

Pesticide Discussion Forum Summary Digest

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Gender and Pesticide Management

- Many farmers worldwide rely on highly hazardous pesticides, as well as on other agrochemicals even if alternatives and good examples of sustainable agricultural practices are available globally.
- Pesticides can cause a range of adverse effects to the environment as well as acute and chronic health impacts to workers handling pesticides and rural family members living nearby.
- The link between gender and pesticide management is highly sensitive due to the potentially adverse effects hazardous pesticides can have on women.
- Women account for 37% of the world's rural agricultural workforce, rising to 48% if only low-income countries are considered. In some countries, they make up 85% or more of the pesticide applicators on commercial farms and plantations, also bearing most of the burden of injuries related to their use.
- The Rotterdam Convention Secretariat in FAO and the Gender Network advocate for specific safety and health measures to be put in place by:
 - Identifying high risk scenarios
 - Raising awareness and building capacities
 - Developing and disseminating knowledge products.

This document is a summary of the University of Cape Town’s Division of Environmental Health’s Pesticide Community of Practice held on the 18th of November 2021 entitled: “Gender and Pesticide Management”. This digest presents the issues, points raised, and information shared by participants in response to the three questions prepared by the presenters, Nadia Correale, FAO and Flavia Grassi, FAO. A total of 46 participants joined the live discussion and 2 people blogged their responses. From the members who attended, 74% were from Africa, 13% were from Europe, 5% were from Latin American and Caribbean and 2% were from South Europe, Eastern Mediterranean, North America, and South-East Asia respectively.

About the Presenter



Nadia Correale is a Social Protection and Community Development Specialist in the Rotterdam Convention Secretariat at Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Her main area of expertise is the occupational exposure to pesticides and the monitoring and collection of data on pesticide poisoning in rural communities with a huge field experience in different countries in Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. Prior to joining FAO in 2014, she worked in Spain, UK and Brazil in agroecology, social protection, and community empowerment.



Flavia Grassi is a Gender Expert in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations with a broad experience in rural development. Her expertise focuses on providing technical advice on the inclusion of gender and social dimensions in the design and implementation of agricultural and rural development projects. In recent years she has been focusing on the reduction of women’s work burden and their uptake of empowering technologies and practices. Flavia is also the co-author of the FAO policy on gender equality 2020-30.

DISCLAIMER: The information below represents the opinions of members participating from different countries expressed during the discussion and shall not necessarily be taken to reflect the official opinion of the DEH, UCT, FAO, SIDA or KemI.

PRESENTED BELOW ARE THE THREE QUESTIONS AND RESULTING DISCUSSION INPUTS FROM PARTICIPANTS:

Question 1: List examples of the key pesticides-related information, training, and health services available for men and women in your country and communities. How extensive is their coverage?

Region	Participant’s responses
AFRICA	<p>Kenya</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Limited number of agricultural extension workers for pesticide application. <p>Nigeria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Most of the available information on pesticide risks are general and not gender specific. However, NGOs like the Society for Family Health have programs for women and pregnant mothers on pesticide exposure and risks. Challenges faced with respect to pesticides in the country:

- HHPs are still circulating in the country and approximately 40% are banned in European Union (EU) countries.
- The government is currently engaging with stakeholders on a regulation that includes a list of HHPs to be phased out. The list is in respect to the recent ban that some agricultural exports are facing from the EU.

Malawi

- Training sessions are conducted on the safe use of pesticides, use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), pre-entry and pre-harvest intervals and the importance of regular medical check-ups for those occupationally engaged in pesticide-related work.
- Training is moderately extensive and is conducted by government extension agents as well as NGOs. However, participation is minimal due to poor membership into farmer associations and lack of time, especially for women with family responsibilities.
- Health facilities are accessed mainly by men due to women's preoccupation with domestic responsibilities and the distance to facilities.

Senegal

- Training and information sessions on the safe use of pesticides are carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture. It is done in the community's local language and using focus groups.
- Acetylcholinesterase assays are carried out for monitoring the level of exposure of farmers to carbamates
- Organophosphate's monitoring is carried out by the poison control centre.

South Africa

- Challenges of pesticide training in the country are:
 - Haphazard and not all people who apply pesticides receive training, nor is the training standardized.
 - Some commercial farms train to adhere to exporting standards.
 - There are limited extension services.
 - Industry conducts training that focuses on pesticides being "safe" when PPE is worn.
 - Lack of access to information is a constraint.
 - Accessing health services is challenging due to financial costs.

Tanzania

- Agricultural extension workers training on pesticide application techniques is provided to women and men.
- Occupational health and safety-related training programs are available for agricultural workers.

Uganda

- Training takes place on the environmental and health standards of the control of crop pests such as fall armyworms, desert locusts and quelea birds. The target of the training is extension workers but there are only a few women as not many women in agriculture do extension work.

Zimbabwe

- Male and females work with pesticides in the agricultural sector, but their exposure levels differ. In most cases, men are allocated tasks that are labour intensive and have fewer chances of being exposed to pesticides than women.
- The following are key pesticide information that will be useful for women:
 - Limit handling and application of pesticides when pregnant.
 - Should not handle or apply pesticides when carrying children.
 - When applying pesticides in the field, children should either be left at home or be placed more than 200m from the area being sprayed.
- The same training is available for men and women, but men attend training more than women as women are frequently busy with household activities after working in the field.
- Health services are the same for men and women, however, women's access may be limited due to the distance to health facilities from their homes.
- Men tend to have more adequate PPE than women.
- The key pesticide information disseminated is hazard classification, direction of use and disposal options. This is mainly done through agricultural extension officers and sometimes through the media. However, the outreach is quite limited owing to several factors which include limited access to media, and low literacy levels.

SOUTH AMERICA

Colombia

- Several institutions train farmers to improve pesticide management. Additionally, in some regions, Health's Authorities conduct a program called surveillance of carbamates and organophosphates, apply surveys, and take biological samples to identify the level of cholinesterase.

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Iran

- The Ministries of Agriculture and Health are involved in training.
- Information on pesticides by academics is available.
- During the past 2-3 decades, there has been no big action made to help address issues on training, and if there are, it will be concentrated in bigger cities.
- TV channels for agriculture-related issues, including pesticides use, exists.

Question 2: If you were a local decision-maker in your country, which approaches and measures would you take to reduce the risks posed to women by hazardous pesticides? And what challenges would you face?

PARTICIPANT'S RESPONSES:

AFRICA:

ETHIOPIA

- Key stakeholders are:
 - Minister of Agriculture.
 - Minister of Health.
 - Environmental Ministry.
 - CropLife Ethiopia.

KENYA

- No information on gender dynamics when using pesticides is available, making it difficult for people to understand how gender is impacted by pesticides.
- At the local level, training of a few spray service providers is taking place but excludes women, and only includes low-risk pesticides.
- At the smallholder farm level, most women handle pesticides from loading, mixing to applications.
- Draft legislation extending to producer responsibility and regulations including pesticide wastes and used pesticide containers exist.

MALAWI

- Policies aimed at protecting women from high-risk engagements like pesticide application are necessary.
- Women are not adequately protected from pesticide exposure due to limited access to adequate PPE (designed for men).
- Women who are pregnant and work with pesticides pose a risk to their foetuses.
- Training needs to be promoted aiming at improving literacy levels, safety, and human rights. However, challenges will be financial, policy-related, and how to access the women groups.

SOUTH AFRICA

- Awareness-raising (i.e., communicating exposure of pesticides and knowledge sharing) in community churches and shopping centres should take place. However, the challenge is the increase of diverse pests and diseases.
- Provision of PPE in smaller sizes to accommodate women in the field is necessary.
- Child labour is high in agriculture and young girls work in agriculture. Therefore, intervention is needed.
- Containers are viewed as a “precious commodity” in many rural areas and therefore, re-use is inevitable. An intervention will be to put a monetary value on pesticide containers when returned to the manufacturer.

TANZANIA

- Training should be provided to women representatives on the safe use, handling, and storage of pesticides and for them to disseminate the information to their colleagues.

UGANDA

- Women often carry home contaminated pesticide containers for fetching water, storing salt, sugar etc. Therefore, not only do they have increased exposure but that also increases exposure for their families and other community members.
- Empowering women to safely use pesticides and providing them with less hazardous pesticides.

ZIMBABWE

- Commercial farmers should provide adequate PPE to women; however, this may be challenging in smaller fields.
- A robust pesticide surveillance system coupled with an inventory is critical in identifying exposure points.
- Pesticide’s subsidies are the cause of hazardous pesticides being placed into the custody of populations, including women.
- It is important to establish controls designed to protect women on all levels of the NIOSH’s hierarchy of controls and all the stages of the pesticide life cycle.

ZAMBIA

- Women are involved in pesticide application processes.

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN:

IRAN

- Identify women structures at community and national levels. Train women leaders in the different structures on pesticides’ benefits and consequences. Challenges will be that women may not have sufficient time to participate in trainings.
- Pesticide related UN agencies have the responsibility to help with pesticide health-related issues, especially in low-to-middle income countries (LMICs).

SOUTH AMERICA:

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

- Men apply pesticides.

Question 3: To your knowledge, what are the policies and legal frameworks in place in your country that promote attention to gender and pesticide (risk reduction) management issues? If there are none, what can be done to improve national policies and legislation?

Region	Legal frameworks for promoting attention to gender and pesticide management
AFRICA	<p>Eswatini</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No legal framework regulates gender and pesticides. <p>Ethiopia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Awareness is mostly done at a subject matter specialist level and at a development agent level. ➤ Awareness at the grassroots level is minimal. ➤ Sensitization for policymakers can be improved by developing full-fledged communication strategies on pesticides and having an aggressive implementation process. <p>Kenya</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gender issues are not captured in pesticide law. ➤ Gender analysis is limited to donor-supported projects. <p>Malawi</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Pesticide Control board and Pesticide act exists, but there is no specific legal sanction or policy that differentiates between men and women in agriculture. ➤ Gradually, advocacy is being done by gender advocates on legislation to exclude women from high-risk work. ➤ The first step is to identify the gap in gender and pesticide management legislation. The next step is to move towards developing policy addressing the identified gaps. ➤ Awareness messages have been designed primarily for vulnerable groups: currently, the focus has been school children. Awareness can be maximized to address gender and pesticide exposure. <p>Nigeria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is no certainty whether gender-specific pesticide policy has been implemented. ➤ Sensitization of stakeholders through a policy brief is needed for gender-specific pesticide regulation. <p>Rwanda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The agriculture gender strategy was developed in 2010 with its implementation far behind. This can be seen in gender-disaggregated data for pesticide application where women are mostly involved in pesticide application in comparison to men. More capacity building and awareness-raising programmes are necessary. <p>South Africa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is no specific gender pesticide legislation. ➤ The main pesticide legislation in South Africa is from 1947. ➤ In 2010 SA developed a Pesticide Management Policy with good provisions, however, it was never implemented into legislation. ➤ Pesticide regulation is fragmented, and interventions are necessary to address it. ➤ There are 14 different pieces of pesticide legislation governed by 7 different government departments. <p>Tanzania</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No specific policy that covers gender exists. ➤ Policy briefs should be used to address gender and pesticide exposure and for national decision-makers to take into consideration the dynamic in pesticide law, policies, and regulations. <p>Uganda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There is no specific policy on gender and pesticides. However, the Agrochemical act of 1999, and the Plant Protection Act point out concerns about pesticide consequences to men, women, and children. Furthermore, the two acts promote the need for the safe use and handling of pesticides. <p>Zambia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The country has fragmented legislation and most regulations are not specific to pesticides except for the Environmental Management Act. <p>Zimbabwe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ No specific policies regulating the use of pesticides and gender exist. The current policies were formulated on the basis that women have equal results as men and should not be discriminated against.

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN	Iran ➤ More education and incentives for women to do family work/stay at home jobs.
EUROPE	Germany ➤ Concerning women, the following should be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Occupational exposure ○ Levels and consumer exposure ○ Levels for chemicals ➤ Most standards are based on a "Standard Person", which is mostly a Caucasian middle-aged male. Women, old and young and other ethnic groups may have very different vulnerabilities and are systematically overexposed using these standard OELs.

Resources and Further Reading

- 2018. Global Gender and Environment Outlook (GGEO) <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/global-gender-and-environment-outlook-ggeo>
- Exposure to hazardous chemicals at work and resulting health impacts: A global review (ILO 2021): https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---lab_admin/documents/publication/wcms_811455.pdf
- <http://gender-chemicals.org/chemical-safety-at-work>
- SHPF toolkit <http://www.pic.int/Implementation/SeverelyHazardousPesticideFormulations/SHPFKit/tabid/3114/language/en-US/Default.aspx>
- Farmers field schools “Gender equality, social inclusion and community empowerment - Experiences from Uganda” <http://www.fao.org/3/cb0709en/cb0709en.pdf>
- FAO Manual on “Farmer Field Schools in times of COVID-19”: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9064en/ca9064en.pdf>
- FFS and Dimitra Clubs: <https://www.fao.org/farmer-field-schools/ffs-overview/gender-and-social-inclusion/en/>
- BRS Gender action Plan: <http://www.brsmeas.org/Gender/BRSGenderActionPlan/Overview/tabid/7998/language/en-US/Default.aspx>
- CEDAW General recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/INT_CEDAW_GEC_7933_E.pdf

If you are not a member, we invite you to join UCT's Pesticide Discussion Forum:
<https://forms.gle/NzYH5REfUruL3jdm6>

The **Division of Environmental Health (DEH)** Pesticide Discussion Forum is a bi-monthly online seminar for pesticide regulators and resource persons, as well as students in the postgraduate Diploma in Pesticide Risk Management (DPRM). Our aim is to provide support for managing pesticide risks and implementing risk reduction strategies. DEH is based in the School of Public Health and Family Medicine at the University of Cape Town (UCT). environmentalhealth@uct.ac.za

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