

# University of Cape Town's CHEMICALS NETWORK

Issue: 3 of 2020

Date of discussion: 11 December 2020

## Discussion Forum Digest

This final Chemicals Network discussion for 2020 was a follow-on discussion that links into the theme of the Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS). It was a discussion that focused on the implementation of GHS at a national level. The topic of the discussion was “African government experiences in GHS implementation” and was presented by Elize Lourens from the South African Department of Employment and Labour and Christopher Kanema from the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA). Both our presenters shared their unique experiences of GHS implementation at a national level in their respective countries and then engaged with participants on how their experiences could be used to guide or help other countries with implementation.

### ABOUT THE PRESENTER



**Elize Lourens** was born and studied in Bloemfontein, the Free State’s capital in South Africa. She obtained her Masters degree in Environmental Health specialising in biological quality of indoor air. Her career started at the Local Municipality and in 2007 she moved to Gauteng accepting a position as Deputy Detector Health Risk Management with Gauteng Provincial Health. In 2011 she joined the Head office of the Department of Employment and Labour as a Deputy Director of Chemical Stressors and Asbestos. She is a registered Occupational Hygiene Technologist with SAIOH (Sothorn African Institute of Occupational Hygiene) and service of their National Council.

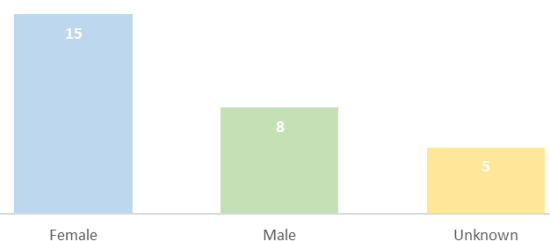


**Christopher Kanema** works for the Zambia Environmental Management Agency (ZEMA) as Principal Inspector and Heads the unit responsible for sound management of Pesticides and Toxic Substances in Zambia. He obtained his Masters Degree in Agriculture and Natural Resources Management from the University of Bonn in Germany. He is currently the focal point for the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade as well as the focal point of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. He is a member of several Technical Committees including the Southern African Pesticides Regulators Forum (SAPReF).

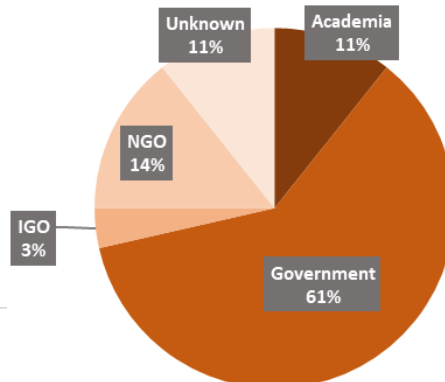
### ATTENDANCE BREAKDOWN

# ATTENDEES: 28

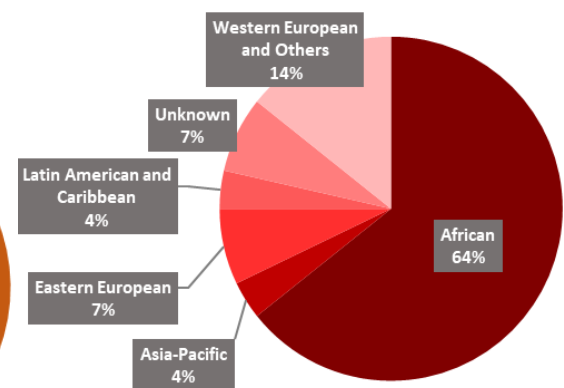
Gender representation



Sector representation



Regional representation



Key:  
 IGOs = Intergovernmental Organisations  
 NGOs = Non-governmental Organisations

## KEY MESSAGES FROM THE DISCUSSION

1. A key message from participants was that **responsibilities need to be clearly defined** of the various stakeholders involved in chemicals management and GHS implementation. This will help determine who is responsible for what and prevent duplication of duties. Having said this, participants highlighted the need to establish national chemicals management committees, containing members from all stakeholder groups, for developing guidelines and GHS strategies. Having responsibilities spread across multiple national governmental departments with no coordinating body was raised as a concern and barrier to achieving sound chemicals and waste management.
2. Many participants agreed that **chemicals educational programmes, including training in the components of the GHS**, introduced into primary and secondary school, as well as university curricula was key for GHS compliance. In addition to this, it was mentioned that basic training should be carried out for all government departments involved in chemicals management, with advanced training being offered for departments that need further information. Awareness raising of hazards and risks related to chemicals and how the GHS system works was seen as a means for consumer “training”. Finally, an important point raised, was that customs officials should be adequately trained on GHS and chemical hazards to effectively protect a country against illegal and harmful chemicals entering the country in the first place.
3. Many participants agreed that **external funding** and assistance is extremely important in achieving implementation the GHS. It was noted that while financial assistance is helpful and often necessary for low- and middle-income countries, other forms of assistance, such as knowledge sharing and capacity building, are just as important.

## CONTRIBUTIONS FROM DISCUSSION PARTICIPANTS

The discussion was structured around three questions and the key discussion points are presented under each:

### Question 1:

**As chemicals management is cross-cutting over several government departments in South Africa and other countries, what are some strategies that could be implemented to ensure collaboration and standardisation?**

<b>ALBANIA</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Working with Biocides registration, authorisation, dossier evaluation of the private companies which intend to import biocides in Albania.</li> <li>- There should be only one well-structured unit or department or institution which have all the needed specialists working together.</li> <li>- One institution can easily collaborate and decide</li> <li>- Different institutions there will have gaps of collaboration, decisions, gathering, meetings etc.</li> </ul>
<b>MYANMAR</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear responsibilities of government organizations for chemical management.</li> <li>- Departmental specific chemicals management is effective.</li> <li>- For e.g., Agricultural chemicals go under Department of Agriculture and Industrial chemicals under Industrial department - all organizations cooperate.</li> <li>- Capacity building on chemicals knowledge should be worked all together.</li> <li>- Two different departments are taking responsibility for chemicals control.</li> </ul>
<b>SOUTH AFRICA</b> (Academia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The issue of having silos with government departments regulating different pieces of chemicals legislation is problematic.</li> </ul>
<b>SOUTH AFRICA</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Several government departments are involved in chemical management.</li> <li>- It is challenging to coordinate activities across all role-players in this field.</li> <li>- Joint committee are a great help.</li> <li>- Training and inspection activities can be coordinated between departments.</li> <li>- Environmental hazards fall outside the mandate of the Department of Employment and Labour (DoEL) but environmental hazard classification requirements are included in labour legislation as guidance only to ensure all three hazards groups are covered.</li> <li>- Other departments can just refer to this legislation.</li> <li>- Joint training sessions for government departments on GHS are often held.</li> <li>- One target to ensure compliance in relation to chemical issues and GHS, so continuous engagement is very important both locally and beyond borders.</li> <li>- SA legislation on GHS will refer to the GHS Purple Book and not a standard.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There should be a regulator responsible for approving chemicals that can be used in formulations (for whatever purpose) and use in industrial applications like the EU's ECHA.</li> <li>- Then will be able to know the inventory of all chemicals used in various industrial applications and be able to keep out known harmful substances from industrial use.</li> <li>- Currently in South Africa, chemicals are only regulated as formulations such as disinfectants, pesticides, medicines, cosmetics, etc.</li> <li>- Raw materials (industrial chemicals) are not controlled at all; therefore, it is difficult to find data on industrial chemicals that are used by the various industries.</li> <li>- There is a need to harmonise the chemical legislation housed in different Departments.</li> <li>- After the Beirut incident, South Africa has developed a task team to normalise and promote one voice and avoid duplication of services.</li> <li>- There is a gap in registering any business on industrial raw chemical because the industry is supposed to disclose the type of chemicals being used.</li> <li>- Using the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act 13 of 2005 to encourage collaboration</li> <li>- Collaboration is key in the management of chemicals.</li> </ul>
<b>SWEDEN</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is challenging but to let one department take lead, like DoEL does in South Africa, is one way to do it.</li> <li>- In Sweden there is a requirement for government ministries to consult each other on several issues, that is part of the constitution.</li> <li>- The government speaks with one voice.</li> </ul>
<b>UGANDA</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need to have similar legal regimes.</li> <li>- It becomes easier to have collaboration in chemical management across borders when partner states have related laws governing chemical management.</li> </ul>
<b>ZAMBIA</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Zambia used multisectoral committee to coordinate the GHS implementation.</li> <li>- Developed a GHS standard which is cross referenced in the law and by so doing it is easy to revise the standard than the law.</li> </ul>

*Throughout the discussion, informal polls were conducted to help encourage discussion among the participants. They do not provide any representative data but rather provide a snapshot of participant views.*

#### **Poll 1 Results (N=21)**

**Do you feel it is beneficial to have all chemicals management legislation under one central government agency?**

**Yes: 19**

**No: 2**

#### **Poll 2 Results (N=16)**

**What barriers are there, or do you think there are, with multiple sectors implementing the GHS:**

**Gaps with implementation: 5**

**Overlapping responsibilities: 4**

**Different standards being implemented: 3**

**Confusion for those who have to comply: 4**

#### **Question 2:**

**As workers can directly benefit from the implementation of GHS, what are the needs of Organised Labour to ensure the greatest benefit from implementation?**

<b>ALBANIA</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A multisectoral Institution/department with all the needed sources of researchers and chemists, etc., in the same Institution.</li> </ul>
<b>MYANMAR</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GHS communication knowledge should be in the basic schooling.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- For workplace and at the point of consumption, hazard communication, and precautionary statements for emergency response are important.</li> <li>- Chemical Health and Safety code for trade should also be considered.</li> <li>- Chemicals related hazards awareness talk should start first at different age levels at school level</li> <li>- Synonyms of chemicals cause some issues - one name is acceptable in one country, but its synonym is not in another countries.</li> </ul>
<b>SOUTH AFRICA</b> (Academia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concern is that the GHS will appear on product labelling first and then only years after this will education of workers and the public take place.</li> <li>- Since children in many low- and middle-income countries are sent to buy chemicals, and use chemicals in homes and at work, it is important for them to firstly learn what the pictograms mean and how to prevent whatever is illustrated in the pictogram.</li> <li>- South Africa is already seeing GHS pictograms on chemical containers sold in supermarkets and yet, most people have no idea what they are telling the consumer.</li> </ul>
<b>SOUTH AFRICA</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Standardised training on GHS and chemicals are a great need for Organised Labour.</li> <li>- Mandate of the Department and the legal boundaries of our Minister were some stumbling blocks.</li> <li>- A generic basic training needs to be developed that can be used as a training tool for all sectors and those who need details will then be taken through advanced training.</li> <li>- Publications through different media platforms is useful in raising awareness on GHS.</li> <li>- Retailers could have boards with GHS product labelling to raise awareness amongst the public.</li> <li>- Customs officials need to be informed regarding chemical imports – obviously prohibited substances are of importance for them.</li> <li>- Need to assess how the country is doing in relation to the implementation of GHS and where it must apply before deciding to have it taught at schools.</li> <li>- Suppliers of chemicals may also be tasked with duties to provide information for training on top of Safety Data Sheets</li> <li>- All future workers must have relevant qualifications to avoid incompetency.</li> <li>- Collaborative efforts are key. with National DoEL being the leading agency.</li> <li>- Continuous engagement with others beyond borders can assist in exposing cases of negligence.</li> </ul>
<b>SWEDEN</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customs need training in the GHS and they seldom have resources for prioritizing this.</li> <li>- Sweden has discussed with the Swedish work Environment authority to start GHS training for workers in certain sectors.</li> <li>- Some GHS training also takes place at university level in Sweden.</li> <li>- Consumers are also exposed to chemical products and need to therefore understand the labels so they can choose less hazardous products.</li> </ul>
<b>TUNISIA</b> (NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- During these last months, Tunisia received illegal waste from Italy.</li> <li>- It was entered under the international GHS code which is considered as an illegal code for our country, but it was kept.</li> <li>- The priority should be training of customs officials, they are the first line of protection for a country.</li> <li>- The World Organization of Customs should cooperate to delay codes that are the source of problems for developing countries.</li> <li>- Customs officers need to be made aware about the hazards of some chemicals.</li> <li>- GHS is better at the secondary and tertiary phase of education.</li> </ul>
<b>ZAMBIA</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One of the challenges has been Industry considering the labelling requirements as a trade barrier because Zambia seemed to be one of the few countries implementing GHS.</li> <li>- A generic training to raise awareness followed by a feedback aspect to monitor the different levels of knowledge retention of the various groups would be prime for upper secondary and tertiary level education.</li> </ul>

**Poll 3 Results (N=21)**

**Providing education at school level on GHS will improve national levels of understanding of GHS hazard communication elements**

**True: 20**

**False: 1**

**Question 3:**

**How would your country benefit from support from and partnering with donors? What needs to be done to make this happen?**

<b>MYANMAR</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Swedish Chemicals Agency (KemI) gave great support to Myanmar on chemical management legislation.</li> </ul>
<b>NIGERIA</b> (Academia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nigeria started a GHS implementation programme very early.</li> <li>- It now needs substantial support for awareness raising and capacity building both human and institutional for Government officers/regulators etc.</li> <li>- NGOs can come in handy too.</li> </ul>
<b>SOUTH AFRICA</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- KEMI from Sweden has assisted SA with development of legislation as well as training and advising of possible approaches.</li> <li>- International donors and/or partners are of great assistance when it comes to training and awareness raising.</li> <li>- Implementation is mostly being funded from Departmental budgets, there are projects to obtain funding from international donor institutions though.</li> <li>- Support not only comes in the form of budget, often the knowledge shared and systems shared are of greater benefit.</li> <li>- The budget for awareness raising is shared amongst the Departments involved.</li> <li>- The development of standards and legislation as well as enforcement cost is carried by DoEL.</li> <li>- Industry takes on the responsibility of implementation (and the cost thereof)</li> <li>- Joint training sessions has been undertaken with Industry associations in SA.</li> </ul>
<b>TUNISIA</b> (NGO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NGOs are doing great.</li> <li>- Success has been experienced at ground level when building relationships with governments through advocates.</li> <li>- It is crucial that UNITAR collaborate with our NGOs in our respective countries.</li> </ul>
<b>UGANDA</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Donor support can help in training and sensitizing stakeholders in chemical management and in helping to enact laws and regulations for the sector.</li> <li>- Therefore, there is need to involve responsible government agencies and the private sector to achieve the above.</li> </ul>
<b>ZAMBIA</b> (Government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Donor partnership can enhance the objective on the implementation part as well as capacity building to ensure the deliverables are assured.</li> <li>- Informed expert opinion as well as exchange visits would be of great help.</li> <li>- Donors would help train local regulators and enforcers to implement the GHS in the country.</li> <li>- The government can then take it up to raise cross cutting awareness of the chemicals in all the sectors involved.</li> </ul>

**Poll 4 Results (N=15)**

**What is needed in your country to ensure the GHS is complied with once implemented?  
(participants could tick multiple options)**

**Full participation from industry: 12**  
**Training of regulators and law enforcement: 15**  
**Increased public awareness: 10**

**Poll 5 Results (N=14)**

**Countries that have implemented GHS did so with support from donors?**

**Yes: 10**  
**No: 4**

## Key resources:

- **Occupational Health and Safety Act**, 85 of 1993, as amended, South Africa
- **UN Globally Harmonized System or “GHS”** means the Globally Harmonized System of classification and labelling of chemicals, a guidance document developed by the United Nations for standardizing and harmonizing the classification and labelling of chemicals globally, commonly known as the UN Purple Book;
- **Regulations for Hazardous Chemical Substances**, under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 85 of 1993, as amended
- **Draft Regulations for Hazardous Chemical Agents**, Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 85 of 1993, as amended
- **The Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals—Explaining the Legal Implementation Gap**, Linn Persson et al.  
<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/9/12/2176>

**Chemical Network:** The Chemical Network is a non-partisan online forum established by the Division of Environmental Health (DEH) at the University of Cape Town’s (UCT) School of Public Health and Family Medicine. It was established as part of a knowledge management and sharing project supported by the Swedish Chemicals Authority (KemI).

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If you have any question or require clarification on this initiative, please contact UCT at [chemicallistserver@gmail.com](mailto:chemicallistserver@gmail.com).

**If you are not already a member, to join the Chemical Network at:**

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=NUNFkk5Wz0ywsCREW4wD9xEG1M2Og-dLiLPia0l63\\_JUMk9STUk1OThJVFizVFdKVktMNIg4TVVHUiQIQCN0PWcu](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=NUNFkk5Wz0ywsCREW4wD9xEG1M2Og-dLiLPia0l63_JUMk9STUk1OThJVFizVFdKVktMNIg4TVVHUiQIQCN0PWcu)

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