

The International Biological Security Education Network: an imperative and timely tool for global biosecurity

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The risks of scientific research with dual-use concern have been discussed in the past two decades. Dual-use research of concern (DURC) is scientific research with significant potential for generating information that could be used to harm national security, the public health, and the environment. The rapid advances in life sciences represent the ever-expanding capabilities for malign use of the research. Although the civil society and government have progressively become aware of the risks of DURC, the efforts deployed lack coordination and there is a clear need for education on these issues in the scientific community.

The new initiative “International Biological Security Education Network (IBSEN)” which is funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust Fund, aims to address the above issue. The IBSEN objective is to create a global network to raise awareness and deliver education of biosecurity among life scientists and policymakers through comparing and integrating the International Nuclear Security Education Network (INSEN) which was developed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and education efforts at ABEO of OPCW.

Taking note of the methods and challenges faced implementing INSEN we aim to develop a Biosecurity education handbook. The handbook will mainly cover two sections from the development of educational materials in biosecurity to effective implementation methodologies. We recently published an edited biosecurity education resource book “essential of biological security”. Further educational materials will be developed at various formats including reports, learning kits such as Team-Based learning exercises academic cartoons, etc. To be able to best promote and implement awareness raising and education, a strong digital presence is used to set up of the IBSEN website and the publishing of a Quarterly Newsletter throughout the project. The first Newsletter will be published in May 2024 and will focus on the lesson learned from INSEN and ABEO. Good and effective methodologies used A variety of implement methodologies will be discussed in detail and tailored to different cultural and geographical differences when designing degree course curriculums, short training course materials and other forms of activities such as summer school, workshop, webinar etc.