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New study finds slight reduction of lead level in enamel decorative paints, however some paints still contain high lead levels

Paint can labels still lack information on lead content making it difficult for consumers to choose non-lead paint on the market

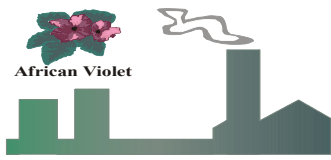
(Dar es Salam, Tanzania) AGENDA for Environment and Responsible Development (AGENDA) is today releasing a new study on lead in 46 solvent-based paints for home use in Tanzania. The study compares the results with those of a similar study carried out in 2015 and shows a slight improvement, although some paints still contain very high levels of lead. This study released is one of the four studies that have being released in four different African countries on lead in paint within the framework of the Lead Paint Elimination Project in Africa.

According to this new study, 46 percent of the analyzed paints (21 of the 46 paints) contained total lead levels above 90 parts per million (ppm) as compared to 64 percent in a similar study in 2015. This is also the regulatory limit endorsed by more than 20 African government representatives as the preferred legal limit. It is the limit in many countries such as India and the United States.

However, one or more of the paints sold, 7 out of 12 brands in the study (58 percent of paint brands) contained dangerously high lead concentrations above 10,000 ppm. These brands represented both paints manufactured in Tanzania as well as imported paints. The highest lead concentration detected was 84,000 ppm in one yellow and one green paint, both imported. Moreover, despite that paints with safe levels of lead are available on the market, consumers have no way of discerning which since none of the paint cans in the study carried information about lead content on the label. The Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) is in a process for approving the National Standard on Lead in Paint which is expected to solve this problem once completed and enforced.

“The health impacts of lead exposure on young children’s brains are lifelong, irreversible and untreatable,” said Prof. Jamidu Katima, Chairman of AGENDA. “We must reduce this critical source of lead exposure to young children. TBS is urged to complete and start enforcing the national, mandatory lead standard and regulatory framework for the manufacture, import, export, sale and use of lead paints and products coated with enamel decorative paint. That is crucial in order to protect the health of our children.”

In 2017, AGENDA purchased a total of 46 cans of solvent-based, enamel decorative paints from stores in Arusha, Dar es Salaam and Mwanza. The paints were from 12 brands, both locally manufactured and imported. All samples from Tanzania and other three countries were analyzed by an accredited laboratory in the United States of



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America (USA) for their total lead content based on the dry weight of the paint. Key findings include:

- Less than half of the paints analyzed (21 out of 46 paints) contained lead levels above 90 ppm and could not be sold in most highly industrialized countries.
- Ten out of 46 (22 percent) contained exceedingly high lead levels, above 10,000 ppm.
- Yellow and red paints contained the highest levels of lead, similar as in the 2015 study.
- The highest lead concentration detected was 84,000 ppm as compared to 99,000 ppm in 2015.
- No paint can from any brand provided the consumer with 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.

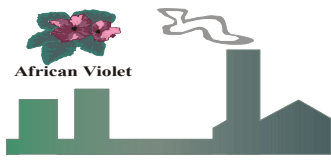
To address the problem of lead in paint, AGENDA and IPEN propose the following:

Government and Government Agencies

The study demonstrates that the technology to produce non-lead paint exists in Tanzania since 25 out of 46 paints (54 percent of paints), including those produced in Tanzania contained lead concentrations below 90 ppm. Therefore, the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) should immediately enforce a 90-ppm total lead paint standard for all enamel decorative paints manufactured, imported, exported, distributed, sold and used in Tanzania. TBS and the Government Chemist Laboratory Agency (GCLA) should also require paint companies to display sufficient information indicating harmful content on paint can labels such as lead and solvents. They should also increase public awareness campaigns on the health effects of lead, as well as essential measures to prevent lead exposure.

Paint Industry

Some paint companies still produce lead paints, they should expeditiously stop the use of leaded paint ingredients in paint formulations. Lead free ingredients are available and have been used by some manufacturers in Tanzania—those whose paints contain lead below 90 ppm. There is no reason why manufacturers should continue producing lead paints. They should be responsible in protecting human health and the environment by avoiding environmental pollution at all stages as indicated in the Environmental



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Management Act of 2004, Part II, Section 4. Similar action should be considered by importers and distributors of paints and other coatings.

Paint Consumers (Individuals, Households and Institutions)

Paint consumers should demand paints with no added lead from paint manufacturers and retailers, as well as full disclosure of a paint product's content. They 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. Institutions should review their procurement policies to include a requirement to use only lead-free paints.

Organizations and Professional Groups

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

All Stakeholders

All stakeholders should come together and unite in promoting a strong policy that will eliminate lead paint in Tanzania, a policy that will influence changes in procurement procedures at all levels.

Notes to the Editor

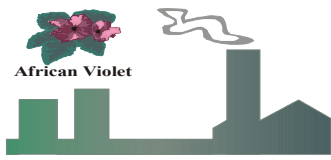
This paint study released today is the last under the Lead Paint Elimination Project in Africa, which works with government, the paint industry and the public to raise awareness of the dangers associated with high lead levels in paint. The project was implemented in four countries (Tanzania, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Ivory Coast) with funding from the Global Environment Facility. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – UN Environment is the Implementing Agency and IPEN is the Executing Agency for this project. AGENDA, the Tanzanian NGO, is responsible for Lead Paint Elimination Project activities in Tanzania. 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.

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For More information

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