

**Women Leadership, Chemical Safety, and the  
SDGs**

**Webinar Report**

**13<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**Organised by IPEN in collaboration with UNEP  
and SAICM Secretariat**

**Report by**



for a toxics-free future

## Notes:

In 2021, a joint UNEP-IPEN report on Women, chemicals and the SDGs was published as an output of the currently ongoing GEF Project on Global Best Practices on Emerging Policy Issues of Concern under SAICM. The report focuses on the SAICM Emerging Policy Issues and identifies gender priorities. Building on this report and advancing chemicals safety, IPEN has developed a series of free online courses on women and chemicals, featuring a diverse group of nine trainers across the globe. The courses enhance the role of women and women's leadership in local, regional, national, and global efforts to reduce exposures to harmful chemicals and wastes.

To draw attention to the intersection between gender and chemicals management, UNEP, SAICM, and IPEN had jointly organized a webinar on "Women Leadership, Chemical Safety, and the SDGs" on 13<sup>th</sup> Jan 2022.

**Ms. Nalini Sharma**, SAICM Coordinator at UNEP moderated the session and highlighted that the webinar aims to draw attention to the intersection between gender and chemicals management and its vital importance for reaching the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

### OPENING SESSION

The webinar was inaugurated with the opening remarks of **Mr. Per Ångquist**, Director General of the Swedish Chemicals Agency. He gave reflections on the intersection between chemicals and gender and stated its two-fold agenda. Briefing on the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN) report [Women, Chemicals and the SDGs](#), he emphasized that women and men equally must have same opportunity to contribute in the management of chemicals. Mr. Ångquist informed that Sweden has adopted a feminist policy and based on that he stated that there is a need of involving females to manage chemical safety, GHS, occupational hazards, and inform decision making.

He highlighted that as the UNEP-IPEN report states, both genders gets impacted differently by the chemicals can have different health impacts on both women and male, depending on the chemical products and chemical exposure. Mr. Ångquist closed his remarks with the view that reproduction and SDGs are not just a women & men issue but rather a human issue that requires equal efforts to provide a safer world to the future generation.

### TECHNICAL AND EXPERIENCE SHARING SESSION ON WOMEN LEADERSHIP, CHEMICAL SAFETY AND THE SDGS

UNEP perspectives on issues related to gender and chemicals and waste

The first presentation was conducted by **Monika Gail MacDevette**, Chief of the Chemicals and Health Branch, Economy Division at UNEP. She started her talk by thanking UNEP and IPEN for the report on "WOMEN, CHEMICALS AND THE SDGS" and organising this webinar to disseminate findings of the report. Ms. MacDevette gave an overview of how UNEP and UN Women with gender experts from around the world integrated a holistic assessment approach of the environment from a gender lens. This was called for in 2014 by the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the environment and the report was launched at the UN Environment Assembly in May, 2016. She mentioned that the fundamental conclusions of that report resonate today as we discuss the issues of gender in the context of the sound management of chemicals and waste, and how this can advance the achievement of the SDGs.

Ms. MacDevette informed that UNEP is focusing on gender aspects of chemicals and waste due to the pandemic, highlighting once again the inequality of the effects of unsound management of chemicals and waste on women. She shared the findings of the report and gave examples of UNEP's action to explain gender data gaps in analysis. She also commented on the SAICM emerging policy issues and

the relevance for the SDGs and areas where focus is needed to develop gender mapping tools. She concluded the session with the overview of the work UNEP has undertaken and continues to undertake on the environmental dimensions of gender, chemicals and waste.

### **1. Women Leaders and the Importance of Addressing Issues Related to Women, Chemicals, and the Sustainable Development Goals**

**Pamela Miller** provided an overview of the mission and activities of the Alaska Community Action on Toxics that work on policy change to protect human health through community-based and participatory scientific research, public education and training. Pamela informed that it must be recognized by all that the community has environmental and health expertise and that although difficult to prove “cause and effect,” the health concerns must be addressed. She expressed that it is important to do what we can to eliminate and prevent exposures from contamination by ensuring responsible clean-up.

Pamela informed that Arctic Indigenous Peoples who rely on a traditional diet are particularly vulnerable to exposure and have levels of persistent contaminants in blood and breast milk that are among the highest of any population on Earth. The Arctic is warming three times as fast as the rest of the world. Melting of Arctic ice, glaciers, and permafrost is releasing sequestered chemicals and microplastics into our environment and food web.

Pamela shared the findings of a project by the Commonwealth, MOMs and POPs Project and IPEN on the presence of chemicals in breast milk in women in five countries. She also discussed the findings of a mercury pollution research study conducted by IPEN in twenty-five countries.

### **2. EMPOWERING PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS ON THE UNDERSTANDING AND KNOWLEDGE OF HIGHLY HAZARDOUS PESTICIDES**

**Vivianne Atah** from the Centre de Recherche et d'Education pour le Développement (CREPD) briefly presented about the organization and its mission. She shared local cases of the lethal health impacts caused by the usages of highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs) in her locality in Cameroon. She mentioned that the use of pesticides, particularly HHPs, in developing and countries in transition, is responsible for health and environmental harms.

Ms. Atah shared global data on pesticide usages and its poisoning cases. She spoke to her experience as one of the trainer who created the training courses on gender and chemical supported by IPEN. She mentioned that the courses purpose is to: help people know and avoid HHPs in order to protect their health and environment, to enable policy makers to be more vigilant about the quality of pesticides registered by their countries, and encourage the integration of the gender aspect, especially women in the decision-making bodies concerning pesticides in Africa.

### **3. Precautionary Principle and Environmental Violence Associated with Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)**

**Cecilia Bianco and Ariana Ortega** spoke on behalf of NGO Taller Ecologista based in Argentina. Cecilia started the session with the introduction of the organization and briefed the audience on how women had started raising environmental and health issues related to chemicals management in Argentina. She informed the participants about the course they have developed on gender issue in support of IPEN which was carried out with the topic of Ecofeminism, Socio-Environmental Education and Toxics. She explained that the ecofeminism area is the newest area in the course and has given great motivation to the organization, for its fight for women's rights and feminized identities.

Ariana Ortega, followed by sharing her experience from ground level and informed that because of the resistance of women in protecting their land, that many have been criminalized and threatened. She had shared the importance of the precautionary principle, which warned about the risks of uncertainty and guides towards strategies aimed at avoiding socio-environmental impacts.

### QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Participants had the opportunity to ask questions to the panellists. Questions were related to pesticide management, women roles in pesticide management??? and best management practices of chemicals in consumer products. Panellists responded by sharing their experience. Ms. MacDevette also shared an overview of the UNEP on global level policy on chemicals and wastes and the importance of providing scientific evidences, bases and governance support to ensure safety.

### Agenda of the webinar:

Time	Topic	Speaker
16:00- 16:10	Welcome remarks	Per Ångquist
16:10-16:25	UNEP perspectives on issues related to gender and chemicals and waste	Monika Gail MacDevette
16:25-16:35	Women leaders and the importance of addressing issues related to women, chemicals and the SDGs	Pamela Miller
16:35-16:45	Empowering Parents and Caregivers on the understanding and knowledge of Highly Hazardous Pesticides	Vivianne Atah
16:45-16:55	Precautionary Principle and Environmental Violence Associated with Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) and Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)	Cecilia Bianco and Ariana Ortega
16:55-17:30	Discussion and Q&A	All panelists Moderated by Nalini Sharma

Video of webinar:

Playlist: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLLxyGs1N7tULbP2aF47JiGMODnkJNmlkM>

English: <https://youtu.be/kAtwon8EUUc>

French: <https://youtu.be/9P9kpGLHsCs>

Spanish: <https://youtu.be/sGCNkHBWB5M>