



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 creation on the effects of mercury on human health and the environment in Ghana

NGO: Ecological Restorations

Country: Ghana

Date: December 2012

Elements of SAICM Covered:

Promote reduction of the risks posed to human health and the environment (57); Help develop comprehensive national profiles or country situation reports about mercury (1, 166); Programs to monitor mercury to assess exposure (66, 82); Promote the development and use of products and processes that pose lesser risks (44); Take immediate action to reduce the risk to human health and the environment posed on a global scale by mercury in products and production processes (59); Participation in activities related to the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on mercury

Description of mercury that is available in the market:

Most common forms of mercury in Ghana include some skin lightening creams, e-waste, fluorescent lamps, medical waste, mercury vapour, mercury/tin amalgam.

Description of the most common forms of mercury exposure:

Some skin lightening creams mostly imported, sold and used especially by women, uncontrolled burning of e-waste, uncontrolled dumping of broken fluorescent lamps, burning/ incineration of medical waste, mercury vapour from the illegal mining operators (called 'galamsey'), mercury/tin amalgam from the dentistry, disposal of broken thermometers in schools and other users.

Description of human sources of mercury:

The human activities known in Ghana that release mercury into the environment include: artisanal gold mining, hospital waste from thermometers, sphygmomanometers, thermometers from schools and other laboratories, and burning of electronic wastes.

From deliberations with the public, it was established that many people do not know much about mercury releases from human activities though few made mention of artisanal mining (galamsey) and burning of e-waste; someone even made the statement that all he knows about mercury is that "it is kept at the banks to prevent money from getting missing". He said he didn't know about the uses of mercury.

Description of the levels of mercury release and exposure:

No data available in Ghana on the release and exposure levels of mercury.

Description of the damage caused by mercury:

Data is not available at the national level, they only know that the bad practices of "waste" including mercury is not good. Mention was made of artisanal workers, women, children, and workers at e-waste burning sites, those living around e-waste burning sites, food vendors, traders, and people living around such activities as the most vulnerable.

Description of the laws currently regulating mercury:

None yet, the Environmental Protection Agency(EPA) is in the process of drafting the Chemicals Bill which will include mercury, nano- waste and other hazardous chemicals to be submitted by the end of the year to Parliament for debate and approval.

Description of the efforts to deal with mercury:

As stated above, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as the agency mandated by government to control the import, sale and use of chemicals, is in the process of drafting a bill through the project on GEF/UNDP/UNITAR/EPA-Ghana Project on Capacity Building for the Elimination of PCBs in Ghana to this effect.

Description of what forces support and oppose the Mercury Treaty, the public participation consultation process, and the level of public awareness of the treaty process:

Not much is known about this process, but agencies working in this area make mention of this process in their activities, so can conclusively say the level of awareness is very low.

Project Outcome:

Description of the activity conducted:

1. Background

This 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.

The project was implemented in close collaboration of the UNDP Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (SGP) to execute the main project activities. The project also collaborated with the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology (MEST), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), The Ghana Chamber of Mines, Ministry of Health, and NGO coalition on artisanal mining.

The main long term objective of the project was to mainstream the formulation and enforcement of the laws on mercury and sound chemical management in the policy towards a toxic free future, and its elimination, reduction or substitution with an alternative, less hazardous chemical. It seeks to raise awareness and sensitize stakeholders on the effects of mercury on human health and the environment.

2. Description of Activities Implemented.

The main activities carried out under the projects were:

2.1 Organize a workshop on the effects of mercury among, policy makers, researchers and major stakeholders.

- Review of Policy on Mercury
 - Worked with the EPA to include mercury issues in the preparation of monitoring and evaluation schedules for PCBs in the country
 - Visits and interactions with the Ministries of Health and Environment and Science on mercury national policy issues
- Effective handling of mercury in artisanal mining
 - Held discussions with artisanal miners
 - Discussions were held on alternatives to using mercury in extracting gold in small scale mining.

2.2 Organize press to support awareness-raising on the effects of mercury among the various stakeholders and the general population of Ghana.

- Awareness creation through press releases on the effects of mercury on human health and the environment
- Held discussions with environmental journalist
- Printed and distributed posters on the effects of mercury on humans
- 50 IPEN books on mercury – NGO Introduction to Mercury Pollution was 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)
- 3 of the IPEN books were distributed to the library of GEF Small Grants Programme

Impact on target groups:

Policy Makers

- EPA included mercury issues from this project “Awareness creation on the effects of mercury on human health and the environment in Ghana “ and information from other sources from the Ministry of Health, Food and Drugs Board, Association of Small Scale Miners and the Minerals Commission in the national monitoring and evaluation schedules for PCBs in the country.
- 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 have been published in two widely circulated national news papers (Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times)

Association of Small Scale Miners

- Have met twice in Tarkwa to discuss the outcome of the workshop
- They have 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 Minerals Commission to prepare a follow-up project for the UNDP to fund alternative methodologies to the use of mercury in artisanal mining.

Impact on target policies:

- The target is to mainstream the formulation and enforcement of the laws on mercury and sound chemical management in the industry policy towards a toxic free future and its elimination or reduction or substitution with an alternate less hazardous chemical.
- 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 very soon.

Outreach to stakeholders:

The following category of stakeholders were involved in the project

1. Policy Makers, Departments & Ministries
 - EPA
 - Ministry of Health
 - Ministry of Environment Science and Technology
 - Minerals Commission
 - Food and Drugs Board
2. Environmental Journalist
3. Association of Small Scale Miners
4. Donors UNDP Global Environment Facility - Small Grants Programme.

As a follow-up, Ecological Restorations has formed a network with these stakeholders to carry out further awareness creation and educational activities to strengthen the issues of elimination and or reduction of mercury use in the country.

Follow-up Actions

After the project the following actions have been executed:

- Held discussions with the Environmental Protection Agency, EPA, for the incorporation of mercury issues in the national chemical policy.

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

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:

- Stakeholders workshop held on 3rd May 2012 –workshop report including resolutions attached
- 300 Posters on the effects of mercury were printed and circulated across the country, mostly in Accra
- Strategies for informing the Ghanaian community on the elimination/reduction of mercury use through press information.
- Participating community report and resolutions.

Communication efforts:

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

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

- a. There should be a follow up meeting for scientists, researchers and policy makers to interact and share experiences on the harmful effects of mercury and the alternative technologies available to replace mercury.
- b. There is the need for nationwide education and awareness creation, especially among the artisanal miners.
- c. Case study of sensitive places where e-waste is becoming a problem should be investigated and reported.
- d. Alternative use of mercury in artisanal mining should be propagated and efforts made to implement and spread the technology.
- e. Funding support to the artisanal miners should be targeted to replacing mercury with the new alternative technologies.
- f. Effective management of mercury in the country should be promoted and the health implications should be of national concerns.