

## IMPACT SHEET • SWITCH-ASIA PROJECT LEAD PAINT ELIMINATION

# Market leaders eliminate lead paint in seven Asian countries



**Three year campaign resulted in lead paint regulations  
and the world's first, independent lead paint certification  
programme**



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## The Challenge



Lead is a toxic metal, which is why it is banned for use in paints in Europe, the U.S. and Australia. Lead is especially harmful to children as it interferes with the developing brain and for example causes lower IQ, attention deficiency, poor impulse control and aggressive behaviour even at very low exposures. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has stated that there is no safe level of childhood lead exposure. However, in developing countries, lead is still used in paints as pigments and drying agents, and when these paints are then used in homes and schools, lead contaminates the household dust and is ingested by children through hand to mouth contact. The damage caused during development is irreversible, but entirely preventable. The challenge for this project was to achieve a switch to lead-free paints in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

The project aimed to reduce childhood lead poisoning by working to eliminate lead decorative paints in the seven participating countries. This will lead to improved school performance, which in turn will help to battle poverty. In addition, this project helped reduce trade barriers for small and medium-sized paint manufacturers.

## Objective

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### TARGET GROUPS

In order to make as large an impact as possible, the project targeted the following groups:

- Civil society, by public awareness campaigns on the hazards of lead for children, and information about the lead content of common household paints;
- The industry, by promoting certification of lead-free paints, and support to SMEs to adapt to changing public demand and regulatory pressure by switching to safer alternatives;
- The government, by initiating dialogues promoting effective and enforced legislation on the maximum allowed lead content of household paint.

## Activities / Strategy



### Increasing Public Awareness

There was very low public awareness in the project countries about the hazards of lead, especially to children's health, and the common use of lead in household paints. Through a public awareness and information campaign, consumers were empowered to make informed decisions and put pressure on paint manufacturers and policy makers to make the necessary changes to eliminate decorative lead paints.



### Creating Certification and Labelling Programmes

At the start of the project no third-party certification existed in Asia aimed at protecting against lead, and to establish this required a carefully prepared design to ensure credibility. The project started by engaging stakeholders, such as paint manufacturers and their associations, in discussions aimed at developing terms of a third-party certification programme. This programme was operational at the end of the project with participating paint brands on the market in the seven countries.



### Providing Capacity Building for SME Paint Manufacturers

Many small and medium-sized manufacturers lack access to lead-free raw materials at a competitive price and the necessary information to reformulate their products effectively. Therefore, the project partners engaged SME paint manufacturers in discussions on the hurdles that they needed to overcome to remove lead from their production. National strategies were then developed on how to address the concerns in the different project countries, as well as common issues for all SME manufacturers interviewed.



### Conducting Policy Dialogues

At the start of the project, no legislation with mandatory limits of lead content in household paint were in force in any of the project countries. There were voluntary standards in two of the countries, but it had been shown previously that they made very little impact. Therefore, the project partners engaged in dialogue with government officials and political leaders to promote the enactment of effective national policy instruments to prohibit or control the manufacture and sale of lead-based paints.



Checking lead content of paints



# Scaling-up Strategy



## Evidence-based and Stakeholder-oriented Communication Campaigns

Most paint cans in the target countries lacked reliable information on content and potential health hazards. Therefore, 1 000 paints were analysed for lead content to assess the situation. At the same time, National Alliances to Eliminate Lead Paint consisting of stakeholders such as paint associations, health professionals and non-governmental organisations were established to further increase the credibility and impact of the campaign. By specifically targeting the media throughout the campaign, the message about the hazards of lead paint was disseminated to a larger audience. As more people got informed, the public pressure to eliminate lead paints was increased.



## Third-party Paint Certification and Labelling Programmes

An Asian Lead Safe Paint certification programme, ensuring no added lead in household paint, ensures the impact of the project past the project lifetime. This effort started with training project partners in, amongst other topics, development of certification standards, organisational structures and governance. The partners then engaged their stakeholders in dialogue to develop the commencement and terms of reference of the certification. Ideally, one certification could be developed for the entire project region; the programme was designed to be self-sustaining based on fees paid by participating paint manufacturers.

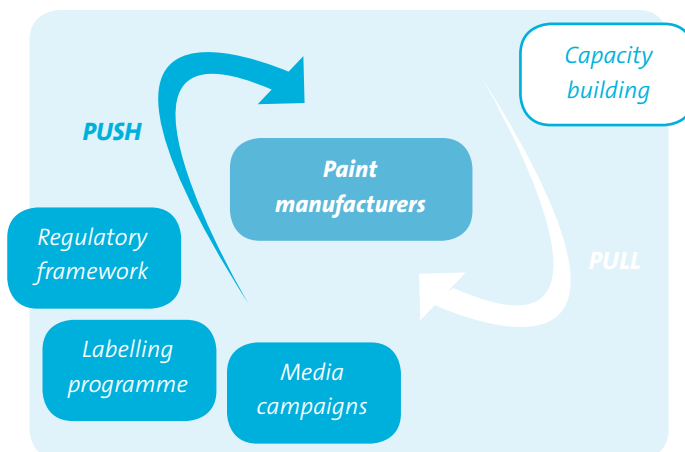


## Instituting Capacity within SMEs

Large paint manufacturers generally have the necessary information and technology to remove lead from their paints. To ensure that the local SMEs would be able to stay competitive in the changing market climate, special efforts were taken to provide technical information and other support for them to change their production processes.



A workshop involving various stakeholders



Push and Pull Strategies of the Lead Paint Elimination Project



## Establishing Policy for Lead Elimination

The most efficient way to eliminate lead paints is effective, enforced legislation. Therefore, the project partners, with support from the National Alliances, engaged politicians and policymakers in dialogue to promote standards for the maximum allowed lead content of household paint.



*This project clearly demonstrates that with a modest amount of resources, lead paint can be eliminated. The first step is to provide data on lead in paint in local markets and then educate the government, industry and civic leaders about the serious health effects of continued use of lead in paint. Non-lead pigments, driers and other materials have been available for decades and are used by manufacturers providing the highest quality paints. Using these materials, in most cases, will result in paints with a lead content well below 90 ppm and will, without doubt, contribute to the improvement of child, family and community health, particularly the health of our most vulnerable populations, such as young children, pregnant women and paint workers.*



Sara Brosché,  
Project Manager,  
IPEN Asian Lead Paint  
Elimination Campaign



## Results



### Majority Share of Market in All Seven Countries Now Lead-free

When the project started, the majority of solvent-based, decorative enamel paint from leading brands analysed in the seven participating countries contained high lead levels. At the conclusion of the project in June 2015, the market-leading brands in all seven countries had eliminated lead from their decorative paint, as had many smaller manufacturers.



### New Legislation in Three Participating Countries

Two participating countries, Nepal and Philippines, have established mandatory limits on lead in paint of 90 parts per million (ppm) total lead (dry weight) — as protective as any regulatory control in force anywhere in the world. The Nepalese standard requires information on paint can labels about lead concentrations and a precautionary message about avoiding lead exposure during repainting and building renovation. The Philippine paint regulation covers both industrial and decorative paint, making it the most rigorous regulation in the world.

In Sri Lanka, additional legislation demanding lead content labelling of paint cans was enacted to enforce the existing lead paint legislation, which came into force just before the start of the project. Now, 90% of the brands on the market comply with the 600 ppm legal limit.

In the other four countries, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Thailand, mandatory regulations to control lead in paint were in development. Senior public officials have indicated support for lead paint regulation, and IPEN expects their formal adoption soon. However, paint manufacturers have quickly taken initiative; in each of these countries, market leaders have reformulated their paint to meet the proposed new standards.



*Avoiding toxic chemicals is not always a top priority in developing countries struggling with poverty. We put children at the centre of our campaign so that consumers and government officials would respond naturally, as parents. We also managed to gain the trust and confidence of the paint companies by showing that we were not just there to fight them and hurt their businesses, but to help them produce non-toxic paints.*



Mr. Manny Calonzo,  
Southeast Asia  
Regional Specialist



### First Lead Safe Paint Certification Programme Established

Major paint producers in the Philippines and Sri Lanka are participating in the world's first, third party, Lead Safe Paint Certification Programme — a programme developed under the project that will independently verify and certify that the lead content of their paint is below 90 ppm.



A high-level public awareness campaign in the Philippines



The project team

# Impact in Numbers

## Economic Impact



- Lead paint is one major source of exposure and its removal will reduce the economic loss. Scientific evidence indicates that childhood lead exposure in Asia can contribute to significant economic loss (almost 2% of GDP), as expressed in lifelong earning power.
- Increased demand for lead-free paint raw materials creates new business opportunities throughout the paint value chain.
- The Lead Safe Paint certification programme established under the project opens up new business opportunities for both paint manufacturers and local labs.
- New green products, lead-safe certified paints, introduced in the market.

## Environmental Impact



- At the end of the project, the market-leading brands in all seven countries had eliminated lead from their decorative paints along with many smaller manufacturers.
- Paint reformulation to eliminate lead from the paint production had reduced damage to the environment through reduced soil contamination; reduced amount of hazardous waste; and reduced environmental impact of building construction and reconstruction.

## Social Impact



- Removing lead from production reduced lead exposure in workers as well as worker's families by contamination brought home.
- Communities were empowered to purchase lead-free paint by more awareness as well as access to lead-safe certified paints.
- Reduced lead exposure leads, in general, to better school results, better job opportunities and higher life earnings.
- Participating NGO partners in Asia increased their standing with stakeholders such as communities, industry and policymakers.

## Target Group Engagement



- On average, the project involved 20-30 SMEs per country and 40-50 stakeholders per country in various project activities.
- 20 outreach activities (media events, paint manufacturers consultations, school visits, and individual meetings with different stakeholders) were organised in each country per year. These involved a number of stakeholders such as:
  - Paint manufacturers (both SME and multinationals);
  - Paint Manufacturers' Associations;
  - Policymakers;
  - Civil Society Organisations;
  - Health Associations;
  - Education Organisations;
  - Media.

## Policy Development



- The project established 15 contacts per policy event per country per year, resulting in:
  - the drafting or enactment of lead paint regulations (enforcing legal limits for lead in paint and/or legally binding restriction in the use of lead in decorative paint) in the seven target countries,
  - the lead-free regional public procurement policies in Nepal, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka,
  - the mandatory labelling of paint cans in the three countries.
- In total, 13 new policies, regulations or standards were established.

## Europe-Asia Cooperation



- Three events were organised per country involving European and Asian participants.
- Seven new European Union - Asia partnerships initiated.
- Cooperation events were held in the form of joint workshops, media events, lead paint studies in each target country, and joint events at international chemical policy meetings.
- SCP knowledge transferred was on overcoming problems in removing lead from paint production and preventing lead dust hazards.



## OBJECTIVES

The project aimed at eliminating the manufacture, import and sale of all decorative lead paints in seven Asian countries: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

## DURATION



## PROJECT TOTAL BUDGET

EUR 1 798 563  
(EU Contribution: 77.8%)

## PROJECT CONTACT

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## PARTNERS



Arnika – Toxics and Waste Programme, Czech Republic



Environmental and Social Development Organisation (ESDO), Bangladesh

**BALIFOKUS**

Balifokus, Indonesia



Centre for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED), Nepal



The Just Environment Charitable Trust (Toxics Link), India



ISEAL Alliance, UK



Ecological Waste Coalition of the Philippines, Inc. (EcoWaste Coalition)



Centre for Environmental Justice (Guarantee) Limited (CEJ), Sri Lanka



Ecological Alert and Recovery Thailand (EARTH)