



FACT SHEET

Mainstreaming gender in chemical and waste policy as the way to address inequality

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Gender equality is a core human rights and development issue, as highlighted in several international and regional human rights instruments, including those that are part of multilateral environmental agreements. Law-binding and voluntary agreements on chemicals and waste are no exception and play an essential role in increasing the participation of women and men in the management of chemicals and waste, while contributing to gender equality.

Chemical pollution can disproportionately affect women's health because of their different susceptibility and likelihood of exposure to different toxic substances at workplace and at home. Reports show that women are exposed to over 160 chemicals every day through consumer products including cleaning products, cosmetics, menstruation products and more.¹² Women are the first environment for babies and their health is critical to reducing child disability and mortality. However, women cannot be empowered if hazardous chemicals weaken females across the globe; and gender equality cannot be achieved if exposure to hazardous chemicals causes women to suffer from cancer, chronic disease, infertility, or damage to their nervous system.

Knowing gender-disaggregated data is important to better identify exposure routes, however this data is scarce or absent. According to UNEP, "failing to address gender differences neglects the needs of half of the world's population as well as of future generations".³ Effective

¹ https://cdn3.ewg.org/sites/default/files/u352/Toxic%20Twenty%20Report_2.pdf?_ga=2.158873274.1230616965.1582815090-479163843.1582815090

² <https://www.womensvoices.org/menstrual-care-products/chem-fatale-report/chem-fatale-fact-sheet/>

³ <https://www.unenvironment.org/ru/node/27298>

gender mainstreaming in the chemicals and waste agenda at national and international levels should require countries, international, scientific and civil society organizations consistently collect sex-disaggregated data and use this data for informed decision-making and policy to eliminate gender disparity.

Existing gender mainstreaming policies include those highlighted in the Rio Declaration on environment and development⁴, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants⁵, the Minamata Convention on Mercury⁶, the Dubai Declaration of the Strategic Approach to international Chemicals management (SAICM)⁷, the Sustainable Development Goals⁸, the GEF policy on gender mainstreaming⁹. Below are examples of texts included in these international agreements that emphasize a gender perspective; links to documents of international organizations, which are manuals and trainings on gender topics; and examples of national regulations related to mainstreaming of gender into national legislation.

References to women in the texts of chemical agreement

Stockholm Convention

“Aware of the health concerns, especially in developing countries, resulting from local exposure to persistent organic pollutants, in particular impacts upon women and, through them, upon future generations,”

Article 7 (2)

The Parties shall, where appropriate, cooperate directly or through global, regional and subregional organizations, and consult their national stakeholders, including women’s groups and groups involved in the health of children, in order to facilitate the development, implementation and updating of their implementation plans.

Article 10 (1)

(c) Development and implementation, especially for women, children and the least educated, of educational and public awareness programmes on persistent organic pollutants, as well as on their health and environmental effects and on their alternatives;

Minamata Convention

Aware of the health concerns, especially in developing countries, resulting from exposure to mercury of vulnerable populations, especially women, children, and, through them, future generations;

Annex C

⁴ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) Rio Declaration on environment and development, <http://www.unep.org/documents.multilingual/default.asp?documentid=78&articleid=1163>

⁵ Stockholm Convention preamble, <http://chm.pops.int/TheConvention/Overview/TextoftheConvention/tabid/2232/Default.aspx>

⁶ Minamata Convention on Mercury http://www.mercuryconvention.org/Portals/11/documents/conventionText/Minamata%20Convention%20on%20Mercury_e.pdf

⁷ UNEP - WHO (2006) Dubai Declaration, para 18, Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management http://www.saicm.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=73&Itemid=475

⁸ United Nations (2015) Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN General Assembly, A/RES/70/1 http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E

⁹ https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/Gender_Mainstreaming_Policy-2012_0.pdf

(i) Strategies to prevent the exposure of vulnerable populations, particularly children and women of child-bearing age, especially pregnant women, to mercury used in artisanal and small-scale gold mining;

SAICM

Dubai Declaration

18. We will work towards effective and efficient governance of chemicals management by means of transparency, public participation and accountability involving all sectors of society, in particular striving for the equal participation of women in chemicals management;

OPS Risk Reduction

Risk reduction measures need to be improved to prevent the adverse effects of chemicals on the health of children, pregnant women, fertile populations, the elderly, the poor, workers and other vulnerable groups and susceptible environments

OPS Governance

That in many countries some stakeholders, particularly women and indigenous communities, still do not participate in all aspects of decision-making related to the sound management of chemicals, a situation which needs to be addressed

To promote and support meaningful and active participation by all sectors of civil society, particularly women, workers and indigenous communities, in regulatory and other decision-making processes that relate to chemical safety

To ensure equal participation of women in decision-making on chemicals policy and management;

Global plan of action

Examples of measures to safeguard the health of women and children are the minimization of chemical exposures before conception and through gestation, infancy, childhood and adolescence

SDG5

Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is included in SDG 5 with the following major targets:

5.1: *"End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere"*

5.5: *"Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life."*

5a: *"Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws."*

5c: *"Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels."*

The GEF policy on gender mainstreaming

The Policy includes several requirements for the GEF Secretariat and GEF Partner Agencies, including inter alia the following:

- (a) In order to be eligible to receive GEF financing for GEF projects, all GEF Partner Agencies will be required to have established either (a) policies, (b) strategies, or (c) action plans that promote gender equality;
- (b) The policies, strategies, or action plans of each GEF Partner Agency will need to satisfy the minimum criteria on gender mainstreaming that are included in the policy for the Agency's systems to be assessed as adequate.

The policy of the Intergovernmental organisations on gender mainstreaming

- UNDP Guidelines: Mainstreaming Gender into UNDP-GEF projects on chemicals and waste¹⁰
- OECD gender indicators¹¹
- UNECE indicators for gender equality¹²
- UNDP Gender and Chemicals report¹³
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2012): OECD Guidance Document on Standardised Test Guidelines for Evaluating Chemicals for Endocrine Disruption. Series on Testing and Assessment (ENV/JM/MONO(2012)22). No. 150. OECD: Paris¹⁴
- United Nations Development Programme / UNDP Environment and Energy Group (UNDP) (2011): Chemicals and Gender. Gender Mainstreaming Guidance Series – Chemicals Management. UNDP: New York¹⁵
- United Nations Development Programme / UNDP Environment and Energy Group (UNDP) (2011): Chemicals and Gender. Gender Mainstreaming Guidance Series – Chemicals Management. UNDP: New York¹⁶
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2007): Chemicals Management: The why and how of mainstreaming gender.

¹⁰ https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/chemicals_management/GuidanceGender&Chemicals.html

(authored by Olga Speranskaya and Alexandra Caterbow)

¹¹ <http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/43041409.pdf>

¹² http://www.unece.org/stats/publications/gender_equality.html

¹³ http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/chemicals_management/chemicals-and-gender.html

¹⁴ [http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=ENV/JM/MONO\(2012\)22&doclanguage=en](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=ENV/JM/MONO(2012)22&doclanguage=en) (last accessed 2019.01-31).

¹⁵ <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/environment-energy/www-ee-library/chemicals-management/chemicals-and-gender/2011%20Chemical&Gender.pdf>;

¹⁶ <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/environment-energy/www-ee-library/chemicals-management/chemicals-management-the-why-and-how-of-mainstreaming-gender/Chemicals%20Management%20and%20Gender%20Mainstreaming.pdf>.

National regulations related to mainstreaming of gender into national legislation on chemicals include:

Canada:

<https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-financement/mainstream-integration.aspx?lang=eng>

Regulating Toxics: Sex and Gender in Canada's Chemicals Management Plan

<https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=olsrps>

European Union:

https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/ti_pubpdf_mh0216901enn_pdfweb_20170124144008.pdf

United States of America:

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-04/documents/css-strap.pdf>

Assessing and Managing Chemicals under TSCA

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-06/documents/bills-114hr2576eah.pdf>