

The Realism of Implementing a Sound Chemicals Management Programme in Developing Countries

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The purpose of this paper is to outline the critical organizational challenges of implementing effective systems of chemicals' management in Less Developed Countries (LDCs). The paper is concerned with three kinds of interrelated challenges that may hamper the development of an effective governance framework for chemicals management and SAICM implementation especially in developing countries and countries in transition. These are:

- The logic of market economics;
- The poverty aspect;
- The social context

Logic of Market Economics

Chemical pollution is essentially an aspect of the problem of externalities in economic theory and ought to be treated as such in the course of searching for appropriate solutions.

Furthermore, the low levels of organizational capacity in (LDCs) translate to challenges in administrative competence, financial resources, technological resources, monitoring ability and other such key requirements for a major social development programme such as that of effective chemicals' management.

Poverty

An effective chemicals' management system has to take into account the underlying conditions of poverty such as psychological dispositions, belief systems, power relations and other such conditions that systematically undermine a people's ability for positive coordinated action. This is because effective chemicals' management requires sustained coordinated effort on the part of all sectors of society, including the general public.

The Social Context

In respect of individuals' personal actions, effective chemicals' management requires not only a fair grasp of ecological principles, but also an appreciation of the practical significance of one's own actions in a broad social context. This is a major challenge for people with a poor comprehension of their power to influence their circumstances.

In addition, there is the challenge of priorities in situations where hunger, debilitating disease and socio-economic dislocation have a powerful immediacy. In such situations, selling a message like that of sound chemicals management to the general public requires special effort.

Proposed Solutions

Consequently, the need for approaching any major chemicals' management effort in the context of an overall sustainable development strategy cannot be over-emphasized. An effective Chemicals' management system should have three main components:

- Targeted action on the part of government, through taxation policies, to make the market cost of potential pollutants reflective of their real costs to society;
- Industries including SMEs to critically consider the corporate/social responsibility aspect of their activities;
- Make community mobilization a key focus of the chemicals' management programme, in order to ensure proper grassroots participation as part of the effort to overcome the challenges of poor social organization;
- Introduce motivational training as part of the community mobilization programme in order to change attitudes and assist participants to appreciate their power to transform their circumstances.

Elaborate ways to achieve these aspirations will be expressed in the presentation.