



# ILPPWA 2019 report - Young Volunteers for the Environment (JVE) Cameroon – ENGLISH

## Report on the round table on the prevention of lead poisoning organized by JVE CAMEROON



### Introduction

On 23 October 2019, the NGO JVE - Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement Cameroun (Young Volunteers for the Environment Cameroon), as part of the International Week for the Prevention of Lead Poisoning, held a round table bringing together different actors from civil society (8), press (8), students and state institutions. This session was organized by Young Volunteers for the Environment Cameroon (JVE) as part of its risk reduction program for POPs and heavy metals (mercury and lead) through an effective and efficient participation of young people and women.

This workshop had the global objective to inform and educate young people, women and the media about the risks associated with lead, and the prospects and challenges to be met. Specifically:

- Share with the participants the actions undertaken at international and national levels to fight against lead poisoning, especially lead contained in paints
- Present and analyze with the participants the different perspectives and challenges to be met
- Encouraging journalists to become deeply involved in the fight against poisoning which is of paramount importance for the protection of human health and the environment.



## Some highlights of this workshop

### Overview of the workshop

From the outset, Miss TCHOKOUATOU Ghislaine, Program Director and Head of the cell hazardous chemicals at Young Volunteers for the Environment Cameroon, has welcomed the participants and panelists while briefly presenting this week dedicated to the prevention of lead poisoning which aims to increase awareness of exposure of lead poisoning; highlight the efforts made by countries and partners to prevent the effects of lead exposure on human health, in particular in children; urge that additional measures be taken and respected to remove paints containing abnormally high levels of lead by the adoption of regulatory measures at the local level.

She pointed out that Cameroon adopted a regulation in September 2017 prohibiting the manufacture, import, marketing and use of all paints containing more than 90 ppm lead in Cameroon. Similarly, the need for mobilizing efforts to deal with this threat is compelling because she said "one hand cannot tie a package". Before closing, she said that the theme of this workshop, "No lead in paints" is an important part of the SAICM particularly because the reduction of risks associated with hazardous waste will contribute to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. She also expressed the wish that this workshop results in the necessary improvement of capacity for all, so that everyone can lead this battle at their own level and that the media present serve as a relay to raise awareness on this threat unfortunately little known by Cameroonians.

### **Presentation of Participants and Group Photos**

The introductory phase of the workshop continued with the presentation of all participants in the room. We note in terms of representativeness, 04 radio stations, 02 print media organizations and 02 bloggers; 02 state institutions, 05 representatives of civil society and 10 students. A group photo has immortalized the event.

### **Presentations**



Mr. BASSI, toxicologist at the Ministry of Public Health in Cameroon, informed the participants on symptoms related to lead poisoning, and the actions and intervention strategies of the Ministry of Health of Cameroon for the fight against lead poisoning. Addressing the concerns of the participants on the vulnerability and degree of contamination to be subject to lead poisoning, Mr. Bassi brought clarification that no level of lead poisoning is

tolerated, the symptoms depending on the individual organisms. However, children are more vulnerable than adults.



## Role of CREPD in the Elimination of Lead Paint in Cameroon

This point made allowed to present some actions of the Research Center for Education and Development (CREPD) which is one of the NGOs which have worked a lot and continue to work for the fight against lead poisoning in order to stimulate local and community initiatives to reduce the impact of these substances on the environment and humans. Achille NGAKEG reviewed some actions and activities conducted by the CREPD since 2013 and which resulted



on September 21, 2017 in the adoption of a national decree limiting to 90 ppm (parts per million) the content of lead in paints produced and marketed in Cameroon. Briefly, this can be summarized as follows:

- Analysis of the paints marketed in Cameroon and publication of the results,
- Popularization of the dangers of lead paints to officials, schools and parents of students,
- Advocacy with the ministries involved, ANOR, the private sector for a
- Regulation or standard on lead paints,
- Development of draft standard and regulation on lead paints in Cameroon and submission to the competent authorities
- Pilot study of blood lead levels in young children in Cameroon
- Publication of the official results jointly with the Min. of Health at the Djeuga Hotel Palace in 2018

### **Some results obtained**

- Publication in the emergence daily n ° 1560 of October 24, 2019
- About 10 young people, 15 civil society leaders and media outlets were sensitized on lead poisoning and some practical measures to be taken to protect lead poisoning.
- The media has come to understand more about the fight against lead in paints in view of better communication
- The animations are made on social networks to reach a major audience:  
<https://afrilao.com/2019/10/31/cameroun-long-jve-se-dresse-contre-lpoisoning-auplomb/>  
and





Plus de 5 millions d'enfants menacés par le plomb

<https://mbethen.wordpress.com/2019/10/23/cameroun-sante-publique-5-millionsdenfants-menaces-par-leplomb/?fbclid=IwAR1GwuC5IZcaZ71gzwoYwIUQeoCxDKSFLNyfa3yeEmopt6kybCgWO64fwsY> (see below)

## Plus de 5 millions d'enfants menacés par le plomb

*Ceci n'est qu'une estimation d'autant plus que l'ingestion de ce métal menace également les adultes.*

**L**a sonnette d'alarme vient une fois encore d'être lancée. Cette fois, c'est par l'intermédiaire des jeunes volontaires pour l'environnement (Jve) qui organisent une semaine d'action internationale pour la prévention de l'intoxication au plomb. C'est dans l'optique d'attirer l'attention des pouvoirs publics, en particulier ceux qui interagissent dans le domaine de la santé, afin de continuer le processus qui est engagé depuis plus de 4 ans déjà.

Si l'on s'en tient aux chiffres de l'institut national de la statistique (Ins) de 2010, plus de 5 millions d'enfants sont menacés par l'ingestion du plomb. Ce nombre peut être revu à la hausse au regard de l'évolution constante de la population estimée à plus de 23 millions d'habitants, toujours selon l'Ins.

« Selon le bureau central des recensements et des études de la population (Bucrep), le Cameroun comptait en 2005 17 463 836 habitants. Les enfants âgés de moins de 15 ans représentent 39,2 % de la population en milieu ur-



Les enfants menacés par le plomb

bain et 47,8 % en milieu rural ».

### Agir maintenant

Selon JVE, c'est cette tranche d'âge qui est la plus vulnérable au plomb. Le métal est à l'origine des déficiences mentales, des incapacités intellectuelles et des autres troubles de la santé liés à la consommation du plomb, même de manière involontaire, sou-

ligne Blondel Silenou. Il précise que la course pour la réalisation des bâtiments publics a fait la part belle à l'usage des peintures qui contiennent du plomb. Or, depuis 2015, le Cameroun s'est engagé à réglementer l'utilisation de la peinture. Une loi a même été adoptée en 2017 au Parlement en vue d'éviter un véritable désastre au sein de la jeunesse camerou-

naise en particulier, mais aussi pour ce qui est de la population en général. Bien plus, soutiennent les organisateurs de la semaine de sensibilisation, les jouets en provenance de nombreux exportateurs vers le Cameroun constituent une réelle menace pour les moins de 5 ans. « Au Cameroun, le fardeau macroéconomique de l'exposition au plomb

s'élève à environ 2,52 milliards de dollars chaque année. Ce montant est trois fois plus élevé que l'aide au développement que le pays perçoit par an », souligne les amis de l'environnement. D'après une évaluation de l'Institute for Health Metrics and evaluation, en 2017, « l'intoxication au plomb est inévitable ».

Hervé Ndongong



### **Some challenges to take up**

- Ensure the effective application of the 2017 regulations by stakeholders private sector
- Continue public awareness of the dangers of lead paints and other sources of poisoning
- Advocacy for the development of national capacity for monitoring and prevention of lead poisoning in children
- Contribute to tackling old lead paint contained in buildings, public spaces, children's toys, etc
- Continue to alert the government authorities that more coercive and persuasive measures are be taken to make lead paints in particular a sad memory.

[*Editor's note:* See other photos and the attendance list in the original French version of this article – which precedes this English translation by LEAD Group volunteer Patricia Parkinson.]

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