

PRESS RELEASE

YouthNet Global and Pure Earth Bangladesh Unite to Combat Lead Pollution Through Youth-Led Movement



YouthNet Global and Pure Earth Bangladesh have officially launched a youth-driven movement to tackle the growing crisis of lead pollution in Bangladesh. Marking a significant step forward, the two organizations signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during a youth workshop on Thursday at Shala Space, Aloki, Dhaka, formalizing their partnership to amplify youth voices in the fight against lead exposure.

The workshop brought together 50 youth leaders from more than 20 educational institutions across the country to raise awareness, gain knowledge, and develop action plans to combat lead pollution, which has become a silent but devastating public health crisis in Bangladesh. Currently, 60% of the nation's children are affected by lead poisoning, leading to an annual loss of 20 million IQ points and costing the total economy approximately US\$28.6 billion—equivalent to 6-9% of the country's GDP.

Lead, a highly poisonous heavy metal, affects almost every organ in a child's body. Lead can especially have bad effects on the brain such as decreased intelligence, behavioral problems, and attention deficit. It can also slow the growth and development of the child. Lead exposure comes from everyday items like aluminum cookware, ceramics, toys, and lead-based paint.

Another significant source of lead pollution is the informal recycling of lead-acid batteries, which power 3-4 million electric vehicles such as EZ bikes and e-rickshaws.

Facilitated by Mitali Das, Communications Lead at Pure Earth Bangladesh, the workshop featured presentations, video screenings, and interactive sessions. Youth participants were introduced to the sources of lead exposure, such as aluminum cookware, lead-based paints, toys, and the informal recycling of lead-acid batteries. The event emphasized the health consequences of lead, particularly its severe impact on children's brain development, intelligence, and behavior.

Sohanur Rahman, Executive Coordinator of YouthNet Global, stressed the urgency of this issue in his remarks, *"Lead pollution is a silent crisis that endangers the health and future of our communities. A clean and healthy environment is a basic human right—especially for our children, who deserve to grow up free from toxic exposure. Through our partnership with Pure Earth Bangladesh, we are igniting a youth-driven movement to demand a lead-free future and build a safer, healthier Bangladesh for all."*

Dr. Mahfuzar Rahman, Country Director of Pure Earth Bangladesh, highlighted the crucial role of youth in combating lead pollution, *"Youth are naturally open to new ideas, eager to learn, and quick to adapt to new skills and knowledge. Their sensitivity and awareness of issues around them make their involvement crucial in tackling lead pollution. Engaging young people in this cause is vital for building a brighter future for Bangladesh—one where no one is left behind due to lead exposure, and children can grow up in a safe, lead-free environment."*

Julien Deur, Head of the Economic Department at the French Embassy in Bangladesh, emphasized the global relevance of this initiative: *"Children around the world are being poisoned by lead on a massive and alarming scale. It is our collective responsibility to support youth-led action against this invisible threat. Empowering young people of Bangladesh to fight lead pollution is essential for safeguarding future generations and ensuring every child has the right to grow up in a safe and healthy environment. The French Embassy will continue supporting the mitigation efforts of lead pollution."*

The workshop concluded with youth leaders collaboratively developing strategic action plans, focusing on community awareness, school outreach programs, social media advocacy, and engagement with local and national authorities. The participants called for continued training and youth fellowship programs to sustain the momentum of the campaign and ensure long-term impact.

This workshop represents the first step in an ambitious, youth-led effort to eliminate lead pollution in Bangladesh, empowering the next generation to protect their future and promote a safer environment for all.

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