



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: "Raising awareness on mercury" campaign

NGO: Eko-svest/ Eco-sense

Country: Macedonia

Date: October 2012

Elements of SAICM Covered:

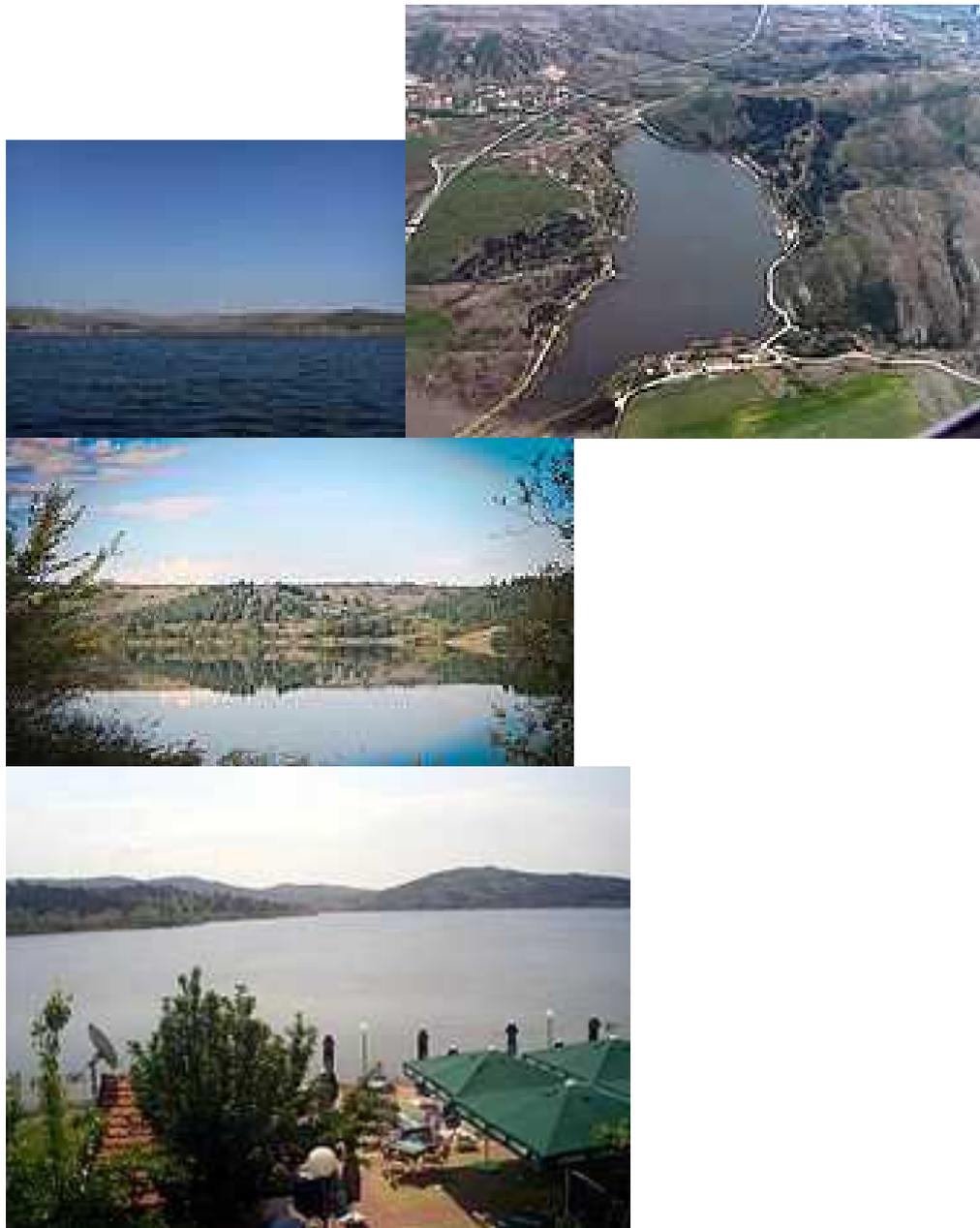
Identify, explain problem, make initial recommendations on how to address the problem, may be linked to public awareness-raising about the issue; Facilitate the identification and disposal of obsolete stocks of pesticides and other chemicals (47, 68)

Provide a physical description of the site

Geographical location (latitude and longitude if possible); nature of land; photos; surrounding water supplies; surrounding communities; surrounding wildlife or plant life; photos

- GPS coordinate Northing: 41° 46' 23.64" N
- GPS coordinate Easting: 21° 45' 36.5" E
- Veles downtown distance: 6.61 km / 4.11 mi
- **Latitude** 41.77410
- **Longitude** 21.75998
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- Lake "Mladost" (also called Veles Lake) is an artificial lake located 7 miles northwest of the town of Veles. The land is owned by the Republic of Macedonia. Traffic access is via paved local road from the direction of Veles, which goes along the lake, passing through the dam and continuing to the highway Skopje-Veles. Within the site there is a paved road that connects the local road to the complex of motels. The lake was built in order to irrigate vineyards and agricultural plantations in the area that often suffered from drought in the past.
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- Today, the lake "Mladost" is a much visited tourist place. In hydrographic terms the site is located beside the reservoir "Mladost" Otovica River, left tributary of the River Vardar. Urban Planning of the lake includes: satellite settlement for housing, commercial content, hospitality and area for sport and recreation. The lake is mostly visited for sport fishing.
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- The accumulation of this lake was completed in 1962. The surface of the lake is 52 acres with a capacity of 12 million cubic meters of water. Lengthwise it is about 1.6 kilometers, 400 meters wide, with a maximum depth of 25 meters. The lake abounds with larger fish (which is typical for artificial lakes), such as catfish, carp, Common Nase, Sneep, Siluridae, smugj (Sander lucioperca), common roach, belvica, sunchanica, white and yellow Amur, river crab and river shell.
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- The Ministry of Transport and Communications has taken action to build walkways and municipalities have taken responsibility for setting urban horticultural equipment and editing paths. It is expected that the path to the lake Mladost will be ready by the end of June 2012.





Give a history of the site

In 2011, Veles Lake Mladost was given to the management and use of PE "Lisice" from Veles. This government decision put an end to the decades of illegal use of water potential when the lake had no manager. Obtaining a manager for Lake Mladost will mean a lot for economic development environment, and will benefit the owners of agricultural land because it will get the irrigation system.

Description of the chemical characterization

The smelters for zinc and lead began operating in 1974 and were closed in 2003. They were (and still are) located in urban areas, and were never diverted elsewhere in the years of their operation. Until 1991 Macedonia was part of a Yugoslavia, and Veles at the time was the most polluted city in the entire Balkan region.

Although the smelters were closed in 2003, Veles still breathes poisons, experts warn. They warn that pollution in Veles remains alarmingly high, and the most serious

problem is cadmium. The presence of mercury, selenium and antimony in soil has doubled, and the concentrations of indium, which is considered a very toxic element, are very serious.

Only The Faculty of Natural Sciences in Skopje had conducted research about heavy metals in the soil in Veles, and their research showed elevated levels of mercury. Unfortunately, we couldn't get the data because the professor that conducted the research is out of the country.

Description of the environmental and health consequences

Except agricultural land, all public areas in town are polluted - the yards of schools, kindergartens, parks. All tests show extremely high concentrations of heavy metals: cadmium, lead, zinc - they have up to 70 times the allowable limits. The presence of mercury, selenium and antimony in soil is doubled, and the concentrations of indium, which is considered very toxic element, are very serious.

People in Veles are carriers of serious diseases among the population. It is symptomatic that in the past, most diseases were not present in Veles. The consequences of polluted soil in Veles are felt by even the youngest of the population. Cancer of the lymph glands in young children (most of them not older than 16 years), lung disease and leukemia are just some of the diseases present in the city. Surveys of pediatricians showed that children in Veles are most susceptible to respiratory diseases, compared with other diseases present in Veles. For improving this situation, a climate rehabilitation program was funded by the state and local government. They provided a seven-day stay in nature to improve overall health through summer climate rehabilitation in a children's resort called Pelister, located on the mountain Baba, at around 1400 meters altitude. All investigations made by domestic and international organizations show that pollution in Veles is the result of the 30 years of work that the smelters for lead and zinc carried out. Neither the smelters themselves nor institutions are familiar with the amounts of harmful gases released into the air. Instruments that measure pollution instantly showed changed values after the plants ceased to operate. Now doctors say that for many years citizens will feel the effects of pollution. Because of this, local government, NGOs and citizens all together are trying to prevent poisoning by heavy metals, which now comes from the soil. At several locations in the city and beyond, various crops have been planted that help in cleaning the polluted soil.

Description of who is responsible for the site

Veles city is responsible for the site. The city gives the place to a concessionaire to run it.

Description of the plans for cleanup

For now, there are none. On the contrary, there is an ongoing battle for restarting the smelters. The citizens in Veles, and citizens all around the country, already made two protests, gathering more than 20,000 citizens that protested against the reopening of the smelters. This is a current situation; currently there is a lawsuit between one activist against restarting the smelter- Igor Smilev (also, a president of NGO Green Power from Veles)- and the director of Metrudhem, the firm that is considering restarting the smelters. Smilev has a private lawsuit from the director of Metrudhem, allegedly for insult and using information in public that is not accurate

Project Outcomes:

Description of the activity conducted

As a follow up of the mercury-related project- "Raising awareness on mercury," we continued with research of the toxic metal mercury.

Our goal was to get the truth closer to the public about the toxicity of this metal, detoxification and possible alternatives.

For that purpose we've conducted the following activities:

- Updated the existing Report on the status of mercury in Macedonia, with new results (continuation of the previous activities).

The report is completed with 17 more results from the mercury testing in hair samples. The report is published in English and Macedonian and will be posted on the web in the few next days (www.toxic.mk; www.ekosvest.org).

The target group for this activity is general public and NGOs as well as health officials in the health authorities in Macedonia.

- Prepared a case study on a specific case

A new case study is prepared for a male participant in the testing that had elevated levels of mercury identified during the initial testing.

The case study presents the levels of mercury according to the lifestyle, dietary and other habits of the person in a period of 9 months (period analyzed is during 2011). The purpose is to show how mercury levels can be decreased naturally, with a change of lifestyle and help from the body's natural detoxification process. The study is supported by scientific data from a sequence of tests (a total of 3 tests for the period specified). The study will be put on the websites.

The target group for this activity is general public and NGOs.

- Research work regarding vaccines in Macedonia, resulting in preparing an issue paper

As a result of the research work regarding vaccines in Macedonia, an issue paper is prepared. This issue paper consists of information about:

- number of children vaccinated in one year
- number of adults vaccinated in one year
- names of vaccines used
- content of used vaccines
- alternatives to mercury vaccines in Macedonia
- list of vaccines that contain thimerosal

- Awareness-raising workshop for vulnerable groups- such as mothers and children, and pregnant women

In order to reach most of the public, especially the vulnerable groups, we figured that the most effective way to spread the information is if we hold a workshop for raising awareness on mercury.

The workshop was intended mostly for women where they could hear information on mercury toxicity, mercury in vaccines, and alternatives to mercury vaccines.

At the workshop, a short lecture from a homeopathy specialist was held, regarding the vaccination process and her opinion, as an alternative specialist.

Impact on target groups:

With this project we managed the following:

- The broader public is informed about the existence of this project and its main goal.
- Authorities that are involved in the procedures and enacting of the laws and regulations regarding mercury are well familiar with all the information about this metal and its effects on human health and environment as well as current status in Macedonia.

With the publishing of the mercury report, the research and the workshops:

- 3000 people are informed about the risks and toxicity from mercury, and that they are able to take measures to avoid mercury and its compounds.
- At least 1500 people will continue to take care of their and the health of their loved ones, as well as the environment, by using mercury-free alternatives and spreading the information about mercury toxicity.
- More consciousness in women and future mothers as well as mothers towards their children.
- Through the workshop, people are well informed about mercury in general, vaccines in Macedonia, mercury content in vaccines and its alternatives.

Impact on target policies:

By promoting the web site www.toxic.mk and by spreading information about the presence of the toxic metal mercury in our organism and environment, to the public through the media, they become a critical mass that can request from the Government stricter legislation and regulations in order to protect the public and the environment from the toxic substance.

Eko-svest as a non-governmental organization will continue to do lobby work for toxic chemicals, especially mercury.

Outreach to stakeholders:

In this activity mainly the citizens of Macedonia were most involved and most interested. These citizens automatically get information on the mercury levels, possibilities for detoxification of their body and how to protect themselves from mercury exposure. During the research, a lot of institutions were contacted in effort to get more information: Center and Institute for public health, Public health facilities, Ministry of health, homeopathy facilities, University Clinic of Toxicology, Institute of Occupational Medicine.

Deliverables, outputs and/or products:

As project deliverables there are:

- Updated report on the status of mercury in Macedonia with 17 more results from mercury testing in hair samples
- 1 case study report on the website that shows the link between mercury levels and lifestyle
- 1 issue paper containing information about vaccines in Macedonia
- 1 workshop for raising awareness on mercury

Communication Efforts:

As a result of the research, we managed to inform the public about the results and the project itself through:

- 1 workshop aimed mostly at women.
The workshop was intended for distributing the information about mercury and its toxicity and promoting the results from the research regarding the content of vaccines that are routinely used in Macedonia.
- Putting the results from the research on the website www.ekosvest.org.mk and www.toxic.mk (this will be done in the next few days) There can be found: the case study, updated report on the situation with mercury in Macedonia, report about vaccination in Macedonia, and protocols about detoxification from acute mercury poisoning used by the clinics (still waiting for this information).
- Through the media by being a guest on radio and TV shows

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NGO Recommendations for next steps:

As a center for environmental research, Eco sense will continue informing people about mercury toxicity and available alternatives through the media and our web site www.toxic.mk. Because of the great concern about effects of mercury on human health and environment, we will continue lobbying about more strict measures regarding this heavy metal.

We will continue to deal with this issue and will try to help improve the situation regarding mercury and heavy metals in general.