

A conversation with Barbara Hendrie, Hilary French, Samantha Marie Suffety, and Angela Bandemehr, February 27, 2019

Participants

- Barbara Hendrie – Director, North America Office, UN Environment Programme
- Hilary French – Program Management Officer, North America Office, UN Environment Programme
- Samantha Marie Suffety – Partnerships and Communications Consultant, UN Environment Programme
- Angela Bandemehr – International Lead Paint Program Manager, US Environmental Protection Agency in its role as Chair of the Advisory Council of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint (aka Lead Paint Alliance)
- James Snowden – Research Consultant, GiveWell

Note: These notes were compiled by GiveWell and give an overview of the major points made by Ms. Hendrie, Ms. French, Ms. Suffety, and Ms. Bandemehr. This discussion was held for information collection purposes only. The United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) and the World Health Organization are the Secretariat of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint. The United States Environmental Protection Agency participated in the conversation as a technical advisor to UN Environment and Chair of the Advisory Council of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint.

Summary

GiveWell spoke with Ms. Hendrie, Ms. French, and Ms. Suffety of UN Environment and Ms. Bandemehr of the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) as part of an investigation into lead paint regulation in developing countries. Conversation topics included sources of lead exposure, the regulation of lead paint, an overview of the lead paint industry, an overview of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint, and how additional funding could support the mission of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint. UN Environment, WHO, and the US EPA support lead paint work globally through their engagement in the Alliance and with Alliance partners.

Sources of lead exposure

Sources of acute lead exposure

Lead-acid batteries

Lead-acid batteries contain high concentrations of lead and can cause lead poisoning. Due to the acute nature of exposure, hotspots can be identified.

Mining

Zamfara State in Nigeria experienced significant deaths from exposure to lead ore being mined.

Lead paint

Although lead in paint—as well as gasoline—was gradually eliminated in the US and Europe in the 1970s and 1980s, lead paint is still present in many homes and is only removed as homes are renovated. Lead paint is still used in most developing countries due to lack of regulation or enforcement.

Unlike lead-acid batteries and mining, lead paint impacts public health outcomes over longer periods of time. Based on the experience of the US and Europe, where lead paint remains a source of exposure to children and given its ubiquitous nature, the Alliance and other researchers believe that lead paint is a major source of lead exposure for most children globally.

Lack of academic evidence of impact

Data from the US and Europe have demonstrated strong, population-level effects of lead exposure on IQ levels and the effect of lead paint exposure on IQ can be inferred from studies linking IQ decrements with lead concentration levels in blood. However, there is a lack of direct evidence for a correlation in developing countries between IQ loss and exposure to lead paint specifically, due to the lack of population-level studies. In the US this link has been proven by showing the link between lead in house dust (linked with lead paint) and lead in children's blood.¹ This link can also be inferred by the fact that despite control of lead paint and other sources of lead in the US, children's blood lead levels have plateaued and are not reducing further. A possible source is historic lead paint on the walls of their homes.

Regulation of lead

General lead regulation in the US

Data from different years of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), a large and costly study that includes measures of blood lead levels (BLLs) for each state in the US, demonstrate reductions in BLLs following the establishment of regulations on lead from gasoline and other sources.

Surveys comparable to NHANES do not exist in developing countries.

Regulation of lead paint in developing countries

The national governments of many developing countries lack awareness of the harmful impacts of lead paint. Enacting lead paint regulation in these countries is a major priority of actors such as UN Environment and the US EPA through the Lead Paint Alliance.

¹ B. P. Lanphear et. al.; ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH, SECTION A 79, 51Ð68 (1998)

Impact of regulation on levels of lead paint

Studies conducted by IPEN have found that the enactment of lead paint regulation results in reduced levels of lead in paint, which is a more proximate measure of effectiveness than BLLs (since lead will begin to dissipate from the blood stream as it is processed and absorbed). However, IPEN has also found that laws without proper enforcement do not result in reduced levels of lead paint. It is planning to continue conducting studies on the effect of lead paint regulations.

Usefulness for efforts to address other sources of lead

US EPA and UN Environment have found that their former work assisting countries to enact regulations on lead in gasoline helped establish processes and awareness that can be leveraged to enact regulations on lead paint. Similarly, learnings from regulating lead paint can be utilized by governments to effectively address other sources of lead.

Case study of lead paint regulation in Israel

US EPA first introduced the issue of lead paint regulation in Israel during a bilateral meeting with the nation's Ministry of Environmental Protection, with which it had a pre-existing relationship. Key decision-makers for lead paint regulation included the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Economy. Following this meeting, the Israeli Ministry of Health conducted a few small screening studies that found unsafe levels of lead (above 90 parts per million) in playground soil and aerosol paint—which convinced Israeli policymakers to pursue the adoption of a lead paint standard. US EPA and the US Embassy in Israel then held a roundtable discussion with government representatives, global and local industry, and academia to demonstrate the importance of eliminating lead in paint. Global industry stakeholders were also able to reassure the two producers of paint in Israel that lead paint regulation would not be detrimental to business.

After the Israeli government received assurance that local industry would not oppose lead paint regulation, US EPA continued to encourage the adoption of a lead standard and provided guidance on language based on the “Model Law and Guidance for Regulating Lead Paint” developed by UN Environment. The Israeli lead paint standard was adopted in February 2019 and will go into effect in 90 days. There will be a phase-out period for the existing labelling standard until January 2021, after which the new standard will be fully in force.

Overview of the lead paint industry

Multinational companies

Multinational paint producers have largely discontinued the sale of lead-based paints. They are working closely with the Lead Paint Alliance to help encourage all companies to phase out lead paint.

Small businesses

Small and local businesses are still widespread in the paint industry.

Challenges in transitioning to lead compound alternatives

Lead-containing compounds are often used in paint for specific properties, such as color and accelerated drying. Lead may also be inadvertently added to paint through natural extenders or pigments (such as ferrous oxide), which may contain naturally-occurring lead. To reduce lead content in paint, non-lead alternatives can be substituted. Reformulating paint to remove lead can often be difficult for small business for several reasons. Small businesses may not be aware of the dangers of lead, may not have access to vendors of lead-free compounds, and may have difficulty replacing lead compounds with non-lead options, which often requires adjustments to other components in paint.

Small businesses do not always have access to ingredients at competitive market prices, due to the small sales volume they represent to larger vendors of paint additives. However, these large paint additive vendors have expressed strong interest in working with the Lead Paint Alliance, and given the appropriate support, they may be willing to train small paint producers.

Overview of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint

In 2009, the second International Conference on Chemicals Management agreed to begin focusing attention on lead paint and lead-acid batteries under the Strategic Approach for International Chemicals Management (SAICM)—a global policy framework that includes input from non-profits, public-sector actors, and industry stakeholders. This agreement resulted in the creation of the Lead Paint Alliance, a collaborative initiative including governments, global (International Paint and Printing Ink Council or IPPIC) and local industry, multilateral organizations (e.g. UN Environment, World Health Organization), and non-governmental organizations (e.g. IPEN, OK International, Pure Earth, Health and Environment Alliance). UN Environment and WHO serve as the joint Secretariat and US EPA is the Chair of the Lead Paint Alliance Advisory Council. The Advisory Council is a select group of Alliance partners representing governments, industry, environmental and health non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations. The work of the Alliance has received global support from the paint industry and both the environmental and health communities.

The Secretariat provides a coordination function for the disparate efforts of Alliance partners, develops an action plan and activity report to communicate goals and progress, and conducts briefings and outreach to raise awareness about the Alliance. The Secretariat and the Chair have successfully brought together disparate partners from government, industry, and environment organizations to agree on a common goal and on coordinated actions.

Organizational structure

Financing

The Lead Paint Alliance is not a grantmaking entity. Funding for the Lead Paint Alliance is provided for Secretariat functions through UN Environment and the

World Health Organization (WHO). Other organizations are considered partners and provide their own funding for specific projects to support Alliance goals.

Staffing

Staff working for the Lead Paint Alliance Secretariat include 50% of a full-time equivalent (FTE) staff at WHO and 50% of an FTE staff at UN Environment.

Partners of the Alliance provide in-kind staff for specific projects to achieve Alliance goals.

Historic work

The Lead Paint Alliance has historically worked with limited resources. Despite this, through in-kind resources from partners, it has developed several useful tools to support countries in establishing laws. In addition, some funding from the Global Environment Facility and the European Union achieved meaningful results in a limited number of countries through regional workshops, in which partner organizations met with government officials, encouraged them to adopt lead paint regulations, and engaged in a small amount of follow-up at the country level. While these efforts resulted in some countries passing lead paint laws, the funding fell short of what is needed for all countries to adopt lead paint laws in the next five years.

Development of a Model Law

In 2017, the Lead Paint Alliance worked with the American Bar Association (ABA) to develop a Model Law and Guidance for Regulating Lead Paint, which provides a model template for lead paint laws that can be adapted to country-specific legal frameworks.

Current work through the SAICM Global Environment Facility project

The current efforts of the Lead Paint Alliance are being guided by a SAICM and Global Environment Facility (GEF) project, the lead paint component of which commenced in January of 2019 and will conclude in 2021. The project executing agency is SAICM and project executing partners include UN Environment, WHO, US EPA, ABA, IPEN, and IPPIC. This GEF-funded project helps extend the reach of the Alliance and aims to create momentum toward laws globally.

Establishing national lead paint regulations

The lead paint component of the SAICM GEF project has targeted a number of countries as high priorities for lead paint regulation, which is believed to be the only effective approach to eliminating lead paint.

Target countries will participate in regional workshops (all scheduled for spring of 2019) to meet with government officials, identify the needs of countries, and conduct follow-up according to country needs. For example, a country with low awareness of lead paint issues may decide to work with IPEN and WHO on a campaign to raise awareness among local industry and the national health ministry.

Alternatively, countries may request assistance with establishing law drafting committees, which ABA would then help facilitate.

Working with small and medium enterprises

The lead paint component of the SAICM GEF project will also work with small and medium enterprises—which are sometimes the main producers of paint in a country—on transitioning to lead additive alternatives.

Lack of funds for travel and sampling studies

The SAICM GEF project does not allocate significant funding to travel expenses for follow-up work at the country level. Project executing partners could likely only travel to five or six countries for follow-up work. Absent funding for travel, project executing partners could provide support and analysis through remote meetings.

The SAICM GEF project also lacks funding to conduct lead paint screening studies.

The Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint’s room for more funding

Former and current budget

In 2018, the Lead Paint Alliance received approximately \$500,000 in in-kind resources from various sources. Historically, the Lead Paint Alliance has largely been supported by in-kind contributions.

The SAICM GEF project provided a \$3 million grant (\$1 million per year for three years) to UN Environment, which is intended for work in 40 countries and is being dispersed, in part, to project executing partners including IPEN and ABA. US EPA is a non-funded project executing partner. IPEN is also contributing some additional funding leveraged by the GEF Lead Paint Project. Governments and small businesses will receive technical assistance from project partners but no direct funding (some governments and small businesses targeted in the project have also decided to make in-kind contributions).

Use of additional funding

UN Environment believes that additional funding would enable the Lead Paint Alliance to speed up and scale up the process of establishing lead paint laws in developing countries. It estimates that an additional \$1-1.5 million per year for five years—as well as the required political will—could result in major achievements (e.g. lead paint laws, high awareness among industry and public) in 50% of high-priority countries.

UN Environment stated that it would primarily use additional funding to hire senior staff to support the Lead Paint Alliance Secretariat that could effectively engage with industry, raise awareness among government stakeholders, and facilitate stronger communication between partners. In addition to a senior-level project manager, the Lead Paint Alliance Secretariat at UN Environment could benefit from a number of regionally focused staff and one globally focused staff member to support work at

the national, regional, and global levels —a model with which the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles achieved significant success.

Additional funding would also be granted to partner organizations to support their work on lead paint laws at the national level.

Potential mechanisms for GiveWell to fund work on lead paint

A few potential mechanisms exist for GiveWell to fund work on lead paint:

- **Granting funding to a particular organization** – GiveWell could choose to provide funding to one particular partner organization within the Lead Paint Alliance. This option may be least desirable because a single organization would not be able to achieve the same progress that the combined effort of many organizations could. The work of the Lead Paint Alliance is a global multi-stakeholder effort that can easily become disorganized without proper management and communications. Furthermore, a single organization may have a board of directors that promotes priorities not fully aligned with the Lead Paint Alliance.
- **Granting funding to an overarching body** – GiveWell could find or create an entity that manages allocations of funding to organizations within the Lead Paint Alliance.
- **Hiring an employee to manage a portfolio of grants** – GiveWell could hire a specialist with significant experience to manage a portfolio of grants for work on lead paint.

*All GiveWell conversations are available at
<http://www.givewell.org/research/conversations>*