



## PRESS RELEASE

### **EU-funded Study shows many paints still contain hazardous Lead Levels** **More than 50 percent of the paint complies with the lead paint regulations gazetted by the CAA**

**Colombo, Sri Lanka, 17 June 2015.** A new study shows that since Center for Environmental Justice (CEJ) began studying the lead content of paints sold in Sri Lanka in 2009, most paint brands with the largest market share have reduced lead content in their paints to less than 600 ppm. Nevertheless, too many paints still contain dangerous levels of lead as high as 44,000 ppm. According to the regulations published by the Consumer Affairs Authority no person shall produce, sell or store enamel paints with more than 600 ppm of lead. The paint study was conducted as a part the IPEN Asian Lead Paint Elimination Project, funded with EUR 1.4 million (Rs. 245 million) by the European Union.

The study released today by CEJ of paints purchased around the country between August 2014 and February 2015 shows that even two years after paint regulations were implemented, 46% (26 samples out of 56) paints had lead levels exceeding 600 ppm, the regulated level in Sri Lanka. Also, 21% (12 out of 56) paints had lead concentrations of more than 10,000 ppm.

As a positive note, 54% (30 out of 56 paints) were found to be following the Sri Lankan mandatory level for enamel paints. In addition, 43% (24 out of 56) of all paints sampled contained lead levels below 90 ppm, which demonstrates the ability of the manufacturers to produce low leaded paint in Sri Lanka.

It was found that one of the paints with “lead safe” claim on the label contained 969 ppm lead. Also paints claiming to be “heavy metal safe, had lead levels exceeding the lead standard.

Results also show that green (8 out of 11 samples) and yellow (10 out of 15 samples) colour paints contained higher concentrations of lead. Yet, a green and a yellow paint also had low levels of lead (70 ppm and 3 ppm, respectively), proving that local producers do have the capability to produce low lead levels in these colors as well.

“There is no excuse for producing paint with high lead content any more. We found that some of the SMEs that participated in awareness activities conducted by CEJ have shown a tremendous improvement in producing LEAD



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Centre for Environmental Justice, based in Sri Lanka, is a partner organization of the Asia Lead Paint Elimination Project of IPEN

IPEN is an international organization promoting safe chemical practices that protect human health and the environment

This project is funded by the European Union. The Delegation of the European Union to Sri Lanka, 26, Sir Marcus Fernando Mawatha, Colombo 07, Sri Lanka

The European Commission is the EU's executive body. “The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms. The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders”.

SAFE PAINT. Seventeen (17) paints that contained more than 600 ppm lead in 2013, now have lead levels below 600 ppm, and the majority, 82% (14 out of 17) of these paints had lead levels below 90 ppm. This evident that any manufacturer can produce paints within the legal limits” said Hemantha Withanage, CEJ Executive Director.

Lead is hazardous to all, however children are more vulnerable. Exposure to even small amounts of lead can reduce a child’s intelligence and school performance. Lead can also cause increased violent behavior. High levels of lead in dust are a cause for serious concern not only for families, but the country as a whole. This damage is lifelong and irreversible. A study conducted by CEJ in 2014 on lead levels in the dust found in household, schools and pre-schools clearly showed how lead in paint can contaminate the environment and enters the human body through breathing and hand to mouth activity.

“It is the time for authorities to act. Strict implementation of the law is a must, but not only on the paint in market shelves also on the production process and raw materials, said, Eranda Rathnamalala, Environmental Officer at CEJ.

“We recommend a third party certification mechanism to verify lead-free claims and measures by the government authorities for the safe disposal of lead contaminated paints found in the market,” he added.

Since 2012, three studies have conducted by CEJ in coordination with the IPEN under the ASIAN LEAD PAINT ELIMINATION PROJECT, which is being implemented in seven countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand) with European Union (EU) funding of EUR 1.4 million (Rs. 245 million) over a period of three years.

CEJ published two previous studies on Lead levels found in Paints in 2013 and the lead levels found in dust samples obtained from house, schools and pre schools in 2014.

End

## Notes

Regulations published in Gazette Extra Ordinary No. 1725/30 on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011 clearly states that “ ***no Manufacturer, Importer, Packer, Distributor or Trader shall manufacture, import and use or distribute, pack, store or sell or display for sale, expose for sale or offer for sale, wholesale or retail any paints unless such paints shall conform to the corresponding Total Lead Content given hereunder as specified by the Sri Lanka Standard Institution for such paints***” and that standard for enamel paint is 600 ppm.

Gazette Extra Ordinary No 1875/38 dated 15<sup>th</sup> August 2014 published by the Consumer Affairs Authority directs “**all manufacturers and traders of paints used in the building industry that they shall print legibly the total content of Lead in paint in mg/ kg on the packs of containers of paints**”...

**CEJ (Centre for Environmental Justice)** conducts projects and programs in the areas of science, law and advocacy and provides free legal aid and trainings to marginalized communities to protect their environmental rights.

**IPEN Lead Paint Elimination Project** is working in seven Asian countries to eliminate lead in paint and raise widespread awareness among business entrepreneurs and consumers about the adverse human health impacts of lead-based decorative paints, particularly on the health of children under six years old.

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