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LEAD IN PAINT

UNEP TOOLS TO ADDRESS LEAD IN PAINT



WORKING TOWARDS THE GOAL OF ELIMINATING LEAD IN PAINT

Every year, [an estimated 900,000 people die](#) from lead exposure, with childhood exposure alone resulting in [economic losses of USD 977 billion annually](#). Lead exposure can also result in an increased risk of antisocial behaviour, cardiovascular disease, and reduced fertility. In children, lead can damage the brain and nervous system, slowing down growth and development. The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified lead as one of 10 chemicals of major public health concern globally. One of the most prevalent sources of lead exposure is lead in paint.

UNEP has been working on the issue of lead in paint, preparing guidance and tools to support the banning or restricting use of lead in paint, primarily through the GEF-funded project, [Global best practices on emerging chemical policy issues of concern under the Strategic Approach for International Chemicals Management](#). The project focuses on helping governments develop laws that restrict or ban the use of lead paint and helping small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) promote the phase-out of lead additives. Eliminating lead paint contributes to achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goal targets, particularly targets 3.9 (Reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals) and 12.4 (Achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and wastes throughout their life cycle and reduce their release to minimize adverse impacts on health and the environment).

KEY TOOLS AND GUIDANCE

The [Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint](#), jointly led by the UNEP and WHO and UNEP, plays an important and overarching role in tackling the issue of lead in paint. Established in 2011, the Alliance aims to catalyse efforts to prevent children's exposure to lead from paints and to minimize occupational exposures to lead paint. It also encourages industry to voluntarily stop the manufacture, import, and sale of lead paints and supports civil society groups and other stakeholders to raise awareness about the health and environmental impacts of lead paint.

UNEP tools to address the issue of lead in paint have yielded measurable outcomes and significant impact.

[Model Law and Guidance for Regulating Lead Paint](#)

- includes sample legal text for provisions aimed at advancing effective implementation and enforcement of lead paint laws
- recommends the concentration limit for lead of 90 parts per million (ppm), the lowest, most protective regulatory limit for lead paint that is technically feasible for paint manufacturers

As of 31 March 2023, 93 countries (48% of countries) have confirmed they have legally binding controls on the production, import, sale, and use of lead paints. However, more than 100 countries do not, especially low- and middle-income countries, such as in Central Asia, the Caucuses, and Eastern Europe. Even in countries where lead is banned, lead in paint still exists as a legacy chemical.



**View Map
of Legally
Binding
Controls on
Lead Paint**

List of countries with legally binding controls on lead paint (as of 31 March 2023)

Albania	Colombia	Germany	Kyrgyzstan	Morocco	Republic of Korea	Trinidad and Tobago
Algeria	Costa Rica	Greece	Lao People's Democratic Republic	Nepal	Romania	Ukraine
Argentina	Croatia	Guyana	Latvia	Netherlands	Russian Federation	United Arab Emirates
Armenia	Cuba	Hungary	Lebanon	New Zealand	Saudi Arabia	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Australia	Cyprus	Iceland	Liechtenstein	North Macedonia	Senegal	United Republic of Tanzania
Austria	Czech Republic	India	Lithuania	Norway	Serbia	United States of America
Bangladesh	Denmark	Iraq	Luxembourg	Oman	Slovakia	Uruguay
Belarus	Dominica	Ireland	Madagascar	Pakistan	Slovenia	Viet Nam
Belgium	Ecuador	Israel	Malawi	Panama	South Africa	
Brazil	Egypt	Italy	Malta	Paraguay	Spain	
Bulgaria	Estonia	Jamaica	Mexico	Peru	Sri Lanka	
Cameroon	Ethiopia	Jordan	Monaco	Philippines	Sweden	
Canada	Finland	Kazakhstan	Montenegro	Poland	Switzerland	
Chile	France	Kenya		Portugal	Thailand	
China	Georgia	Kuwait		Qatar		

Model Law and Guidance for Regulating Lead Paint [view](#)

This 2019 publication can be useful when a country is ready to take action to eliminate lead paint and have been helpful in countries that have adopted laws. Steps include:

- engaging with a range of stakeholders to gain support for a lead paint law
- developing a lead paint law, by reviewing the current regulatory framework and deciding which ministry will take the lead in developing the law
- designating the lead agency for drafting legal limitations for lead paint
- establishing a drafting coordinating group
- conducting a public review process
- promulgating the law

Process Considerations for Drafting Lead Paint Laws [view](#)

These considerations were developed in response to questions received by the Alliance on roadmaps for developing regulations on lead content in paint. They include a series of questions, indicating the kinds of information governments might consider when undertaking the drafting process and steps listed above, such as limits on lead in paint, the date the limit would become mandatory, as well as effective enforcement provisions and any penalties that would be imposed for violating the law.

Global Elimination of Lead Paint: Why and how countries should take action [view](#)

Published by WHO and UNEP, this brief reviews international efforts to eliminate lead in paint, including:

- In 2009, the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM2), nominated lead in paint as an emerging policy issue (EPI) for voluntary cooperative action for risk reduction by countries under SAICM.
- In 2011, following a request from governments at ICCM2, the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint was established, with the aim of promoting the global phase-out of lead paint through legally binding control measures.
- In 2017, the UN Environmental Assembly adopted a [resolution](#) on eliminating exposure to lead paint and promoting the environmentally sound management of lead acid batteries.

The document discusses: health, environmental, and socioeconomic impacts of lead exposure; economic benefits of eliminating lead paint; alternatives to lead-based paint; the 90 ppm limit for total lead content in paint as protective and feasible, particularly in places where a total ban is currently not practical or possible; and resources and assistance available from the Lead Paint Alliance.

PRACTICAL APPLICABILITY

A range of tools and guidance documents offer practical solutions that stakeholders, governments, and relevant organizations can easily implement.

Mainly aimed at paint manufacturers, [Lead Paint Reformulation Technical Guidelines](#) [view](#)

- contend that reformulation is entirely possible
- were developed to help address capacity constraints and technical barriers to the substitution of lead compounds in paints
- focus on the needs of SMEs for the effective and efficient reformulation of paint

The more accessible [Summary](#) [view](#)

- describes how the information in the Guidelines can be used by different stakeholders involved in phasing out lead paint
- presents the findings and recommendations of the reformulation pilot demonstrations, as well as two case studies involving paint manufacturers that have reformulated paint products, including successes and challenges faced

With technical guidance from UNEP, an Ecuadorian company produced an alternative paint with less than 56 mg/kg of lead content by substituting lead pigment with less hazardous alternatives. In addition, an SME in China participated in the pilot reformulation project, to support implementation of the SDGs and prepare for the introduction of new national lead paint standards. Such reformulations sometimes require changes in the production process.

[Lead Paint Law Compliance and Enforcement Guidance](#) [view](#)

- adaptable by governments to their unique legal systems and regulatory structures
- provides guidance for developing and implementing compliance and enforcement strategies for lead paint laws
- describes key elements of compliance and enforcement strategies, such as: drafting clear, enforceable laws; “compliance promotion,” where governments can share information to foster compliance; and compliance monitoring
- provides examples from countries that have enacted lead paint laws and of action paint manufacturers and importers can take to demonstrate compliance

[Lead in Paint Laboratory Database](#) [view](#) [and Summary Infographic](#) [view](#)

The database lists laboratories that are capable of identifying and quantifying lead in paint samples. The database of laboratories undertaking lead paint testing provides information to countries that lack national laboratory capacity and fear this would constitute an obstacle to implementing a regulatory limit on total lead content in new paint. Of the 101 laboratories that replied as of May 2021:

- 40.6% are from the Asia-Pacific region
- 33.7% are from WEOG
- 19.8% are from Latin America and the Caribbean
- 3.8% are from Eastern Europe
- 1.8% are from Africa

[Lead Paint Law Status Interactive Map](#) [view](#)

The map reflects data on the status of national lead paint laws provided by governments to UNEP and WHO, including the year the law was passed.

[Guidance on Organizing an Advocacy or Awareness-Raising Campaign on Lead Paint](#) [view](#)

- this joint WHO and UNEP publication provides guidance and tools to support advocacy or awareness-raising activities to build momentum toward the development, adoption, and implementation of lead paint laws
- builds on the experience of the Lead Paint Alliance in its annual International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week campaign, as well as draws on WHO communication guidance
- recommends that communication activities be accessible, actionable, credible, trusted, relevant, timely, and understandable
- recommends deciding on the desired outcome of campaign and audience
- recommends deciding what information to present, be it scientific or advocacy communication, and choosing communication methods based on audience, desired outcomes, and available resources
- recommends organizing an advocacy or awareness-raising campaign to create a sense of urgency

COMPREHENSIVE COVERAGE

Several resources cover a wide range of aspects related to lead in paint, including awareness raising, policy development, risk assessment, mitigation strategies, and capacity building.

[Toolkit for Establishing Laws to Control the Use of Lead in Paint](#) is a practical resource to provide information to government officials interested in establishing legal limits for lead in paint in their countries.

[International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week](#) is organized annually by WHO to raise global awareness about the health effects of exposure to lead and to highlight the efforts of countries and partners to prevent exposure to lead, particularly in children.

- Activities and events during the Week include: social media communications; television broadcasts; marches and demonstrations calling for action on lead paint; poster and banner campaigns; educational activities in schools; stakeholder meetings; information stands in public areas; and donations of lead-safe paint to schools.
- Reports are available for [2017](#), [2018](#), [2019](#), [2020](#), [2021](#), and [2022](#).

Examples of Activities During International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

In Bangladesh, the Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO) organized a social media campaign and a roundtable meeting, where information was provided about the danger of lead paint and the need to ban it.



In Colombia, a discussion panel was organized with officials from the Ministries of Health and Social Protection, Environment and Sustainable Development, and Commerce, Industry and Tourism, as well as with various paint manufacturers.



In Jordan, a national workshop was attended by around 30 delegates from different sectors and ministries, some school facilities were painted with non-lead paint, and a law now sets a limit of 90 ppm for the total lead content of domestic paints.



In Kenya, the University of Nairobi used the ILPPW campaign to promote implementation and enforcement in Kenya of the East Africa Regional Standard for paint, which sets a 90 ppm limit for total lead content of certain paints.



View [all registered events](#) (organized by country) for International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week 2023.

The [SAICM Knowledge Management Platform](#) acts as a clearing house for information on lead in paint, including technical information, guidance, and an abundance of resources.

The [Lead in Paint Community of Practice](#) provides a platform for those with expertise and interest in the issue to regularly interact and share knowledge and experiences.

About United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

UNEP is the leading global voice on the environment. It provides leadership and encourages partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations

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