

Country paper on Chemicals Management in Cambodia

**by Phet Pichhara, Chief Office, Office of Technology Research and
Environmental Management, Department of Environmental Pollution Control,
Ministry of Environment**

Cambodia is a least developed country and its economy is depending on mainly agriculture, which is employed more than 80% of total population. The current development of the country is agriculture, small and medium industries (export of garment), construction, and tourist sector. In order to promote social development, Cambodia has significant sectoral economic improvement including agriculture, industry, construction and health. These sectors development activities have demanded high volume of chemicals uses, particularly in the last 10 years. All chemical substances imported have been distributed to different places and different sectoral users. Therefore, the import of chemicals, and the data and information concerning its use, have been managed at different institutions. Cambodia has no centralized source for chemicals data and information, and currently lacks a national document. The lack of information and data collection has created problems for chemical management in Cambodia, particularly in ensuring technical management to protect public health and maintain a safe environment.

For management purposes, Cambodia paid great attention to permission processes for the import and use of chemicals through the regulation, which focus on the management of chemical substances such as chemicals fertilizers and pesticides, chemicals raw material for industrial production, narcotics, pharmaceutical products, cosmetic, etc. The government had assigned different professional ministries to undertake safe and sound management of those chemicals through its whole lifecycle, i.e. import, trafficking, distribution, stockpile, use and dispose of.

Cambodia has adequate implementation mechanisms among 7 main ministries for managing chemicals with the role and responsibility determined by the governmental ordinance (sub-decree) including: Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries MAFF), Ministry of Commerce (Department of CAMCONTROL), Ministry of Economic and Finance (Office of Customs and Excise), Ministry of Environment (MOE), Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy (MIME), Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Interior (National Authority for Controlling Drugs). Related to managing chemicals, the Royal Government of Cambodia has established three inter-ministerial committees for facilitating and assisting the line ministries. These are the:

1. Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Management of Quality and Safety of Products and Services.
2. Inter-Ministerial Technical Committee for Industrial Standard.
3. Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee In charge of Facilitation and Implementation of the Basel, Vienna, and Stockholm Conventions.

The above inter-ministerial committees have the role to develop and propose national policy and facilitate the enforcement and implementation of the international conventions and protocols related to chemicals management. In practice, these roles and responsibilities contain some gaps, such as a lack of an institutional capacity, human resource, and facility for chemicals analyzing in particular caused very limited data and information reliable.

Of the above governmental institutions, the management of chemicals has involved the participation of civil organizations such as the private sector, NGOs, research groups and other national institutes. Stakeholder groups actively support national efforts to manage chemicals, and the aims to improve the sectors' environmental performance in the safe use and disposal of chemicals to protect people's health and the environment. However, stakeholder participation is limited and focused mainly on education and information dissemination.

Concerning safe and sound management of chemicals, Cambodia has facing both opportunities and challenges are the following:

Opportunities:

- › Cambodia had ratified and signed many international conventions related to environment and chemicals concerns, which **those conventions fulfill the limited national legal instruments**. For in stance, Cambodia does not have any specific legal instrument for managing persistent organic pollutants (POPs), but the Stockholm Convention on POPs help Cambodia to address these substances,
- › The establishment and use of **inter-ministerial coordinating committee(s)** is a favorite option for responding to any cross-cutting management issues, i.e. sound management of chemicals. The inter-ministerial coordinating committees play important role in development and proposing national policy and facilitating the enforcement and implementation of the national laws/regulations and international conventions and protocols related to chemicals management,
- › **Government counterparts** are the need for the implementation of sound chemicals management as they do important role in sharing information and data collection, **to be**

representative(s) of their own institutions, and to be a mediator for solving any problem arise from miscommunication between institutions or other related activities,

Challenges

- › **Limited resources, basically financial support.** As economic in transition, the government unable to provide enough budget necessarily for managing chemicals with safe and sound environment through their lifecycle since import, transport, distribute, use and dispose of such chemicals. Beside this there is **no sustainable funding mechanism** for supporting the implementation of sound chemicals management.
- › **Low income** (no pay no cure). Government counterparts are the key players in project coordination and implementation. Due to the negligence of data and information recording, professional officers are the bank of information and knowledge. However, low income of professional officers leads them to not so active in their professional work and they are looking for other alternative income to support their daily life. To overcome this problem, supplementary supports are very needs to encourage counterparts to work more active and paid high attention on their assignment work. For instance, supplementary supports for governmental counterparts encourage them to dig for information from individual professional officer.
- › **Capacity building.** Science and technology are moving very fast (new chemicals introduced to the world markets), causes least developed countries unable to provide and strengthen the capacity of officers on time. Some information about the chemicals impact on human health that was concerned by developed countries within decade(s) ago just introduced to least developed countries like Cambodia, i.e. POPs. In this regards, it is a key factor that affect the effectiveness sound management of chemicals.
- › **Cross-cutting issue.** As limited operational budget lead to most professional institutions willing to declare that any cross-cutting issues does not under their duties even such issues has much involved with. However, when there is funding available for operational activities, there are many professional institutions wish to declare that those cross-cutting issues are under their duties, even it is slightly related to their main work, actually.

In conclusion, the effective project coordination in sound management of chemicals are involved in sustainable operation budget, the commitment of policy makers and professional institutions, the supplementary support for counterparts to enable them to pay high attention on their duties, and the maximum use national consultants with somehow assistance from international experts.