



Swiss Agency for  
Development  
and Cooperation  
SDC



Swiss Agency for  
the Environment,  
Forests and  
Landscape SAEFL

## **International POPs Elimination Project**

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

---

# **Training workshop of grassroots communities on the risks of exposure to POPs, in the department of Ouémé in Benin**

**Organisation des Femmes pour la Gestion de l'Energie, de  
l'Environnement et la Promotion du Développement intégré  
(OFEDI)**

**Benin  
April 2005**

## **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>

IPEN gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Global Environment Facility, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Swiss Agency for the Environment Forests and Landscape, the Canada POPs Fund, the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM), Mitchell Kapor Foundation, Sigrid Rausing Trust, New York Community Trust and others.

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: summary in English, full report in French

# **Training workshop of grassroots communities on the risks of exposure to POPs, in the department of Ouémé in Benin**

**CCAF, Porto-Novo  
April 9th and 10th, 2005**

OFEDI (Women's Organization for Energy and Environment Management, and Integrated Development Promotion), organized a training and awareness workshop of grassroots communities on POPs and the Stockholm Convention in collaboration with PAN-Africa and IPEN. The workshop was mainly meant to inform and train communities working in the informal system in Ouémé department about the Stockholm Convention and the inherent dangers and risks related to direct and indirect exposure to POPs and to make them change behaviour and promote their contribution to the implementation of the Stockholm Convention.

The choice of this Benin department was prompted by the importance of the trans-boundary trade which facilitates chemicals flow from Nigeria to Benin's first cities, those of Ouémé, in particular. Ouémé was finally chosen, for farmers growing bean and market gardeners are numerous in that part of Benin and they over-use pesticides.

This project is within the scope of the International Project for POPs Elimination (IPEP) of IPEN. IPEP is a worldwide project meant to promote entire contribution of developing and transition economy countries NGOs in the preparation activities for the implementation of the Stockholm Convention on POPs.

About forty participants composed of farmers, market gardeners, women storing and selling grains and beans, welders, garage owners, fishermen and some members of OFEDI took part in the workshop. Participants were chosen according to their levels of involvement in the management of products likely to contain POPs. Four (4) people were also selected from each of the eight (8) communes.

## **Workshop progress**

The opening ceremony was presided by the Environment Department of the Ministry of Environment, Housing and Urban planning (MEHU). After the welcome speech delivered by Mrs IGUE-DJINADOU Koubourath, Secretary General of OFEDI, Mr Séké MORAKPAÏ, Focal Point of the Stockholm Convention and representative of the Director of Environment of MEHU, first hailed OFEDI's initiative for a grassroots agents' training on a rather common, but concerning issue. He urged participants to be the relays for the distribution of the information they received. Then Dr DOSSOU Bernadette, Chair person of OFEDI, delivered the opening speech, in which she underlined the important aspect of this training for the preservation of human health and environment. She thanked IPEN for its technical and financial support.

Three papers were read during the workshop.

**The first paper focusing on the theme “the Stockholm Convention and its objectives”** was presented by Mr. Séké MORAKPAÏ, Focal Point of the Stockholm Convention. After explaining the meaning of POPs, giving the exhaustive list of regulated POPs by the Stockholm Convention, indicating their sources and explaining their various uses, he presented the main clauses of the Stockholm Convention (the precaution principle as code of principle, the financial supports to help all the countries participate in the implementation of the treaty, the elimination of POPs called into question, the management and treatment of POP waste without harmful impacts on environment and the strict restrictions and bans on POPs trade. Participants were informed about the implementation state of this Convention by Benin, after being adopted, signed and ratified. Participants were brought to understand that they themselves produce or use POPs in their daily activities.

**The second paper, read by Dr Bernadette DOSSOU, Chairperson of OFEDI, dealt with POPs release sources and their impacts on health and environment.** She laid emphasis on POPs characteristics, such as the persistency in the environment, the capacity of traveling great distances, the accumulation in living organism’s tissues and the toxicity for humans, the fauna and flora. They were given concrete examples of POPs use in different activities sectors such as farming, market gardening, refrigeration, mechanic, welding, foundries, transportation, etc. Then POPs impacts on environment (water, soils, air, and plants) and on human beings were widely discussed.

**The third paper, presented by Kpangon Hector and Dossou Krystel, agricultural engineers, addressed POPs control strategies as well as alternatives to POPs and the BAT/BEP.** Participants could understand how to treat and eliminate POPs. So, the alternative solutions were suggested as alternatives to POPs, touching each group of agents involved in the informal system activities in which POPs can be used; farming, market gardening, gardening, welding, electricity, car repairs, forge, refrigeration, etc.

**Debates following** each of these papers were very interesting. Many contributors come back on the relevancy and the opportune timing of this workshop and thanked its organizers. Questions were mainly related to the classification of substances among POPs. Other questions addressed rather the effectiveness of alternative solutions and the costs related to their adoption. Here are a few questions asked by participants. These questions kept the discussions going:

1. Can we always use, or do we have to stop using the products mentioned, such as insecticides in fields, fertilizers (NPK, carbamide) that we use for crops, carbide used to bring on the flowering of pine apples? If we have to stop their use, what are we going to replace them with?
2. As a cattle breeder, I take our animals excrements which I either sell or burn with other rubbish; they smell. Is it good to burn them?
3. Women who resell, store food crops with other products for 3 to 4 months. What kind of available and accessible product can we suggest to them if the current products they are using are not good?
4. This workshop gets us out of the dark; How are we going to inform our parents and relations so that they stop the bad practices? Can OFEDI help us?

5. The information that you have given us related to IPM, by using neem (*azadirachta indica*) and paw paw especially with the doses, is very instructive. We would like to have more information.
6. Can we have another oil management system coming from the processing firms of SBEE (Beninese firm of water and electricity) for welders not to buy it?
7. What harm can the gasoline, which mechanics suck up with their mouth, do to them?
8. There seems to be a contraction between what our different ministries say: The MEHU says not to use POPs anymore, the MSP asks people to get mosquito nets impregnated with farm products and inputs which the Ministry of Agriculture asks us to use on our crops.

With regards to questions asked by participants, presenters insisted on the necessity to distinguish insecticides recommended by the Ministry of Health and Agriculture from POPs. Even though some products used in farming and public health in Benin, are not POPs, they may be declared as POPs some day. For example an experts group is currently considering the nomination of Lindane.

One who burns animals' excrements, burns a fortune. We have to fertilize fields with animals' excrements rather than chemicals which seem good for our plants, but are harmful to soils and plants consumers.

## Workgroups

After reading papers, workgroups were organised on the 4 following issues:

1. Describe the management situation in your villages: (what uses do they make of the products in farming, their nature, where do they buy them, what is their utility, what adverse effects do they have, the protective measures, what products are available?)
2. Cite/tell the accident cases caused by POPs in your villages or elsewhere.
3. What strategies will you develop to convey to the other villagers, the notions received during the workshop?
4. Recommendations of the group

Workgroups mentioned that POPs like endrin were used in bean and cotton treatment. Endrin is also used to control vegetable pests. According to participants, its use is justified by its effectiveness, its rapidity of action and its relatively low cost compared with new products.

The second big group of POPs reported is that of dioxins and furans. In fact during celebrations (Tabaski feasts) and events, many tyres are burnt in the open air.

Besides POPs, we have to point out the use of battery (carbon) during corn sowing to avoid having grains unearthed repeatedly by poultry (birds and hens) and the re-use of waste oils used by millers and garage owners.

Workgroups also showed that many food poisoning cases, known or not, have been related to POPs. These situations have caused losses in men and poultry fed with grains treated by these toxic products. Some participants mentioned the case of Lokossa in 1999 where 180 people, during a training organised by PPAD, died after eating beans.

With the insistence of participants, a committee was set up for a continued conveyance of the message all over the department. It is composed of a focal point of each commune. It is agreed that each of the focal points will take on two to three assistants to set up a POPs control committee at the commune level.

The workshop assessment done by participants shows that participants found the themes very relevant, useful and that the true grassroots agents were invited. They think that the workshop enlightened them about many important points they ignored.

## **Recommendations of the workshop**

At the end of the training workshop, participants made the following recommendations:

- Extended awareness of population as soon as possible, by NGOs and the mass-media
- Proposition and popularization of substitutable products
- Taxation and prohibition of plastic products in polyethylene
- Setting up of a POPs control committee
- Involvement of the boards of directors (Chief of the arrondissement) and mayors of communes in POPs control activities.
- Collaboration between boards of directors and participants to this workshop
- Follow-up organisation of committees and participants at commune and arrondissement level, by OFEDI and PAN-AFRICA.
- Setting up of a POPs committee for the relay in villages by seeing to it that women be well represented
- Providing committees with means for the distribution of information
- Authorities must take actions to restrict and ban POPs entry on the national territory
- The workshop results must not remain unprocessed.