

**VIRTUAL
WORKSHOP**

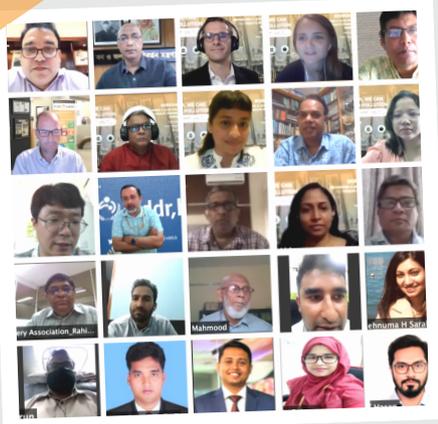
**ADVANCING A LEAD POLLUTION AND
HEALTH ROADMAP FOR BANGLADESH**

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Organized by:

Pure Earth Bangladesh

in coordination with the DoE and
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Despite the severe impacts of lead on public health and economic development, few programs and policies exist to adequately control contemporary lead sources, reduce exposures, and identify and treat lead-poisoned children. There is also a lack of communication and coordination among stakeholders and no unified plan at the national level. The overwhelming outcome of the meeting was that lead poisoning in Bangladesh should be viewed as a public health crisis. *The speakers and participants shared recommendations to improve this situation, with a particular emphasis on establishing a multi-stakeholder approach with the leadership of the relevant government ministries to eradicate community lead exposure. Participants also discussed preparing comprehensive lead pollution studies, developing a national inventory on lead pollution sources, and importantly, a time-bound national action plan.*

Guests & Participants

The workshop was enriched by more than 65 diverse sets of experts representing government agencies, national and international civil society organizations, research and academic institutions, & development agencies. It was also attended by print and electronic media agencies, received excellent media coverage.

Objectives

- Understand how lead work in the country is evolving
- Build a common understanding of lead challenges, sources, impacts, and opportunities
- Develop common goals and strategies to mitigate lead exposures

The draft of Lead Pollution & Health Roadmap Strategy will be found in this link: shorturl.at/flJPT

Concerns

- The average blood lead level in children in Bangladesh is 7.5 mcg/dL, which is 50% higher than the common health guidelines.
- 4% of total deaths in Bangladesh are caused by exposure to lead pollution, making Bangladesh the 4th most impacted country in the world.
- Almost 70% of intellectual disabilities in Bangladesh are caused by lead pollution.
- The economic loss caused by the effects of lead pollution is equal to 6% of Bangladesh's GDP
- High concentrations of lead have been found at informal ULAB recycling sites and other industrial sites.
- Recent studies have identified lead in spices and other food items, as well as various consumer products.

Commitment & Action

- The Chief Guest of the event, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, has committed to treating lead as one of the biggest priorities in the ministry.
- He also requested the Department of Environment (DoE) to take the lead in a joint, multi-stakeholder approach to eradicating lead pollution.

Recommendations

1. A multi-stakeholder approach with the leadership of the Department of Environment (DoE) to eradicating lead pollution. A coordination committee could be formed in the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, and a technical committee can be formed under the leadership of the Director-General of DoE.
2. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the Department of Environment, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Industry, the Local Government Division, and the Food Safety Authority should work closely on this issue.
3. A time-bound, a holistic national action plan which considers existing legislation is needed to advance progress on the issue of lead exposure. This action plan should include provisions for monitoring, reporting, and enforcement.
4. Comprehensive lead pollution studies and a national inventory on lead pollution sources are key to prioritizing effective exposure mitigation projects. This research is needed to identify polluting industries and lead-containing consumer products.
5. Effective monitoring by relevant agencies is needed to identify lead exposure sources, develop interventions, and ensure long-term success. This is needed for both industrial sources (e.g., the closure of informal ULAB sites), as well as in products (e.g., lead chromate adulteration in spices).
6. Interventions in the ULAB recycling sector should be prioritized as this is a major known source of community lead exposure. Research institutions and universities should come up with ways to shift illegal, informal ULAB recycling industries to the regulated, registered sector. Second-generation lead-acid batteries or alternatives such as lithium-ion batteries should be examined for application in Bangladesh.
7. Occupational health and safety hazards of working with lead need more attention; workers who are working directly with lead require additional education. For those workers engaged in informal lead industries, alternative livelihoods should be explored as more of the industry shifts to the formal sector.
8. Ensuring effective waste management across all sectors, especially industrial waste is important because contaminated waste ends up affecting health through different pathways, including the agricultural chain.
9. Blood lead monitoring must be established. Blood lead data could be integrated into the MOHFW's existing routine health information system, DHIS2. Investment is needed to conduct this testing at district and division levels. Blood lead data can be used to identify contributing sources and monitor the efficacy of interventions.
10. The capacity of health workers and the health care sector to address lead exposure should be expanded.
11. Sensitization through print and electronic media plays a crucial role in creating public awareness about the sources and effects of lead pollution and spurring government bodies to act. There should be various training sessions and workshops to enhance the knowledge and skills of stakeholders related to lead pollution.

Conclusion

The main goal of the workshop was to bring together the various stakeholders of lead pollution to come together on a unified strategy that has been largely successful. The representatives from the various departments of government acknowledged the devastating social, health, and economic impacts of lead pollution, and agreed that a multi-sectoral approach, better surveillance and public awareness are needed going forward. The important roles of the media and local governments in working with the public were also highlighted.