

## EcoWaste Coalition

### Philippines

The EcoWaste Coalition, an environmental watchdog group promoting chemical safety and zero waste, conducted a market investigation between November 2014 and February 2015 to determine the availability of mercury-containing skin whitening products, particularly facial creams, in the Philippines. EcoWaste Coalition procured 355 samples of skin whitening creams from various retailers in 50 cities across the archipelago and had them analyzed for mercury content using a portable X-Ray Fluorescence (XRF) device. Based on the screening conducted, 316 of the 355 samples (89%) were found to contain mercury many orders of magnitude higher than the 1 part per million (ppm) limit for mercury in cosmetics under the ASEAN Cosmetics Directive.

This project generated expanded data on mercury in skin whitening products to

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demonstrate the scope and gravity of the problem. The EcoWaste Coalition has been using the findings to campaign for more effective measures to halt illegal traffic and trade of mercury-added cosmetics in the market in the Philippines and the ASEAN. In addition, this study serves to raise public awareness on the health and environmental issues associated with the consumption and disposal of such mercury-added products.

As a result of this initiative, the Food and Drugs Administration of the Philippines banned 24 more mercury-laden skin whitening creams in May 2015, bringing the number of banned skin whitening cosmetics in the country to 135, of which 79 were discovered by the EcoWaste Coalition through its periodic test buys.



EcoWaste Coalition staged a mock “Miss Poison Cosmetics” beauty pageant as part of their IMEAP project to draw public attention to the danger of using mercury-containing skin whitening products. (Photo by EcoWaste Coalition)

## IMEAP – INTERNATIONAL MERCURY-TREATY ENABLING ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

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