

Lead Poisoning and its Devastating Impacts on Early Childhood Development

Over 800 million children globally are affected by lead, with the majority residing in low and middle-income countries. Lead poisoning links to heart and kidney disorders, impaired intelligence, violent behavior and premature death. However, lead poisoning is entirely preventable, please join this Webinar to learn more about lead poisoning and what you can do to protect children.

Wednesday 26th, March 2025
2:00-3:30PM, Singapore time

ARNEC and Vital Strategies are pleased to host a webinar amplifying the important linkage of early childhood development (ECD) and climate/environmental factors with a specific focus on how the heavy metal – lead – from common household items is posing a threat to health. This webinar will discuss the dangers of lead poisoning and what we do to protect ourselves and our children. It will also highlight specific country-level examples.

1. Discussion focus and speakers

Despite clear evidence of harm, lead is still widely available. Sources of lead exposure include, but are not limited to, contaminated soil, and consumer products such as paint, metallic cookware, ceramics, cosmetics, toys, spices and food. Lead can also be released from industrial activities like used lead acid battery recycling, coal-fired power plants, artisanal gold mining, and aviation/motor sports. In LMICs, informal battery breaking, lead smelting, e-waste recycling, and junkshop operations also result in lead exposure. This webinar will also serve as the launch of a new factsheet on Lead Poisoning and Early Childhood Development by ARNEC and Vital Strategies. **Download the [factsheet](#) here.**

Webinar Objectives:

1. **Raise Awareness:** Understand the health impacts of lead poisoning and possible sources of lead
2. **Equip Stakeholders:** Gain tools and knowledge to mitigate the impacts of lead exposure on young children, their families and communities.
3. **Promote Co-Learning:** Share experiences and strategies from countries that are working on lead.

The speakers and topics are found below:

Speaker		Topic
Evelyn Santiago, ARNEC		Early Childhood Development & Climate Change: ARNEC's Advocacy
Lynn Tang, Vital Strategies		Health Impacts of Lead Poisoning on Pregnant Women and Young Children + Virtual Launch of the Factsheet
Asia-Pacific Panel on Lead Poisoning – Moderated by Neelima Chopra, ARNEC		
1	Srujith Lingala, Program Manager, LEEP	Prevalence and Impact of Lead Paint in the Asia-Pacific
2	Larah Ortega - Ibañez, Philippines Country Director, Pure Earth	Efforts to Institutionalize BLL Screening and Follow Up Services in the Philippines
3	Kinley Dorjee, Researcher, HMIS and Research Unit, Ministry of Health, Bhutan	Discovering the sources of Lead Poisoning in Bhutan
4	Dr. Md. Mahbubur Rahman Project Coordinator, Environmental Health and WASH, ICDDR, Bangladesh	Eliminating lead in spices in Bangladesh

*See Attachment A for the profiles of speakers and their organisations.

2. Discussion flow and facilitation

Time (SGT)	Speaker	Mode / Time	Key Messages
2:00- 2:15 PM	Evelyn Santiago	Presenting [15 min]	Welcome & Introductions ARNEC's advocacy on ECD and climate + Virtual launch of the Factsheet
2:15-2:30 PM	Lynn Tang	Presenting [15 min]	Health Impacts of Lead Poisoning on Pregnant Women and Young Children
2:30-3:20 PM	Panel Discussion Moderated by Neelima Chopra	Panel Presentations [45 min]	Introduction to the Asia-Pacific Panel on Lead Poisoning Country-specific findings and efforts by 4 presenters
3:20-3:30 PM	Neelima Chopra	Q&A Closing [15 min]	Open forum Summarizing key points; and thanking presenters and participants

Profiles of Speakers and their Organisations

Picture



Bio-note

Evelyn D. Santiago is the current Executive Director of the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC). It is a network established to build strong partnerships across sectors and different disciplines, organisations, agencies and institutions in the Asia-Pacific region to advance the agenda on and investments in Early Childhood. Evelyn has more than 25 years of professional experience in development work. Prior to joining ARNEC, she spent 10 years working for ChildFund International in various management positions at Country Offices in the Philippines, Timor Leste and at the Asia Regional Office in Bangkok. She also worked previously with the German Technical Cooperation (now called GIZ) and with the Central Economic Planning Ministry of the Philippine Government. Evelyn has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science-Economics from the University of the Philippines and has a Master of Arts degree in Economics of Development from the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, The Netherlands.



Lynn Tang is the Director of Programs, Environmental, Climate and Urban Health at Vital Strategies, an international public health organization. She is a development professional with over two decades of experience in various local and international NGOs, including UN Women and Conservation International. She has proven competence in a range of roles including marketing and communications, program management, partnership development and fundraising. Her portfolio of past and present projects includes air pollution, lead poisoning, non-communicable diseases and data and indicators for environmental and climate health tracking. She holds a Bachelor of Communications from Northwestern University and a Master of Tri-Sector Collaboration from the Singapore Management University. She is currently based in Singapore.



Srjith Lingala is the India Program Manager at Lead Elimination Exposure Project, an international organization that is driving effective policies to eliminate lead poisoning around the world. Srjith was previously the Director of Business Solutions at Sight and Life Foundation, where he managed projects in global health, nutrition, and livelihoods. He has also held roles at J-PAL, The World Bank, and served as a fellow at Teach for India. Srjith holds a Master of Public Administration from Columbia University and a Master of Business Administration from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM).



Larah Ortega -Ibañez is the Country Director of Pure Earth Philippines, managing program and portfolio implementation to help stop toxic exposures, protect health, and restore environments. She holds a degree in Public Administration from the University of the Philippines Diliman and has been professionally engaged in development work for the last 17 years, rendering various roles in the country's media-based non-profit ABS-CBN Foundation and the government's Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) before joining Pure Earth. Recently, she's been pioneering efforts with the national and local governments and concerned sectors to

institutionalize lead poisoning detection and interventions in the country.



Kinley Dorjee is a dedicated public health researcher with the HMIS and Research Unit under the Policy and Planning Division of the Ministry of Health, Royal Government of Bhutan. Since joining the ministry in 2017, he has been actively involved in health research, data management, and policy analysis. Mr. Dorjee holds a Master of Public Health from Chulalongkorn University, Thailand, and a Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Development from the College of Natural Resources, Bhutan. He also completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Public Administration (PGDPA) from the Royal Institute of Management. His research interests include environmental health, health systems strengthening, and public health policy. He played a key role in the National Blood Lead Level Survey, leading efforts to assess population exposure and identify potential sources of lead contamination in Bhutan. Additionally, he was a core technical member in the National STEPS Survey and the National Health Survey 2023, contributing to data collection, analysis, and policy recommendations to strengthen Bhutan's public health landscape.



Mahbubur Rahman is the Head and Associate Scientist of the Environmental Health and WASH research group at ICDDR, an international research organization in the global south. Located in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Dr. Rahman is a physician and public health professional by training with over two decades of experience in various international organizations. Under Dr. Rahman's leadership, the group conducts a wide range of environmental health research in Bangladesh, addressing topics such as water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); heavy metal contamination; antimicrobial resistance; e-waste; microplastics; air pollution from brick kilns; heat stress; water salinity; wastewater surveillance; environmentally friendly housing; and other pressing environmental health issues. Dr. Rahman has published more than 200 articles in the peer-reviewed journals, contributing significantly to the body of knowledge in environmental health and public health research.

Moderator:



Neelima Chopra is an advocate for early childhood development and education, with over 18 years of expertise in the field. Currently serving as a Program and Partnership Specialist with the Asia Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC), Neelima spearheads the implementation of ARNEC's programmatic and thematic priorities, notably focusing on ECD and Climate Change, Responsive Parenting, and Social & Emotional Learning. Neelima has previously worked with HCL Foundation (the CSR arm of HCLTech) as the Lead for Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) & Education, and at UNESCO MGIEP as the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Coordinator. She served as an Assistant Professor at Jamia Millia Islamia University for over a decade, where she taught MA Early Childhood Development students and supervised PhD candidates. In addition to her academic role, Neelima has led various research projects and studies for esteemed institutions, including ICMR, ICSSR, UNICEF, Save the Children, and Mobile Creches. Many of her research findings have been published in renowned national and international journals.