

A woman is seen from behind, walking through a lush green field. She is carrying a baby on her back in a yellow and red patterned cloth. She is wearing a yellow shirt and a blue skirt with a circular pattern. She is holding a green net in her right hand and a brown basket in her left hand. The background is filled with tall green trees and a small yellow building in the distance.

# PREVENTING SUICIDE

A resource for pesticide  
registrars and regulators



World Health  
Organization



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# **PREVENTING SUICIDE**

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Preventing suicide: a resource for pesticide registrars and regulators

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# FOREWORD

**Suicide is a leading cause of premature mortality among young people in many countries, making it a serious global public health problem. Suicides are preventable but preventing them is no easy task. Interventions range from providing the best possible conditions for bringing up our children and young people, through accurate and timely assessment of mental disorders and their effective treatment, to responsible reporting of suicide by the media and the environmental control of risk factors.**

Pesticide poisoning is one of the commonest, and most readily preventable, methods of suicide in certain parts of the world. Overall, pesticide poisoning accounts for as many as one in every five of the world's suicides. Appropriate action by pesticide registrars and regulators has the potential to save thousands of lives every year.

This booklet is one of a series of resources for specific groups who are in a unique position to prevent deaths by suicide.<sup>1</sup> Suicide prevention involves the concerted efforts of many social sectors and professional groups – national and local government, legislators, law enforcers, health workers, educators, social agencies, the media, families, schools, workplaces and communities. This resource is targeted at pesticide registrars and regulators who have an important role in reducing access to, and regulating the use of, highly hazardous pesticides.

Throughout the booklet “pesticide registrars and regulators” are referred to as a shorthand for all persons involved in the policy development, evaluation,

authorization and management of pesticides – whether in a pesticide regulatory unit within a ministry, or in a dedicated pesticide registration authority or a member of a pesticide registration board.

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<sup>1</sup> See : [https://www.who.int/mental\\_health/resources/preventingsuicide/en/](https://www.who.int/mental_health/resources/preventingsuicide/en/) (accessed 24 August 2019).

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This resource is being widely disseminated in the hope that it will be translated into local languages and adapted to local situations. Such adaptation is a prerequisite for its effectiveness. Comments and requests for permission to translate and adapt the resource are welcome.

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# GLOSSARY

<b>HHP</b>	Highly hazardous pesticide
<b>HIC</b>	High-income country
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IPM</b>	Integrated pest management
<b>IVM</b>	Integrated vector management
<b>JMPM</b>	Joint Meeting on Pesticide Management (of FAO and WHO)
<b>LMIC</b>	Low- and middle-income countries
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme (or UN Environment)
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: WHAT PESTICIDE REGISTRARS AND REGULATORS CAN DO TO PREVENT PESTICIDE SUICIDES

Self-poisoning with pesticides causes up to one in five of the world's suicides.

Regulatory action in Bangladesh, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and other countries indicates that many suicide deaths can be prevented by bans on specific pesticides. In Sri Lanka, for instance, bans are thought to have led to 93 000 fewer suicide deaths between 1995 and 2015.

There is no evidence that bans in these countries have adversely affected crop yields.

Pesticide registrars and regulators have a key role to play in suicide prevention. Important approaches they can take include:

- » identifying the pesticides most commonly used in fatal self-poisoning
- » identifying highly hazardous pesticides for withdrawal
- » taking regulatory actions to phase out the most hazardous pesticides, along with advice and training about low-risk alternatives
- » requiring data on human risk assessments, particularly in relation to acute toxicity when

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