



Old Paints Sold in Sri Lanka Continue to Contain Dangerous Levels of Lead
Paints produced After Jan. 2013 Meet Legal Limit

For Immediate Release

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(Colombo) New research once again finds very high levels of lead in enamel (solvent-based) paint available in the Sri Lankan market, contrary to regulation enacted by the Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) under the consumers Act No 9 of 2003, which came into force in January 2013. This is the fourth study in Sri Lanka to find high lead levels in paints sold in Sri Lankan markets.

The research was conducted by Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ) in collaboration with the three-year, IPEN Asian Lead Paint Elimination Project. The project is being implemented in seven different countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand) with a total European Union funding of EUR 1.4 million and has as its goal the complete elimination of lead paint in those countries.

Key findings from the new report released today show that more than half (8 out of 15 brands or 53%) of the enamel paint samples analysed contained lead concentrations above 600 parts per million (ppm), the legal limit for lead in enamel paints permitted to be sold in Sri Lanka. Dangerously high lead levels of 72,000 ppm were found in one red colour paint sample. Among the analysed brands, one paint brand, which claimed to be lead-free on the label, contained more than 600 ppm lead. The study, which tested a small sample of paints, will be followed up with a more in-depth study with 60 samples later this year.

The research also revealed that seven (88%) out of the eight enamel paint samples manufactured after the mandatory regulation took effect on January 1, 2013 contained lead levels below 600 ppm. Six of the 8 paints (40%) manufactured after January 1, 2013, contained lead levels below 90 ppm.

“The analysis clearly demonstrates that producing paint with low lead levels is possible within Sri Lanka, and that the new regulation limiting lead in paint is having an impact. Elimination of lead in paint is an important issue, the presence of which impairs learning abilities. The effects of low level lead exposure on children are lifelong and irreversible. This is a matter that concerns us all and for which prompt action needs to be taken in order to ensure that the regulation is respected in its entirety by all parties concerned including producers, consumers and consumer representative authorities” said Hemantha Withanage, Director, Centre for Environmental Justice.

CEJ began working to eliminate lead in decorative paint in Sri Lanka in 2009, with support from the Indian NGO, Toxics Link and IPEN, an international network of NGOs working to reduce harm to human health and the environment from toxic chemicals.

Since 2009, CEJ has brought the issue of lead in paint to the attention of government and the public; it has provided a thorough analysis of the harm exposure to lead cause both Sri Lankan children and the country as whole; and it has provided both the public and government with well-documented, scientific evidence of the high lead content present Sri Lankan paints.

As a result of this work, new lead standards came to effect in Sri Lanka in January, 2013. An October, 2013 report, released by CEJ, found that half of the 94 cans of household paints sold in local markets and analysed for lead content, still contained lead above the legal limit of 600 ppm. The study released today is a follow-up to that report and was conducted to determine whether progress had been made in eliminating lead decorative paints with high lead levels in Sri Lanka

“Elimination of lead in paint is an important national and international issue. Lead is a toxic metal, which impairs individual’s learning abilities and, in doing so, impairs the ability of developing countries to reach their maximum potential. The effects of low level lead exposure on children are lifelong and irreversible,” said Withanage.

Children are not generally exposed to lead from paint while the paint is still in the can or even when the paint is being newly applied to a previously unpainted or uncoated surface. Rather, the lead exposure generally occurs after the lead paint has already dried on the wall or on the article that has been painted. Painted surfaces deteriorate with time or when disturbed, and lead from the paint then contaminates household dust and soils surrounding the home. Children can then ingest lead from dusts and soils during customary hand-to-mouth behavior, after which neurological damage occurs.

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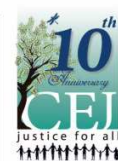
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CEJ (Centre for Environmental Justice) conducts projects and programs in the areas of science, law and advocacy and provides free legal aid and trainings to marginalized communities to protect their environmental rights.

IPEN is a leading global organization working to establish and implement safe chemicals policies and practices that protect human health and the environment around the world.



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