



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 Programme on Mercury Hazards in Health & Education Sectors

**NGO:** Society for Direct Initiative for Social and Health Action (DISHA)

**Country:** India

**Date:** February 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:

DISHA took part in Global Day of Action on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2004 to highlight the issue of POPs among concerned people. Citizens' meeting and media sensitization were organized. Government of India was approached to ratify the Stockholm Convention.

In 2005-06 DISHA conducted a project "Campaign and Awareness Building on POPs Elimination" supported by IPEP, highlighting the Stockholm Convention on POPs. The aim of the project was to develop awareness among the environmental groups and individuals. A network was developed to address the issues like pesticides, DDT, dioxins etc.

Recently DISHA organised Workshop on: Toxic Chemicals – Concern of Coastal Fishers on 21.2.09 at Dadan Patrabar Fish Landing Centre, in coastal district East Midnapore in West Bengal. Another Workshop was held in Kolkata introducing SAICM to the NGOs and individuals on 19.2.09.

Several other projects on chemical issues, though not directly related to or linked with IPEN and SAICM funded projects, were conducted, namely (a) An Assessment of the Mercury Usage and Risks Involved In the Laboratories of Schools and Colleges of Kolkata (2005 – 06), (b) 2 surveys on Mercury Contamination in Fish in West Bengal (2007 and 2008) and (c) Holding Policy Level Meeting on Mercury in Kolkata (2009).

DISHA took part in OEWG meeting held in Bangkok in October 2009 as a part of developing intergovernmental negotiating treaty on mercury.

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

DISHA is very much concerned with the chemicals and their toxicity issues. It is fighting against establishment of a proposed multi-million dollar petrochemical hub in West Bengal. DISHA is also fighting against a proposed waste incinerator in the name of Waste to Energy plant. Developing awareness on mercury among the students and health workers is very much part of the on-going struggle against toxic menace.

#### **Project Outcomes:**

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

Production of information materials – Information materials have been produced in four categories (a) Booklet in Bengali for school students of higher classes who work in laboratories, (b) Folder in vernacular for distribution among health care workers, (c) Fliers and notices in vernacular for displaying at appropriate places in selected hospitals and institutions (d) Power point presentation for health workers and students.

(Soft copies of some of the materials are being sent in annexure. Hard copies of all the materials are being separately.)

Procurement of Spill Management Kit – Two sets of spill management kit for hospitals and health workers have been procured for demonstration during training programmes.

Training and Sensitizing Health Care Units – Training programmes were organized in the following hospitals –

1. Woodlands Hospital, 6/5 Alipore Road, Kolkata 700027 230 Beds
2. Institute of Child Health, 11 Dr. Biresh Guha Street, Kolkata 700017 100 Beds
3. Calcutta National Medical College, 24 Gorachand Road, Kolkata 700014 1260 Beds

(In case of Calcutta National Medical College, two programmes were scheduled but only one could be held as the authority is yet to give another date.)

Training and Sensitizing Institutions – Training programmes were held among the students of higher classes of science stream in three institutions –

1. Metropolitan Institution, Bidhan Sarani, Machuabazar, Kolkata, West Bengal
2. Scottish Church Collegiate School, 73, Bidhan Sarani, Sovabazar, Kolkata, West bengal 700006

**Impact on target groups:**

In case of hospitals, the training programmes were mainly attended by the nursing staff. In case of Institute of Child Health trainee nurses also took part. Most of them were unaware of harmful effects of mercury. In case of Woodlands Hospital, mercury thermometers are being phased out but the nursing staff had little idea about the reason. So all the training programmes were very eye-opening for the participants. It is expected that they will contribute to develop phase out policy in respective hospitals.

In case of schools, training programmes were attended by the students of higher classes in science stream. They were very receptive but most of them could not be very sure about their role in reducing use of mercury or managing spills in laboratory activities. But they were specially sensitized to avoid handling mercury in risky way.

**Impact on target policies:**

In case hospitals target policy is to initiate phasing out mercury-based instruments and to introduce proper spill management. Both the private hospitals (Woodlands Hospital and Institute of Child Health) have seriously taken up our proposal for consideration. In fact Woodlands Hospital has stopped purchasing new mercury thermometers. They are going to take similar decision for mercury sphygmomanometers. Institute of Child Health has decided to introduce spill management displaying our posters. Written policies of these two hospitals are yet to be issued.

In case of government hospital (Calcutta National MCH), the authority is yet to take up the matter seriously. There are some technical issues like policy decisions to be taken up by the state health department. State health department has already issued guidelines for mercury management but the implementation level is very poor.

However follow-up meetings will continue with the authorities of these hospitals and progress will be monitored.

**Outreach to stakeholders:**

West Bengal Pollution Control Board (WBPCB), the highest monitoring body of the state, was involved in this process. Series of discussions and meetings took place. DISHA issued letter dated 20<sup>th</sup> July requesting to issue guidelines for phasing out mercury in health care citing examples of Delhi hospitals and Delhi Government.

Of late WBPCB took up the issue with due importance. WBPCB issued direction to all health care facilities having bed capacity more than 200 to phase out mercury instruments by 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010 (vide memo no. 432(1-94)/1 S-74/2001(Pt.-IV) dated 5.10.2010 – copy enclosed).

There is definite potential for follow-up to advance the relationship to monitor the progress of implementation.

The issue has also been taken up with the state Health & Welfare Department. Though there is mentions of spill management in Operational Guidelines of Bio-medical Waste Management (enclosed), the authorities are yet to give due importance in regard to implementation.

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

1. Bengali booklet for institution. (Soft and Hard copy)
2. Bengali folder (brochure) for health care institution. (Soft and Hard copy)
3. Bengali flyer on spill management for display in health care and other institutions. (Hard copy)
4. Power point presentations used for trainings.
5. DISHA communication to WBPCB and Scanned copy of the WBPCB direction.

6. 'Operational Guidelines of BMW Management of the state Health Department (Pages 12-13)
7. Few photographs of training programmes.

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

NGOs in West Bengal are not very interested to participate in long term toxicity related issues. Adequate support is necessary to include people having scientific background and interest to work on these issues.