

Strategic Approach to International Chemical Management (SAICM)
Regional SAICM Implementation Report

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Region

South Asian

Hub

Toxics Link

1. State of SAICM implementation

All the countries in South Asia region have signed SAICM declaration in 2006 and abide to take steps to minimize harmful effects of chemicals on human health and the environment. During last three-four years, the countries in the region have made some efforts to move the chemical safety issues forward to achieve 2020 goal. However, the approach and state of the progress to achieve SAICM goals varies from country to country in the region.

Bangladesh

The Ministry of Environment and Forest is the focal point for SAICM in Bangladesh and responsible for implementation of SAICM goals. Though the governments have intervened in some issues, however the impacts are not visible. The point person in the ministry responsible for the implementation has also been frequently shifted thus creating serious bottleneck in the implementation of SAICM. Absence of any dedicated budget has also been a factor responsible for any meaningful action by the national focal point. Bangladesh has the presence of strong civil society groups and many are engaged on issues of chemicals management and continue to do excellent work in this direction; however, the government has not been able to create any platform for active interaction and involvement of NGOs, the government does not seem to be open to involving NGOs in this SAICM process. So during these years the overall chemical safety situation in Bangladesh has not witnessed any significant changes.

Select NGOs have tried at their own arrangements to take up the issues in association with the concerned stakeholders, etc. They have intervened on wide range of issues,

from e-waste, lead in paints, and pesticides to workers' safety from chemicals exposures, as per the mandate of SAICM. Some of these civil society interventions have also received the support and encouragement from government. The NGOs have been consistent in creation of new data and creating conversations with various stakeholders aiming for policy shifts.

Bhutan

Bhutan is committed to SAICM declaration; nevertheless chemical safety issues are not very high on the priority of the government. Chemical issues are in their infancy in the country and there is very little capacity among stakeholders to understand the issue in detail. There is a common perception that the country does not produce chemicals and its usage is also very limited; hence not being high on the priority of the government. However, Bhutan government is implementing the project in Quick Start Program **“Strengthening National Capacities for Sound Management of Priority Carcinogenic Chemicals in Bhutan”**. As the issues are very new in Bhutan, NGOs do not have adequate capacities to take up chemical safety issues.

India

India is an important country in SAICM development process; however the progress of SAICM implementation in India has been slow. No established system has been in place for NGOs' participation in SAICM process in India. The Ministry of Environment and Forest, the focal point for SAICM, invited Toxics Link on only one occasion to discuss SAICM issues- this reflects that the Government is not open to NGOs' participation in this process. The government has notified Hazardous Materials (Management, Handling, and Transboundary Movement) Rules and E-waste rules for electronic waste management. Further, the government has notified the draft Pesticides Management Bill and draft National Chemical Policies-2012 for India. However, there are many grey areas related to chemicals management and a critical need to build capacity and deeper understanding among regulators, industry and NGOs. These policies and regulations require further strengthening and operationalising across the country. Lack of coordination among the concerned Ministries is also one of the factors responsible for poor implementation of the rules in India.

In spite lack of encouragement from the Government, many NGOs have taken new initiatives to implement SAICM goals. Toxics Link has been actively involved on issues of chemicals management and in the last two years has been responsible for bringing together all stakeholders to discuss some of these issues. Toxics Link has also encouraged these NGOs to take up some interventions on-the-ground, which has proved to be effective. Many new interventions have been carried out at the state level, which have contributed to better understanding of chemicals issues among various stakeholders.

Nepal

Nepal has been passing through political instability in the past few years which has also impacted governance in the country; however, the Nepalese government has taken steps to achieve some of the SAICM goals. There are discussions at the government level on bringing new policies on these issues. Though there is no established mechanism in place by the government to coordinate with NGOs for SAICM interventions, there are examples of NGOs' participation in the implementation and decision-making process. The NGOs are quite accessible to the focal points and regularly in dialogue to take forward the issues. The relationship between government, NGOs and other stakeholders are very much cordial and symbiotic in nature. The government has even financed the initiatives undertaken by the NGOs on these issues.

Through the support of the Quick Start Fund Nepal is developing a national chemicals management profile, developing a national SAICM capacity assessment, and holding a national SAICM priority setting workshop in Nepal. However, there are some hindrances in SAICM implementation process in Nepal. Apart from political instabilities, lack of adequate financial resources, inaccessibility to the technology, and limited policy interventions are posing bottlenecks in implementing SAICM goals at the fullest.

Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, implementation of SAICM is not on high priority for the Government. The Ministry of Environment is working on two agendas, mercury and asbestos. There has not been very active involvement of NGOs in the SAICM decision-making and implementation process. There is no established mechanism for the NGOs' participation in SAICM process and there is no dedicated budget for SAICM implementation. The Sri Lanka government has, however, undertaken two projects in quick start programs: Strengthening National Capacities for Sound Management of Priority Industrial Carcinogens and Updating National Chemicals Profile in Sri Lanka and Chemical Accident Prevention and Preparedness Programme for Sri Lanka. Ironically, NGOs have not been consulted for the program and are not part of the implementing process. The government has also initiated measures for safe handling of electronic waste in the country and initiated measures for elimination of lead in paints.

Center for Environment and Justice (CEJ), the focal NGO for SAICM in Sri Lanka, has organized a capacity building workshop to take up the issues with the stakeholders, including academics. Further, CEJ has also undertaken multifarious projects for SAICM implementation in a GEF-SGP. Thus NGOs role are critical in Sri Lanka to improve the chemical safety situation in Sri Lanka.

2. What are the major gaps in SAICM implementation in your region?

During these years efforts have been made by the governments and the NGOs in the region to intervene on chemical safety issues to achieve SAICM goals. The governments of the region have tried to address the challenges through suitable policies

and on-the-ground interventions. The Quick Start Programme (QSP) in some countries has helped the government to intervene and build capacities of regulators and policy makers on chemical safety issues.

NGOs have also developed capacities to undertake new interventions to achieve SAICM goals. Some NGOs also have access to the resources to carry out interventions on SAICM issues. The interventions of the NGOs have helped the communities and other stakeholders like doctors, media and academics to access new information and create awareness on SAICM issues. Networks have been set up among NGOs and other stakeholders to exchange information. Information sharing and exchange between the NGOs of North and South have helped to build confidence among NGOs in the region.

Nevertheless, in totality, the governments of the region have been slow in initiating major interventions towards achieving SAICM goals. With the exception of Nepal, government stands and positions towards NGOs have not changed so much. Governments of the other countries, particularly Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, are not very supportive of the roles of the NGOs in implementation and policy processes. In India during these years, though the situation has changed a bit, gaps and differences remain to build synergy among the NGOs and governments. Further, no country in the region has set up an intergovernmental committee to look into specific SAICM issues. There is also further need to upscale knowledge and information on these issues for effective implementation of SAICM processes.

There is a lack of understanding among all stakeholders on chemicals issues in the region and the need to build capacity. There are serious gaps in regulatory framework in almost all countries of the region which require immediate attention. The governments of the region need to place chemicals management on high priority and act on some of the identified gaps. The region also has a high population density and high growth rate leading to progressively high consumption of chemicals. The demand for higher consumption will have to be met through domestic production and some through international trade of chemicals; hence the requirement to manage and consume such large amounts with adequate care and without causing any adverse impacts on environment and human health. The countries will require drafting improved laws and also effectively implementing these laws. Further, the South Asian region is vulnerable to climate change and attention is required to conduct more research and information linking chemical safety and climate change. Specific, required actions need to be undertaken, as the vulnerable populations and weaker sections of societies in the region are bearing the brunt of the growing crisis (even though SAICM has mentioned specific actions to tackle the problems). Finally, there is an urgent need to improve and strengthen overall environmental governance by the respective countries of the region to achieve SAICM goals.

There are some specific gaps in the region that require adequate attention to achieve the desired results:

1. Openness for the governments to involve NGO participation.
2. Financial support from the governments to NGOs for implementation.
3. Set up of mechanisms for information exchange on SAICM between stakeholders.
4. Sound monitoring system in place involving all stakeholders.
5. Set up of intergovernmental coordination committee for SAICM.
6. Adequate infrastructure in place for upstream and downstream solutions.
7. Capacity and knowledge of the regulators, policy makers and NGOs to be enhanced.
8. Proactive and responsible initiatives from the industry to achieve SAICM goals.
9. Transparency in decision-making processes.
10. Enhancement of the stakeholders' participation in policy decisions.
11. Suitable policies and regulations in place.

3. Inventory of NGO activities supporting SAICM implementation

SAICM Objective	NGO Activity and Results	Names of NGOs	Country
Risk Reduction	Campaign to phase out of mercury from health sectors in India	Toxics Link	India
	Campaign for Lead Free Paints in South Asia Region Results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandatory standard for lead in paints by Sri Lanka government • Report exposing the double standard of Paint Industries operating in these countries 	Environment and Social Development Organization-ESDO, Toxics Link, Center for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED)	Bangladesh, India, Nepal,

	GPA ITEMS: 85 152		
	Promotion of Dry Welding Machine over wet welding machine using PCB contaminated transformer oil. GPA ITEMS: 54	Center for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED)	Nepal
	Program to Phase out mercury from health care in some districts of Uttar Pradesh, India	Youth Round Table Society (YRT)	India
	Campaign to phase out of hazardous pesticides in Bangladesh Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • .It was a first time any kind of Multi-stakeholder level consolation held in Bangladesh on this issue • Recommendations by participants on making the way to forward towards Phasing-out hazardous pesticides from Bangladesh GPA ITEMS: 27, 51, 29, 66 68,	Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE)	Bangladesh
	Workshops Mercury free health care system in some districts of Gujarat state of India Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness among the key stakeholders in the state on mercury free health set up. • Some hospitals are taking steps to phase out mercury GPA ITEMS: 57	Paryavaraniya Vikas Kendra	Gujarat, India
	Program to Phase out mercury from hospitals in Coimbatore , Tamil Nadu	Arulagam	India

	<p>Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The govt run medical college-hospital in Coimbatore city has shifted to mercury free. • Two hospitals have taken initiative to shift to mercury free <p>GPA ITEMS: 57</p>		
	<p>Campaign for Mercury Free Dentistry in Bangladesh</p> <p>Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness among the community mostly youth on mercury in dental care <p>GPA ITEMS: 57</p>	ESDO	Bangladesh
Knowledge and Information	<p>Study, Awareness Raising and Capacity building about Electronic Waste in Nepal</p> <p>GPA ITEMS: 121,</p>	Center for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED)	Nepal
	<p>Study of lead in children's jewelry</p> <p>GPA ITEMS: 152</p>	Toxics Link	India
	<p>Estimation of mercury use in health care sectors and dental sectors in India</p> <p>GPA ITEMS: 57, 89</p>	Toxics Link	India
	<p>Research on mercury content in CFL bulbs</p> <p>GPA ITEMS: 57, 89</p>	Toxics Link, CEPHED	India, Nepal
	<p>Research on Recycling of Brominated Flame Retardant Contaminated Plastics</p> <p>GPA ITEMS: 89</p>	Toxics Link	India
	<p>Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment: The EU & India sharing best practices</p> <p>GPA ITEMS: 119</p>	Toxics Link	India

	Mercury monitoring through hair and fish samples GPA ITEMS: 57, 85	CEPHED, Toxics Link	India
	Study of Lead in cosmetics and Artificial Jewelry GPA ITEMS: 80, 81 , 85	CEPHED	Nepal
	Report on the breakage of Mercury appliances in the hospitals and health clinics GPA ITEMS: 57, 85	Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ)	Sri Lanka
	Study on mercury level in working environment as well as aquatic environment to promote alternatives to mercury. GPA ITEMS: 57, 85	Health Care Foundation Nepal (HECAF)	Nepal
Governance	Campaign for electronic waste rule for a sound e -waste management in India Results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separate E-Waste Rule on the principle of EPR has been notified by Indian government GPA ITEMS: 195, 196	Toxics Link	Sri Lanka
	Strengthening Governance and Accountability on SAICM in Nepal GPA ; 206	Forum for Justice	Nepal
	Raising awareness and making policy intervention for reduction of mercury in health sector and for safe handling of mercury in institution laboratories in West Bengal GPA ITEMS: 57, 195	Society for Direct Initiative for Social and Health Action (DISHA)	India
Capacity Building	Capacity building workshop on SAICM in Sri Lanka GPA ITEMS: 57, 195	Center for Environmental Justice (CEJ)	Sri Lanka
	Capacity building of farmers for ecological agriculture Results	Parivartan Pariharpur Sansthan, Lok Kalyan	India

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmers clubs have formed and capacity building of these clubs on organic agriculture Setting up of composting units by the farmers <p>GPA ITEMS: 51, 114, 160</p>	Samajik Sanstha	
	<p>Sharing E-waste information among the young communities in Bangladesh</p> <p>GPA TEMS: 258</p>	Environment and Social Development Organization-ESDO	Bangladesh
	<p>Advocacy and awareness campaign on Mercury</p> <p>GPA ITEMS: 57, 216</p>	Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ)	Sri Lanka
	<p>Awareness and Learning Initiative of E-waste Hazard in Bangladesh</p> <p>GPA ITEMS: 216, 260</p>	Environment and Social Development Organization-ESDO	Bangladesh
	<p>Awareness Programme on Mercury Hazards in Health and Education Sectors</p> <p>GPA ITEMS: 57,150, 216,</p>	Society for Direct Initiative for Social and Health Action (DISHA)	India
	<p>National Conference on Persistent Organic Pollutants</p> <p>GPA ITEMS: 54, 216</p>	Toxics Link	India
	<p>Making farmers aware on judicious use of pesticides and adoption of organic agriculture</p> <p>Results:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 300 farmers and 42 spraying persons have got benefitted by the training <p>GPA ITEMS: 51, 114 160</p>	Indian Agricultural Development Foundation	India
	<p>Capacity building programs on the impact of heavy metals</p> <p>GPA ITEMS: 216</p>	CEPHED	Nepal

	Undertake training programmes for preventing the exposure of waste handlers and recyclers, particularly waste scavengers, to hazardous chemicals and waste GPA ITEMS: 161	ESDO	Bangladesh
	Raising awareness among informal e-waste recyclers for and providing support to bring them in formal channel in Kolkata. GPA ITEMS: 161, 162	Toxics Link and DISHA	India
	State level capacity building workshop of stakeholders on mercury Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiative to issue guidelines for mercury free hospitals by State PCB, in Manipur state of India GPA ITEMS: 57, 214	Rural Health Organization	India
Illegal Traffic	Mobilization Against Arsenic Poisoning due to illegal pesticides use in Sri Lanka	Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ)	Sri Lanka
	Study on illegal trafficking of E-waste from China and India. GPA ITEMS: 272, 273	CEPHED	Nepal
	Strengthen national strategies for prevention, detection and control of illegal trans boundary movements of waste. GPA ITEMS: 272, 273	ESDO	Bangladesh

4. NGOs actions on emerging policy issues

In the South Asian region NGOs actively intervened on emerging policy issues and their range of activities were from research, awareness generation, and campaigning to developing information material, testing of the products to promote best practices, etc. However, the interventions of the NGOs in the South Asian region are very much country specific, taking the needs and priorities of the issues in their respective countries.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh the issues of chemical pesticides and fertilizer are still top most priorities for the NGOs. However, Environmental and Social Development Organization (ESDO) and Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environmental Foundation (OSHE) have intervened to take up emerging chemical safety challenges for Bangladesh.

ESDO has intervened in wide range of emerging chemicals issues like conducting research and campaigning for lead-free paints, creating data on electronic waste (e-waste) generation in Bangladesh and campaigning against the illegal import and trade of e-waste. ESDO is now campaigning to bring forth policies to check toxicity in various products.

India

In India, NGOs have been actively involved in emerging chemical issues ranging from lead in paints campaigns and e- waste issues to testing of products like CFL bulbs, jewelry and plastics of electronic products.

Toxics Link has played a crucial role in highlighting lead-free paint issues from South Asian perspectives. Toxics Link has conducted testing of the same brand of paints from India, Nepal and Bangladesh (in association with CEPHED and ESDO), and exposed the double standard of paints manufacturers on lead contents in paints. Toxics Link has also conducted a research study on lead content in children's jewelry.

Electronics waste management is another important emerging issue for India, where NGOs have played significant role to bring changes. Toxics Link has done number of studies to highlight plights of unregulated e-waste management scenario in India. The sustained campaign and advocacy by Toxics Link and other NGOs lead to notification for a separate e-waste management rule by the government of India, which came into effect in May 2012. At present DISHA and Toxics Link are raising awareness among informal e-waste recyclers and providing support to bring them into formal channels in Kolkata. Toxics Link has also organized a series of workshops to raise awareness among the stakeholders on new e-waste rules.

Nepal

Nepal has also witnessed series of activities by the NGOs to address challenges of emerging chemical safety issues. CEPHED has conducted an extensive study on the e-waste scenario of Nepal. It has also done a study to highlight the illegal trafficking of e-waste from China and India. CEPHED has raised awareness on lead and other heavy metals in Nepal. In fact, CEPHED was an important partner, along with Toxics Link and ESDO, in a lead in paints study for South Asia. Further, CEPHED has conducted a series of research studies on mercury content in CFL bulbs, and lead in children's jewelry, as well as participated in various chemical safety discussions in Nepal.

Forum for Justice has conducted a national conference on governance and accountability on SAICM in Nepal. Many stakeholders, including representatives of government officials, industries and NGOs, attended the meeting. In this conference, existing chemical policy scenario of Nepal was discussed.

Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka chemical pesticides and fertilizer are important priorities for the NGOs. Center for Environment Justice (CEJ) is perhaps the only organization that has been actively working on the emerging chemical safety issues in Sri Lanka. CEJ participated in IPEN's global paint study and since then has been campaigning on lead-free paints in Sri Lanka, including taking a legal course. As a result of their efforts, the government of Sri Lanka is coming up with a new regulation for lead-free paints by 2013.

Sri Lanka is the first country in South Asia that has developed a policy for electronic waste management. However, there is no specific regulation yet in Sri Lanka to enforce management of e-waste legally. CEJ has started a campaign for a policy on extended producer responsibility for the better management of electronics waste. CEJ on its own has even started a collection mechanism for e-waste as a pilot project.

5. Interesting case-study examples of SAICM implementation

Center for Environmental Justice's (Sri Lanka) Lead Free Paint Campaign

The paint industry in Sri Lanka comprises about 30 large and small players, some of which are well known for having a strong market presence. Lead in paint was not a concern for the regulatory authorities or the paint manufacturers in Sri Lanka until Toxics Link/ IPEN/ CEJ global research found out that the lead levels in Sri Lankan paints were too high. Though Sri Lanka had voluntary standards for lead in paints; research found that the lead levels in paints were far in excess of the voluntary standards. Based on the findings of the study, CEJ launched a national campaign against lead use in paints. Many stakeholders were part of the campaign and it triggered some level of discussions among communities on the issue. Further, CEJ pushed for a mandatory standard for lead and filed a public interest suit in the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka. As a result, the Sri Lankan consumer authority has come out with a notification "Gazette Extra Ordinary No 1725/30 on 30 of September 2011" for mandatory standard of lead content in various categories of paints. The notification will be effective from January 2013.

Toxics Link's Interventions led to Electronics-waste Rule in India

Since the last decade, the electronics industry has been one of the fastest growing industries in India. Apart from high domestic consumption of electronic products, legally or illegally, India imports a large amount of e-waste from developed countries. In 2004, Toxics Link conducted the first study on e-waste to bring the issues of environmental and health impacts into the public domain. However, policy makers were not critical of the growing problems of e-waste management in India. Toxics Link did further studies on e-waste problems of the metropolitan cities, and, in response to the media pressure and civil society's outlook, the government of India came out with a guideline for the management of e-waste in 2008, insisting on the non-requirement of a separate e-waste rule for India. Toxics Link stuck to its stand for a separate e-waste rule and campaigned vigorously, involving all stakeholders. In association with other NGOs, the Electronics Manufacture Association, and Traders' Association, Toxics Link later set up a core group and drafted an e-waste rule for India incorporating principles of Extended Producer Responsibility. The draft was presented to the Ministry of Environment. Industries also supported most of the provisions of the draft. Finally, the efforts led to the issuance of new e-waste rule, which came into effect in May 2012.

Center for Public Health and Environmental Development's (CEPHED's) PCB-Free Grill Workshop in Nepal (Metal Fabricating)

In Nepal, PCB-contaminated oil from old transformers was very commonly used for welding machines. CEPHED conducted a study on the impact of PCBs on the grill workers (metal fabricators) and made them aware of the impact of PCBs on their health and the environment. At the same time, CEPHED also pushed for the best alternative technology that would be able to replace the existing technology. Finally the efforts of CEPHED led to the adoption of a new, environmentally friendly technology: dry welding machines used by the grill workers. The new dry machine is now becoming increasingly popular among grill workers in Nepal.