Dr. Marcos A. Orellana,   
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**Berlin, March 28, 2024**

**Submission: input for the upcoming thematic report on gender and toxics**

Dear Dr. Marcos A. Orellana, Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights,

Thank you for your call for submissions to support preparations for your upcoming report on gender and toxics. We very much appreciate the opportunity to share with you herewith some information on our project work.

Since 2017, we at [MSP Institute](http://msp-institute.org/,) (a charitable association based in Berlin), have been doing advocacy work for the integration of gender in chemicals management. All Information on our projects, background materials, position papers and webinars are available at our project website: <http://gender-chemicals.org/>.

For further information or if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best regards,

Anna Holthaus and Dr Minu Hemmati, MSP Institute

**Gender and Toxics**

**PROBLEM SITUATION**

Gender is relevant to chemicals and waste management in many ways – but this does not receive enough attention. Hence, inequalities can be worsened, human rights violated, and policy-making and implementation are not as good and effective as they could be.

We at the MSP Institute distinguish between three main gender dimension in regard to chemicals:

1. Biological dimension: women’s bodies are often affected differently by certain chemicals than men’s. Women tend to store more environmental pollutants in their body tissues than men due to a higher body fat content. In addition to puberty, women live through other phases of life such as pregnancy, breastfeeding and menopause, during which their bodies become more susceptible to health damages from chemicals due to the significant physiological changes. Furthermore, chemical exposure can also be passed on to the next generation. This chemical exposure happens through the placenta, as well as during breast-feeding, and that is why women in childbearing age needs special protection ([UNDP, 2011](https://www.undp.org/publications/chemicals-and-gender); [SAICM and IPEN 2020](https://saicmknowledge.org/library/women-chemicals-and-sdgs)).
2. Social dimension: chemical exposure is influenced by various social gender aspects and women and men are affected differently because of their gendered roles in society. Women for example are more likely to work in the care sector and come more often into contact with chemicals from cleaning agents and cosmetics or care products then men. Additionally, the division of labour also causes differences in exposure within individual sectors: men are often more directly exposed because they more often perform risky tasks, and women’s occupational diseases are on the other hand often under-diagnosed, under-reported and under-compensated because their exposition is often more indirect and over a long time period. For example, women in agricultural are more affected by indirect exposure, e.g. from harvesting and handling chemically-treated plants or contaminated clothing, while men are often more directly exposed, e.g. when mixing chemicals. ([UNDP, 2011](https://www.undp.org/publications/chemicals-and-gender); [ILO, 2021](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/resources-library/publications/WCMS_811455/lang--en/index.htm); [MSP, 2017](http://gender-chemicals.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017-12-04-Gender_and_Chemicals_IssuePaper_MSP_Institute.pdf)).
3. The transformative potential of the gender perspective: in our opinion, the inclusion of the gender perspective is a strategic opportunity which offers a great potential transforming chemicals management. The gender perspective helps us to understand the causes of unsustainable behaviour in dealing with chemicals and thus to find new solutions for more effective and sustainable chemicals management. By using a gender lens for example in agriculture you can better understand why women and men are often not using protective measures when dealing with toxic chemicals: Women are less likely to be able to afford appropriately-fitting personal protective equipment (PPE) than their male colleagues, because it is often more expensive or not even available on the market ([Ontario Women's Directorate, 2006](https://elcosh.org/record/document/1198/d001110.pdf)). Men, on the other hand, often believe that wearing protective clothing is unnecessary and indicates a level of weakness, and tend to use risky behaviour and dangerous practices in order to improve their status in a group ([Stergiou-Kita et al., 2015](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4880472/); [Andrade-Rivas/Rother, 2015](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/278672388_Chemical_exposure_reductionFactors_impacting_on_South_African_herbicide_sprayers%27_personal_protective_equipment_compliance_and_high_risk_work_practices)).

**OUR PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

In order to address the problem situation described above, we have been doing project activities and advocacy work since 2017 with the aim of integrating gender mainstreaming into international and national chemicals management. In the following these activities are briefly presented.

**Gender & Chemicals Partnership – G&CP (founded in September 2023)**



The Gender & Chemicals Partnership (G&CP) is an international, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral partnership founded in 2023 by the MSP Institute.

Partners work together to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in chemicals management and to support addressing the global pollution crisis and contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The interim Board members are the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection of Germany (BMUV), the Foreign Office of Mexico, The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC). The MSP Institute serves as the Secretariat of the G&CP.

The Gender & Chemicals Partnership was launched during the Fifth Session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5) in Bonn, at a Side event on 28 September 2023.

The partnership is focusing on joint activities to achieve gender equality and tackle gender-based discrimination and injustices in chemicals management.

The G&CP will begin with the following activities:

* collaborating with UN and other intergovernmental organizations, including the Secretariats of related chemicals conventions and processes to raise visibility of and attention to the gendered dimensions of chemicals and wastes.
* supporting gender data collection and disaggregation by science, industry, and (inter)national statistical institutes
* supporting knowledge sharing and training

The G&CP is currently finalising its statutes, developing a glossary of gender terminology in chemicals management and fundraising. The next steps planned are to invite further interested partner organisations and individual experts, develop a detailed work plan, and organise a first G&CP Assembly..

All information on the G&CP, including a concept note, can be found [here](http://gender-chemicals.org/gandcpartnership).

**Advocacy activities in GFC / SAICM and SPP OEWG**

The gender-responsive design of international and national policy instruments and programmes has so far been insufficient. The SAICM Beyond 2020 process, which had been ongoing since 2015 and finished with the adoption of the Global Framework on Chemicals at the ICCM5 in 2023 in Bonn, was an important opportunity to raise attention to the issue of gender and chemicals and to integrate gender mainstreaming instruments in the international framework. In addition, the development process launched in 2021 for a new Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution Prevention offers another opportunity to strengthen the topic in the dialogue between science and politics. The MSP Institute has been doing active advocacy work in the SACIM Beyond 20202 process and the ad hoc OEWG for a new SPP by publishing information materials and position papers and organizing webinars for political decision-makers. In addition, the MSP Institute initiated the informal “Women and Gender group at SAICM” and moderated the drafting of Resolution V/4: “Mainstreaming a gender perspective and promoting gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls in chemicals and waste management” in the run-up to the ICCM5, that was agreed by the conference and foresees among others the development of a gender action plan for the GFC.

Latest webinars:

* A Gender Action Plan for the new Global Framework on Chemicals (Nov 2023)
* A new chemicals framework that leaves no one behind – webinar on gender and human rights in SAICM Beyond 2020 (June, 2023).

The recordings are available [here](https://www.youtube.com/@mspinstitute2175).

**Side Event: Gender Mainstreaming for Sustainable Chemistry (during HLPF, July, 2022)**

A Side Event on Gender Mainstreaming for Sustainable Chemistry was held on July 14, 2022 during the UN High-level Political Forum 2022, and co-hosted by the German Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) and the MSP Institute.

The intention of this side event was to increase the understanding of the interconnections between gender and sustainable chemistry amongst stakeholders; and to enable an exchange on how to better address issues of gender inequalities in chemicals management at all policy levels. Panelists shared challenges as well as best-practice examples on the integration of gender in chemicals management, and in sustainable chemistry, in the context of SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals.

More than forty participants from different regions and stakeholder groups participated at the side event (governments, non-governmental organizations, inter-governmental organizations, in- dustry and academia).

A [summary](http://gender-chemicals.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Summary-HLPF-Side-Event_Gender-Mainstreaming-for-Sustainable-Chemistry.pdf) documents the key points and policy recommendations that were discussed.

**GenChemRoadMAP – a project to initiate concrete steps towards gender mainstreaming in national chemicals management in Germany and beyond (2021-2022)**

To minimise negative impacts of chemicals on people and the environment as chemical production increases, future chemicals management must integrate the needs and realities of life for all. For this to happen, the gender dimensions of international and national chemicals policy must be acknowledged and taken into account in practice.

The linkages between gender and chemicals are receiving increasing attention in international agreements on chemicals management. In national chemicals management, however, ideas and approaches for a practical implementation of gender mainstreaming are still lacking, as many of the actors involved, such as research institutions, the chemical industry, governmental as well as non-governmental organisations, often have only a vague idea of the potential that tools such as gender analysis offer.

The MSP Institute conducted the “GenChemRoadMap” project in 2021 and 2022. The project aimed to help initiate and build support for the systematic integration of gender into national chemicals management with the Gender and Chemicals Road Map, a guide for SAICM National Focal Points. The road map was piloted in Germany in collaboration with the German SAICM National Focal Point, Dr Hans Christian Stolzenberg, and in consultation and collaboration with other German stakeholders. In the following a brief summary of the project activities is presented:

From April-May 2021, the [Gender and Chemicals Road Map](http://gender-chemicals.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Gender-Road-Map-final.pdf) and the associated [Workbook](http://gender-chemicals.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/GenChemRoadMap_Workbook_print_Version_final-.pdf) were developed. The Road Map offers an overview how to mainstream gender into chemicals management at national level and the workbook offers a step-by-step guidance for the implementation.

T[he kick-off event for the pilot phase in Germany](http://gender-chemicals.org/event-report-roundtable-genchemroadmap) was the next step. A round table meeting with stakeholders took place on July 20, 2021, organized by Dr Hans-Christian Stolzenberg, the German SAICM National Focal Point at the Federal Environment Agency, and the MSP Institute. More than 40 participants from industry, governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as professional associations and science followed the invitation and engaged in a first exchange on gender and gender equity among diverse stakeholders of chemicals management in Germany.

The event was followed by an [international workshop on Gender in National Chemicals Policies](http://gender-chemicals.org/event-report-international-webinar-the-gender-and-chemicals-road-map-veranstaltungsbericht-internationales-webinar-zur-gender-and-chemicals-road-map) for SAICM National Focal Points on Sept. 24, 2021. The aim of the workshop was to generate interest in the linkages between gender and chemicals, to present and discuss the Gender and Chemicals Road Map, and to facilitate exchange on gender aspects among SAICM National Focal Points. A total of 39 participants from government organizations, academia, civil society and industry attended the virtual workshop, including about 20 National Focal Points from different parts of the world.

An initial implementation of the steps included in the Gender and Chemicals Road Map took place from October 2021 to April 2022 as part of the pilot phase in Germany: In October, the German SAICM National Focal Point and the MSP Institute started with a core working group of interested stakeholders. The working group held several virtual meetings to take stock of the integration of gender in German chemicals management and was able to gather initial ideas for optimizing the integration of gender. This was done along five action areas based on the questions for gender analysis. To narrow the scope of the work, the team focused on the topic of chemicals in building materials. The gender analysis highlighted that while several projects and policy activities in chemicals management in Germany do address gender aspects, the lack of gender-specific data, or the advancement of women in chemicals management, a strategic overview to improve gender mainstreaming in chemicals management has been missing to date. The team then conducted a Gender Impact Assessment, including secondary research as well as expert interviews on the gender impacts of a policy proposal currently under discussion: the introduction of a building resource passport in Germany. The assessment showed how the information needs of building owners on the topic of chemical safety can be taken into account from a gender perspective, and how the policy instrument could be designed effectively.

A summary of the results and experiences of the pilot phase in Germany can be found in the [flyer](http://gender-chemicals.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Flyer_Pilot_Germany_GenChemRoadMap.pdf), and a detailed presentation of the results and experiences can be found in the [presentation](http://gender-chemicals.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Presentation_Pilot-Phase_Germany_GenChemRoadMap.pdf).

## Further resources from MSP Institute:

* Holthaus/ Hemmati (2022): [Gender – an essential substance for sustainable chemistry. In: Journal of Business Chemistry, Vol19](https://www.businesschemistry.org/article/gender-an-essential-substance-for-sustainable-chemistry/).
* MSP Institute: [Info movie “The gender lens - for a new perspective in chemicals management](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5gSkMT-VYs&t=8s)”.
* MSP Institute: [45min for gender (in sectors) – webinar series on gender equality and future chemicals management. Webinar recordings](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyX6KeUPeCkiWDUokxRAD9A/videos): <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyX6KeUPeCkiWDUokxRAD9A/videos>
* MSP Institute (2019): [Gender & SAICM Beyond 2020 – How to create a gender-just healthy planet](http://gender-chemicals.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MSPInstitute_Broschu%CC%88re_Howtocreate.pdf).

## Other resources that might be of interest:

* Journal Sustainable Chemistry and Pharmacy: [Open call for papers for a special issue entitled 'Gender, Diversity, Inclusion and Chemistry'](https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/sustainable-chemistry-and-pharmacy/about/call-for-papers).
* [Catalyst – feminism, theory, technoscience (2020): 6(1): Special Section on Chemical Entanglements: Gender and Exposure](https://catalystjournal.org/index.php/catalyst/issue/view/2293).
* IPEN/ SAICM (2020): [Women, Chemicals and the SDGs](https://ipen.org/documents/women-chemicals-and-sdgs).
* Royal Society of Chemistry (2019): [Is publishing in the chemical sciences gender biased?](https://www.rsc.org/globalassets/04-campaigning-outreach/campaigning/gender-bias/gender-bias-report-final.pdf)
* Royal Society of Chemistry (2018): [Breaking the barriers. Women's retention and progression in the chemical sciences.](https://www.rsc.org/policy-evidence-campaigns/inclusion-diversity/surveys-reports-campaigns/breaking-the-barriers/)
* UNDP (2011): [Gender and Chemicals](https://www.undp.org/publications/chemicals-and-gender).
* WEN/ WECF (2021): [Gender just chemicals policy. Together for a toxic-free future.](•%09WEN/%20WECH%20(2021):%20Gender%20just%20chemicals%20policy.%20Together%20for%20a%20toxic-free%20future.)