

**Thematic Workshop on Governance, Civil Society Participation and
Strengthening Partnerships for Chemicals and Waste Management and
SAICM Implementation**

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Intro: "Filipinos use pesticides ten times more than necessary", said an alarmed regional director of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). The country is poisoning the earth with pesticide overdose said a special report. The Philippines has 69 pesticide compounds with over 400 brand names. Under the WHO and Fertilizer and Pesticides Authority (FPA) standards, 10 of these fall under Category I (extremely hazardous), 24 are in Category II (moderately hazardous), 7 in Category III (slightly hazardous) and 28 are in Category IV (least hazardous).

At least five of the Dirty Dozen, the world's deadliest pesticides have not been banned in the country. These extremely dangerous pest killers, parathion, paraquat, Chlordane, Lindane and PCP are allowed for restricted use.

Controlling 90 percent of the distribution and marketing of pesticides is a group of 20 firms under the Agricultural Pesticide Institute (APIP). Of the 20, eight are owned by Europeans, eight by Americans and the remaining four by Filipinos. Most of the firms belong to the top 1000 corporations in the country, some topping world's lists too.

With this grim scenario, the Associated Labor Unions-Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (ALU-TUCP) one of the biggest affiliate labor organizations of the TUCP, with different labor federations under its fold representing thousand of workers throughout the country has been helping trade union members through information, communication, education (ICE) campaign on the effects of hazardous chemicals which pose grave and long-term harm to life and the environment targeting agricultural workers and those working in the leather and garments factories.

Even before the Stockholm Convention took effect and become legally binding instrument to eliminate the use of the 12 persistent organic pollutants (the so-called dirty dozen chemicals) and to establish a framework for eliminating others in the future, the ALU-TUCP has been implementing local and regional initiatives since the early 90's, such as conducting **Trainors' Training Workshop "On Health And Ecological Problems Caused By The Use Of Chemical Pesticides and Alternative Pest Control Methods"** and formulating the **"Trade Union Plan of Action Concerning the Use of Chemical Pesticides"**.

Likewise, trade union members are encouraged to participate on seminars and fora on the fight and safe elimination of these pollutants. Moreover, media campaign by the trade union was also adopted such as **“Make Working Environment Safe for Agricultural Workers”** and slides showing presentation on **“The Pestilence of Hazardous and Toxic Substances**, a presentation prepared by the FES and IFPAAW.

Our support for the Stockholm Convention is consistent with the mandate of our organization to promote the highest standards of work site’s safety, health and productivity, and freedom from environmental hazards for the country’s workers and industries.

It must be noted that before problems affecting the health or life of a worker was labeled as occupational hazards. The world of work then was narrowly viewed as separate from what is perceived as the natural environment. While some distinctions may be established between occupational and environmental issues, the fundamental similarities between the two should prove to be more compelling. Experiences have shown that the effects of occupational dangers cannot be confined within the premises of the workplace.

On the other hand, the struggle for safe and decent workplaces cannot be segregated from the fight to protect the environment. The fact that many POPs exist at the workplace such as PCBs, HCB, chlorinated pesticides and others due to the absence of solutions for information sharing, training, substitution of materials and the institutionalization of techniques and practices that involve workers.

The trade union agenda is to strengthen the integration of worker issues and to promote just transition mechanisms in the phasing out of these chemicals if we are to pursue an effective implementation of the Stockholm Convention. Moreover, the trade union has been tracking the POPs issue for the OSHE Global Union’s Working Party. They have worked towards ensuring the optimum protection of both environment and social interests, with particular focus on occupational health perspective and promoting prevention of risks at the workplace. The safe elimination of these pollutants at source will not only protect the workers’ health but also further avoid releases of hazardous chemicals to the environment.

Predicated on the above-mentioned facts and circumstances, allow me to answer some key questions as stipulated in the program.

1) What are examples (or models) to facilitate effective inter-ministerial coordination for sound chemicals management and what are strengths and weaknesses of different approaches?

Presently, there are several multilateral agreements related to chemicals in force such as the ILO Convention 170, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, the Montreal Protocol to the Vienna Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention etc. And to facilitate effective enforcement it is imperative to continue develop tools and methodologies for chemical testing, assessment and management for labeling and classification of chemicals. The OECD Test Guidelines and The Globally Harmonized System develop jointly by the UN and the OECD is a good starting point.

With the recent program implemented by the EU, UN and OECD strengthening a new chemical policy on registration, evaluation and authorization of chemicals to manage chemicals risks more stringent and more efficient is a positive response in assessing chemical risks in taking preventive measures and seeking elimination and banning of some of the most toxic chemicals known to man.

With regards to its strengths and weaknesses as far as implementation are concerned , it should be noted that global production of chemicals mostly from multinational firms are equipped with well-oiled marketing and advertising machineries, many of the firms wake up employers, farmers and housewives with ads about their wares. The shift now in the global production of chemicals is from developed to developing countries.

2) What are practical lessons learned involving industry in addressing important questions of chemicals management and what are opportunities and challenges for engaging industry in partnership projects.

The chemical industry is increasingly globalized and new countries are becoming major producers for the world. The business is highly research intensive and an ever increasing number of new substances are entering the market. While developed countries have difficulties in keeping track of and controlling unwanted effects of new and old substances the situation in developing countries are becoming increasingly precarious.

The Philippines has already been working against the POPs. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Environmental Management Bureau is the country's lead agency in the handling of matters pertaining to industrial chemicals and its unintended byproducts as mandated under Republic Act 6969, otherwise known as the Toxic Substances, Hazardous and Nuclear Waste Act. Likewise, R.A. 8749, otherwise known as the Clean Air Act of 1999, the DENR is already addressing the issue of POPs.

The EMB, following the mandate of the Act, is already preparing an inventory of all sources of POPs in the country with the participation of the stakeholders, and will outline a national program for their reduction and elimination.

3) What is the role of public interest and labor organizations in chemicals management and how can potential capacity constraints of relevant groups be addressed.

Please refer to the trade union agenda statement as stated above. Moreover, management of chemical risks is internationally one of the high priority issues in programs on environmental protection as well as programs on public health and workers protection. And in the Philippines, among the heavy users of POPs are workers in the agriculture, health and housing sectors.

4) And, what specific chemicals management topics which would benefit from a partnership approach involving government, industry and public interest and labor organizations?

Among the possible topics here are the following, to wit: a) Global Actions for the Sound Management of Chemicals; b) Strategic Approach to International Chemical Management; c) Health Effects of Pesticide Use in Southeast Asia and Possible Solutions; d) National Policies for Improved Management of Agricultural Chemicals; e) Pesticide Action Network for Asia and the Pacific; f) Alternatives and Actions for Mitigation; g) Role of Governments in Regulating Use of Chemicals.

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