

NATIONAL POLICY AND ACTION PLAN FOR LEAD POISONING ELIMINATION

Lead poisoning is not just of an environmental concern; it is a public health threat that silently erodes the wellbeing of children, causing irreversible damage to their developing brains, nervous systems, and overall growth.

In Nigeria, mass lead poisoning incidence occurred in 2010 in Zamfara State due to unsafe mining and ore processing. This led to the deaths of more than 400 children in few of months (MSF, 2012), followed by the 2015 Niger State outbreak. Due to persistent artisanal mining and related factor, there has been recurrent outbreaks in Zamfara and Sokoto which resulted to high morbidity and mortality. Illegal and informal used lead-acid batteries recycling in Nigeria is a major environmental crisis, leading to a widespread and severe lead poisoning and factory workers with a large amount of lead dust, fumes and acid into the environment which causes devastating and often fatal consequences for children.

Young children ages 1-6 years are particularly vulnerable to the toxic effects of lead. There is no level of exposure to lead that is known to be without harmful effects; therefore, no safe blood lead level (BLL) in children has been identified. Low levels of lead in blood have been shown to affect Intelligent Quotient (IQ), that is, inability to pay attention and achieve academic excellence. Several children are exposed to high levels of lead through various means such as contaminated soil, dust, water and food as well as toys.

The *Policy, (the first in the AFRO Region)* will help Federal Agencies and MDAs to work strategically and collaboratively to reduce exposure to lead and improve children's health. It builds upon previous work to provide a comprehensive, multisectoral approach to prevent lead exposure, safe guard the health of the public address (especially for Children) and ultimately eliminate lead poisoning exposure in children in line with SDG 3 and 12.

This policy will build Nigeria to a place where children, especially those in vulnerable communities, live, learn and play protected from lead exposure and its harmful effects.