



ILPPWA 2018 highlights from CEJ Sri Lanka



Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ) Report on the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action (ILPPWA) 2018

20A, Kuruppu Road, Colombo 08, Sri Lanka.

Email: info@ejustice.lk website: www.ejustice.lk

Tel/ Fax: 0094112683282



Press conference to announce the week

On 16th October CEJ held a press conference to announce the activities of the week of action. CEJ reminded media on the harmful effects of Lead and sources of lead poisoning in Sri Lanka in addition to the activity plan for the week of action. Also, CEJ urged health, environmental and consumer agencies to take measures in preventing lead poisoning from lead paint, lead contaminated toys, lead acid batteries etc. A press release was issued to the media absent for the conference (see Press Release below).



The news was covered in 4 printed media and 2 electronic media.



CHILDREN THREATENED BY LEAD POISONING

By KALANI KRISHNATHA

Children of preschool and primary school age are being exposed to lead poisoning through toys, school bags, pencil cases, among others, which they use, Executive Director of the Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ), Hemantha Withanage claimed.

Withanage said that there had been no regulations or standards for the content of lead in the chemical element, Lead, in school bags, toys, and other educational used by children. He pointed out that the CEJ had found high concentrations of Lead in some toys and school bags when random research conducted in the previous years.

The standard concentration of Lead that can be used in toys is around 10 ppm (10 milligrams per kilogram), but locally we have found a higher concentration than that. However, Sri Lanka has not done any proper research in this connection yet. According to very recent research done by the Centre for Public Health and Environmental Development in Nepal, the concentration of Lead in imported toys was 4688 ppm, he said.

He noted that basically Sri Lanka

and Nepal were both importing toys and school bags from countries like India and China.

"So, our children can also be exposed to such poisonous Lead concentrations. Lead is included in the external coat or painting layer of bags and toys. From chewing toys and school bags and also from the inhalation they breathe of Lead content in the human body," he added.

Withanage said that Lead could be harmful to the health of children.

Higher concentrations of Lead can lead to a lower intelligence quotient figure in children, behavioural changes, increasing anti-social behaviour and a diminished attention span. And, also physical disturbances like hypertension, renal impairment, among others could occur due to the bio-deposition of Lead," he said.

He requested the Government to formulate standards and regulations for the level of Lead in imported toys, school bags, and others.

LEAD

Lead is one of the ten chemicals of major public health concern, needing action to protect the health of workers, children and women of reproductive age. It affects a child's brain development. The culprit is hidden behind some paints (especially those oil-based paints such as enamel, anti-corrosive, etc. in bright red, yellow, green and orange colours). In addition one can get Lead contamination by handling car batteries, electronic

waste, some toys, children's schools, baggy/pencil boxes, etc.

However, Sri Lankans now can enjoy Lead safe paint due to the Lead paint standards enacted as a result of the Supreme Court case No. 64/2011.

CEJ vs Consumer Affairs Authority and others. According to the Gazette Extra Ordinary No. 1725/30 on 30th September 2011 the maximum Lead level in Emulsion paint is 80 ppm and oil-based paint can have only 600 ppm," Withanage said.

Although the Gazette Extraordinary No. 1988/28 on 25th of September 2016, effective from 1 January 2017, published by Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA) to print a self-declaration that the Lead content in paint is below the regulated level, we seldom see the Lead levels printed on paint cans," Withanage added.

LEAD IN PRESCHOOLS

In 2014, the Centre for Environmental Justice found that preschools can be contaminated with Lead in the dust. Unaware of the fact that lead loadings as low as 10 µg/m² can contribute to blood Lead levels, harmful to the developing brain, dust samples taken from 11 out of the 20 locations contained Lead levels exceeding 10 µg/m².

The study area had no heavy traffic to release Lead from contribution of fuel, Lead battery production, smelting, e-waste disposal (requiring facilities or any other major sources of emitting Lead. Thus, it was assumed

that the Lead comes from chipped paint containing Lead. This could be from walls, floors, and play equipments such as swings or painted toys. Understanding the great danger faced, the CEJ formed the first pre-school painted with Lead safe paints in 2014, with financial assistance from EU and IPDA," Chalani Padanayake, the senior environmental officer of CEJ told Ceylon Today.

She noted that currently there was less or minimum risk of Lead exposure from the paints due to regulations imposed by the Consumer Affairs Authority as a result of Supreme Court Order on paints.

However, she added that the current problem was emerging from school bags, toys and other imported items for children.

Media Spokesman of the Customs, Surin Jayarathna said that there was no regulation regarding the inspection of toys, school bags etc which may include Lead in poisonous concentrations.

"Currently there is an ongoing discussion regarding this issue between the Customs and other responsible officers. We will explore if necessary regulations in future," he said.

He noted that a number of toys are being imported from countries like China and India and the quality of the products are relatively low. Meanwhile, international work for prevention of Lead poisoning will be commensurated from October 21 to 28.

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Figure 8: News published in the Ceylon Today newspaper

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Figure 9: Newspaper

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articles in local language



Figure 10: How the government news channel covered the lead week program.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WRL3bnCimaY>

Radio program



On 18th Mr. Hemantha Withanage had a program on the lead week of action and lead poisoning with the SLBC (Sri Lanka Broadcasting Cooperation). Ms Udayarani Wickramasinghe interviewed him on lead and the activities planned for the week of action.

He further mentioned the activities carried out under the Asian lead paint Elimination project in association with IPEN and EU and how it facilitated in creating a lead safe paint market in Sri Lanka. By today Sri Lankan paint industry is regulated by two laws; on limits of Pb concentration and label standards (see Gazette notice below).

More preschools to be lead safe

In celebrating the International lead poisoning prevention week of action- (21 to 27 October 2018) Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ) took initiatives to make more pre-schools lead safe.

In 2014, CEJ revealed in a study that pre-schools can contain up to 600 micrograms of lead per square foot, when studies have shown that lead loading as low as 10 micrograms per square foot can effect a child's brain development. In the absence of other lead sources, it was concluded that this lead in dust came from the chipping lead contaminated paint from walls (murals), floor, playing equipments (swing/ sea-saw, etc.)



and toys. Therefore in order to prevent lead coming into dust, CEJ initiated forming lead safe pre-schools by painting them with Lead safe paint along with awareness raising.

Implementing the 4th paint distribution program, CEJ organized this event at Dehiattakandiya in association with Macksons Paints Lanka (Pvt) Ltd, with around 200 participants representing government agencies, the base hospital, schools, education officials, teachers, parents and students.

Demarking the opening of the event Mr. Dilena Patragoda, Managing director, CEJ explained the history of CEJ and lead paint. He recalled the court case filed by CEJ in order to bring legal standards to lead concentration in paint.

Mr. Hasodh Samarasinghe spoke on behalf of the Macksons Paints Lanka (Pvt) Ltd and Ms. Chalani Rubesinghe, Senior Environmental Officer of CEJ spoke on the measures to be taken for preventing lead poisoning in pre-schools and household environments. Many participants including the Assistant director of education (early childhood development), Sub Police Inspector, A school principal, parents, teachers and students were thankful for both the donation and the awareness program.

In total 15 pre-schools, a children's home and the office of Medical Officers of Health (MOH) received lead safe paint.

In conclusion, Mr. Gamini Piyarathna, Assistant field Coordinator of CEJ, thanked the representatives of Macksons Paints Lanka (Pvt) Ltd and the other participants for their contribution in successful implementation of the event.

Signing of the MOU between the base hospital of Dehiattakandiya, CEJ and Macksons Paints Lanka (Pvt) Ltd was held at the Base hospital on the same day. The agreement was to paint the children's and the maternity ward of the hospital.

Donations from Mayura paints Lanka Pvt Ltd. was given to "Sooriya" pre-school, Sooriyapokuna, Dehiattakandiya, that of Burlux Paints Lanka Pvt Ltd. was donated to Subodi pre-school, Dalukkatiya, Sewanagala, that of Lanka paints solution Pvt Ltd. was donated to Mihindu pre-school, Mihindupura, and paints from Royal paints Lanka Pvt Ltd. was donated to "Rosakusum" Pre-school, Mahasenpura, Uwa Palwatta, Moneragala.



Figure 11; Giving paints to pre-schools. Altogether there were 5 companies sponsoring these paints.



Sticker campaign

CEJ had a sticker distribution event at main bus stand of Colombo to widen the awareness among general public. Many busses and timekeepers welcomed the message. Even people who are merchandising small items pasted the sticker on their baskets to help spreading the message.



Figure 12: Moments of the Sticker campaign held on 26th October 2018 at Pettah bus stand, Sri Lanka.

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Figure 13: Beware! Lead poisoning reduces IQ in children. Handling lead contaminated oil based paints, lead-acid batteries, electronic waste, toys and school items can cause lead contamination.

Lead Paint Legislation in Sri Lanka

Sri Lankans now can enjoy lead safe paint due to the lead paint standards enacted as a result of the Supreme Court case No 64/2011 – CEJ vs Consumer Affair Authority and others case filed by



the Centre for Environmental Justice. According to the Gazette Extra Ordinary No 1725/30 on 30th September 2011 Maximum lead level in Emulsion paint and paints for children's toys is 90 ppm while oil-based paints (Enamel and floor) can have only 600 ppm.

The **Gazette Extraordinary No. 1985/38 on 23rd of September 2016**, effected from 01st January, 2017, published by Consumer Affairs Authority (CAA), mandates to print a self-declaration that the lead content in paint is below the regulated level (figure 2).



Figure 14: AkzoNobel labels the paint productions according to the gazette notification Gazette Extraordinary No. 1985/38 on 23rd of September 2016, effected from 01st



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சுற்றாடல் நீதிக்கான கேந்திர நிலையம்
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16/ 10/ 2018

PRESS RELEASE

Paint labeling still do not follow regulations

Lead contaminated toys, school bags/pencil boxes etc., has no regulations

Lead acid battery recycling industry poison the environment and the workers

CEJ join hands with Multilac, Multico, Royal, Burlux and Evershine to make pre-schools lead safe

INTERNATIONAL LEAD POISONING PREVENTION WEEK OF ACTION- (21 TO 27 OCTOBER 2018)

Colombo, Sri Lanka, Lead is one of the ten chemicals of major public health concern, needing action to protect the health of workers, children and women of reproductive age. **It affects a child’s brain development** thereby making the whole population less productive. The culprit is hidden behind some lead contaminated paint (specially those oil based paints such as enamel, anti-corrosive, etc. in bright red, yellow, green and orange colors). In addition one can get lead contaminated by handling car batteries, electronic waste, some contaminated toys, children’s schools bags/pencil boxes, etc.

However, Sri Lankans now can enjoy lead safe paint due to the lead paint standards enacted as a result of the Supreme Court case No 64/2011 – CEJ vs Consumer Affair Authority and others case filed by the Centre for Environmental Justice. According to the Gazette Extra Ordinary No 1725/30 on 30th September 2011 Maximum lead level in Emulsion paint is 90 ppm and oil based paint can have only 600 ppm.

According to Mr. Hemantha Withanage, Executive Director of the Centre for Environmental Justice “CEJ started working on preventing lead poisoning since 2009. By 2015 our studies revealed that even Small and Medium Manufacturers (SMEs) produce lead safe paint. Yet, due to absence of a proper labeling and certification, general public fails to identify good paint of SMEs”.



Although the **Gazette Extraordinary No. 1985/38 on 23rd of September 2016**, effected from 01st January, 2017, published by Consumer Affairs Authority(CAA) to print a self-declaration that the lead content in paint is below the regulated level, we seldomly see the lead levels printed on paint cans” Mr. Withanage added.

A recent study published in Nepal by Center for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED), revealed that plastic and rubber toys from India and China can have lead in the amounts such as; 4688, 900.2, 328.9, 86.6, 151, 243, 185 ppm. In addition some toys were found to have cadmium, chromium (VI), zinc and Phthalates, that are also hazardous to children’s health. The situation in Sri Lanka though is a mystery.

According to Mr. Withanage, “Sri Lanka has number of Lead-Acid Battery recycling businesses especially in the North Western province which has no safeguards. They use bare hands to break the Lead cells of the batteries and dump waste in the open environment and poison the surroundings”.

Centre for Environmental Justice celebrates this International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action (21 to 27 October 2018) by making more pre-schools lead safe.

The week for 2018 will have several events.

Paint distribution to 15 preschools and the awareness program at Dehiattakandiya in association with **Macksons Paints Lanka (Pvt) Ltd.**

Distribution of paints to 4 pre-schools in Monaragala district in association with **Lanka paints solution Pvt Ltd., Mayura paints Lanka Pvt Ltd., Royal paints Lanka Pvt Ltd. and Burlux Paints Lanka Pvt Ltd.**

Distribution of stickers to display for public awareness raising at busses, trains and other public places

CEJ celebrates the International lead poisoning prevention week of action every year to remind general public about the lead poisoning and urge health, environmental and consumer agencies to take measures in preventing lead poisoning from lead paint, lead contaminated toys, lead acid batteries etc.

End



Figure 8: Participants representing the government Agencies, hospital, media, schools and preschools



Figure 13: Paint donation and awareness program at Sewanagala



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(Published by Authority)

PART I : SECTION (I) — GENERAL

Government Notifications

Direction No. 61

CONSUMER AFFAIRS AUTHORITY ACT, No. 09 OF 2003

Direction under Section 10(1)(a)

ACTING under the powers vested in it by Section 10(1)(a) of the Consumer Affairs Authority Act, No. 09 of 2003, the Consumer Affairs Authority directs all manufacturers and traders of paints, varnishes and solvents used in the building industry that on the bottles, packs or containers of such paints, varnishes and solvents the following information shall be printed legibly.

- (a) Batch No.
- (b) Date of Manufacture
- (c) Best before date
- (d) Volume
- (e) Maximum retail price
- (f) A Declaration to the effect that the total Lead content does not exceed the permissible maximum level of Lead content specified in Direction No. 36 issued by the Consumer Affairs Authority and published in *Gazette Notification* No. 1725/ 30, dated 30.09.2011.

The Consumer Affairs Authority do by this Direction, rescind Direction No. 50 published, in *Gazette Extraordinary* No. 1875/38 dated 15th August 2014.

This Direction shall come into effect from 1st January, 2017.

By order of the Consumer Affairs Authority,

HASITHA TILLEKERATNE,
Chairman

Colombo,
22nd September 2016.

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Figure 14: Paint donation and awareness program at Mihindupura



Figure 16: Donation of Multico paints