

GCP - Gender & Chemicals Partnership

Concept Note

Prepared by MSP Institute, based on consultations with interested stakeholders

September 2023

Introduction

The MSP Institute has initiated discussions about a multi-stakeholder partnership on gender and chemicals to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in chemicals management and support addressing the global pollution crisis.

This concept note on the planned partnership on gender and chemicals is based on initial brainstorming conversations with interested stakeholders conducted in April and May 2023, as well as virtual meetings on 19 June, 28 July, 29 August and 11 September 2023.

Background

In 1995 the Fourth World Conference on Women endorsed gender mainstreaming as a critical and strategic approach for achieving gender equality commitments. Gender mainstreaming is a global cross-cutting task, and the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**¹ mandates all stakeholders in development policies and programmes, including UN organizations, Member States and civil society actors, to take action in this regard. In addition, political guidance was also given regarding the gendered effects of chemicals:

25.8 (...) Develop gender-sensitive databases, information and monitoring systems and participatory action-oriented research, methodologies and policy analyses, with the collaboration of academic institutions and local women researchers.

247. "Environmental risks in the home and workplace may have a disproportionate impact on women's health because of women's different susceptibilities to the toxic effects of various chemicals.

SDG5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls has reaffirmed these objectives and tasks. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underlines that it applies to all countries, and that the necessary transformation requires the engagement, and collaboration, of all stakeholders.

More recently, the linkages between gender and chemicals have been noted in several international processes on chemicals, waste and pollution;

- **The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM):** SAICM's Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS) draws attention to the fact "[t]hat 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" and states that the objectives of the Strategic Approach with regard to governance are: "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"; and "to ensure equal participation of women in decision-making on

¹ [UN \(1995\): Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.](#)

chemicals policy and management”². In the Intersessional Process SAICM Beyond 2020 the establishment of a gender action plan is discussed.³

- **The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions:** Gender equality is an integral part of the implementation of the BRS Conventions, including the Secretariat activities. The BRS Secretariat developed a Gender Action Plan (GAP) in 2013, which was updated in 2016, 2019 and 2023.⁴
- **The Minamata Convention on Mercury** pays specific attention to the needs of vulnerable populations, especially women and children, in several parts of its text. Annex C to the Convention states that National Action Plans to address artisanal and small-scale gold mining are to include strategies to prevent the exposure of vulnerable populations, particularly children and women of childbearing age, especially pregnant women, to mercury used in artisanal and small-scale gold mining. Principles of gender equality are embedded in the current Programme of Work of the Minamata Convention, the development of a gender action plan for the Minamata Convention during the biennium 2022–2023 was agreed and the draft Gender Action Plan is expected to be submitted for consideration by the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, which is scheduled to take place from 30 October to 3 November 2023 in Geneva.⁵

However, gender-responsive chemicals management has hardly been realised worldwide.

In his current report on “Women, girls and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment”⁶ the UN Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, Mr David R. Boyd, states that *“to achieve gender equality and ecological sustainability, States must tackle gender-based discrimination and environmental injustices with urgent, gender-transformative, rights-based (...) environmental action.”*

In addition, various civil society organizations have identified policy recommendations and actions to strengthen gender considerations in (inter)national chemicals management.⁷

We welcome the growing awareness at the international level that chemicals often have gendered impacts on human health and that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls can support the sound management of chemicals and waste, as well as international initiatives that promote gender activities in chemicals management in projects and countries.

We want to build on these developments and strengthen the impact together.

Purpose and goals of the partnership

The Gender & Chemicals Partnership is being established to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in chemicals management and to support addressing the

² SAICM Secretariat (2012): Overarching Policy Strategy

³ See SAICM (2023): Intersessional Process Single Consolidated Document Draft, p. 5.

⁴ BRS Secretariat (2023): BRS Gender Action Plan.

⁵ Minamata Convention on Mercury Secretariat (2023): Gender.

⁶ Human Rights Council (2023): Women, girls and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

⁷ See e.g. IPEN/SAICM Secretariat (2020): Women, Chemicals and the SDGs; MSP Institute (2019): Gender and SAICM beyond 2020; WECF and WEN (2021): Gender Just Chemicals Policy, and the joint position paper by the informal women and gender at SAICM group (2019)

global pollution crisis and contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Objectives and activities

The partnership shall focus on joint activities that enable and promote gender-transformative⁸ interventions to achieve gender equality and tackle gender-based discrimination and injustices in chemicals management. Details and scope of activities as well as a strategy for monitoring, evaluation and learning need to be discussed and agreed together.

The following potential partnership objectives and corresponding activities – listed here in no particular order - were discussed in initial consultations and form a basis of further discussions; (the first agreed activities that the partnership would like to start with are underlined here):

1) Raising awareness on the linkages of gender and chemicals and fostering gender mainstreaming activities

- supporting the integration of gender issues in existing partnerships and programs on chemicals, waste, and pollution;
- developing joint global commitments on gender and chemicals;
- unlocking new, additional funding for gender-specific activities in the field of chemicals management;
- collaborate with UN and other intergovernmental organizations, including the Secretariats of related chemicals conventions and processes to raise visibility of and attention to the gendered dimensions of chemicals and wastes.

2) Assisting stakeholders in implementing gender mainstreaming activities

- supporting states to implement gendered national legislation and to develop gender-responsive national action plans; including through existing projects;
- working with implementing agencies of the Global Environment Facility, governments, executing agencies, CSOs/women's organizations, and other interested entities in developing gender-transformative chemicals and waste projects;
- supporting stakeholders to develop gender road maps; and support organizations who wish to integrate / mainstream gender in tools, processes, projects, etc.
- providing space for exchange on gender mainstreaming.

3) Supporting gender data collection, and gender research

- supporting gender data collection and disaggregation by science, industry and (inter)national statistical institutes;
- developing a chemical inventory/ database on gender-specific health impacts of chemical exposure;
- supporting the integration of gender aspects in existing databases/portals.

⁸ Gender-transformative approaches challenge the nature of the gendered power relationship between genders. They aim to transform unequal gender relations to promote shared power, control of resources, decision-making, and support for women's empowerment (UN Women, 2021).

4) Supporting knowledge sharing and training

- developing and disseminating e-learning courses;
- developing and disseminating gender-transformative chemicals hazard/risk communication plans, chemical safety trainings and checklists for the registration of chemicals;
- developing and disseminating case studies and factsheets for various stakeholder groups; highlighting role models/ gender champions (from all stakeholder groups).

5) Providing substantive input to international discussions on chemicals management

- supporting the development and implementation of Gender Action Plans in SAICM Beyond 2020 / MEAs;
- supporting the establishment of (national) gender focal points in SAICM Beyond 2020 / MEAs;
- contributing to the development of gender-responsive indicator(s) in SAICM Beyond 2020 / MEAs, and of women and chemicals safety as an issue of concern;
- strengthening gender aspects in international political discussions on chemicals outside of SAICM / MEAs, e.g. at the Ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, UNEA, HLPF, UN General Assembly.

Participating in the partnership

The partnership is open to all stakeholders willing to mainstream gender considerations in their organizations and their work and jointly undertake and support gender-transformative activities. It shall include governments, intergovernmental organizations, women's organisations and networks, non-governmental organisations, academia, financial mechanisms, workers and trade unions, private sector and industry, youth organisations, and others.

A suitable governance structure will be developed together. This will include criteria and procedures for joining and leaving the partnership, balanced representation of stakeholders, transparent decision-making processes, a no conflict of interest policy or code of conduct, rules and procedures for setting up and running a Secretariat to manage the day-to-day work of the partnership, and a resourcing strategy.

Resourcing the partnership

The partnership can work collaboratively on resourcing and fundraising and propose joint activities. This will help to raise funds, implement activities efficiently and create synergies.

Contributions from partners can include financial as well as in kind resources, earmarked for certain activities or general contributions, e.g. to the Secretariat costs.

Additional resources will need to be raised to support partnership activities. A suitable fundraising strategy will be developed together. It will need to be flexible and possibly combine different proposals and projects so as to allow that different sources contribute to different parts of partnership activities or partnership-related activities. Hence, the partnership fundraising strategy may include several sub-strategies suitable for different activities and different potential sources of funding. The partnership may decide to develop specific funding proposals by sub-groups of the partnership – e.g. governments and IGOs eligible for receiving funding from certain sources,

or sub-groups of NGOs, women's organisations, IGOs and other eligible to receive funding from other sources.

Timeline

The following timeline gives an overview of the key milestones in the initial phase of the partnership. A detailed timeline needs to be agreed and discussed together.

- Sept 2023 - launch of partnership at ICCM5
- Oct-Dec 2023 – agreement on an initial set of collaborative activities and begin fundraising for implementing these / finalizing governance structure
- Q1/Q2 2024 – full members meeting (e.g. at the margins of UNEA6), development of a detailed implementation plan
- Q3 2024 – agreement on a 2-year implementation plan