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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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# **Public Information and Capacity Building on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and their Disposal**

## **Association for Community Development (ACD)**

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## 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.

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# Public Information and Capacity Building on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and their Disposal

## INTRODUCTION

A large number of industrial and non-industrial processes result in the release of POP chemicals in the environment. POPs pervade the environment through a variety of media and end up in the food chain, water, and air and into non-target species and ecological systems, which causes environmental degradation and adverse impacts on human and wildlife. The effects of POPs are threatening the well being of humans and wildlife by damaging and changing the processes of ecosystems. The most devastating effects on the health of human beings are cancer, birth defects, dysfunctional immune and reproductive systems and developmental disorders. Especially vulnerable are the foetus and infants who are exposed to POPs via the placenta, breast-feeding, and other pathways during the critical early years of their development. A dramatic growth and other human activities over the last few decades have resulted in the growth in toxic pollutants, which are posing a serious and permanent threat to human health and the environment. Efforts are underway to develop information exchange mechanism and build capacity by creating knowledge that will help in directing policy decision towards the needs of the environment, community and society.

## ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW

Various activities were taken up. These include a capacity building workshop on the issues of POPs and the Stockholm Convention; advocacy training, formation and mobilization of support group involving the youth of the locality to raise their voices regarding the issues of POPs and environment; and an awareness-raising campaign on the impact of POPs through community meeting, rally and public gathering.

The aim of these activities was to increase knowledge about the POPs issue and their impact on public health, to build the capacity of civil societies to strengthen the movement on POPs, to advocate with the government officials about the key issues related to POPs and the need for adequate legislative framework; and to strengthen the organizational capacity and conceptual clarity targeting to develop information exchange mechanism and build capacity through creating knowledge amongst the community people.

The activities were primarily targeted towards the youth, relevant government officials and agencies, community leaders, media persons, civil society and NGOs, and people at large.

### *Organizational Capacity Building*

ACD took various steps with the intention of building its capacity as well as to bring about conceptual clarity about POPs issue, this being their first engagement with the issue. Training for capacity building on POPs was conducted with 15 organizational staff people. The training

session was organized with the help of an external resources person, Dr. Choudhury Sarwer Jahan from Rajshahi University. The session was focused on the issue of POPs and initiated to take action regarding these issues at the field level with the target groups and stakeholders. The basic agenda of the session was to bring in conceptual clarity with regard to POPs and their consequences to human and wild life including the ecosystem. The introductory training apprised the staff on issues concerning POPs and their consequences. This enabled them to further discuss the issue at different levels, including community people.

### ***Capacity Building Workshop with the Civil Society***

A capacity building workshop was organized with the civil society. The community leaders, media persons and NGOs' representatives took part in the workshop. Resource persons from Rajshahi University facilitated the workshop covering POPs issues as well as the Stockholm Convention. A total of 25 persons were present in the workshop.

In the workshop the issue of POPs and its causes and consequences was discussed among the participants. The main aim of the workshop was to sensitise the participants on POPs and the Stockholm Convention, to encourage them to take action regarding these issues and to develop information exchange mechanism along with building their capacity regarding POPs issues. It is mentionable that prior to the workshop most of the participants were not aware of POPs and their impact on human life and how it affects the environment.

The participants came up with several suggestions including reaching out to the community people especially who are related in cultivation and make them aware about the ill effects of chemicals (fertilizer, pesticide and insecticide), including POPs. Equally important is to train them on the use of alternative options in cultivation to minimize the impacts. Quite evidently, at the grass root levels people are ignorant about the issues of POPs. They also emphasized on taking policy level advocacy on the issues of POPs and initiating a national policy.

### ***Advocacy Training***

Advocacy training was conducted with 20 participants representing the civil society, relevant government agencies and local elected bodies on POPs and Stockholm Convention. The aim of the advocacy training was to sensitise the participants on the issues of POP and strengthen the movement with different stakeholders including local elected agencies, journalists, social leaders, civil society and grass root people's organization. This brought the issue of POPs to the attention of members of civil society, community leaders, relevant government officials and local elected bodies. A platform has been created to raise the issues of POPs among the civil societies and creating pressure at the policy level.

### ***Formation and Mobilization of Support Group***

Support groups involving the youth of the locality were formed and mobilized to raise voice on the issues of POPs and environment. Two groups consisting of 20 members each were formed. The support group members are acting as community based educators on the POPs issue as well working as pressure groups in the area.

### ***Awareness raising campaign***

Awareness raising campaign was initiated to make common people aware about POPs issues. Besides addressing the issue of POPs, the awareness programs stressed the need for prevention by promotion of alternatives. To carry out the awareness campaign, activities such as community meetings, rally and public gatherings, and walling posters were conducted. Two community meetings organised with 170 participants each. In the community meetings the participants were made aware of POPs along with its ill consequences. Alternatives to POPs were discussed as well as a preventive approach. In addition to the community meetings, one rally and one public gathering were organised to spread the message far and wide. About 100 participants participated. Posters on the issue were printed in local language and the same disseminated largely.

### **IMPACT**

The project is seen to have brought qualitative changes in the society in general and among the stakeholders in particular. Through different activities, the level of awareness of the general public relating to POPs has risen to a great extent. The capacity of the organisation on the issue of POPs has also built considerably and brought about conceptual clarity. This is needed to take the issue further. Changes among the community members are visible. The community leaders, elite members of the society, government officials and other stakeholders are now more aware of the dangers of POPs. A platform has been created to raise the issues of POPs among the civil societies for creating pressure at the policy level. A number of youth support groups have been formed from within the community and acting as a community based change makers.

### **SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENT**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Participant</b>
1	Organizational capacity building with conceptual clarity to strengthen the POPs movement from grassroots level to policy level.	15
2	Capacity building workshop with civil society on the issues of POPs and Stockholm Convention.	25
3	Advocacy training with the members of civil society, relevant government officials and local elected bodies on POPs and Stockholm Convention	20
4	Formation and mobilization of support group among the youth of the locality to raise the voice regarding the issues of POPs.	2*20 = 40
5	Awareness raising campaign on the impact of POPs through community meeting, Rally and public gathering, and posters.	
	• Community meeting	47 + 49 = 96
	• Rally and public gathering	100
	• Awareness raising Materials	450