

## **G7 Workshop**

### **Lead as a major threat for human health and the environment – an integrated approach strengthening cooperation toward solutions**

Berlin and online, 9-10 November 2022

#### **Report to G7 Ministers on Key Workshop Outcomes**

The 2022 G7 Environment Ministers' communiqué affirmed a strong commitment to reduce lead in the environment and to reduce the disproportionate lead exposure in vulnerable communities.<sup>i</sup> They committed to “take stock of G7 activities and develop possible options for future work and cooperation on sources of lead to reduce lead exposure in developing countries.”

Participants of G7 members recognised that according to the World Bank's most recent assessment, the global cost of the health effects of lead exposure is estimated to be 4.6% of global GDP.<sup>ii</sup>

Delivering on this commitment, participants from G7 member states, developing countries, industry, and other relevant experts met at the workshop to discuss the results of the stocktaking exercise and identify opportunities for future work and cooperation. This document summarizes key workshop outcomes identified by participants of G7 members, which were informed by the discussions summarized in the workshop report, including possible options for future work and cooperation on lead sources to reduce lead exposure in developing countries – hereinafter referred to as Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs). It also identifies areas of action to strengthen the work to minimise lead pollution and exposure globally, as well as areas of increased cooperation with existing international initiatives and instruments.

Participants of G7 members are aware of the need to act and believe that it is important to strengthen international cooperation, including with the G20, international organisations (such as UNEP, WHO, UNICEF, the World Bank and others), existing Multilateral Agreements (such as the Basel and Rotterdam Conventions) and voluntary instruments and existing international partnerships, such as the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and the sound management of chemicals and wastes beyond 2020 instrument/framework, and the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint. They also recognize that further actions would benefit from increasing domestic inter-ministerial and inter-agency collaboration.

Participants of G7 members acknowledged that circular economy policies to improve design, reuse and safe recycling can contribute in addressing this issue.

Recognizing the issue of lead exposure as a key element of the global environmental pollution crisis, participants of G7 members identified that actions and collaboration should be strengthened to address lead poisoning in LMICs, in particular regarding vulnerable populations and children's health. These actions will contribute to reducing the economic and social costs associated with the health effects of lead exposure, considering that societal benefits of lead regulation far exceed its costs. Sharing experiences, building upon

successful implemented measures and stocktaking of the actions in the future, as appropriate, would be helpful in this regard.

A shared vision of G7 work to support addressing pollution to achieve a world free of lead poisoning, could include, inter alia, the actions below:

1. Strengthen the linkages between environment, health and development officials of G7 members and LMICs to promote effective coordinated action in LMICs to reduce lead poisoning;
2. Strengthen institutional capacities in LMICs and assist them to develop, implement, and enforce domestic actions to prevent pollution and reduce lead exposure, including by setting limits on lead exposure. For example, G7 countries could assist LMICs by:
  - sharing guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices (BAT/BEP);
  - supporting capacity building and promoting international cooperation to develop, strengthen compliance with and enforce legal requirements aimed at reducing lead exposure and preventing pollution;
  - promoting pollution prevention and management of contaminated sites including, where necessary, remediation;
  - building capacities within LMICs toward the establishment of national source inventories for lead, and implementation of BAT/BEP for reduction of these releases from sources identified during inventory development;
  - assisting in the development and implementation of best economically achievable pollution prevention practices for management and disposal of wastes containing or contaminated with lead;
3. Encourage development and uptake of safer alternatives, substitutes, and processes and substitution where alternatives are already available to reduce lead exposure in LMICs, including by providing support and information resources to artisanal and small- and medium-sized manufacturers, lead recyclers and disposal operators;
4. Increase awareness among government officials in LMICs, development assistance agencies and international organizations and institutions about the problem of lead poisoning and cost-effective solutions to reduce exposure within LMICs;
5. Support LMICs to conduct initial diagnostic assessments about the prevalence of lead poisoning and identification and ranking of relevant sources of exposure including monitoring and reporting of lead poisoning at the national level and/or at risk subgroups. To this end laboratory capacity and surveillance systems should be supported to enable systematic monitoring of blood lead levels and exposure pathways, assisted by relevant international organisations and institutions, including WHO and OECD;
6. Strengthen action by stakeholders, notably concerning prevention, including through multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches, involving academia, the health sector, industry, civil society and local universities, research institutes and national agencies to address lead exposure especially in LMICs; including by:

- Identifying and exploring ways to involve producers, industry and trade associations to exercise product stewardship and sustainable and responsible supply chain management for their products and relevant lead-contaminated articles, including through extended producer responsibility schemes;
  - Developing awareness of and supporting local communities and civil society on how to advocate for policies to prevent, and to protect themselves from lead pollution via air, water, food, and soil.
7. Encourage Global Environment Facility (GEF) implementing agencies and other actors in GEF projects, together with recipient countries, to continue and strengthen work to build capacity to reduce lead poisoning from relevant sources, building on the progress achieved on lead paint under the SAICM GEF Project and taking note of the United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution 3/9 on lead-acid batteries and lead paint (UNEP/EA.3/Res.9).
  8. Pursue the opportunities for bilateral cooperation to meet the priorities and needs in LMICs, in addressing lead pollution in their specific circumstances and identify areas of joint cooperation among interested G7 members for interventions in one or more LMICs, as described above.
  9. Recommend to G7 Ministers to consider further discussions on the issue of lead pollution and poisoning in LMICs among the G7, where appropriate.

*External link to PDF: G7 Workshop on Lead as a Major Threat for Human Health and the Environment – An Integrated Approach Strengthening Cooperation Towards Solutions*

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i Underscoring our strong commitment to reduce lead in the environment, to reduce the disproportionate lead exposure in vulnerable communities, we encourage appropriate domestic regulation or control of lead in all countries, which can deliver societal benefits that far exceed the costs. We look forward to the EU-USA co-hosted workshop to be held under the German Presidency to take stock of G7 activities and develop possible options for future work and cooperation on sources of lead to reduce lead exposure in developing countries. The G7 aims to identify areas of action to strengthen the work to minimise lead pollution and exposure globally and strengthen cooperation with existing international initiatives and instruments, particularly SAICM. In doing so, the G7 will continue to work with multilateral organisations such as UNEP, WHO and UNICEF (<https://www.bundesregierung.de/resource/blob/974430/2044350/84e380088170c69e6b6ad45dbd133ef8/2022-05-27-1-climate-ministers-communique-data.pdf?download=1>).

ii Results submitted for publication and presented at the G7 Workshop by Dr. Valerie Hickey, Global Director, Environment, Natural Resources and Blue Economy of the World Bank to be published early 2023