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The International POPs Elimination Project

*Fostering Active and Effective Civil Society Participation in
Preparations for Implementation of the Stockholm Convention*

Skill Share Workshop on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and South Asia Regional Hub Steering Committee Meeting

**Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI),
Islamabad, Pakistan
Toxics Link, New Delhi, India**

**Pakistan
December 2004**

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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Islamabad, Pakistan 7-8 December 2004

Proceedings in Brief

Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, Pakistan
Toxics Link, New Delhi, India

7 December 2004

INTRODUCTION

A one-day Skill Share Workshop on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) for the NGOs was organised by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with Toxics link on 7 December 2004 in Islamabad, Pakistan. The workshop was primarily targeted at the civil society organizations from Pakistan, including a few from other South Asian countries. The activity was organised as part of the International POPs Elimination Project (IPEP), a project of the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN).

BACKGROUND

Most of the South Asia nations have, by adopting the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants in May 2001, demonstrated their intent to include successful Convention implementation among their national priorities. However the same cannot be successfully implemented without enhanced public awareness about POPs and increased civil society participation.

NGOs and civil society in South Asia have been playing an important role in raising awareness and promoting appropriate policies for the protection of health and the environment from chemicals and wastes -- more specifically in promoting the elimination of POPs. While the NGO interest, involvement, capacity, and activity on these issues may have been rapidly emerging and evolving, there was a growing need to further raise this to an unprecedented levels in order to make significant contribution in achieving the objective of the Stockholm Convention, and to longer-term efforts aimed at the reduction and elimination of other PTS.

AIMS AND WORKSHOP DESIGN

The skill-share workshop on POPs was organised keeping in view this pressing need and aimed at enhancing the capacity of the civil society organizations to deal with issues related to POPs and to play a constructive role in the implementation of the global treaty on POPs, the Stockholm Convention. It was also geared towards arousing interest among

the organisations, providing opportunities for direct contact/interaction and networking, to take up the issue further.

The workshop was designed in a way as to present before the participants the various aspects of the problem as well as look at ways of addressing them. The first session was an introduction to POPs and covered the various categories of POPs and their health and environmental implications. This was followed by a session on the Role of the Media, among various other stakeholders, in addressing the issue. The third session focused on highlighting POPs issue in the South Asia region looking at the situation of POPs in Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. This was followed by a regional overview of the status of National Implementation Plan (NIP) in each of the South Asia countries. The following session stressed on the need for global action to address the issue of POPs and primarily covered the International POPs Elimination Project (IPEP). The concluding session was a general discussion on the issues at national and regional level and the opportunities available to address the same.

The workshop involved resource persons, mainly experts in respective fields, from Pakistan as well as other South Asia countries. The sessions were conducted in an interactive fashion, encouraging and involving the participants in the discussions. The skill-share workshop was attended by over 20 organizations from the South Asia region, a majority being from the host country.

WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

Workshop proceedings opened with welcome addresses delivered by Dr. Saba Gul Kattak, Executive Director, SDPI and Ravi Agarwal, Director, Toxics Link. Both, in their address, stressed the need for acknowledging the gravity of the issue and the role of civil society in taking on challenges such as the one posed by POPs. At the same time they reiterated the need for enhancing the capacities and enabling these civil society organizations to play a more meaningful role. The regional approach to tackling the issue was appreciated by both.

Session 1: Introducing POPs

Chair: Mahmood Khwaja, SDPI Pakistan

An overview was presented by Mahmood Khwaja on what the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) are and the characteristics that they possess that make them a global threat. POPs are chemical substances that persist in the environment, bio-accumulate through the food web, transport globally and pose a risk of causing adverse effects to human health and the environment. This group of priority pollutants consists of pesticides (such as DDT, Dieldrin and Aldrin), industrial chemicals (such as polychlorinated biphenyls, PCBs) and unintentional by-products of industrial processes (such as dioxins and furans). The POPs sources and impact was also discussed before taking in details its various forms and categories.

The overview was followed by detailed presentations on various categories of POPs and how each of those affects human health and environment. Qasim Shah from UNDP-SDPI

made a presentation on POPs in Agriculture covering the pesticide POPs namely DDT, Dieldrin, Aldrin, and the others. Reiterating the adverse impacts of these chemicals, he pointed out how these continue to be in use in the South Asia region despite legally being banned, putting at risk the human health and environment.

Mahmood Khwaja's presentation on the Industrial POPs provided further insight into the POPs issue. He talked about HCB and PCBs and their continued industrial applications in the South Asia region. He pointed out how the transformers containing PCBs remain a major threat to the environment.

The last category of unintentional or by-product POPs namely Dioxins and Furans, was taken up by Ravi Agarwal from Toxics Link. He pointed out that the term dioxin, commonly covering polychlorinated dibenzo-dioxins (PCDDs) and polychlorinated dibenzo-furans (PCDFs), referred to a group of chlorinated organic chemicals and poses great risks to human health owing to their unique chemical structure. The sources of Dioxins such as combustion activities, chlorinated pesticides manufacturing, burning of materials containing chlorine among several others, were shared. In terms of human exposure, the major source listed was diet i.e. meat, milk, fish, dairy, breast milk etc. He stressed the irreversible damages caused by POPs, including Dioxins, which is not limited to one generation but transcends to generations as has been evidenced by Agent Orange use during the Vietnam war, the health effects of which can still be seen.

While discussing POPs issue it is important to note that while the Stockholm Convention currently covers 12 POPs (Dirty Dozen), there are numerous other POPs of great concern and should be brought within the purview of the Convention. He made the group aware of these "New Candidate POPs", which despite sharing all the properties of POPs are currently not listed. These include pentachlorophenol, brominated flame-retardants, HCH isomers (such as the organochlorine pesticide Lindane), short chained chlorinated paraffins (used in cutting oils and lubricants) and the others.

Session II: Addressing POPs Issues

Chair: Ram Charitra Sah, Center for Public Health and Environment Development (CEPHED), Nepal

Having presented an overview on POPs and the challenges they pose, it is important to discuss ways and approaches of addressing the same. It is well understood that POPs is a Global problem and every single individual is equally vulnerable. It was stressed that every one has a role to play in addressing the issue effectively and there is an urgent need for concerted action by all stakeholders, including the NGOs and the media.

In particular, the important role of the media in addressing the issue was deliberated upon by Shafqat Muneer from Action Aid Pakistan. It was interesting to note how media can help in highlighting the issue and pressurizing the relevant stakeholders to take action. POPs as was earlier acknowledged is still an emerging issue in South Asia and not many are aware. Media therefore plays a crucial role in raising the awareness levels of public and the authorities likewise. He also gave some useful tips on attracting media attention,

not to miss the important role of civil society organizations in feeding useful, accurate and regular information to the media.

Session III: POPs in South Asia – Case Studies

Chair: Hemantha Withanage, Centre for Environmental Justice, Sri Lanka

It is seen that although each country may have its own problems and priorities, but they often share some common characteristics with other countries in the region. This is equally true with respect to the South Asia region with regard to POPs issue. The countries in the region share the nature of problems posed by POPs. Not just this, it is also important to be aware of the situation in other countries in the region in order to effectively deal with the issue in their own countries as they may be interlinked in some ways.

It was with this idea that the participants were exposed to the status of POPs in Nepal, Sri Lanka and India, in addition to Pakistan. It helped get a regional overview. Case studies presented by the participants from South Asian countries gave an insight into the prevailing situation of POPs in these countries, the main issues, challenges, existing laws and the like.

Session IV: Status of NIPs process in South Asia

Chair: Ravi Agarwal, Toxics Link, India

Closely linked with the country overview is the status of National Implementation Plan (NIP) process in these countries. Each Party to the Stockholm Convention is required to develop a NIP describing how they will meet the obligations set by the Convention and this they are required to do in consultation with the civil society organisations. The presentation covered NIPs related activities in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India. It was interesting to assess the country status in relation to others in the region. While some are way ahead in the formulation of the plan, others were found lagging far behind. The level of civil society participation in these processes was also remarkably diverse. Challenges before the CSOs were in gaining access to information and meaningful participation in the NIP process in their country.

Session V: Need for Global Action

Need for regional/ global action to address the issue of POPs has been the overarching theme of all the discussions. At the same time the need and role of the civil society participation in effectively addressing the issue of POPs was stressed. The International POPs Elimination Project (IPEP), being implemented by IPEN globally is one such opportunity that seeks to foster active and effective civil society participation in preparations for implementation of the Stockholm Convention. Upasana Choudhry, IPEP Coordinator for South Asia Region gave an overview of the project goals, coverage and activities, including information on how CSOs can participate in the project.

General Discussions:

Moderators: Ravi Agarwal, Toxics Link, India and Mahmood Khwaja, SDPI, Pakistan

The major outcome of the discussions was the realisation that NGOs can play an important role in awareness raising and promoting appropriate policies for the protection

of health and the environment from chemicals and wastes, more specifically in promoting the elimination of POPs.

The need of the hour identified was to break away from the institutionalised thinking and look for more creative and sustainable measures to address the issue. Most important was their concern about chemical alternatives to POPs that has been the recent trend as these alternatives are not sustainable in the long run.

The participants also urged their respective governments to help solve the issue and to improve public participation in the planning and implementation processes. As a follow up to this workshop, the regional hub would mobilize the participating NGOs to take up country-based activities under IPEP thereby making POPs as a priority environmental issue in South Asian region.

The workshop was concluded by Engg. Asif Shujah Khan, DG, Pakistan EPA who emphasized the need for holding more awareness raising workshops on POPs, as the issue was still not a priority environmental issue in South Asian region.

8 December 2004

BACKGROUND

Regional Strategy Plan for project implementation developed by Toxics Link, Regional Hub for South Asia under the International POPs Elimination project (IPEP) focused on the formation of a Steering Committee at the Regional level in order to achieve transparency in processes and a participatory approach to regional management, administration and coordination of the Project.

The idea was to form a Committee composed of the Hub NGO and one key civil society representative from the each of the participating countries within the region based on their interest and commitment to take forward the project activities and their capacity for mobilizing the civil society in their countries. While the role of the members was largely seen as providing the much needed guidance and direction in addition to overseeing the actually implementation of activities in their country, the same was to be refined and fine tuned in the first Steering Committee meeting.

PARTICIPANTS

The First Hub Committee meeting was attended by Ravi Agarwal (Toxics Link, India); Mahmood A. Khwaja (SDPI, Pakistan); Ram Charitra Sah (CEPHED, Nepal); Hemantha Withanage (CEJ, Sri Lanka); Saiful Islam (University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh); Cai Kui (Yunnan University, China); Bharati Chaturvedi (Chintan, India); Nancy Hateh Dupree (ARIC, Afghanistan) and Upasana Choudhry (IPEP SA Coordinator)

KEY DECISIONS AND OUTCOMES

The idea of the Steering Committee was formalised and was entrusted with the task of Regional Coordination. As proposed, the committee will comprise of the Hub NGO

(Toxics Link) and at least one representative from each of the participating countries in the region, along with the IPEP South Asia Coordinator. India, being a larger country, will have two representatives on the committee. The Committee will be headed by Co-Chairs, Ravi (Toxics Link, India) and Mahmood (SDPI, Pakistan). The other members include: Ram (Nepal), Hemantha (Sri Lanka), Bharati (India), Nancy (Afghanistan), Cai Kui (China), Saiful Islam (Bangladesh) and Upasana (IPEP SA Coordinator). The members get represented on the Committee on rotation basis. The tenure for the present Committee was fixed till April 2006.

Besides the Steering Committee, the idea of forming expert sub-groups was also proposed. These sub-groups may be constituted, as per the need, of IPEP, South Asia partners, based on their expertise and interest and would deal with specific aspects of project implementation.

With regard to the roles of the members on the Steering Committee, each country representative commits to a meaningful engagement with their peers in their respective countries. They shall push forth the project agenda in their country and collectively set national priorities that need to be addressed under the project. They will also help mobilise NGOs in their country as well as South Asia region and incite action. The Steering Committee collectively would provide the requisite direction to the project as well as provide inputs for post-project sustainability. The membership may be reviewed from time to time.

These structures are solely meant to support and assist project implementation in the countries of the region and may be reviewed if found counter productive. The option of working directly with the Hub NGO and not through the country representative was left open for the national NGOs.

The discussions also focused on defining the regional boundaries with regard to project implementation. It was found desirable to also cover Afghanistan, Iran and China, in addition to Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan is currently on a threshold and the environmental issues are a prime concern. Meaningful interventions at this stage would make significant contributions to the planning process. Likewise, a constructive civil society engagement in China would ensure the implementation of the provisions of the POPs treaty to which the country is a party. The option of covering Bhutan is also open and intervention may be made based on the interest among the NGOs from these countries to partner on the project.

The Steering Committee members shall initiate a consultation process involving all the relevant/ interested groups in their respective countries for setting up National priorities and developing action plans with regard to project implementation.

The Regional Hub shall facilitate the process by providing to each country representative a Resource Pack containing project related information as well as some useful kit on POPs as well as the Convention.

The Steering Committee shall exchange information on the progress in their country on regular basis through the list serve created for the purpose.

ANNEX A

WORKSHOP PROGRAM

7 December 2004

INTRODUCTION & WELCOME ADDRESSES

Dr. Saba Gul Khattak, Executive Director, SDPI, Pakistan
Ravi Agarwal, Director, Toxics Link, India

SESSION 1: INTRODUCING POPs

Chair: Mahmood Khwaja, SDPI

POP_s - An Introduction

Mahmood Khwaja, SDPI, Pakistan

POP_s in Agriculture

Qasim Shah, SDPI, Pakistan

POP_s in Industry

Mahmood Khwaja, SDPI, Pakistan

Dioxins, Furans and the New Candidates
Ravi Agarwal, Toxics Link, India

Discussions

SESSION 2: ADDRESSING POP_s ISSUES

Chair: Ram Charitra Sah, CEPHED, Nepal

Stockholm Convention on POP_s

Mahmood Khwaja, SDPI, Pakistan

Role of Media Towards Environmental Issues
Shafqat Muneer, Action Aid Pakistan

SESSION 3: POP_s IN SOUTH ASIA

Chair: Hemantha Withanage, CEJ, Sri Lanka

Sources of POP_s and its Management in Nepal
Ram Charitra Sah, CEPHED, Nepal

POP_s Situation in India

Ravi Agarwal, Toxics Link, India

Pakistan Country Report – Pesticides

Dr. Yousaf Hayat, NIP, Islamabad, Pakistan

POPs – NWFP

Noor ul Hadi, Pakistan

POPs Elimination – Case of Sri Lanka

Hemantha Withanage, CEJ, Sri Lanka

SESSION 4: NIPs PROCESS

Chair: Ravi Agarwal, Toxics Link, India

POPs Enabling Activity Project in Pakistan

Dr. Javed Iqbal, POPs Focal Person, NIP, Pak. EPA, Pakistan

NIP Activities in Sri Lanka

Hemantha Withanage, CEJ, Sri Lanka

NIP Activities in India

Ravi Agarwal and Upasana Choudhry, Toxics Link, India

SESSION 5: NEED FOR GLOBAL ACTION

International POPs Elimination Project (IPEP)

Upasana Choudhry, IPEP South Asia

General Discussions on Issues at Regional and National level and Steps for Managing POPs

Moderators: Ravi Agarwal, Toxics Link, India and Mahmood Khwaja, SDPI, Pakistan

ANNEXURE B

Workshop Participants

S.No.	Name	Designation	Organisation
1.	Aziz Ali	District Manager	IUCNP, Chitral Conservation Strategy, Support Unit
2.	Bharati Chaturvedi	Director	Chintan Environmental Research and Action Group, India
3.	Dr. Mahmood AKhwaja	Research Fellow	Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad.
4.	Dr. Yousaf Hayat	Federal Coordinator	UNDP-POPs, Islamabad
5.	Fazal Rabbi	Chairman	Society for Health Environment and Justice, Peshawar
6.	Ishfaq Ahmed	Assistant Programme Coordinator	Pak Environmental Protection Foundation, Peshawar
7.	M. Sami-ur-Rehman	Technical Assistant	UNDP, PAK-EPA, Islamabad
8.	Marriyum Aurangzeb	Policy Research Analyst	WWFP, Islamabad
9.	Mian Suleman Gul	Programme Coordinator	National Research and Development Foundation (NRDF); Peshawar
10.	Mohammad Farooq	Deputy Chief Executive	SABA WON International, Peshawar
11.	Nadia Akhtar	Lecturer	Allama Iqbal Open University, , Islamabad
12.	Nancy Hateh Dupree	Senior Consultant	ACBAR/ARIC, Peshawar

13.	Noor-ul-Hadi	Coordinator, POPs Enabling Activity NWFP	EPA-NWFP, Peshawar
14.	Qasim Ali Shah	National Project Manager	UNDP-SDPI, , Ministry of Commerce, Islamabad
15.	Qasim M. Ahmed	Environmental Management Expert	LEAD-Pakistan, Islamabad
16.	Ram Charitra Sah	Environment Scientist	Center for Public Health and Environment Development (CEPHED), Katmandu, Nepal;
17.	Ravi Agarwal	Director	Toxics Link, New Delhi
18.	Sarah Amir	Lecturer	Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad
19.	Sohail Iqbal	Program Assistant	ECI, ECO Conservation Initiatives, Islamabad
20.	Upasana Choudhry	IPEP SA Coordinator	Toxic Link, New Delhi
21.	W.D. Hemantha	Executive Director	Centre for Environmental Justice, Sri Lanka
22.	Yasmin Doran	Executive Director	AWARE, Peshawar