Update on the global status of legal limits on lead in paint

March 2023
Recent progress on development of lead paint laws

The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint has continued to see significant progress in, the establishment of legal limits for lead paint, through its work with governments and other stakeholders.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Health Observatory, a total of 93 countries have laws limiting the content of lead in paint (Figure 1). In addition, 19 countries are in the final stages of drafting lead paint laws. Twenty two percent of the country-progress was assisted by work under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Project, Global best practices on emerging chemical policy issues of concern under SAICM.

Updated status: Albania, Egypt, Jamaica, Paraguay and Republic of Korea established new laws to address lead in paint. The status of laws in Malawi, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were updated in the Global Health Observatory to reflect already existing laws and changes from 2014 and 2023.

New tools: The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) published Lead Paint Law Compliance and Enforcement Guidance describing key elements of compliance and enforcement strategies for government officials, with examples from countries that have enacted lead paint laws and examples of actions paint manufacturers and importers can take to demonstrate compliance. UNEP’s Lead Paint Reformulation Technical Guidelines were jointly developed with the National Cleaner Production Centre from Serbia (NCPC Serbia). The guidelines address technical barriers as well as logistical and economic capacity constraints to the substitution of lead compounds in paint, focusing on the needs of small and medium sized enterprises. The summary Reformulation is Entirely Possible contains key messages from the technical guidelines highlighting how they can be used by different stakeholders involved in the phasing out of lead paint. Both the guidelines and the summary are available in all UN languages.

New momentum: To further galvanize action, the Alliance is organizing the 11th International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (ILPPW) to be held 22-28 October 2023. This year’s week of action will focus on children’s environmental health in relation to lead exposure. Learn more about the ILPPW here.

In November 2022, a Workshop on Lead as a major threat for human health and the environment – an integrated approach strengthening cooperation toward solutions, was organized by the G7 Climate, Energy and Environment Ministers. The workshop drew attention to possible actions to reduce exposures to lead paint along with other sources and set-out some of the elements of a shared vision for G7 work to support achieving a world free of lead poisoning.

New Partners: The number of partners committed to the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint has grown to 107 as of December 2022 with, 26 governments, 50 non-government organizations, 5 inter-governmental organizations, 6 academic organizations or institutions, and 20 industry or trade associations.

Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint

The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint (Lead Paint Alliance) is a voluntary partnership formed by UNEP and WHO in 2011 to focus and catalyze the efforts to achieve international goals to prevent children’s exposure to lead from paints containing lead and to minimize occupational exposures to lead paint. Its broad objective is to promote a phase-out of the manufacture and sale of paints containing lead and eventually to eliminate the risks that such paints pose.

Lead Paint Alliance Activities in 2022

Regional GEF project close-out workshops in Latin America, Africa, and Central Eastern Europe.


10th annual International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (ILPPW) from 23-29 October, 2022. The campaign theme, “Say No to Lead Poisoning,” recognized the urgency of action needed to identify and eliminate all sources of lead exposure.

Lead in Paint Community of Practice (LiP CoP) • March 9: “Lead Paint Testing: Case Studies of Impact” • May 18: “Transitioning to paints without added lead: guidance and experience in reformulation” • July 13: “Preparing for the 10th International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week” • November 16: “Compliance with Lead Paint Laws”
Status of lead paint laws in each region

Africa

- Figure 2: Legally binding controls on lead paint in countries in the UNEP Africa Region

• 10 countries have laws, 34 countries do not have laws, and 10 countries have not confirmed their status.

• The Alliance provided technical and legal comments to assist the development of draft lead paint laws for Sierra Leone, Egypt and Ghana.

• Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): The Alliance reviewed the draft technical regulation of ECOWAS, which subsequently held a meeting in November 2022 validating the draft lead paint technical regulation for approval by Ministers.

• Egypt: In June 2022, a ministerial decree was enacted which sets a limit of 5000 ppm for lead in paint.

• Malawi: Reported standards enacted in 2013 and 2014 requiring that paints contain no lead, including road-marking, emulsion and decorative paints.

• Sierra Leone: A stakeholder meeting was held in November 2022 to present a paint study conducted with the Lead Exposure Elimination Project (LEEP) and to plan for finalization of the lead paint regulation.

• Zambia: A stakeholder workshop was held in December 2022 to obtain input for a draft law to reduce lead in paint and to make an existing 90 ppm lead paint standard mandatory.
Asia and the Pacific

Figure 3: Legally binding controls on lead paint in countries in the UNEP Asia and the Pacific Region

- 12 countries have laws, 17 countries do not have laws, and 10 countries have not confirmed their status.
- **Indonesia:** Following a meeting with the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) in May 2022, the National Standardization Agency of Indonesia enacted a 90 ppm maximum voluntary limit for lead in decorative paint, aerosol paint, automotive paint, and heat reflective paints.
- **Malaysia:** In May 2022, the Department of Standards (DoS) published a draft standard for public comments, which sets a 90 ppm set dry weight limit on lead in solvent-based and water-based paints, varnishes, and stains, including spray paint for architectural coatings for interior and exterior applications.
- **Mongolia:** The Ministry of Health shared a proposed draft law prohibiting the import of lead paint for review by the Lead Paint Alliance.
- **Republic of Korea:** Under the Environmental Health Act, a lead content limit of 0.009% applies to paint and finishing materials which may come into contact with children. Korea Consumer Agency is responsible for the compliance with lead in paint-related laws and regulations.

West Asia

Figure 4: Legally binding controls on lead paint in countries in the UNEP West Asia Region

- 9 countries have laws, 1 country does not have a law, and 1 country has not confirmed their status.
- **Azerbaijan:** Following a multistakeholder meeting in Spring 2022, draft legislation on limiting lead in paints was developed and the Alliance provided comments.
- **Jordan:** 5 new Jordanian Standards for decorative paints were revised in the first quarter of 2022 to align with Ministry of Health decree (with a 90 ppm limit).
- **Oman:** The Department of Health and Occupational Health (DEOH) and Ministry of Health Oman, in collaboration with WHO OMAN, raised awareness with industry and communities by developing and disseminating materials, such as a video on lead poisoning risks, prevention and control, and broadcasts using national radio channels.
- **Saudi Arabia:** A technical regulation was published in 2020, limiting the concentration of lead in paint to 90 ppm.
- **United Arab Emirates:** A legally binding control on lead, volatile organic compounds, and heavy metals in paint and varnish products was established in 2014. There is no numerical limit mentioned in the standard.
- **Uzbekistan:** A meeting was organized by WHO on how to address the global context of chemicals management, health, economics and environmental impacts of lead; lead in paints as a source of exposure; existing initiatives and progress in neighboring countries; and recommendations on prohibiting lead in paints.
Europe

Figure 5: Legally binding controls on lead paint in countries in the UNEP Europe Region

- 45 countries have laws, 6 countries do not have laws, and 3 countries have not confirmed their status.
- Albania: In 2019, a Decision of Ministerial Council on the restrictions in the production, putting on the market and the use of certain hazardous chemicals and articles adopted REACH and the lead in paint is regulated as stated in EU legislation.
- Moldova: In April 2022, the Lead Paint Alliance provided a second round of technical comments during a period of public comment on the draft Government Decision for the approval of a regulation limiting lead in paints.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Figure 6: Legally binding controls on lead paint in countries in the UNEP Latin America and the Caribbean Region

- 15 countries have laws, 11 countries do not have laws, and 7 countries have not confirmed their status.
- The Lead Paint Alliance reviewed the draft version of an existing standard in Ecuador.
- Jamaica: As of March 2023, a new standard on lead in paint enters into force. The enforcement of the standard will be led by the National Compliance and Regulatory Authority (NCRA), an agency arm of Bureau of Standards Jamaica (BSJ).
- Panama: In November 2022, a national stakeholder meeting took place with UNEP support. On behalf of the Lead Paint Alliance, the U.S. EPA provided comments on a draft decree to update the existing regulation by lowering the limit to 90 ppm and improving enforcement mechanisms.
- Paraguay: In 2022, Ministry of Environment adopted a resolution to limit all lead compounds that may be found in paint. The legally binding limit of 90 ppm is applied to specific types of paint: paint for the exterior and interior of residential and public buildings, and furniture.
North America

Figure 7. Legally binding controls on lead paint in countries in the UNEP North America Region

- All countries have lead paint laws.
- The United States is the Chair of the Lead Paint Alliance Advisory Council and works closely with UNEP, WHO, Lead Paint Alliance partners and others to promote lead paint laws.

References
