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NAPE JOINS THE REST OF THE WORLD TO MARK THE INTERNATIONAL LEAD POISONING PREVENTION WEEK OF ACTION (20TH-

26TH OCTOBER, 2019).

The National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) this week joined the rest of the world to mark the International Lead Poisoning Week of Action.

The Lead Poisoning Week of Action is used raise awareness and to promote actions aimed at addressing the human health effects of lead exposure especially on children.

This years' focus is on eliminating lead paint. Lead paint is a major source of childhood exposure to lead poisoning.

The NAPE officer in charge of the Chemicals Management Programme Ms. Peruth Atukwatse said that for this year, her organization has concentrated on creating awareness on lead exposure and poisoning using the mass media.

"We have partnered with the Community Green Radio which covers the entire Albertine Region and neighbouring areas to create awareness on lead poisoning. Radio talk-shows and a number of news items have featured on this radio throughout this entire week," Atukwatse said.

The NAPE Executive Director Mr. Frank Muramuzi said that in 2017, NAPE with support from IPEN carried out a study on lead in solvent based paints for home use in Uganda. He said that the study was aimed at assessing the levels of lead in paint that is produced in Uganda.

" It was found out that 20 out of 30 analysed solvent-based paints for home use (67 percent of paints) were lead paints. This means that they contained lead concentrations above 90 parts per million (ppm, dry weight of paint)," Muramuzi said.

Muramuzi called upon the government of Uganda and its relevant implementing agencies like NEMA, UNBS, to move faster to develop laws and regulations that either ban or restrict the use of lead paint.

He appealed to schools, hospitals and the general public should ensure that when purchasing paint, they only look for that one which does not contain lead.

What the public should know about lead.

- Lead is a naturally occurring toxic metal found in the Earth's crust. Its widespread use has resulted in extensive environmental contamination, human exposure and significant public health problems in many parts of the world.
- Lead is a cumulative toxicant that affects multiple body systems and is particularly harmful to young children.
- Lead in the body is distributed to the brain, liver, kidney and bones. It is stored in the teeth and bones, where it accumulates over time. Human exposure is usually assessed through the measurement of lead in blood.
- Lead in bone is released into blood during pregnancy and becomes a source of exposure to the developing fetus.
- There is no level of exposure to lead that is known to be without harmful effects.
- Lead exposure is preventable.
- Young children are particularly vulnerable to the toxic effects of lead and can suffer profound and permanent adverse health effects, particularly affecting the development of the brain and nervous system. Lead also causes long-term harm in adults, including increased risk of high blood pressure and kidney damage.
- Exposure of pregnant women to high levels of lead can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight.

Sources and routes of exposure

- People can become exposed to lead through occupational and environmental sources.
- Young children are particularly vulnerable to lead poisoning because they absorb 4–5 times as much ingested lead as adults from a given source. Moreover, children's innate curiosity and their age-appropriate hand-to-mouth behaviour result in their mouthing and swallowing lead-containing or lead-coated objects, such as contaminated soil or dust and flakes from decaying lead-containing paint.

ISSUED BY THE NAPE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT