



**a toxics-free future**

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## **International SAICM Implementation Project (ISIP)**

In 2010, in an effort to demonstrate SAICM implementation via IPEN Participating Organizations, IPEN launched an International SAICM Implementation Project, also known as ISIP. ISIP aims to mobilize resources for initial enabling activities pertaining to national priorities, in keeping with the work areas set out in the strategic objectives of section IV of the SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy.

In particular, the ISIP supports the Governance objective of SAICM's Overarching Policy Strategy paragraph 26, which calls for enhanced "cooperation on the sound management of chemicals between Governments, the private sector and civil society at the national, regional and global levels."

In addition, ISIP builds on the 2008-2009 Global SAICM Outreach Campaign to raise awareness about SAICM and strengthen collaboration among the public interest, health and labor sectors.

### **ISIP Objectives**

ISIP's four objectives include:

- Promoting the need for sound chemicals management
- Advancing National SAICM Implementation
- Promoting global SAICM implementation by global civil society
- Building capacity among NGOs developing countries and countries with economies in transition

**Title of activity:** Fostering Importance of Chemical and Product Safety in Local Communities

**NGO:** Resource centre Leskovac

**Country:** Serbia

**Date:** December, 2012

### **Elements of SAICM Covered:**

Participation in the collection, review, and assessment of existing information on information systems pertaining to chemicals in products including but not limited to regulations, standards and industry practices; Develop specific recommendations for actions to promote implementation of the Strategic Approach with regard to such information, incorporating identified priorities and access and delivery mechanisms; and follow up activities for the SAICM OEWG and ICMM3; Promote the use of safe and effective alternatives, including non-chemical alternatives to organic chemicals that are highly toxic, persistent and bioaccumulative; Promote the development and use of products and processes that pose lesser risks; Articles and products containing hazardous substances should all be accompanied by relevant information

for users, workplaces and at disposal sites; Promote provision of information for all chemicals in commerce, including appropriate information detailing their inherent hazards should be made available to the public at no charge and generated where needed with essential health, safety and environmental information made available (ICCM2 decision II/4, GPA items 54, 44, 108,111)

**Description of the specific product(s) and chemical(s) related to the activity:**

Specific products that were issue of testing were toys produced from different materials and for different age ranges. There were 4 main groups of toys, divided by materials (metal, plastic, wood and rubber). Toys were tested for heavy metals (Pb, CD, ZN, Cr, NI, Hg, As), phthalates and formaldehyde chemicals.

**Description of the toxic effects of the chemicals contained in the product(s):**

Above mentioned chemicals are source of unacceptable risks to human health and environment. These chemicals can influence children's health via asthma, different allergies, skin damage, immune response problems, etc. ...

**Description of how consumers are exposed to these toxic chemicals:**

Consumers and kids are exposed to toxic elements during everyday contact in the playing and learning process. Due to the high level of availability of toys in the market, consumers are widely exposed to the toys of unsecure source of origin, as well as from products that are made in countries where safety regulations do not comply with EU regulations.

**Description of how the product waste that contains the hazardous chemical(s) is handled:**

All products that were part of the laboratory testing were handled according to official regulations of the Republic of Serbia on handling hazardous waste. Both Public Health institutions in Leskovac and Belgrade handled the waste according to their operational rules in accordance with the harmonized laws of the EU regulations that have been made to date in the Republic of Serbia.

**Description of what information (or level of information) is available to consumers about the toxic chemicals in the product:**

Information about dangerous and toxic risks in products used everyday is available via a limited source of information to the public. Mostly information can be found in specialized newsletters of official institutions such as the Public Health Institute and Ministries that are reachable to a very low percentage of the general public. Also, some information occasionally can be found in specialized baby care websites, as well as specialized consumers' websites and their info bulletins. This level of information's is not covering general public and wider media. For this reason, consumer awareness regarding this issue is at a very low level and further efforts are needed to raise their awareness in order for production companies to start to act more responsibly to society.

**Description of what types of similar products are available on the market, including safer alternatives:**

Most products that appear on the markets in Serbia as well as the western Balkans have more or less the same source for importing the toys and from the same manufactures. Some of the products enter the market as a copy of the original version in the same package, even in pharmacies, where consumers trust as the most safe place to supply their needs.

## **Project Outcomes:**

### **Description of the activity conducted:**

The project was realized in 3 different phases in order to contribute to better understanding of the importance of chemical and product safety in local communities. At the same time, awareness research in health institutions and on chemical toy testing was done. Research was done on 150 health workers/parents with kids from 2 -12 years old in health institutions in 4 local communities (Leskovac, Bojnik, Medvedja, Vlasotince). Research represents the biggest single source of information of knowledge, attitudes and awareness level in Jablanica district, and at the same time represents a rich base for further monitoring of kids' safety in relation to toy safety and products of common use.

Toy testing was made strategically, selecting 4 different types of toy products based on production material groups (wood, plastic, metal, rubber). Tests were done on heavy metals (Pb, Cd, Zn, Cr, Ni, Hg, As), phthalates and formaldehyde. From 12 toys in total chosen from specialized shops, market places and pharmacies, 3 of them did not pass safety regulations and have unacceptable risks to human health and environment. From this, number one was bought in china shop, one in a book store, and one (and most disturbing) in a branded pharmacy chain (the product (hogger) was made for babies up to one year old). Testing was done in public health institutions in Leskovac and the public health institute Batut in Belgrade. Both of them are certified by the Ministry of Health of Republic of Serbia for specialized chemical testing.

A short report of testing toys for hazardous chemicals is given as an annex. A public awareness campaign was done in local communities in general, and also in health institutions in Jablanica district. During the short media campaign, promotional printed materials were distributed with important information on hazardous materials in products of common use and toys, as a tool to raise awareness in the local community. T-shirts and promotional badges were also made and distributed to volunteers who were part of the volunteering team. Distribution of materials continues after realization of project cycles. The local community responds very actively and responsibly to realized promotional actions.

### **Impact on target groups:**

Local community in general, as well as employees in health institutions in 4 municipalities (Leskovac, Vlasotince, Medvedja and Bojnik), are empowered to continue requesting updated information from official bodies in the Republic of Serbia. Their awareness level has been brought up to the next level, and together with other local actions from consumer associations and public health institutions, will continue to improve.

### **Impact on target policies:**

Since the research done on toy safety and products of common use for kids aged 2-12 years old is the first one that was realized in Southern Serbia and Jablanica district, it will contribute in a large scale to all similar actions, and encourage policy makers in this area to improve current regulatory controls and distribution of information. At the same time, the research helped to create the first database of data indicating familiarity and attitudes of parents and health workers of toy and product safety. Also, these results will be used as part of further monitoring target policies.

**Outreach to stakeholders:**

The main stakeholders that were involved in this project were the Public Health Institute from Leskovac and the Public Health Institute-Batut, Belgrade. Apart from them, health institutions from 4 municipalities were also involved in the project implementation period. Potential follow up of this action include assisting the legal and responsible institutions and including consumer product associations in a larger scale in order to create a stable, strategically oriented team who will continue to work in this field.

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

- 1 Research on toy safety report (Serbian)
- 1 Toy testing report done in hard copy version (Serbian and English)
- 12 official toy products test results from Public Health Institute
- 50 t-shirts, 1000 information leaflets, 500 small booklets and 500 badges

**Communication efforts:**

Local and regional media were very eager to find out more about these topics, as until now it's not so well covered in our region. Reaction of local communities was on a very high level, as a large number of people were in direct contact with some of the project activities.

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**NGO Recommendations for next steps:**

Further consumer awareness raising need to be done in order to have active participation from local community. Strategy of constant control of products in the markets needs to be created and implemented. Involvement of new important stakeholders needs to be continued, as well as the creation of a strategically oriented implementation team. Improvement of the knowledge and familiarity (through trainings and workshops) of local and regional media should be done in order for them to report on irregularities on the spot and inform the local community in a proper way with the right information.