

Pesticide Action Network **NEWS**

Advancing alternatives to pesticides worldwide • www.panna.org

Fall 2014



A Silent Pandemic

On June 5, 2014, Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific, partnering with PAN North America, launched a global campaign to phase out 20 highly hazardous pesticides particularly dangerous to children.

The Terrible Twenty are linked to cancers, brain damage, birth defects and asthma, among others.

The campaign will target policy makers in strategic Asian countries and North America with a call for a permanent moratorium on use of the Terrible Twenty and support for introducing agroecological farming.

Simultaneously, the campaign aims to increase public awareness and build a vibrant international dialogue about pesticides and their harms for children. The campaign will engage health professionals, parents groups, teachers and scientists.

The ultimate aim is to help create engaged communities in several countries to take actions calling on their national governments to develop pesticide policies protective of children's health. It will include media outreach with information about the health harms of pesticides as well as practical advice for protecting children from pesticides at home, schools and in public places such as playgrounds.

The world now uses 2.3 million tons of pesticides annually—50 times more than in 1950. Children are exposed to pesticides from the womb through infancy and adolescence.

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Making the Grade on Kids & Drift

Fall marks a fresh start for students and teachers. This year, the season may also signal the start of real progress toward protecting children from harmful pesticides. Why the optimism?

From Iowa to Hawai'i, and from California to our nation's capital, pesticide drift is now a focus of public concern. Health experts are calling for action to protect kids from pesticides that put their developing minds and bodies at risk, as the science linking many of these chemicals to children's health harms continues to stack up.

This combination of heightened public concern and increased validation from health experts is powerful, indicating a strategic moment for meaningful policy changes that could protect kids and communities in very real ways.

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Irene Fernandez

1946–2014

Human Rights Activist & Chair, Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific

On March 31, we lost Malaysian human rights campaigner, Irene Fernandez, to heart failure. In that moment, the world lost a tireless advocate for the rights of the most marginalized: migrant workers, farm workers, domestic workers, sex trade workers and AIDS sufferers.

From 1992 until the time of her death, Irene was chair of Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PAN AP). She worked hard for the elimination of pesticides and against GMOs, and campaigned for the development of sustainable agriculture and taking back control of seeds. Irene helped PAN AP become a force to be reckoned with in Malaysia's civil society movement.

Irene was fearless in the face of harassment and intimidation from the Malaysian government on unfounded charges of "maliciously publishing false news." Her trial spanned 13 years and is the longest in Malaysian judicial history. Many of the witnesses she relied upon were deported before she could make her defense.

After 300 court appearances, she was found guilty and sentenced to a year in prison. While out on bail, her passport was confiscated. Funding for her many charitable endeavors was curtailed. Finally, in 2008, Irene was acquitted.

Irene's legacy also includes her work to stop violence against women. In the 1980s, she founded several women's rights organizations, including Malaysia's influential All Women's Action Society. Malaysia's Domestic Violence Act, Sexual Harassment Code and advances in laws related to rape are all a direct result of Irene's work and influence. She was also a founding member of the Asia Pacific Women, Law and Development (APWLD) forum, a vital regional organization that brings women lawyers and activists together to scrutinize relevant women's laws across Asia.

Irene began her career as a high school teacher, and in 1970 became a full-time organizer. She organized the first textile workers' union in Malaysia and began programs to create trade unions in the free trade zones. She also focused on developing women leaders in the labor movement.

All of us in the PAN family salute Irene for her leadership and exemplary achievements, and stand together to make certain Irene's work and beliefs will continue in our work each and every day as we strive to build a safe, green and fair food system throughout the world.



The young activist: Irene Fernandez started out fighting for women's rights. In 1985, at age 39, she was chairperson of All Women's Action Society. In 1991, she founded Tenaganita ("women's force" in Malay) to empower Malaysia's migrant workers. She served as the chair of PAN AP for 22 years. Photo: *The Star Online*

She never, ever stopped fighting for human rights and justice, and was relentless in focusing a bright light on people who were used up and thrown out by those more powerful than they, and forgotten by everyone else. Working with Irene was a constant inspiration and one of the joys of working with PAN.

— Monica Moore, one of the U.S.-based founders of PAN International & former Executive Director, PAN North America

Women Farmers Advance Agroecology

Midwest farmers and PAN join in promoting sustainable agriculture

Agroecology—the science of applying ecological concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agroecosystems—offers solutions for strengthening our global food system. This approach supports farming practices that are productive, resilient and resource conserving.

The science underlying agroecology is robust. From 2004 to 2009, PAN senior scientist Marcia Ishii-Eiteman was a lead author for the UN/World Bank International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, a collaboration of 400 scientists and food system experts. The core finding of the Assessment was that “business as usual is not an option,” the world cannot be fed if we continue to rely on chemical-intensive industrial farming.

In parts of Africa and Asia, women make up the majority of smallholder farmers, often building on traditional practices to advance innovative agroecological methods. Yet in the U.S., while sustainable agricultural practices are growing, the word “farmer” usually conjures a man, and the promise of agroecology is virtually unknown outside academic circles.

Women take the lead

Members of the Women, Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN) are on the front lines of embracing and promoting sustainable agriculture. Like PAN, they aim to position agroecological solutions front and center to influence and inform sound public policy.

WFAN was founded in 1997 by PAN Board member Denise O'Brien, a farmer in southwest Iowa. During the 1980s, when economic restructuring in agriculture was disrupting farmers' lives, women began taking off-farm jobs to help put groceries on the table. Denise realized that women's contribution to farming was invisible—they were considered “farmers' wives,” but not “farmers.” In addition to deserving recognition for their



PAN Board member and Iowa farmer Denise O'Brien co-founded the Women, Food and Agriculture Network to unite and empower women farmers across the U.S.—the fastest growing population in farming today.

farming expertise, she believed they needed to pay attention to national and state policy decisions that led to farm crises.

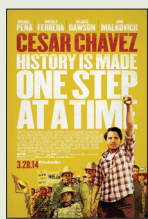
Since then, WFAN has grown into a broad national network of women working to build a healthier food system. With women now accounting for half the rural land ownership in the U.S., and women a rapidly growing segment of a new generation of progressive farmers, WFAN's influence is becoming more prominent.

In 2014–2015, PAN and WFAN are launching a project to popularize the concepts of agroecology and amplify the national conversation about reforming our food system to make it more resilient, sustainable and fair. Together with farmers from Africa and Asia, we will share personal stories of success in major media outlets, public forums and policy venues.

ON THE WEB To follow our agroecology work, see www.panna.org/science/agroecology.

Make a year-round impact today

It adds up and it ensures your continuous support for PAN's work to build a safe, green and fair food system. Pledge \$15 or more per month, and we'll send you *Cesar Chavez*, a must-have DVD chronicling the birth of a movement, plus a four-page PAN/United Farm Workers toolkit so you, too, can keep Chavez's legacy alive. Please join the PAN Sustainers Circle at www.panna.org/pledge today.



OUR MISSION
30+ YEARS **90 COUNTRIES**
Pesticide Action Network North America
works to replace the use of hazardous pesticides with ecologically sound and socially just alternatives. As one of five PAN Regional Centers worldwide, we link local and international consumer, labor, health, environment and agriculture groups into an international citizens' action network. This network challenges the global proliferation of pesticides, defends basic rights to health and environmental quality, and works to ensure the transition to a just and viable society.

- Studies in China, India, Japan, Kazakhstan, Thailand and the U.S. have found pesticides in umbilical cord blood, the placenta and the amniotic fluid that protects and nourishes the fetus. Pesticides have even been found in the meconium (first feces) of newborns in these countries.
- Due to its persistent nature, DDT, though banned in many countries, continues to be found in breast milk and people's bodies throughout the world, particularly in parts of Africa and Asia.
- Children in the Global South get exposed to pesticides not only through their environment and food residues but also through work, as many are engaged in farming.

The evidence of pesticides harming children's health around the world is clear and growing. It is insufficient to prevent exposure in just one country. Your support of PAN can have a global impact.

ON THE WEB To learn more, download *Children & Pesticides* by PAN New Zealand scientist Dr. Meriel Watts from panap.net.

The Science

for your conversations about pesticides

The UC Davis MIND Institute released a landmark study this summer linking prenatal exposure to chlorpyrifos and other organophosphate pesticides to increased risk of autism and developmental delays.

- More than 970 families from California's agriculture-rich Central Valley participated in the study.
- Overall, mothers who live within a mile of fields where highly hazardous pesticides are applied have a 60% higher chance of having children with autism.
- Timing of exposure is critical. Women who were exposed to chlorpyrifos during the second trimester of pregnancy were most at risk of having children with developmental delays and autism.

States take the lead

California's Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) is reviewing the state's stance on the controversial insecticide chlorpyrifos right now. This widely used chemical has long been known to harm the nervous systems of the young. The latest study—from the UC Davis MIND Institute—links prenatal exposure to increased risk of autism and developmental delays (see The Science box).

Another recent study shows just how many children are being exposed to pesticides. According to data released by the state's Department of Public Health this spring, nearly 500,000 kids in California attend school within a quarter of a mile of pesticide applications. Drift-prone fumigant pesticides and brain-harming chlorpyrifos top the list of pesticides used at these sites.

Given this evidence of both exposure and health risk, California officials are facing growing public pressure to take a leadership role and put policies in place that protect the state's children from harm.

Meanwhile, farmers and rural communities in Iowa and other Midwestern states are speaking out about the potential harms of drifting herbicides. The issue has new urgency in the face of proposed genetically engineered crops designed for use with extremely drift-prone, archaic and toxic herbicides, including the infamous 2,4-D. These discussions are getting state policymakers' attention as well.

National spotlight, too

In response to legal action by PAN and our partners (based in part on community monitoring data collected with our Drift Catcher air sampling tools), U.S. EPA is finally taking a closer look at how pesticide drift puts children in farm communities across the country at risk.

This is significant but is moving far too slowly. The time is ripe for us to push EPA to act with urgency. Last month, we submitted thousands of signatures from members like you and other concerned citizens urging EPA to act quickly with stronger protection for kids and communities from health-harming drift.

It's gratifying to see this urgent issue get the attention it deserves. Thank you for helping us bring drift and kids' health into the public conversation!

ON THE WEB You can also visit www.panna.org/kids. Together, we can stand up to corporations and governments for the health of this and future generations.

TAKE ACTION: Tell the U.S. EPA to phase out chlorpyrifos for our children at www.panna.org/brain-harming-pesticide.

Connect Online

 Sign up for Action Alerts and the GroundTruth blog at www.panna.org/subscribe.

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