



PESTICIDE ACTION NEXUS
ASSOCIATION (PAN-Ethiopia)



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New Study Still Finds High Lead Content in Many Ethiopian Paints

(Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) A new study on the lead content of solvent-based paints for home use in Ethiopia released today by the Pesticide Action Nexus Association (PAN-Ethiopia) and IPEN shows that more than 80 percent of the analyzed paint brands sold have one or more paint that contained dangerously high total lead content greater than 10,000 parts per million (ppm). This is the third study on lead content in Ethiopian household decorative paints since 2012. Two orange paints contained 100,000 ppm lead or 10 percent of the paint's content, more than 1,100 times the allowed threshold limit of 0.009 percent (90 ppm) established in many countries for lead in paint. This is also the maximum threshold limit from which the draft standard by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MEFC) is based on, expected to be ratified this year.

“The exposure to lead can have a wide range of effects on a child’s development and behavior. Even when exposed to small amounts of lead, children may appear inattentive, hyperactive and irritable. Children with high lead levels in their bodies may also have problems with learning and reading, delayed growth and hearing loss,” said Dr. Tadesse Amera, Director, PAN-Ethiopia.

“Children who have reached crawling stage and even those learning to walk tend to insert everything they touch into their mouths, becoming highly vulnerable to the health risks from paints with lead,” he added.

“Use of lead in paint is a major source of childhood lead exposure” said Dr. Sara Brosché, Global Lead Paint Elimination Project Manager of IPEN. “Children with six years of age and under are the most vulnerable, typically ingesting lead-contaminated dust through normal hand-to-mouth behavior while their bodies absorb up to five times as much of ingested lead than adults. We urge governments to enact regulations that will prohibit the use of lead in paint and paint manufacturers to act immediately to remove leaded ingredients from their paint production.”

From June 2016 to January 2017, PAN-Ethiopia purchased a total of 36 cans of solvent-based paint intended for home use representing 11 brands and produced by 11 manufacturers from various stores in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Samples from these paints were analyzed by an accredited laboratory in the USA for total lead content.

Key findings from the report, *Lead in Solvent-Based Paints for Home Use in Ethiopia*, include:

- A majority (75 percent) of the solvent-based paints contained lead concentrations above 90 ppm. Moreover, 42 percent of paints contained dangerously high lead concentrations above 10,000 ppm.
- The highest lead concentration detected was 100,000 ppm in two orange paints sold for home use, both of which were manufactured in the country.
- 82 percent of the brands in the study sold at least one paint with dangerously high lead concentrations above 10,000 ppm.
- Yellow and orange paints were the most hazardous with 82 percent of yellow paints and 71 percent of orange paints containing lead concentrations greater than 10,000 ppm.
- Most paint can labels did not carry meaningful information about lead content or the hazards of lead paint.
- The study shows similar results compared to a previous paint study conducted in 2015, demonstrating the need for immediate action to eliminate lead paint in Ethiopia.

“If we managed to phase out lead in petrol, we can also manage to phase it out in paints. What is required is determination that should be backed up by regulatory framework,” said Dr. Tadesse Amera.

He added that customers wishing to buy paints for home use cannot identify those with low lead and those with high lead concentrations simply because the cans of paint analyzed did not carry meaningful information on their label.

There is currently no existing regulatory framework that limits the lead content in household decorative paints in Ethiopia. However, the MEFC has drafted a national regulation which sets 90 ppm total lead as threshold limit in Ethiopian paints. This threshold limit also applies to items that use paints as an input such as toys and furniture. The MEFC official who attended the occasion to launch the report informed participants that the Ministry has been finalizing procedures to approve a national regulation to limit lead levels in paints and products that use leaded paints as input.

Dr. Ayele Hegena, Director of Policy, Law and Standards Directorate in the MEFC, said that the Ministry is addressing the pressing need to come up with a regulatory framework to ensure people’s health and the environment protected from hazards caused by lead in paint.

“The Ethiopian Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change is finalizing the draft regulation, which upon implementation will ban the manufacture, import, export, distribution, sale and use of paints that contain total lead concentrations exceeding 90 ppm. Paint companies will also be required to display sufficient information indicating harmful content on paint can labels such as solvents and provide warning on possible lead dust hazards when disturbing painted surfaces,” said Dr. Hegena.

He said that the draft regulation passed through many processes and it is at its final stage to be submitted to the Ethiopian Council of Ministers for approval as a mandatory national regulation under the Ethiopian Environmental Pollution Control Proclamation.

Most highly industrial countries adopted laws or regulations to control the lead content of decorative paints—the paints used on the interiors and exteriors of homes, schools, and other child-occupied facilities—beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. The strictest regulatory limit of 90 parts per million (ppm) total lead content is established in many countries, including Canada, India, Nepal, the Philippines, and the USA.

Continuous awareness raising campaigns resulted in the success of bringing the paint industry on board in the formulation of a national regulation that would limit lead in paint. The success story of the campaign is today manifested by the absence of leaded fuel in all petrol stations. Though some fuel stations do not mark their pumps with the word ‘Unleaded,’ it is understandable that no oil dealer today sells fuel (diesel and petrol) that contains lead.

The report also provided the public with a sigh of relief as it was also detected that some paints contained lead concentrations below the proposed regulatory limit of 90ppm, indicating that the technology to produce paints without lead ingredients was available in the country.

Key recommendations made in the report include:

- **Government:** For the Ethiopian Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MEFC) to immediately finalize and implement the draft a regulation that will ban the manufacture, import, export, distribution, sale and use of lead paints.
- **Industry:** Stop the use of lead-based pigments, driers, and substances in paint formulations, and shift to non-hazardous alternatives.
- **Consumers:** Purchase and use paints with no added lead in places frequently used by children such as homes, schools, day care centers, parks and playgrounds, and demand full disclosure of a paint product’s content.

About IPEN

IPEN is a global non-government organization (NGO) with participating organizations in more than 100 countries working for a toxics free future. It has conducted studies of lead in paint in more than 50 countries and is a member of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint Advisory Group. For information, visit www.ipen.org.

About PAN-Ethiopia

Pesticide Action Nexus Association (PAN-Ethiopia) works on environment and development issues to contribute to the eradication of poverty in Ethiopia and beyond through raising awareness among the public in order to prevent the negative public health and environmental impacts of pesticides and other hazardous chemicals. Its main purpose is to support policies and strategies that enhance and promote the implementation of a safe and sustainable environment for all people and other living things, keeping them protected from harm posed by hazardous chemicals by building close collaboration among government and non-governmental organizations, civil society interest groups, urban and rural communities, nationally and internationally. PAN-Ethiopia coordinates the IPEN global E-products working

group. PAN-Ethiopia also has a Special Consultative Status with Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations since July 2012.