



Lead is a toxic metal whose widespread use has caused extensive environmental contamination and health problems in many parts of the world. [The students pictured above were part of the awareness-raising campaign in the Dead Sea area]. As part of the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint and the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action, 20–26 October 2013, Jordan conducted an effective campaign this week to protect individuals from exposure to lead. The official launch was organized by WHO Regional Centre for Environmental Health Action (CEHA) and inaugurated under the patronage of the Ministries of Environment and Health with the support of a national nongovernmental organization Jordan Environment Society.

WHO has identified lead as one of 10 chemicals of major public health concern. It is currently developing guidelines on the prevention and management of lead poisoning, which it will provide policy-makers, public health authorities and health professionals with evidence-based guidance on the measures that they can take to protect the health of children and adults from lead exposure.

Since leaded paint is a continuing source of exposure in many countries, WHO has joined with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to form the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint (GAELP). The alliance focuses and catalyses efforts to achieve international goals on preventing children's exposure to lead from leaded paints and minimizing occupational exposures to such paint. Its broad objective is to promote a phase-out of the manufacture and sale of paints containing lead and eventually eliminate the risks that such paints pose.

H.E. Minister of the Environment Dr Taher Al-Shakhshir pledged the elimination of lead from paints. Dr Basel Al-Yousfi, Director, CEHA, delivered an opening message describing lead exposure, contamination, toxicity and WHO actions towards preventing lead poisoning in children. Engineer Salah Al-Hyari, Director, Environmental Health Directorate, Ministry of Health, described research on lead poisoning conducted in Jordan from 1994 until the present day.

Engineer Ahmad Al-Kofahi, Executive Director, Jordan Environment Society, supports the campaign which it has adopted as one of its sustained programmes. Dr Mohamed Elmi, Environmental Health Risk Coordinator, CEHA, said that even as early as 3000 BC the Romans had become aware that lead was causing health problems. In 1922, the League of Nations had banned lead-based paint and in 1978 the United States had also done so.

A range of activities and awareness-raising campaigns were conducted by the Jordan Environment Society this week in Irbid, Amman, Aqaba and the Dead Sea. The campaigns were attended by students, teachers, principals, rangers, and representatives of the Ministry of Health and governmental organizations who took part in activities to raise awareness of lead poisoning.

### **Related links**

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Sunday 28th of April 2024 01:32:48 AM