



**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:** "Awareness to phase out Mercury in Health care in some Districts of Uttar Pradesh state in India"

**NGO:** Youth Round Table Society

**Country:** India

**Date:** August, 2011

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

Include civil society representatives in Government committees formulating, carrying out and monitoring SAICM implementation plans, or useful inputs into the process where NGOs encounter barriers to their substantive direct participation, broad and meaningful participation of stakeholders, including women, at all levels in devising responses to chemicals management challenges and in regulatory and decision-making processes that relate to chemical safety (164, 206)

### **Description of Stockholm Convention or SAICM implementation-related policy processes that you have participated in or contributed to:**

Youth Round table society works in two districts of Uttar Pradesh province of India. As we have based in the state level we have limited information on the issues of POPs and SAICM. So YRT

has never contributed in these policy issues earlier. However with Toxics Link help, YRT is trying to build its information capacity on POPs and other chemical safety issues pertaining to SAICM. In fact the mercury project under ISIP-II is the first kind of project YRT has implemented on chemical safety issues. Taking the lead from the project and in building the partnership with IPEN and Toxics Link, YRT will push the issue of Stockholm Convention and SAICM at the regional and national level.

### **Description of NGO positions, priorities and concerns with the process:**

To date YRT's main focus areas were on various social and health issues of these districts. After coming in contact with Toxics Link and attending few workshops, we have realized the importance of POPs and other chemical safety issues. In the meantime, the organization has also developed fair understanding on Stockholm Convention and SAICM process. Indeed YRT has also realized the importance of these issues at the regional level. So gradually YRT will thrive to work on these issues. However, sustained funding on these issues are prime concerns for us.

### **Project Outcomes:**

#### **Description of the activity conducted or type of participation that was organized:**



Faizabad is a district which is situated in Uttar Pradesh province of India and is not a well off district of the country. The issue of mercury usage in the health care system is a new issue to this region as well as for the organization. Further, the health issue is a provincial subject in India and the concerned Uttar Pradesh government has hardly taken any initiative to minimize the mercury use from the health care set up in the state. Though YRT was aware of the developments going on the mercury issues at the national and international level through Toxics Link, the ISIP project creates an opportunity for us to take forward the issue in this region of the country.

Before the project inception, we organized an orientation training for staff and volunteers for an in-depth understanding on the issue pertaining to mercury.

#### ***Rapid assessment of mercury use in health care facilities***

A rapid assessment was conducted to understand the use of mercury in health care sector of the district. During the assessment it was observed that there is wide use of mercury based instruments like mercury thermometers and BP machines in most of the health facilities in the district. In dental clinics the use of mercury in dental fillings is quite common. During the assessment it also came out that the level of information outreach among the health care professionals on the issue is very limited in the district.

#### ***Publication of fact sheet***

To create awareness on the toxicity impact of mercury use, a fact sheet was published and was distributed among all the health care units, i.e. clinics, nursing homes, hospitals, etc.

### ***BCC activities (Behavioral Change Communication)***

A focus group discussion meeting was held with the health care professionals, nursing and other staff on mercury toxicity and mercury spill management issues. The stakeholders were sensitized on the issue and were made aware of mercury spill management.

### ***Networking activities***

Networks were developed with the key stake holders like the Regional Office of the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board, Para Medical Staff Association, Indian Medical Association, office of Chief Medical officer- Faizabad, print and electronic media, etc. The feedback of program was shared with the stakeholders on a regular basis.

### ***Meetings and workshops***



***At sub division level*** – Two round table meetings were organized at a sub-divisional level and the discussions were conducted for phasing-out the use of mercury instruments from the health care system. Medical professional raised queries regarding alternative use and its reliability, cost effectiveness, etc. The issues of mercury use in ayurvedic medicines were also discussed.



***At Regional level*** – A regional level consultation workshop was organized and the representatives of health care units participated in the event. The fact sheet was released by Mr. Ghanshyam, Regional Officer – Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board and distributed to the participants of the regional consultation workshop. A short film on mercury spill management at health care units, prepared by Toxics Link, was screened during the workshop. Dr. Ragini Kumari (Sr. Program Officer) from Toxics Link gave a presentation on mercury toxicity and the global campaign for shifting mercury use from health care system.

As mentioned earlier, the issue of mercury is very new to the region even for the organisation. However, the project was able to provide a well needed platform for YRT to take the issue to the regional level; also in due process, this could be a part of the national and global campaign. Most importantly, the success and the encouragement at the regional level will help the organisation to come out as an important player in the state on the issues. Though there are some bottlenecks on the financial aspects and on the technicality of the issues, with help from Toxics Link we can take up the issue into a higher level, engaging the state government.

### ***Types of inputs including written policies or recommendations***

The Regional Officer – Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board has promised to issue a notice to all health care units in his working districts for reducing the dependency on mercury-based instruments in their health care units.

### ***Results of participation***

YRT has developed a fair understanding on the global mercury-free campaign and has developed itself as a resource organisation at the regional level. YRT will continue its advocacy to mainstream the issue of mercury toxicity at the rural, district and regional level with the help and support from the stakeholders.

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

YRT conducted one-to-one and one-to-group communications with the key stakeholders, along with the nursing and cleaning staffs of private and government nursing homes, hospitals, clinics, etc. for sensitizing them on mercury toxicity issues, mercury spill management, dental amalgam, refusing the mercury-based equipment and adopting the alternatives like digital and aneroid-based equipment, etc. We worked closely with the regional pollution control board and invited them to our regional and sub-divisional level workshops. The process helped to develop a clear understanding on the issues among the stakeholders.

Further, during the development of the fact sheet, we consulted and engaged the officials and scientists of the regional pollution control board at various levels and strongly advocated the policy level issues in reference of the guidelines by the Government of India under bio medical rules. As a result the issue has gained prominence in the healthcare sector within the community, as well as among health care professionals, policy makers and even the local media.

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

- The project has helped in mainstreaming the issues related to the health hazards due to mercury. The project has also helped to create mass awareness among the target groups & relevant stakeholders.
- The project also helped us to raise the awareness of the policy makers of government health departments like the National Rural Health Mission, Office of Chief Medical Officer and the Office of the Regional Pollution Control Board. They were sensitized on the cross-cutting issues of mercury spill management and mixing of mercury-containing waste with household waste.
- During the rapid assessment for the use of mercury based equipment at Faizabad, the stakeholders (like nursing homes, hospitals, clinics, and dental clinics) were briefed on the issues pertaining to mercury, which indirectly helped to create awareness among the stakeholders. A questionnaire was prepared and circulated.
- The fact sheet was used as the advocacy tool. The policy level officials were sensitized on the ill effects of mercury and promised to take some initiatives like issuing a notice to all health care facilities for the phase-out of mercury products / instruments.

**Outreach to stakeholders:**

In this project, various government health departments like of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer, the National Rural Health Mission and the Office of the Regional Pollution Control Board, along with various organizations like the Indian Medical Association and PMS Associations were engaged. Apart from these, communities and media were kept in loop on the issues.

Fact sheet was an important medium to reach the communities as well as the media. The fact sheets have been distributed among the communities and also the relevant stakeholders. Media was also kept in the loop on the developments. They were invited to all the meetings and workshops. The media were also briefed separately after the meeting.

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

Mentioned above

**Description of communication efforts:**

This was the first time a project of this kind was held on the issues. Prior to it, hardly any activities had taken place on mercury issues in this part of the country. So media played a critical role in highlighting the issues.

**SAICM National Focal Point:**

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**NGO Recommendations to achieve desired NGO participation:**

The issue of mercury is quite technical in nature. There is little capacity among the grassroots NGOs to understand and take up the issues at the local and regional level. However, Toxics Link's role in this is laudable. Their workshops have helped to bring the group like us into the issues. More awareness and capacity-building workshops will bring more groups into the issues, which is a needed for India at this point of time.