



For Immediate Release: May 23, 2016

For More information:

Sara Brosché, IPEN, +46 704035816, sarabrosche@ipen.org

Teresa Attina, NYU School of Medicine, +646-5012853, Teresa.attina@nyumc.org

Valerie Denney, IPEN, +1 312-320-2162, vdenney@ipen.org

**Lead Exposure Costs Developing Nations \$977 Billion Each Year
Annual Worldwide Lead Exposure Costs are 7 Times the Amount Low- and Middle-Income Countries
Receive in Development Assistance**

(Nairobi, Kenya) Worldwide, the annual costs of lead exposure are \$977 billion international dollars, with developing countries bearing the great majority of costs, according to research and a new interactive map released today that shows country-by-country costs. Overall, the costs of lead exposure are 7 times the amount of funding provided to developing countries in development aid in 2014.ⁱ

Economic Costs of Childhood Lead Exposure in Low-and Middle-Income Countries was developed by New York University School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics (NYU) and released today at the 2nd United Nations Environment Assembly meeting held in Nairobi, Kenya. The website can be accessed at: <http://nyulmc.org/pediatricleadexposure>. The map was created to help governments see the costs of lead exposure in their own countries; compare those costs with other countries; and compare costs with the amount of development assistance their country receives.

The website provides country-by-country data. Annual costs of lead exposure by region include:

- \$134.7 billion in Africa (4.03% of gross domestic product (GDP) in that region),
- \$142.3 billion in Latin America and the Caribbean (2.04% of GDP in that region), and
- \$699.9 billion in Asia (1.88% of GDP in that region).

“Children’s developing brains are permanently harmed by exposure to lead. One key impact is reduction in IQ score, which is correlated with decreases in lifetime earning potential. Population-wide reductions in IQ means greater social costs, reduced intellectual capital, and adverse economic impact,” said Sara Brosché, Manager for IPEN’s Global Lead Paint Elimination Campaign.

According to the World Health Organization, “There is no known safe blood lead concentration.”ⁱⁱ When a young child is exposed to lead, the harm to her or his nervous system makes it more likely that the child will have difficulties in school and engage in impulsive and violent behavior. Lead exposure in young children is also linked to increased rates of hyperactivity, inattentiveness, failure to graduate from high school, conduct disorder, juvenile delinquency, drug use, and incarceration.

According to the NYU researchers: “One of the most important things we can do to decrease children's exposure to lead in LMICs (low- and middle-income countries) is to ensure lead is no longer used in household paint and other paints to which children may be exposed (such as paints on playground equipment).”ⁱⁱⁱ

To prepare the interactive map, researchers assessed the neurodevelopmental impacts of lead, assessed as decrements (or reductions) in intelligence quotient (IQ) points caused by lead and how those reductions translated into decreases in lifetime earning potential, assessed as lost lifetime economic productivity (LEP) in each country examined.

IPEN is a network of non-governmental organizations working in more than 100 countries to reduce and eliminate the harm to human health and the environment from toxic chemicals and heavy metals. [IPEN](#) is a member of the Advisory Group of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint ([GAELP](#)), which seeks the elimination of lead in paint by 2020.

-end-

ⁱ“Net official development assistance (ODA) from DAC members totalled USD 135.2 billion, level with a record USD 135.1 billion in 2013, though marking a 0.5% decline in real terms” <http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/development-aid-stable-in-2014-but-flows-to-poorest-countries-still-falling.htm>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs379/en/>

ⁱⁱⁱ nyulmc.org/pediatricleadexposure