

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 treaty¹.

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.

¹ 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: Ghana

Name of the NGO : ECOLOGICAL RESTORATIONS

Country: GHANA

Date: 22 FEBRUARY 2015 (IMEAP: 2014 Phase)

Title of project: **NATIONAL PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS CREATION ON THE MINAMATA CONVENTION**

Summary

Ecological Restorations Ghana has completed a highly successful awareness raising and public education project aimed at furthering stakeholder knowledge of the human health and environmental impacts of mercury. This is especially relevant in Ghana where ASGM involves mercury use resulting in the release of many tonnes of mercury to the environment in recent years. Ecological Restorations held very successful meetings with media, policy makers and artisanal gold miners which highlighted the need to ratify the Minamata Convention and move to rapid implementation of the treaty provisions. While ASGM is an allowed use under the mercury treaty, Ecological Restorations used this project to share information with miners on how they can protect themselves from mercury intoxication and implement mercury-free ASGM methods. Highlights of the project include broad stakeholder interest, significant media coverage of the issue and impacts at policy level. Since taking part in the stakeholder events with Ecological Restorations the EPA of Ghana has now included mercury issues in the national monitoring and evaluation schedules for PCBs in the country. The EPA is also in the process of drafting a Chemicals Bill and has agreed to include measures to regulate mercury in the Bill. The Association for ASGM miners has invited Ecological Restorations to hold workshops for all its 5000 members on mercury free ASGM techniques and planning is underway for this activity. This project has specific relevance to articles 3, 7, 11, 12, 16 and 18 of the mercury treaty.

This IMEAP CONSULTING PROJECT was implemented with the view to advocating for the mainstreaming of national policies on mercury and finding suitable ways of addressing the issue of mercury pollution in Ghana. Specific objectives were:

1. To create awareness of the provisions of the Minamata Convention on Mercury among the policy makers, researchers, and other stakeholders.
2. To develop strategies for informing the Ghanaian community on the Minamata Convention in order to contribute towards the elimination or reduction in the use of mercury.

The project collaborated with the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovations, (MESTI), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), The Ghana Chamber of Mines, Ministry of Health, and NGO coalition on artisanal mining.

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

The main long term objective of the project was to mainstream the formulation and enforcement of the laws on mercury and sound management of chemicals, elimination,

reduction or substitution with an alternative, less hazardous chemical in the policy towards a toxic free future. It seeks to raise awareness and sensitize stakeholders on the effects of mercury on human health and the environment.

The priority aspect of mercury pollution was artisanal small scale gold mining (ASGM), targeting the miners, policy makers and media. ASGM in Ghana has gained notoriety due to the damage it has caused to the environment and water bodies and hence effects on human health especially where mercury is used. This is caused by lack of awareness of alternatives to mercury. It was necessary to address this situation starting with awareness of different stakeholders involved.

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

Generally, awareness on mercury pollution among all stakeholders in Ghana is low, only those government officials and NGOs involved directly in the events related to Minamata Convention are aware. This creates gaps in the implementation of the Convention in different aspects. Early ratification will allow for further discussions and implementation of the Convention by different stakeholders. This will be successful only if they are aware of their roles.

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

The priority was given to stakeholders with specific roles to play in the implementation of the Convention. Policymakers have the role to provide an environment for early ratification and supporting national policy; researchers for alternatives; artisanal miners are the users of mercury who need to understand the impacts and the need for change; and the press for dissemination of information.

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

Ecological Restorations has;

- Organized press release /statement and discussions on mercury effects and the Convention on 22nd January 2015
- Held discussions with journalists on mercury and effects, the Convention and roles they could play.
- Held discussions with miners on the alternatives to using mercury in extracting gold.
- Organization of stakeholders' workshop.
- Distribution of the IPEN booklet – An NGO Introduction on Mercury Pollution and Minamata Convention on Mercury

The methods were chosen to facilitate sharing of information and prompt further dialogue on mercury pollution.

Explain why there is a specific need for awareness raising around ASGM activities in your country (if this is the case):

The need arises from the low awareness on the effects of mercury on the miners who directly handle mercury with bare hands, and low awareness of the existence of alternatives which they could use. Furthermore, studies of mercury effects conducted in various areas have provided evidence of mercury impacts which need to be addressed in the course of implementation of the Convention.

Project Outcome:

Significant awareness creation on the effects of mercury on human health among key, targeted stakeholders.

Ecological Restorations have;

- carried out press releases on the effects of mercury on human health and the environment (appended).
- Held discussions with two (2) environmental journalists from the Ghana News Agency (GNA) and the Daily Graphic the most read national newspaper.
- Distributed 40 books 'An NGO Introduction on Mercury Pollution and Minamata Convention on Mercury' which were distributed as follows: Ministry of Environment Science and Technology (5), EPA (5), Chamber of Mines (5), Mineral Commission (5), Ministry of Health (5), Journalists (5), Association of Small Scale Miners (7), Food and Drugs Board (3), GEF/NGO Network (5), and library of GEF Small Grants Programme (3).
- Held discussions with five (5) artisanal miners on the 19th of January 2015 on effective handling of mercury and existing alternatives

Ecological Restorations organized a one day stakeholders' workshop on 22nd January 2015 on the effects of mercury use on human health and the environment. The workshop participants were government, the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Ghana Chamber of Mines, the private sector, Food and Drugs Authority, Water Research Institute of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, small scale gold mining association, media, and CSOs/NGOs including Friends of the Nation (FoN), CARE International (KASA).

Engagement of and Impact on Target Groups:

Policy Makers

The Ghanaian EPA has now included mercury issues in the national monitoring and evaluation schedules for PCBs in the country. The EPA is in the process of drafting the Chemicals Bill to be submitted to Parliament for debate and approval and issues of mercury has now been incorporated.

Environmental Journalist

Two articles on the effects of mercury on human health were published in two widely circulated national media (Daily Graphic and Ghana News Agency (GNA) (attached).

Association of Small Scale Miners

Ecological Restorations met the Small Scale Miners association twice in Tarkwa to discuss the outcome of the workshop. The Association then invited Ecological Restorations to hold workshops for all its members (about 5,000) to brief them on the effects of mercury and the

alternative methodologies available. Five locations have been suggested and cost sharing arrangements are being made with them.

Donors

Steps have been initiated with Chamber of Mines to prepare follow-up projects for the UNDP to fund alternative methodologies to the use of mercury in artisanal gold mining.

Impact on target policies:

The target is to mainstream the formulation and enforcement of the laws on mercury and sound management of chemicals in the industry policy towards a toxic free future and its elimination, reduction or substitution with an alternate less hazardous chemicals. The project has provided some inputs to the EPA to include issues of mercury on the new policy on chemicals, which will be laid before Cabinet later in 2015.

Outreach to Stakeholders: The following category of stakeholders were involved in the project;

Policy Makers, Departments & Ministries

- EPA
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Environment Science, Technology and Innovations
- Chamber of Mines
- Food and Drugs Authority
- Environmental Journalists
- Association of Small Scale Miners
- Donors: UNDP Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme and the World Health Organization (WHO) Ghana Office.

Follow-up Actions

Ecological Restorations (ER) held discussions with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the incorporation of mercury issues in the national chemical policy.

Steps have been initiated with Chamber of Mines to prepare follow-up projects for the UNDP to fund alternative methodologies to the use of mercury in artisanal mining. Also ER met with the Association of Small Scale miners to discuss national workshop for the members of the association on the effects of mercury and the alternative methodologies available.

Deliverables, outputs and/or products:

- Workshop report
- Media reports
- 50 books “An NGOs Introduction on Mercury Pollution and Minamata Convention on Mercury” distributed.
- The electronic link to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (Text and Annexes) by UNEP was also shared with participants.

Communication Efforts:

- A media briefing was first held for the Press houses to understand the dangers that are related to the uncontrolled use mercury.
- Environmental journalists were invited to participate in the stakeholder workshop to understand the issues related to mercury
- The press covered and reported on these key issues.

Communication with National or Local Authorities:

The National Minamata/SAICM Focal Point was briefed on the project at the initiation stage and was invited to the stakeholder workshop, to which he participated. Copies of the workshop report were sent to the National Authorities.

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

Mr. Fredua-Agyemang

Director

Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovations

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

Some participants stated challenges they are facing by using mercury in their extractions and the reasons why they are still using it even after knowing the dangers involved. They said the alternatives available have so many challenges including availability, therefore they pleaded for better alternatives to help make their business grow in a sound environment as well health safety. They also asked of their involvement in the Minamata Convention process. The recommendations were part of the consultation processes aimed at finding strategies to help reduce or find alternatives to mercury use and also where possible to eliminate or Phase-Out mercury and mercury products.

Further recommendations include:

- Need for intensive education on the effects of mercury, especially in the mining areas.
- Support the phase-out the use of mercury where necessary (especially in artisanal mining, mercury products, dental health care etc.).
- Need to educate importers on the legislation on the import and use of mercury and their enforcement.
- NGOs/CSOs to be considered as key partners with the EPA to implement the provisions of Minamata Convention by the government.

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

There were no changes.

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

- www.ipen.org - IPEN Mercury Free Campaign & IPEN Heavy Metal Program
- www.chem.unep.ch - UNEP
- www.mercuryconvention.org – Minamata Convention on Mercury

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Press Statement

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATIONS

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PRESS STATEMENT ON THE AWARENESS RAISING ON THE MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY, HELD ON THE 22ND JANUARY 2015 AT THE GEF/SGP CONFERENCE ROOM.

Mr Chairperson, Ladies and gentlemen, various stakeholders, invited guests and participants, On behalf of IPEN (International POPs Elimination Network), ECOLOGICAL RESTORATIONS, and the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme, GEF/SGP, I welcome you to the maiden round table discussion on the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

The Minamata Convention on Mercury has travelled a long way through more than three years of intensive work after 5 negotiations starting in 2010. In October 2013, this journey ended with the signing of the treaty to become a Convention which to date has been signed by 128 countries including our beloved country Ghana.

This legally binding document (Minamata Convention) has the objective to protect the human health and the environment from anthropogenic (man-made) emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds and includes a range of measures to meet that objective.

- * Supply of mercury and trade of mercury
- * limitations on certain specific sources of mercury such as primary mining
- * mercury-added products (batteries, switches and relays, compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs), cosmetics, pesticides, biocides and topical antiseptics, thermometers, sphygmomanometers, hygrometers, manometers, barometers, dental amalgam etc.
- * manufacturing processes in which mercury compounds are used
- * Controls on artisanal and small-scale gold mining (galamsey)
- * Environmentally sound interim storage of mercury and on mercury wastes.
- * Contaminated sites.

The concern for this Convention arises from the history of mercury pollution all the world with the Minamata case a typical example showing the effects of mercury on human health. These include:

- Damage to the Central Nervous System
- Thyroid glands
- Kidneys
- Lungs
- Immune system
- Eyes
- Gum and skin
- Neurological and behavioural disorders (tremors, insomnia, memory loss, neuromuscular effects, headaches, and cognitive and motor dysfunction, cardiovascular effects,
- Mental retardation, seizures, delayed development
- Etc.

The objective of this discussion is to raise awareness among various stakeholders and find strategies to help reduce or find alternates to mercury use and also where there is the possibility to eliminate or PHASE-OUT mercury and mercury products. To achieve these, ECOLOGICAL RESTORATIONS calls on all stakeholders to intensify their activities on:

- Education on the effects of mercury
- Phase-out the use of mercury where necessary (especially in artisanal mining, mercury products, dental health care etc.)
- Legislation on the import and use of mercury enforced
- Ratification of the Minamata Convention by government.

Through these I believe the Minamata Convention will stay the process of Ratification in the next few years.

Thank you,
EMMANUEL ODJAM-AKUMATEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Appendix 2: News articles

<http://www.ghananewsagency.org/science/convention-calls-on-ban-on-usage-of-mercury-84888#.VMUETp7Thrl.gmail>

Convention calls on ban on usage of mercury

Friday 23rd January, 2015

Accra, Jan. 23, GNA - The Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF/SGP) in collaboration with the Ecological Restoration and the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) has held a round table discussion on the Minamata Convention on the use of mercury.

The discussion is to enable policy makers, researchers, practitioners and civil society organizations discuss issues of mercury usage in Ghana and agree on the way forward to implement the Convention in Ghana.

It is also aimed at raising awareness among stakeholders and finding strategies to help reduce or find alternatives to mercury use and the possible elimination of mercury and mercury products

The Minamata Convention on Mercury is an international treaty signed by 128 countries and ratified by 10 countries and was adopted in Japan in October 2013.

It seeks to protect human health and the environment from the harmful effects of mercury.

The objective of the convention is to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic (man-made) emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds.

Mr Emmanuel Odjam-Akumatey, the Executive Director of GEF/SGP, said the convention on mercury had travelled a long way through more than three years of intensive work after five negotiations which started in 2010.

He said its concern arose from the history of mercury pollution and that total anthropogenic emissions of mercury in 2010 were 1960 tonnes with 37 per cent of the emissions coming from small scale gold mining alone, adding that, "the sub-Saharan African contributed 16.1 per cent of global mercury emissions with the artisan mining being the largest contributor".

Mr Odjam-Akumatey said worldwide, the Minamata worst case scenario had shown the damaging effects of mercury on human health including, damage to the central nervous system, thyroid glands, kidneys, lungs, immune system, eyes, gum and skin, neurological and behavioural disorders and many more.

He said a report by Ghana's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) showed that as at 2013, artisanal small scale mining contributed 34.8 per cent (1,464,781 ounces) of mercury usage in gold production and in 2011, about 19.26 metric tonnes of mercury was imported which has gradually reduced to about 2.5 metric tonnes in 2013.

The Executive Director said Article seven, paragraph two, of the Minamata Convention enjoins each party to commit to reduce and where feasible eliminate the use of mercury mining and processing.

He said to achieve these, the Ecological Restorations was seeking to work with the Government of Ghana to educate Ghanaians on the Mercury Act 1989, Mineral and Mining Act 2006 (Act 703) and Environmental Assessment Regulations 1999 (LI 1652) that regulates Mercury imports and use in Ghana.

"Governments should step-up intensive education on the effects of mercury in mining areas, Support the phasing-out of use of mercury and mercury products, increase support in dental health care and assist the EPA to implement the provisions of Minamata Convention."

Dr Sam Adu-Kumi, a Director of the EPA, said controlling the anthropogenic releases of mercury throughout its lifecycle had been a key factor in shaping the obligations under the convention.

He said the convention demanded the countries on the convention to develop and implement a national action plan and also submit the plan to the convention Secretariat within three years.

It also requested all countries on the convention to provide a review of the progress made every three years and include such reviews in its reports.

GNA

<http://graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/37813-enforce-laws-on-use-of-mercury-for-mining.html>

'Enforce laws on use of mercury for mining'

29 January 2015 | Written by [Rebecca Quaicoe Duho \(Mrs\)](#)

A group picture of participants at the round table discussion on mercury use in Ghana

The Director of Environment at the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Mr Fredua Agyeman, has called for the enforcement of laws that criminalise the activities of miners who use mercury in their work.

He expressed optimism that when enforced, the devastating effects of mercury on humans such as damage to the central nervous system, thyroid glands, kidneys, lungs, immune system, eyes, gum and skin as well as neurological and behavioural disorders would be minimised.

Mr Agyeman made the call at a roundtable discussion on raising awareness of the Minamata Convention on mercury.

Organised by Ecological Restorations, a non-governmental organisation (NGO), with support from the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) and the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF/SGP) in Ghana, it was aimed at raising awareness of the dangers of mercury to humans and the environment.

The roundtable discussion was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Health, the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and NGOs.

Minamata Convention

The Minamata Convention on Mercury is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury.

In October 2013, the treaty was signed by 128 countries and ratified by 10 countries to become a convention.

Ghana is a signatory to the convention.

Mr Agyeman called for another look to be taken at the issue of small-scale mining being the livelihood of majority of indigenous people in mining communities.

Among others, he suggested that they should be given other forms of skills training to earn their livelihood. Mercury emission

In Ghana, according to a 2014 environmental report by the EPA, artisanal small-scale mining contributed to 34.8 per cent (1,464,781 ounces) of mercury usage in gold production as of 2013.

In a presentation on the “Development of a national plan for the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury,” the acting Director of Chemicals Control and Management Centre of EPA, Dr Sam Adu-Kumi, said the convention called on parties that had artisanal and small-scale gold mining and processing subject within its territory to take steps to reduce and, where feasible, eliminate the use of mercury and mercury compounds.

So far, he said, a national plan of action was being put in place to put together national objectives and reduction targets on mercury, work at eliminating worst practices, formalise or

regulate the sector as well as come out with a baseline estimates of the quantities of mercury used and the practices employed.

The Executive Director of Ecological Restoration, Mr Emmanuel Odjam-Akumatey, said the Minamata Convention enjoined signatories to reduce and, where feasible, eliminate the use of mercury mining and processing.

He said Ecological Restoration was, therefore, ready to work with the government and other agencies to educate the public on the legislations that regulate mercury imports and use in Ghana.

Among some of the activities lined-up, he said, included intensive education on the effects of mercury, especially in the mining areas, support the phase-out of the use of mercury where necessary, especially in artisanal mining.

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Appendix 3: Photos:



Participants at the workshop

Cross-section of participants during discussion

