



Centre de Recherche et d'Éducation pour le Développement

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PRESS RELEASE

Project to Eliminate Lead Paint to Protect Children's Health Launched in Cameroon

(Yaounde). The non-government organization (NGO), Centre de Recherche et d'Éducation pour le Développement (CREPD) announced today that it is launching a new national effort to eliminate lead in paint and protect children's health in Cameroon. This national effort is part of an African Lead Paint Elimination Project in four African countries – Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia and Tanzania. The Project is funded by the Global Environment Facility and implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The Project is being managed by IPEN, an international network working to reduce harm to human health and the environment from toxic chemicals. CREPD has lead responsibility for project activities in Cameroon.

The goal of the project is to create greater awareness of the dangers of lead paint, assist in obtaining new standards for lead content of decorative paints sold to consumers, help strengthen lead paint regulation and promote paint certification. The project will raise widespread awareness among business entrepreneurs, consumers and policy makers about the adverse human health impacts of lead-based decorative paints, particularly on the health of children under six years old. It also will conduct analytical studies of the lead content of paints easily available on the national market and publicize the results.

“Previous studies of paint sold in Cameroon show that paint in local markets continues to contain high levels of lead, despite solid evidence that exposure to lead, even in small amounts, can reduce a child's intelligence and school performance. Companies should stop adding lead to the paints they manufacture and sell. In addition, a national regulatory framework is needed in Cameroon to insure that they do so, said Dr. Gilbert KUEPOUO, Coordinator of CREPD.



Participating in the launch event were representatives of the Ministries of Health, Environment, Industry; GEF Operational Focal Point, Media, school children, and academia.

An analysis of the paints conducted in 2011 in Cameroon found that 67% of paints had lead concentrations greater than 90 ppm (lead-based paint), among which 98% had levels of lead above 600 ppm. The highest concentration of lead was as high as 500 000 ppm (50% lead by weight). In the same study, 33% of the paint samples of paintings proved to be lead-free (i.e. with less than 90 ppm lead content). Another round of paint analyses conducted in 2013, indicated that the percentage of lead paints marketed in Cameroon decreased from 67% to 50%. This was due to the fact that largest local paint manufacturer has reformulated its products to produce lead-free paints as the result of the joint call signed in 2012 between CREPD and CEP Seigneurie work together towards the elimination of paint in Cameroon.

“Safe, cost effective alternatives to lead in paint have been in use for more than 40 years in the United States, the European Union and other high income countries. There is no good reason that lead paint continues to be sold in Cameroon,” said Dr. Gilbert KUEPOUO.

Over time, paint on a surface chips, wears and deteriorates. Lead present in the deteriorating paint is released to dust and soils surrounding the home, school or playground. Children ingest lead from dusts and soils during normal hand to mouth behavior. Damage to children’s intelligence and mental development occurs, even when there are no obvious or clinical signs of lead poisoning. Recent World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines indicate that there is no known acceptable lead intake level for children. A recent study investigating the economic impact of childhood lead exposure on national economies estimated a total cumulative loss of \$977 billion international dollars per year for all low- and middle-income countries, and \$134.7 billion loss in Africa or 4.03% of GDP

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CREPD (www.crepcameroun.org) is a Cameroon based Health and Environmental NGO aiming to bridge the gap between Science and Action in sub Sahara Africa and beyond

GEF (<http://www.thegef.org/>) is a partnership for international cooperation where 183 countries work together with international institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector, to address global environmental issues.

UNEP (www.unep.org) is the voice for the environment within the United Nations system. UNEP acts as a catalyst, advocate, educator and facilitator to promote the wise use and sustainable development of the global environment.



IPEN (www.ipen.org) is an international NGO network with 700 participating organizations working in 116 countries to promote safe chemical policies and practices that protect human health and the environment.

