

## AFRICA STOCKPILES PROGRAMME

Across Africa, at least 50,000 tons of obsolete pesticides have accumulated. These hazardous pesticides are contaminating soil, water, air, and food sources. They pose serious health threats to rural as well as urban populations and contribute to land and water degradation.

Obsolete pesticide stocks in Africa are often located near people and their livelihoods. These chemicals particularly harm poor communities. Children often face heightened exposure and are at higher risk than adults. In one country, a DDT storage site leaches chemicals constantly into a river catchment; in another country, a new apartment block was constructed unknowingly above an old pesticide store; elsewhere, scarce water resources that service remote communities are contaminated with dieldrin.

The World Health Organization estimates that pesticides may cause 250,000 unintentional deaths a year and that nearly three million people may suffer specific and nonspecific acute and chronic effects, mostly in developing countries. Many of these chemicals, particularly persistent organic pollutants (POPs), affect people and wildlife even at very low doses. Chronic illnesses, reproductive problems, and birth defects may result from exposure to these chemicals. Most African countries have poor poisoning recording systems and many farming communities have no access to medical care, thus pesticide poisoning incidents are under-reported and inadequately treated.

The Africa Stockpiles Programme (ASP) is addressing this urgent situation. The program seeks to clear all obsolete pesticide stocks from Africa and put in place measures to help prevent

their recurrence. Prevention measures include the following: reduced reliance on pesticides for agriculture and public health; better import controls, storage, stock management, and distribution systems; improved awareness and training for pesticide users; capacity building in poison centers and analytical laboratories; and establishment of container and pesticide waste management systems. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is a key supporter of the ASP; in 2002, the GEF approved \$25 million for Phase 1 of the program.

Specifically, the ASP aims to do the following:

- Clean up stockpiled pesticides and pesticide-contaminated waste in Africa in an environmentally sound manner;
- Catalyze development of prevention measures; and
- Provide capacity building and institutional strengthening on chemical-related issues.

ASP activities will also create opportunities to address broader hazardous waste management issues and evaluate new, cleaner disposal technologies.

ASP is designed as a 12–15 year program, consisting of four overlapping phases, each of which will last 4–5 years. This design reflects the breadth of the problem on the continent and the range of activities necessary in each country to achieve clean-up, disposal, and prevention of future accumulation. The total cost of the program is estimated at \$250 million, of which the GEF would contribute up to \$80 million. Phase 1 consists of two subprojects. In the first subproject, comprehensive clean-up and prevention will

take place in Ethiopia, Mali, Morocco, South Africa, Tanzania, and Tunisia, with an additional pilot project for prevention and preparation for disposal in Nigeria. The second sub-project under Phase I will implement prevention programs and prepare for obsolete pesticide disposal in an additional eight countries.

### **UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP**

The ASP grew out of informal discussions between nongovernmental organizations and several intergovernmental organizations. Some of the leading partners involved are the African Union, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Pesticide Action Network, the World Bank, the World Wildlife Fund—and the GEF. Today, industry, participating countries, private foundations, nonprofit organizations, and international organizations are all pooling their resources and expertise for the ASP. In addition to the GEF, donors include Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the African Development Bank, the European Union, the World Bank, and CropLife International, the plant sciences industry trade association.

### **THE ROLE OF THE GEF**

The GEF is the interim financial mechanism for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. In October 2002, the GEF reinforced its support for POPs when it added POPs to its mandate. In terms of the ASP, the GEF is providing funds for development and implementation. In addition to advancing GEF's work on POPs, ASP is benefiting other GEF focal areas: biodiversity, international waters, and land degradation.

### **GLOBAL TREATIES**

The ASP will contribute to the implementation of several international legal instruments that address chemical and hazardous material management. While developing its own criteria and objectives, the program will also promote the following global treaties: the Stockholm Convention

on Persistent Organic Pollutants; the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal; the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedures for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade; and the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa.

Countries seeking support from the ASP will be encouraged to become parties to the Stockholm, Basel, and Rotterdam Conventions, along with applying the requirements of the Bamako Convention, a regional agreement, and the International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code.

### **COUNTRY PARTICIPATION**

Central to the ASP is the belief that project activities should be country driven. Countries involved need to show ownership and commitment to the ASP by acknowledging the existence of the problem and taking responsibility to address the issue. To work with the program, countries must commit local financial or in-kind resources, such as personnel and institutions. In addition, the participating countries need to take leadership on the issue by identifying a lead organization that will coordinate activities related to disposal and prevention of obsolete pesticides, while also involving all relevant stakeholders.

### **THE AFRICA STOCKPILES PROGRAMME AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The ASP brings together the skills, expertise, and resources of a diverse group of stakeholders, enabling national leadership to carry out country-led activities. This exciting and innovative project offers real on-the-ground solutions to a difficult problem. By reducing and removing long-standing toxic threats throughout Africa, the ASP promotes improved public health, poverty reduction, and environmental safety—critical elements of sustainable development.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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