

45min for gender in sectors

WEBINAR SERIES ON GENDER EQUALITY
IN VARIOUS CHEMICAL SECTORS

WEBINAR 5:
GENDER & CHEMICALS IN AGRICULTURE

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION



WEBINAR SERIES: 45MIN FOR GENDER IN SECTORS

Every last Tuesday of the month, 2 – 2:45pm CEST:

- **WEBINAR 1 – 23rd of Feb 2021:** Gender & Chemicals in Toxicology
- **WEBINAR 2 – 30th of March 2021:** Gender & Chemicals in Cosmetics
- **WEBINAR 3 – 27th of April 2021:** Gender & Chemicals in Science
- **WEBINAR 4 – 25th of May 2021:** Gender & Chemicals in Textiles
- **WEBINAR 5 – 29th of June 2021:** Gender & Chemicals in Agriculture

AGENDA WEBINAR 5: GENDER & CHEMICALS IN AGRICULTURE

- Presentation by Elizabeth Mueni Kiio-Nzioka
- Q&A
- Brainstorming:
How to improve the sector?





GUEST SPEAKER:

ELIZABETH MUENI KIIO-NZIOKA

Gender & Chemicals in Agriculture (Pesticides)

Kenya

By

Elizabeth Mueni Kiiio-Nzioka

Women in a Rice plantation in Senegal – Courtesy Downtoearth

- According to FAO, women make up roughly half of the agricultural workforce in sub-Saharan Africa
- But due to social and cultural discrimination, they often lack access to the knowledge, inputs, technologies and decision-making skills needed to increase agricultural productivity and incomes.



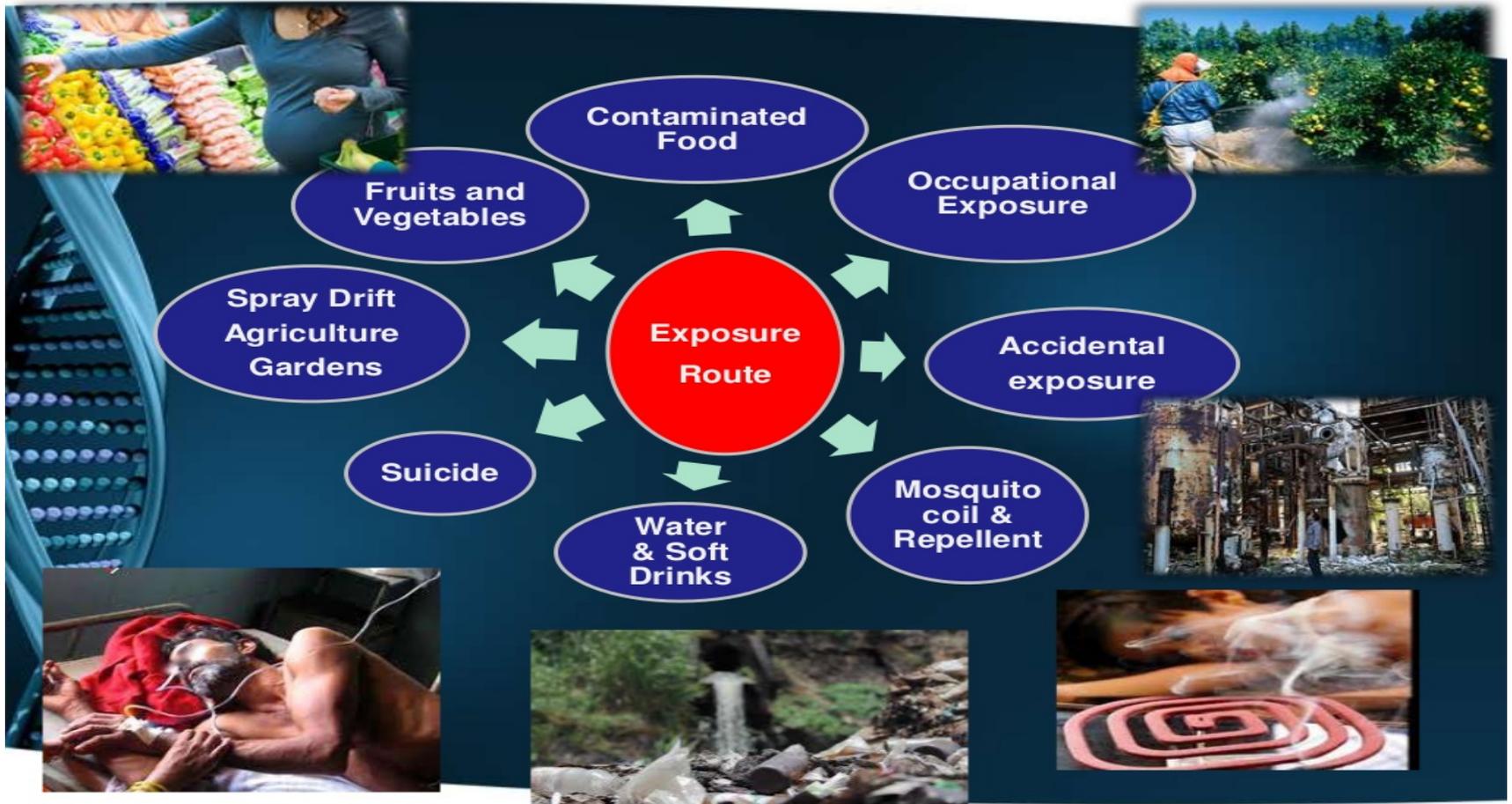
Introduction

- A significant part of the Kenyan population faces food insecurity.
- Due to multiple challenges that hinder agricultural productivity ; high on farm and post-harvest losses due to pests and diseases
- Govt agricultural policy is therefore big on expanding use of production-enhancing inputs such as pesticides
- However, similar effort lacks in enforcing safety measures against potential pesticides health and environmental hazards
- The Kenya Pest Control Products Board has not followed WHO or FAO guidelines on use of pesticides
- This saw Kenyan horticultural products rejected by the EU for having high levels of pesticide residue.

Pesticides

- **Pesticides** are not a recent inventions! Many ancient civilizations **used pesticides** to protect their **crops** from insects, fungi, and weeds.
- The same applies today - a general acceptance that without pesticides, farmers would loose a large portion of their crops to pests
- The most commonly applied agricultural chemicals are **pesticides** like **insecticides**, **rodenticides**, and **fungicides** and **herbicides**

Exposure Route



Study findings on pesticide usage

- Most studies or write-ups were done to get effects of pesticides on farmers and workers were general not necessarily with a gender lense
- The findings are therefore not necessarily in-depth when they speak to the gender concern
- A study, "Risk of agrochemicals on the environment and human health" by Gitahi Moses, found out:
 - that more than 95% of the farmers used agro-chemicals,
 - Due to low levels of awareness/inadequate knowledge of the dangers posed by these chemicals, farmers and workers had poor handling and disposing practices resulting in adverse human health effects.

Risks to human health

Low-Level Pesticide
Exposure Linked to
Parkinson's Disease

Exposure Leads to:

- Death
- Extinction species
- Hormone Imbalance
- Birth defects
- Mutation
- Cancer
- Nuro degenerative disorder

The collage also features several photographs: a dead bird, a collage of birds with the text 'உலர் சிமென்டுவெள்ளி தினம்' (Ular Chimentuvanali Dinam), a severely deformed monkey, a child with a large tumor, a baby with a large tumor, and a dead bird on a table.

The practice by different genders

- Farmers, more so women, have little training on agrochemical usage, therefore tend to rely on their own experience in deciding the type of chemical to use
- For example, instead of using the calibrated measuring jar/cup provided by manufacturers to determine the quantities of the agrochemicals to use, most use approximation.
- On disposal after use, many farmers throw the empty containers in pits, others in the farm, while few destroy, burn or bury the containers as required

Effects on different genders

- More women than men were found to be at risk of agrochemicals exposure, while babies and children were at more risk of agrochemicals exposure than the women, though the report did not explain how or why?
- Limited knowledge and awareness of safe handling and storage of agrochemicals
- Few knew the remedy to use in case of accidental poisoning
- Reports of negative health effects as a result of inappropriate handling or use of agrochemicals by the community members were reported
- Also use for suicide attempts was reported but not on gender lines.

Effects on different genders contd

- Another study ,**Health Impact of Pesticides on Residents and Horticultural Workers in the Lake Naivasha Region, Kenya**, assessed the symptoms commonly experienced by residents of Naivasha town due to pesticide exposure.
- Findings - several residents exhibited respiratory; skin, joints and bones; and nervous system complications.
- A higher frequency of complications were among planters, weeders and harvesters who are mainly women (61.6%) than in sprayers (men) working in horticultural farms.

Case study of maize

- Study of a gender sensitive technology to reduce pesticides exposure
- Findings:
 - Division of labor in the farm is culturally-specific and is also affected by: individual farm household characteristic; levels of income; access to technology and; appropriateness of the specific technology.
 - Differences :
 - in pastoral communities women perform post-harvest all the activities, while
 - agricultural communities - division of labor between men and women in post-harvest activities i.e. de-husking, staking of the maize and transporting from the farm to the homestead is done by men. Winnowing especially if done manually; drying grain; storage and; preparation of grain for consumption, is done by women

Maize case study

- To reduce post harvest losses farmers are adopting metal silo technology
- Women reported that, owning a metal silo reduced their labor burden as they do not have to dust maize frequently with pesticides and this allows them to engage in other activities.
- They also reported improved health status because they no longer use chemicals to dust the maize and neither do they consume food that is contaminated by pesticides.
- Male farmers reported that they no longer have to buy pesticides or bags to store the maize and therefore in the long run using metal silos saves money.
- Metal silos fully protected grains from rats, weevils and termite attack
- Farmers do not have to sell maize immediately after harvesting; they can now wait and sell when prices are good.

Health & safety at the workplace

- According to a FIDA report, *“Tracking working conditions of women labourers and the socio-economic status of women in the kericho tea zones”*,
- in a cross-section of tea farms, workers are not provided with adequate protective gear appropriate for their work, which leads -ve health consequences.
- Employers do provide gloves and aprons among other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to workers, but most do not provide footwear
- In certain instances, workers have stated *that the exemption of women from working with hazardous chemicals, has ironically had adverse consequences on the promotion prospects or job security of expectant or nursing mothers.*

Petition

- In 2019, lobby groups in Kenya petitioned Parliament to order the withdrawal of harmful chemical pesticides in the Kenyan market.
- Their concern was the increase of pesticides in Kenya, posing risk to human health and the environment.
- The volume of imported herbicides, insecticides and fungicides had doubled in four years from 6,400 tonnes in 2015 to 15,600 tonnes in 2018.
- Despite this, there is no data available concerning the use of pesticides in food, water and soil and their related impacts.
- Identified 485 harmful pesticide products in the Kenyan market
- The petition made several recommendations which the parliamentary report comprehensively responded to.

Conclusion

- The report was however not gender sensitive
- I am guessing this was so because the petition was in itself also gender blind
- The Petition and other petitioners concerns and asks as well as the Parliamentary committee report findings and recommendations can be found in the Kenyan parliament website – *Report on public petition on withdrawal of harmful chemicals pesticides*
- The gender agenda on chemicals and pesticides use in Kenya is could do with help
- There is a clear cut work for gender experts to lobby, educate and create aware on the importance of incorporating gender for effective interventions.

Thank you

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**BRAINSTORMING:
HOW TO IMPROVE THE SECTOR?**

Please use the link in the chat box



THANK YOU!

More information & all webinar recordings:

www.gender-chemicals.org