



SRADev Nigeria 1st NATIONAL PRESS CONFERENCE

“Children’s Health First: Eliminate Lead Paint”

Venue: Lagos Airport Hotel, Ikeja @ 10.00 prompt

Protocols,

Preamble

I am pleased to welcome you all, gentlemen and ladies of the media, to this special event of SRADev Nigeria’s 1st National Media Conference on **Global Lead in Paint Report Launch and Campaign to Eliminate Lead from Paint** under the auspices of the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN). The event is special and remarkable because the media/journalists are important in the institutional arrangement for the implementation of SAICM in Nigeria.

In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) took two vital decisions to protect children's health from exposure to lead. The first called for the phase out of lead in gasoline, and the second, the phase out of lead in lead-based paints and in other sources of human exposure.

The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) as you know is a global policy and strategy adopted by over 100 governments and stakeholders in 2006 to change how chemicals are produced and used in order to minimize harmful effects on public health and the environment. In 2008, the Second International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM2) endorsed the proposal by NGOs (IPEN) for Global phase-out of Lead through a Global partnership to eliminate lead from Paint.

“In the relevant section of the omnibus decision on emerging issues (SAICM/ICCM.2/CRP.26), the ICCM endorses a global partnership to promote the phasing out of lead in paints and invites all stakeholders to become partnership members. The Conference requests the partnership to adopt its terms of reference using the draft terms of reference presented to ICCM2 as their basis, and to develop a business plan with milestones for progress in relation to: awareness raising on the toxicity of lead and on alternatives, guidance and assistance to identify potential lead exposure, assistance to industry, prevention programmes to reduce exposure, and promotion of national regulatory efforts”.

Throughout the month December 2009, NGOs are carrying out several activities globally to launch its pioneering global study “The Lead in New Decorative Household Paints: A Global Study,” conducted in 10 developing countries including Nigeria and accompanying campaign to eliminate Lead in paint and promote safer alternatives titled “*Children’s Health First: Eliminate Lead Paint*” global campaign.

In Nigeria, NGOs are playing a role in raising awareness and supporting prevention strategies. To address this lead threat, **Sustainable Research and Action for Environmental Development - SRADev Nigeria** (*IPEN focal point on heavy metals in Nigeria*) in collaboration with **Friends of the Environment** on behalf of IPEN and Toxics Link has put together this media event. This event is aimed at developing media understanding on the challenges associated with lead in products with a view to provide informed and accurate information to the public by unveiling its global study towards a sustainable strategic national campaign to eliminate lead in paint. It is important that all journalists at this event see themselves as very important stakeholders with NGOs and as such the need to fully understand the danger Chemicals pose to the human health and environment.

Gentlemen of the press, it is a known fact that you play an important role both in development and governance of any nation and the case of Nigeria is not farfetched. We all need to empower industrialists, communities by disseminating information that educates, facilitates and promotes changes in the attitude and behaviours that allow people to positively contribute to nation’s building.

The Nigerian Paints Industry

The Nigerian paint industry is not highly regulated. There are over **1000** companies producing paint in the country. The bigger ones which are less than 10% of the total numbers of companies producing paint controls about 50% of the market while the remaining market share are divided among the rest. About 40 million litres of paints are produced and used in the country annually (PMA). In Nigeria, decorative paints have **60%** of the market share, Industrial has **20%**, Refinishing **10%**, Wood finishing and Automotive have **5%** each of the market share.

Paint manufacturers have blamed the rising cost of production in the industry partly on high prices of imported raw materials which they say constitute 70 percent of their production inputs. Importantly also, the uncontrolled level of product adulteration, faking, and merchandising of paints with high nuisance value has eroded the market share and business turnover. Total investment in the industry is about **N15 billion** with an installed capacity in excess of 150 million liters of assorted paints per annum with about 10,000 people presently employed in the industry. In 2008, 40 million litres was estimated to have been produced and utilized in the country.

The paint industry standards are presently regulated by the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) which has only been able to set standards for household products. SON conducts

inspection of local paints factories just twice a year with little or no consideration for lead content in paint while the status of input on imported brands is not known. **Only about 15 paint companies in Nigeria have met SON NIS products standard, four have been ISO 9000 certified, while others are in the process of certification.**

Talking about imported paints, it is interesting to know how government measures have helped in further crippling of paint manufacturing sector in the recent past. For instance, the import duty on finished paints was 10% while the duty on raw material input was about 35%. Under this unfavourable import tariff regime, it is impossible for locally manufactured paints to effectively compete against the imported brands.

Management of Chemicals (heavy metals) in Nigeria

Chemicals are essential requirements of modern society that need to be managed properly in order to achieve a sustainable level of agricultural and industrial development, and a high level of environmental and human health protection. Despite the ban on certain categories of chemicals, these substances are still common in the markets, utilized in various locations in the society and are considered potential threats to the environment and health of the population.

With the strong and active environmental awareness and pressure groups in industrialized countries, the hazardous waste from industrial processes in these countries were awaiting disposal elsewhere. The toxic chemicals (POPs and some heavy metals) which have been banned in these countries are finding their way illegally into developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. Nigeria, like other developing countries, is facing continuous threats of hazardous wastes, toxic chemicals, in spite of the stringent laws enacted after Nigeria's first experience of hazardous wastes dumping in 1988. The reasons advanced for this trend in Nigeria are: the down turn in the economy, which is compelling industrialists to seek for cheap secondary raw materials and goods; poor awareness of existing enforcement agencies and bottle necks in the enforcement of the regulations; and porous borders.

In Nigeria, there are a number of laws that have some relevance to heavy metals. Many of these laws however do not address the dangers posed to human and the environment by the chemicals in question. Where they may be relevant, the institutions that deal with them do not have the resources to monitor or research into their effects on health and the environment. Besides, as at now in the country, the legal and regulatory requirement for heavy metals regulation in products/management is still diffused and not specific. There is utter lack of harmonisation of the legislations among governmental agencies such as NESREA, SON, NAFDAC, Customs, Federal Ministry of Environment etc.

Despite the functioning of a legal framework by the mandate of NESREA coupled with stringent penalties, the prevailing situation indicates the lowest level of compliance by most industry, importers/retailers.

The State of the Lead in Paint study

Lead is a soft gray metal that improves the protective power of paint. Throughout the 19th century and up until about 1950, Lead was added to most paint to improve its covering power and durability. Lead is used during the production stage as drying agent for preservation of paints. Unfortunately, lead is a powerful poison. Both inside and outside the home, deteriorated lead-paint mixes with household dust and soil. Children may become lead poisoned by: Putting their hands or other lead-contaminated objects into their mouths, eating paint chips found in homes with peeling or flaking lead-based paint, Kids eat peeling paint; it tastes like lemon drops or playing in lead-contaminated soil. Lead is more dangerous to children because: Children's growing bodies absorb more lead and Children's brains and nervous systems are more sensitive to the damaging effects of lead.

At low levels, it reduces a person's intelligence, makes it difficult to concentrate or pay attention, and harms hearing. These effects are permanent. Naturally, in children, these effects reduce performance in school. At higher levels, lead has many additional severe effects including kidney disease, blindness, seizures, and death.

Unfortunately, even though there is wide recognition of this problem, which led to a number of bans of lead in paint across North America and Western Europe over the past 70 years, today paints are sold with added lead in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. This is an avoidable problem, and one with well known and tested safer commercial substitutes. But in Nigeria inadequate attention is given to issues of lead in paints.

Nigeria has no standard or limit for lead in paints, this leaves the general public at the mercy of paints manufacturers. However, there are alternatives to lead as drying agent in paint production, and this is recognized even by the Paint Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (PMA). These include *zirconium, metallic zinc, cobalt, metallic calcium* among others. Cleaner alternatives like *Titanium dioxide* have been known to be in use.

To investigate the problem globally, IPEN partnered with the Indian NGO Toxics Link in 2009 to test paint for lead in local markets in countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. The results confirmed that lead in paint is still being produced and sold, exposing children and communities to this toxic substance.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, I crave your indulgence to acquaint you with the details of the study in a brief PowerPoint presentation.

OUR CONCERNS:

Against the foregoing therefore, the NGOs are deeply concern about the following:

- ✓ The continuous use of lead in paint irrespective of safer alternatives known to be globally available.
- ✓ The lack of regulatory standard or legal limits for lead in paint in Nigeria. *In the absence of any mandatory standard for lead in paints, industries, big and small, continue to use lead without regard for its environmental and health impacts.*
- ✓ The very high levels of lead found in paint popular brands in excess of 100% paints with levels greater than 600ppm. This is corroborated in a study by *Adebamowo et al* in Ibadan, which showed in 2007 that 96% were higher than recommended limits.
- ✓ The fact that Nigeria paint samples were found to contain the highest lead in paint level. *Alarmed by the highest lead levels in Nigeria paint compared to other developing countries - Sri Lanka, Philippines, Thailand, Tanzania, South Africa, Senegal, Belarus, Mexico, Brazil.*
- ✓ The general public are uninformed and uneducated about the danger inherent in lead in products usage. Hence, there is inadequate public enlightenment on handling, applications, procurement and management of heavy metals in industrial use.
- ✓ Problems among the various federal government ministries sharing responsibilities for the control and management of chemicals. The jurisdictional conflict and lack of coordination among the different ministries in charge of chemical management and across different levels of government have adversely affected the efficient management of chemicals in Nigeria.

WAY FORWARD

Ladies and Gentlemen of the press,

We wish to therefore seize this opportunity to urgently call for immediate solution towards addressing all the aforementioned concerns for the safety of Nigerian children who are most vulnerable.

1. Immediate need to enact mandatory national regulations for limiting lead concentrations in paints. Urgent effort needs to be put in place to eliminate lead in paint as was achieved in petrol phase out.
2. Complete ban and eradication of continued sale of leaded paints. Put in place regulatory mechanism towards adulterated, unregistered, unlabelled, repackaged and uncertified paint products. This is very important in this era of national re-branding.
3. Urgently put in place plans to encapsulate paint with lead in paint (i.e. focus on containment of existing paint with lead on structures).
4. Government should set example by prohibiting procurement (purchasing) of paint products with lead (thus the government does not buy paint with lead in paint, noting public structures the government paints (i.e. schools, hospitals, etc.).

5. A mass campaign should be launched to educate and make people aware (especially painters, architects, and the paint industry) of the hazards associated with lead. Such a campaign should comprise programmes for an aggressive implementation of preventive measures. The paint industry should include a lead-free paint symbol on products, as well as guidelines for use including for home decorative or industrial and commercial.

In Conclusion:

Gentlemen of the media, today's event therefore marks a giant step in our resolve to move forward chemical management issues in Nigeria. This initiative signifies an eloquent testimony of our commitment to comply with the provisions of the Stockholm Convention. It also reflects our deep desire to provide a healthy environment that ensures the economic and social well being of the Nigeria populace,

Once more, I welcome you all the invited seasoned journalists/media reporters to take opportunity of this event to disseminate widely the dangers of not only lead in paint but generally in other products.

I thank you for your attention and may God bless you.

Ane Leslie Adogame

Executive Director

SRADev Nigeria