



IOMC

INTER-ORGANIZATION PROGRAMME FOR THE SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS
A cooperative agreement among UNEP, ILO, FAO, WHO, UNIDO, UNITAR and OECD

Training and Capacity Building Programme for Implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS)

Programme Update

November 2003

BACKGROUND

In response to growing requests from countries for GHS-related capacity building, UNITAR and ILO initiated in 2001 a Training and Capacity Building Programme for Implementation of the GHS. Working in collaboration with international organisations, countries and stakeholders, the programme provides guidance documents, training materials, expert training and educational, awareness-raising and resource materials regarding the GHS and related topics of chemical hazard communication. Programme objectives include raising national and regional GHS awareness, producing comprehensive GHS situation analyses and needs assessments, catalyzing multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder processes to implement the GHS, and understanding the challenges faced by developing countries in implementing the GHS. In order to take advantage of the time prior to formal adoption of the GHS, UNITAR initiated a number of pilot activities, supported by the Governments of The Netherlands and Switzerland, at the country and regional levels. A number of services to support these activities were also developed. This brochure provides an update on the progress and future development of the programme.

PROGRESS AND RESULTS OF PILOT ACTIVITIES

Country-based Activities

In 2001/02, country-based GHS pilot projects were initiated in Zambia, South Africa, Senegal and Sri Lanka. These activities have provided an important testing ground to review draft-versions of chemical hazard communication and GHS-related guidance and training material, as well as provided important feedback to the international community regarding

opportunities and challenges associated with GHS implementation in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Zambia

The Environmental Council of Zambia (ECZ), in cooperation with interested parties within and outside of government, executes a two year (2001-2003) project entitled “Developing and Implementing a National Action Plan for Chemical Hazard Communication and GHS Implementation”. Completed activities and progress achieved include: a detailed situation analysis; organization of a national Chemical Hazard Communication Workshop; a high-level GHS briefing session for key decision-makers; and rapid comprehensibility testing of chemical hazard pictograms (undertaken with technical support from the University of Zambia and University of Cape Town). An executive regulatory process has commenced, designed to identify and adopt provisions to ensure GHS implementation across all sectors. Zambia has finalized its action plan and started to implement a number of priority activities – such as introducing a national chemical safety day, certificate-based training program and customs training – before the end of 2003.

South Africa

In South Africa, the development of an implementation strategy for the GHS – including on-the-ground training – is coordinated by the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC), a tripartite statutory body established to address key issues of economic and social development in South Africa involving government, labour and business. In 2002, a situation analysis was initiated, while the gap analysis and GHS implementation strategy will be completed in 2003.

Complementary to these activities, a comprehensibility testing project has been implemented involving some 400 industrial and agricultural workers and consumers. Based on the ILO comprehensibility methodology and with input from the University of Cape Town, the project reviews and tests the comprehensibility of available hazard information and examines what additional measures are required to undertake effective chemical hazard communication.

Senegal

Activities on chemical hazard communication and the GHS in Senegal, as well as Sri Lanka, have been on-going as part of Senegal’s participation in

the UNITAR/IOMC programme “Developing and Sustaining an Integrated National Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals” (2001-2003). The Ministry of Environment, supported by a multi-stakeholder committee, completed a situation analysis, held a national workshop on the GHS and developed a draft action plan for strengthening chemical hazard communication in the country. The action plan was adopted by a national review workshop in 2003 and one direct early result has been ECOSOC’s official approval of Senegal’s full membership on the SCEGHS.

Sri Lanka

The Central Environment Authority (CEA) of Sri Lanka completed a situation analysis and held a workshop on the GHS (including participation from the Chair of the UN SCEGHS and UNITAR) in 2002. All relevant sectors have been engaged on a national basis for the project, training activities have been undertaken and awareness-raising tools identified that can assist with increasing understanding and effectiveness of the use of labels, SDS and other hazard communication tools. Sri Lanka completed its national GHS action plan in April 2003 and has begun distributing identified training and awareness-raising tools, including a pesticides hazard communication video and awareness training programme for school children.

Regional Activities

The first in a series of regional and sub-regional GHS awareness raising workshops was held for countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region in Livingstone, Zambia, from 1 to 4 September 2003. The event brought together over forty representatives from SADC governments, industry and labour organizations, international organizations and GHS resource persons. The workshop was supported by GTZ, UNITAR (with resources provided by the Governments of Switzerland and The Netherlands), IFCS and the ICCA. One of the key outcomes was a commitment to initiate the development of a regional strategy with the goal to ensure SADC-wide harmonization of GHS implementation by 2007. Complimentary to this workshop, a regional GHS needs assessment and implementation report is being prepared as a basis to further inform the development of the regional strategy.

Supporting Services

The programme has also developed or initiated a number of services to

support regional and national GHS activities. Pilot versions of guidance materials for undertaking GHS-related situation analyses and national action plans are available and a GHS capacity building library is now online and available in CD ROM format. At the WSSD in September 2002, UNITAR, along with ILO and OECD, initiated the *Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the GHS*. A first Meeting of Partners was held in July 2003 in Geneva, Switzerland.¹ In November 2003, a special GHS workshop at IFCS Forum IV will take place in Bangkok, Thailand. The UNITAR/ILO Programme Advisory Group (PAG) has continued to meet to review programme documents, ensure complementarity with other chemical hazard communication initiatives and provide overall guidance regarding Programme implementation. UNITAR/ILO are the designated focal point for capacity building in the UN ECOSOC Subcommittee of Experts on the GHS (SCEGHS).

RESOURCE ISSUES AND FUTURE PLANS

GHS capacity building activities organized by UNITAR/ILO are funded by extra-budgetary resources. Current funding will allow the continuation of project activities until early 2004. Additional activities will be subject to availability of financial resources for specific projects.

As of July 2003, 65 countries have expressed an interest to UNITAR to participate in a GHS capacity development project. A UNITAR/ILO framework project proposal for a second phase GHS capacity building programme, 2004-2006, is available upon request.

Interested countries and organizations that may be in a position to support project activities at the regional or country level in 2004 and beyond are requested to contact:

Senior Programme Coordinator Training and Capacity Building Programmes in Chemicals and Waste Management UNITAR Palais des Nations CH-1211 GENEVE 10, Switzerland FAX +41 22 917 80 47 Email: cwm@unitar.org Website: www.unitar.org/cwm
--

¹ A separate brochure on the GHS Partnership is available from UNITAR.