



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: Current Status of Mercury in Jordan

NGO: Baytuna Society

Country: Jordan

Date: February, 2011

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:

Mercury in Jordan only exists in the electrical and electronic equipment the country imports from abroad, dental clinics, hospitals, cement factories and oil industry. Mercury is banned from being a constituent of pesticides, paints and in chlor-alkali plants (Jordan used to have 5 plants operated on mercury- the plants continue to exist but in a mercury-free form).

Description of the most common forms of mercury exposure:

Out of date electrical and electronic equipment are either stored somewhere in institutions or individual store yards. The business of recycling these apparatus and equipment is growing and therefore, the first point of exposure are the ones who are dismantling the equipment either for refurbishment or for recycling, looking for the elements such as copper and gold. Possible sites and points of exposures are recyclers, refurbishment people, medical centers and hospitals, dumping sites scavengers, computer retailers who are involved in refurbishment, dental clinic patients and technicians, and, at a lower scale, people at home who have mercury-containing thermometers.

Description of human sources of mercury:

One kind of activity that may release mercury into the environment is disposal of solid waste, including medical waste (not yet organized in a way so that they are sorted and end in the hazardous and medical waste disposal sites). Recyclers, refurbishment and scavengers' actions in the form of dismantling this equipment are other types of activities, as are dental clinics that are still using amalgam, some of the pharmaceutical products that contain mercury, and mercury-containing cosmetics. A study was conducted by the Dentistry Department in Jordan University with the purpose to assess the knowledge and observance of proper mercury hygiene and amalgam waste management (AWM) among Jordanian general dental practitioners (GDPs) through applying a questionnaire on 250 dental practitioners. It was found that, of the Jordanian practitioners, 22.6% reported no undergraduate training in amalgam safety measures. Almost a quarter of GDPs did not have proper ventilation in their clinics, around 20-25% did not use protective clothing or eye protection, 5.3% were mixing amalgam manually, and 13.9% used their bare fingers for inserting the freshly mixed amalgam. Most of unused amalgam ends up in the drain or in trash; there are no recycling facilities to be used. The study concluded that most Jordanian GDPs do not strictly follow the mercury hygiene and AWM guidelines. Promoting the American Dental Association (ADA) guidelines through undergraduate and postgraduate training will help GDPs acquire proper attitudes towards the correct hygiene practices described in these recommendations.

Description of the levels of mercury release and exposure:

So far mercury issues have not been addressed in the country nor mentioned in the national chemicals profile as being a topic of concern. A preliminary mercury inventory was made in the 2002 based on a desk research study. Jordan's response to a UNEP questionnaire identified potential areas of mercury use or contamination. Therefore the country has no data, records or measures of mercury levels. This sector is not clear and requires research and studies. Some of the potential sources that may release mercury are the oil industry in Jordan (raw materials contain mercury), cement manufacturing, hospital waste incinerators (in the form of ashes and air emissions) and some of the waste that may end in the domestic solid waste bins and thus the dumping sites.

Description of the damage caused by mercury:

No reported cases of direct mercury poisoning are registered in the country. In 1979 an indirect accident occurred in Jordan in one of the plants that generate chlorine and release mercury as a by-product. The chlorine released caused the suffocation of about 200 civil defense persons who rushed to the place to provide assistance. The mercury byproduct of this plant used to be stored in piles in the nearby wadi and were thus distributed by storm water in winter into water and soil. No studies were done to study the mercury dispersal on the soil, water nor people.

Description of the laws currently regulating mercury:

The laws that govern mercury are the Environment Protection Law for the year 2003 and the Public Health Law 2008. As mercury is considered a hazardous material, it is also treated according to regulation no 43 of 1999 on the management and circulation of harmful and hazardous wastes. It seems that next mercury should be regulated through a national law and the development of a national policy.

Description of the efforts to deal with mercury:

Jordan is now part of the international efforts that would lead to the adoption of a treaty to manage mercury worldwide by the year 2013. At the national level, little has been done. Some efforts are underway to handle and manage all electrical and electronic waste, among which is mercury, but no specific effort is addressing mercury.

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:

At the governmental level, Jordan is directly involved in the negotiations that would lead to a mercury convention. Occasional involvement of civil society is there. Some of these interested and concerned NGOs participated in some of the regional meetings which are a sort of consultation on the treaty. The Ministry of Environment must lead a national consultation on this matter, although this project brought mercury issues to the attention of Jordanians and contributed to raising their awareness about what is going on at the global level. However, the national efforts are still humble.

Project Outcome:**Description of the activity conducted:**

The project was able to examine the current situation of mercury in Jordan and thus indicate the dangers associated with this matter in case no regulation or policy is adopted. So, by implementing this project, the risk and danger is uncovered. Those who have come across the project activities and in the public discussions and meetings were informed on mercury sources, where it exists, the danger if not managed and the global movement currently taking place.

Activities of the project included:

- conducting a review on the current legislations that govern mercury, as well as on previous studies and actions;
- discussion with ministries to learn about any actions (if any exist) to deal with mercury;
- organization of a national campaign (including meetings) targeting all stakeholders to get their feedback on the matter and thus come up with a pre-final report on the current status of mercury in the country; and
- conducting a national awareness campaign addressing the public at large, including circulation of a leaflet that summarizes the findings about the hazards of mercury on human health and the environment, and sharing information about the coming international treaty on mercury.

Impact on target groups:

The target groups included government officials, policy makers, NGOs/ CSOs, youth, and media. They were engaged through the meeting organized and through participation in other meetings and workshops, where information were disseminated. In youth and group meetings and gatherings the matter of mercury was presented actively.

Impact on target policies:

At the policy level, the government, represented by the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Health, has legislation through which they can act. However, the country needs to consider mercury in the annual national chemical profile, and draft a policy and a specific legislation that

deals with mercury. Some of these efforts are still at the beginning. However, the global movement is putting some pressure on Jordan to become more active and draw such a policy. It seems that by the time of the adoption of the mercury treaty, Jordan will draw out of it a national legislation to comply with first and manage the mercury situation in Jordan.

Outreach to stakeholders:

The main stakeholders were the civil society organizations and youth. Baytuna, being part of this group and their network, will keep informing and educating them on the updates of the topic.

Deliverables, outputs and/or products:

The deliverables are a current status report on mercury, a brochure on mercury and the actions (discussions, meetings and workshops) organized during the project life.

Communication efforts:

These efforts were communicated to general public represented by NGOs, CSOs and CBOs. Below is a picture of one of the events.



SAICM National Focal Point:

Eng. Faris Al-Junidi
Secretary General
Ministry of Environment

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

It is recommended to:

- Carry out an in-depth study on the current status of mercury.
- Increase the level of community awareness through intensifying the awareness campaign efforts.
- Draft a national policy and a national legislation for mercury.
- Organize a national consultation to be lead by the Ministry of Environment on the process of developing the Mercury Treaty.