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International POPs Elimination Project

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

National Level POPs Awareness and Capacity Building Workshop in Bangladesh

**Environment and Social Development Organization
(ESDO)**

**Bangladesh
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.

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National Level POPs Awareness and Capacity Building Workshop in Bangladesh

BACKGROUND

The awareness level with respect to Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and their adverse affects on human health and environment is extremely low in the community. This often results in the adoption of practices such as continued use of POPs pesticides in agriculture, open burning, incineration and others that add to the POPs level in the country.

The communities based organizations (CBOs), non governmental organizations (NGOs), and other civil society organizations can play a meaningful role in creating awareness on POPs in the community. However, to be able to play that role, they themselves need to be aware of the issues and challenges. They can, in addition, play a larger role as an effective stakeholder and contribute to the implementation of the Stockholm Convention on POPs in the country. Unfortunately they are not aware of the role that the civil society can play in the whole process.

Likewise, all the stakeholders have a role to play in the process but due to lack of awareness about the issue they are not able to fulfil their roles. To deal with the issue of POPs it is necessary that all the stakeholders participate actively in the process and play the desired roles.

ACTIVITY PROPOSED

Against this background, Environment and Social Development Organisation (ESDO) planned an extensive awareness and training program for the various stakeholders including NGOs, Government and the media. The broad objective of the workshop was to create awareness among the relevant stakeholders about POPs and its impacts on human health and environment, and working towards its elimination.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

The activity was expected to have a multiplier affect towards solving the issue of POPs. The participating NGOs would further raise awareness in their respective communities. The media representatives would help spread the message among a wider section of the population through informative and educative news reporting. This would also help localize the issue of POPs. The concerned government officials would give due recognition to the roles and efforts of other stakeholders and establish inter linkages to ensure smooth implementation of POPs control and management activities by the government. All this would contribute to the effective implementation of the Stockholm Convention in the country.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The Environment and Social Development Organisation (ESDO) organized the *National Level POPs Awareness and Capacity Building Workshop on POPs* from 19-20 February 2006 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The aim of the workshop was to raise awareness and build their capacity and promote active and effective civil society participation in the preparation for implementation of the Stockholm Convention on POPs.

Workshop was attended by 26 participants (see annexure 1) including NGO representatives working on pesticides, agriculture, environment and public health issues from various parts of the country, concerned government officials, experts, journalists and others. Participants represented Dhaka and five other cities in the country. The list of invitees was carefully drawn up keeping in mind the basic objective of the workshop as well as the larger objective of International POPs Elimination Project under which the said activity was organized. A representative from IPEP South Asia Regional Hub also participated in the workshop.

Workshop was designed in such a way that technical sessions were followed by interactions and discussion to bring in clarity among the participants.

Mr. Shahajan Siraj, Honourable Minister for Jute and Textiles and Mr. Jafrul Islam Chowdhury, Honourable State Minister for Environment and Forest were the special invitees for the occasion.

The workshop broadly covered issues such as the status of POPs in Bangladesh as well as in the South Asia Region, the efforts being made and mechanism available in the country to prevent and eliminate POPs, the existing POPs hotspots, and the role of the civil society in addressing the issue. All the presentations and discussions were in Bangla.

Participants later discussed some specific issues in small groups and came up with a set of recommendations to strengthen the country effort on POPs. The topics for discussion (with the intent of developing strategy) include: management of the existing POPs in Bangladesh; Agricultural use of POPs; POPs in waste and the contaminated sites; and POPs Awareness and the role of the civil society. These discussions promote greater interaction and sharing among the stockholders.

The workshop concluded with the formation of a National level network on POPs to further strengthen the efforts to address the issue of POPs in Bangladesh. The task of coordinating the Bangladesh POPs Elimination Network or BPEN has been entrusted to ESDO. In addition, participants were motivated to join the global network on POPs, IPEN, and work collaboratively for greater impact.

Press release was issued and the event was covered in the National Daily. The workshop participants were also given information material, posters, country situation report as well as other material by IPEN and Toxics Link on POPs issue. The workshop proceedings were circulated among the participants as well as others. It is believed that this shall act as a useful reference material for other interested groups who wish to organise similar activities.

The various recommendations can be summarised as below:

- Bangladesh POPs Elimination Network (BPEN) shall act as a watchdog on POPs /PTS as well as engage in advocacy lobbying with policy makers on POPs issue.
- Collaboration and cooperation with donor governments and other organizations for mass awareness and capacity building on POPs.
- Establish a database and information centre on POPs / PTS for Bangladesh.
- Initiate a mass awareness and media campaign on POPs
- There is a need for more resources to take the issue forward.
- Need for setting up an effective monitoring mechanism for POPs / PTS.
- Availability and accessibility of country specific information and data on POPs.
- Technical support needed for mapping of POPs / PTS Hotspots
- Introduction of stringent measures that would reduce U-POPs.
- Stop burning of PVC-containing waste. Promote material substitution to reduce the use of PVC.
- Urgently ratify the Stockholm Convention on POPs and adhere to the various provisions under it.
- Further efforts to improve the UNEP Toolkit to avoid misplaced priorities by countries.
- Encourage more and more research on the issue.
- Laying down standards regulating industrial effluents and emissions to air, land and water.

OUTCOMES

The workshop can be termed a success since it did meet all the objectives. The various accomplishments can be summarized briefly as under:

- The workshop was instrumental in creating a multiplier effect towards solving the problem of POPs. Many participants are keen on taking up awareness activities in their respective areas.
- The workshop inspired the participants to join hands and work collaboratively. This took the shape of a national level network on POPs – the Bangladesh POPs Elimination Network-BPEN. This also implies an expansion of IPEN network.
- The capacities of participating NGOs have been enhanced significantly. With enhanced capacity and understanding of POPs issue, they are committed to raise awareness in their respective areas and work towards its elimination.
- Media became sensitised on the issue of POPs and extensively covered it. This has helped in localizing the issue of POPs and taking the information right to the common masses.

- The concerned government recognised the roles and efforts of other stakeholders (especially the civil society) and established inter linkages to ensure smooth implementation of POPs control and management activities by the government

ANNEXURE 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Sl. No.	Name	Designation	Organization
01.	Dr. Akter Mahal Gulfam	Project Director	Kanchan Samity, Dinajpur
02.	Nazmul Karim Sabuz	Program Officer	WBB Trust, Dhaka
03.	Abu Muzaffar Mahmud	Program Officer,	JJS Khulna
04.	Mr. Joyanta Ray	Assistant Director	TMSS, Bogra
05.	Senjuti Barua	Correspondent	News Network
06.	Ms. Dilara Begum	Assistant Coordinator	Institute for Environment and Development (IED)
07.	Arif Mohiuddin Sikder	Assistant Professor	Stamford University, Bangladesh
08.	Shahana Fardous Jhumi	Assistant Teacher	Badda Alatunnesa Higher Secondary School
09.	Singeda Khanam	Ranger	Girls Guide Association
10.	Md. Monwar Hossain	Executive Director	SAS, Borisal
11.	Altab Hossain	Executive Director	Bill-Cholon Development Project (BCDP)
12.	Mohammad Ilyas	Fisheries Biologist	CNRS
13.	Feroz Ahmmad	Assistant Program Officer	NAGORIK UDDOYG
14.	Md. Kamrul Hassan	Assistant Lecturer Dept. of Zoology	Jahangirnager University

15.	Md. Abdul Aziz	Assistant Lecturer Dept. of Zoology	Jahangirnager University
16.	M. Mashirul Haque	Project Coordinator	OVINNO, Chitagong
17.	Muhmmad Shahidul Islam	Program Officer	Forum of Environment Journalist of Bangladesh (FEJB)
18.	Dr. Md. Khabir Uddin	Associate Professor, Dept. of Environmental Science	Jahangirnager University
19.	Yeasir Arafat	Research Officer	IPSU, Ministry of Environment and Forest-MoEF
20.	Mr. Abdus Samad	Head of the Program	ASRAI, Rajshahi
21.	Rezina Sultana	Trainer	Nari Uddog Kendra
22.	Mr. Fazlul Karim	Deputy Secretary	Dhaka Chambers of Commerce
23.	Mr. Rustom Ali Khan	DCF	Department of Forest
24.	Md. Abdul Awal	Sr. Coordinator	CDS, Dhaka
25.	Mabia Begum	Project Coordinator	NKSS, Dhaka
26.	Khorshed Alam	Assistant Trainer	Press Institute of Bangladesh

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE WORKSHOP

