



# MEDIA RELEASE

**ATTENTION: News Editor**

## **Bangladesh moves to eliminate dangerous chemicals**

**Dhaka 12 May, 2003** -- A dangerous group of chemicals known as the 'dirty dozen', that can cause cancer, may soon be eliminated from widespread use in Bangladesh if a Government initiative supported by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) launched recently proves successful.

Technically known as *Persistent Organic Pollutants* (POPs), the dirty dozen are long lasting toxic substances traditionally produced for use as pesticides, industrial chemicals, or are by-products of industry. Today the dirty dozen are widely found in the environment all over the world. Scientists have proven that these chemicals contaminate food, air and water. In people they can cause cancer, learning disorders, and immune system changes.

In Bangladesh, these chemicals are widely used in agriculture, which employs more than 80 percent of the population. Despite this, Bangladesh was among the first nations to adopt the *Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants*, aimed at protecting the environment and people's health. Since then the Government has banned the production and use of the 'dirty dozen' along with a number of other dangerous chemicals, but enforcing the ban has proven difficult. No specific laws guide their use or production, and local authorities do not have the technology nor experience needed to identify and monitor POP sources.

"Internationally, Bangladesh has confirmed its commitment to eliminating these dangerous substances. Assistance is now needed to develop national legislation against their use. Meanwhile, in the villages and towns, the average farmer or factory worker who uses these dangerous substances everyday must be aware of the health risks to themselves – and the nightmarish prospects of highly toxic chemicals accidentally seeping into the environment in this very densely populated country," UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner said.



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Widespread lack of awareness about the risks associated with these substances mean that chemicals -- like DDT used locally in fish drying and mosquito control -- are still readily available and readily purchased from other countries in the region that have not banned the production of POPs.

Under the new initiative (USD 653,000), the Government plans to draw on UNDP's expertise to phase out the 'dirty dozen' over the next two years. Activities will include: examining and strengthening national legislation covering these chemicals, building the skills and knowledge of local authorities tasked with eliminating them, drawing-up an inventory detailing the import, production and use of the 'dirty dozen', and raising awareness about the need to eliminate these dangerous substances.

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**UNDP** is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. We are on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop local capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and our wide range of partners.

## Notes for editors:

- ✍ The dirty dozen are: Aldrin, Chlordane, DDT, Dieldrin, Dioxins and Furans, Endrin, Heptachlor, Hexachlorobenze, Mirex, Toxaphene and Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB).
- ✍ The Government of Bangladesh has already listed the following pesticides banned: BHC, Chlordane, DDT, Dieldrin, Dicrotophos, Disulfoton, Endrin, Ethyl Parathion, Isobenzene, Methyl Parathion, Methyl Bromide, Mercury Compound, Methoxychlor, Posmet, Phospamidán, Monocrofos, Kalthane and Hetachlor.