



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: Use of mercury in Mali: A Case Study of traditional gold mining in Kangaba Circle

NGO: Fondation pour le Developpement au Sahel (FDS)

Country: Mali

Date: November 2010

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 is available in liquid form. It is generally used in gold artisanal mining (traditional gold mining) and in small quantities in measurement devices, such as the thermometer. It is found in gaseous form as a result of burning amalgam of minerals and liquid mercury. Also, there is mercury in solid form when used in dental fillings.

Description of the most common forms of mercury exposure:

The most common form of mercury exposure in Mali is gold mining; artisanal gold mining requires the use of mercury. Users are directly exposed during mixing the mercury. The vapors produced during the burning of amalgam exposes the manipulators of traditional ovens and burners, but also the surrounding population through inhalation of gas containing mercury. Garbage collecting is also a form of mercury exposure when collectors (especially children) can come into contact of biomedical waste containing mercury.

Description of human sources of mercury:

The most common human activity that releases mercury into the environment is gold panning; mercury is added to rinsing water. Thus, mercury can leach into the soil or the stream.

When the amalgam is burned in a furnace the mercury molecules evaporate, then the air can be polluted.

Certain medical devices, such as mercury thermometers, are sources of mercury pollution when they are defective and incinerated.

Description of the levels of mercury release and exposure:

Mali does not have yet a system of data collection on mercury releases. It is the same for the case of population exposure to mercury.

Description of the damage caused by mercury:

There are no data or reliable statistics in Mali on the damage caused by mercury to people's health and the environment. However, survey results of this study show that the threats are real and that vulnerable groups are the traditional miners, in particular women and children who carry out work surface and washing the ore used for extraction of gold.

Particular attention should be paid to beneficiaries of dental filling, as they are essentially made from mercury.

Description of the laws currently regulating mercury:

Chemicals in general are managed by the Law 01-020 on pollution and nuisance. But there is no legislation regulating the use of mercury.

Description of the efforts to deal with mercury:

There is a focal point of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and one of the missions of the SAICM focal point-Mali is to prevent the use of mercury in artisanal gold mines.

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:

Mali has signed and ratified Stockholm, Basel, Bamako and Rotterdam conventions. At the state level, article 15 of Mali Constitution says that: "Everyone has the right to a healthy environment, protection and preservation of the environment is a duty for all and for the state." To achieve the goals of these commitments, the country has established institutions to facilitate the management of the environment, resulting in 1998 by establishing the Ministry of the Environment and Sanitation (MEA). The National Directorate for Sanitation and Pollution Control and Nuisance (DNACPN) houses all of the MEA focal points of different conventions mentioned

above and also within it, the focus of the Strategic Approach to Management International Chemicals Management (SAICM).

Surveys showed that public consultation with all stakeholders is essential to achieve a better treatment of issues related to mercury management. Information and education of stakeholders must be done to improve adoption and strict enforcement of the treaty.

The public has no knowledge about mercury treaty.

Project Outcome:

Description of the activity conducted:

The first task was to make contact with local authorities. A survey was done in gold panning areas. Animation briefings and awareness-raising about the risks and dangers linked to the use of mercury to health and the environment were conducted during field missions.

Validation of survey results was made by all participants.

Impact on target groups:

Several missions were carried out on the field, and they allowed us share the context of the project, schedule a visit to the gold-panning sites, meet the actors involved and approve a work plan. Involvement of all stakeholders has been identified as a priority action.

Impact on target policies:

The study has strengthened the awareness of local authorities and policy makers about the need to regulate the management of the sale and use of mercury, which increasingly constitutes a serious threat to the health of people and their environment.

Outreach to stakeholders:

The first meetings of awareness-raising involved following stakeholders:

- The technical services (health, environment, agriculture, law enforcement)
- Local officials
- The organizations of civil society (associations, NGOs, GIE)
- The traditional players in mining
- The chamber of mines under development

The sectors involved were:

- Water and Environment
- Health
- Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries
- Artisanal mines

Deliverables, outputs and/or products:

The study report.

Communication efforts:

This activity began by communicating with stakeholders. But note that results of the study will be shared with all stakeholders, and production of posters and animation tools will be done, too. We also asked the media about which activities (to engage actors in information campaigns with) would be covered, as so far this subject does not receive any support in this direction.

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

FDS recommends to:

- conduct advocacy and lobbying towards authorities for regulation at the national level of

mercury management

- inform and educate those involved in the management of mercury and on the impact of the use of mercury on human health and the environment
- help reunite miners in structured socio-professional organizations
- promote the establishment of a mechanism for data collection and management of accidents involving the use of mercury

FDS' perspective on reducing and eliminating human sources of mercury is to conduct advocacy and lobbying activities. The advocacy plan proposed after analyzing the results of surveys conducted during this study should focus on:

- The establishment of regulations governing the use of mercury
- Information, education and communication on the impact of mercury on the environment and health