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First ever study finds lead in 77% of house paint

Popular brands such as Goldstar, Sadolin, Coral paints included

Children are at risk of poisoning; safer substitutes available

Dar es Salaam– A study of new household paints sold in Dar es Salaam and other parts of Tanzania found that many paints contained lead. The study found lead in 26 paint samples out of 26 tested (100%). All enamel paint samples exceeded permitted lead levels for paints in the USA, while all plastic paint samples were found to have lead concentrations less than 90 ppm (USA permitted level). This is believed to be first study of lead in paints conducted in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Key findings of the study:

- The study analysed 20 enamel paint samples from 3 brands i.e. Goldstar, Sadolin, Coral paints
- 100% exceeded the current US lead in paint standard of 90 ppm
- 95% exceeded the current Tanzania lead in paint standard of 450 ppm
- The highest sample contained 120,862.1 ppm lead, 1,342 times greater than the US limit and 269 times greater than what is allowed in Tanzania
- Brands of paint below the US lead limit included all sampled water based paints of Goldstar paints (mist pink, summer blue), Coral paints (summer blue, candy pink) and Sadolin paints (mist pink, summer blue).

Lead causes irreversible nervous system damage and decreased intelligence, particularly in children, at extremely low doses. Lead exposure in childhood has been associated with lower vocabulary and grammatical-reasoning scores, increased absenteeism, poorer eye-to-hand coordination, and lower class standing in high school. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that lead is a probable human carcinogen. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Healthy Environments for Children Alliance, *“There is no known safe blood lead level but it is known that, as lead exposure increases, the range and severity of symptoms and effects also increases.”* One of the largest causes of lead exposure is lead-contaminated dust from decaying paint. Lead ingestion and poisoning typically occurs through hand-to-mouth activity. For that reason lead in paint has been phased in most developed countries since 1920s

In 2002, WHO’s *World Health Report* identified lead exposure as one of twenty leading selected risk factors contributing to the global burden of disease and stated that worldwide, 40 percent of children have blood lead levels greater than 5 µg/dl, and that 97 percent of the affected children live in developing regions.

“Lead threatens a child’s brain development and health,” reports Dr. Rongo, LMB of the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences. *“Child lead poisoning should be taken seriously, and parents should be aware of possible pathways of exposure including lead paint in one’s home.”*

“Lead is a poison and it should not be present in paints or other products to which children are exposed,” said Dr. Vera Ngowi, of Tanzania Association of Public, Occupational and Environmental Health Experts (TAPOHE). *“Europe banned lead in paint in the 1920s. What are we waiting for when safer alternatives are available? We need to protect our children and eliminate lead from paint.”*

The study comes on the heels of a global commitment to eliminate lead in paint in all countries. In May 2009, at the 2nd International Conference on Chemicals Management, Tanzania was among more than 100 countries that endorsed a Global Partnership to Eliminate Lead from Paint.

To address this lead threat, AGENDA for Environment and Responsible Development (AGENDA) together with the International POPs Elimination Network and Toxics Link of India, have launched the **“Children’s Health First: Eliminate Lead Paint”** global campaign, which aims to both eliminate lead paint and promote safer alternatives via the Global Partnership to Eliminate Lead from Paint under the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM).

Link to study & campaign webpage:

http://www.ipen.org/ipenweb/work/lead/lead_paint.html,
http://www.ipen.org/ipenweb/work/lead/lead_paint.html#fact

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The International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) is a global public interest NGO network with more than 700 Participating Organizations in over 100 countries and in all regions. IPEN works with NGOs around the world toward a future where toxic chemicals no longer cause harm to human health or to the environment. www.ipen.org

