

JOIN NOW THE NEW COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ON CHEMICALS AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Organized by the SAICM Secretariat and the University of Cape Town



Issue: 1 of 2020

Discussion date: 26th August 2020

Discussion 1 Digest

Topic of Discussion: Gender and Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste: Gender and the SAICM Emerging Policy Issues

The aim of this discussion was to identify and share experiences about gender inequalities related to chemicals and waste management, their linkages to the SDGs, and identify steps that can be taken by different stakeholders to address these. A special focus was on the SAICM Emerging Policy Issues and Issues of Concern, and actions needed to address gender inequalities in the SAICM and policy context.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER

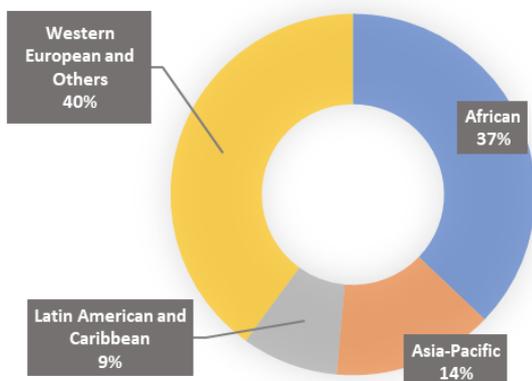


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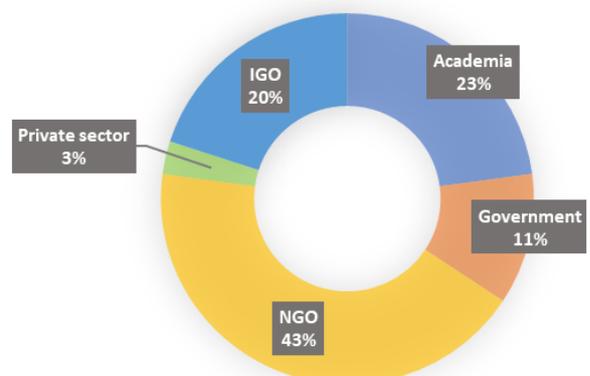
DISCUSSION 1 ATTENDANCE BREAKDOWN

TOTAL ATTENDEES FOR DISCUSSION 1: 35

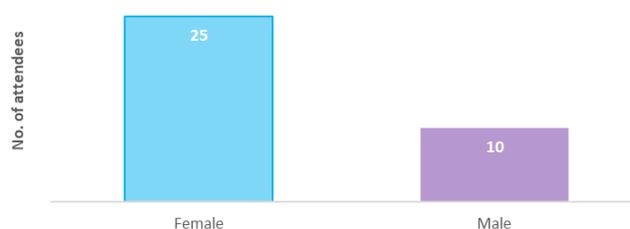
Regional representation



Sector representation



Gender representation



Key:
 IGO – Intergovernmental organisation
 NGO – Non-governmental organisation

Chemicals and SDGs Community of Practice Discussion 1

Summary and looking ahead

1. Participants expressed that while gender equality and participation in decision making processes seems to be more representative than before, there is still room for improvement. Some countries have successfully implemented gender equality principles in legislation, but others are still struggling to get these kinds of considerations included in legislation. It was expressed that ideologies have begun to change but more visible action and policies are needed nationally and internationally around gender and chemicals and waste management.
2. In terms of gender inequality and exposure to chemicals and waste, it appears that level of exposure in some countries can be linked back to gender roles of men and women in these countries (i.e. types of jobs or duties performed by men and women based on their genders). Men are more likely to work in hard labour jobs that expose them to chemicals, while women may perform lighter labour duties. Despite this, it was noted women's chemical exposures are potentially as high or higher as men due to women's work and home obligations (e.g., cleaning men's chemical exposed PPE at home, using hazardous chemicals for domestic work). Also, it was highlighted that the work conducted by women such as disassembling electronic waste or handling crops sprayed with pesticides sometimes constitute a source of higher exposure than the manual labour. There was a general expression of the need for more research and data linked to gendered exposures to chemicals and waste.
3. Participants' felt that increased awareness raising around gender and chemicals would benefit this global, national, and local discussion. In addition to this, suggestions of national and regional development of a gender and chemicals strategy to support implementation of laws and legislation that explicitly refer to gender equality would promote addressing gender inequalities on a more local level.

Inputs to the discussion from participants:

Q1. In the context of chemicals and waste, what is your experience with gender equality when it comes to participation in decision-making on a local, national, or global level? Please provide examples and where possible please state which SAICM Emerging Policy Issue or Issues of Concern and 2030 SDG goal this experience relates to.

BANGLADESH (Environment and Social Development Organisation – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A strong gender equality concept currently exists but does not yet relate back to chemicals and waste.
BRAZIL (VIZY – Private Sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender is not often on the agenda of multinational companies.
FINLAND (Finish Institute for Health and Welfare – Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decision-making related to chemicals and waste at global level involves selection processes based on the expertise of an individual. - Not all genders rise to that level, due to inequality faced by many at the local or national level due to gender inequality. - This is significant in under-developed and developing nations.
GERMANY (MSP Institute – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Federal Ministry for the Environment: Unit for diversity and equal opportunities officer, intern plan for gender equality and women in leadership positions (due to Federal Equality Act) and a new unit on gender aspects of environmental policy. - Environmental Agency (including SAICM national focal point): Equal opportunities officer, intern plan for gender equality and women in leadership positions (due to Federal Equality Act), one gender mainstreaming expert. - In chemicals units' women are in leadership positions, which increases the proportion of women and gender issue in chemical policies gains more attention. - In contrast to other areas like climate change the proportion of women in decision-making is a little bit better, but e.g. indigenous women are very much underrepresented in the SAICM process.
IRAN (University of Tehran – Academia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some academic papers addressing these issues but nothing in decision and policy making yet. - Better consideration of gender equality at a global level in developed countries but not in many developing countries.
KENYA (Academia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislation about gender equality currently in place. - On an individual perspective level many people are still caught up in the scenarios of gender inequality at local level as they still define roles based on gender. - Majority of women and children are disadvantaged in terms of chemical and hazardous waste exposure.

MEXICO (SEMARNAT – Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hard work put into implementation of gender equity policies, particularly by the National Institute of Women, to strengthen its participation in 50% of federal and local government spaces, in the executive, legislative and judicial branches.
NIGERIA (Independent National Electoral Commission Staff Clinic – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness on gender equality is on the rise especially through NGO programs - No legislation focusing on gender and chemicals.
OECD - IGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When considering international organisations and the development of technical tools for chemical safety, there is good balance, both in attendance of meetings and contributions to discussions. - Biological sex is considered as part of international test methods for determining properties of chemicals. - Differences in sexes, different physiological differences are always investigated. - As part of tools developed for exposure assessment, all possible use cases (independent of gender behaviour) are always investigated. - Things are less clear for vulnerable populations, e.g. children, where more efforts are needed to get the exposure assessment right.
SOUTH AFRICA (Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries – Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Male-bias still exists when it comes to chemicals and waste management. - Legislation does not consider genders separately but rather considers them together. - Female issues are not prioritized under the National Environmental Management: Waste Act. Vulnerable persons are referred to but no stipulation as to who these persons are. The Constitution in SA refers to vulnerable persons as people living with disabilities, youth, and women. - Current legislation does not include the transgender community.
UGANDA (Association of Uganda Professional Women in Agriculture and Environment – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good representation in decision-making - More data is needed on gender and chemicals.

Throughout the discussion, informal polls were conducted to help encourage discussion among the participants. They do not provide any representative data.

Poll 1 Results (N=19)

Do you have a national program to implement the SDGs in your country?



Poll 2 Results (N=20)

Have you been engaged in work on the SDGs and/or the SAICM beyond 2020 process?

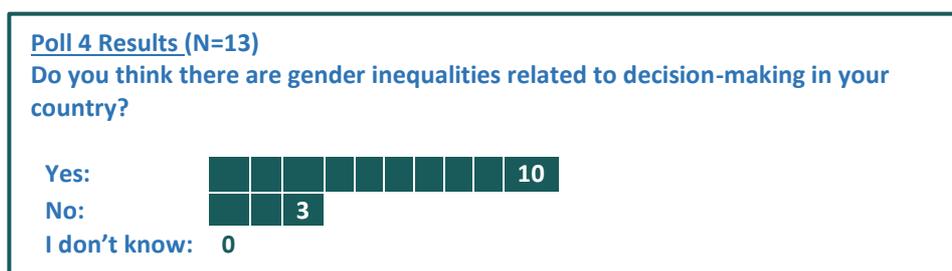
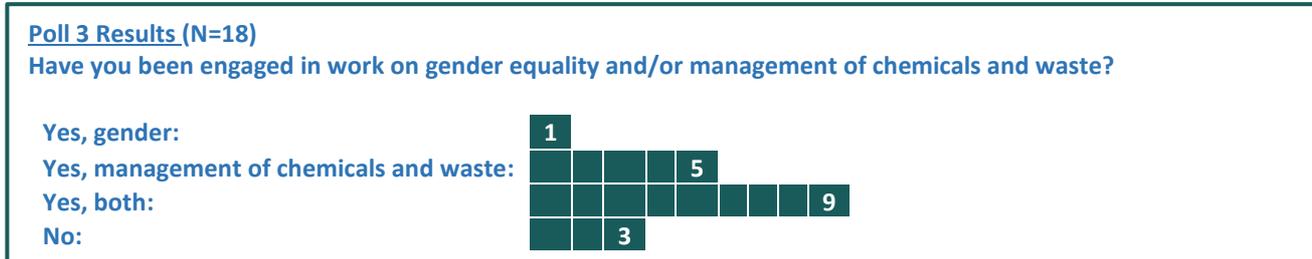


Q2. Do you think there are gender inequalities when it comes to exposure to chemicals and waste? If so, could you share examples of what you have experienced or learned about? If possible, please also state the SAICM Emerging Policy Issue or Issues of Concern and 2030 SDG goal your examples link/relate to.

AUSTRALIA (Monash University – Academia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Industries with a higher and more dangerous exposure to chemicals have a lower percentage of women.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing: 30.1% - Manufacturing: 29.5% - Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services: 23.8% - Transport, Postal and Warehousing: 20.9% - Mining: 16.3% - Construction: 12.0% - Health care and education have the highest percentage of women (73%+). - The anti-discrimination laws for employment in general are strict.
BANGLADESH (Environment and Social Development Organisation – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are inequalities in certain stages, such as taking decisions in for burning out waste (plastic waste) where men are dominating.
BRAZIL (VIZY – Private Sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perception is that there may be gender inequalities in the informal recycling business in Brazil, where there are many women working in the handling and separation phase without personal protective equipment. - There is, however, a lack of data to back this up.
CAMEROON (Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The issue of gender equality is still problematic due to the non-involvement of women in the process, also the weakness of the State to promote this. - Women are vulnerable and bigger victims of the effects linked to dangerous chemicals in the sense that they are those who handle chemicals daily in households, during rural work, in food consumption, etc.
FINLAND (Finish Institute for Health and Welfare – Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not much research related to gender and exposure but biological sex and chemical exposure is well studied. - It can be seen that the females, due to their physiological making and social level, are more exposed to chemicals in developing countries. - In Nordic countries plenty research data is available which focuses on exposure and impact of chemicals on females but still there is lack of data from more exposed populations.
GERMANY (MSP Institute – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender roles and division of labour result in men more directly exposed, because they more often perform the risky tasks - Women exposure is usually more long-term. - Effects on women are often underdiagnosed. - Children get exposed by chemicals because of double-burden of women: working and child-caring.
IRAN (University of Tehran – Academia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes, for many years I was observing female rice paddy workers in the Northern Provinces of Iran with more exposure to pesticides. - These females also had less access to food materials/ food diversity and generally food security (as a general global issue) that this in term were decreasing their bodies detoxification systems. - More exposure of females to home cleaning compounds (biocides).
ISC3 – NGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Waste pickers and gold mines workers are in many countries female workers
ITALY (Centre for Environmental Justice – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes, there is a gender inequality in exposure but most of the times this happens in developing countries. - Work that is light (that needs less physical strength) has higher risk of exposure and are often done by females. - Example: recycling lead-acid batteries - almost none of these women knows its risk or health effects of this exposure.
KENYA (Academia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Levels and duration of exposure depends on gender roles and biological sex. - Women in sub Saharan Africa take on roles like farming in rural areas and end up using more pesticides and therefore more exposed. - Considering biological sex, women, when exposed, may experience adverse effects that can be passed on to their infants and future generations.
MEXICO (SEMARNAT – Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is inequity in waste management in general, since there is a high percentage of informality in this sector, men generally work in collection, formal and informal, and many women work at home in the separation, sale and shipment to recycling of usable by-products. - Since 2000 carried out, among women from both urban and rural areas, environmental education actions to modify irrational patterns of consumption, reducing thereby generated waste and promoting recycling.

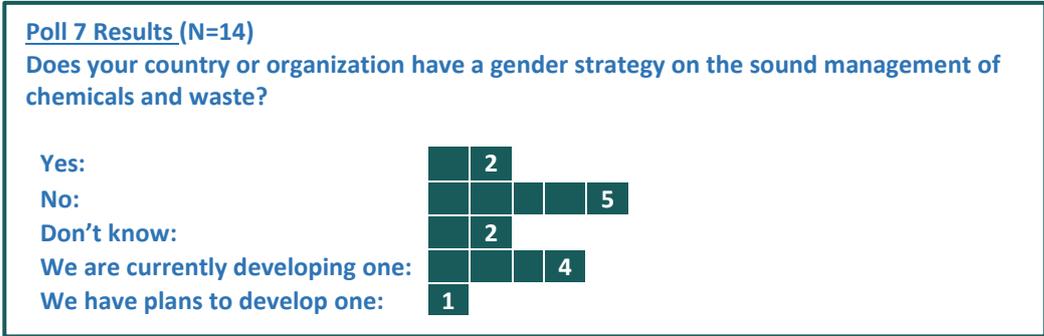
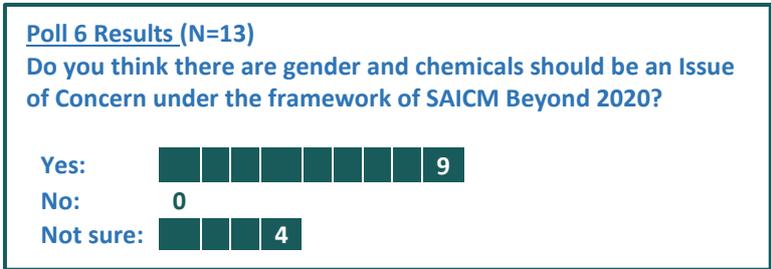
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This programme also has socio-environmental indicators with a gender perspective; monitors sustainable development projects that promote gender equity in the country; sensitize and train on gender equity and environment.
NIGERIA (Independent National Electoral Commission Staff Clinic – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes, the issue of gender inequality is real with women not getting the proper attention needed. - Citing example from farming activities during the application of pesticides, the common people believe only the applicator is to gear up (usually the husband) while the wife and the children will be left exposed despite the fact that they are working on the same farm.
OECD - IGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The data from the global burden of disease indicates that the biggest gender imbalance in the impact from chemical exposure is due to occupational exposure, where men are more exposed. - Beyond that, there is a lack of information on gender-disaggregated impact from exposure to chemicals.
SOUTH AFRICA (Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries – Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inequalities of exposures are different as females are the ones doing the hard labour in the fields. - Women are exposed more as the government’s Extended Public Works Programme employs a larger percentage of women.
SOUTH AFRICA (University of Cape Town – Academia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the farming sector perception is that women's exposures to hazardous pesticides are low as men often do the mixing. - Yet women harvest and weed in sprayed/wet fields, sometimes can't wear pants for cultural reasons, etc...and so their exposures can be high.
TOGO (University of Kara – Academia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In chemical laboratory women are kept away from chemicals when they are pregnant for example in France and Germany. - Not aware of what is legal in African countries. - In Togo for example, chemist women are few and we need to draw attention on this topic.



Q3. What actions do you think would help address gender inequalities on a local and global level? Do you have ideas or examples of how to integrate this in the SAICM beyond 2020 process?

BANGLADESH (Environment and Social Development Organisation – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness program.
BRAZIL (VIZY – Private Sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education and awareness must be included in action plans.
CAMEROON (Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State must vote on a specific law to protect women against chemicals, in the post-2020 SAICM - Projects must be oriented more towards women in order to involve them and raise their awareness of the dangerousness of their exposure.
FINLAND (Finish Institute for Health and Welfare – Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More data should be generated on risk assessment and pipelined into policy making. - Risk due to chemical mixture exposure is also very relevant here, on which the research data is much less.
IRAN (University of Tehran – Academia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define clear laws and regulations and make sure to enforce them in developing countries. - Regulations for pregnant mothers, as we heard there are already many good recipes for pregnant mothers to avoid toxic exposure. - These issues should be included in the SAICM beyond 2020. Giving equal opportunities in international discussions/ conventions and conferences to females, also to discussions, etc. as we observed it in Cambridge last year.
ISC3 – NGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existing [political] measures designed to help women to set up their own businesses are far from adequate. - It is still made much more difficult for women to obtain the necessary funding.
ITALY (Centre for Environmental Justice – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness and encouraging small and medium enterprises to take measures for workers' safety would be the initial steps to reduce exposure without gender discrimination.
KENYA (Academia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a need to create awareness. - In Kenya people are not aware about the consequences of gender inequality with respect to the management of chemicals and waste as far as SDGs success is concerned. - The political class are the ones who determine the legislation processes so that they may be best guided as they make laws regarding gender.
MEXICO (SEMARNAT – Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It can be promoted by formulating an action plan of gender and chemical and waste management accompanied by a methodological structure and an annex of materials and resources for their prompt use and implementation, there may be support readings, videos, brochures, images, among others. - In Mexico there has been since 2007 the General Law of Access for Women to a life free of violence and since 2006, the General Law for Equality between men and women, from this framework we work to promote equality.
GERMANY (MSP Institute – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global level: establish a gender focal point in the SAICM secretariat and gender working group to develop a gender action plan for SAICM Beyond2020 like in other UN processes (UNFCCC; CBD; BRS;...). - National level: SAICM national focal points need gender expertise, gender should be included in national action plans. - Important to underline women's role as agents of change, not only their vulnerability, for example indigenous women's knowledge on non-chemical alternatives. - Beside SDG5 the issue of gender and chemicals also relate to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (one of the most powerful declaration for women) from 1995. - ICCM5 needs to include language on women's participation, gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the outcome documents and the high-level declaration.
SOUTH AFRICA (University of Cape Town – Academia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I think at the national level it is key to have gendered text related to specific chemicals in legislation. - It would be good to share examples of this type of legislation in the SAICM process.
UGANDA (Association of Uganda Professional Women in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the agricultural sector and in relation to pesticides application, protective gear should be affordable and easily accessible by both men and women. - Maybe texts related to chemicals and genders in general.

Agriculture and Environment – NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is highly important for girls and women who are enrolling in chemical-based studies to be aware of likely exposure to chemical. - Global actions are necessary to avoid imbalance between gender equality in work area and chemical exposure. - In Uganda sector-specific gender strategies which are applicable to chemicals management are 1)the Environment and Natural Resources sub-sector Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2016-2021 and 2)the current Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan, which promotes mainstreaming gender in all activities.
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Helpful resources:

- **SDG Goal 5:** <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/?Text=&Goal=5&Target>
- **SDG Goal 12:** <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/?Text=&Goal=12&Target>
- **The 2030 SDGs:** <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>
- **Description of the SAICM Emerging Policy Issues and Issues of Concern:** <http://www.saicm.org/Implementation/EmergingPolicyIssues/tabid/5524/language/en-US/Default.aspx>
- **Chemicals and gender UNDP 2011:** https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/chemicals_management/chemicals-and-gender.html
- **Mainstreaming Gender into UNDP-GEF projects on chemicals and waste:** https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/chemicals_management/GuidanceGender&Chemicals.html
- **SAICM Gender Policy Brief:** http://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/Documents/SDGs/SAICM_Gender_Policy_Brief.pdf

CSDGs CoP: The Secretariat of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and the Environmental Health Division at the University of Cape Town (UCT) created this Community of Practice (CoP) to foster online discussions and address key issues on Chemicals and SDGs among stakeholders from governments, international organizations, industry, academia and civil society. This CoP is contributing to the SAICM/GEF project on Emerging Chemicals Policy Issues Knowledge Management Component.

This activity is supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) project ID: 9771 on *Global Best Practices on Emerging Chemical Policy Issues of Concern under the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)*.

If you have any question or require clarification on this initiative, please contact the SAICM Secretariat at saicm.chemicals@un.org or UCT at uctcops@outlook.com.

Join the CSDGs CoP at: <https://chemicalswithoutconcern.org/community>

Disclaimer: The information in this digest represents the opinions of members participating from different stakeholder groups expressed during the discussion. The views expressed in this document do not necessarily represent the opinion or the stated policy of the United Nations Environment Programme, the SAICM Secretariat, the GEF or UCT, nor does citing of trade names or commercial processes constitute endorsement.