



Statement for the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

October 27, 2021

In 2002, the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development called for the phase-out of lead-based paints.

- In 2009, the International Conference on Chemicals Management asked UNEP and WHO to establish a global partnership to promote phasing out lead in paint.
- The United Nations Environmental Assembly and the World Health Assembly both have called upon governments to establish national controls on lead in paints.

In this same time period, we have achieved the global phase-out of leaded automobile fuels—a goal announced in 2002 at the same Johannesburg World Summit that called for the global phase-out of lead paints.

Why, after nearly 20 years, have we not eliminated lead paint globally?

It is not because the health impact of leaded paint is not known.

- Authoritative international bodies and medical professionals have called upon all governments to adopt national lead paint controls.
- It is widely known that:
 - ✓ Exposure to lead from lead paints is harmful to children’s health and reduces their mental capabilities.
 - ✓ Alternatives to lead paint are available and affordable.

And it is also not because the barriers to enacting lead paint regulation are insurmountable.

IPEN remains fully committed to the goal of total lead paint elimination in all countries, and we still believe this can be achieved in the not-too-distant future. We call upon governments, UN agencies, global civil society, and the international paint industry to continue and accelerate our joint efforts to achieve this goal—and not to give it up.



Real Progress Has Been Made

IPEN has worked successfully with civil society organizations since 2007 in more than 50 countries to promote national lead paint regulatory controls and is currently supporting ongoing, civil society-based efforts in more than 30 countries. IPEN's work and the work of others in the international community has had real results:

New/strengthened regulations adopted in more than 30 new countries and over 20 countries currently engaged in finalizing lead paint controls.

The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint (GAELP) has become effective, key actor promoting and coordinating global lead paint elimination efforts. The Model Law and Guidance for Regulating Lead Paint¹, published by UN Environment, in cooperation with GAELP partners, includes a strict limit for total lead content of all types of paint and is increasingly used by many of the countries that have or are in the process of adopting lead paint regulations.

The paint industry supports the phase out of lead paint.

The World Coatings Council formally recommends the adoption of lead-use restrictions for countries that are not currently regulating the use of lead in paint and supports the "Model Law" as a starting point for national stakeholder discussions. Some of the world's largest transnational paint companies no longer produce or sell any lead paints in any country and numerous companies have voluntarily stopped producing and selling lead paints in countries that lack legal regulatory controls.

Serious Challenges Prevent the Global Elimination of Lead Paint

Lead industrial paint is still produced and used.

Many paint manufacturers, including some of the world's largest transnational paint companies, continue to produce and sell lead paints which they classify as "industrial paints". These paints frequently contain extremely high lead concentrations (up to 30%) but are still sold for consumer use² and found on metal playground equipment, and on household and school metal fences, windows, and doors³. Studies indicate that lead paints used for cars, road markings, ships, bridges, and steel structures are a significant source of environmental contamination⁴. While many newer regulations set strict limits on lead in all types of paint, in many countries these laws control only those lead paints that are produced for architectural (decorative) uses, excluding so called, "industrial paints."

¹ <https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/model-law-and-guidance-regulating-lead-paint>

² <https://ipen.org/documents/lead-solvent-based-industrial-paints-sold-philippines>

³ <https://ipen.org/news/children%E2%80%99s-playgrounds-around-world-pose-lead-paint-danger>

⁴ <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2015.00144/full>



Trade of lead paint and lead compounds used in paint is still widespread

Some countries with lead paint laws have been unable to stop all lead paint imports and stop all domestic manufacture of lead paints. Prohibited lead paints, therefore, continue to be sold and used in these countries, despite their having lead paint laws.

While only modest resources are needed, sufficient funding for lead paint elimination programs is still not available

Well-supported, civil society-based national lead paint efforts have been very effective in persuading national governments and paint industry stakeholders to adopt national lead paint laws. Such efforts are inexpensive, especially when compared to the public health benefits they can achieve. But in most countries with no lead paint controls, the funds needed to support adequate civil society efforts have not been available. Unfortunately, sustained lead paint elimination programs, activities, and campaigns have only been supported by major donors in approximately a dozen countries.

The effort to eliminate lead paint must be finished

There is currently unprecedented global momentum for eliminating lead paint thanks to targeted efforts over the past ten years as well as ongoing funding from the Global Environment Facility for the UNEP-led GEF SAICM project. While the 2020 target was not met, lead paint can be eliminated by 2030 if the current efforts continue, and additional efforts described below are implemented. However, the GEF SAICM project ends in mid-2022 and the future is uncertain. There is a risk that the effort to eliminate lead paint will be compounded with other sources of lead exposure that requires very different type of solutions. If so, global elimination of lead paint by 2030 is unlikely.

How IPEN Will Work for Global Lead Paint Elimination

IPEN will continue to support civil society organizations in every region working for national lead paint regulation.

IPEN has developed and proven a successful and cost-effective country strategy for lead paint elimination, and will continue to promote and support country-by-country, civil society-based campaigns for the adoption of national lead paint control regulations. We will do this as best we can, despite having, so far, been only able to mobilize limited resources for our network's lead paint efforts.

IPEN will work to ban lead industrial paints.

Lead use in so-called industrial paint must be prohibited. IPEN will work with national partners to encourage countries that have not yet adopted lead paint controls, to adopt regulations that control all lead paints, and to encourage countries with limited lead paint controls to expand their controls to cover all lead paints.

IPEN will seek a Rotterdam listing to control trade of lead compounds.

Country-by-country efforts by themselves will not be sufficient to eliminate lead paint globally, or even nationally where the enforcement capacity is low. IPEN will therefore



launch an international campaign to support a Rotterdam Convention listing of the lead pigments commonly use as ingredients in paints. This will give countries the right, under the Convention's Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure to deny consent to imports of the listed lead pigments or paints that contain the listed lead pigments.