

New Study Finds Lead Paint Still Common on the Market in CÔTE D'IVOIRE
Consumers can't buy safe products because labels lack information about lead levels

(Abidjan) A new study on lead in decorative paints in Côte d'Ivoire released today by the NGO JEUNES VOLONTAIRES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT COTE D'IVOIRE finds that more than half of the paints analyzed still contain lead levels above 90 parts per million, a level endorsed by more than 20 African government representatives as the preferred legal limit, despite a slight reduction since a similar study was released in 2015. Moreover, a majority of the 21 brands in the new study sold one or more paints containing dangerously high levels of lead above 10,000 ppm. Even when paint brands offered paint with safe levels of lead, consumers have no way of knowing it because none of the 51 paint cans analyzed in the study carried information about lead content on the label. This study is one of the four studies being released in four different African countries on lead in paint within the framework of the Lead Paint Elimination Project in Africa.

"The health impacts of lead exposure on young children's brains are lifelong, irreversible and untreatable," said Dominique Bally KPOKRO, Project Manager at JVE- Cote d'Ivoire. "We must reduce this critical source of lead exposure to young children. A national, mandatory lead standard and regulatory framework for the manufacture, import, export, sale and use of lead paints and products coated with paint is needed to ensure the health and future potential of our children."

"Due to the alarming situation caused by high levels of lead paint sold on the domestic market, Environmental authorities included the elimination of lead paint as national priority in the national strategy for chemicals management and registered lead paint as hazardous products to be banned in the draft framework law on chemicals management in Côte d'Ivoire to be approved nearly by the government council before its final adoption by the Parliament", said Dr. SAY Martial, SAICM Focal Point Côte d'Ivoire.

Also, Dr. Claude KOFFI, Legal Department Director, at the Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene, argued that "lead poisoning had become a public health problem in Côte d'Ivoire. Thus, this study realized by JVE Côte d'Ivoire will speed the decisional process regard to lead paint regulation by health authorities".

In 2017 Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement Côte d'Ivoire purchased 51 cans of solvent-based decorative and anticorrosive paints from various stores in different districts in Abidjan. The paints were from 21 brands, including locally produced paint by 6 manufacturers of which some are exported to other West -African Countries. All paints were analyzed by an accredited laboratory in the United States of America (USA) for their total lead content based on the dry weight of the paint. Key findings include:

- **Overall Results:** Most of the paints analyzed contained lead levels above 90 ppm, the regulatory standard in many countries and a limit endorsed by more than 20 African government representatives as the preferred legal limit (63% of decorative paints; 63% of anticorrosive paints)
- **Results by Brand:** One or more paints from 9 of the 13 brands of ***decorative paints*** sampled had lead content above 90 ppm; the paints from 5 of the 8 brands of ***anticorrosive paints*** had lead content above a 90 ppm limit.
- **Extremely High Lead Levels:** One or more paints from 12 brands (57% of brands) had lead concentrations higher than 10,000 ppm
- **Paint Colors:** Bright colors had the highest lead content. The highest lead content was found in Yellow paints, follow by red paints.
- **Lead Information on Labels:** A part from the "Kimiline Antirouille" anticorrosive red paint, no paint can label from any brand provided information about the lead content of the paint or lead paint hazards.

The World Health Organization (WHO) calls lead paint "a major flashpoint" for children's potential lead poisoning and says that "since the phase-out of leaded petrol, lead paint is one of the largest sources of exposure to lead in children." Children are exposed to lead, when painted surfaces deteriorate over time and contaminate household dust and soils. Children, ages 0-6, engaging in normal hand-to-mouth behaviors are most at risk of damage to their intelligence and mental development from exposure to lead dust and soil.

JVE - CI began studying the lead content of paints and raising awareness of the hazards of lead paint in 2013, when its first paint analysis showed that the majority of paint analyzed, even from major manufacturers, had high lead

content. In 2015, a second study showed again that many decorative paints on the market in Cote d'Ivoire contain high levels of lead, but some improvements have been seen in lead levels of the anticorrosive decorative paints included in both this and the 2015 study.

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. Côte d'Ivoire does not currently have a specific policy or regulation for the content of lead in enamel decorative paints.

Key recommendations made in the report include:

For the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to immediately approve the draft framework law on chemicals management and advocate for its adoption by the parliament since this law bans the manufacture, import, export, distribution, sale and use of paints that contain total lead concentrations exceeding 90 ppm, the most restrictive standard in the world. The Ministries in charge of Trade and Industry should also require paint companies to display sufficient information indicating harmful content on paint can labels such as solvents and provide a warning on possible lead dust hazards when disturbing painted surfaces.

For paint companies that still produce lead paints to expeditiously stop the use of leaded paint ingredients in paint formulations. Paint companies that have shifted to non-lead paint production should get their products certified through independent, third party verification procedures to increase the customer's ability to choose paints with no added lead.

For paint consumers to demand paints with no added lead from paint manufacturers and retailers, as well as full disclosure of a paint product's content. Household and institutional consumers should ask for, consciously buy, and apply only paints with no added lead in places frequently used by children such as homes, schools, day care centers, parks and playgrounds.

For public health groups, consumer organizations and other concerned entities to support the elimination of lead paint, and conduct activities to inform the public and protect children from lead exposure through lead paint, lead in dust and soil, and other sources of lead.

For all stakeholders to come together and unite in promoting a strong policy that will eliminate lead paint in Côte d'Ivoire.

The paint study released today was conducted as a part the African Lead Paint Elimination Project, which works with government, the paint industry and the public to raise awareness of the dangers associated with high lead levels in paint. The African Lead Paint Elimination Project is being carried out in four countries (Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia and Tanzania) with funding from the Global Environment Facility. United Nations Environment is the Implementing Agency and IPEN is the Executing Agency for this project. While this study was undertaken with the assistance of the Global Environment Facility and UN Environment, responsibility for the content lies entirely with IPEN and AGENDA. The GEF and UN Environment do not necessarily share the expressed views and interpretations. IPEN is a network of 500 NGOs in more than 100 countries working for a toxics free future and is a member of the Advisory Committee for the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint, an activity of UNEP and WHO. The Côte d'Ivoire NGO, JEUNES VOLONTAIRES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT, is responsible for Lead Paint Elimination Project activities in Côte d'Ivoire.

END

For More information

Organisation Name: Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement Côte d'Ivoire

Project Manager: Dominique Bally KPOKRO

Address: 01 BP 1660 Abidjan 01

Telephone(s): (+225) 08 10 52 67 / 20 01 20 92

Email: jve.ivoire@yahoo.fr

Skype: ballynicus