

## Press Release

### Pure Earth Bangladesh together with partners launches a week-long campaign to mark “International Lead Pollution Prevention Week”

20th October 2024, Bangladesh – The "International Lead Pollution Prevention Week" is observed globally every October to highlight the dangers of lead pollution. This year, from October 20 to October 26, the United Nations' World Health Organization (WHO) is calling on governments, civil society, healthcare workers, and the public to take urgent action to protect children from the harmful effects of lead. In solidarity of the week, Pure Earth Bangladesh together with its partners: the Department of Environment, YouthNet Global, UNICEF, and North South University are going to jointly organize different national and district-level events to increase awareness at all levels and call on the government and policymakers to implement strict and effective measures to prevent childhood lead poisoning.

The campaign launched on October 20, with a rally, human chain, and discussion event in Rangpur which is jointly organized by YouthNet Global and Pure Earth Bangladesh, with the support of UNICEF. The event, under the theme "Bright Futures Begin Lead-Free," aimed to raise awareness of lead pollution and its effects. Hundreds of participants, including YouthNet Global volunteers, representatives from Pure Earth Bangladesh, UNICEF, local NGOs, government institutions, policymakers, environmental rights activists, media workers, and civil society members, took part in the event.

Despite the severe prevalence of lead pollution in Bangladesh, awareness remains limited. Bangladesh ranks fourth globally in lead pollution, with approximately 36 million children—about 60% of the child population—suffering from elevated lead levels in their blood. Children exposed to lead often experience reduced intelligence, learning difficulties, and behavioral problems. The country's economic losses due to lead-related health issues are estimated at \$28,633 million annually, contributing to a 6-9% GDP deficit.

Many everyday products may contain lead, such as wall paint, aluminum and ceramic utensils, spices, children's toys, cosmetics, and even fish feed. Unsafe recycling practices, particularly the breaking and melting of lead-acid batteries in open areas, contribute significantly to environmental lead pollution.

To address this public health concern, Pure Earth Bangladesh and North South University (NSU) are jointly organizing an interactive seminar titled "Multisectoral Approach to Build a Lead-Free Future" on October 23 at the university auditorium. This initiative is supported by the French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM) of the French government under the project "Building Capacity to Reduce Childhood Lead Poisoning in Bangladesh". This seminar will bring together students, public health and environmental academicians, governments, environmental activists, NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders to discuss the impact of lead on children and take unified actions for solution. Md. Ziaul Haque, Director of Air Quality Monitoring, Department of Environment will be present as a Special Guest at the event. The seminar will be chaired by Dipak

Kumar Mitra, Professor and Dean, of the School of Health and Life Sciences, North South University.

Besides the offline events, there will be also a week-long social media campaign promoting the impact of lead on health and the environment and drawing the attention of the decision-makers to prioritize ensuring a lead-free reality.

For detailed information, contact:

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