

Improving capacities to eliminate and prevent recurrence of obsolete pesticides as a model for tackling unused hazardous chemicals in the former Soviet Union

Summary of Findings, Recommendations and Lessons Learnt

2nd Meeting of the Programme Steering Committee

Kiev, Ukraine
November 11 – 12, 2013

Introduction:

The 2nd annual steering committee meeting of the project “Improving capacities to eliminate and prevent recurrence of obsolete pesticides as a model for tackling unused hazardous chemicals in the former Soviet Union” was held in Kiev on November 11 – 12 2013. The meeting provided an opportunity for participating countries and project partners to present progress on implementation in 2013 and also the plan for activities for 2014. Countries yet to conclude project agreements with FAO were also provided an opportunity to highlight the challenges they face from pesticide management and to report on the status of project signature. The meeting resulted in the following findings, recommendations and lessons learnt which will be factored into the implementation plan for 2014 and provisionally into 2015.

Findings:

The meeting allowed for both presentations on status by countries and also sessions of group working to examine areas where countries needed additional technical support and assistance. In summary:

1. The meeting found that the recommendations from the 1st SC meeting had been addressed during 2013;
2. The meeting found that the EC project, through its comprehensive approach and its close synergies with related national and donor actions, plays a vital role in providing a regional platform for better definition of the challenges facing the countries in the region from pesticides and POPs and to implement concrete solutions addressing those problems. The remaining challenges are to be addressed follow-on projects which can build on the foundations laid from the on-going project activities thus helping to achieve long term sustainability;
3. Countries which have signed project agreements with FAO (Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine) are all making progress towards implementation of risk reduction activities under Outcome 1 (obsolete pesticide management) and Outcome 2 (pesticide lifecycle management). All have developed Operational

Manuals, have established national implementation mechanisms, have implemented country level activities and have work plans for 2014 outlined;

4. Countries which have not signed project agreements with FAO (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) all confirmed high levels of support at technical level for joining the project by end of 2013 / early 2014. Azerbaijan, Belarus and Tajikistan have completed all internal review processes and are awaiting final approval to sign the agreement from senior officials. Kazakhstan confirmed the need for amendment of the legal agreement in relation to Clause 7 linked to ratification of the convention on immunities and privileges which is under consideration with the FAO legal service in Rome. Uzbekistan confirmed that whilst support for participation at technical level was strong the process for internal review and final approval was likely to stretch further;
5. The representative from Centre for International Projects (CIP) in Russian Federation expressed interest in supporting project implementation as a continuation of previous work completed in the Krasnoyarsk Krai. The proposed work would allow for a completion of inventory and environmental assessment work. The focus of the work would also be expanded to include a review of pesticide management activities at Krai / Oblast / Regional level which would feed into the wider review across the former Soviet Union (see item 6 below). FAO will examine the possibility of concluding an agreement with CIP for activities in Russian Federation in lieu of signing an agreement with Government who have indicated through the FAO Permanent Representative in Rome that they do not consider participation in the project of interest;
6. The review of activities completed under Outcome 2 on pesticide legislation, pesticide lifecycle review and promotion of lower risk alternatives to highly hazardous pesticides confirmed a number of common issues and areas for future follow-up. The review of legislation in all countries will be completed by end of 2013 with a plan to complete all other consultant reviews and national validation workshops with all key relevant stakeholders by the end of April 2014. The commonalities between countries across the region were presented at the SC meeting with primary finding being the need to focus on support to improve enforcement of existing legislation. All countries also confirmed they have need for:
 - more promotion of IPM as an alternative production strategy;
 - guidance on the management of pesticide containers;
 - improved product stewardship from pesticide suppliers;
 - standardisation of labelling requirements;
 - improvements to process for assessment of new products prior to registration;
 - guidance on surveillance monitoring of pesticide use and impacts including awareness on health impact linked to existing work on poison reporting by WHO; and,
 - improved access to laboratory capacity through training at national level and regional agreements.
7. All countries indicated support for the proposed increase in the number of regional and subregional training events (see recommendations);

8. Countries in Central Asia face difficulty in the export of waste across Russian Federation due to a ban on movement of waste imposed through the Customs Union of Belarus / Kazakhstan/ Russian Federation. Access to a any facility developed in Kazakhstan under a World Bank implemented GEF project is also unlikely to solve issues on waste treatment during the lifetime of this project as the facility is likely to be operational post 2020 and issues of waste movement to Kazakhstan are as yet undefined. A need for local solutions to treat wastes in this region is needed.
9. The Central Asian Countries (specifically Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) which are included in the FAO implemented GEF project on pesticide risk reduction in Central Asia and Turkey endorsed the implementation of the Project Preparation Grant (PPG) at the SC meeting. The PPG stage includes an inception workshop where the inter-linkages with the on-going EC project will be explored and defined to ensure complementarity;
10. Representatives from the Arctic Contaminants Action Programme (ACAP) and Nordic Environmental Finance Corporation (NEFCO) expressed support for the aims of the project and interest in formal cooperation on pesticide issues linked to protection of the Baltic and Arctic regions. The proposal of partnering with the EC project was endorsed by the Arctic Council ministerial meeting in September 2013;
11. Both UNEP Chemical and World Bank representatives confirmed support to the project and the efforts made to develop a coordinated response to the challenges facing the region from obsolete pesticides and POPs waste;
12. Countries with signed agreements will be supported in developing a common monitoring and evaluation reporting format by Green Cross Switzerland. The reporting format will be complimentary to the Outcome and Output reporting system developed in 2013 and will employ a dash-board approach with indicator “traffic” light system to highlight project implementation status. Green Cross will make arrangements for a regional training on the development of the national reporting plans early in 2014.

Recommendations:

The meeting concluded with the outline recommendations of the meeting. These have been reviewed and are presented here as the official conclusion of the meeting.

The recommendations will be a factor in the development of the 2014 work plan for implementation to be developed in late 2014 and to be presented in the 2013 annual report:

1. To increase the capacity building efforts including in non-signatory countries, the project will organise a series of regional training workshops and conferences in key areas. The focus of these regional trainings/meetings was decided by a series of group working exercises where countries from the Eastern European, Caucasus and Central Asian sub-regions were asked to identify and prioritise areas where a regional approach would be the most effective mechanism for implementation. Six regional

training / conference subject areas were confirmed and events will be scheduled for 2014. The subject areas below are not presented in any order of priority:

- a. Contaminated land: the regional review of contaminated sites to be completed by Blacksmith Institute will feature a regional meeting on contaminated land issues. FAO will explore the option of expanding the scope of this meeting into a regional conference on contaminated land with inclusion of international experts from Europe and the US to provide examples of proven technologies for land remediation and advice on the legislation issues which need to be considered when addressing the risks from this problem. Technical guidance on this issue will also be developed as volume 5 of the FAO Environmental Management Tool Kit (EMTK) for obsolete pesticides;
- b. Container management: based on the preliminary findings of the container management review conducted in Belarus and Ukraine countries expressed a strong interest in development of common approach to container management at a regional or sub-regional level. An initial regional workshop on container management best practice with examples from existing systems will be completed. This will be supported with more detailed country-by-country reviews to be completed as part of the proposed extension to Outcome 3 (see below);
- c. Waste management: the meeting proposed a training on implementation of the BAT BEP guidance from the Basel / Stockholm Convention Secretariats and guidance on the development of sound legal framework on environmentally sound disposal of pesticides;
- d. Environmentally sound disposal: the project will support a regional meeting on destruction technologies based on the Basel and Stockholm list of approved technologies for POPs waste. The project will explore the options for invitation of waste management companies to present their technologies along with regulators from Europe on the process of licensing and monitoring of emissions for destruction facilities;
- e. Pesticide legislation: the meeting confirmed a need for strengthening of the existing legal framework for pesticides and the promotion of harmonisation in key common areas defined by the reviews currently underway;
- f. Awareness raising: countries will be supported in the development of national awareness and communications strategies as part of the existing work under the management of Milieucontact International (MKI). MKI will organise a regional training for countries which have signed project agreements in early 2014. Country participants will include technical personnel from the key Government Agency implementing the project plus a national NGO partner selected by MKI based on an expression of interest to be posted in each country. The personnel trained by MKI will then be tasked with the development of a national stakeholder consultation meeting to confirm the main target groups, the main messages and the mechanism for delivery of the messages. The national workshop will include representatives from the local EU delegations.

2. In addition to the regional trainings and conferences outlined above the meeting also concluded that a number of additional cross-cutting activities be added to the scope of work to be implemented under Outcome 3 of the project:
 - a. Development of guidance and training programme on labelling of pesticides. This should include issues related to trade in counterfeit and illegal products;
 - b. Development of a regional approach to pesticide container management;
 - c. Development of targeted regional information and awareness materials on health impacts of pesticides for use by farmers and local communities.

The scope of work and terms of reference for each of these areas of work will be elaborated in the 2013 annual report;

3. Based on discussions on access to disposal technologies and the need for development of regional capacity for environmentally sound disposal the meeting endorsed the proposal to extend the scope of the existing survey on pesticide disposal capacity being implemented by IHPA to include the development of a technological and economic feasibility study on establishment of a network of pesticide waste handling and destruction facilities or a single facility serving the needs of the Eastern Neighbourhood region. The study should link with the work commencing by the World Bank in Kazakhstan on a large-scale national facility to ensure a common approach to the methodology for the studies. A TOR for the additional activities will be developed by IHPA for approval by FAO prior to any confirmed extension of the existing study;
4. Linked to the issue of partnership and sustainability the project will continue to develop partnerships aimed at ensuring the sustainability of project initiated activities. Existing partnerships with ACAP, UNDP, UNEP and World Bank will continue to be supported and where necessary new partnerships will be developed based on the principle of comparative advantage;
5. The project will also develop ideas for relevant follow-on actions. The projects results of the final conference on Outcome 2, for example, can form the basis of a follow-on project on a regional approach to capacity development on pest and pesticide management linked to harmonisation of legislation across the region, convergence with EU standards, development of regional approaches to labelling and container management, expansion of the work on contaminated land assessment and remediation and development of a regional platform for promotion of lower risk alternatives to Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) through implementation of demonstration activities;
6. National level safeguarding and disposal activities should be used as pilot / demonstration exercises. Supervision of activities at country level by representatives from neighbouring countries as a quality assurance measure should be considered;

7. Countries from the Central Asia grouping (specifically Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) are requested to formally confirm support the implementation of the Project Preparation grant (PPG) phase of the GEF funded project on pesticide risk reduction. This is an example of how the EC project can result in the development of a complimentary follow on project which will improve the overall sustainability. A project inception mission to examine the linkages of the two projects can only be held once the SC representatives from the EC project have confirmed to the national GEF focal point their support of the PPG proposal (supplied separately);
8. The project should link with existing efforts by WHO on development of centres for reporting of pesticide poisonings and health impacts;
9. The meeting endorsed the adaptation of the existing training materials on pesticide risk reduction and the planned partnering with national teaching institutions to offer the course materials as part of the national curriculum at University level. The expansion of the course. Modules to include training on labour issues such as child exposure and farm worker safety was supported. The further adaptation of materials on teaching on sustainable food production at primary and secondary school level were also supported;
10. Project web site to be operational in first quarter of 2014 with links to country activities, partner activities, events calendar, related projects and initiatives, news flashes, training events etc. This form a component of the wider communications and awareness efforts in 2014 which will include the development of national awareness strategies, common communication tools, community focused awareness campaigns on the risks from pesticide mis-use and a series of visibility events to be identified in the coming months;
11. The 2014 SC meeting will be held in Kyrgyzstan in November 2014.

Lessons from SC meeting:

The SC meeting can be considered as meeting all the aims and objectives as set out in the terms of reference presented in the original project description. As with all meetings there are always areas where we can improve and the following section provides an outline of the areas where we will work to improve in the future. The points are subdivided based on headings including organisation of the meeting and the format for the meeting:

Organisation of the meeting:

1. The meeting was organised by a committee comprising representatives from FAO, Green Cross Switzerland and Green Cross Belarus. At times the roles of the partners became blurred and in future FAO will appoint an event manager which will report on preparations on a monthly / weekly basis to the project coordinator and budget holder at FAO and EC to ensure all FAO procurement and financial management requirements are fully met;

2. Formal notification of the meeting to high level officials to be sent out 3 months before the date of the meeting. Country focal points are to contact senior officials to provide confirmation of appointment to join the meeting before officially registering;
3. Lines of communication for the organisation of travel, hotels, payments and other logistical issues will be made clear to all participants at the time of the first announcement of the meeting dates and venue. An on-line registration form will be developed as part of the new project web page and all arrangements will be coordinated through this common platform so removing the need for direct dialogue unless essential. All registrations should be completed at least 1 month before the meeting;
4. Countries with signed agreements should ensure that a minimum of two technical persons (from Agriculture and Environment / Emergency) are confirmed to attend the meeting with an additional senior decision maker also joining the meeting for the high level session on the last day as a minimum;
5. The organisation of the meeting was made more complex by linking it with the IHPA Forum and the Outcome 2 results workshop. Whilst this achieved some savings on travel for participants it did mean some country and partner representatives were unable to join sessions in the events due to common timing. The saving on travel costs for participants was also offset by increased management costs needed to ensure coordination between the various events. As a result it has been decided that the SC meeting will remain a separate event in the future with report back on the findings and recommendations of the various regional meetings scheduled for completion in 2014;
6. The inclusion of the ROM evaluators in the meeting did facilitate their evaluation of the project, but would be more appropriate in the conclusion rather than the beginning of their mission;
7. The agenda for the meeting was too heavy and crammed with information so it is proposed to have a two day technical meeting with a 1 day high level segment for presentation of results and a summary of findings to the national officials;
8. The meeting formal reception and dinner will be moved to the final night to celebrate the conclusion of the meeting;
9. The sessions will be broken up with more short breaks to allow time for separate networking and discussions between participants;
10. All presentations must be provided a minimum of 2 weeks before the event and all need to be translated into Russian to allow bi-lingual presentation on two separate screens;
11. A local national focal point responsible for local administration and coordination of logistics is needed along with technical specialists to deal with IT issues during the event;

12. All materials to be provided on USB disks and not CDs and also loaded onto web site to allow down load direct by participants;

Format of the meeting:

1. The number of presentations is to be reduced to allow more time for group discussion and group working to further improve the level of active participation by the country and partner representatives;
2. Future meetings will be preceded by completion of a summary status report of implementation at country level and partner level. The summary status report will replace the country presentations and allow for more in-depth discussion on key areas of concern and more group working to identify and resolve issues;
3. A series of group working sessions will be included in the meeting based on discussion of the various regional events scheduled in 2014. These include the 6 regional workshop /conferences;
4. Separate sessions on issues encountered, risks and lessons learnt during implementation will be included. A pro-forma table will be circulated to participants prior to the meeting to allow for regional trends to be identified and mitigation strategies proposed and discussed by the group;
5. More time will be provided to allow for analysis and debate on the group working sessions and presentations;
6. A clear road map of where we are and we need to focus our efforts will be provided as part of the overall discussion on Monitoring and Evaluation;
7. International partners and consultants present at the meeting will provide more support to the working groups and discussions as facilitators;
8. Countries must ensure that all information contained in presentation and provided to the meeting is cleared for release. The project retains the right to publish all information provided in reports and presentations;
9. An evaluation form will be circulated at the end of each day to allow for feedback on the meeting and adjustment to timings and content based on specific requests from the participants.