CONCEPT NOTE

Workshop for strengthening collaboration on phasing out dental amalgam in the WHO South-East Asia Region

Date: 13 and 14 July 2026

Bangkok, Thailand

1. Background

Dental amalgam has been a widely used filling material in dental restorative care for over 175 years. It consists of a mixture of metals: approximately 50% elemental mercury combined with a powdered alloy of silver, tin, and copper. Mercury pollution can occur throughout the amalgam lifecycle, during production, supply, cavity placement, removal of fillings, and disposal.

To address these concerns, the Minamata Convention on Mercury, a global treaty aimed at protecting human health and the environment from emissions and releases of mercury and its compounds caused by human activity, entered into force on 16 August 2017. Provisions related to dental amalgam amended during the fourth, fifth, and sixth meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP)—are outlined in Annex A, Part I and II of the Convention[1]. While the Convention initially focused on phasing down the use of dental amalgam, at COP-6 in 2025, the Parties have now agreed to move towards phasing it out by 2034, requiring countries to formulate and submit national action plans to phase out dental amalgam.

In parallel, efforts to strengthen oral health within the broader noncommunicable disease (NCD) agenda and universal health coverage have gained momentum. The World Health Assembly adopted the Resolution on Oral Health (WHA74.5)[2] in 2021, followed by a Global Strategy on Oral Health in 2022, and noted the Global Oral Health Action Plan 2023-2030 (GOHAP)[3] in 2023. Among its 11 global targets, one is directly linked to the Minamata Convention: By 2030, 90% of countries should have implemented measures to phase down the use of dental amalgam or have phased it out. As of the 2024 baseline, 31% of countries globally had fully achieved this target, compared with 19% in the WHO South East Asian

[1] https://minamataconvention.org/sites/default/files/documents/final_report_and_outcomes/UNEP-MC-COP6-25-Add1-Compilation-Decisions_Unedited-Advance.pdf
[2] https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA74/A74_R5-en.pdf
[3] https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240090538

Region[4]. There is a growing interest among Member States and other stakeholders in addressing the environmental impact of oral health care. This is reflected in the *Bangkok declaration on oral health - No Health Without Oral Health*[5], adopted during the WHO Global oral health meeting in Bangkok, calling for environmentally sound oral health care practices. In addition, the Global Coalition on Oral Health, a WHO-convened forum designed to support WHO's work and country efforts to advance the global oral health agenda towards 2030, was launched in May 2026.

In the South-East Asia Region, the Action plan for oral health in South-East Asia 2022–2030, approved at the 75th Regional Committee is the technical guidance in the region towards universal health coverage for oral health. Phasing down dental amalgam use as part of the Minamata Convention on Mercury is a core action identified under the strategic action area of Oral health research, digital innovation and emerging issues.

To advance progress, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded a project to accelerate the implementation of dental amalgam provisions and strengthen country capacities in the environmentally sound management of associated wastes under the Minamata Convention (GEF-7 Phasing Down Dental Amalgam Project). The project, implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and executed by WHO with targeted technical assistance of the Global Mercury Partnership, runs from March 2023 to October 2026. Thailand is one of the pilot countries in the WHO South East Asia Region, alongside Senegal and Uruguay.

Thailand's GEF-7 Phasing Down Dental Amalgam project[6] is led by Thailand's Ministry of Public Health with close collaboration by Ministry of Environment and support from WHO Collaborating Centres. Early outcomes include a measurable decline in amalgam use among the Thai population supported by strengthened national strategies that prioritize prevention-focused oral health and mercury-free alternatives. These efforts are complemented by a feasibility study on the use of dental amalgam separators and improved practices for mercury-waste reduction in dental clinics.

As we are approaching the end of the project, Thailand will host a regional workshop with all Member States from the WHO South East Asia Region to share the results and lessons learned from the project and strengthen regional collaboration to implement the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

[4]https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240106031#:~:text=The%20aim%20of%20this%20report%20is%20to%20provide,and%20serves%20as%20a%20reference%20for%20future%20reports.
[5] https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/bangkok-declaration---no-health-without-oral-health
[6] https://minamataconvention.org/sites/default/files/documents/2025-10/Presentation_20251014_14h45_FDI-IADR.pdf

2. Aim, objectives and expected outcomes

The aim of the workshop is to share results from the GEF7 Phasing Down Dental Amalgam project, facilitate exchange of national experiences and strengthen regional collaboration to support countries in accelerating the transition towards the phase out of dental amalgam in alignment with the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

The specific objectives are to:

- Present Thailand's project results and lessons learned in implementing GEF-7 Phasing Down Dental Amalgam Project
- Strengthen collaboration between health and environment sectors on phasing down dental amalgam at national and regional levels
- Promote practical implementation of Articles 4 and 11 of the Minamata Convention considering requirements and guidelines under the Basel Convention.
- Share experiences and capacities on the sound management of dental amalgam wastes and/or other mercury containing products wastes.
- Provide a structured platform to support countries to present and refine prioritized actions for phasing out dental amalgam, informed by existing national oral health roadmaps or national oral health plans, and to identify common regional needs and opportunities.

The expected outcomes are:

1. Documented achievements and lessons learned from Thailand implementation, generating insights that may inform adaptation in the region.
2. Shared knowledge and experiences on national and regional initiatives, fostering cross-country learning and regional collaboration.
3. Strengthened integration of health and environmental strategies through practical approaches to implement article 4 and 11 of the Minamata Convention, and the Basel Convention guidelines.
4. Identified regional needs and priorities with corresponding recommendations regarding the sound management of dental amalgam wastes, and other mercury containing products wastes.
5. Identified key national prioritized actions, challenges and opportunities, for accelerating national and regional efforts for phasing out dental amalgam.

3. Participants

- Ministry of Health and Ministry of Environment representatives at the host country, Thailand
- Two (2) representatives countries from all WHO SEARO Member States will be invited to attend (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste). The two representatives from each country will be the national oral health lead from the Ministry of Health and the National Focal Point of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (commonly based at the Ministry of Environment).

- WHO (Country office, Regional Office, and Headquarters representatives)
- UNEP (Regional Office, and Headquarters representatives)
- UNEP Global Mercury Partnership
- Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury
- WHO CC for Oral Health Education and Research Department of Oral Medicine and Periodontology, Faculty of Dentistry, Mahidol University, Thailand
- Co-financing partners of the project and private sector partners engaged in the region
- Metasys
- BMT Asia
- World Alliance for Mercury Free Dentistry
- Dental Association of Thailand
- National organizations as identified by the National Project Steering Committee, WHO, and UNEP.

4. Date and location

- Date: 13 & 14 July 2026
- Location and venue: Hotel Pullman King Power, Bangkok, Thailand

5. Format

The workshop will be conducted in English and in-person.

The workshop will include:

- Technical segments to present project results and share country experiences.
- Interactive discussions to exchange lessons learned and strengthen regional collaboration on phasing out the use of dental amalgam.

6. Agenda

Time	Agenda Item	Speaker/Moderator
	DAY 1 ***Chair - morning:*** *Dr Gabriela Sardon, WHO* ***Chair – afternoon:*** *Dr Gampo Dorji, WHO Nepal*	
8:00-9:00	**Registration**	
9:00-9:35	**Inaugural session** • Welcome remarks (20 min)	• Dr Catharina Boehme Officer-in-Charge, WHO South-East Asia delivered by Dr Suman Rijal, Director, Dept. of Health Promotion, Disease Prevention and Control of the WHO regional office for South East Asia • Mr Sudhir Sharma, Chemicals and Waste Focal Point, UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific • Dr Damrong Thamronglaohaphan, Director, Bureau of Dental Health, Department of Health, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand • Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand
	• Overview of workshop and objectives, and housekeeping session (5 min)	• Dr Gabriela Sardon, WHO
	• Tour de table (10 min)	• All participants
9:35-10:00	**Healthy break and group photo**	

10:00-10:30	**Session 1: Advancing oral health and environmental agendas: The contribution of the GEF-7 Dental Amalgam Project** • Current Global and Regional Context on Oral Health, including an introduction to the GEF-7 Phasing Down Dental Amalgam project (15 min) • Minamata Convention: Transition towards the phase-out of dental amalgam and development of national action plans (15 min)	• Dr Nalika Gunawardena, WHO SEARO • Mr Eisaku Toda, Minamata Convention Secretariat
10:30-11:10	**Session 2: Introduction to Thailand's Experience and Setting the Scene in the region** • Brief Overview of Implementation of GEF 7 Phasing Down Dental Amalgam Project in Thailand: Results and lessons learnt (15 min) • Regional experience sharing and Q&A (25 min)	• Dr Nanmanas Yaembut, Bureau of Dental Health, Department of Health, Thailand • All participating countries. *Moderated by Gabriela Sardon, WHO and Sudhir Sharma, UNEP*

11:10-12:30	**Session 3: Policy and system-level measures: How do regulations, insurance schemes, and integration into PHC/UHC support the transition away from dental amalgam?**
	• Integrating oral health into PHC and UHC frameworks and benefit packages (20 min)
	• Thailand national experience:
	  ○ Leveraging UHC and policy reforms towards phasing out dental amalgam (15 min)
	  ○ Development and implementation of national guidelines on dental caries prevention and phasing down dental amalgam (15 min)
	• Regional experience sharing and Q&A (30 min)
		• Dr Benoit Varenne, WHO
		• Dr Voramon Agrasuta, Bureau of Dental Health, Department of Health, Thailand
		• Prof. Dr Siriluk Nakhonchai, Dental Association of Thailand
		• All participating countries. *Moderated by Nalika Gunawardena, WHO SEARO & Benoit Varenne, WHO*

12:30-13:30	**Lunch break**	

13:30-14:30	**Session 4: How do trade, supply chains, and market dynamics shape the use of dental amalgam and mercury-free materials?** • Lifecycle perspective: Emissions, releases and trade (10 min) • Global trends in the trade for dental amalgam and alternatives (10 min) • Thailand national experience: regulatory measures restricting the importation and distribution of dental amalgam (15 min) • Regional experience sharing and Q&A (25 min)	• Dr Gabriela Sardon, WHO • Mr Florian Schulze, European Network for Environmental Medicine • Mrs Sunsanee Pinthong & Mrs Rapipan Inthayat, Food and Drug Administration, Thailand • All participating countries. *Moderated by: Benoit Varenne, WHO*
14:30-14:50	**Coffee break**	
14:50-16:20	**Session 5: What are effective approaches to improving the management of dental amalgam waste, from safe handling at health-care facilities to environmentally sound final disposal?** • Guidance on mercury waste management in healthcare facilities, including mapping of facilities worldwide that provide environmentally sound management services (15 min) • Thailand national experience: piloting amalgam separators and implementing an end-to-end management system for dental amalgam waste – approaches, challenges and lessons learned (25 min) • How can amalgam separators contribute to an effective management of dental amalgam waste? (10 min) • Technical session on methodology for collection, transport, treatment and final disposal of dental amalgam waste in Thailand (10 min)	• Mr Dave Hunter, UNEP Global Mercury Partnership • Dr Nanmanas Yaembut, Bureau of Dental Health & Mrs Neeranuch Arphacharus, Bureau of Environmental Health, Department of Health, Thailand • Ms Carola Auer, Metasys • Mr Chairat Nattakittikoson, BMT Asia

	• Regional experience sharing and Q&A (30 min)	• All participating countries. *Moderated by: Sudhir Sharma, UNEP & Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand*
16:20-16:30	**Wrap up Day 1 and key take away for national action plans to phase out dental amalgam**	• Benoit Varenne, WHO
DAY 2 ***Chair-morning:*** *Sushera Bunluesin, WHO Thailand* ***Chair-afternoon****: TBC*		
9:00-9:20	**Welcome and reflections from Day 1**	• Dr Nanmanas Yaembut, Bureau of Dental Health, Department of Health, Thailand

9:20-10:20	**Session 6: How do innovative health workforce models and partnerships support implementation of environmentally friendly and less invasive oral health care?**
	• Thailand national experience:
	  ○ Oral health workforce in Thailand (15 min)
	  ○ Dental education and curriculum development (15 min)
	• Regional experience sharing & Q&A (30 min)
		• Dr Warut Chalittikul, Bureau of Dental Health, Department of Health, Thailand
		• Assistant Professor, Dr Ajiravudh Subarnbhesaj, Khon Kaen University
		• All participating countries. *Moderated by: Benoit, WHO and Mahidol University WHO CC*

10:20-10:40	**Coffee break**	
10:40-12:30	**Session 7 (First part): Which actions should be prioritized to reach out the phase out of dental amalgam** • Introduction and objectives of the session • Group work to refine pre-meeting assignment (PowerPoint presentation) based on learnings from Day 1 and Day 2 (25 min) • Group 1 (4 countries' presentations; 10 min each) • Guided discussion – key takeaways to accelerate the phase out of dental amalgam, and identify common regional needs and opportunities	*Session moderated by Nalika Gunawardena, WHO SEARO and Gabriela Sardon, WHO* • All participating countries

	[For participating countries, please see separate supplementary document and PowerPoint presentation for guidance on this session]	
12:30-13:30	**Lunch break**	
13:30-15:00	**Session 7 (Second part): Which actions should be prioritized to advance the phase out of dental amalgam?** • Group 2 (4 countries' presentations; 10 min each) • Guided discussion – key takeaways to accelerate the phase out of dental amalgam, and identify common regional needs and opportunities [For participating countries, please see separate supplementary document and PowerPoint presentation for guidance on this session]	*Session moderated by Nalika Gunawardena, WHO SEARO and Gabriela Sardon, WHO* • All participating countries
15:00-15:20	**Coffee break**	
15:20-16:20	**Session 8: Conclusion, lessons learned and next steps** • Joint reflection: lessons and key takeaways from Thailand experience, other countries, and the event. (45 min) • Conclusion, lessons learned, and key actions to advance toward the phasing out dental amalgam in the region (15 min)	• All participants • Benoit Varenne, WHO, Sudhir Sharma, UNEP & Eisaku Toda, Minamata Convention Secretariat
16:20-16:30	Closure remarks	• WHO SEARO