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## **International POPs Elimination Project**

*Fostering Active and Efficient Civil Society Participation in  
Preparation for Implementation of the Stockholm Convention*

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# **Together let's eliminate POPs**

**Association pour la protection de l'environnement et  
du patrimoine –Nabatieh (APEP)**

**Lebanon  
March 2006**

## About the International POPs Elimination Project

On May 1, 2004, the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN <http://www.ipen.org>) began a global NGO project called the International POPs Elimination Project (IPEP) in partnership with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). The Global Environment Facility (GEF) provided core funding for the project.

IPEP has three principal objectives:

- Encourage and enable NGOs in 40 developing and transitional countries to engage in activities that provide concrete and immediate contributions to country efforts in preparing for the implementation of the Stockholm Convention;
- Enhance the skills and knowledge of NGOs to help build their capacity as effective stakeholders in the Convention implementation process;
- Help establish regional and national NGO coordination and capacity in all regions of the world in support of longer term efforts to achieve chemical safety.

IPEP will support preparation of reports on country situation, hotspots, policy briefs, and regional activities. Three principal types of activities will be supported by IPEP: participation in the National Implementation Plan, training and awareness workshops, and public information and awareness campaigns.

For more information, please see <http://www.ipen.org>

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily the views of the institutions providing management and/or financial support.

This report is available in the following languages: English

# Together let's eliminate POPs

This is the report of the activities carried out by the Community Awareness Program concerning the effects of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) on health and the environment.

Preparations for the four workshops began by contacting the concerned societies. We contacted the National Education Boy Scouts. (You can find the relevant letter in the file of the Society project). In the same file you will find a letter from the Chief of the Public Agricultural Co-operative Society in Zoter. You will also find a letter from the Chief of the Social Services Corporation Society and UNESCO Club, together with a letter from the Head of Al Nabatia Municipality. In the file, there is also consent from the participating establishments for taking part in the project of eliminating POPs. All the establishments participated in the four workshops as promised. Moreover, students participated with numerous municipalities in the area.

## Materials

We circulated a brochure in the name of the society which contains a list of the POPs as defined by the Stockholm Convention and a summary of their hazards. Five thousand copies of these brochures were distributed in Al Nabatia and the neighbouring villages.

Three large signs were displayed in public streets, urging people to participate in the workshops organized by the society for the purpose of eliminating the hazards resulting from POPs.

Our contact with societies, municipalities and agricultural cooperative societies, as well as the signs displayed in the streets, produced an important awareness campaign for the safe disposal of POPs. This was actually incarnated through the participation of more than one hundred people in the four workshops.

## Workshop part 1

The scientific section covered a lecture delivered by Dr. Majed B'alabaki on the hazards of POPs that have appeared since the beginning of the twentieth century. It is true that such chemical substances contributed to the welfare of man because farm production increased when pests were brought under control. However, these chemicals caused environmental poisonous reactions that went on for years and are capable of going from place to another. They are now in the south and north poles and in the oceans as well. It has been explained that such substances are attracted to the fatty tissues where they gradually concentrate while organisms feed on other organisms. They multiply thousands of times as they reach the top of the food chain.

These substances have been defined, named and divided into three classes. All the twelve pollutants have been described and their uses have been stated. The lecture focused on the properties of these pollutants. It states that they are highly poisonous,

volatile, insoluble, and concentrated in fat tissues. They do not degenerate and remain in soil, water or air for long periods. The lecture covered the sources of these pollutants and the incidental by-products (dioxins and furans).

Presentations dealt with the industrial and thermal processes producing such pollutants. It also covered medical sources, wastes, cigarette smoke, exhaust emissions and leakage resulting from improper storage. Ideas like the effect of pollutants on the health of humans and the environment and on the immune, nervous and reproduction systems were also included. The lecture tackled pollutants as the cause of all kinds of cancer, memory loss, liver and hormone system diseases, diabetes, and body deformations. It also covered the way such pollutants cause harms and how they enter the human body. The role that ministers may play for the disposal of such pollutants was also one of the main points in the lecture.

Part of the lecture was also devoted to safe alternatives for the disposal of persistent organic pollutants, and natural and biological alternatives.

Following a scientific presentation of the hazards arising from organic pollutants, there was a discussion on whether such pollutants exist in the area or not. It was made clear to the people present that, according to the Lebanese Ministry of Environment, pollutants that actually exist in Lebanon are dioxins, furans and hexachlorobenzene.

The audience was in doubt regarding the opinion of the Ministry of the Environment. Some people believed that DDT also existed. The Society was requested to conduct investigations for verification of the idea.

The society was also requested to survey the places where such pollutants may be present. The audience was also informed that the Society was preparing a project on this topic, in collaboration with the Global Environment Facility. The activities of the Society will focus on this topic in 2006.

The discussion was concluded by a recommendation made by the Environment Society. The recommendation stated that societies should be informed of any alternative uses which may be safer than such pollutants.

## **Workshop part 2**

The second section of the workshop dealt with laws and agreements related to POPs. The workshop was conducted by Dr. Abdul Amir Shams El Din, a professor of law. Legal texts of Decrees No. 8006 and 13339 were handed in to the audience. The Stockholm Convention and the date when it was accessed by Lebanon (3 January 2003) was covered. A leaflet issued by the UNEP was also handed in to the audience.

In the discussion, participants expressed their readiness to contact the Society and inform it of places where these classes of pollutants do exist, particularly when a new telephone line dedicated for the disposal of such pollutants is added.

People's participation was effective. They signed a number of petitions which will be sent to the Minister of Health, stating the following:

We, the undersigned, have met here with the aim of reviewing the hazards of persistent organic pollutants the use of which was prohibited by the Stockholm Convention that was signed by the Lebanese state and took force with effect from 2004. The Stockholm Convention warns against the risks of dioxin to health and environment, stating that it causes cancer, diabetes, heart diseases, high blood pressure and liver diseases according the information released by the World Health Organization.

Therefore, we request you to replace hospital incinerators with antiseptic equipment. Antiseptic equipment is not highly expensive. The amounts of money paid by the Ministry of Health on cancer patients are as much as the amounts to be paid for replacing such incinerators.

Discussions in the workshops included the participation of the Lebanese press. Newspapers that covered the topic included Al Safir, Al Nahar and Al Diar.

The discussions also focused on the information campaign in the community and the awareness of the hazards of POPs. The discussion praised the educational role of the brochures and the list of the twelve pollutants for warning people against these hazards. The list is now considered an important reference for farmers, who refer to it to know the scientific names of the pollutants when they use chemicals in farming.

Signs displayed on the main roads played an important role, because they drew the attention of people to the hazards of such pollutants. Workshop participants emphasized the act of burning tyres in valleys when it gets dark for getting the copper parts contained in such tyres. The burning of tyres, which is widespread in the whole area, causes the emission of dioxins and furans. There was a call on the Society to exert efforts for eliminating this act which is repeated in a different place every night. Therefore, the intensive existence of different teams and the good response on the part of municipalities and security authorities are urgently required, but this is currently something impossible under the current conditions prevailing in our country.

## **Results**

The Society is still being contacted by people. There are petitions stating people's complaint of the effects of pollutants. The last petition was submitted on 23 March 2006 by residents of the Commercial Quarter in the middle of Al Nabatia near a sweets shop called Al Sultan Sweets. The petition had the signatures of the owners of stores located in the area such as Farol Bookshop, Wahid Spare Parts, the barber Hussain Saleh, Al Mash'al Spices and others. All the people called upon the Society to intervene for stopping the harm resulting from chemical waste from which DDT was smelt. The Society contacted Al Nabatia Society to do something and the problem was solved.

The press and information campaign created clear understanding of the people and establishments of the community through their effective participation and semi-continuous contact with the Society to inform it of the places where POPs exist. The campaign expressed the understanding of these establishments to the hazards of such pollutants. Participants in these workshops raised very important recommendations. They recommended the designation of a special day to announce a large meeting where this problem may be discussed. Large crowds of people should be present to stop incinerating waste in the area because it causes harm to the health of people and pollutes the environment in the South of Lebanon. We are studying how to finance this campaign. We need to attract the attention of large numbers of people from the other neighbouring towns but this requires transport cost and information costs.





## مستجدات

● يعقد الباحث في الفكر الجيو- استراتيجي، د. نبيل خليفة، مؤتمراً صحافياً في مكتبه في البترون، بعنوان «إشكالية مزارع شبعاء: نحو مقاربة علمية لمسألة جيو- استراتيجية بامتياز»، الحادية عشرة قبل ظهر الخميس المقبل.

● يلقي نقيب المرصقات والمرضين في لبنان إيلي الأعرج، محاضرة لمناسبة الاحتفال بمئوية مدرسة التمريض في الجامعة الأميركية في بيروت، بعنوان «مهنة التمريض: إنجازات

وتطلعات»، الرابعة بعد ظهر غد في قاعة عصام فارس - حرم الجامعة.

● أقام اتحاد القسوس الديموقراطي الفلسطيني ندوة في قاعة الشهداء بمخيم برج الشمالي - صور بعنوان «الحركة الوطنية الأسيرة في سجون الاحتلال الإسرائيلي»، بمناسبة يوم الأسير الفلسطيني وذكرى مجزرتي قانا وجنين.

أشار رئيس الاتحاد في لبنان يوسف أحمد إلى «الانتهاكات التي تمارسها سلطات الاحتلال بحق

الأسرى» واعتبر أنها تشكل «خرقاً قاضحاً لكل الأعراف والواجب الدولي واتفاقية جنيف الرابعة»، داعياً إلى التحرك العاجل للإفراج عنهم.

● بمناسبة «يوم الأرض»، تنظم هيئة حماية البيئة والمحافظة على التراث في النبطية، ندوة حول اللوثات العضوية الثابتة وخطورها على الصحة العامة، يتحدث فيها الدكتور ماجد بعلبكي، في مركز الجمعية في النبطية الساعة الثامنة والنصف من مساء الخميس المقبل.

السفير

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