

Monitoring pesticide impacts in Ethiopia

In countries with limited resources collaboration and sharing of expertise is vital. In September 2006 Ethiopian NGOs, researchers and regulators were trained in ecotoxicology monitoring. The professional relationships forged between participants have already borne fruit and will be vital to improve future pesticide management.

Tadesse Amera reports.

Many pesticides imported into Ethiopia remain unused by their expiration date. Poor management of such obsolete stocks leads to environmental and public health hazards while safe disposal is expensive. It is essential to ensure proper management and disposal of these stocks. It is also vital that safer alternatives to pesticides are developed, and that people, particularly farmers, become aware of the issues. While the Africa Stockpiles Programme (ASP) works towards these aims, the key to long-term progress is the involvement of national NGOs, farmers and researchers.

Ethiopian NGOs ASP Network

In February 2006 a workshop took place to discuss how NGOs could contribute to improving pesticide management and to the ASP. As a result, the Ethiopian NGOs ASP Network was established. A national coordinator was appointed who is hosted at the Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD) and activities of the network are agreed in collaboration with five steering committee members from different NGOs assigned by network members. The network receives financial and technical support from PAN UK, PAN Africa, AGENDA, and WWF. The commitment of the member NGOs, together with the support of government organizations and research centres, and the support of ISD as hosts provide a strong national base for the network.

Eco-Toxicology Monitoring Training of Trainers

Currently Ethiopia lacks a system for post-



Sampling aquatic invertebrates and sediment from a local lake Photo: Tadesse Amera

registration surveillance of pesticides. The network decided to focus on increasing national capacity to conduct post-registration monitoring. From 13-24 September, 2006 an Eco-toxicology Training of Trainers was carried out organized by PAN UK, PAN Africa, AGENDA and WWF, with financial aid from European Union (EU) and ASP. The purpose was to train participants to identify pesticide impacts within ecosystems and to conduct appropriate analyses on water, soil and biota. The training was sufficiently detailed to enable the participants to subsequently train others. The Ethiopian NGOs ASP Network steering committee identified appropriate organizations for the training and 17 applicants were selected, including eight from government and research institutions. Training was provided by Dr Colin Tingle, Professor Ian Grant and John Cox from the Natural Resource Group (NRgroup) based in the UK, who have developed a hand book and method sheets for such training¹. The training included explanations of international conventions, ecosystems monitoring, pesticide impacts and residue analysis. Field work taught participants techniques for water and biota sampling, measurement of residues and data analysis.

Lasting benefits of joint training

On the final day of the training the value of the Ethiopian NGOs ASP Network was recognized when all the participants suggested joining and contributing to the network's activities. This included those from the Ministry of Agriculture (and the Project Management Unit of the ASP), the Environmental Protection Authority, the Quality and Standard Authority of Ethiopia, the Drug Administration and Control Authority and Addis Ababa University. A participant from the Ethiopian Environmental Journalists Association showed his commitment by subsequently advocating pesticide issues among fellow journalists and has already covered the issues on Ethiopian television.

Equipment used in the training was donated, and can now be borrowed by member organizations from the ISD office. In addition, the Chemistry Department of Addis Ababa University and the Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia

(QSAE) promised use of their laboratory facilities if required for future research. The Environmental Science programme of Addis Ababa University indicated that they will assign masters students to conduct related research. The Drug Administration and Control Authority indicated they would seek scientific input from the group in consultations on future national regulations.

The participants suggested conducting regular meetings for exchanging information, planning and discussion. In the first meeting (June 2006) the group planned to produce newsletters, train others in ecotoxicology monitoring, and to conduct research based on the training they had received. They also proposed to set up a yahoo group email to share information. Network members were also consulted to provide ideas on potential activities for 2007. In the second and third meetings of the network (held in December 2006 and February 2007, respectively) members were updated on two international meetings in which the coordinator participated, given feedback on a journalist's training on pesticide issues conducted in Tanzania and discussed the future strategy for the group.

Conclusion

One of the aims of holding joint training for NGOs, government scientists and regulators was to foster ongoing collaboration in countries where resources are limited. The spontaneous agreement of the researchers and regulators to join the Ethiopian ASP NGOs Network demonstrates the need for sharing of scarce and different expertise and resources. The 'Network' has full consent of the project Management Unit of the ASP. The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and the Ministry of Agriculture, which are the Designated National Authorities (DNAs) for most chemical conventions also work with the network and assist the network in areas where their input is needed.

1. Grant IF, Tingle CCD (eds) *Ecological Monitoring Methods for the Assessment of Pesticide Impacts in the Tropics*, Natural Resources Institute, Chatham UK, 2002.

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Examining aquatic invertebrates from the local river Photo: Tadesse Amera