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**Lead Paint Dangerous to Children Found in 15 African Countries, including Kenya.  
*Lead Exposure Can Cause Permanent Brain Damage***

**Nairobi, Kenya (27<sup>th</sup> October 2017).** Decorative paints containing levels of lead dangerous to children is widely available in 15 African countries, according to a new report released today by [IPEN](#), an international organization promoting safe and sustainable chemical use. More than half of all paints analyzed in a new study on lead in decorative paints contained lead levels illegal in most of the developed world (more than 90 ppm) and more than a quarter of the paints contained dangerously high lead levels (more than 10,000 ppm). Very few paint can labels carried any consumer information about the lead content of the paints or the dangers associated with lead exposure. These findings are part of a new report released today by [IPEN](#), an international organization promoting safe and sustainable chemical use and 15 African, non-government organizations (NGOs) including Centre for Environment Justice and Development in Kenya. (Please see *Lead in Solvent-Based Paint for Home Use in Africa<sup>1</sup> Fact Sheet for report details.*)

“The health impacts of lead exposure on young children’s brains are lifelong, irreversible and untreatable,” said Mr. Griffins Ochieng, Centre for Environment Justice and Development. “We are limiting our children and our nations’ futures intellectual development even though safe and effective alternatives are already in use and widely available. We must reduce this critical source of lead exposure to young children.”

Data from a study of lead paint in Kenya, *Lead in Solvent-Based Paints for Home Use in Kenya<sup>2</sup>* conducted in 2017 was included in the report. That study found that more than 70 percent of paint brands analyzed in the study on total lead in solvent-based paints for home use contained dangerously high lead levels greater than 10,000 ppm. According to the study findings, one yellow paint advertised as “lead free” contained lead levels as high as 16 percent of the paint, almost 1,800 times the allowed limit of 0.009 percent (90 ppm) established in many countries for lead in paint and the maximum allowed level in two paint standards adopted by the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS).

A recent study investigating the economic impact of childhood lead exposure on national economies in all low- and middle-income countries estimated a total cumulative cost burden of \$134.7 billion of economic loss in Africa, or 4.03 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and a loss of US\$3.76 billion of economic loss, or 5.26 percent of GDP to Kenya.

“Continued use of lead paint is a primary source of childhood lead exposure,” said Dr. Sara Brosché, IPEN’s Global Lead Paint Elimination Campaign Manager. “Children – especially those under 6 years of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ipen.org/documents/africa-lead-paint>

<sup>2</sup> [http://cejadkenya.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CEJAD-ipen-lead-paint-kenya-v1\\_4-en.pdf](http://cejadkenya.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/CEJAD-ipen-lead-paint-kenya-v1_4-en.pdf)

age – ingest or inhale lead through exposure to dust or soil contaminated with lead-based paint and normal hand-to-mouth behavior or when they chew on toys, household furniture or other articles painted with lead paint. Governments should set mandatory limits on lead paint, but paint companies should not wait for regulation; they can and should act now.”

IPEN released *Lead in Solvent-Based Paint for Home Use in Africa* as a part of a new "Lead Safe Africa by 2020" Initiative during International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action (ILPPWA), Oct 22 -28, 2017. NGOs across the continent plan to use the Initiative to raise awareness about the dangers of lead paint and push for regulatory controls. The Week of Action is co-led by UN Environment and the World Health Organization (WHO).

In a [statement](#) prepared for this year’s ILPPWA, Dr Maria Neira Director of the Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health for the World Health Organization (WHO) said: “Lead paint is a serious threat to the long term health of our children. Yet lead paint is still on sale in many countries and is used to decorate homes and schools. WHO calls on all countries to phase out lead paint by 2020 to protect the health of this and future generations.”

Very few countries in Africa regulate the lead content in decorative paints. In Kenya, Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) has developed and adopted two Standards on the determination of total lead content in paints, varnishes and related products (KS 2661-1:2016 and KS 2661-2:2016) aimed at controlling the manufacture and importation of lead paints. However, the standards are yet to be published in an official gazette.

Most highly industrial countries adopted laws or regulations to control the lead content of decorative paints—the paints used on the interiors and exteriors of homes, schools, and other child-occupied facilities—beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. The strictest standard, 90 parts per million (ppm) total lead content in decorative paint, is common in many countries, including the Philippines, Nepal and the United States of America. Several other countries, including Singapore and Sri Lanka, have a 600 ppm total lead standard.

The World Health Organization (WHO) calls lead paint “a major flashpoint” for children’s potential lead poisoning and says that “since the phase-out of leaded petrol, lead paint is one of the largest sources of exposure to lead in children.” Children are exposed to lead, when painted surfaces deteriorate over time and contaminate household dust and soils. Children, ages 0-6, engaging in normal hand-to-mouth behaviors are most at risk of damage to their intelligence and mental development from exposure to lead dust and soil.

As a part of the Week of Action, IPEN also released *Lead in Solvent-Based Paint for Home Use*<sup>3</sup>, a comprehensive review of lead in paint sold around the world. This report found that a quarter of all paints analyzed in 50 out of the 54 countries studied in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe contain lead levels dangerous to children.

### **About CEJAD**

Centre for Environment Justice and Development (CEJAD) is a not-for-profit Non-Governmental Organization promoting rural development and environmental justice in Kenya, through sound chemicals

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<sup>3</sup> <http://ipen.org/documents/lead-solvent-based-paints-home-use-global-report>

management and sustainable use of natural resources by: advocating and lobbying for pro-sustainability policy and legal frameworks; educating and advising the public on available technologies and practices that improve human and environmental health; and conducting and/or participating in research that generate knowledge for influencing sound policies and actions. For information, visit [www.cejadkenya.org](http://www.cejadkenya.org)

**About IPEN**

IPEN is an international NGO network comprised of 700 organizations in 116 countries that work to reduce and eliminate hazardous, toxic substances internationally and within their own countries. ([www.ipen.org](http://www.ipen.org))

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