

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

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Region	Middle East

1. State of SAICM implementation

Most of the Arab countries have ratified the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam conventions, and are signatories to SAICM, therefore they are aware of the dangers of toxic material and try to regulate/ban their use.

Nowadays, there is national cooperation between governments and NGOs on chemical safety issues in most Arab countries.

However, there is a lack of laws regulating toxics in the majority of the Middle East countries. Chemical safety is not really improving, and the implementation of chemicals management is still relatively slow.

Nevertheless, people are little by little starting to be more aware of the harm of toxics. NGOs do their own work and have their own campaigns to try to improve the situation, by organizing workshops, conferences, awareness campaigns and trainings.

There are, however, projects done by the government, like the one prepared by the Ministry of Environment in Lebanon regarding hospital waste that was published in September 2011 under the name of “Demonstrating and Promoting Best Techniques and Practices for Reducing Health-Care Waste to Avoid Environmental Releases of Dioxins and Mercury.” The Project aims at demonstrating and promoting best practices and techniques for health-care waste management, evaluating commercially available, non-incineration healthcare waste treatment technologies, introducing and evaluating the use of mercury-free devices in model facilities, and establishing or enhancing training programs to build capacity for the implementation of best practices and technologies both within and beyond the model facilities and programs.

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

There are many gaps in the Middle East that are hindering the implementation of SAICM. The major ones are:

- lack of permanent and sustainable financial mechanism;
- variations in the implementation of international conventions;
- lack of financial assistance;
- lack of assistance obtaining data about chemicals;
- difficulty in prioritizing issues to concentrate on specific work areas;
- limited or no information about chemicals;
- insufficient access to safer technologies and alternatives to chemicals; and
- lack of clear and accessible information about chemicals and toxics.

Also, there is no communication or cooperation or coordination between National SAICM Focal points and NGOs working on SAICM Issues.

3. Inventory of NGO activities supporting SAICM implementation

SAICM Objective	NGO Activity and Results	Names of NGOs	Country
Risk Reduction	<u>Conference</u> : “Zero Mercury Conference” on the use of mercury in the healthcare sector, the harm it causes and alternatives to it. <u>Results</u> : Dental students in universities are more aware of the complications resulting from amalgam.	IndyACT	Lebanon
	<u>ISIP Project</u> : National Awareness Campaign to Eliminate Harmful Chemicals in Compounds in Children’s Toys in Tunisia”	APEDDUB	Tunisia

	<p><u>ISIP Project:</u> Tunisia Mercury Situation Report - Awareness-raising campaign about mercury: hazardous for health & the environment <u>Results:</u> A conference was held; presentations were given in schools; posters, stickers & a brochure were created; dentists committed to stop the use of amalgam; the regional hospital of CNSS in Bizerte is stopping the purchase of Hg-containing products; Students are engaged to collect the Hg-containing products; workshop attendees learned about Hg-spill clean-up; the president of APEDDUB was interviewed by the local radio station about the the health & environmental impacts of mercury.</p>	APEDDUB	Tunisia
	<p><u>ISIP project:</u> Reduce & Eliminate & Replace Mercury in Healthcare Facilities <u>Results:</u> Major workshop conducted w/ Al Akram Red Crescent Medical Ctr. (which has good connections w/ Syrian Red Crescent committee, medical ctr. staff, NGOs, etc.); signed a statement w/ the Syrian Red Crescent leadership & Al Akram Medical Ctr. to replace mercury medical equipment w/ Hg- free alternatives; conducted an inventory of Hg-containing equipment in the medical ctr.; researched reliable Hg- free devices; delivered old Hg-containing equipment to the Ministry of Environment to dispose of; and commitment made w/ the health care ctr. that they will no longer use amalgam filling.</p>	Environmental Protection & Sustainable Development Society	Syria
Knowledge and Information	<p><u>Workshop:</u> Advantages and Disadvantages of Nanotechnology <u>Results:</u> Workshop participants have increased awareness about nanotechnology.</p>	APEDDUB Bizerte	Tunisia

	<p><u>Workshop:</u> Intoxication by Heavy Metals and the need for better medicine to deal with it</p> <p><u>Results:</u> Local newspapers reported on the workshop and people became more aware of the dangers.</p>	<p>SMTCA (Moroccan Society for Clinical and Analytical Toxicology)</p>	<p>Morocco</p>
	<p><u>ISIP Project:</u> Awareness Campaign to Educate Community about the Hazards of Mercury to Health & Environment</p> <p><u>Results:</u> Conducted a regional workshop for 40 participants representing NGOs, media, experts & parliamentarians from 8 MENA countries to enhance the int'l efforts towards reducing Hg usage. A mercury country situation report was also prepared.</p>	<p>Arab Network for Environment and Development (RAED)/Arab Office for Youth and Environment (AOYE)</p>	<p>Egypt</p>
	<p><u>ISIP Project:</u> Current Status of Mercury in Jordan</p> <p><u>Results:</u> A mercury country situation report was prepared.</p>	<p>Baytuna Society</p>	<p>Jordan</p>
	<p><u>ISIP Project:</u> Information and awareness-raising on mercury meant for government, NGOs, professional organizations and the press.</p> <p><u>Results:</u> Organised a nat'l. workshop on Hg in collaboration w/ the Nat'l. Drinking Water Ofc, IPEN, PAN Morocco & Day Hospital. The workshop aimed to develop the current status of mercury both at the nat'l. & int'l. level & to discuss issues related to the production, uses, emissions & alternatives of Hg, its risks on health & the environment as well as nat'l. & int'l. action to implement Hg sustainable solutions in order to protect health & the environment. 27 experts & mgrs. Participated. Brochures & press releases were also developed, & radio & newspaper interviews conducted.</p>	<p>Association d'Education Environnementale et de Protection des Oiseaux au Maroc (SEEPOM)</p>	<p>Morocco</p>

	<p><u>ISIP Project:</u> Electrical and Electronic Waste: a New Emerging Danger: E-waste National Awareness Campaign</p> <p><u>Results:</u> Carried out an assessment of the situation on electrical & electronic (EE) waste in Jordan; distributed questionnaires (to schools & electronic shops) to measure knowledge on e-waste; developed a brochure that contains basic info on EE-waste for the purpose of raising community awareness about the topic; & organized community consultations in order to present the facts derived from the assessment study & discuss possible actions and recommendations</p>	Land and Human to Advocate Progress (LHAP)	Jordan
	<p><u>ISIP Project:</u> Awareness raising in schools on SAICM and chemicals</p> <p><u>Results:</u> Carried out awareness-raising programs that reached 8 states, 52 schools; 1600 students; 450 educators; 37 NGOs; 300 women & media. Chemical hazards of pesticides, POPs and used batteries (heavy metals) were the issues discussed, via workshops, presentations, brochures, publications & photos. Used batteries were also collected for safe disposal.</p>	Association for Sustainable Development (AREMEDD)	Tunisia
	<p><u>ISIP Project:</u> Campaign & policy dialogue for action to remove Saida Waste Dump</p> <p><u>Results:</u> Mtgs w/ the local municipality of Saida, Ministry of Environment officials & agents for tourism were conducted to put together a plan & action to minimize the dump. Informational leaflets were distributed to the public.</p>	AMWAJ of the Environment	Lebanon
Governance	Working on implementing a law that would regulate the use of specific toxic materials in military activities	NCII (Coalition of NGOs in Iraq)	Iraq

4. NGOs actions on emerging policy issues

APEDDUB Bizerte in Tunisia has conducted many workshops that have:

- Raised public awareness on harmful chemicals substances found in children's toys (2012)
- Addressed the advantages and disadvantages of Nanotechnology (2012)

APEDDUB has also recently proposed a project on lead in paint to WHO.

IndyACT in Lebanon is currently working on lead in paints and zero mercury, pushing for a law and regulations regarding these two heavy metals.

In Morocco, SMTCA has conducted a workshop on intoxication by heavy metals, including lead in paint, and has insisted on the need of a better medicine to deal with it.

In Jordan, the NGO Land and Human to Advocate Progress (LHAP) carried out a project entitled, "Electrical and Electronic Waste: a New Emerging Danger: E-waste National Awareness Campaign." Within the project, LHAP carried out an assessment of the situation on electrical and electronic (EE) waste in Jordan (including current national laws and general end-of-life destination); distributed questionnaires (to schools and electronic shops) to measure knowledge on e-waste; developed a brochure that contains basic information on EE-waste for the purpose of raising community awareness about the topic; and organized community consultations in order to present the facts derived from the assessment study and discuss possible actions and recommendations.

LHAP is also currently working on a project on lead in paint, which should be completed at the end of August. Research will be conducted to assess the current status of lead in paint in Jordan, informational materials will be developed, and public hearings will be held.

5. Interesting case-study examples of SAICM implementation

From September 2010 – January 2011, APEDDUB-Tunisia carried out its project, "*Tunisia Mercury Situation Report - Awareness-raising campaign about mercury: hazardous for health & the environment.*" Two important results came from this project:

- Many dentists in the city of Bizerte have stopped using dangerous mercury-containing amalgam for fillings and are demanding alternatives for it.
- The regional hospital of CNSS in Bizerte is stopping the purchase of mercury-containing products.

These are two concrete, significant actions that are a direct result of the conference that APEDDUB held in Bizerte, in which 160 people participated.

Additionally, through their project on chemicals in products, APEDUBB so impressed upon teachers the hazards contained in certain toys that some kindergarten directors decided to stop buying certain harmful and toxic toys for children in the city of Bizerte.

In Lebanon, the NGO IndyACT held a Zero Mercury conference on March 29, 2012. There were four speakers:

- IndyACT discussed a mercury study they published, and its results;
- UNDP discussed a study regarding the possible phase-out of mercury from hospitals;
- The Syndicate of Hospitals discussed plans to start phasing out mercury-containing devices from hospitals (but their plan needs good management and implementation); and
- A dental care expert discussed the role of the media in raising awareness among people about the mercury issue.

In the conference, there was a stuntman disguised as a dentist filling toxic mercury amalgam into a big tooth (made out of foam), and a picture of this traveled the world and was published in newspapers, on the web...it got famous and raised awareness among people.