

Workshop Report

Regional Workshop for Europe, Asia and Africa: Mainstreaming Gender in National Implementation Plans under the Stockholm Convention

27 August 2025



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Introduction

Persistent organic pollutants (POPs) are hazardous chemicals that persist in the environment, accumulate in living organisms, and threaten human health and ecosystems. Under the Stockholm Convention, Parties are required to develop and update National Implementation Plans (NIPs), which serve as the primary tool for planning and reporting on national action. To be effective, these NIPs must take into account social and biological factors that shape how different groups are exposed to chemicals.

Gender is an important dimension in this process. Women and men face different risks due to biological factors and social roles. Women often perform a large share of agricultural work and household waste management—activities that can involve direct contact with pesticide POPs or exposure to unintentional POPs (uPOPs) from open burning. Yet cultural norms, institutional gaps and the lack of sex-disaggregated data often limit how these realities are reflected in chemical management policies. Embedding gender into NIP updates is therefore not only a matter of equity, but also of effectiveness and accuracy in chemicals governance.

To address this need, the Green Growth Knowledge Partnership (GGKP), under the GEF-funded and UNEP-led Global NIP Update project (GEF ID 10785), convened a regional workshop to support Parties in the African, European and Asian regions in better integrating gender considerations into their NIP processes. The workshop refreshed understanding of gender-differentiated exposure pathways, shared practical entry points for mainstreaming gender, and created a space for dialogue between governments, technical experts, civil society and community representatives.

The session was primarily designed for Stockholm Convention focal points and national officials involved in NIP development, but also engaged representatives from regional centres, NGOs and other stakeholders working at the intersection of chemicals management and gender. By bringing together these diverse perspectives, the workshop aimed to build capacity, exchange experiences and identify actionable ways to strengthen gender-responsive implementation of the Stockholm Convention.

Featured speakers

- Opening remarks: Ms Susan Wingfield, Gender Focal Point of Basel, Rotterdam Stockholm Conventions (BRS), UNEP
- Main session: Mr Fouad Berguigi, Gender Expert, International Consultant
- Ms Melina Valjevac, Manager, Sustainable water and chemical management, ENOVA, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Mr Griffins Ochieng, Executive Director, Centre for Environment Justice and Development (CEJAD), Kenya
- Ms Gohar Khojayan, Communications Specialist, Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment (AWHHE), Armenia
- Ms Shweta Dabholkar, Project Officer, The Center for Pesticide Suicide Prevention (CPSP), The University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

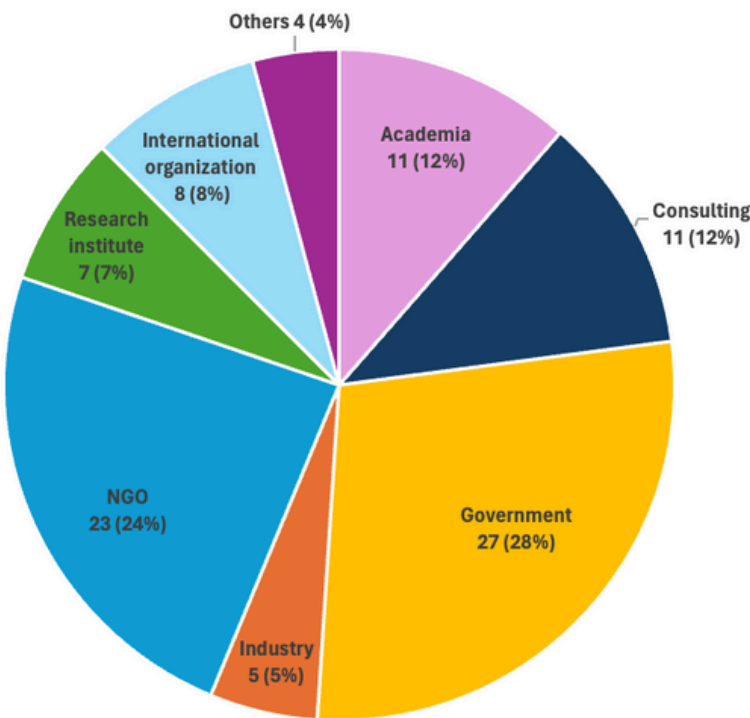
Registration and attendance

Number of registrants: 209 / total attendance: 96
(Approx. 58% female, 42% male)

Participants by country

Country	Attendees	Country	Attendees	Country	Attendees
South Africa	7	Mozambique	1	Burundi	1
Kenya	7	Portugal	1	United Republic of Tanzania	1
Indonesia	5	Switzerland	1	Yemen	1
Nigeria	4	Thailand	1	Viet Nam	1
Sierra Leone	4	Sweden	1	Japan	1
Senegal	3	Congo	1	Djibouti	1
Zimbabwe	3	Cameroon	1	Finland	1
Armenia	3	Egypt	1	Gabon	1
North Macedonia	3	Türkiye	1	Morocco	1
Zambia	3	Ethiopia	1	Belgium	1
India	2	Côte d'Ivoire	1	Czechia	1
Republic of Korea	2	France	1	Qatar	1
Myanmar	2	Uganda	1	Bangladesh	1
United States of America	2	Costa Rica	1	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1
Albania	2	Burkina Faso	1	Guinea	1
Slovakia	2	Azerbaijan	1	Greece	1
Germany	2	Mali	1	Hungary	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2	Mauritius	1		
Maldives	2	Ghana	1		

Participants by sector



Key highlights

The workshop brought together Stockholm Convention focal points, national officials involved in NIP development, review and update, as well as national and international experts working on the intersection of gender and chemicals, representatives of regional centres, civil society and non-government organizations, and other stakeholders from across Europe, Asia, Africa and beyond to engage in interactive discussions on gender mainstreaming.

In the keynote speech, Susan Wingfield emphasized the significance of incorporating gender differences in National Implementation Plans (NIPs) under the Stockholm Convention, referring to an example of UV-328, a recently listed POP. Exposure to UV-328 affects differently according to gender: men in plastics production, women and children through cosmetics or household products, and both genders in informal recycling sectors, often unprotected. She highlighted case studies from Bolivia, Kyrgyzstan and Kenya showing how gender shapes exposure risks and access to decision-making. She also stressed the importance of collecting sex-disaggregated data, ensuring participation and targeted actions. Additionally, she pointed to existing tools, such as the newly updated BRS Gender Action Plan and the UNEP Gender Guidelines, which offer concrete steps for making NIPs more inclusive. Wingfield invited participants to consider how to integrate gender from the outset, strengthen data collection and share good practices to ensure that NIPs become practical tools for equitable protection rather than mere compliance.

Fouad Berguigi noted that gender is not limited to women, but encompasses socially constructed roles that influence patterns of chemical exposure and protection. Referring to a GEF review, he observed that most projects remain merely “gender-sensitive,” with very few achieving genuine mainstreaming or transformative outcomes. He underscored that without sex-disaggregated data and targeted measures, women and vulnerable groups are often excluded from training, information and personal protective equipment (PPE), leaving them disproportionately exposed to POPs. Drawing on UNEP’s guidance, he outlined practical entry points for Parties, including empowering women in decision-making, collecting gender-differentiated data, ensuring equitable access to safer alternatives, and tailoring awareness and health protection to local realities. He further detailed procedural steps for integrating gender considerations, from drafting terms of reference and advertising job opportunities to delivering capacity-building and field activities.

Melina Džajić-Valjevac described how Bosnia and Herzegovina has mainstreamed gender in its NIP update, recognizing women’s susceptibility to hazardous chemicals due to reproductive biology, higher body fat composition that stores lipophilic POPs, and vulnerable life stages such as pregnancy and menopause. She outlined the country’s legal and institutional framework — from the Law on Gender Equality to gender focal points in all ministries and a network of NGOs — and emphasized the shift needed to integrate gender considerations into policy design rather than treating them as standalone “women’s issues.” Through the UNDP POPs management project, Bosnia and Herzegovina has mainstreamed gender via targeted trainings and guidelines, social-factor assessments and awareness materials, exemplified by two gender-focused workshops in 2021 and 2024. She stressed that gender must not be treated as a separate or isolated issue, and every stage of the NIP — strategy, implementation and communications — must be reviewed through a gender lens and validated by gender equality institutions.

Key highlights

Griffins Ochieng introduced gender-focused case studies from Kenya, Tunisia, Rwanda and Zambia. The studies found that women plastic pickers in Kenya face toxic brominated flame retardants without protective gear, whereas Rwanda's formal recognition of women waste workers and provision of equipment and health insurance have markedly contributed to reduced risks. He highlighted Kenya's constitutional gender equality guarantees and the 2022 Sustainable Waste Management Act that recognizes the role of informal waste pickers, including women, alongside Rwanda's constitutional mandate for women's representation and gender budgeting. Although gaps persist notably in gender-disaggregated data and unpaid domestic responsibilities of women, this limits women's participation and protection. Promising practices — women-led recycling enterprises, agroecological farming, biogas investments, and institutional innovations such as licensing and gender audits — are also emerging. He urged that NIPs under the Stockholm Convention systematically embed gender dimensions through inclusive committees, expanded sex-disaggregated data collection and enforceable legal protections, emphasizing that gender integration is essential to effective chemicals governance and sustainable development.

Gohar Khojayan stressed that NIPs should integrate gender dimensions to reflect women's unique exposure pathways — from household products to agricultural work — and physiological vulnerability to endocrine disruptors and carcinogens. Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment (AWHHE) pursues a mission to safeguard a healthy environment by empowering women and children, bringing community perspectives into Armenia's NIP Committee, gathering sex-disaggregated data and conducting gender analysis. Especially by translating technical terms of POPs into messages relatable to daily routines —whether about food preparation, waste management, or farming — AWHHE's risk communication campaigns inform and empower families to understand both the dangers and the safer alternatives available to them. Through collaboration with Armenia's Stockholm Convention National Focal Point and global networks, gender-responsive communication, awareness-raising and advocacy, AWHHE is making efforts towards more inclusive NIP processes.

Shweta Dabholkar emphasized that highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs) — a subset of particularly toxic pesticides that includes all POPs listed under the Stockholm Convention — present a threat to farming and rural communities in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Women, who make up 40–50 percent of the agricultural workforce in LMICs, face compounded risks due to biological susceptibilities — such as hormone disruption during pregnancy and lactation and lipophilic POP accumulation in body fat. Social norms further limit women's access to training, protective equipment and decision-making related to chemical management. Dabholkar called for prioritizing sex-disaggregated data collection on pesticide exposures and poisonings, embedding women's voices in NIP committees, and strengthening coordination among health, agriculture, labour and women's affairs ministries to ensure women's realities are visible in national strategies and advance inclusive, effective chemicals governance.

Questions and answers

Q1. How has the country in the case study engaged the government authorities to mainstream gender into their policies that were previously gender-blind?

Griffins Ochieng: Integrating gender into policy remains a work in progress. For example, recognition of informal waste workers — many of whom are women — has advanced through legal reforms and by organizing workers into cooperatives, creating a more enabling environment. Improving NIP is important, including specific provisions to address the distinct challenges faced by particular groups and genders. Civil society organizations also have contributed scientific studies on chemical exposures — such as in plastic products — to bring evidence-based solutions that minimize harmful chemical exposures and encourage women's leadership in decision-making forums.

Q2. How can chemical management be linked to climate change?

Griffins Ochieng: Chemicals and climate change are interlinked through shared pathways such as waste streams, including plastics, metals and aluminum. Burning materials like plastics — and their chemical additives — releases both toxic pollutants and greenhouse gases. A multisectoral approach at the national level is needed, uniting chemical, climate and biodiversity policies rather than operating in silos. National action plans for chemicals, climate change and biodiversity should be coordinated to exploit synergies and avoid contradictory or overlapping measures. Effective stakeholder engagement must bridge these areas to ensure integrated interventions across all relevant treaties and strategies.

Q3. When discussing gender initiatives, is the focus only on male and female, or does it include other gender identities and groups?

Fouad Berguigi: It depends on the national context and circumstances. We have seen many countries recently move beyond the binary definition of gender, shifting from a focus solely on men and women to a non-binary framework that includes other population subcategories and groups. It is context-specific, based on national needs and evolving regulatory frameworks, as there is no single globally recognized definition. This remains a work in progress: assess your country's situation, and if the environment allows, expand beyond a binary approach to include additional social categories.

Resources

The concept note and video recording in English, Russian and French of the webinar are available on the Global NIP Update platform:

<https://www.greenpolicyplatform.org/webinar/regional-workshop-europe-asia-and-africa-mainstreaming-gender-national-implementation-plans>



French



Russian



BRS resources on gender and chemicals

- Basel, Rotterdam Stockholm Conventions Secretariat. (2023). BRS Gender Action Plan <https://www.brsmeas.org/Gender/BRSGenderActionPlan/Overview/tabid/7998/language/en-US/Default.aspx>
- Basel, Rotterdam Stockholm Conventions Secretariat, Global Resource Information Database (GRID) Arendal. (2019, updated as of 2023). Pocket Guide to the BRS Gender Action Plan <https://www.brsmeas.org/Implementation/Gender/BRSGenderActionPlan/PocketGuide/tabid/7999/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

United Nations partners resources on gender and chemicals

- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Mutemeri, N., Singo, P., Mutemeri, I., Minamata, & Stockholm. (2021). Incorporating Gender Dimensions into National Strategy Setting in Chemicals Management. <https://www.unep.org/resources/toolkits-manuals-and-guides/incorporating-gender-dimensions-national-strategy-setting>

External resources on gender and chemicals

- Gabizon, S., Ismawati, Y., Priscilla Achakpa & John Baaki (WEP), Sarah Petras (WECF), & Meriel Watts (PAN-AP). (2017). Gender Dimensions of Hazardous Chemicals and Waste Policies under the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions: Case Studies Indonesia and Nigeria (Susan Wingfield, Leah Khayat, Tatiana Terekhova (BRS secretariat), Ed.). https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/NigeriaGenderDimensions_2018_BRS_WECF.compressed.pdf
- Caterbow, A., Hausmann, J., Women in Europe for a Common Future, Women International for a Common Future, Yadav, M., & Krisztina André. (2016). Women and Chemicals: The impact of hazardous chemicals on women (By UNEP). https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/WomenAndChemicals_PublicationIWD2016.pdf
- Health Environment Justice Support (HEJ Support) (retrieved in 2025, September 8) Gender, Women and Chemicals - HEJ Support online courses. <https://hej-support.org/online-courses/course/gender-women-and-chemicals/>
- Armenian Woman for Health and Healthy Environment (AWHHE)(2025, May 18).
 - 2024 – 2026 – Promoting democratic participation and Climate-Smart agriculture in Armenia. <https://awhhe.am/promoting-democratic-participation-and-climate-smart-agriculture-in-armenia/>
- Armenian Woman for Health and Healthy Environment (AWHHE)(2023, July 17). April – December 2023 – “Strengthening National Capacity of the Republic of Armenia in Sound Chemicals and Waste Management for implementation of the Stockholm, Basel, Rotterdam, Minamata Conventions and SAICM.” <https://awhhe.am/april-december-2023-strengthening-national-capacity-of-the-republic-of-armenia-in-sound-chemicals-and-waste-management-for-implementation-of-the-stockholm-basel-rotterdam-minam/>
- Armenian Woman for Health and Healthy Environment (AWHHE)(2022, June 15).
 - April – June 2022 – “The Situation with Chlorpyrifos in Armenia.” <https://awhhe.am/april-june-2022-the-situation-with-chlorpyrifos-in-armenia-2/>
- Armenian Woman for Health and Healthy Environment (AWHHE)(2021, October 15).
 - 2021 – Armenia’s Women – Rural Entrepreneurs for safe alternatives to highly hazardous pesticides. [Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment. https://awhhe.am/2021-armenias-women-rural-entrepreneurs-for-safe-alternatives-to-highly-hazardous-pesticides/](https://awhhe.am/2021-armenias-women-rural-entrepreneurs-for-safe-alternatives-to-highly-hazardous-pesticides/)
- Ismawati, Y. & Nexus3 Foundation. (2023). Case studies Kenya and Tunisia (G. Ochieng, CEJAD, S. Garbi, AEEFG, S. Gabizon, & WECF, Eds.). <https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Kenya-Tunisia-Scoping-Study-BRS-2022-English.pdf>

If you have any questions or comments, please contact the GGKP team.

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Resources

- Woman Engage for a Common Future (WECF). (2023). Documentary Series “Tackling Toxics. <https://youtu.be/wqFTGW7d124?si=TX7dNZr1RktJAee3>



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