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International POPs Elimination Project

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

Global Week of Action on POPs in the Philippines

Eco Waste Coalition

**18-23 April 2005
Philippines**

Eco Waste Coalition

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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This report is available in the following languages: English Summary

Global Week of Action on POPs in the Philippines

With “Keep the Promise, Eliminate POPs” as a prime message, the Ecological Waste Coalition of the Philippines (EcoWaste Coalition), a participating group of the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN), organized a series of activities from 18 to 23 April 2005 to mark the Global Week of Action on POPs.

Introduction. The Government of the Philippines is one of the 98 countries that have so far ratified the Stockholm Convention, the first global legally binding treaty that seeks to control the production, use and disposal of an initial list of 12 POPs. Even before the Convention was signed in May 2001 and even before it entered into force in May 2004, the Philippine Congress was already setting its sights towards phasing out POPs. The Clean Air Act of 1999, passed by the Congress of the Philippines in May 1999, directs the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to establish an inventory of all POPs sources in the country, and to develop programs, short term and long term, for the reduction and elimination of POPs, specifically citing by-product POPs such as dioxins and furans. The same law imposes a national ban on waste incineration. By commemorating a Global Week of Action on POPs on the eve of the first Conference of Parties (COP1) of the Stockholm Convention, the civil society had the opportunity of reminding the Government and other stakeholders not to forget the promises of the POPs treaty as well as the country’s Clean Air Act.

Objectives. The events were planned and carried with these two-fold objectives in mind:

1. To push the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to turn away from processes that yield by-product POPs that both the Stockholm Convention and the Clean Air Act are seeking to minimize and ultimately eradicate.
2. To inform and generate support from various stakeholders on non-incineration processes for managing municipal discards and health care waste to protect the public health and the environment.

Participating Groups. The Global Week of Action on POPs drew the participation of EcoWaste Coalition’s network partners and friends: Archdiocese of Manila Ecology Office (AMEO), Cavite Green Coalition (CGC), Concerned Citizens Against Pollution (COCAP), Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), Greenpeace, Health Care Without Harm (HCWH), Institute for the Development of Educational and Ecological Alternatives (IDEAS), Lasallian Community Development Center (LCDC), Maskara, Mother Earth Foundation (MEF), People’s Task Force for Bases Clean Up (PTFBC), Pesticide Action Network (PAN Philippines), Sanib Lakas para sa Inang Kalikasan (SALIKA), and the Science and Technology for the People (AGHAM).

Activities Undertaken: Meeting government officials to press our case, spreading information using the radio, TV, Internet, and newspapers, educating community members and other stakeholders through various fora, an ecological clean up drive – these were the events held to build public awareness and participation on POPs and related concerns.

1. Twelve NGO representatives, led by Dr. Romy Quijano and Manny Calonzo, IPEP co-hubs in Southeast Asia, met the national focal point Ms. Angelina Brabante of the Environmental Management Bureau on **18 April 2005** to discuss the upcoming COP1, the major issues in the provisional agenda and the positions of the Government and IPEN. The Government and the NGO representatives exchanged views on key agenda items, reaching a common understanding on many of the concerns raised. The EcoWaste Coalition, GAIA, Greenpeace, and PAN Philippines arranged the fruitful meeting with the national focal point.

2. Some 50 participants, mostly from healthcare institutions, attended the forum on "Non-Incineration Medical Waste Management and the Philippine Clean Air Act of 1999" held on **19 April 2005** at the Philippine Heart Center. Visiting Filipino-American scientist Dr. Jorge Emmanuel led a sequence of speakers who talked about the various non-burn options for treating medical waste, pursuant to the incineration ban under the Clean Air Act of 1999. Hospital administrators, facility managers and environmental advocates from COCAP, GAIA, Greenpeace, MEF and the Diocese of Kalookan obtained information and guidance on various aspects of medical waste management, particularly in reducing the waste size and toxicity, and in assessing and selecting the most appropriate technology for treating the infectious portion of waste generated by hospitals and related institutions. The HCWH, EcoWaste Coalition and the Philippine Heart Center joined hands in organizing the said forum.

3. About a hundred citizens, mainly residents from two communities impacted by a dump and the other by an incinerator, gathered at the Environment Department on **21 April 2005** for a pre-Earth Day action to urge the authorities to prevent toxic pollution. With a huge IPEN banner that says "Keep the Promise, Eliminate POPs" as backdrop, artists from Masaka, a youth cultural group, dramatized the health and environmental hazards of incinerating waste before the audience, which also included officials and staff of the Department. The event saw the EcoWaste Coalition releasing the report of the Philippine egg sampling results that shows eggs collected near an incineration plant in Barangay Aguado contain alarming levels of dioxins and PCBs. Dr. Irma Makalinao of the UP National Poisons Control Center spoke about dioxins and their effects on human health. Community representatives then presented a petition to the DENR demanding the closure of the incinerator and its replacement with cleaner and safer non-burn waste treatment technology. Environmental activists stressed that the "toxic eggs" should rouse the Government to vigilantly enforcing the incineration ban, stressing that the society has the obligation to protect the egg – a basic food and a symbol of life – from chemical contamination. The EcoWaste Coalition and GAIA were the primary organizers of this event.

4. Together with Progressive Times Action Group, Tahanang Walang Hagdan and the municipal government of Cainta, Rizal, the EcoWaste Coalition joined the Earth Day Clean Up Drive held at the town's public market on **22 April 2005** that drew a thousand people. "Armed" with broomsticks, the participants paraded around the town center and then gathered at the public market for a short program. The Smokey Mountain Children's Choir - comprising of children and youth from the dump - rendered songs calling attention to our ravaged environment. Speakers, including Akbayan Citizens' Action Party Rep. Risa Baraquel, AMEO's Coordinator Lou Arsenio and EcoWaste Coalition's Chair Eileen Sison, spoke about the need for active community involvement in cleaning up our society. Mayor Mon Ilagan led the unveiling of a billboard reminding citizens of their responsibility to care for the

environment for a healthy and prosperous community. The event also saw the SMRRS and TWH selling compost, organic rice, herbal products, recycled paper bags and reusable canvass bags.

5. Representatives of the EcoWaste Coalition discussed the results of the Barangay Aguado egg sampling at two separate programs of Radio Veritas on **23 April 2005**. Lou Arsenio joined the “Mano-Mano” radio talk show in the morning, while Manny Calonzo spoke in the afternoon at the “Buhay Maralita” radio program.

6. Some 75 people coming from local government units, hospitals, non-government organizations, and people’s organizations from various parts of Cavite took part in a seminar-forum on alternative treatment technologies for medical waste held on **23 April 2005** at the De La Salle University-Dasmaringas, with Dr. Jorge Emmanuel as lead resource person. Among the topics discussed were the law and legal requirements on medical waste management and the different treatment technologies. The forum also tackled the problems with the so-called “pyrolysis” plant in Barangay Aguado, Trece Martires City, particularly the high levels of dioxins and PCBs found in eggs collected near the incinerator. Organized by the CGC, HCWH and LCDC, the forum adjourned with a shared call from government and non-government leaders for a united action against the incinerator.

Key Accomplishments

The Global Week of Action on POPs has afforded the EcoWaste Coalition and the other participating groups with a platform to discuss and articulate issues surrounding waste incineration and POPs. The events, particularly the “Keep the Promise” action generated a number of media stories on dioxins in eggs, the health and environmental impacts of burning waste, and the need for the government to enforce the incineration ban, and honor the promises of the Stockholm Convention. The *Manila Standard Today* even featured the egg results in its editorial on 25 April 2005. The campaign has prompted the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Department of Health, the Congressional Oversight Committee on the Clean Air Act, and the Office of Sen. Jamby Madrigal to plan for fact-finding visits to the hot spot. “Keep the Promise” rekindled NGO interest on POPs and chemical issues, paving the way for increased interaction between the NGOs and the national focal point, and among the NGOs as well on POPs issues and interventions.

Media Coverage

The “Keep the Promise” event held on 21 April 2005 was well covered by the local media. The egg-sampling story was reported in the news programs of Channels 2, 5 and 11, while the ecological Clean Up Drive was featured in “Magandang Umaga Bayan” of Channel 2.

Articles were also published in broadsheets and tabloids as well as in interactive news:

1. Adraneda, Katherine, “Chicken eggs from Cavite barangay have high levels of dioxin,” *Philippine Star*, 22 April 2005.
2. Araja, Rio N., “Warning: toxic eggs on breakfast table,” *Manila Standard Today*, 23 April 2005.

3. "Contaminated eggs," *Business World*, 22 April 2005
4. Reyes, Z.D., "Itlog sa Cavite namamatay," *Taliba*, 22 April 2005.
5. Rivera, Blanche S., "Dioxins found in chicken eggs near Cavite waste plant," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 22 April 2005.
6. Rivera, Blanche S., "Incinerator bumubuga ng lason – EcoWaste," *Inquirer Libre*, 22 April 2005.
7. Torres, Jose Jr., "Toxic eggs, anyone? *abs-cbnnews.com*, 22 April 2005
8. "Egg yuck," Editorial, *Manila Standard Today*, 25 April 2005

The "toxic eggs" press release has been uploaded to the GAIA website (www.no-burn.org) and the IPEP website (www.oztoxics.org/ipepweb).

Journalists were provided with kits containing the following papers: press release in English and Tagalog, summary of the egg sampling results, "Keep the Promise" letter to Sec. Defensor, POPs language.

Follow Up Action

- 22 April 2005 Meeting with the staff of Sen. Jamby Madrigal
- 23 April 2005 EcoWaste Coalition wrote to the Department of Health requesting the agency to send a fact-finding mission to address the health concerns of Barangay Aguado residents.
- 25 April 2005 CGC Strategy Planning
- 25 April 2005 Submission of proposed government interventions at COP1
- 26 April 2005 Planned visit to Barangay Aguado by Sen. Jamby Madrigal and DENR
- 30 April 2005 CGC Follow-up radio discussion on toxic eggs
- 12 May 2005 Post-COP1 meeting with the national focal point
- 12 May 2005 NGO meeting on the non-combustion demonstration project for PCBs destruction
- 12 May 2005
- or
- 19 May 2005 Visit to Barangay Aguado by the Congressional Oversight Committee on the Clean Air Act

Concerned faculty members of De La Salle-Dasmariñas expressed interest in collecting supplementary data from industry and other sources to strengthen our case against the medical waste incinerator in Barangay Aguado.