

In addition, to adequately protect children's health, countries should implement Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 and sign, ratify and implement existing international treaties regarding hazardous chemicals such as the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent (1998), the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001) and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste and their Disposal (1989). "In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation." Rio Declaration on Environment and Development Principle 15

#### References:

Lynn Goldman & Nga Tran, *Toxics and Poverty: The Impact of Toxic Substances on the Poor in Developing Countries*, World Bank, 2002  
UNEP, UNICEF & WHO, *Children in the New Millennium: Environmental Impact on Health*, 2002

World Health Organization, WHO, Regional Office for Europe & EEA, *Children's health and environment: A review of the evidence*, 2002

World Health Organization, WHO, *The World Health Report 2002: Reducing Risks, Promoting a Healthy Life Protecting children from harmful chemical exposures*, Decision and Information Document, IV International Forum on Chemical Safety, IFCS, 2003

#### Children's Environmental Health

[www.who.int/phe/ceh](http://www.who.int/phe/ceh)

#### Healthy Environments for Children Alliance

[www.who.int/heca/en/](http://www.who.int/heca/en/)

#### International Pops Elimination network, IPEN

[www.ipen.org](http://www.ipen.org)

#### International Society of Doctors for the Environment

[www.isde.org](http://www.isde.org)

#### International Research and Information Network on Children's Health, Environment and Safety

[www.inchesnetwork.org](http://www.inchesnetwork.org)

#### Healthy Schools

[www.toolforhealthyschools.org](http://www.toolforhealthyschools.org)

## About



The International POPs Elimination Network is a global network of public interest non-governmental organizations working together for the elimination of persistent organic pollutants, on an expedited yet socially equitable Basis.

The IPEN Network has grown to include more than 350 public health, environmental, consumer, and other non-governmental organizations in 65 countries. The network works to mobilize grassroots support for the Stockholm Convention and to ensure that grassroots groups are present at national and regional fora and international discussions about toxic chemicals.

#### IPEN Activities

**UN NEGOTIATIONS:** Throughout the UN POPs negotiations, IPEN organized NGOs, community group representatives and scientists to participate in the UN process and in other relevant national and regional fora and activities. Our participation played a strong and critically important role in UN deliberations on POPs chemicals which resulted in the globally agreed treaty, the Stockholm Convention.

IPEN continues to play a leading role in the continuing UN discussions on toxic chemicals.

#### UN STOCKHOLM CONVENTION IMPLEMENTATION:

At the signing of the Stockholm Convention, IPEN Participating Organizations reaffirmed their joint commitment to continue to work together as a network to implement the provisions of this agreement. As such IPENers are participating in relevant local national and international fora concerning the implementation of the convention and are engaging in Nation Implementation Plans (NIPs). IPENers are also organizing grassroots activities aimed at developing and using alternative substances and processes in order to avoid further production, use and stockpiling of POPs chemicals, are instituting environmentally-sound remediation and clean-up processes, and are developing public awareness and right-to-know initiatives.

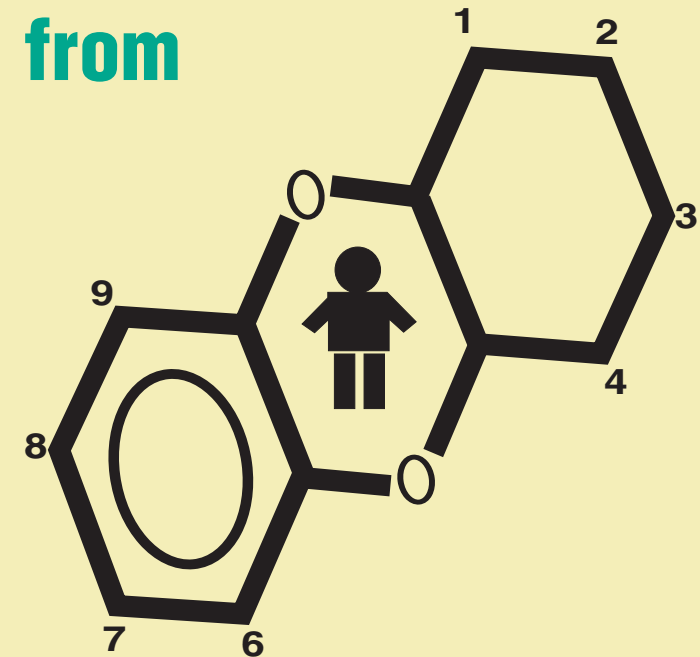
#### IPEN ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY-BUILDING WORK:

IPEN has established an organizational and governance structure consisting of a provisional Steering Committee, Secretariat, and Northern and Southern Co-Chairs, and regional focal points that oversee and support ongoing grassroots implementation of the Stockholm Convention. IPEN has also established a Pesticides Working Group, a Dioxin, Wastes and Stockpiles Working Group and Community Monitoring Working Group. These three working groups focus on specific activities related to the Stockholm Convention and to the implementation of the IPEN Stockholm Declaration, which serves as a guide to IPEN activities. These Working Groups welcome new members to help in their activities.

#### INFORMATION EXCHANGE:

IPEN maintains an email list serve and website. The mailing lists and website provide an efficient way to exchange information about POPs-related activities, scientific research and emerging issues.

# Protecting children from



# harmful chemical exposure

IPEN

International POP's Elimination Network  
Community Monitoring Working Group

New hazards are emerging from **INDUSTRIALIZATION** and the increased use of **CHEMICALS**.

Children are born with more than 300 synthetic chemicals in their blood.

Hundreds of children are disabled every year by exposure to modern environmental hazards.

A growing number of diseases affecting children are linked to **UNHEALTHY AND UNSAFE ENVIRONMENTS**.

- High levels of air pollutants can lead to respiratory illness, asthma, organ damage and cancer.
- Chemical exposure can lead to neurotoxicity, neurobehavioral and reproductive problems, immune and hormonal disruption, and cancer.
- Chemical exposure can interfere with the body's ability to develop to its full capacity.

We can improve children's health by dramatically increasing our efforts to tackle these environmental dangers.

### CHILDREN have the right to a TOXIC-FREE ENVIRONMENT

### HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN WHY NOW? BECAUSE THE PROBLEM IS URGENT

In 2000, more than 4.7 million children under the age of five died from illnesses aggravated by unhealthy environments. Most of the 13,000 child deaths that occur each day are due to dangers present in the environment in which children live, learn, play and grow.

In 2000, polluted environments contributed to:

- Two million deaths from acute respiratory infections aggravated by indoor air pollution.
- One million deaths from malaria, dengue fever, leishmaniasis, Japanese encephalitis, hepatitis and other environment-related infectious and vector-borne diseases.
- In 2000, five per cent of children's deaths in developing countries due to injury were from toxic poisoning.

Toxic chemicals simply exacerbate the vicious cycle of poverty and ill health, with families losing precious income and assets to pay for their children's medical costs. As if this were not enough, sick children lose much of their potential for a healthy and productive adulthood.

CHILDREN ARE INCREASING

### WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTS?

Specific actions proposed in the IFCS Decision Document: **"Protecting from harmful chemical exposures"** include the following:

- ★ Adopt pollution prevention and other appropriate management strategies that prevent children's exposure to unsafe chemicals, in particular to those chemicals of highest concern.
- ★ Educate parents, children, teachers, and communities about types and routes of exposure and how to recognize and avoid unsafe exposure, e.g., safe chemical use and distribution, proper disposal of chemicals, and appropriate alternatives.
- ★ Design educational materials and implement school programs and media campaigns in the local language, taking into account local needs, to alert and teach children, parents and the public about the potential dangers of improper chemical use and potential unintentional chemical exposures.
- ★ Encourage further industry participation in educational campaigns to raise awareness about children's special vulnerability and the need to protect children through the safe use of chemicals.

### TARGET FOR ACTION



### IPEN proposal:

- ★ In the first place promote as much as possible, at every opportunity, the exclusion of most toxic chemicals for which alternatives have been developed or that are classified as carcinogens, hormone disruptors, or endocrine disruptors or that interfere with neurodevelopment.
- ★ Educate environmental actors, media, policy-makers and other professionals about chemical risks and risk communication.
- ★ Raise the awareness of decision-makers about the risks to children's health and development associated with chemical use and encourage policies that take into account children's special vulnerability to chemicals.
- ★ Train health professionals about children's unique vulnerability to certain chemicals and the risk of chemical exposures in different settings, the most common exposure pathways, as well as how to diagnose, identify the cause of, prevent and treat exposures.
- ★ Increase and support further scientific research on the link between chemical exposure and health outcomes in different age groups and in different settings. Continue to improve and implement risk assessment approaches that take child-specific issues into account.
- ★ Adopt the precautionary approach in the context of children's environmental health.
- ★ Ensure that effective safety information labels are included on consumer products that are potentially hazardous to children, providing guidance on handling, transport, use and disposal, first aid and contacting poison information centers.
- ★ Increase support for the creation and/or strengthening of poison control centers in developing countries.
- ★ Encourage donors to fund innovative research and educational programs, incorporating children and chemicals into development assistance programs, and taking the opportunities offered through existing convention funding mechanisms to address issues concerning children and chemicals. Develop and use appropriate indicators for chemical safety and children's health.
- ★ Provide financial support for research to find and promote the use of **ALTERNATIVES**.
- ★ Identify chemicals in the market and provide information about them to the public.

**BANNING TOXIC CHEMICALS FROM THE MARKET AND FINDING AND PROMOTING SAFE ALTERNATIVES IS THE BEST WAY TO PROTECT THE HEALTH OF OUR CHILDREN NOW**