



Global Alliance to
Eliminate Lead Paint

POLICY BRIEF #1



International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week: 21–27 October 2018

International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (ILPPW) raises awareness and promotes actions to address the human health effects of lead exposure, especially for children. During the week, governments, academia, industry and civil society promote efforts to prevent childhood lead poisoning, and specifically laws to eliminate lead in paint. While many countries have long-established bans on lead paint, it is still legal to sell lead paint for use in homes, schools and other buildings in more than one third of the world's countries.

Children living in low- and middle-income countries, where there are few or no governmental controls on lead, are disproportionately affected.

Last year, over 67 ILPPW events took place in 44 countries.

Health Effects of Lead Exposure

- ✓ There is no known safe level of lead exposure and even low levels may cause lifelong health problems.
- ✓ Lead is toxic and accumulates in the body, affecting practically all organ systems, including the central nervous system and brain, the reproductive system, the kidneys, the cardiovascular system, and the blood and the immune system.
- ✓ Lead is especially dangerous to children's developing brains, and potentially causes reduced intelligence quotient through reduced cognitive abilities, dyslexia, attention deficit disorder and antisocial behavioural problems.
- ✓ Infants or children who survive severe lead poisoning can be left with permanent neurological injury such as deafness and mental retardation.
- ✓ Lead exposure can also cause hypertension, renal impairment, immunotoxicity and toxicity to reproductive organs.
- ✓ These health impacts result in significant economic, social and healthcare costs.

Lead Paint is a Major Source of Lead Exposure

- ✓ Lead is added to some paints to improve colour and speed up drying.
- ✓ As lead paint ages it flakes and crumbles, creating lead-contaminated dust and soil.
- ✓ When used in homes, schools, and playgrounds, this paint can be a source of lead exposure to children, who easily ingest dust, soil or paint chips when putting their hands in their mouths.
- ✓ By producing paints without lead, potential health risks posed to children and workers can be avoided.

Lead Paint Laws to Reduce Lead Globally

- ✓ It is significantly more cost-effective to ban new sources of lead paint and promote lead-safe alternatives, than to remediate contaminated homes, schools and playgrounds.
- ✓ Laws, regulations or enforceable standards are needed in every country to stop the manufacture, import and sale of lead-containing paints.
- ✓ The manufacture of paint without added lead does not involve significant additional cost, and alternative lead-free ingredients are available. Many paint manufacturers have already stopped adding lead to their paints or have committed to do so.

Current Status of Implementation of Laws

As of 31 July 2018, 70 countries have reported that they have lead paint laws in place. Considerable action is still required to reach the 2020 goal that all countries should have such laws in place (see below). Currently,

- ▶ 31 countries ban lead additives in paint through their implementation or adoption of the EU Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) regulation
- ▶ 24 countries have 100–600 ppm lead limits
- ▶ Recently laws have been changed to adopt a limit of 90 ppm of total lead content in paint in the following countries: Cameroon, India, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Philippines.

AFRICAN REGION: Algeria, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, and United Republic of Tanzania have lead paint laws. The East African Community established a regional standard that has yet to be adopted by all its member states. Member states are working to revise the standard to be 90 ppm of total lead.

THE AMERICAS: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay have lead paint laws. Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and are in the process of revising their existing laws (to match the 90 ppm standard).

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION: Jordan, Oman and Iraq have lead paint laws.

EUROPEAN REGION: 40 countries have lead paint laws. Most use a chemical-specific regulatory limit. Three countries (Armenia, Belarus and Switzerland) use total lead limits and efforts are underway through the Eurasian Economic Union to establish a regional lead paint standard.

SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION: China, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand have lead paint laws.

WESTERN PACIFIC REGION: Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines have lead paint laws.

Looking for your country? Consult the WHO [Global Health Observatory](#) or the [Update on the Global Status of Legal Limits on Lead Paint](#) on the UN Environment website. If you would like to provide an update, please contact noleadinpaint@who.int and lead-cadmiumchemicals@un.org.

Barriers to Developing and Implementing Lead Paint Laws

- ✓ General lack of awareness on the issue of lead
- ✓ Absence of mandatory standards for lead in paints in many countries
- ✓ Lack of understanding of the health impact
- ✓ Lack of knowledge of tools available.

What Actions Governments Can Take Before, During and After the Week

Governments play a key role in this process besides industry and civil society organizations. Governments could take the following actions:

- ✓ Establish and implement protective legal limits on lead in paint, building on the Lead Paint Alliance Model Law and Guidance for Regulating Lead Paint.
- ✓ Strengthen existing regulations or legal limits on lead in paint where they exist but are not protective of public health.
- ✓ Serve as government “champions” to encourage other governments to take action, especially through regional efforts and activities.
- ✓ Take all necessary measures to ensure full compliance with legal limits.

Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint – Lead Paint Alliance

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) lead the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint (Lead Paint Alliance). The primary goal of the Lead Paint Alliance is to prevent children’s exposure to paints containing lead and to minimize occupational exposures to lead paint. The Lead Paint Alliance is working to phase-out the manufacture and sale of all paints containing lead. To achieve this global goal, countries must eliminate the use of lead additives in new paints by establishing and enforcing lead paint laws. The strategic target of the Alliance is for all countries to have effective lead paint laws in place by the year 2020.

WHO provides information about country status on lead paint laws in its [Global Health Observatory](#). A [Model Law and Guidance for Regulating Lead Paint](#) (UN Environment, November 2017) document is available to assist countries wishing to develop and implement their own laws.

The phasing out of lead paint by 2020 is one of the priority actions for governments included in the WHO [Road map to enhance health sector engagement in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards the 2020 goal and beyond](#). This road map was approved by the Seventieth World Health Assembly in decision WHA70(23). A resolution adopted by the third UN Environment Assembly encourages governments to develop, adopt, and implement legislation and support the private sector to eliminate lead paint (UNEP/EA.3/L.24).

Resources

General information on lead:

http://www.who.int/ipcs/assessment/public_health/lead/en/
<http://ipen.org/projects/eliminating-lead-paint>

Reports of the 2017 ILPPW campaign:

http://www.who.int/ipcs/lead_campaign/objectives/en/
<http://ipen.org/documents/international-lead-poisoning-week-action-2017>

WHO Global Health Observatory – countries with legally binding controls on lead paint:

http://www.who.int/gho/phe/chemical_safety/lead_paint_regulations/en/

Map of lead in paint by country:

<http://www.ipen.org/projects/eliminating-lead-paint/lead-levels-paint-around-world>

Model Law and Guidance for Regulating Lead Paint:

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

Toolkit for Establishing Laws to Eliminate Lead Paint:

<https://www.unenvironment.org/toolkit-establishing-laws-eliminate-lead-paint>

Information and background materials about the campaign week:

Arabic: http://www.who.int/ipcs/lead_campaign/ar/

Chinese: http://www.who.int/ipcs/lead_campaign/zh/

English: http://www.who.int/ipcs/lead_campaign/en

French: http://www.who.int/ipcs/lead_campaign/fr/

Russian: http://www.who.int/ipcs/lead_campaign/ru/

Spanish: http://www.who.int/ipcs/lead_campaign/es/