



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: To promote management at the regional level to prevent mercury pollution of the Volga river and Caspian coastal area

NGO: Volgograd-Ecopress

Country: Russia

Date: February, 2011

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

Two targeted regions- the Lower Volga and Northern Caspian - Astrakhan and Volgograd - located in the southeastern part of the East European Plain which is a link between all Russian regions, the CIS countries, and the whole world. It shares borders with many neighbors, including Voronezh, Saratov and Rostov regions, the Republic of Kalmykia, and Kazakhstan.

The Volga River divides the region into the high Right Bank (elevations to 358 m) and the low Left Bank (or Trans-Volga). The Volga and the Don are the region's main rivers. Volgograd Region has an area of 113 900 km² (0.67% of the Russian Federation).

The region has a continental climate with hot, dry summers and cold winters with little snow. Annual precipitation varies from about 500 mm in the northeast to 250 mm in the southeast. The average January temperature ranges from -8 °C to -12 °C, and the average July temperature is +23 °C. Most of the region is located in the dry steppe and semidesert zones. Soils are divided into five different zones: steppe black earth (chernozem), dry steppe light chestnut, dry steppe chestnut, semidesert light chestnut, and Volga-Akhtuba floodplain.

Give a history of the site

The threat of mercury pollution in the Northern Caspian Sea, in the first place, comes from the use of mercury-containing equipment currently in production and in households: lamps, medical thermometers, measuring equipment, etc. Only about 20% of used mercury containing light bulbs is sent for further decontamination and reprocessing in the Southern Federal District (SFD). Mostly the recycling of mercury containing lamps is going on in Krasnodar and Stavropol, Volgograd and Rostov regions, while about 1.3 million mercury lamps break down annually in the coastal areas of the Astrakhan region and Dagestan. In 2000 the Head of administration in Astrakhan region signed a Decree on the development of a program on mercury wastes treatment. However, its implementation is hampered largely by the lack of facilities for mercury waste disposal and mercury waste collection systems.

The situation is exacerbated by the adoption of the Federal Law dated from November 23, 2009 No 261-FZ "On energy conservation and energy efficiency and amending certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation." Under the Law, since 2011, a ban has been introduced in Russia on production and circulation of conventional mercury-free electric bulbs in favor of energy-saving lamps, many of which contain mercury. At the same time there is lack of the necessary infrastructure for the centralized collection and recycling of mercury-containing lamps in the country. As a result, mercury-containing lamp wastes are discarded along with regular garbage, ending up in municipal solid waste landfills.

The total amount of mercury polluting the environment facilities within residential areas is more than 1.5 tons per year.

Description of the environmental and health consequences

Mercury containing equipment is stored in the territory of secondary schools and kindergartens. According to the preliminary estimation, an average school in Astrakhan and Volgograd region can store up to 3000 waste mercury lamps on their territory.

It is obvious that the major part of wasted mercury-containing lamps and other mercury-containing equipment ends up in municipal landfills and private backyards and is illegally dumped. Due to permanent changes of water level in the Volga River delta, mercury and mercury compounds leach from landfills and accumulate in streams, and lakes, and spread in floods over long distances. The Volga River delta is the main migration route for migratory birds. The oldest in Russia, the Astrakhan Biosphere Reserve, is of great importance for biodiversity conservation in the Volga River delta. Mercury contamination of its territory poses a real threat to a large number of species of animals and birds.

Project Outcomes:

Description of the activity conducted

According to the project activities, consultations were held with representatives of local environmental authorities of Astrakhan and Volgograd regions, including the Service of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, environmental prosecution, Rospotrebnadzor, Rostekhnadzor, Rospirodnadzor, and local industrial facilities engaged in the collection and

transportation of mercury-containing waste, including mercury containing light bulbs (MCW). During the negotiations and discussions with officials, the following problems were revealed:

- There is no centralized system of MCW collection and transportation from the private sector and municipal organisations;
- There is no adequate data on the number of facilities and organizations generating MCW;
- There is a lack of necessary funds to collect and transport MCW from the social (municipal) organisations in Astrakhan region and Volgograd region; and
- There is a very low or no awareness on mercury threats to human health and the environment among the citizens of the coastal area, which results in the bad practice of handling MCW at the household level.

To address the problems raised above it was necessary to analyze the experience of neighboring regions in the treatment of MCW. In order to study the situation on mercury waste management the following materials were analyzed:

- Official websites of local authorities working on waste management (<http://www.doncomeco.ru/news>, <http://adm.k.kuban.ru>, <http://www.krd.ru/>)
- Interviews with local environmental authorities ;
- Information received from companies involved in MCW treatment of MCW (Ltd SPC "Tehnoekolog", Ltd SPC "Promekologiya", Ltd "Foundation "Ecology of the Don" - Rostov Region, CJSC SPC "Kubantsvetmet", Ltd "Agency" Mercury Security" - Krasnodar, Ltd "Chistaya Volga, JSC "Caustic", JSC "Bam-Activ-Eco", FE Evseenko AA - Volgograd Oblast)
- Scientific publications
- Internet resources (<http://news.webrostov.ru/news/4286976> , <http://www.rtut-arb.ru>, <http://www.kcvm.ru>)

Based on this information a survey on MCW management was prepared, which unites the experience from Rostov Region, Volgograd Region, Krasnodar Region and Kalmykiya. The survey addresses the following issues: environmental governance, including financial aspects of MCW collection, transportation and disposal; the number of facilities and organizations generating MSW; and experience in MCW treatment.

1000 copies of a booklet about MCW danger for human health and the environment were prepared. Its main readers are local citizens, including those living in the coastal area, as well local administration.

Workshops were organized to identify and discuss the problems of mercury-containing waste management in the Caspian region and Astrakhan region, and to develop the final document containing proposals and recommendations to address identified problems. Participants were selected on the basis of interest and representation of state control, environmental authorities, organizations involved in the direct treatment of MCW, the public and the media.

The Astrakhan workshop was held on 15 September 2010 and the workshop in Volgograd was held on 30 September 2010. Issues related to mercury pollution of coastal areas caused by poor MCW collection and management were discussed. Particular attention was paid to MCW management in the Astrakhan Region in the context of compliance with environmental legislation.

As a result of the meeting in Astrakhan a final document entitled "Appeal to the Government of Astrakhan Region" was prepared. It contains proposals and recommendations to the administration of the Astrakhan region, and the Volodarsky, Ikryaninsky, Kamyzyaksky and Limansky administrative districts of the Astrakhan region, to optimize the management of mercury wastes. All proposals were submitted to the administration of the Astrakhan region and Volodarsky Ikryaninsky, Kamyzyaksky and Limansky districts of Astrakhan Region.

The workshop in Volgograd was attended by representatives of five companies dealing with MCW processing. They requested local authorities to start a broad public information campaign. The Department of the Environment of the city administration has promised to prepare special guidelines for the collection of mercury waste in Volgograd.

After the workshop in Volgograd articles on MCW management were published in the newspaper of Volodarsky District and on the Internet: <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/175677/>

Information was also disseminated via Eco-Accord news service on chemical safety and directly to the Russian experts and organizations working on prevention of mercury pollution.

Impact on target groups:

The implementation of this project provided decision makers responsible for mercury-containing waste management with a reasoned, analyzed and research-based approach to address mercury contamination of the environment.

All stakeholders (control environmental bodies, sanitary and epidemiological services, local authorities, facilities and organizations involved in MCW management) received detailed information about good practice experience on MCW management.

After the workshop representatives of local authorities expressed their intention to start developing systems of MCW collection.

Impact on target policies:

The project target policy is to improve the involvement of all interested stakeholders of Astrakhan and Volgograd regions, namely, community organizations, local authorities, regional administration, and enterprises in MCW management in Astrakhan and Volgograd regions.

Representatives of all stakeholders attended the workshops in Volgograd and Astrakhan, shared their experiences and discussed possible ways of addressing problems.

The final document entitled "Appeal to the Government of Astrakhan Region" related to poor MCW collection and management. Prepared after the workshop in Astrakhan, it contains proposals and recommendations to the administration of the Astrakhan region and the local authorities that are aimed at improving MCW management. After the workshop, representatives of the local authorities of the Astrakhan region expressed their wish to start developing a system of MCW collection from the local households. Representatives of the Volgograd local control environmental department decided to prepare special guidelines for MCW collection from the public sector of the city.

Outreach to stakeholders:

The workshop was attended by control environmental bodies, sanitary and epidemiological services, organizations involved in the direct treatment of MCW, NGOs and mass media. Volgograd-Ecopress has a long history of cooperation and partnership with these stakeholders. It continues working with all of them on issues of MCW management and other environmental issues of mutual concern.

Deliverables, outputs and/or products:

1. Informational materials and good practice examples regarding the state of MCW management in Astrakhan and Volgograd regions.
2. Workshops suggestions and recommendations on improving MCW management submitted to the administration of the Astrakhan and Volgograd regions.
3. Proposals on how to organize MCW collection and improve MCW management submitted to the local governments of Volodarski, Ikryaninski, Kamyzyaksky and Liman areas of the Astrakhan region.

4. A booklet on MCW threats, methods of treatment at the household level, and ways of disposal distributed among local residents through NGOs operating in the Astrakhan and Volgograd regions.

5. Articles published in the Astrakhan local press and on the internet, based on the materials and press-releases prepared during the project.

Communication Efforts:

The following information materials were prepared to communicate the results of the workshops to the public:

- press-release for local media;
- press conferences following the workshops in Volgograd and Astrakhan;
- radio program on local and regional radio stations;
- internet publication; and
- information about the project and its deliverables disseminated via Eco-Accord Information Service on Chemical Safety.

SAICM National Focal Point:

There is no SAICM National Focal point in Russia

NGO Recommendations for next steps:

1. Start a broad educational and awareness-raising campaign in the Southern Federal District of Russia aimed at raising the level of knowledge among local citizens, administration and industry on MCW danger to human health and the environment and measures to improve MCW collection and treatment.
2. Start a broad advocacy campaign in the Southern Federal District of Russia aimed at improving local MCW collection and management systems, environmental law enforcement and monitoring.
3. Prepare educational and training materials on the MCW threat, good practice experience of MCW collection and management.