

UNEP/GEF projects “Implementation of the POPs Global Monitoring Plan under the Stockholm Convention” in the Asia Region and “Continuing Regional Support for the POPs Global Monitoring Plan under the Stockholm Convention” in the Africa, Pacific and Latin America and Caribbean Regions

Stakeholder Consultation on Securing Sustainable Conditions for the Monitoring of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) under the Stockholm Convention

Brisbane, Australia, 10-11 December 2019

Key Messages

Article 16 of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) requests parties to evaluate the effectiveness of the Convention four years after the date of entry into force of the Convention and periodically thereafter, including setting up and maintaining a Global Monitoring Plan (GMP) for obtaining comparable monitoring data on the presence of POPs in the environment and in humans. UNEP Chemicals and Health Branch implements projects to contribute to POPs monitoring and implementation of the Stockholm Convention’s GMP in developing countries.

As part of the projects, UNEP Chemicals and Health Branch, in close collaboration with project partners and relevant experts, has initiated an assessment of technical information generated through the projects to identify related facts towards contributing to the road map for sustainable monitoring of POPs. A focused and inclusive dialogue of key stakeholders representing science, policy and civil-society clusters related to POP monitoring, capacity building and sound management of hazardous chemicals should provide an opportunity to identify the scope and key elements of future capacity assistance activities with enhanced political and financial support.

A rigorous and long term monitoring program for POPs in the environment and biota is an absolute necessity to fulfill the scientific basis of Article 16 of the Convention, to undertake a technically sound and unbiased evaluation of the effectiveness of the convention, to provide an independent and neutral assessment of the impact of the technical measures implemented by the countries, and to provide the Conference of parties of the Stockholm convention an accurate feedback for the consideration of priorities of future programmes of the Convention. This should also contribute to reflecting the success of global POPs elimination efforts.

Participants agreed after two days intensive and engaged discussions and consultations anonymous on the following Key messages:

1. Essential and most feasible requirements for a global, sustainable and technically sound POPs monitoring system

While recognizing that there are cost implications, there was a general agreement, that the maintenance of a long-term POPs monitoring program, consistent with the Guidance for the Global Monitoring Plan for Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs GMP) developed under the Stockholm Convention, is an absolute must so that long-term trends can be kept under review. A long-term POPs monitoring programme has to include the following forms of monitoring.

1.1 Human milk

The human milk POPs monitoring programme must be continued in order to assess the evolving trends of POPs in humans. The current arrangements and support provided by UNEP for monitoring POPs in human milk is considered very efficient and cost-effective. It has provided a valuable archive of samples and results for current and future analysis, as needed.

1.2 Air

Cooperation and coordination with relevant air monitoring networks must be further strengthened. The sampling sites and the substances measured by the future UNEP project should be reviewed and adjusted considering the other monitoring programs with a focus on supporting optimum global coverage, measurement of the background concentrations, inclusion of newly listed POPs, and with priorities for the measurement of long term trends and long range transport.

1.3 Water

The water monitoring programme requires further development and consolidation in terms of sampling sites, substances measured, capacity building/tools and medium.

1.4 Matrices of National interest

National POPs monitoring is mainly focused on matrices of concerns and hot-spots within the national context towards contributing to reviewing and updating related national policies and programmes, while global POPs monitoring requires measuring the background levels. In order to have higher level country commitment and interest in global POPs monitoring, it is vital that country specific needs are also addressed in a more sustainable and cost-effective manner.

Key elements/parameters for a future project¹

1. Human milk monitoring - Continuation of the current model is a top priority.
 - a. Centrally organized, focus on trends.
 - b. Cost effective; archive opportunities.
2. Air monitoring- optimisation of:
 - a. Sites and analytes to ensure minimum global coverage;
 - b. Focus to complement with gaps found in existing networks;
 - c. Priority to support long-term trends.

¹ The final conclusions of Table 1 of the 2nd day World-Café.

3. Water monitoring - develop and consolidate further:
 - a. Sampling sites; capacity, tools;
 - b. Priority on time trends.
4. Interlaboratory Assessment programme- optimize impacts and cost-efficiency:
 - a. Serve as the recognised method to guarantee QA/QC for POPs analysis;
 - b. Introduce cost-effective criteria for participation;
 - c. Explore collaboration with other established programmes.
5. Cross-cutting- Enhanced data/trend interpretation:
 - a. Improve tools and guidance;
 - b. Assist in the use of monitoring results at national level.

2. Purposes, for which chemical analytical monitoring are needed

2.1 Data quality assurance

The inter-laboratory assessment programme is a recognized method to guarantee quality of analytical results of POPs in core matrices. Criteria for laboratories to participate in the Interlaboratory Assessment programmes must focus on those laboratories that have a potential to contribute to global monitoring POPs in the future with high quality and comparable data. The laboratory capacity assistance programme needs to be optimized and its cost effectiveness must be sharpened to focus on the labs best positioned to sustain related investments. Collaboration with other established interlaboratory assessment programmes should be explored for synergy and cost efficiency.

2.2 Data

Data handling, validation and interpretation, including analysis of trends, use of models and formulation of measures based on the results at national level must be improved, so that the use of the results in policy formulation and national implementation plans are strengthened, which creates conditions at national level to enhance interest for sustainable contribution to the generation of data. The POPs GMP Data Warehouse should be used to this end.

Utilize and strengthen the use, involvement and capacity of regional Stockholm Convention Centers in all these activities to help developing countries implement their national POPs monitoring program and to play a more important role in the global POPs monitoring.

Key elements/parameters for future projects²

1. Raise awareness at the national level to address the national interests on sound management of POPs (e.g. Open burning, waste management).
2. Support the use of generated information/data to inform stakeholders/donors/policy makers/others to comply with related obligation under the Stockholm Convention (e.g. NIPs).
3. Enhance possible linkages to existing monitoring programmes.

² The final conclusions of table 2 of the 2nd day World-Café.

4. Utilize and strengthen regional centres to help developing countries implement POPs monitoring activities.
5. Promote the allocation of a minimum percentage of the GEF replenishment for technical capacity enhancement for the implementation of core activities of POPs monitoring.
6. Strengthen linkages to broader sound management of chemicals and waste within the context of SDGs and high-level political priority activities.

3. Efficient and cost-effective implementation strategy, focusing on the best possible scenarios

The next UNEP POPs monitoring project must build on lessons learned and outputs of past activities. In order to be efficient and cost-effective, country commitments for sustainable POPs monitoring is essential. Therefore, the priority should be on countries that delivered well on previous activities, build capacity incrementally and focus not only to support capacity needs but also to ensure sustainability of those resources.

Future capacity assistance on national laboratories should concentrate more on the best performers based on the evaluation of outcomes from the previous rounds using clear and transparent terms of reference. Two laboratories per region (per required substances and medium) could be enough to implement a cost-effective global POPs monitoring programme.

The development of national/regional capacity to implement monitoring programmes should include practical approaches to address the challenges or provide solutions for sound management of POPs in respective countries.

Results and trends must be better used for awareness raising and decision making to promote environmentally sound management of POPs and enhance commitment of policy makers in reviewing and implementation of technical measures. Stakeholder collaboration, including the scientific community should be promoted for the compilation of information available and data interpretation. Care should be taken to facilitate countries, as needed, to communicate and exchange on the outcomes of monitoring results linked to national concerns in order to seek donor interests for follow-up work.

The commitment from funding agencies, such as GEF as well as related international agencies (UNEP, WHO etc.) is needed to highlight the POPs challenge and related issues to build better and broader policy understanding of the need to support monitoring activities.

Key elements/parameters for future projects³

1. Incorporate clear partner strategies for the delivery of services and capacity or capability for enhanced cost efficiency and improved quality outputs.
2. Clear/transparent terms of references for:
 - a. Laboratories/services;
 - b. Minimum requirements;

³ The final conclusions of table 3 of the 2nd day World-Café.

- c. Outcomes;
- d. Reporting timelines.
3. Build on learnings and outputs from previous rounds
4. Redesign interlaboratory assessment to meet capacity building objectives:
 - a. Define the outcomes;
 - b. As a tool to assess the deliveries of related capacity building project.

4. Sustainable financing opportunities and options

Long-term monitoring of POPs is imperative to gauge trends over time, and thus requires sustainable financing or resourcing over time too. The results of monitoring are an important public knowledge good in the overall governance of the POPs regime, and will require public funding support.

It is worth noting that data on POPs monitoring can also be useful in other setting, such as for indicators for environmental health, biodiversity and climate, and others.

Imperative is to make the narrative on POPs well understood by non-experts so that other see the value of supporting this work. Furthermore, strengthening of coordination, collaboration and involvement of external stakeholders in monitoring activities as well as with other environmental monitoring programmes such as mercury, lead, cadmium, etc. that are of high international priority, can help elevate the understanding and support for POPs monitoring. In this vein, key stakeholders such as academic institutions and government-linked research institutions can be drawn in to enhance the cost efficiency and identify more long-term sustainable financing.

At the national level, opportunities to strengthen linkages between POPs monitoring and other activities under the Stockholm Convention, such as the National Implementation Plans (NIPs), must be explored to enhance the sustainability and commitment of the national decision-makers. Data can be a powerful political tool to drive action.

It is also worth noting that outcomes of the analysis of long-term trends and levels of POPs in core media provide the scientific base for indicators for the GEF to evaluate the impact of related technical assistance projects. Allocating a minimum percentage of the GEF POPs portfolio in every funding cycle for selected core activities of the POPs monitoring programme and its capacity building activities is therefore recommended.

At the operational level, in terms of laboratories to secure buy-in, enhance the cost-effectiveness and promote sustainability, a small fee may be introduced for laboratories and/or stringent and transparent participation criteria for capacity building activities for laboratories and training recipients is recommended.

Key elements/parameters for future projects⁴

1. Monitoring results are public knowledge products and will require public funding.

⁴ The final conclusions of table 4 of the 2nd day World-Café.

2. The approach is to build upon what is available already, and to leverage additional resources with a clear focus on how the outcomes and outputs
3. directly deliver on data to support policy and implementation.
4. To be sustainable, it is imperative that there is strong country commitment, which also requires a real understanding and articulation of needs.
5. To garner sustained support, donor confidence in the merit and necessity of the monitoring work is imperative, and will have to be based on a strong justification, as well as engagement to validating political support.
6. The human milk survey is central to efficient and effective long-term POPs monitoring, and is best arranged by being centrally implemented.
7. The Interlaboratory process is effective for capacity building.

5. Next Steps

- Consolidate the outcomes, based on the consultation with participants, and elaborate the details based on inputs provided during the meeting.
- Develop detailed criteria to define the key elements identified for a future project and their implementing strategies in consultation with key experts in related disciplines.
- Prepare a project concept and engage with GEF and other potential donors for possible funding support.
- The participants will be regularly updated of the progress.