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High Levels of Lead Paint Found in majority of the paints sold in Pakistan.

Lead Exposure Can Cause Permanent Brain Damage in Children

Islamabad, 31st October, 2017: More than 60 percent of paints analyzed in a new study on total lead in solvent-based decorative paints contained high lead levels. 14 out of 58 paints from 21 brands analyzed contained exceedingly high lead levels, and 35 out of 58 paint can labels failed to carry any consumer information about lead content. These findings are part of a new report released today by Sustainable Development Policy Institute and IPEN.

“It is our children who are most affected by exposure to lead. The health impacts on their brains are lifelong, irreversible and untreatable,” said Dr. Imran Khalid, Research Fellow SDPI. “We can no longer be oblivious to the environmental threats facing our communities. It is high time that we started implementing the laws and regulations that cater to these threats.”

“Continued use of lead paint is a primary source of childhood lead exposure,” said Dr. Sara Brosché, IPEN’s Global Lead Paint Elimination Campaign Manager. “Children – especially those under 6 years of age – ingest or inhale lead through exposure to dust or soil contaminated with lead-based paint and normal hand-to-mouth behavior, or when they chew on toys, household furniture or other articles painted with lead paint. Governments should set mandatory limits on lead paint, but paint companies should not wait for regulation; they can and should act now.”

SDPI released “Lead in Solvent- Based Paints for Home Use in Pakistan”, as a part of its worldwide activities during International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action (ILPPWA), Oct 22 -28, 2017. The Week of Action is co-led by UN Environment and the World Health Organization (WHO). As a part of the Week of Action, IPEN also released *Lead in Solvent-Based Paint for Home Use*, a comprehensive review of lead in paint sold around the world, which finds that a quarter of all paints analyzed in 50 out of the 54 countries studied in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe contain lead levels dangerous to children.

In a statement prepared for this year’s ILPPWA, Dr. Maria Neira, Director of the Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health for the World Health Organization (WHO), said: “Lead paint is a serious threat to the long term health of our children. Yet lead paint is still on sale in many countries and is used to decorate homes and schools. WHO calls on all countries to phase out lead paint by 2020 to protect the health of this and future generations.”

In January 2017, SDPI purchased a total of 58 cans of solvent-based, enamel decorative paints from various stores in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The paints represented 21 different brands produced by 18 manufacturers. Samples from these paints were analyzed by an accredited laboratory in Pakistan for total lead content.

Key findings from the report, “Lead in Solvent- Based Paints for Home Use in Pakistan”, include:

- 35 out of 58 (60 percent) of the solvent-based paints analyzed contained total lead concentrations above 90 parts per million (ppm); 14 paints (24 percent) contained dangerously high lead concentrations above 10,000 ppm.
- 17 out of 21 paint brands produced at least one paint with a total lead concentration above 90 ppm.
- A majority of brightly colored paints 29 out of 40 (72 percent) contained lead concentrations greater than 90 ppm. Yellow colored paints were the most hazardous with 12 out of 15 yellow colored paints (80 percent) containing total lead concentrations greater than 10,000 ppm
- The highest lead concentration detected was 110,000 ppm in a yellow colored paint.
- Only 23 out of 58 paints provided information about lead on their labels.

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. The strictest standard, 90 parts per million (ppm) total lead content in decorative paint, is common in many countries, including the Philippines, Nepal and the United States of America. Several other countries, including Singapore and Sri Lanka, have a 600 ppm total lead standard.

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.

The demand for decorative paints in Pakistan has risen, owing largely to the developments in the housing and construction industries.

Key recommendations made in the report include:

Government: **Industry:** Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) to take steps to ban manufacture, export, distribution and sale of lead paints.

Paint Industry: To stop use of ingredients and chemicals in paint formulation which are hazardous to health. The companies that produce non-lead paints should get their products certified through independent, third party to increase customers to choose paints with no added lead.

Consumers: To demand paints with no added lead from paint manufacturers as well as full disclosure of paint products content.

The paint study was undertaken as part of IPEN’s Global Lead Paint Elimination Project.

SDPI was founded in 1992, its mandate to conduct policy analysis to catalyze the transition towards sustainable and just development in Pakistan.

IPEN is an international NGO network comprised of 700 organizations in 116 countries that work to reduce and eliminate hazardous, toxic substances internationally and within their own countries.

(www.ipen.org)