

Dental Amalgam Memoire

Roadmap of Nigeria's Transition from Mercury Filling to Non-Pollution Fillings

Submission to Minamata Convention Secretariat

Preamble:

Noting that following the adopted Minamata Convention on Mercury, the world recognizes that dental amalgam is a major environmental pollutant and requires each participating nation "to phase down the use of dental amalgam."¹

Recalling that in October 2013, Nigeria (the most populous nation in Africa) became a Signatory to the Minamata Convention on Mercury and then a Party when it ratified the Convention in February 2018, and the **goal** of that treaty, and thus of Nigeria as a Party, is to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds.

The World Alliance/SRADeV Nigeria in collaboration with key stakeholders took up this campaign (past 6 years) not only to ensure that Nigeria emerges dental amalgam-free, but also to implement the dental amalgam phase-down measures of the Minamata Convention (and ultimately phase out amalgam use). We highlight below a steady but very progressive national efforts/achievements which serve as a useful reference tool to the Minamata Secretariat for stakeholder engagement/consultations, action plans, resolutions and communiqués agreed to further encourage dental professionals, hospitals, governments and other nations of the world to begin to phase-out of dental amalgam and a transition to the several non-toxic alternatives.

➤ In Abuja (Federal Capital Territory)

In May 2014, a summit hosted by SRADeV Nigeria (NGO) and sponsored by the World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry held a *West African Summit on Phasing Out Amalgam* in Abuja. Almost forty (40) environmental, consumer, and human rights groups from African nations spanning the continent – west, east, north, south, and central – signed the [Abuja Declaration for Mercury-Free Dentistry for Africa](#). Noting that Africa has **the lowest use of amalgam of any region**, the Abuja Declaration boldly declares, "Africa shall be the 1st continent to phase out amalgam."

Stakeholders commenced the national response to the *Minamata Convention on Mercury* obligation. In May 2014, 115 participants at the one-day stakeholders' forum in Abuja organised by Federal Ministries of Health and Environment in conjunction with SRADeV Nigeria, unanimously agreed that, in compliance with the provisions of the Convention, a coordinated multi-sectoral approach is required for an effective phase down of use of dental amalgam in Nigeria; and that "strengthening of disease prevention and health promotion is the most relevant approach to reduce the need for restorative care and it may be prudent to consider phasing down dental amalgam" towards phase out.

In 2015, a Federal agency (Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission – FFCPC) produced consumer fact sheet on "*Dental fillings – the choices you have*" in collaboration with SRADeV Nigeria, on the rights of consumers to ensure consumers are protected and promoted, with information on dental alternatives. This was distributed nationwide to dental hospitals, clinics for consumers education and healthy environment.

Following the Federal Ministry of Environment/UNIDO's effort in 2017, to meet the treaty's obligation, the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted the roadmap document - "Minamata Convention Initial Assessment (MIA) in

¹ Minamata Convention, UNEP (2013) , <http://www.mercuryconvention.org/Convention/Text/tabid/3426/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

Nigeria”², which identified measures towards its implementation plans and priorities, and set *the phase down the use of dental amalgam*, as its second topmost national priority for action, after ratification and domestication.

By July 2018, 102 participants drawn from Governments, Dental practitioners, Dental surgery/technicians, Academia, Civil society groups and the Media among others, to deliberate on policy issues for the phasing down of the use of Dental Amalgam in Nigeria at the “*National stakeholders’ summit on development of national policy on phase down of dental amalgam use*” hosted by the Federal Ministry of Health, unanimously resolved “*to end the use of Dental Amalgam as restorative material in children under 16 years, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers (the vulnerable group) by December 2020*”³.

Understanding, that Nigeria Dental Association (NDA) as a key stakeholder. Prior to 2019, NDA notably in various times at both national and state levels undertook several dialogue sessions to brainstorm on accelerating the phase down of dental amalgam use. In July 2019, NDA for instance at its 52nd Annual General Meeting/Scientific Conference with the theme: “*The Minamata Convention on Mercury - Phasing down of Mercury Dental Amalgam in Nigeria*”, its agreed and advocated a fast track and leap-frogging approach to the phase down programme for Nigeria.

➤ In Lagos

Lagos State is Nigeria’s commercial capital. Lagos city is the most populous city in all of Africa.

In June 2016, over 150 key stakeholders (Ministries of Education and Environment, dental practitioners, NGOs, Academics, Nigerian Dental Association and Association of Private Dental Practitioners etc) at the 10th Annual Scientific Conference on Phasing Down of Mercury Amalgam in Nigeria, organised by the Faculty of Dental Sciences, University of Lagos, agreed on a ‘four-step Action Plan’ on the dental amalgam phasedown to phase out process in Nigeria. The dental practitioners/experts also recommended to the Federal Ministries of Health and Environment to *discourage and stop mercury amalgam use in children’s primary teeth and pregnant women in Nigeria* by December 2017⁴.

By February 2016, stakeholders fostered concrete steps toward a framework of national action for **Mercury-Free Dentistry in Nigeria**, about 63 participants consisting of dental experts, the academia, representatives of different Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs), professional bodies - Nigeria Dental Association (NDA), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the Media, agreed on a phased down workplan on the *introduction and promotion of Alternatives/Transition to alternatives*.

In 2019, as a result of the perceived prolonged phase down of mercury dental amalgam obligation of the convention, Nigeria academicians formed an expert group for Mercury free Dentistry in Africa called “*Dentists’ Committee for a Mercury Free Africa*”, chaired by Prof. Godwin Arotiba (a renowned Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery and former Dean of the oldest dental school in Sub-Saharan Africa). The committee believe that current evidence based on 21st century approach to management of tooth decay is minimum intervention dentistry (MID), and that mercury dental amalgam is an historical remnant of “*drill and fill dentistry*” of 19th and 20th century, no longer fitting for 21st century Africa.

➤ Model States Campaigns

Nigeria, the 7th most populous country in the world, is a federal system with 36 states (plus the Federal Capital Territory), grouped into six regions. With such a power-sharing constitutional system, it was important we work at the state as well as federal level. In 2017, we began the Model State campaign, choosing Edo State in the South-South Region. In 2019, we expanded the Model State campaign into Enugu State, in the South-East Region.

² http://www.mercuryconvention.org/Portals/11/documents/MIAs/Nigeria_MIA_2017.pdf

³ Communique issued at the National Stakeholders’ Summit on development of National Policy on Phase Down of Dental Amalgam Use in Nigeria held on Tuesday 17 July 2018 at Barcelona hotels, Wuse II, Abuja Nigeria.

⁴ Communique Issued at the End of the Stakeholders’ forum on Phasing Down of Mercury Amalgam in Nigeria Held at The Old Great Hall, College of Medicine, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria on June 28-29, 2016.

In Benin City, Edo State, in October 2017, stakeholders from Government, Dental practitioners, Dental and dental auxiliary profession students, Dental surgery technicians, Academia, Media and civil society groups representing children, women's interests, business, and the environment – about 60 persons, including some from other states in the South-South Region – gathered for a Workshop on Phase-down of Dental Amalgam Use. At its conclusion, the stakeholders called for *the end of dental amalgam use in children under 16, pregnant and breastfeeding women* and urged the Federal government, the other States of Nigeria, and all nations of Africa to end amalgam use in children under 16, pregnant and breast feeding women.⁵

Edo State, South-South, Nigeria. The Edo State model project adopts the use of multiple-level approach to stakeholders in the dental amalgam value chain with a central focus on mercury free dentistry. The Paediatrics Unit of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital (UBTH), the state's largest public hospital, has phased out amalgam use for children since 2018. This is based largely on awareness raising advocacy which has greatly reduced the dental health risk to children. In addition, amalgam is currently not the first line of dental treatment prescription at the UBTH and private clinics as non-mercury alternatives are readily available, and they include Composites and Glass Ionomer Cements (GICs).

Enugu State, South-East, Nigeria. The Nigerian Dental Association (NDA), Enugu State branch has recorded increased use of nonmercury alternatives to dental amalgam in most dental clinics. The State NDA chairman, Dr. Emedom Elias, has reported that over 89% of the dental clinics now use non-mercury alternatives which are available. The State Ministry of Environment has engaged the media to educate the people on the environmental health risk associated with the use of amalgam. The head of pollution in the Ministry of Environment, Mrs Chinwe Nwuko is spearheading governmental efforts in coordination with other ministries and civil society to create awareness on amalgam phase-out. In October 2019, stakeholders from Enugu State convened for a conference on the transition from amalgam to the non-toxic alternatives.

Lagos, Nigeria
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⁵ <http://sedinig.org/a-communique-issued-at-the-stakeholders-workshop-on-phase-down-of-dental-amalgam-in-edo-state/>