

Challenges in management of chemicals in low developing countries: The role of civil society and interest groups

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The world has recognized the sound management of chemicals is essential to sustainable development and that it is a fundamental underpinning of human health, safety and environmental protection in achieving success in many other chapters of agenda 21 and millenium development goals. Environment pollution has in a few decades become one of the major shaping the future of modern technological civilization; because of the nature and extent of its impact, chemical pollution of all land and sea environments threatens not only human health but also the sustainability of the whole biosphere (Ramade. F. 1992).

Chemicals especially pesticides occupy top ranking among chemical pollutants, since he use of pesticides has expanded considerably not only in developed countries but also in low developing countries. This is quite helpful because it has enabled productivity to be increased in agriculture and livestock raising but these pesticides and chemicals in general have caused serious pollution problems because of their persistence and toxicity. Large scale of pesticides has had irreversible consequences both on the environment and on human surroundings. These consequences have been expressed in terms of health problems.

Recognizing that the governments alone can not assure the sound management of chemicals, there is therefore a critical role for Civil Society Organizations, Voluntary Industry efforts of responsible care and product stewardships, advocacy and community efforts by worker and public interest and specialized work of intergovernmental and scientific organizations to take up this challenge. The greatest achievement will come when all stakeholders work together.

For many chemicals, general knowledge of their property and effects on human being and environment may not be complete. Effective systems should therefore be identified and established for obtaining essential information on the chemicals of concern.

Civil Society Organization, Public Interest and intergovernmental can take up the challenge of;

Appropriate training and education at various levels. These can play an important part in creating awareness on chemical handling and accident prevention. Workers who are aware of potential risks to life and health are more likely to be safety conscious. The implication for those in health field are that they need to consider their role, not only in training their personnel but also in contributing to the training of others. These trainings should be at various levels including;

Community: this is the people living in the vicinity of chemical installation and other work places where chemical are handled. It is communities right to know about the risks involved with chemicals.

Workers: Workers have the right to be educated regarding potential hazards of chemicals, as well as regarding appropriate preventive measures. The training and education of workers should be provided on different levels and using different materials.

Medical personnel and other health profession: Concepts of mass casualty management and specific information on chemical emergencies should be part of the training of physicians, nurses and paramedics from the earliest stages.

Another role can be advocacy: Many countries especially the low developing countries are still in the process of National implementation plans. There is need to advocate for all stakeholders' participation and also to advocate for sound chemical management and elimination of persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

Dissemination of information and materials: The CSOs can greatly contribute in disseminating relevant information especially to grass roots

Challenges in ensuring sustainable chemical management in LDCs

- ◆ Limited capacities and resources of large number of countries especially in low developing countries.
- ◆ Absence of facilities for environmental and human health monitoring and analytical capacity.
- ◆ Lack of targeted research
- ◆ Inadequate information on chemical related issues especially in low developing countries.
- ◆ Lack of National Inventories on potential sources of generation and releases of persistent organic pollutants (POPs).
- ◆ The information available is in scientific language, which makes it difficult for local people to interpret the information especially the precautions on the labels.
- ◆ Illegal trade in chemicals
- ◆ Poor enforcement of existing laws and policies
- ◆ Corruption

Recommendations

The amounts and types of chemicals and pesticides being used is growing year by year due to the increased demand especially in agriculture and health sector, this therefore calls for collaborative chemical management. Obligations under the convention are not a monopoly to government alone but a responsibility for all.

Need to create awareness on chemical related issues at various levels. The existing inventories is not satisfactory, incomplete, outdated and lack of uniform structures especially

in low developing countries. There is need to carry out an inventory on type of chemicals, and activities that release POPs in countries.

Conclusion.

Management of chemicals and POPs is not a sole responsibility of governments. All stakeholders like Civil Society Organization, interest groups, and industries should work together and measure should be taken to reduce damage to environment and to minimize human exposure to harmful chemicals. Research and inventories is also necessary in order to come up with specific data on chemicals in each country. Human health and prosperity depend on the health and integrity of the whole environment in which man lives. The wide range of human activities, alongside the population explosion and demands calls for a precedent investment in ensuring sound chemical management and promotion of environmental health. A polluted environment is costly both in terms of health and socio-economics.

References:

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