

# South-Asia Regional Meeting

17-19 April, 2019

Zorba The Buddha, New Delhi



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## Introduction

IPEN's South Asia regional meeting was organized by Toxics Link, South Asia regional hub from 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> April 2019 at Zorba the Buddha in New Delhi. Representative from IPEN (International POPs Elimination Network) and participating organizations (POs) from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Bhutan participated to discuss IPEN's agenda for a toxics free future for South Asia region. This was the first regional meeting organized with an objective of closer cooperation and networking between POs to make South Asia a Toxics free region. The meeting focused on the cross cutting issues of chemicals, waste and toxicity in the region in the context of various international developments and policies.

The meeting was an avenue for sharing knowledge and information, charting out the development objectives, strengthening networking between the POs and exploring funding needs to cater IPEN's vision for South Asia with adoption of a regional strategy to work on the issue of plastics.

## DAY 1: International and National Policy and chemical issues

**Ms. Tripti Arora**, Coordinator, IPEN SA region welcomed all the participants and talked about the major objectives of the meeting.



The inaugural address was given by **Mr. Ravi Agarwal, Director, Toxics Link** who welcomed the POs from different countries of the region. He briefed them about IPEN while explaining the important role that POs play in strengthening the network. He reminded them that it's the POs who actually are IPEN. He further highlighted that the role of the hub which is to facilitate the regional programmes, to represent regional concerns at various international forums and to catalyze

regional work. He mentioned that South Asia region is a unique region yet all the countries have some similarities, although India has done some work in terms of its legislative framework, yet the challenges are very similar. He further emphasized that the aim here is to understand how to activate the work of chemicals and human health work in the region. There is lack of information on the issues that we are talking about and there is a dire need to create more technical resources in the region.

He stressed upon the importance of safe use of chemicals in all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the growing concerns over lack of developmental norms in the region. He concluded his opening remarks by underscoring the need for better networking and communication among PO's to achieve their goal of toxic free South Asia.

## Introduction of the participants

Being the first regional meeting, most of the POs were interacting with each other for the first time. So, in order to accustom the POs with each other's work, this session was held where in the participants were introduced through an innovative approach. Instead of each participant introducing themselves, they were divided in groups of two where they told each other about themselves and their work. Later on each group came forward and introduced their partners. The purpose of this exercise was to enhance the communication between the POs.



## IPEN 2020 Goals and Toxics free SDGs strategy

In this session, **Ms. Tiffany Tool**, Network Organizer of IPEN presented on IPEN 2020 goals and also briefly touched upon Toxics free SDGs strategy. She started by giving a brief history of IPEN, mentioned that it was founded by Jack Weinberg in 1998 and talked about its growth since its establishment. She also explained about the organizational structure of IPEN. She further discussed IPEN's theory which focuses on globalizing local priorities and localizing global priorities. She specified that along with halting the spread of toxic metals there is a dire need to strengthen policies related to chemicals. The presentation further pointed out how 15 out of 17 SDGs cannot be achieved without chemical safety and emphasized on the need to mobilize funds for sustaining global campaign. She concluded her session by asking the POs to utilize the resources available on the IPEN website to raise their technical capacities.





## IPEN Survey Results for SA Region, 2017

**Ms. Tripti Arora**, Coordinator, IPEN South Asia Hub, Toxics Link presented the results of the survey of POs in the region conducted in 2017. The objective of this survey was to understand the interventions carried out by POs on chemicals and waste issues and to establish its linkage with IPEN's 2020 goals. In this survey, 42 PO were contacted, out of which 31 POs responded. The survey analyses depicted waste and pesticides as the top priority work areas, apart from these two, SDGs, contaminated sites, mercury, lead and waste incineration were also identified as the priority areas of the region. The survey results also reflected that the POs in the region have expertise in policy & advocacy, capacity building, sustainable agriculture etc. She further highlighted the importance of list serve which is to access available resources and to enhance networking with other POs. The importance of using webinar as a tool in capacity building was also discussed.



She emphasized on the importance of the survey and informed that suggestions from the POs will be taken in future while designing the survey forms. Further she appealed for an active involvement of POs in the survey as it is crucial in IPEN's project planning for the region.

## International Chemical Safety Policies



The session on international chemical safety policy was presented by **Mr. Piyush Mohapatra**, Senior Programme Coordinator, Toxics Link. In this session, he briefly discussed about the global conventions: The Stockholm convention, The Minamata convention, The Basel convention, The Rotterdam convention and SAICM (Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management). He highlighted mandates of the conventions

and the role that they play in developing national policies. He further shared statistics on the deaths and disability caused due to exposure to toxic chemicals. He also highlighted how these conventions are playing a critical role in managing chemicals and waste at the global, national level and the local level. Further, he guided the POs to link their activities in the context of

global conventions. His presentation concluded with a brief on SDG 2030 and the scope of activities for the POs on the areas of waste and chemicals in order to achieve SDGs goals.

### Discussion Points:

- Need to strengthen the compliance mechanism under these conventions.

### Session 1: Technical and Experience Sharing session on International Chemical Issues- Chemicals in Products

The first presentation of this session was conducted by a PO, **Mr. Ram Charitra Sah**, Executive Director and environmental scientist at Center for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED), Nepal who presented on chemicals in products campaign. He started his talk by highlighting the study conducted by his organization in Nepal which found a number of hazardous chemicals in toys being commonly used in the country. He shared the findings of Global Chemicals Outlook to highlight the state of international chemicals industry and emphasized on the need to build a campaign strategy based on evidence and engagement with stakeholders. He further illustrated the findings with the strides in chemical safety management in Nepal, for eg: lead in paint guidelines (as imposed by the supreme court of Nepal), ban on use of asbestos and the campaigns for mercury-free healthcare and dentistry in Nepal. He discussed in detail the findings of study on Chemicals in toys and explained the rationale and the outcome of the study.



The session identified the challenges in sustaining the campaign like the lack of legal framework for chemical management and the presence of strong industrial lobbies. He further emphasized on the need to promote research based awareness and capacity building along with media partnerships to sustain the campaign.

### Discussion points:

- Query was raised about the laboratory testing. Mr. Ram responded that the testing was done in a government laboratory so that the government agencies cannot challenge the results. He also mentioned that XRF device was used to analyze the level of heavy metals in the products.
- The need to make XRF devices widely available was also raised in order to conduct timely test for determining toxicity in products. IPEN can also provide a few devices for the entire network and maybe one for the region.

- WTO and US embassy undermined the efforts taken by Nepal (to curb the use of lead in Nepal) by putting pressure on the government to revoke the standard.

### Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals: Emphasis on BPA



The presentation on the harmful effects of EDCs and its impact was given by **Mr. Prashant Rajankar**, Programme Coordinator, Toxics Link who emphasized on the effects of EDCs on the hormone system and its ability to alter the normal functioning of endocrine system as these chemicals are present in a number of consumer products like textiles, personal care products, children products, pesticides etc. He further talked about the global

perspective on the use of EDCs and the emerging policy issues in ICCM-4 (SAICM) which categorically accepts EDCs as an international problem. He further focused on the use of BPA in different products and the campaign by Toxics Link to spread awareness about its harmful effects. He also emphasized on the need to increase stakeholder engagement by bringing manufacturers, consumer organizations, ministries and product standardization bodies on board to tackle the challenges related to compliance and policy requirement for product standardization.

### Discussion points:

- Concern about usage of epoxy resin containing BPA in dental fillings was raised. Dr. Prashant responded that BPA has been phased out from dental fillings globally, national data is still insufficient.
- Lack of public awareness on the health impacts of EDCs especially in causing cancer was identified.
- Many participants feel the need to bring the issue of EDCs into the public domain



## Session 2: Technical and Experience Sharing session on International Chemical Issues- Lead in products



The first presentation in this session was given by **Ms. Priti Mahesh**, Chief Programme Coordinator, Toxics Link. She started her presentation by discussing about the possible impacts of Lead on human health and also talked about the sources of exposure: inhalation, ingestion and contact with products contaminated with lead. She narrated the sustained campaign carried out by Toxics Link for the elimination of lead in products (lead in

paints, lead acid batteries) and how the strategic approach including research, advocacy and awareness generation played a role in curbing the menace of lead in products. She emphasized on building a strategy by identifying policy groups, engaging stakeholders and launching public and media campaigns to restrict the use of lead. She also outlined the key challenges like the lack of research studies on lead poisoning and the poor enforcement of regulatory standards in the region.

### Lead in paints in Nepal

The second presentation under this session was given by a PO, **Mr. Dhiraj Pokhral**, General Secretary, LEADERS, Nepal where he focused on lead consumption in Nepal by highlighting that the per capita consumption of lead in Nepal is 1.3 times higher than that of India and 3 times higher than that of Bangladesh. He showcased the actions taken to restrict lead use in paint industry in Nepal and the problems in enforcing strict compliance norms with regard to lead use in paints.



### Discussion points for session 2:

- A query was raised on the presence of lead in crayons or water colors used by children. It was clarified that tests have not been carried out to assess the presence of lead in crayons but it may not contain lead.
- Another participant raised the issue of presence of lead in kumkum and sindoor used by women in the region and colored powders being used in other religious activities. She mentioned that due to the involvement of religious sentiments, it is difficult to intervene



on the subject. The presence of lead in turmeric and in baby food was also highlighted by a participant.

- The participants agreed upon the need to regulate the use of lead by underscoring the fact that lead is used in many crucial industries and the only recourse is to engage in proper management of lead and the enforcement of regulations at the grassroots level.
- Importance of state level interventions to improve the on ground situation at the state or the city level. The strategy to work at the regional level by roping in SPCB in respective states was recognized and the role of Indian companies in lead contamination in the region was recognized.
- The success in bringing down the lead content level in paints from 1,35,000 ppm to 600 ppm in Sri Lanka was recognized.
- The discussion highlighted the policy framework for maintaining the quantity of lead in enamel and outdoor paints to 90 ppm in India, Nepal and reducing it to 90ppm from the existing 600 ppm standard in Sri Lanka. The challenges in the form of lack of regulatory framework and health studies on lead poisoning was highlighted along with the need to involve SMEs (Small and medium enterprises) from informal sector to check the spread of lead in the region.
- Lead has its presence in a number of consumer products and thus has a lot of opportunities for our POs to take up the issues either individually in the respective areas or collectively in the region to create safer ways to manage the lead containing products.

### Mobilizing Resources for Environmental Health and Chemical Safety



**Mr. Jaison Varghese**, Program Coordinator, GEF/UNDP India gave the presentation on the small grant project of Global Environment Facility (GEF) and described the framework of GEF and its areas of operation. He highlighted the work done by SGP in India since its launch in 1997 in the form of 443 community based projects. He identified the key areas for which funding is granted under SGP and the factors which aid the allocation of grants to

organizations and advised the POs to look into the country specific strategic plan to identify the thematic focus and formulate participatory, community managed programs for availing funds under SGP.

### Discussion points:

- The participants raised queries about the co-financing requirements under SGP and were advised to work with established partners (either private or an NGO) to increase their chance of funding approval.
- The amount of maximum funding was enquired and it was informed to be 50,000 USD.
- Another crucial point raised dealt with the varying norms from country to country for availing funds under SGP and the participants were advised to work with relevant projects under SGP guidelines and the need to scale up their projects to establish their worth in the market.
- The absence of SGP programmes in Bangladesh was discussed.
- The significance of working together in partnership for availing funds was recognized and the PO's were advised to structure their projects according to community needs in order to have better chance of availing funds.

### Session 3: Technical and Experience Sharing session on International Chemical Issues-Mercury

#### Mercury and Coal-Community Monitoring

**Mr. Hemantha Withanage**, Executive Director, Centre for Environmental Justice, Sri Lanka presented upon the contamination of mercury caused by coal based power plants by highlighting the case of Norochcholai Coal power plant in Puttalam, Sri Lanka. He presented the research study (10 country study) undertaken in Sri Lanka in association with IPEN to test the presence of mercury in hair samples especially in women of child bearing age. He detailed the findings of his study and discussed about the



impacts of mercury on human health and environment. This issue was also raised in the Minamata Convention. He also roused upon the open flouting of fly ash emissions from power plants. He also stressed upon the delays in legal hearings to curb mercury emissions in the country and also talked about the challenges that he faced while conducting this study. He further pointed out that Sri Lanka has the worst mercury contamination in the world after Dominican Republic. He called for a three pronged campaign strategy involving the government, media and the public to curb mercury contamination and push for monitored mercury content in coal and the stricter compliance of Minamata guidelines.

### Discussion points:

- Accumulation of mercury in water, crop and fish was identified as a big concern in areas surrounded by the coal power plants.
- Assessment of the areas surrounded by the thermal power plants or other facilities using mercury and also charting out a plan to decontaminate the area was discussed. Importance of MIA (Mercury Initial Assessment) was highlighted as a possible solution to reduce contamination or minimize damage,
- The discussion acknowledged the difficulty in phasing out coal based electricity production as about 60% of total electricity production is produced through coal based plants.

### Mercury-free dentistry



The session on mercury-free dentistry was presented by **Ms. Siddika Sultana** from ESDO, Bangladesh where she highlighted the widespread use of mercury in dentistry in the form of amalgam used for dental fillings. She explained how methyl mercury readily passes through both the placenta and blood barrier and thus cause great damage to children bearing women and children. She identified the mindset of old dentists,

lack of public awareness and policy guidelines and the presence of non-registered dentists as the challenges in curbing mercury use in dentistry in Bangladesh and advocated a campaign strategy build on creating mass awareness about the issue and to push for ban on use of dental amalgam. She called for updating the dental curriculum and highlighted the ban on use of dental amalgam by the Bangladesh Armed Forces as the success of her campaign.

### Discussion points:

- The use of composite resins and Glass ionomer by dentists was recommended when she was queried about the alternative to dental amalgam.
- Phasing out the use of mercury amalgam by quack was identified as a major challenge.



### **Closing remarks:**

The closing remarks by Mr. Satish Sinha emphasized upon the need to stop cross-border proliferation of harmful chemicals and increase regional cooperation between the stakeholders for creating a toxics free future.



## DAY 2: Addressing the issue of waste and its management practices

### Session 4: Technical and Experience Sharing session on Waste

#### Bio-medical waste: Success story and challenges

The first presentation under this session on bio-medical waste management was given by **Mr. Satish Sinha**, Associate Director, Toxics Link in which he presented the findings from the report of eleven countries of South-East Asia on bio-medical waste management conducted by WHO in collaboration with Toxics Link. He emphasized on the need of bio-medical management in different countries of the region. He identified the key areas of healthcare waste generation and pointed out that only 15-20% of hospital waste is infectious waste like pathological and pharmaceutical waste. He further outlined the dangers of bio-medical waste on patients, community and waste handlers and presented a plan for waste management by following appropriate practices of waste collection, segregation, transportation and subsequent treatment and disposal. He also touched upon the importance of treating the waste water being discharged from the healthcare facilities. He elaborated on the best technologies available for managing bio-medical waste. Further he identified the key gaps in bio-medical waste management and covered the international guidelines in place for its effective management and mentioned some funding sources available on the issue.



#### Discussion points:

- Protocol of handling cytotoxic drug was discussed.
- Process for handling radioactive waste management was enquired and was informed that in India, Department of Atomic Energy deals with end to end management of nuclear waste. He suggested that CPCB and MCI should work together to grant license to medical setups in order to impose effective bio-medical waste regulations.
- Information on the data available of bio-medical waste generation at the district level was sought and were informed that state level data is present but district level data still needs to be created and NGOs need to pick up the issue and create such data.
- He further pointed out to WHO's bluebook which prohibits dumping of waste into sanitary landfills when asked about the lack of dumping sites and processing facilities in

Sri Lanka and suggested adopting at source segregation and non-combustion technologies as best management practices to deal with Bio-medical waste.

- Establishment of less number of incinerators was advocated so as to have a better quality instrument and also to enhance monitoring and compliance.

### E-waste awareness and implementation: Engaging Informal sector



The second presentation under this session was given by **Ms. Priti Mahesh**, Chief programme Coordinator, Toxics Link where she gave key statistics about e-waste in India and South Asia region. She pointed out to the economic value of e-waste in the form of valuable materials and precious metals like copper, silver, gold etc. and gave a brief historiography of the journey of e-waste management in India from 2003 when ‘Scrapping the hi-tech myth’ report was published to the adoption of new e-waste rules in 2016. She

identified the key challenges in e-waste management and called for stricter law enforcement for the same and increase of extended producer warranty to manage e-waste.

### Discussion points:

- A query was raised about the list of recyclers who are handling e-waste in the desired manner. She responded that they are still trying to evaluate the recyclers, so there is no such list available. Also, it is better to approach the brands who liable under the EPR to take back their products. A list of collection centers can be shared.
- Public awareness and responsibility as an NGO and as a consumer to dispose-off the e-waste and to report if the collection center is not in working condition was pointed out.
- The coverage of EPR to the manufacturers and also its mandate was enquired and was discussed in brief.
- The need to curb PBDE in products pointed out by the participants.
- The effects of recycling in magnifying the spread of PBDE was recognised along with its presence in children toys and hair brushes etc. The need for political recognition of the hazards of e-waste was raised along with the steps needed to increase awareness about the tenacity of the problem.
- The presence of a policy in E-waste in different countries of the region was discussed.

## Session 5: Technical and Experience Sharing session on Persistent Organic Pollutants & Toxic Recycling (BFRs Rubix Cube testing)

The presentation on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and toxic recycling was given by **Mr. Lee Bell**, IPEN Mercury and POPs Policy Advisor in which he discussed the role of circular economy in POPs generation and pointed out the objects that should not be recycled like asbestos, nuclear waste and POPs. He discussed about the migration of Brominated flame retardants (OctaBDE, DecaBDE and HBCD) from e-waste to plastic toys. He further talked about a study conducted by IPEN in children toys in 26 countries (including Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka) and shared that they found high concentration of POPs in a number of children toys. He explained the health risks associated with the exposure to POPs and the loopholes in The Stockholm convention and The Basel convention which aggravates the problems caused due to POPs. He called for strict enforcement of low POPs content level in plastics and an end to the practice of recycling of POPs. He concluded his presentation by informing the participants about the POPs limit and non combustion technologies (for POPs waste destruction) that IPEN will be proposing for during the upcoming COP9.

### Discussion:

- The participants queried him about appropriate testing tools for POPs and were advised to undertake testing on XRF devices through IPEN network and also explained about the bio-assays (DR-CALUX) testing methods to assess the concentration of Dioxins.
- On being asked about the appropriate disposal method for contaminated samples tested at the lab and also the duplicate samples kept at the office premises, he advised that according to Basel Convention, non-combustible methods should be used to dispose samples with high POPs content and combustible methods or through a landfill for samples with low POPs content. The duplicate set should be stored in a safe manner so that they do not leach to the environment.

### Antimicrobial Resistance

**Mr. David Sutherland**, WHO gave his presentation on anti-microbial resistance in which he discussed the importance of the issue in South Asia region and the problems originating from the unchecked entry of antibiotics in human life cycle. He discussed about the gaps in understanding the complex issue of AMR and explained the environment's role in AMR in detail. He pointed out to the areas where research is required. He raised concern about the lack of recording of the extent of transmission of antimicrobial resistance between humans, animals and the environment and the ignorance about different sources of antibiotics and antibiotic resistant bacteria. He further spoke of the studies conducted in past assessing the concentration of pharmaceutical compounds in the environment especially in water. He discussed the global action plan for antimicrobial resistance and its objectives and called for an increase in research and advocacy to

curb the menace of antimicrobial resistance. Lastly, he spoke about the available funding to tackle the issue of AMR.

### **Discussion:**

- The participants raised queries about the organizations involved in AMR survey in their country and were advised to work for raising awareness among doctors and patients to refrain from quick fixes for medical ailments which aggravates antimicrobial resistance.
- He informed the participants about the list of 120 prominent pharmaceutical compounds which are included in the WHO list as they are the most critically important antimicrobials when queried about the list of antibiotics used for the study. He also called for awareness generation about antimicrobial resistance and reduction of toxic waste when queried about the appropriate ways to devise a national level strategy for AMR resistance.

## **Session 6: Technical and Experience Sharing session on Sustainable Agricultural Practices**

### **Sustainable Agriculture: Working with the farmers to adapt organic farming practices**

This presentation was given by Mr. Suranjan from Green movement of Sri Lanka in which he gave the geographical and agricultural details about farming in Sri Lanka and talked about ensuring self-sufficiency in livelihoods as the core value of sustainable agriculture. He further discussed the strategies and activities to promote sustainable agriculture in Sri Lanka and mentioned the programme started by his organisation in 1998 to promote domestically grown food and traditional recipes to curb anaemia. He further discussed ways to promote credit schemes, seed banks and use of traditional knowledge in farming and called for the active involvement of youth in agriculture to make this practice sustainable.



### **Discussion points:**

- The participants queried about the ways to control pesticides and were suggested to use traditional practices like use of neem pesticides and the practice of keeping a lamp near agricultural produce to keep pets away. He called for a re-thought on farmer's cooperative with adequate profit sharing to combat the influence of supermarkets in farming which prohibits sustainable agriculture.



## Organic Farming



The presentation on organic farming was given by Mr. Krishna Kant from Abhivyakti Foundation, Jharkhand in which he talked about his campaign for sustainable agriculture and the cyclic link between collaboration, recycling, evolution, combination and competition to engage in sustainable farming. He highlighted the decline in nutritional ingredient in food consumed by humans over the past sixty years as pointed out by studies conducted by AIIMS and Harvard University.

He also talked about the excessive use of pesticides in India and the health issues caused by it by citing the express train from Bathinda to Bikaner which is infamously called as the cancer express because of the large number of cancer patients from Punjab travelling to Bikaner to receive cancer treatment there. He highlighted the sustainable agriculture practices adopted by his organization in villages in Jharkhand and the positive effects it has had in terms of creating a sustainable ecosystem. He also highlighted the financial benefits the village communities had after adopting sustainable agricultural practices.

### Discussion:

The post session discussion highlighted the need to increase dietary diversity in order to curb the reliance on products which need pesticide use for production. He showcased how the presence of worms in fruits and vegetables indicates the non-use of pesticides and stressed upon the use of all spaces for sustainable agriculture by enhancing crop diversity and engagement in cropping sequences according to localized geographical factors.

### Field Visit

The participants were taken for a field visit organized by Conserve India, a Delhi based NGO working with rag pickers to collect plastic waste which is later used to design fashion products.

The group first headed to Dakshinpuri in South Delhi where they were shown the waste collection and sorting mechanism. The group was divided into three teams and they proceeded to visit three sites subsequently.

The first leg of the visit involved observing the door to door garbage collection from households where the participants were informed that on an average 5-6 kgs of waste is collected from every household and the waste collectors are paid 40 rupees a day for their service. The waste collectors informed the participants that people don't segregate waste despite separate bins being provided to them and the waste collected is a mix of dry and wet waste which makes the task of waste segregation difficult. On an average the waste collectors cater to about 20 households and take the waste to a dumping site (*dhalao*).

The second leg involved visiting the dumping site where municipal waste is also segregated. The participants queried about the safety precautions used while waste segregation and were

informed that despite the availability of gloves and masks, it is seldom used by the personnel involved in it.

The third leg of the visit involved understanding the plastic bag sorting system that has been devised by the team in order to teach the ragpickers to segregate the bags according to the desired colors. To make them learn better the colors are named after bollywood actors.

After the waste is sorted, it is processed by fusing plastic bags (after washing and cleaning) to make it into a fabric (leather like) used to make products like bags, chappals etc. Different colour patterns are used to make the products attractive which are then sold online and in open markets commercially. The product thus obtained is known as upcycled product because of the value addition during the recycling process.

Conserve India later took the group to Wazirabad, where in addition to explaining the process they also introduced the group to the refugee afghani women who use their traditional designing work to design these upcycled products.

**Discussion:**

A participant from Sri Lanka pointed out to the presence of garbage collecting centers in Sri Lanka where people can voluntarily drop garbage and further enquired whether the waste collectors have access to safety masks and gloves for waste segregation.

### Day 3: Media, Funding and Regional priorities

#### Plastic Toxic Liabilities: Invisible ocean pollutants & additives to plastic

The presentation on plastic toxic liabilities was given by **Mr. Bjorn Beeler**, IPEN International coordinator who described how toxic liabilities can harm human health and marine life. He explained the link between oil & gas industry to plastics industry and the side effects of recycling plastics with POPs and how major economies like India, China, Thailand and Malaysia have imposed a ban on recycled plastics to check the spread of POP's. The proposal to define plastic waste as hazardous under The Basel convention in 2019 was discussed along with the collaborations to list hazardous chemicals under international conventions (The Rotterdam Convention, The Stockholm Convention, SAICM) to prevent its spread. He also spoke about the listing of Dicofol, PFOA and PFAS in The Stockholm Convention in the upcoming COP.

#### Free SDG Campaign and a briefing on the SAICM process

Mr. Beeler moved on to discuss IPEN's 2030 plan and the contemporary issues emerging from plastics and petrochemical industry under SDG's 2030 agenda. He suggested the participants to watch the documentary 'Stories from the clean room' and cited an example of the way Samsung-workers dealt in 2018 to prevent deaths due to toxic chemicals which included an apology, compensation to employees and the inclusion of sub-contractors under the ambit of liability.

#### Mobilizing Resources:

The third part of the presentation by Mr. Bjorn Beeler dealt with resource mobilization for strategic collaboration and a shift from the donor driven model for funding. He urged the POs to think about organizations niche before applying for the funding. He called for proper identification of targets for which funds need to be raised and emphasized on understanding the need to mobilize resources on a particular issue. He stressed upon the need for mobilizing private donors, governments and international agencies for funds and defining agendas of organizations around chemical elimination goals of SDG to garner funds from a number of funding agencies such as Global Green Grants Fund.

#### Discussion:

- The participants queried about credible data on health and ecological impacts of plastics and about the presence of plastics in human fecal matter. They were informed about a report known as "Plastics and Health" (<https://www.ciel.org/news/plasticandhealth/>) which talks about the health impacts of plastics.
- On being questioned about the presence of EDCs in plastics he addressed the issue of BPA in whale blubber which highlights the pervasiveness of toxins in the food chain. He called for promise by manufacturers to stop the addition of EDCs in plastics and enforcement of extended producer responsibility to prevent the spread of toxins. He acknowledged the fact that total elimination of EDCs is difficult factoring in the demand for various types of plastics.
- Plastic pollution in Himalaya was raised as a serious concern and the issue to link ocean pollution downstream to plastic pollution upstream was raised. He mentioned that there is

a need to put responsibilities on the producers of such and acknowledged the need for research on plastic pollution in Himalayas which is a leading environmental concern in Nepal.

### Product development and communication strategy

The workshop on communication strategy and project proposal writing was conducted by **Mr. Arup Rai Baruah** of Margdarshak where he discussed the basics of formulating a project proposal and pointed out the basic objective of project proposal i.e the request for financial assistance. He mentioned different kinds of project proposals and described key differences in preparing a project proposal for them. He implored the participants to take up projects



even if the stated aim of the project varies from the aims of the organization in order to build credibility about the organization so that it can avail funds for its stated goals in the future. He suggested the participants to pitch for unsolicited projects as they have a chance of approval if the funding aims of the donor agencies change in the foreseeable future.

The second part of the workshop dealt with the frameworks used for project proposal writing in which the result based approach (RBA) and logical framework analysis (LFA) were discussed by Mr. Raj, Margdarshak. He described the difference between output, outcome and impact of the project and advised the participants to prepare project proposal by keeping the time frame of the stated objectives in mind and formulate activities accordingly. He explained the standard 4\*4 logframe analysis matrix and stressed upon the fact that communication is the weakest link in NGO management in South Asia and how it can be improved by the active use of social media. He further guided the POs on writing an effective press release for their respective reports.

### Discussion:

- The participants queried about the miscommunication between media and NGOs and were advised to engage in better networking with media houses so that they accept the press releases and publish it on their platform and minimize the risk of miscommunication.
- On being asked about writing of the press releases, he stressed upon the need to refrain from catchy headlines to raise issues of concern as it leads to trivialization of those issues and ends up sabotaging the efforts made for the issue.



## Genesis of Waste management regulations in India



The presentation on genesis of waste management regulations in India was given by **Ms. Sanchita Jindal**, former scientific advisor, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India. She started with the constitutional provisions for protection of environment in India and pointed out how the Union Carbide incident in 1984 was a watershed moment for environmental regulation in India. She gave key statistics about waste generation in India and how lack of waste

segregation is a bane for proper waste disposal in India. She advocated 'Polluter pays principle' and called for increase in extended producer responsibility on hazardous products. She highlighted the need to involve local authorities and village panchayats in waste management and cited the Ambikapur model of waste management as a template to be followed on a wider scale.

### Discussion:

- The participants commented upon the shoddy implementation of government regulations and were made aware of steps taken by state governments in India like the ban on plastics in Maharashtra and the need for citizens to step up to take responsibility to make India toxic free.
- On being questioned about plastic ban and adoption of alternatives, she pointed out that the call for alternatives to plastic should be analysed by the carbon footprint which the alternatives are going to leave.
- The participant from Nepal raised the concern over the presence of toxins in the entire ecosystem by highlighting the release of POPs (such as Dioxins and furans) through improper burning of plastics and was suggested to scale up the use of waste to energy incinerators and landfills for waste that can be recycled properly.

## Role of Law and Judiciary in management of hazardous chemicals and waste

**Mr. Sanjay Upadhyay**, advocate, Supreme Court of India and managing partner, Enviro Legal Defence Firm presented upon the role of law and judiciary in management of hazardous chemicals and waste in India in which he highlighted the origin of hazardous waste laws starting from the Stockholm Conference in 1972 and the landmark environmental cases which have shaped the environmental legislation landscape of the country. He advocated for a new approach to devise environmental laws and create better public awareness on it. He also stressed upon a shift from strict liability to absolute liability for producers of hazardous products. He lamented about the sad state of environmental governance in India and the role of NGT while acknowledging the e-waste rules, 2016 as a major step in strengthening the framework of environmental regulation by bringing in extended producers responsibility.

### Discussion:

- Upon being queried about the use of funds collected as fines, he informed the participants that most of the huge fines imposed by NGT are stayed by Supreme court and the fines which are collected goes to the pollution control boards which mostly uses it to pay salaries of judges which are adjudicating the cases related to the environment and thus fail to provide any compensation to the affected parties.
- The comment by the participant pointing out the shifting of responsibility from the executive to the judiciary elicited the response detailing the way in which NGT is acting as an executive body due to the lack of technical expertise in the government and the practical non-functioning of Environmental Protection Authority.
- He further pointed out about the presence of prior informed consent (PIC) in case of export of products which are banned in the country of origin when queried about the provisions which are in place to curb the export of toxins from one nation to another.



### Environmental Journalism



**Mr. Arjun Dhakal** from NEFEJ, Nepal presented upon environmental journalism and highlighted the communication strategy used by his organization to bring stakeholders from government, academics, media and civil society on a single platform to push for stronger environmental legislations and effective public campaigns. He described how the efforts by his organization to build a network of decision makers has led to significance of environmental issues in national media and called for building

better relations with media instead of indulging in media management. He cited the example of LISTSERVE which focuses on environmental issues and has the top decision makers of Nepal as its members as a template to be followed which can give issues of environmental concern the significance it deserves. He further advised the participants to make use of social media to bring the issues related to toxicity under public radar in order to raise awareness about it.

### Discussion:

- The participants raised query about the lack of reach of investigative stories about environment was acknowledged and the need to keep up the sustained effort on social media was recognized.
- The lack of transformation of social media impact to on ground impact was discussed and the participants were advised to be patient and engage to achieve their aim.
- He advised the participants to be specific about issues under the wider ambit of environment and engage the interested audience accordingly in order to achieve their stated objectives.

### Regional Strategy:

In the final session, the thrust of the discussion was to develop the region strategy based on the challenges of the region. Mr. Satish Sinha, facilitated this discussion considering the requirement of the region. Almost all the POs participated in this conversation. Some of the major issues evolved during the deliberations are:

Need to develop a uniform South Asia strategy to get rid of toxic chemicals in the region. Funding was identified as an important issue for the POs in the region. Therefore, efforts are required to involve corporate and international organizations such as SGF, Global Green Grants Fund and Swedish embassy. Resources from IPEN can also be utilized for technical as well as financial assistance.

In order to develop strategy to prevent the widespread use of chemical such as pesticides and herbicides in agriculture there is a dire need to work on those chemical pesticides which are already banned. This issue was also linked with the food safety.

Regular interactions among the POs (such as regional meeting) can also be organized during international policy meetings like SAICM.

The issues of concern under chemicals and waste which were mentioned during the discussion were:

- Waste:
  - Plastic waste
  - E-waste
- Chemicals:
  - Lead
  - Food Safety
  - Mercury
  - Pesticides
  - Contaminated sites
  - Chemicals in products

However the participants identified two major issues for the region: **plastic and food safety**.

Finally, it was unanimously decided that plastics is a critical issue for the region and efforts should be made to phase out single use plastic from the region. After the detailed discussion, action points were discussed to tackle the issue of single use plastics.

The following steps were identified in order to achieve the goal:

- Need to develop country situation reports for enhancing the understanding and to create enough data on plastics (production, usage, toxicity, impacts, disposal to oceans, landfill etc.) to initiate a campaign on advocating for banning single use plastics and initiate a country/region wide petition to government to ban single use plastics
- Advocating for EPR (Extended producer responsibility) in plastic management
- Building campaign in different countries in collaboration with the key stakeholders like industries, school and media.
- Approaching different donor agencies such as SGP, break free from plastics and ocean pollutant groups.
- Engaging countries around Bay of Bengal to curb the use of single use plastic.

The meeting concluded with renewed promise by the participants to ensure a toxics free future for South Asia and the world.

### Feedback from the participants

The meeting received a good response from the participating organizations. All of them appreciated the efforts taken to organize this meeting and mentioned that they had a fruitful discussion during the course of the meeting.

The POs largely agreed that the meeting fulfilled all of its objectives and they are now leaving with a better understanding about IPEN and its work. The POs also stated that they learnt about a number of issues such as plastic waste, organic farming, e-waste, legal strategy, project designing, EDCs, mercury, chemical waste, international policies, Anti-microbial resistance, Bio-medical waste, lead, mercury and sustainable agriculture. Many of the POs mentioned plastics as the most pressing topic for the region and combined efforts are required to tackle the issue in the region.



The participants also appreciated the field trip however some of the participants mentioned that the trip was bit time consuming and it could be interesting if they could have seen the technology/technology through which the plastic is converted into the fabric.



The participants also pressed upon the need of frequent regional meeting and mentioned that it should be conducted annually.

Most of the POs mentioned that they made good contacts during the meeting and are planning to work with a few POs on certain projects.

Finally, the POs emphasized that in future meetings, more time should be allotted for the discussions rather on presentations so that more focused discussions can be carried on more important issues.

Note: All the presentations can be viewed at:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Z3vM3fRN7FFxVm3FwFPxqgmhWX0PrxoY>