



PRESS RELEASE

Groups Back Phase-Out of Lead Paint to Mark the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

26 October 2015, Quezon City. Concerned groups from the public and private sectors have come together to promote awareness and action to combat childhood lead exposure, which contributes to approximately 600,000 new cases per year of kids with intellectual disabilities across the globe.

In observance of the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action (ILPPWA) on October 25 to 31, an annual campaign spearheaded by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Health Organization (WHO), government, industry and civil society organizations jointly backed the scheduled phase-out of lead paints in the country as an essential step for a healthy future.

To mark the occasion, some 500 students, parents and teachers of Masambong Elementary School today participated in an interactive awareness-raising program organized by the EcoWaste Coalition, a civil society partner of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint, a joint UNEP-WHO initiative.

Dr. Annabelle Sinlao, lecturer at Manila Central University College of Medicine and resource person of Health Care Without Harm discussed the issue with the young audience, while Dr. Luis Gatmaitan, author of the children's storybook "Ang Makulay na Bahay" (The Colorful House) read the story in tandem with celebrity Posh Develos.

"Through this event, we affirm our commitment to work in partnership with all sectors to ensure full compliance to the national phase-out policy for lead paints, indisputably an environmental and health milestone of the Aquino presidency," said Thony Dizon, Coordinator of the EcoWaste Coalition's Project Protect.

As per the "Chemical Control Order for Lead and Lead Compounds" (CCO) issued by Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary

Ramon J.P. Paje in December 2013, lead-containing decorative paints would be phased out by December 2016 and lead-containing industrial paints by December 2019.

“As there is no known level of lead exposure that is considered safe for any child, let us be vigilant and support efforts to make the Philippines meet the global and local goal of eliminating lead paint,” stated Assistant DENR Secretary Juan Miguel Cuna, who is also the concurrent Director of the Environmental Management Bureau.

“We hope that the phase out of leaded paints in due time will contribute to making our children’s environment safe from lead, he added.

Vergel Dyoco, Chairman of the Technical Committee of the Philippine Association of Paint Manufacturers (PAPM), assured that: “We are moving towards lead-safe paint production in line with the government’s policy that was crafted in a collaborative way with input from the PAPM, EcoWaste Coalition and IPEN, and we expect this transition process to evolve further as the phase-out target nears.”

Dr. Ulysses Dorotheo, Chairman of the Committee on Environmental Health and Ecology of the Philippine Medical Association (PMA), said: “We join the efforts of the EcoWaste Coalition and its partners to raise community awareness on the dangers of lead exposure through lead paint and dust and the need for concerted action to eliminate sources of lead in children's environment, including lead-containing paints and toys.”

“As prevention is better than cure, the PMA calls on all concerned sectors to pursue policies and measures that will prevent and reduce lead pollution at source such as by effectively enforcing the agreed phase-out for lead-added paints,” he said.

Information compiled by the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN), a global civil society network promoting safe chemicals policies and practices, indicates that “lead exposure in children impairs the developing brain and causes neurological deficits.”

“It is associated with decreased intelligence as measured by IQ tests, reduced school performance, increased violent behavior and incarceration rates, increased cases of mental retardation, and decreased labor productivity as measured by lifelong earning potential,” IPEN, which includes the EcoWaste

Coalition, said.

Aside from lead in paint and dust, the other major sources of lead in children's environment include lead in products such as cosmetics and toys, lead in electronic waste and lead released by incineration of lead-containing waste. Lead pollution from the informal recycling of used lead-acid batteries is another common source.

Ingestion and inhalation are the major routes of lead exposure for both children and adults.

To reduce children's exposure to lead in paint and dust, the EcoWaste Coalition reminded the public, particularly the parents, to observe the following health tips:

1. Choose and use lead-safe paints, and handle surfaces painted with lead very carefully to prevent chipping paint and dust from scattering.
2. Keep the areas where your children play as clean and dust-free as possible as ordinary dirt and dust may contain lead. Wet-mop the floors, and wet-wipe the window frames and sills and other surfaces.
3. Make sure your child does not chew on anything covered with lead paint such as painted cribs, playpens, toys or window sills.
4. Keep children from eating dirt and make sure they wash their hands after playing and before eating.
5. Wash pacifiers, teethingers, bottles and eating utensils after they fall on the floor.
6. Choose only lead-safe toys for your kids, and wash toys and stuffed animals regularly.

"Children can swallow lead or breathe lead contaminated dust if they play in places with abundant dust or dirt and then put their fingers or toys in their mouths, or if they eat without washing their hands first," the EcoWaste Coalition reiterated.

-end-

Reference:

http://www.who.int/ipcs/lead_campaign/en/

<http://www.who.int/ceh/publications/childhoodpoisoning/en/>