Report on activities during the 7th International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week 20–26 October 2019
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## Contents

Executive summary ....................................................................................................................................... v

Background ................................................................................................................................................... 1

The seventh International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week ................................................................. 2

Overview of ILPPW events ............................................................................................................................ 4

Planned use of Lead Paint Alliance campaign resources ........................................................................ 6

Activities and events that took place during ILPPW2019 ........................................................................ 8

  Using mass and social media .................................................................................................................... 8

  Examples of mass and social media activities ........................................................................................... 9

  Examples of activities engaging the public and other stakeholders ....................................................... 11

Key resources to support countries in eliminating lead paint ................................................................. 15
Executive summary

From 20 to 26 October 2019 the seventh International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of action (ILPPW) took place in countries around the world. This report describes some of the activities held during the week. As with earlier years, the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint (the Lead Paint Alliance) provided a campaign resource package and a range of multilingual campaign materials. All the materials were made available from the World Health Organization (WHO) website.

The overarching theme of the 2019 campaign was the achievement of the Lead Paint Alliance goal that all countries should have in place legally binding controls on the production, import, sale and use of lead paints.

Event organizers were invited to register and provide information about their events on a WHO webpage. Analysis showed that most respondents planned multiple activities with the most common involving mass and social media, followed by advocacy to policy makers. Of the Lead Paint Alliance campaign materials available, respondents particularly mentioned use of the infographics and the customizable flyers and posters. Most event organizers were seeking to increase public awareness about lead paint and build support for the establishment of legally binding controls to eliminate lead paint.

Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the paint industry, academia and others were active in organizing awareness raising events in 2019. A total of 89 events were registered on the WHO website, involving 82 organizations in 57 countries, particularly in Africa and Europe. NGOs held the largest number of events (55) followed by local and national governments (11). Many of these NGOs were participating organizations of the International Pollution Elimination Network (IPEN).

Activities and events included: social media communications; television and radio broadcasts; marches and demonstrations calling for action on lead paint; educational activities in schools and universities; stakeholder meetings; information stands in public areas; and appeals to legislators to take action.

Resource materials for regulating lead paint can be found at the Lead Paint Alliance website.
Background

The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint (Lead Paint Alliance) is a voluntary collaborative initiative working to focus and catalyse the efforts of a diverse range of stakeholders to achieve international goals to prevent children’s exposure to lead from paint and to minimize occupational exposures to lead paint. The goal of the Alliance is to eliminate lead paint by encouraging all countries to establish legally binding controls on the addition of lead to paint. The Alliance is a joint undertaking of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

There is no known level of lead exposure without harmful effects, and even low levels may cause lifelong health problems. Young children are particularly vulnerable. Lead paint is an important but preventable source of lead exposure for children and workers. Children are exposed when lead paint has been used in homes, schools and playgrounds because as this paint ages it flakes and crumbles contaminating household dust and soil, which is easily ingested. Workers are exposed during the manufacture, application and removal of lead paint.

Lead compounds may be added to paint as pigments or to speed drying and improve corrosion resistance. There are safer alternative compounds that can be used and there is, therefore, no need to add lead to paint. The best way of ensuring that lead compounds are no longer used in paint is for countries to put in place legally binding controls on the production, import, sale and use of lead paint. To support countries in achieving the phase-out of lead paint the Lead Paint Alliance works to raise awareness of the issue and has developed a *Model Law and Guidance for Regulating Lead Paint* in multiple languages to assist countries in developing their own legally binding controls.

One of the initiatives of the Lead Paint Alliance is the annual International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (ILPPW) campaign. The ILPPW provides an opportunity to mobilize political and social commitment for further progress towards the establishment of legally binding controls for the elimination of lead paint. This week of action is supported by partners in the Alliance – including UNEP, the UNEP North America Office, WHO, the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), and the International Pollution Elimination Network (IPEN).

In 2019 a new impetus for the campaign week was provided by the initiation of a project funded by the Strategic Approach for International Chemicals Management (SAICM), Global Environment Facility (GEF) to increase the number of countries phasing out lead paint. Selected countries have been invited to participate in the project and to commence work on establishing legally binding controls on lead paint with the technical support of the project advisors. These advisors are: UNEP, WHO, the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI), IPEN, USEPA and the World Coatings Council.

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1 Project 9771: Global best practices on emerging chemical policy issues of concern under the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)
The seventh International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

The seventh International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week took place on 20–26 October 2019. Three key messages guided the week of action:

1. Lead exposure affects human health especially that of children.
2. Lead paint is a major source of lead exposure.
3. Legally binding controls on lead paint are needed to reduce lead exposure globally.

As with earlier years, the Lead Paint Alliance provided a campaign resource package and a range of multilingual campaign materials. These included modifiable posters and flyers, web banners, infographics, questions and answers, campaign videos in English, French and Spanish, a video animation in English, French, Russian and Spanish, and a ‘ban lead paint’ graphic. A social media toolkit was also developed. The materials highlighted three key themes in relation to the elimination of lead paint:

Learn the risk by finding out about hazards of lead and, in particular, lead paint
Call for action: Raise awareness and promote action to prevent lead poisoning, particularly in children
Ban lead paint: Work with national governments and stakeholders to establish a law to eliminate lead paint, and to ensure the effective enforcement of lead paint regulations

Examples of these materials are shown below. All the materials were made available from the WHO website.

Examples of infographics.
Examples of posters and flyers

Event organizers were encouraged to adapt the text in the posters to reflect their local campaigns.

Examples of web banners

Questions and answers

This document provides answers to 15 questions about lead in general, lead paint and the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint. It is available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.
WHO developed a video animation explaining why lead, and particularly lead paint, is harmful to children and the need for countries to take action to stop this source of exposure.

Overview of ILPPW events

In 2019, once again, governments, non-governmental organizations, the paint industry, and others were active in organizing awareness-raising events. A total of 89 events were registered on the WHO website, involving 82 organizations in 57 countries. As shown in Figure 1, there were events in all WHO regions, particularly in African and European countries. Of the 57 countries where events were held, 33 (58%) were countries participating in the SAICM GEF project lead in paint component.

Figure 1. Number of countries where events were held and number of organizations holding events in 2019

Key to WHO regions: AFR – Africa; AMR – Americas; SEAR – South-East Asia; EUR – Europe; EMR – Eastern Mediterranean; WPR – Western Pacific.
There was an increase in the number of events by comparison with 2018, when a total of 82 events were registered, involving 73 organizations in 50 countries, again most of them located in Africa and Europe. Table 1 shows that, while there has been some fluctuation, there has been a generally increasing trend in the number of countries where events have been organized since the campaign week started in 2013.

Table 1. Number of ILPPW events and number of countries where events took place, 2013–2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. events</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. countries</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As in all other years, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) held the largest number of events (55 in 2019). The next largest group was local and national governments (11 in 2019). This is shown in Figure 2. Information about all of the events registered with WHO can be seen on the event page.

Figure 2. Number of events held by different types of organization

![Figure 2](image)

Key: IGO – intergovernmental organization; NGO – non-governmental organization; Local/natl gov – local or national government institution

Most of the NGOs organizing events were IPEN participating organizations and additional information can be found on the IPEN website.
Planned use of Lead Paint Alliance campaign resources

People registering events were asked to provide information about the kinds of activities they were planning, the materials that they planned to use, and the aims of their campaign. The responses are summarized below.

On the question of the type of activity being organized, most respondents planned multiple activities with the most common involving mass and social media, followed by advocacy to policy makers. The results are shown in Figure 3. Under the category of “other or single activity” respondents listed activities such as health promotion on environmental issues, webinars, roundtables, seminars, and the analytical testing of environmental media (soil, indoor/outdoor air) for lead.

**Figure 3. Responses to the question “What type of activity do you plan to organize for ILPPW 2019?”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media/social media</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy to policy makers</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community program or event</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School or student program</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry project or event</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government-sponsored program or event (national...)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other or single activity</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: In the registration form “single activity” means that the respondent planned to organize just one activity during the lead campaign.*

On the question of which Lead Paint Alliance campaign materials respondents planned to use, most planned to use a number of different materials, in particular infographics, customizable flyers and social media posts (Figure 4).
Most event organizers were seeking to increase public awareness about lead paint and build support for eliminating lead paint through the establishment of legally binding controls (Figure 5). Under the category of “other” respondents indicated that they wanted to address the problem of lead exposure more widely. Some of the expected results included: to introduce analytical methods for lead quantification in paints and coatings; reducing lead exposure from contaminated soil; eliminating the use of lead mining waste as construction material; increasing industry responsibility; and raising awareness about lead exposure from all sources (legacy paint, paint dust, emissions, water).
Activities and events that took place during ILPPW2019

A wide range of activities and events took place around the world, including: social media communications; television and radio broadcasts; marches and demonstrations calling for action on lead paint; educational activities in schools and universities; stakeholder meetings; information stands in public areas; and appeals to legislators to take action. Some examples are described below.

Using mass and social media
The campaign social media toolkit provided a set of sample social media messages for campaigners to use. The campaign hashtags were #BanLeadPaint and #ILPPW2019. WHO tracked the use of these hashtags and details are shown in Table 2. #BanLeadPaint was posted by 109 users and #ILPPW2019 was posted by 106 users. Activity was reported in a wide range of countries. Of note, #ILPPW2019 was seen by over 6 million unique users and received over 11 million impressions. A gender analysis revealed that these social media tools were more often used by women (60%) than men (40%).

Table 2. Analysis of activity involving campaign hashtags in social media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hashtag</th>
<th>Posts</th>
<th>Users</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Reach</th>
<th>Impressions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#BanLeadPaint</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, France, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, Malaysia, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, United Republic of Tanzania, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America</td>
<td>14 173</td>
<td>541 778</td>
<td>617 174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>25.09.19 – 25.10.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#ILPPW2019</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>Bangladesh, Cameroon, Canada, Colombia, Congo, Ecuador, France, Finland, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lebanon, Nepal, Nigeria, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America</td>
<td>13 731</td>
<td>6 144 863</td>
<td>11 353 248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.10.19 – 25.10.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: Engagement – someone intentionally interacting with the post. Reach – the number of unique users who saw the posts containing the tracked hashtag. Impressions – the number of times that users saw the posts containing the tracked hashtag. A single user can deliver multiple impressions.
Examples of mass and social media activities
Lead Paint Alliance partners and other organizations disseminated information and key messages about lead paint using social media, including Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

The Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, posted tweets during ILPPW to emphasize the hazards of lead paint. This included a link to the WHO video animation about lead.

The WHO home page emphasized the hazards of lead paint during the ILPPW.

The WHO Regional Office for Africa tweeted about the economic impact of lead exposure in the region as a result of reduced IQ caused by lead exposure in children. The Regional Office also disseminated a podcast explaining why lead is harmful to health and how action should be taken to limit lead exposure in the region.

In addition, the Regional Director gave a speech during the ILPPW on eliminating lead paint.
The Secretariat of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) retweeted the fact that although lead paint is a preventable source of exposure, many states have yet to prohibit the manufacture and sale of lead paint.

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) tweeted information about the way in which the European Union’s REACH Regulation (registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals) restricts the use of lead and protects children.

In the United States of America, the Environmental Protection Agency tweeted that manufacturing paints without adding lead compounds was feasible and had already been achieved in many countries worldwide.
Examples of activities engaging the public and other stakeholders

The activities described below include community programs, industry projects, government-sponsored events and advocacy to policy makers.

In **South Africa**, the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) reiterated its support for the global ban on lead in paint in the build-up to ILPPW. The SAMRC commended the National Department of Health on its efforts, currently underway, to strengthen South Africa’s lead paint regulations, and encouraged all stakeholders involved to take all possible measures to ensure full compliance.

In **Kenya**, the University of Nairobi used the ILPPW campaign to promote the implementation and enforcement of the new East Africa Regional standard for paint, which sets a limit of 90 parts per million (ppm) for the total lead content. A presentation on the “Priorities and Progress on Lead Paint Elimination in the East Africa Region” was made during the Technical Committee Workshop on Paints and Allied Products Standard held in Burundi. The Association of Industrial Chemistry Students and other interested entities participated in an awareness-raising event on lead-free paints organized by the University, with media involvement.

The Ministry of Health in **Panama** had a booth in a large shopping mall in Panama City to disseminate information to the public on different health-related topics, including lead. Staff from the Ministry of Health and from the WHO Country Office in Panama were on hand to explain the effects of lead on human health and to answer questions about the elimination of lead in paints.
The Caribbean Poison Information Network (CARPIN) in Jamaica organized a forum with national stakeholders and handed out 100 brochures on "Lead and your health". CARPIN used social media to disseminate information and a link to the WHO video message about lead to over 400 persons. Jamaica does not currently have a legally binding control on lead paint but is planning to start work on this.

In Jordan, the WHO Centre for Environmental Health Action, in collaboration with the Jordanian Ministry of Health and Jordan Environment Society, held a number of activities to raise awareness about the health effects of exposure to lead and the need to eliminate lead in paint. A national workshop was attended by around 30 delegates from different sectors and ministries. As a part of these campaigns some school facilities were painted with non-lead paint. In Jordan there is now a law that sets a limit of 90 ppm for the total lead content of domestic paints; the corresponding paint standard is currently being revised.
The National Public Health Centre in **Lithuania** published a press release on its website about ILPPW2019, describing the aim of the campaign week. As in other European Union countries, the use of lead compounds in paints intended for consumer use is restricted.

In **Georgia**, the L Sakvarelidze National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health organized a range of activities dedicated to ILPPW2019. A scientific conference was organized, with the support of UNICEF and WHO, to discuss a multisectoral action plan to reduce harmful exposure to lead in children. This will include action to eliminate lead paint.

A lecture was delivered to students at the Tbilisi State Medical University about the role of medical students in informing the population about the harmful effects of lead-containing paints. Informational brochures were distributed to the participants, including ILPPW campaign materials translated into Georgian.

Other informational meetings were organized in Telavi City Hall, at the Georgian-American School, in the Batumi Regional Medical Center and at the Union of Kindergartens. A video animation was made with the support of the State program “Environment and Health”.
In **Bangladesh**, the Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO) organized a social media campaign and a roundtable meeting. Information about the danger of lead paint and the need to ban lead paint to protect children’s health and environment was provided. ESDO emphasized the need for a legally binding control to stop manufacture, import and sale of lead-containing paints. Bangladesh already has legally binding standards on decorative paints that limit the lead content to 90 ppm.

In **Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, the Philippines** and **Thailand**, studies were carried out by IPEN participating organizations into the lead content in paint used on children’s outdoor playground equipment. These studies showed that in each country the paint used on playground equipment exceeded 90 ppm. Levels above 90 ppm were reported in 85% of playground equipment, with 39% of items having levels above 10 000 ppm. Extremely high levels, above 100 000 ppm, were reported for 13% of tested equipment. Environmental health advocates called for urgent action to prohibit the sale and use of lead paint especially for products that can expose children to lead. The report of the investigation can be found [here](#).

Thailand passed a lead paint law in 2016 and established a 100-ppm lead limit for all paint. The Philippines established legally binding controls in 2017 with a 90-ppm lead limit for architectural, decorative, household and industrial paint. Mexico is currently working on revising an existing standard to add a limit on lead in paint. Malaysia and Indonesia do not yet have legally binding controls on lead paint.
Key resources to support countries in eliminating lead paint

The Lead Paint Alliance has developed several resources to help countries to regulate and eliminate lead paint. These were promoted during ILPPW.

Model law and guidance for regulating lead paint

The Model law and guidance for regulating lead paint is a resource to help countries establish new laws, or modify existing laws, to limit the lead content in paints. It includes model legal language and detailed guidance with key elements of effective and enforceable legal requirements, based on the best approaches currently found in lead paint laws around the world.

This guidance document is available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish and can be downloaded from the Lead Paint Alliance website.

Toolkit for establishing laws to eliminate lead paint

The toolkit is a collection of materials for advocacy and technical support for the elimination of lead paint and can be found here. These materials will be updated in 2020.

Suggested steps for establishing a lead paint law

This fact sheet outlines steps that have been helpful in countries that have adopted laws. The steps are not necessarily sequential or needed in every country. The fact sheet is available in Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian from the UNEP webpage.
Update in the global status of legal limits in lead paint

This document is an annual report describing the status of lead paint laws in countries as of September 2019. It is available in English and Spanish here.

WHO Global Health Observatory: Regulations and controls on lead paint

This is an interactive map and a database providing information on the status of lead paint laws in countries. It can be used to find out what regulatory controls apply in neighbouring countries or important trading partners. It is available in English on the WHO Global Health Observatory website.

The project Chemicals Without Concern focuses on lead in paint as a SAICM Emerging Policy Issue (EPI) that presents particular environmental and health challenges for achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The project also focuses on the need for knowledge management, information exchange and strategic planning to ensure concerted and coordinated action on all EPIs, and this website is one of the tools created to advance towards such goal.
For further information about the Lead Paint Alliance please go to the Alliance website where there is a description of the Alliance and its objectives, information on how to become a partner in the Alliance, and a range of technical materials on lead paint.

Information can also be obtained by sending an email to lead-cadmiumchemicals@un.org and noleadinpaint@who.int.