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The International POPs Elimination Project

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

Global Day of Action on POPs in South Africa

groundWork

**South Africa
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>

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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.

**IPEN GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION (GDA) ON THE EARTH DAY
22ND APRIL 2005 IN SOUTH AFRICA**

List of GDA activities

- Information distribution to civil society on incineration and cement kilns, health and environmental effects, opposition in other countries, alternatives and action that can be taken by communities to stop incineration processes.
- Preparation and dissemination of information pamphlet on cement kilns, pollutants released and their problems and alternatives,
- Press release

Status of the Stockholm Convention in South Africa

South Africa is a Party to the Convention. It ratified the Convention on 4th September 2002.

The National implementation Plan (NIP)

South Africa is preparing the National Implementation Plan (NIP) and civil society organizations are among the stakeholders of the process. groundWork is a civil society stakeholder on the NIP regarding the hazardous waste of obsolete pesticides under the Africa Stockpile Program (ASP). groundWork and Earthlife Africa are participating in the NIP and its role is to generate awareness regarding the disposal of hazardous waste by cement kiln incineration which generates POPs and which harm human health and the environment. Our role is also to remind the South African government of their responsibility and commitment to the implementation of the Stockholm Convention.

Objectives of the GDA

A week of action by NGOs and other CSOs around the world in April centred on Earth Day on April 22. The event raised awareness about the Keep the Promise campaign to the implementation of the Stockholm Convention and the issues to be addressed at COP1, just ten days later. The activity raised awareness of POPs, their sources and effects and need to take action among the public, government, NGOs and other parts of civil society.

Why Campaigning

The South African government has already approached a cement company to consider a proposal to burn hazardous waste in their cement kiln. Governments of the world adopted and signed the Stockholm Convention in 2001 with the intention of reducing and eliminating POPs, including those formed as unintentional by-products. In May 2004, the treaty came into legal force, triggering the first conference of the parties in May 2005. Article 10 of the Stockholm Convention calls for “development and exchange of educational and public awareness materials at the national and international levels” and “development and implementation, especially for women, children and the least educated of educational and public awareness programmes on persistent organic pollutants...” The campaign aimed to provide greater public awareness of POPs and the Stockholm Convention in line with this mandate.

Materials produced and disseminated

groundWork drew up press releases (sent to various media outlets) of hazardous waste by cement kiln incineration, which will generate POPs in SA. POPs harm human health and the environment. The aim of the press release was to create and raise awareness nationally. We reminded the government through the Minister and Deputy Minister of Environment Affairs as well as other relevant government individuals of their responsibility and commitment to the Convention implementation. We also formulated updated campaigning materials for the general public for continued awareness-raising such as pamphlets on the burning of hazardous waste by cement kiln incineration, their consequences and existing alternatives.

Participants

Besides distributing to civil society, the information was distributed to various NGOs for further distribution to their communities. Material sent to Earthlife Africa (Johannesburg branch) through Zini Mokhini, Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa (WESSA – Eastern Cape) through Morgan Griffiths, Injiya ya Uri (Johannesburg) through Zini Mokhini, and Sustainable Energy through Clare Taylor (Johannesburg).

Media coverage

Press release attached was sent out to all database media contacts including radios, TV stations and newspapers.

Some of key newspapers: The Mercury, Business report, The Witness, The Star, The Sunday Times, The Daily Sun, The Sunday Tribune, The Mail and Guardian, The Rapport, The Sowetan.

Some of key TV stations: ETV, SABC

Some of key Radio Stations: East Coast Radio, Cape Talk, KFM, BDFM,

ANNEX 1 PRESS RELEASE

DEMONSTRATION AGAINST PROPOSED BURNING OF HAZARDOUS WASTE BY CEMENT INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA

An international coalition of activists today launched the 4th Global Day of Action against Waste (GDAW) citing the increasing health impacts of polluting waste disposal practices.

Coordinated by the Global Anti-Incineration Alliance (GAIA) [1], and the International Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Elimination Network (IPEN) [2], more than 60 groups from over 31 countries participated this year in what has become an annual day of protest against unsustainable and dangerous waste disposal systems. Incinerators are linked to serious environmental health threats. Incineration alone is responsible for 69 percent of global emissions of the notorious pollutant dioxin, which is linked to cancer, immune and reproductive system disorders, birth defects, and other health threats. Incineration is also a primary source of mercury, a potent neurotoxin, which builds up in the environment - especially aquatic ecosystems- and affects the brain, spinal cord, kidneys and liver. It is especially harmful to pregnant women and children.

Civil society in South Africa has been lobbying governments to consider alternative technologies instead of incineration. A campaign that is of special concern is the continent wide push by the cement industries to burn hazardous wastes in cement kilns (incinerators) in South Africa.

According to Llewellyn Leonard of groundWork, the South African government has sent out varied signals on their position on burning of hazardous wastes. On the one hand we find that government officials have requested a local cement industry to burn agricultural waste such as obsolete pesticides and herbicides. While on the other hand we have DEAT holding workshops to establish national implementation plans for the management and strategies to clean up and prevent future accumulation of unwanted stocks of pesticides under the Africa stockpiles programme.

South Africa has signed and ratified the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) [3], which states that using incinerators and cement kilns to burn POPs waste or other halogenated wastes has the potential to generate and release large quantities of unintentional POPs such as dioxins and furans into the environment [4]. The Stockholm Convention also gives preferential treatment for the use of non combustion-based approaches to the management of waste, including the disposal of stockpiles of hazardous waste.

According to Zini Mokhine of Injiya, “While civil society welcomes governments’ decision to ratify the Stockholm Convention on POPs, it is of serious concern that the South African government has considered using the cement industry to dispose of POPs related waste.”

According to Claire Taylor of Earthlife Africa, “the South African government will be attending the first Conference of Parties (COP1) to the Stockholm Convention regarding implementation activities, to be held from the 2 – 6 May in Uruguay. It is hoped that government will meet the obligations enshrined in the text of the convention and not go against this by allowing the burning of hazardous waste such as herbicides and pesticides in cement kilns and incinerators.”

According to Morgan Griffith of the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) Eastern Cape, the South African government is failing to protect people’s health and the environment at large from harmful chemical assaults resulting from unsustainable and irresponsible practices such as incineration. Civil society calls on the South African government to put a stop to the use of dangerously polluting technology whose operations will virtually undermine the objectives of the POPs treaty.

For more information please contact:

Morgan Griffiths, WESSA (Environmental officer) at 041 5859606
Llewellyn Leonard, groundWork (Waste campaigns coordinator) at 082-353-5029
Zini Mokhine, Injiya ya Uri community (Zero Waste) at 011 9856234
Claire Tylor, Earthlife Africa, (Sustainable energy and climate change) at 011 339 3662

[1] GAIA is an international coalition of community-based organizations, research and policy advocacy institutions, citizen pressure groups and other non-profit organizations and individuals working together to promote clean production, zero waste and sustainable discard management systems. Contact for GAIA Secretariat (Gigie at +632-9290376 or 436 4733 - Philippines).

[2] IPEN is a global network of public interest non-governmental organizations united in support of a common POPs Elimination Platform. The mission of IPEN is to work for the global elimination of persistent organic pollutants, on an expedited yet socially equitable basis. Contact for IPEN (Silvani at +255 22 2450 213 - Tanzania).

[3] The Stockholm Convention is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants (POPs). POPs are chemicals that remain intact in the environment for long periods, become widely distributed geographically, accumulate in the fatty tissue of living organisms and are toxic to humans and wildlife. POPs circulate globally and can cause damage wherever they travel. In implementing the Convention, Governments will take measures to eliminate or reduce the release of POPs into the environment.

[4] Stockholm Convention document, Annex C, Unintentional Production, part 2: Source categories

ANNEX 2

Burning of hazardous waste in Cement kilns

What are cement kilns?

Cement kilns are technologies used by cement industries to produce cement products. Cement products are used in the construction of a number of processes, i.e. office buildings, homes, roads and many other types of construction.

The problem with burning hazardous waste in cement kilns

Cement kilns are not designed, constructed, operated, or intended to burn hazardous waste. They are permitted and regulated by government as cement manufacturing facilities. Cement kilns do not have to meet the same stringent standards of performance and emission limits as incinerators. When a cement kiln burns hazardous waste it becomes an incinerator. To 'incinerate' means to burn waste until only ashes are left over. Types of hazardous waste that can be burned in cement kilns include tyres, plastics, paint, ink, solvents, petroleum industry waste and waste oils including crankcase oil, transmission fluid and coolants.

Myths and Facts about Cement Kilns

Myths	Facts
Cement kilns (CK) are of no risk to people living near it	An environmental pollution study around a large industrial area in Egypt found that cement factories contributed substantially to environmental pollution. Around 2.4 million tons of cement kiln dust was released into the atmosphere per year. The data obtained indicated that the pollution was hazardous to people living in and around the area surveyed. (<i>A. Abdel-Halim et al, 2003</i>)
CK produce almost no harmful air emissions.	According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), cement kilns are the third largest source of dioxin emissions and the second largest source of mercury emissions in the United States. Mercury causes damage to the nervous system and birth defects. A study regarding <i>Mercury emissions to the atmosphere from natural and anthropogenic sources in the Mediterranean region</i> showed that the emission from cement production was one of three processes that contributed to 82% of the regional anthropogenic total. (<i>N, Pirrone et al, 2001</i>).
CK temperatures cannot change quickly,	According to the EPA, the products that do

ensuring that waste destruction is always complete.	not burn completely are released in the stack gases and are estimated to range in the thousands. For toxic chemicals, they cannot be destroyed completely. (<i>EPA, Background Document for the Development of PIC, October, 1989</i>)
Cement Kiln dust (CKD) emitted is minimal and of no risk to the workers, community and environment	<p>Cement kilns that burn hazardous waste produce up to 104% more CKD than cement kilns that do not burn hazardous waste. (<i>EPA, December 1993</i>).</p> <p>Exposure to cement dust causes interstitial lung disease, pleural thickening and chronic bronchitis (<i>Meo. S, Chest radiological findings in Pakistani cement mill workers, 2003</i>).</p> <p>There is good evidence for cement dust exposure acting as a tobacco, alcohol and asbestos independent risk factor for laryngeal carcinoma (<i>A. Dietz et al, Exposure to cement dust, related occupational groups and laryngeal cancer risk, 2004</i>).</p>
CK produce few heavy metals	Heavy metals are amongst the most relevant substances emitted during the processes of cement manufacture, especially know are the toxic effects of arsenic, cadmium, lead, mercury and thallium (<i>Schuhmacher et al, 2000</i>).

What do cement companies say?

Cement companies claim that burning hazardous waste “alternative fuels” in cement kilns (e.g. tyres) is ‘recycling’. This is not true since toxic chemicals are created and this enters our environment, food supplies and our bodies. This will cost the community a lot of money in terms of visits to doctors and buying medicine. Cement companies burn waste in their cement kilns to save on fuel costs at the expense of the surrounding community. If you put together all the ash and dirty air coming out of a cement kiln, you would find as much waste as you put into the cement kiln.

Opposition to incineration in cement kilns

Opposition to the burning of hazardous waste in cement kilns has increased as people have learnt of its dangers. In 2004, Holcim Cement in Columbia proposed to burn hazardous waste in its local plant in Nobsa, Boyaca. As a result of intense community protest, the Columbian Ministry of environment rejected Holcim’s proposal.

In the United States, hazardous waste was being burned in cement kilns for many years until they were required under regulations of 1991 to inform communities about this practice. Since then, opposition has been fierce. Other community opposition to burning hazardous waste in cement kilns were in Texas, Montana, Dundee, Mexico and Mozambique to name a few.

Alternatives

The alternative to burning hazardous waste in cement kilns is for cement companies to continue using fuel oils or a better option, natural gas, the cleanest fuel for cement production. A non-burn technology that can be used for the destruction of hazardous waste is the Gas-Phase Chemical Reduction (GPCR), which is being used in countries such as the Philippines, Australia, Japan, America and Canada. Hazardous waste is chemically reduced to other substances that are safe for reuse, e.g. methane and hydrogen chloride. These substances can be further broken down to produce other products such as hydrogen, which can be reused. The gas produced can be reused as fuel.

What can you do?

Fight against any proposal by cement companies to burn hazardous waste in cement kilns
Join community organisations which are against cement kiln incineration
Go to public meetings and speak out against cement kiln incineration
Tell your family, friends and neighbours to attend public meetings and also speak out
Teach people not to burn their rubbish

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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www.groundwork.org.za

Western Cape Anti Incineration Alliance (AIA) Alliance c/o EJNF tel: 021- 448 0144

Earthlife Africa Tel: 011-782 6602 or web www.earthlife.org.za

Global Anti-Incineration Alliance (GAIA): www.no-burn.org

Greenpeace International: www.greenpeace.org

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