

Safe Water for Africa Community Initiative, Written Contribution

Micheal ALE, President, SWACI

Addressing the challenges for sound chemical management at the National level in a practical way will have no significant effect without the involvement of all stakeholders in chemical management especially the Civil Society. At all level and from the past research, it is pertinent to say that success is far reach in any programme without effective communication and sensitization campaign on the change of habit, which is normally carried out by the Civil Society and the Local NGO. The Major themes and issues to be address by the Workshop did not reflect major topic of the conference by only focusing on one aspect which is SAICM Implementation. Waste Management is not stressed in the themes of the workshop or may be it is going to be co-opted into the National SAICM Implementation strategy?

Civil Society has a great role to play in all the 3 themes and for effective take off the SAICM in the regions from September. Basically it is difficult implementing a project in Africa except enough budget is given to communication because the people from the developing countries have an attitude problem in the sense that convincing anybody from that end to change his/her behavior is a big problem because of habitual adaptation and the religious believe what ever happen is from God forgetting that some death can be averted.

First of all, in African continents, Poverty is the order of the day and the need to get a good job to satisfy the family's need I not an easy thing to come by, so any option of job whether safe or not is acceptable to any average African, because of their level of Education which constrain them to that kind of job. Awareness campaign on the effect of the chemical and the need to promulgate a decree/law guiding the company involved to provide necessary protective covering in all parts of the body to the staff involve in the disposition of his duty is necessary.

SAICM Implementation in African countries must be made compulsory to have the inclusion of Civil Society in the execution of their activities and not to just include the civil society in the giving of the fund, but, in the full participation in the program. Civil Society must be given a critical role of establishing a concrete program at all local level in line with the SAICM Implementation to figure out the best practices on the issue of carrying out duties.

SAICM Implementation is a separate program, and should not be merged with any existing program in any dept but must have a different committee for its implementation since there is a separate target for the implementation. Government in each country must be empowered in the implementation of the program and must be given a strong backing in instituting it into the countries law for effective governance and they in turn should empower citizen especially Women who suffer the chores of chemical pollution in their Water sources and other means.

Since Industries are the major targets in this program and few other companies especially on the issue of Waste Management, every country should have a body in charge of the regulation of their product and the effective monitoring of waste must be made compulsory for the industries and company concerned so as the water source and land are not contaminated as a result of the after effect of the discharge of their waste through percolation and infiltration which pollutes the well and the borehole concern. An example is not far fetched from the activities of the Artesian in the mining of Gold in Nigeria thereby causing danger into their life by allowing Mercury to infiltrate into the underground. Another is the braking of the pipeline and the discharge of Organic Waste product in the Niger Delta area Nigeria where most of the aqua life have been affected by the spillages and the dumping of the Hazardous

waste. The most recent example is the opening of can of an expired chlorine in an area in Oyo State Nigeria recently which was contracted to a contractor in the Ministry to discharge but unknowingly for him he dump it within the city believing that it is just an expire chemical and that it will just mix with the soil. This act caused some people in the area to start vomiting when the can of the expired Chlorine from the State water works was let out and it brought out smoke which makes the whole of the trees around the area to dry up immediately. The effect of the expired chlorine caused itching on the body for any body passing by the dumps but have these facts.

1. The communities where the expired chlorine was dumped raised an alarm of their health and the journalists came to report the case to the entire country.
2. The Journalists who visited the site reported the case to be that of toxic waste while the State Government debunks the fact to be a toxic waste but expired chlorine? Which in any way is not toxic to the Government authority just to reduce the up heaved tension in the community that they are safe.
3. Several visits were made to the site by different ministry and the dump was immediately removed to an unknown destination.

SOLUTION

During the Seventh global civil society meeting and statement to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environmental Program (UNEP) and the Ninth special session of its Governing Council / Global Ministerial Environmental Forum in Dubai which I attended on behalf of SWACI, with over 300 Non-governmental organization and other civil representatives met in six consultative meetings worldwide to provide input to the statement As Agenda 21 states

..... “The major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries, which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating poverty and imbalances.”

Effective communication on the management of chemical is of vital importance to the masses and this must stress down to those that are caused naturally example is that of boreholes that are not tested for the chemical composition over years but have different trace elements and infiltrated hazardous chemical through a nearby companies, In this case constant testing of Water source is necessary by the citizen concern, better still the SAICM regional office can carry out a baseline survey on all the water source in the respective countries .

Handling of chemical must be carried out by experts well trained for that issue.

Civil society must constantly be empowered on the need to carry out research, training, awareness campaign, educating the masses and capacity building on Chemical & Waste Management, which includes disposal.

REMINDER

Global Civil society stand which SWACI participated on chemical management includes:

Chemical offer many social benefits, but the improper or inadequate management of chemicals including substances in products and waste and from accident and releases, threatens the human right to life, health and well being of all people, especially children, vulnerable population and future generation. Currently, decision on production or authorization of chemicals are too often, based on an evaluation of chemical effects on

healthy adults, when they should instead be directed to protecting the most sensitive groups, particularly developing children.

SAICM is the action plan to achieve the goal that by 2020 chemicals are used and produced in a way that lead to the minimization of significant adverse on human health and the environment. SAICM is the crucial part of the global effort to protect human health and the environment and promote sustainable development. While the civil society including the NGO have been supportive of the SAICM process, Government are urged to address its many GAPS and DEFICIENCIES, including those related to Pharmaceuticals, food additives and radio actives chemicals

The SAICM represents a political, moral and ethnical commitment to work towards achieving the 2020 goals. And government should promptly adopt SAICM. Civil society support SAICM and the concept that it will lead to the adoption of a legally binding international instrument:

Implementation of SAICM must includes but not limited to, the measure to phase out and require safer substitute and solution when a chemical causes significant adverse effects to human health or the environment under its ordinary condition of production, use or disposal in a country or region.

The implementation of SAICM must embrace core principles and approaches of Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration and other relevant international agreements, including the precautionary principle, liability and compensation, public participation, comprehensive right –to – know legislation; the polluter- pays principle, and others.

Additionally, the principle of “no data, no market” should be adopted and implemented in all countries. SAICM should provide guidance on how these principles and approaches can be applied to sound chemical management.

Institutional arrangement for implementation of SAICM must be dynamic, fully participatory, multi- stakeholder. They should build upon the participatory practices of the intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS), but they should provide more authority, be better integrated into the United Nation system and create a secretariat with sufficiently robust resources and mandate to ensure successful implementation.

SAICM can succeed only if it includes a financial mechanism that provides substantial new and additional funds to developing countries and countries with economies in transition and only if such funds are used effectively.

Donor countries and donor agencies should be encouraged to provide new and additional financial and technical assistance that enables developing countries with transitional economies to implement fully all their commitments under international chemicals and wastes agreements and initiatives.