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Press Statement

For immediate release

NAPE CALLS FOR TOTAL BAN ON LEAD PAINT AS THE WORLD MARKS THE INTERNATIONAL LEAD POISONING PREVENTION WEEK OF ACTION.

National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) has joined the rest of the World to mark the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action (24th-30th October) with a call on the Ugandan Government to impose a total ban on the use of lead paint.

This week of action is an initiative of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint (the Lead Paint Alliance), which is jointly led by the UN Environment Programme and WHO.

With this year's theme, "Working together for a world without lead," NAPE has partnered with local leaders to create awareness using Uganda Community Green Radio about the harmful effects of Lead poison and its exposure pathways including paints, batteries, lead contaminated toys and lead contaminated dust.

Peruth Atukwatse, the Program Officer for Chemicals management and climate change at NAPE says though World Health Organisation (WHO) has identified Lead in particular lead paint as one the chemicals of major public health concern, the government of Uganda has given little attention to its regulation and raising awareness about its effects to the public.

She explains that there is need to draft a regulation to ban the manufacturing and production of lead paint that exceeds lead concentration of 90 parts per million (ppm), increase on awareness campaigns and assess the quantity of lead put in paints by manufacturers.

Medih Kyakonye, the Kasanda District Environmental Officer and a student of PHD in Environmental Chemistry explains that Lead is a cumulative toxicant that affects brain, liver, kidney and bones. He says lead can affect a child's brain development and nervous system and also causes anemia, hypertension and toxicity of the reproductive organs.

He, however, notes that people are innocently exposed to lead poisoning because they are not sensitized enough to know the effects.

"The paint manufacturers add Lead in their paint to make it easy for the paint to dry quickly. These days almost every house is painted and that means every person in a painted house is exposed to Lead. Lead paint is worse in a newly painted house that is not dry as well as an old house with paint dust. But people are not aware of these dangers," Kyakonye explains.

According to Kyakonye, the government has not done enough to protect the citizens. He said there should be clear laws to regulate toxic chemicals from flowing into the market for the safety of Ugandans. He says the local governments are not facilitated enough to raise awareness on lead poison yet the public needs to be protected.

“Like for us in Kassanda, our sensitization is focused much on mercury use since it is largely used in the gold mines but there is need to increase the district budget so that the public especially town dwellers who live in painted houses are sensitized on dangers of other harmful chemicals like Lead,” adds Kyakonye.

The Kiboga district Senior Environment Officer, Zaina Nakandi said the district is underfunded to carry out awareness campaigns on lead poison for public health. She also notes that lead poison is an issue that has not been given much attention because of the long term that effects take to manifest. She noted that people especially children who are most vulnerable since their bodies are still developing, need to be protected and this can only be done when parents are sensitized about the effects of Lead and its pathways.

“We need to sensitize the public because lead poisoning is a major public health concern but as the district, our hands are tied. That’s why we appreciate the efforts of NAPE for giving us the platform to sensitize people,” said Nakandi.

In 2017, NAPE with support from IPEN carried out a study on lead in solvent based paints for home use in Uganda aimed at assessing the levels of lead in paint produced in Uganda. It was found out that 20 out of 30 analysed solvent-based paints for home use (67% of paints) were lead paints. This means they contain lead concentrations above 90 parts per million.

Frank Muramuzi, the NAPE Executive Director, called upon the government of Uganda to join efforts with the rest of the world to eliminate lead paint by enforcing lead paint regulations and increasing public awareness campaigns about the health effects of lead exposure.

RELEASED BY NAPE’S CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME