



a toxics-free future

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## International Mercury Treaty Enabling Activities Program (IMEAP)

Following the signing of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (the ‘mercury treaty’) in 2013 and the release of the IPEN Minamata Declaration on Toxic Metals, IPEN expanded its Mercury-Free Campaign and developed a broad program of treaty-enabling activities to be implemented in conjunction with IPEN Participating Organizations (POs). The International Mercury Treaty Enabling Activities Program (IMEAP) is geared toward raising awareness about the mercury treaty while generating data on key thematic elements of mercury pollution to help enable countries to implement the Minamata Convention.

IPEN launched IMEAP in early 2014 and continues to mobilise resources for IPEN POs to conduct activities that support implementation of the mercury treaty<sup>1</sup>.

The key objectives of the IPEN IMEAP are:

1. *Preparing for Treaty Ratification & Implementation:* Creating synergies between NGOs in developing countries with ongoing UN agency or government-led mercury activities and NGO priority-setting.
2. *Enabling Activities to Prepare Countries for Treaty Ratification & Implementation:* Support to NGOs to carry out national and thematic mercury treaty activities.
3. *Communication of Issues Related to Mercury and Treaty Ratification & Implementation:* Global dissemination of project results & south-south collaboration.

The following project forms part of the overall IMEAP activities and contributes to the greater global understanding of mercury pollution issues while providing information that may contribute to Minamata Initial Assessments (MIA) and raise public awareness in preparation for early ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

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<sup>1</sup> IPEN would like to acknowledge the financial contributions from the governments of Germany, Sweden and Switzerland, and the Swedish public development co-operation aid through the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) and other donors. The views herein shall not necessarily be taken to reflect the official opinion of any of these donors, including SSNC or its donors.

## **IPEN Mercury Treaty Enabling project: Kazakhstan**

Name of the NGO: "Greenwomen" Analytical Environmental Agency

Date: 02/07/2015 (IMEAP: 2014 Phase)

Title of project: "National Public Awareness activities in Kazakhstan"

### Summary

"Greenwomen" Analytical Environmental Agency conducted a comprehensive awareness raising project on mercury pollution in Kazakhstan. Certain areas of Kazakhstan, such as the River Nura, the city of Temirtau and the Pavlodar chemical complex are heavily impacted by mercury contamination. As part of this activity numerous methods were employed to spread the message about mercury pollution among stakeholders including the public, NGOs, media and government. A comprehensive array of materials were produced and distributed via face to face meetings, social media, broadcast media and other means. These included information fact sheets, media releases, press kits, education modules and a report on the status of mercury pollution in Kazakhstan. This Greenwomen project successfully raised awareness of the mercury pollution issues among stakeholders and directly engaged government on the urgent need to ratify and implement the Mercury Treaty. This project has relevance to Articles 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, and 18 of the Mercury Treaty.

### **Describe which aspects of mercury pollution you have prioritized for awareness raising and why it is required:**

We have prioritized the following aspects of mercury pollution for awareness raising:

#### **1. Mercury contamination of water and soil**

Kazakhstan has a long history of mercury pollution. Today Kazakhstan has at least two sites known to be contaminated with mercury.

High-level mercury contamination exists within the confines of the Pavlodar Chemical Plant, at nearby off-site waste storage and evaporation ponds, and in Balkyldak Lake, which adjoins the waste ponds.



Pavlodar Petrochemical cluster Source: Tengrinews

For decades, a factory just 2 km from Temirtau (Central Kazakhstan) threatened the health of the 170,000 people living there, and also their fragile environment. The former carbide factory's wastewater treatment plant was not designed to remove mercury. As a result, more than 1,500 tons of this heavy metal was discharged into Nura River.

The World Bank and the Government of Kazakhstan, in 2012, finalized implementation of a mutual project aimed at cleaning up the contaminated area to reduce health risks from this toxic substance. The World Bank stated that a 60 hectare industrial site and an 18 kilometer stretch of the Nura's riverbanks and flood plains - totaling more than 3,500 hectares - had been cleaned. Nura River Clean-Up Project 2003-2011.<sup>2</sup>

However, the problems which emerged in the 1990s still remain. The representatives of some Kazakh environmental NGOs took samples of the Nura River's water and claimed that all the samples showed a significant excess of a maximum allowed concentration for mercury in water. This information was obtained by EcoMuseum and CINEST NGOs in the frame of the project implemented in cooperation with Arnika.<sup>3</sup>

Local citizens are aware of the existing problem but still don't care too much about the danger of mercury pollution. Some local fishermen still take fish from the contaminated ponds. Awareness raising campaigns must be continued for this target group.

## **2. Recycling of energy-saving light bulbs containing mercury**

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<sup>2</sup> see: <http://www.worldbank.org/ru/results/2012/04/30/eliminating-mercurys-invisible-threat-in-kazakhstan>

<sup>3</sup> see: <http://toxic.kz/zagryaznennyye-territorii/reka-nura/zagryaznenie/>

Kazakhstan has no plants for recycling energy-saving light bulbs containing mercury (i.e. Compact Fluorescent Lighting - CFLs or tubes). The waste companies in Almaty are forced to store waste containing mercury in special tanks. There were some attempts in some cities in Kazakhstan to open the stations where local citizens could bring their used energy-saving light bulbs containing mercury. However, this issue is still not completely resolved at the national level. People very often throw used energy-saving light bulbs containing mercury in regular dumpsters. This is dangerous because the bulbs might be broken and mercury could contaminate water and soil. It is important to explain to the general public that mercury is dangerous and that the energy-saving light bulbs containing mercury and other consumer goods containing mercury, such as thermometers, require handling with care.

### **3. Increased number of consumer goods containing mercury (for example, dental amalgam fillings; beauty products; fish and canned oysters containing mercury, and so forth)**

Most people are still not aware of the toxic effects which mercury has on their health and why they must choose with care the foods they eat (for example, fish).

### **4. Disposal of waste containing mercury.**

Stated earlier, people often throw used energy-saving light bulbs containing mercury in regular dumpsters.

There is also a risk that some local companies may import mercury-containing waste from more developed countries to Kazakhstan, and people may be exposed to mercury which has toxic effects on their health.

### **Assess the level of awareness of mercury pollution and the need for early ratification among the public, regulators, media, industry and government:**

Kazakhstan does not have a national plan or strategy aimed at managing and solving mercury contamination problems.

Greenwomen, during implementation of a project entitled “National public awareness activities in Kazakhstan”, held a series of meetings and consultations with experts from the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Health Care and Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the representatives of waste management companies, environmental NGOs and mass media. The conclusion is that most of the representatives of target groups (state bodies, businesses, environmental NGOs) understand and are aware of the need to speed up the actions aimed at solving the problem of mercury contamination in the country. However, the government and state bodies are not doing enough to solve the problems. Waste disposal companies don’t have much information on best practices for solving the mercury contamination problem, and don’t have special equipment for safe disposal of wastes containing mercury.

National and local mass media should be commended for covering the issues related to the management of mercury-containing wastes and to the mercury pollution in Kazakhstan, in general. The general public in Kazakhstan has a certain level of awareness of the mercury pollution issues. However, as mentioned earlier, more should be done in terms of implementation of actions aimed at solving the problems of mercury contamination in the country including assistance to companies which main business is disposal of waste containing mercury.

**Indicate why you have prioritized a particular group or groups in your community with which to raise awareness of mercury pollution:**

The project was primarily aimed at raising awareness of environmental NGOs and the media on mercury contamination issues in Temirtau, Pavlodar, Karaganda, Almaty, which are the places where the “hot spots” of mercury contamination are located; where the problem of disposal of mercury-containing waste has risen.

The poor performance of government agencies to address the acute problems of mercury pollution concerns the environmental NGOs working in these regions.

The general public does not have access to the monitoring data which reflects the situation of mercury pollution in the mentioned earlier “hot spots”. There are no public participation mechanisms aimed at involving the public in decision-making processes.

However, there was recently public hearings on the construction of a plant for incineration of toxic substances in Pavlodar which were held in June, 2015. The public was opposed to this plan and over 100, 000 signatures were gathered against the incinerator. Officials have now confirmed it will not go ahead as proposed.

The civil society organizations were able to obtain data reflecting the current situation on mercury contamination in Irtysh River and Nura River (in Pavlodar region). This data is a big concern for NGOs because it is classified and designed for internal use by government agencies only. This data is not available to the general public and to the population living in the territories affected by mercury contamination.

The same situation exists in the cities of Temirtau and Karaganda. Local citizens have less awareness of the situation with regard to mercury pollution of areas which adjoin the carbide plant located near Temirtau, in Karaganda region.

Accordingly, we have decided that there is a necessity to raise awareness of environmental NGOs in order for them to be “whistleblowers” and to put pressure on decision-makers, legal bodies and government agencies.

NGOs also are able to distribute information about the toxic effects of mercury on human health and attract more attention to this problem. The NGOs have shown greater interest in the

activities associated with the assessment of toxic effects of mercury on human health and environment, as well as in participation in projects aimed at solving the problems of mercury pollution and waste containing mercury in Kazakhstan.

**Describe the methods that you have chosen to raise awareness among the population on mercury issues and why they are of strategic significance:**

Greenwomen prepared materials adapted for the general public, such as: a) leaflet which provides information on first aid and emergency treatment in case of mercury poisoning, and b) educational module designed for teachers and students, and specialists working in the government departments as well as a media press kit. These materials form part of the overall Greenwomen awareness-raising campaign. The materials are uploaded to the Greenwomen's web-site: [www.greenwomen.kz](http://www.greenwomen.kz)

Greenwomen (The Agency) believes that such methods are of strategic significance because when one has more information and are aware of issue, he/she able to be "whistleblower" for contamination issues, to start dialogue with officials or to put pressure on decision-makers and legal bodies to prevent pollution.

The Agency analyzed the current situation related to the mercury contamination in the country and prepared a brief description of it which was widely disseminated among the target groups.

The Agency also prepared the materials to support the legally binding agreement on mercury, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and to support the IPEN's campaign to eliminate mercury pollution.

The Agency also considered media as a target group because they are source of information for general public, other target groups and stakeholders. That is why Greenwomen prepared and sent the press kit to the media of Pavlodar and Karaganda region, as well as of Almaty.

The press kit includes:

- Press release "Environmental experts urge the legal bodies in Kazakhstan to speed up the ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury".
- Fact sheet listing facts about mercury and about the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

**Assess the level of awareness of the Minamata Convention and the need for early ratification among the public, regulators, media, industry and government:**

Most of the representatives of target groups (general public, regulators, media, industry and government) have a certain level of awareness of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and understand that Kazakhstan must ratify it.

NGOs have a better understanding of the need for early ratification of the Convention. They believe that the ratification of the Convention obliges Kazakhstan to regulate all aspects of possible formation (accumulation) of mercury, including supply, production, trade, release of products containing mercury, mercury emissions and discharges into air and water.

Regulators also understand the need for early ratification of the Convention. However, they should overcome some internal obstacles and prioritize what they should do. The Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan was dismissed in 2014 and all its duties were transferred to the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The contacts Kazakh environmental NGOs had established and maintained with the Environment Agency are lost now. The Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan postponed action on the environmental issues until better times. Nevertheless, the environmental issues are still a priority and must stay as such.

The media are also aware of the Convention. However, for different reasons (editorial policy, nature of the publication, etc.) they are not always ready to publish articles covering environmental subjects.

### **Project Outcome:**

#### **Describe the activity conducted:**

##### **- Gathering information and analyzing it.**

Greenwomen gathered information from open sources about the situation of mercury pollution in Kazakhstan. We checked the web-sites of government agencies, international organizations, industrial enterprises, NGOs, and divided collected information to the following sections:

- Current laws and national programs related to the chemical safety in Kazakhstan and mercury, in particular;
- “hot spots” of mercury pollution in Kazakhstan;
- sources of mercury pollution;
- consumer goods containing mercury presented in Kazakhstan.

##### **- Preparing a brief report and having consultations**

Greenwomen analyzed the current situation related to the mercury contamination in the country and prepared a brief report about it. It was uploaded at the Greenwomen’s web-site: [www.greenwomen.kz](http://www.greenwomen.kz)

Greenwomen had consultations with officials representing government agencies (the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Health Care and Social Development of the

Republic of Kazakhstan); representatives of government facilities (for example, waste management companies) and representatives of privately owned enterprises and joint stock companies (for example, JSC “Zhasyl Damu”).

JSC “Zhasyl Damu” was reorganized from Kazakhstan scientific and research institute of environment and climate of the Ministry of Environment of Kazakhstan. Currently it is linked to the Ministry of Energy of Kazakhstan. It is responsible for the implementation of concrete international contracts and provides information on the implementation of the state environmental policy<sup>4</sup>.

#### **- Preparing a press release**

The Agency prepared and sent the press release to the media of Temirtau, Pavlodar, Karaganda and Almaty.

#### **- Preparing the leaflet for general public**

The leaflet (for general public) was also distributed. The leaflet provides information on first aid and emergency treatment in case of mercury poisoning, about sources of mercury pollution, consumer goods which contain mercury. The leaflet is distributed among general public and can be downloaded at [www.greenwomen.kz](http://www.greenwomen.kz)

#### **- Preparing an educational module**

The educational module designed for teachers and students, and specialists working in the government departments, entitled “The Dangers of Mercury: How to Avoid Poisoning and How to Cooperate” was prepared. The educational module was prepared by Greenwomen with comments provided by Eco-Accord. It was further presented at NGO meetings in Almaty and Timirtay and broadly disseminated to all interested NGOs via e-mail. The educational module can also be downloaded from <http://www.greenwomen.kz/>

#### **- Participating in the IPEN’s regional meeting and discussing the Statement to the government**

The Agency was a participant in the regional meeting “Public participation in the decision-making process on chemical safety issues in EECCA” organized by IPEN. The meeting took place in Almaty on June 19-20, 2015. The participants of this meeting discussed the issues of mercury contamination, among others. The participants also discussed the Statement which was sent to the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The statement urges the government to ratify the the Minamata Convention on Mercury as soon as possible.

#### Engagement of and impact on Target Groups

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<sup>4</sup> see: <http://www.zhasyldamu.kz/o-kompanii/missiya-tseli-i-zadachi-kompanii.html>



Provide detail on your NGOs engagement with the target groups and report the result of the activity on the target groups:

The project helped to raise the awareness of NGOs from Temirtau, Pavlodar, Karaganda and Almaty. Now, when NGOs have more information and are aware of issue, they are able to be “whistleblowers” and to start a constructive dialogue with decision-makers and legal bodies, providing strong arguments in favor of the ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Kazakh NGOs believe that if Kazakhstan will become a Party to the Convention, they will continue to exercise the right to participate in decision making process and that their opinion will be taking into account when officials make decisions regarding the issues of mercury pollution in the country.

NGOs consider it necessary to assess mercury releases; to develop a plan to reduce the use of mercury and to promote the alternatives. Workers of recycling plants and factories which use mercury for their products must be aware of methods of individual protection, safety rules in case of emergency (for example, leakage and dissipation of mercury, accidental release of mercury, etc.).

Some local NGOs collect information on alternatives (including consumer goods and products) which are safer for human health and environment.

The recommendations to the government on how to minimize the negative effects of mercury on human health and the environment in the context of the provisions of the Convention were developed during the meetings and public consultation.

Outreach to Stakeholders: Record the key stakeholders and sectors that were engaged in this activity, and any potential to develop further involvement with these stakeholders:

Greenwomen had consultations with officials representing government agencies (ministries); representatives of government facilities (for example, waste management companies) and representatives of privately owned enterprises.

The Agency hopes to continue its relationship with these stakeholders. However, there are few pitfalls there.

Greenwomen had established the contacts with the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Ministry was dismissed in 2014 and all its duties were transferred to the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan which now has the Committee of Environmental Regulation, Control and State Inspection in the Oil and Gas Industry. The Agency needs to start from scratch to maintain the contacts. Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan substitutes the work of the former Ministry of Environment. Greenwomen and other Kazakhstan NGOs work hard to establish contacts and cooperation

with the relevant departments of the Ministry of Energy working on hazardous waste incineration. Recently the Ministry of Energy has developed an updated National Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention on POPs. The Ministry also deals with addressing mercury related problems. Some departments deal with waste management and mercury contaminated waste.

**Deliverables, outputs and/or products.**

**List the types of outputs from the activity, including report or information materials:**

**Greenwomen’s deliverables, outputs and/or products after the awareness-raising campaign in Temirtau, Karagada, Pavlodar and Almaty:**

**- Press-release for national news agencies and media of Temirtau, Karagada, Pavlodar and Almaty**

The press release was sent to national news agencies, media of Temirtau, Karagada, Pavlodar and Almaty, and also distributed to the subscribers of environmental e-lists.

**- Information kit for media and public**

The kit includes fact sheet listing facts about mercury (including the facts on the impact of mercury on human health and the environment), and facts about the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

**- Educational module**

The educational module entitled “The Dangers of Mercury: How to Avoid Poisoning and How to Cooperate” was prepared. The module is designed for teachers and students, as well as specialists working in the government departments.

**- Leaflet for general public.**

Greenwomen also is prepared a leaflet for general public. The leaflet provides information on first aid and emergency treatment in case of mercury poisoning, about sources of mercury pollution, consumer goods which contain mercury.

The materials are uploaded at the Greenwomen’s web-site: [www.greenwomen.kz](http://www.greenwomen.kz)

All materials are adapted for general public and target groups and can be used as educational aids during trainings, workshops with participation of representatives of government agencies and businesses. Teachers and students of programs focusing on the environment studies can also use these materials for study or research.

**Communication Efforts**

Describe efforts to communicate this activity to the media and/or general public:

Greenwomen made an effort to communicate its activity to media and general public.

The Agency distributed the press release to national news agencies, media of Temirtau, Karagada, Pavlodar and Almaty, and also distributed to the subscribers of environmental e-lists.

- Kazakhstan Today, the news agency published the press release:

[http://www.kt.kz/rus/ecology/eksperti\\_prizivajut\\_kazahstan\\_uskoritj\\_process\\_ratifikaci\\_i\\_konvencii\\_o\\_rtuti\\_1153602627.html](http://www.kt.kz/rus/ecology/eksperti_prizivajut_kazahstan_uskoritj_process_ratifikaci_i_konvencii_o_rtuti_1153602627.html)

The Agency published press-release and other materials at its Facebook page “Toxic Free Future”: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/chemsafety/>

- Public Association ECOM (Russia) re-published our post at its Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/ecompv/>

Kazakh NGOs suggestions regarding the mercury pollution issues were published by Environmental Informational Service – Kyrgyzstan EKOIS-Bishkek:

<http://www.ekois.net/wp/?p=11190>

### **Communication with National or Local Authorities**

Indicate any communication to or coordination with your National Mercury Treaty Focal Point, or any other national or local authority related to mercury management regarding your Activity:

Greenwomen had consultations with experts from the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Health Care and Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, “Ecoproject” and production enterprises.

Greenwomen sent the Statement urging Kazakhstan to ratify the Minamata Convention on Mercury to the Parliament, to the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, to the Ministry of Health Care and Social Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan and local industrial enterprises.

**Mercury Treaty Focal Point: Provide the name and contact details of your National Mercury Treaty Focal Point:**

N/A

**Recommendations, from a public interest, NGO perspective, on reducing and eliminating human sources of mercury:**

Kazakh NGOs believe that the ratification of the Minamata Convention obliges Kazakhstan to regulate all aspects of possible formation (accumulation) of mercury, including supply, production, trade, release of products containing mercury, mercury emissions and discharges into air and water, and to introduce innovative technologies for the environmentally sound management of mercury wastes. The Convention makes provisions regarding certain products containing mercury compounds (such as thermometers, blood pressure measuring devices, barometers and other measuring devices; fluorescent lamps; batteries; mercury amalgam fillings, as well as some types of soaps and beauty products) – these products should be discontinued and removed from market.

The Parties of Convention must regulate the production processes which use mercury; restrict mercury-contaminated waste; rehabilitate of contaminated sites and to provide compensation to victims of mercury contamination.

Polluter pays principle should be the key principle in solving the problem of mercury pollution.

Kazakh NGOs support the IPEN's position related to the chemical safety and they consider the following actions as the most important on reducing and eliminating human sources of mercury in Kazakhstan:

**- Emissions to all surroundings**

Develop national goals to reduce and eliminate emissions and releases of mercury to all surroundings; develop a plan to achieve these goals and search for financial support.

**- National Implementation Plan (NIP)**

Develop a NIP which will make provisions to reduce the impact of mercury on human health and environment. Access to information and public participation in decision-making is one of the key points in the NIP's development and implementation.

**- Contaminated sites**

Commit to identify and to clean up contaminated sites. Conduct inventory of mercury at the national level; ensure public access to the results and information.

**- Waste**

Commit to the provisions on mercury wastes; use innovative methods for handling mercury-containing waste. Develop measures to minimize and to prevent formation of waste containing mercury; establish responsibility and compensations.

**What, if anything, changed from the original plans and why?**

N/A

**Resources on mercury: Please list websites, databases, reports, academic researchers, laboratories, etc. that you are familiar with.**

<http://www.worldbank.org/ru/results/2013/07/15/kazakhstan-eliminating-mercury-and-controlling-floods>

<http://kapital.kz/info/minamatskaya-konvenciya-po-rtuti>

<http://hg-pavlodar.narod.ru/ru/bm/biomercury.htm>

<http://hg-kazakhstan.narod.ru/pdf/BookR.pdf>

<http://www.nomad.su/?a=7-200707170103>

<http://archive.svoboda.org/programs/eco/2003/eco.011603.asp>

[http://keepslide.com/news\\_politics/37156#sthash.c4NNQ03R.dpbs](http://keepslide.com/news_politics/37156#sthash.c4NNQ03R.dpbs)