

International SAICM Implementation Project (ISIP) Report Submitted by: Cavite Green Coalition

Long-Term Objectives

The long term objective is to increase the capacity of community residents and local authorities to assess chemical safety issues and to make informed decisions regarding chemical safety.

Specific Objectives:

- Raise awareness of households and village officials on chemical safety
- Gather data on the health impact of the toxic and hazardous waste facility in Barangay Maguyam on a selected sample of 47 community residents
- Engage local government in formulating a policy on chemical safety

Results of the project based on the project objectives

Awareness Raising

Forty-four participants attended the Chemical Safety Seminar held on . In addition, Attorney Candelaria, Dean of the College of Law conducted a paralegal seminar workshop for 31 community members on February 7, 2010. Selected community leaders also attended the seminars held by Ecowaste Coalition about Chemical Safety and Precautionary Principles

These awareness raising activities helped the community organization in planning and implementing the following activities:

1. Writing Letters of complaints that were sent to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Laguna Lake Development Authority, Municipal Mayor of Silang, Cavite and Department of Health,
2. Mass mobilizations demanding for the closure of CTC held November 4, 2010 and January 25, 2010; and establishment of a picket line near the entrance of the Meridien Industrial Park (where CTC is located. The first mobilization led to the temporary closure of the facility by the local government; the second mobilization was unsuccessful in stopping the issuance of CTC's business permit by the Municipal Government.
3. Information and media campaign on the issue resulting to several television coverage about the issue and presentation of the issue to various parishes in the province
4. Continuing community manifestation of the struggle through streamers strategically placed along the main road of the community; streamers were stolen by suspected company personnel and immediately put up again by the leaders.
5. Collection of sworn statements from community members and former CTC employees (See Annex 2)
6. Continued monitoring/photodocumentation of CTC wastewater discharges and operations despite threats and harassment including the filing of a libel case against some of the community leaders by CTC; the libel case was dismissed but the company is appealing the case.

7. Community action enlisting the Department of Health and a local university to conduct a community health assessment
8. Community vigilance on entry of new companies in the industrial parks within their barangay, e.g. leaders actively participated in the local governmental committee hearings that reviewed the business permit application of a water treatment company.
9. Active campaign during the recent local elections to ensure that new elective officials are supportive to the community struggle. Of the 8 positions in the barangay election, seven positions were won by those considered sympathetic to the community struggle; unfortunately the former barangay chairperson who actively supported the issue lost by 42 votes to his opponent who was supported with funds by CTC.

Health Impacts

Several community members were brought to the Community Hospital of Carmona for emergency treatment during the 2 pollution incidents in October 2009. They all complained of stomach ache, headache, nausea, vomiting. The community hospital diagnosis was recorded as chemical inhalation.

It was decided by the community leaders that a more thorough medical examination was needed and that results from the community hospital were inadequate for a plan to file a case against CTC. Ten instead of 47 community members were selected to undergo a battery of medical tests due to financial constraints. Those who were selected included former CTC employees and residents who lived in different parts of the barangay.

Eight trips for medical examination of the ten community members were made on December 17 and 18, 2009, January 20, January 27, February 16 and 18, and March 3. A battery of tests were conducted – x-ray of the lungs, sputum test, and stool analysis, among others. Teodora Francisco, who lost her vision in November 2009, was given an MRI examination.

Hazy densities were detected among Pamela Tapia, Rafael Celis, Teodoro Alceco, Trinidad and Rosiller. Trinidad Rosiller and Rafael Celis were diagnosed with chronic hydrocarbon poisoning. Findings for Teodora Francisco, who lost her vision, included mastoid and sinus disease.

Five were tested for the presence of copper, lead, arsenic and mercury. Copper was detected in all of the five persons while mercury was detected in two of the five persons. Although considered within the safe standards as determined by WHO, the confirmed presence of heavy metals prompted the community leaders to seek a broader community health assessment.

Copper toxicity symptoms detected in five persons included headaches, muscle/joint aches and pains, physical fatigue, sleep disorders, memory and concentration problems.

During the project period, October 2009- October 2010, community leaders observed that there were 5 deaths in the community due to cancer; one community member lost her vision completely. Disturbed by these developments, the community leaders together with Cavite Green Coalition took steps so that a community-wide health assessment can be organized. The Department of Health was mobilized to form a health assessment team but there were delays in the actual assessment since the Department of Health did not have any budget for the activity. As of end October, a team composed of various health personnel at the national and local

levels, De La Salle University, the Cleanway Technology Corporation and the Nagkakaisang Mamamayan ng Maguyam was finally organized.

Engaging Local Government on a Chemical Safety Policy

During the height of the mass mobilizations organized in October 2009, the Nagkakaisang Mamamayan ng Silang came out with a position paper that called on the local government to close down CTC due to its toxic discharges and its health and environmental impact. The municipal government responded to this call by closing down the facility. However it bowed down to pressure when the company filed a court case to have the closure order lifted. This was the first round of the community struggle.

The second round came during the period when CTC was applying to the municipal government for the renewal of its business permit. The barangay council refused to issue a barangay clearance, a pre-requisite to the issuance of business permit by the Municipal Government. Through the grapevine, community leaders learned that the business permit was issued; ignoring the policy: "No Barangay Clearance, No Business Permit". Thus the second mass mobilization was held on January 25, 2010.

CTC filed a libel case against some of the leaders. In October 2010, CTC lost the libel case but filed an appeal. Community energies were therefore directed on defending the leaders and the planned lobbying for a chemical safety policy was temporarily put on hold. Two succeeding local elections, one at the municipal level and another at the barangay level further put the lobbying work on hold pending results. During the last week of October, the Chemical Safety Position Paper was discussed with the Committee on Environment of the Municipal Legislative Body of Silang during a deliberation on the preparation of the town's Environment Code. Submission to the Provincial Body is planned this November.