

Minutes – MIA Inception Workshop

Minamata Initial Assessment for Guyana

- Time and Date: 10:00 am – 13:30 pm, Thursday, 27th August 2015
- Venue: DRNE Board Meeting
- Facilitator: DNRE Focal Point Ms. Eulienne Watson
- Participants: Attached in a separate document.

Welcome & Introduction by Mr Veetal Rajkumar (DNRE): Guyana ratified the Minamata Convention (MC) last year. It was the principal objective of the project. With WWF we have mapped out mercury distribution network. The project will add to what we already have in the database to help phase out the mercury use in Guyana.

Remarks from Dr. Chesney (UNDP): On behalf of UNDP, we are happy to start the project funded by GEF. The project was supposed to help the country to ratify the MC but it was re-designed to implement it. UNDP would like to congratulate the DNRE for completing the second draft of the Mercury Action Plan and we hope it to go to the public consultation soon after the approval by the Cabinet.

Most countries in the Guiana Shield are committed to phase out mercury use in mining activities. Guyana and Suriname are in particular dumping a lot of mercury in the pristine natural environment. It's the job of everyone to pool resources to cope with the challenges and how we could deploy to help the social and economic development. UNDP Guyana collaborates with the Suriname office to support the Suriname government to ratify the convention so that we could ensure the transboundary issues related to mercury contamination caused by gold mining.

Ms. Watson: Overview of the Project:

- There are three forms of mercury contamination.
- Documentation that exists in the country is lacking since they do not say what is actually happening in Guyana.
- History of the Convention: In 2009 UN started the negotiation to create a treaty to prevent emissions and releases of mercury.
- Guyana signed on to the Convention on 13th October 2013 and In September 2014, the GoG ratified the MC. To date there are 128 signatures and 12 countries ratified, by having fifty (50)15 ratified countries the Convention will come in force.
- The project looks at improving the management of mercury within the gold mining sector, particularly in the small scale gold mining sector.
- Establishment of 5 million mercury free development fund – to support adoption of mercury free techniques. The Ministry of Finance, GGDMA, and the Women's Miner Association would particularly be interested in the initiative.
- GGMC regulates the areas of Mining, Ministry of Indigenous People's Affairs – most beneficiaries are indigenous. The participants will therefore all benefit from the results of the project.
- Two components of the project were explained.

Discussions:

- WWF has done lots of work in education and public awareness. Duplication should not be made but rather to have baseline. The MIA Project should be adding on to what we already have, meaning building upon the knowledge and experience we already have.
- Past awareness campaign was conducted without any monitoring to see if it is effective. The Project should consider assessing the effectiveness of past experience and what we could improve from them. The Project needs to approach in the objective and evidence-based manner.
- Education has not been targeted to reduce the exposure to mercury. The Presence of the Ministry of Education is important especially as to how we could channel through education awareness.
- The alternative and supportive environment is not there to replace the current use of mercury. However, the Mercury Free Mining Development Fund intends to encourage small and medium miners to adopt mercury-free mining techniques. DNRE has started proposals. The question is how we sustain the proposed alternatives.
- The Project needs to look into the villages where mining is and isn't taking place. There has been evidence of higher levels of mercury contamination found from fish close to villages that are not affected by the mining. Also, the Project needs to consider other communities where the contaminated fish is sold. We cannot only focus on one community.
- It is quite difficult to link the mercury contamination and health problems. Surveillance falls under the purview of the MoPH. In 2016, the Ministry could ensure to submit the budgets to look at the health conditions of communities where mining is the major economic activity.
- Baseline data is essential. WWF has done a number of different public awareness, the issue is that it is quite difficult to understand what the impacts are, and that has not been assessed fully.
- There are some information available by Ministry of Health from tests carried out in the Isseneru village in 2014 after the complaint of mercury contamination by 17 residents. However until the results are released and cleared by the residents, the information cannot be released.
- Assessment follow-up is crucial. We need to think about how to follow up the studies and getting the same information from the same samples. If we are going to look at implementing programme, we do need to have good baseline.
- GGMC and GRA have baseline data. In terms of figure and process, GRA should be able to pull the information of mercury from past 5 years. GRA could provide who a list of importers of mercury and quantities imported. But we need to also consider the quality of the data. WWF report shows confliction of data collection especially by GGMC and GRA, TBTT.
- Economic cost of the use of Mercury in Guyana needs to be explored. – Cost of human health and cost of environment should be visible to convince the Government and the Public.
- Economists from Ministry of Finance to do cost analysis of the health conditions and exposure to mercury.

- National Action Plan: the first draft action plan has been completed, it is circulated for agency reviews. There is a second draft prepared for public consultations.
- Recommendations in the final report needs to be practical. The Project need to look at the gaps to know what we should address.
- We should ensure that the consultants in the project are flexible as possible. Gaps of natural flow, and etc. should be included in the final report. When the final report comes, the National Action Plan must capture the information.
- We hope to guide the consultants with information provided by the Board and how we could translate to policies, implementation and monitoring. We need to get back to those related agencies. What mechanism do we have to make the miners adopt.

Final remark by Mr. Rajkmar (DNRE)

Minutes – MIA Board Meeting

Minamata Initial Assessment for Guyana

- Time and Date: 11:30 am – 13:30 pm, Thursday, 27th August 2015
- Venue: DRNE Board Meeting
- Chair: Ministry of Finance, Mr. Alan Mentis
- Participants: Attached in a separate document.

Objectives:

- TORs of the Board to be discussed and approved
- Annual Work Plan to be agreed/modified for the implementation of the Project.

Welcome remark from Dr. Chesney – Assistant Resident Representative (UNDP):

The intention of the Board meeting is to oversee the project. The Board will meet every 6 months. Project Board has an essential role in the project; its primary function is to ensure the project is implemented in accordance with the design, and signed by the IP and UNDP. Quality assurance role is delegated to UNDP but the principle is to have any decision making process by the Board. Therefore the project takes the overall guidance from the Board. To make it clear, IP is not allowed to make changes to the project without seeking approval of the changes by the Board. However with the Minutes, we could present it to GEF and seek the no-cost extension, if necessary.

Project Board is usually co-chaired by the UNDP and MoF.

Roles and Responsibilities/Agreement for TOR Acceptance:

- The responsibility and TORs of the Board are adopted as modified form below:

Table 1. Tentative TORs for the Project Board

| Terms of Reference: |
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| 1. Provide policy and strategic oversight and support to the implementation of the Project, in particular ensuring that the project and its outputs and outcome are aligned with the future requirements of the Minamata Convention, that reports are of sufficiently high standard and quality and that they are reviewed and endorsed by the Project Board and submitted to the Minamata Convention Secretariat will full Government endorsement. |
| 2. Advise and ensure stakeholder involvement on matters related to the Life-Cycle Management (LCM) of mercury. |
| 3. Review and approve the Project's annual work plans, as well as other Project planning and implementation instruments. |
| 4. Provide inputs to the Project's APR/PIR. |
| 5. Support Project evaluations, if applicable. |
| 6. Approval of the TOR and membership for other committees and working groups that are expected to contribute to the implementation of Project activities and the achievement of its outcomes. |
| 7. To provide policy /guidance to key decision makers on Minamata Convention and application of Minamata Initial Assessment |
| 8. Any other relevant task as applicable. |

- Separate addition to the TORs: "To provide policy /guidance to key decision makers on Minamata Convention and application of Minamata Initial Assessment".

- Policy advice to the Minister so that we have uptake and have follow-up on Project Board recommendations. MCM that requires the Cabinet approval (e.g. recommendations)
- The TOR of the project coordinator should be shared with the Board by IP.

Agreement on Work Programme

- MCM: IP needs to propose the Board of MCM members for revision and adoption. All the relevant parties need to be members. A group was previously formed by GGMC, however not much has been done, another committee was created as a reviewing committee for the Mercury Free Fund. After two meetings the group is no longer functioning. GGMC will provide the information of the members by Monday 31st August 2015.
- Deadlines will be included in the implementation plan. There is scope for accelerated implementation. *Any changes in budget and timelines we need to seek prior approval of the GEF.

Decisions reached by the Board:

- From the next Board Meeting, Ministry of Finance will chair.
- **Based on the discussions, the board agrees on TORs as amended in the Board Meeting.**
- **Produce Accelerated Implementation Plan (need to be achievable).**
- List of Board members to be expanded by including Ministry of Social Protection, Ministry of Education and reflect the recent changes in Ministry's names (Ministry of Indigenous People's Affairs, Ministry of Communities)
- **IP (DNRE) to propose the updated list of the Board members to the participated Board members for revision and adoption by 1st week of September.**
- In first week of December, Quarterly Board Meeting to take place.
- Minutes of two meetings, 'accelerated' Implementation Plan and Matrix stating timeline of consultant hiring process to be circulated by Wednesday 2nd September 2015 to the Board members by UNDP focal point.
- All documents will be adjusted based on the comments/feedback by 4th September 2015 issuing as finalized documents. Upon the finalisation, UNDP will launch the procurement processes.

Closing Remarks by Dr. P.Chesney (UNDP): The project is a first generation of the project funded by GEF for Minamata Conventions. I am very happy to have good response and high level of inputs from the Board. We would like to see this level of commitment continue throughout the Project.