

## PROJECT BRIEFING NOTE

### Global best practices on emerging chemical policy issues of concern under the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)

#### Promoting regulatory and voluntary action by government and industry to phase out lead in paint

##### 1. Background

Lead is a multisystem toxicant for which no safe level of exposure has been identified. Exposure can cause chronic and debilitating health impacts in all age groups, but it is particularly harmful to young children. This is because the developing nervous system can be damaged by lead, resulting in reduced cognitive abilities, poor educational attainment, attention deficit disorder and antisocial behaviour. In adults, lead exposure can cause hypertension, renal impairment and damage to the reproductive organs.

Lead paint is paint to which one or more lead compounds have been added, e.g. as pigments, driers or as anti-corrosives. Lead paint used in homes, schools and playgrounds is an important source of exposure to lead for children. Intact lead paint is safe, however, as it ages the paint starts to decay, fragmenting into flakes and dust that contaminate the environment. Paint flakes and dust are readily swallowed by young children who typically play on the ground and frequently put their hands to their mouths.

Once applied, lead paint can remain a source of exposure for many years into the future. Even in countries that banned lead paint decades ago there are still many homes where lead painted surfaces can be found and exposure to lead occurs. It is far more cost-effective, as well as more protective to public health, to stop the manufacture and sale of lead paint through regulatory action than to remediate homes and deal with the health consequences of lead exposure later on.

There are safer alternatives to lead compounds for use in paints, and a number of paint companies have stopped using lead additives on a voluntary basis. The best way to protect the population from lead exposure from this source, however, is to introduce and enforce laws that either ban or restrict the use of lead in paint.

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*<sup>1</sup>. Member States approved this road map at the Seventieth World Health Assembly (WHA70(23)) in 2017.

The UN Environment Assembly, at its third session in December 2017, adopted resolution UNEP/EA.3/Res.9 “Eliminating Exposure to Lead Paint and Promoting the Environmentally Sound Management of Lead Acid Batteries”. The resolution provides impetus for countries to adopt laws eliminating lead paint.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.who.int/ipcs/saicm/roadmap/en/>

The United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) and the World Health Organization (WHO) 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 exposure to lead paint. The Lead Paint Alliance is working to phase-out the manufacture, import 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.

The elimination of lead paint will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals targets 3.9<sup>2</sup> and 12.4<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. The SAICM Global Environment Facility (GEF) project

The GEF CEO endorsed a SAICM GEF full sized project "Global best practices on emerging chemical policy issues of concern under SAICM" with 3 components: lead in paint, chemicals in products and knowledge management.

*The project outcome is for 40 countries to legislate and implement legislation to restrict the use of lead paint; and for at least 50 small and medium enterprises (SME) paint manufacturers in eight countries to phase out lead from their production processes.*

The project component on lead in paint involves working with governments to support the development of lead paint laws, and working with SMEs to promote the phase-out of the use of lead additives.

Technical support will be provided to countries to increase awareness among policy-makers of the need to regulate lead paint, and to develop the appropriate legislation, regulations or legally-binding standards to ensure the phase-out of lead paint. Each country will develop a roadmap to guide the process of developing and enacting the necessary law.

The first activity will be a regional workshop to which the designated national focal points from ministries of health, environment and, if appropriate, another ministry responsible for regulation, such as the ministry of trade and/or industry, will be invited. Civil society and industry at country level will also be invited to the regional workshop. Countries will be briefed on the issue of lead paint and the project activities and will be asked to decide on their participation in the project.

Further to the legislation, barriers faced by SMEs in replacing lead additives in paint with lead-free alternatives will be addressed by the project. Seven countries with SMEs producing lead paint will be working on the project: five with the National Cleaner Production Centres (NCPCs) in Jordan, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and China; and two with IPEN in Indonesia and Nigeria. Tunisia is also participating in the project and focusing on industrial anti-corrosive paints.

## 3. Project partners and their roles

- **UN Environment, Chemicals and Health Branch** – Lead Project Coordinator. UN Environment will provide overall project coordination and will support countries where Ministries of Environment will lead the national process to develop laws.
- **World Health Organization** – Executing Partner. WHO will support Ministries of Health to advocate for lead paint laws and, in countries where Ministries of Health will

<sup>2</sup> By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination

<sup>3</sup> By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment

lead the national process to develop these laws, will provide facilitation and technical support as requested.

- **IPEN** – Executing Partner. IPEN is a global network of environmental NGOs and a Lead Paint Alliance partner. IPEN will provide support for awareness-raising and stakeholder outreach in countries with lead paint manufacturing. It will also support partner organizations in Nigeria and Indonesia to engage with the local paint industry and conduct pilot demonstrations for best practices.
- **National Cleaner Production Centres (NCPCs)** – Executing Partners. NCPCs comprise a global network of organizations providing specialized technical and advisory services to industries in low- and middle-income countries. They will work on the output involving SMEs. NCPCs in Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, China and Jordan, coordinated by the NCPC in Serbia, will provide technical information to industry for the reformulation of lead paint, and to regulators for the revision/development of lead paint laws.
- **Secretariat of the Economic Organization of West African States (ECOWAS)** – Executing Partner in West Africa. The Secretariat will provide support for the development of a sub-regional lead paint standard.
- **American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI)** – Executing Partner. ABA-ROLI has a global network of legal experts and is a Lead Paint Alliance partner. It will provide and coordinate legal support for countries in drafting lead paint laws.
- **US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)** – a non-funded Executing Partner. USEPA chairs the Lead Paint Alliance and led the development of the Model Law and Guidance for Regulating Lead Paint. USEPA will provide advocacy and technical support to countries.
- **International Paint and Painting Ink Council (IPPIC)** - a non-funded Executing Partner. IPPIC is a global network of national trade associations representing companies that make paints and coatings. IPPIC will organise industry workshops and will engage with companies in countries where lead paint restrictions are not in place to increase industry awareness and provide technical expertise for paint reformulation.

#### 4. Next steps

The project is scheduled to begin in January 2019 and to end in 2021.

On receipt of the letter concerning the project, Ministers of Environment and Health are encouraged to discuss with each other about participation in the project. Each ministry should then respond to UN Environment or WHO, as appropriate, about their potential interest in participating in the project and identify their focal points. If another ministry or agency would be likely to have responsibility for developing a lead paint law it would be useful if this information could be provided.

The regional workshops will be organized by UN Environment and will take place between February and April 2019. The designated focal points from the ministries will participate in these meetings together with project executing partners. At or shortly after these workshops, countries should confirm whether they wish to participate in the project.

A progress report of project outcomes will be presented to the Fifth meeting of the International Conference on Chemicals Management in October 2020 as well as at the UN Environment Assembly at its fifth session. Progress towards and final achievement of the goal to eliminate lead paint will also be included in the progress report on the WHO Chemicals Road Map to the World Health Assembly at its meetings in 2019 and 2021.