



# PRESS RELEASE

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## Creating Sri Lanka's First Lead Safe Pre-School

**Colombo, Sri Lanka,** Work began today to create Sri Lanka's first Lead Safe pre-school by The Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ)/Friends of the Earth Sri Lanka in commemoration of International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week October 19-25, 2014, sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO). Work will completed on November 1 and celebrated at an event involving parents, school children, government officials, and paint manufacturers.

Lead safe paints (paints with less than 600 ppm and 90 ppm lead content, depending on the type of paint) will be used in every application within the preschool, including walls, floors and children's play equipments. The first Lead Safe preschool in Sri Lanka is being established by The Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ)/Friends of the Earth Sri Lanka, as a model for other preschools and schools in the country as a first activity carried out under a project implemented through the EU-SWITCH programme.

International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week is an international event held annually by WHO to raise awareness of the health hazards of lead exposure and to encourage governments to take action to prevent childhood lead poisoning, including eliminating lead in paint.

Dust and soil contaminated by lead in paint has been identified the most common source of lead exposure, especially for children and pregnant women. A recent study, *Lead in Household Dust in Sri Lanka*, released by CEJ revealed that one or more dust samples at half of the 18 schools where samples were taken contained unsafe levels of lead. The study also reported that chipping leaded paint can contribute up to 600 micrograms per square foot of dust whereas, scientific studies reveal that 10 micrograms per square foot can contribute in blood lead levels harmful to the developing brain. A study of paints in Sri Lanka released in 2013 found that the half of the major paint brands sold in Sri Lanka contained lead levels that exceeded current Sri Lankan regulation and one-quarter had very dangerously high levels of lead.



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".

Lead is much more harmful to children than adults and WHO has established that no blood level of lead is safe in children. The health effects of lead exposure in children are irreversible and can have a lifelong impact. Lead in the body can cause problems in growth and development in children including behavior problems, hearing problems, learning problems and slowed growth.

The Gazette of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka Extra Ordinary No 1875/ 38 on 15th of August 2014 ordered that “all manufacturers and traders of paints used in the building industry that they shall print legibly the total content of Lead in paints in mg/ kg on the packs or containers of paints”, to be affected from 1st September 2014. The regulatory limits for the concentration of Lead is 90 ppm for Emulsion paint in exterior and interior use and paints for children’s toys, also 600 ppm for Enamel and Floor paints.

While the regulations for lead in paint have been strengthened, consumers should pay attention and ask for lead free paint. To prevent exposure in the home, it is also recommended that floors and areas around windows and doors, where paint is likely to chip and peel, be cleaned regularly. When applying new paint, the safest procedure is to cover old paint surfaces in your home with a new layer of lead free paint without peeling off painted surfaces or without scraping old paint, as this will form lead dust. It is also better to avoid wooden toys painted in green, yellow and red color from old enamel paints and maintain a dust free environment in both homes and schools.

The Centre for Environmental Justice (CEJ) is a participant in the Asian Lead Paint Elimination Project. The Asian Lead Paint Elimination Project has been established 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. The Asian Lead Paint Elimination Project is being implemented by IPEN – an international network of more than 700 NGOs in 116 countries – over a period of three years in seven countries (Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand) with funding from the European Union (EU) totaling €1.4 million.

**Centre for Environmental Justice**

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