

Invisible News

ISSUE 6

BROUGHT to YOU by the GENEVA CHEMICALS & WASTE CLUSTER at the 4th UN Environment Assembly

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CHEMICALS & WASTE in the CHILDREN'S ROOM?

Some toys, paint, plastic potentially harmful for children

Children, because of their smaller size, rapid growth, and propensity to put things in their mouths, are more vulnerable to the harmful effects of chemicals and waste, than adults. Are we doing enough to protect our children from these hazards?

The adverse impacts of lead on humans, especially on children's development, has long been understood, but did you know that even today, lead might be present in the paint on the walls of your children's bedrooms, or even in the paint-based toys with which they happily play?

Or that electronic toys might be powered by button-cell batteries containing mercury?

Or that toys made from recycled plastic might contain toxic chemicals?

According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics, childhood exposure is a systemic problem everywhere. All around the world, children are born with dozens, perhaps hundreds, of hazardous substances in their bodies. This is leading to what doctors are referring to as a "silent pandemic" of disease and disability affecting millions during childhood and later in life.

Children in the workplace are especially vulnerable. Many children work in agriculture and in waste-picking, to name just two sectors, where possibly experience exposure to chemicals alongside their adult colleagues.

Don't our children deserve better than this?



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Lead – which is known to be toxic and harmful to the central nervous system, blood, and reproductive systems - is present in some paint-based children's toys

Making the Invisible, Visible

The Geneva Chemicals & Waste Cluster is a group of international organisations in Geneva which collectively work to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of chemicals and waste. This lounge installation is brought to you by four organisations of this cluster, namely:

- Secretariat of the [Basel, Rotterdam, & Stockholm Conventions \(BRS\)](#);
- Secretariat of the [Minamata Convention](#);
- Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management ([SAICM](#)); and
- [UN Environment](#), Chemicals and Health Branch (UNEP)

See www.brsmeas.org www.mercuryconvention.org www.saicm.org and www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste for more info



Toys made from recycled plastic may contain toxic chemicals known as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), which are regulated under the Stockholm Convention because of their harmful impacts on health and the environment

Protect those you love the most from chemicals and waste

Children everywhere deserve better than this. We have to make visible this "invisible assault on the rights of the child". In many cases, alternatives already exist. Sound management of chemicals and waste is urgently needed to protect our youngest and future generations from toxic exposure.

Chemical-free toys, lead-free paints, and mercury-free batteries are all available on most markets around the world. And avoiding furniture and carpets which contain toxic chemical additives can further reduce children's exposure, as can ensuring a healthy diet free from harmful pesticides in food.

Turning your home into a safe environment for your children to grow up in requires some new ways of thinking, some effort, and some investments in time and money, but it is possible.

Tackling child exposure to chemicals in the workplace is a more challenging and urgent need. Urging all actors – states, businesses and other stakeholders – to implement the chemicals and waste conventions, respect the human rights conventions including for children, and recognize and implement ILO Labour Standards, must be a first step.

What can you do?

- Read the next *Invisible News* sheets to educate yourself about the hazards;
- Visit the websites listed to find out more;
- Seek out safe alternatives when buying toys, food, clothing, furniture: READ the labelling;
- Discuss with your children, relatives, neighbours.



BASEL / ROTTERDAM / STOCKHOLM CONVENTIONS

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