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Managing Chemicals *for* Sustainable Development

SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS AND
SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

UNDP ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY GROUP





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“

The Sound Management of Chemicals is essential if we are to achieve sustainable development, including the eradication of poverty and disease, the improvement of human health and the environment and the elevation of the standard of living in countries at all levels of development.

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Dubai Declaration on International Chemicals Management, Feb 2006



FOREWORD

The use of chemicals permeates modern life. While chemicals play an important role with respect to development, including through the production and use of life-saving medicines, purification agents for treating drinking water supplies, and agricultural chemicals that boost on-farm productivity, use of chemicals can, in absence of good management practices, pose significant risks to human health and the environment.

Effects on human health and the environment can be immediate and catastrophic, as in the case of oil spills, large accidental releases of industrial chemicals, and acute pesticide poisoning. Less noticeably, long-term exposure to toxic chemicals in water, food, air, and soil can cause or exacerbate many serious human health problems, including damage to reproductive and neurological systems, as well as different types of cancers.

The world's poorest people routinely face the highest risk of exposure to toxic and hazardous chemicals, due to their occupations, living conditions, lack of knowledge about safe handling practices, limited access to sources of uncontaminated food and drinking water, and the fact that they often live in countries where regulatory, health, and education systems are weak.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) thus promotes sound management of chemicals as an important aspect of our work to reduce global poverty and promote human health. We at UNDP advocate for the importance of addressing issues related to chemicals management and chemically-linked pollution in developing countries by integrating rigorous chemicals management schemes into national development policies and plans. We also help these countries obtain the necessary resources to improve their chemicals management regimes in order to achieve desired results.

This publication highlights UNDP's role as a facilitator of sound chemicals management for sustainable development. It focuses on the work that UNDP, with support from different trust funds and donors is undertaking in concert with partner countries to meet the aims of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, as well as other chemicals-related multilateral environmental agreements. These efforts are enhanced by UNDP's commitment to help draw chemicals management issues more effectively into the national development discourse.



Olav Kjörven
Assistant Secretary General
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INTRODUCTION

Chemicals play a part in almost all human activities and make major contributions to national economies. However, whenever chemicals are not properly managed, they can put human health, ecosystems, and national economies at risk. Health and environmental impacts from the mismanagement of chemicals include increased sickness levels and healthcare costs, reduced worker productivity, damage to fisheries and watersheds, reduced crop outputs and many others.

Chemicals also affect progress towards sustainable human development, with the poorest members of the global community, particularly women and children, most vulnerable to their negative effects. The urban and the rural poor routinely face unacceptably high risks of exposure to chemicals because of their occupations, living conditions and lack of knowledge about proper handling of chemicals. At the same time, the ecosystems that provide essential resources for the survival of the rural poor are threatened by chemical pollution and environmental degradation.

The need for effective life-cycle management of chemicals is underscored both by the substantial contribution that chemicals make to social and economic development, and the significant threats to humans and the environment that arise from their improper use and management.

Assisting developing countries and countries with economies in transition to sustainably manage the manufacture, use and disposal of chemicals is an important element in UNDP's efforts to promote progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This work is supported by the Global Environment Facility, the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, the Quick Start Programme Trust Fund of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and various other donors and partners. In collaboration with

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