

ANNUAL REPORT

2025



Annual Report
2025

Foreword



Dear Members, Partners, and Supporters, As we turn the pages of the Annual Report 2025, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the remarkable journey that ESDO has undertaken. This year, our collective efforts have resulted in momentous achievements, notably Bangladesh's ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. The Plastic Free Campus initiative, coupled with our active engagement on international platforms, underscores our commitment to a sustainable future. I extend my sincere appreciation to the dedicated ESDO team and our global partners for their unwavering support. Let this report serve as a testament to our shared commitment to environmental health and social development.

Warm Regards,
Syed Marghub Murshed
Chairperson, ESDO



Dear ESDO community, with great pleasure, I present ESDO's Annual Report 2025, capturing our impactful journey in environmental conservation and social development. From grassroots workshops to global forums, our initiatives like the Plastic Free Campus our holistic approach. Thanks to our dedicated team and partners. Let's keep shaping a sustainable future together!

Sincerely,
Dr. Shahriar Hossain
Secretary-General, ESDO

Dear ESDO Family, reflecting on 2025, I'm thrilled by our strides in environmental justice and sustainability. From local workshops to global collaborations, we're shaping a positive impact. The Plastic Free Campus, groundbreaking studies, and partnerships with UNICEF and FEMNET highlight our commitment. Thanks to our global partners for their steadfast support. This Annual Report captures our journey toward a better world.

Best regards,
Siddika Sultana
Executive Director, ESDO



35 Years of Connecting the Nation through Advocacy



ESDO is a leading organization in Bangladesh contributing to policy advocacy, environmental capacity building and policy intervention. Since its inception in 1990, ESDO has helped more than 1 million people in Bangladesh to achieve a sustainable and self-reliant lifestyle and live in harmony with their surrounding environment. ESDO has also been influential in guiding national policy, the organization's most significant achievement being the banning of plastic (polythene) bags throughout the country.





OUR MISSION

The mission of ESDO is to promote and encourage an environmental movement through a participatory democratic framework involving diverse social groups and to assist them with ideas, information, and leadership for promoting a safe, sustainable and toxic free world.

OUR VISION

The vision of ESDO is to see Bangladesh as well as all developing nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Working towards Protecting and conserving nature and life from toxic and plastic pollution; reducing poverty; increasing literacy and education; empowering women in rural communities, and improving sanitation and health services through sustainable environmental livelihoods.



Nairobi, Kenya



Major Project Partners & Donors

OUR PARTNERS



OUR DONORS





**35 Years of ESDO:
A Legacy of Advocacy & Action!**



On June 19, 2025, ESDO celebrated its 35th anniversary at Xenial Restaurant, uniting officials, partners, academics, and friends in a heartfelt tribute to three and a half decades of environmental stewardship.



**CELEBRATIONS
2025**

Project

Legislation to Combat Single-use Plastic Pollution in Bangladesh

In 2025, the Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO), with support from the Plastics Solutions Fund (PSF), implemented a multi-layered program to combat single-use plastic (SUP) pollution in Bangladesh. The project focused on three pillars: policy advocacy and research, government engagement in global negotiations, and youth mobilization.

ESDO conducted waste audits in sensitive areas like the Sundarbans and released the Toxic Playtime study on chemical contamination in children's toys, generating evidence to inform policy and strengthen enforcement. At the international level, ESDO supported Bangladesh in the Global Plastics Treaty, BRS Conventions, and UNEA-7, advocating for life-cycle management, production reduction, and just transitions for waste workers.

Through initiatives like Plastic-Free Campus and youth dialogues, young leaders were empowered to drive community and policy change. Collectively, these efforts strengthened policy coherence, institutional capacity, and public engagement, positioning Bangladesh for enforceable, sustainable, and globally aligned solutions against plastic pollution.

Key Achievements Summary (Jan–June 2025)

- Advanced national policy advocacy for single-use plastic reduction through research, audits, and legal analyses aligned with the Global Plastics Treaty.
- Conducted a nationwide study on toxic chemicals in children's plastic toys, exposing major safety violations.
- Mobilized youth through workshops, dialogues, and the Plastic-Free Campus initiative.
- Facilitated government–civil society dialogues to shape Bangladesh's positions for global environmental treaties.
- Represented Bangladesh in INC-5.2, BRS, UNEA-7, and OECPR-7 as technical advisor and civil society advocate.
- Advocated for life-cycle approaches, production limits, financial support, and just transitions in global negotiations.
- Produced policy recommendations on improving Bangladesh's polythene ban enforcement.
- Organized multi-stakeholder consultations in the Sundarbans, resulting in an Action Plan for SUP reduction in eco-tourism areas.
- Secured ESDO's inclusion in NIECC, strengthening its institutional role in national environmental governance.
- Enhanced Bangladesh's global leadership in plastic governance by connecting national progress with international advocacy.

DRIVING POLICY CHANGE FOR A PLASTIC-FREE BANGLADESH BY 2030

Empowering Youth for a Plastic-Free Future: Advocating Against False Solutions in Waste Management

As part of ESDO's continuous efforts to advocate for a plastic-free Bangladesh, a youth-focused capacity-building workshop titled "Exposing the False Solutions: Essential Conversations for a Waste-Free Future" was organized in collaboration with GAIA on February 9, 2025, at the Women's Voluntary Association (WVA) auditorium in Dhaka.



Observing International Zero Waste Month, the event empowered youth to challenge false recycling solutions, promote zero-waste principles, and advocate inclusive, sustainable, and plastic-free policies for a cleaner, just Bangladesh. The workshop emphasized the importance of upstream reduction strategies and equipped participants to challenge harmful policies and support inclusive, just, and effective plastic-free legislation.

Advocating the 4Rs: ESDO's Role in Shaping a Zero-Waste Future



On February 5, 2025, ESDO conducted a session at the "Waste to Wealth: Workshop on 4Rs" held at the State University of Bangladesh. The event focused on promoting the principles of Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, and Repurpose to encourage sustainable waste management and a circular economy. Students, educators, and environmental advocates engaged in interactive discussions and activities highlighting practical applications of the 4Rs to reduce single-use plastics and transform waste into resources. The workshop emphasized youth leadership in driving behavioral and policy change, reinforcing ESDO's commitment to sustainable practices, legislative advocacy, and collective action toward achieving a circular economy in Bangladesh.

ESDO Conducts Waste Audit at Karamjol Eco-Tourism Site to Strengthen Policy Advocacy for Plastic Waste Management

On February 11, 2025, ESDO, in collaboration with the Arannayk Foundation and Recycle Jar Ecosystems, conducted a comprehensive waste audit at the Karamjol Eco-Tourism Site in the Sundarbans, under the PRISTINE Initiative. This audit, aimed at assessing plastic waste generation and management practices, was a crucial step in ESDO's ongoing policy advocacy to push for stronger waste management regulations in eco-tourism zones.



Plastic Waste Audit Data:

- **Total waste: 18.13 kg**
- **Unmanaged waste: 12.28 kg**
- **Managed waste: 5.55 kg**
- **Major pollutants: PET bottles, snack wrappers, polythene bags**
- **Key brands identified: Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, PRAN-RFL Group, others**

Youth volunteers actively participated in ESDO's waste audit, collecting and classifying data to assess plastic pollution in the Sundarbans. Their engagement fostered sustainability advocacy and informed policy recommendations, including stricter waste reduction measures, better segregation systems, EPR implementation, and improved waste infrastructure to promote cleaner eco-tourism and strengthen plastic ban enforcement.



ESDO Participates in Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO's 'Green and Clean School Campus' Project



The Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO (BNCU) launched the 'Green and Clean School Campus' project on February 15, 2025, at the International Mother Language Institute. Supported by ICESCO, the three-month initiative promotes environmental awareness and sustainability in schools. Siddika Sultana of ESDO emphasized student-teacher engagement, waste reduction, and eco-friendly practices to build environmentally conscious generations.



Stakeholder Consultation Workshop on Single-Use-Plastic (SUP) Reduction in the Sundarbans

ESDO, Arannayk Foundation, and The Bengal Tours Ltd. organized a stakeholder workshop under the UNOPS-supported PRISTINE project to tackle plastic pollution in the Sundarbans. The Sundarbans, a UNESCO World Heritage site, faces severe plastic waste threats from tourism, harming wildlife and local communities. The workshop brought together tour operators, NGOs, and community leaders to raise awareness and develop strategies for reducing single-use plastics. Key outcomes included waste audit insights, eco-friendly tourism action plans, and commitments to reusable alternatives. This initiative strengthens collaboration for sustainable tourism and long-term conservation of the Sundarbans.

Collaboration on Toxic Chemicals in Plastics and Consumer Products



Continuing its partnership with BAN Toxics, ESDO expanded efforts to address hazardous chemicals in plastics through a community campaign in Ghoshbag, Ashulia, on June 15, 2025. The initiative collected and tested household plastic items, revealing toxic metals harmful to children. Alongside scientific analysis, ESDO educated families on safer product choices, chemical risks, and advocacy for stronger regulatory control, reinforcing its mission toward a toxics-free, sustainable future.

Launch of the Toxic Playtime Study Report: Uncovering Hidden Chemical Risks in Children's Toys

In July 2025, ESDO released a landmark study titled "Toxic Playtime: Uncovering Heavy Metals in Children's Plastic Toys," as a follow-up to its earlier work "Not Suitable for Children." This new study further strengthened ESDO's ongoing advocacy against toxic chemicals in plastics, focusing specifically on children's exposure through plastic toys available in the Bangladeshi market.



Sample Collection and Testing: Collected 70 plastic toys from Dhaka's Chawkbazar and analyzed them using advanced X-ray fluorescence (XRF) technology to detect toxic metals.

Data Analysis and Findings: Identified over 70% of toys exceeding international safety limits, containing lead, mercury, cadmium, and chromium, with locally made toys being most hazardous.

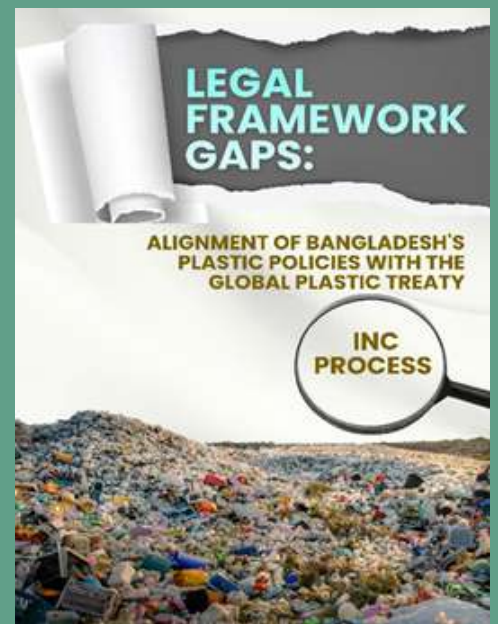
Advocacy and Policy Action: Disseminated findings to policymakers, urging stricter regulations, manufacturing controls, and national safety standards to protect children from toxic exposure.

ESDO Secures National Leadership Role in NIECC: Dr. Shahriar Hossain Joins General Body

Dr. Shahriar Hossain, Secretary General of ESDO, has been appointed to the General Body of the National Institute of Environment and Climate Change (NIECC), reflecting national recognition of ESDO's expertise in climate governance, environmental justice, and sustainable development, and enabling civil society perspectives to inform national climate policy.



ESDO conducted a comprehensive policy analysis titled "Legal Framework Gaps: Alignment of Bangladesh's Plastic Policies with the Global Plastic Treaty" ahead of INC-5.3 in February 2026. The study reviewed national laws, including the Environment Conservation Act, Solid Waste Management Rules, and the National Action Plan for Sustainable Plastic Management, identifying gaps such as the lack of a full life-cycle approach, binding reduction targets, updated definitions, chemical controls, and enforcement capacity. It also highlighted weak interministerial coordination, limited data transparency, and insufficient attention to social equity and informal waste workers. Findings will inform advocacy for strengthened, globally aligned plastic governance in Bangladesh.



ESDO's New Study on Legal Framework Gaps Analysis: Aligning Bangladesh's Plastic Policies with the Emerging Global Plastics Treaty



Reviving a Landmark Environmental Law: Policy Advocacy on the Polythene Bag Ban

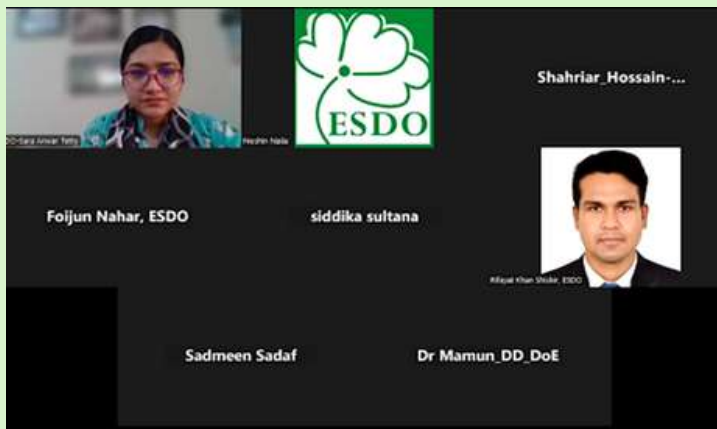
ESDO conducted a nationwide study on Bangladesh's 2002 thin polythene bag ban, identifying weak enforcement, poor inter-agency coordination, limited monitoring, and public dependence on plastics as major challenges. The findings inform targeted advocacy to strengthen legal follow-up, improve institutional capacity, and enhance public awareness for effective polythene reduction.

ENSURING GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT IN GLOBAL NEGOTIATIONS

ESDO's Participation in the Global Plastic Pollution Treaty Negotiations

ESDO attended the SIDS Talk Ocean - Road to INC-5.2 meeting on February 26, 2025, to ensure active participation in the ongoing global plastic pollution treaty negotiations. During the meeting, ESDO engaged with global stakeholders and advocated for key issues such as financing for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the need for a full life cycle approach to plastic pollution, and the establishment of a remediation fund for transboundary pollution.

ESDO Facilitates Government Discussion on Bangladesh's Position for the Basel Convention and INC 5.2



On March 1, 2025, ESDO held an online meeting with government officials to review Bangladesh's position for the Basel Convention and INC 5.2. The discussion identified gaps in plastic waste policies, emphasizing stronger enforcement, transboundary regulation, and strategies for managing hazardous additives and e-waste plastics to align with global standards.

Youth Action for a Plastic-Free Future: ESDO Hosts Workshop on Youth Engagement in Global Plastic Treaty (INC-5.2)



On May 24, 2025, ESDO hosted the "Workshop on the Role of Bangladeshi Youth in the Global Plastic Treaty (INC-5.2)" at the ESDO Office, Dhaka, convening youth leaders, environmental experts, and policymakers to empower the next generation in shaping national and international plastic policy. The event focused on educating and activating youth to take ownership of the Global Plastics Treaty process and other environmental initiatives through knowledge-sharing, advocacy, and organized action.

ACCELERATE AND SHOWCASE THE PLASTIC- FREE CAMPUS, ENGAGING YOUTH IN THE PLASTIC-FREE MOVEMENT

Strengthening Environmental Education through Expansion of the Plastic-Free Campus Initiative

ESDO expanded its Plastic-Free Campus (PFC) initiative to promote sustainable, plastic-free habits among students. Following successful engagement with 10 schools in five divisions, the new phase targets Chittagong, Mymensingh, Barisal, and Dinajpur. The program includes environmental education camps, teacher orientations, and model school recognition, empowering youth as leaders in plastic reduction and sustainability advocacy nationwide.

Follow-Up Webinar with Plastic-Free Campus Students: A Movement Towards Sustainable Change



ESDO organized a follow-up webinar with students from Dhaka, Rangpur, and Khulna under the Plastic-Free Campus initiative, showcasing their leadership in promoting sustainability. Through workshops, community engagement, and creative initiatives like Rangpur Zilla School's eco-disciplinary program, these youth are driving systemic change, inspiring peers, and fostering collective responsibility toward a plastic-free future.

Workshop on the Role of Bangladesh's Youth in the Global Plastics Treaty



On May 24, 2025, ESDO convened a highly interactive workshop at its Dhaka office under the theme “Youth Action for a Plastic-Free Future.” The event brought together youth leaders, environmental activists, policy experts, and government officials to empower young people to actively participate in both national and global plastic policy processes. The workshop featured informative sessions on the Global Plastics Treaty negotiations, Bangladesh’s current plastic management policies, and identified opportunities for youth engagement in treaty advocacy. A major highlight was the introduction of a Youth Action Group dedicated to supporting Bangladesh’s voice in global forums and leading community-level plastic reduction initiatives.

Project

LOWERING ORGANIC WASTE METHANE (LOW-M) INITIATIVE

The LOW-Methane (LOW-M) Initiative, launched at COP28 in December 2023 and coordinated by the UNEP-Convened Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), aims to cut one million tonnes of methane annually from the solid waste sector by 2030, supporting the Global Methane Pledge and Paris Agreement targets. Methane, over 80 times more potent than CO₂, is largely emitted in Bangladesh from decomposing organic waste in unmanaged landfills.

The initiative promotes city-level strategies, such as organic waste management, segregation, composting, and circular economy practices. ESDO, in partnership with the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), has launched the LOW-M Dhaka portfolio to assess the current situation, identify interventions, and develop a roadmap for methane reduction. This effort supports Bangladesh's NDC 3.0, which focuses on reducing short-lived climate pollutants (SLCP) in waste management and encourages teamwork between government and non-government groups.



Strengthening Bangladesh's NDC: Decentralized Waste Management and Methane Mitigation



The Online Consultation Workshop on Revisiting Bangladesh's NDC 2021, organized by ESDO, gathered policymakers, experts, and stakeholders to discuss effective waste management strategies and methane reduction commitments.

Key Insights:

- Waste-to-energy (WtE) incineration is not a viable solution, it is costly, inefficient, and contradicts climate goals.
- Decentralized waste management (composting, biogas, and material recovery) offers sustainable, cost-effective alternatives.
- Environmental justice is essential, waste pickers and marginalized communities must be included in policy frameworks.
- Policy revisions are needed to align Bangladesh's NDC with the Global Methane Pledge, focusing on low-cost, high-impact methane reduction strategies.

Expert Perspectives: Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Advisor, MoEFCC: "Segregation is key, and we must resist quick-fix solutions that appear magical but are not sustainable."

Bangladesh is at a pivotal moment. Prioritizing zero-waste strategies and decentralized approaches will not only reduce methane emissions but also create resilient, inclusive waste management systems.

Collaboration among stakeholders is critical. Let's work together to implement policies that drive meaningful and lasting change.



City-Level Roundtable Discussion on Low-M (Methane) Initiative



The discussion gathered local administrators, bureaucrats, policymakers, and members of GAIA to talk about integrating low-methane solutions within our local waste management infrastructure. Mariel Vilella (GAIA), who joined online, highlighted that reducing methane is a low-hanging fruit to achieving the Paris Climate Agreement and the Global Methane Elimination pledge.

The local government representatives spoke extensively about the challenges faced while materializing NDCs and other climate goals in the field. They stressed the need to curate context-sensitive solutions that work well with local realities. Dr. Shahriar Hossain acknowledged the challenges but encouraged all to look at the bright side and consider how cities outside Bangladesh achieved sustainable waste management systems despite obstacles.

Piloting Decentralized Solutions for Organic Waste Methane Reduction from Bulk Waste Generators in Dhaka North City Corporation

In November 2026, the Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO) launched the project titled “Piloting Decentralized Solutions for Organic Waste Methane Reduction from Bulk Waste Generators in Dhaka North City Corporation,” with financial support from Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors (RPA) on behalf of its sponsored initiative, the Urban Movement Innovation Fund.

The project aims to reduce methane emissions from unmanaged organic waste generated by bulk waste sources such as kitchen markets and madrasas through the implementation of decentralized composting solutions within the Dhaka North City Corporation.

In addition to diverting organic waste from landfills and drains, the initiative seeks to enhance the awareness and technical capacity of local stakeholders, including market committees, madrasa authorities, vendors, and students, on methane mitigation and zero-waste practices. The project will also generate evidence-based policy and community recommendations to support the integration of decentralized waste management solutions into Bangladesh’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) methane mitigation targets, while strengthening collaboration with city authorities and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to advance environmentally just and scalable methane reduction strategies.



Project

REDUCING USES AND RELEASES OF CHEMICALS OF CONCERN, INCLUDING POPS, IN THE TEXTILES SECTOR

Bangladesh's textile and garment sector is a global leader and a cornerstone of the national economy, providing substantial employment and export revenue. However, the sector is also a significant source of chemical pollution. Hazardous substances used in dyeing, washing, printing, and finishing processes release Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and Chemicals of Concern (CoCs), posing serious risks to human health and the environment. To tackle these challenges, the regional project "Reducing Uses and Releases of Chemicals of Concern, including POPs, in the Textile Sector" was launched under the Basel and Stockholm Conventions Regional Centre for South-East Asia (BSCRC-SEA), funded by GEF/UNEP. The project is implemented in Bangladesh by the Environment and Social Development Organization -ESDO in collaboration with the Department of Environment (DoE), MoEFCC, with technical support from NRDC, USA. It focuses on strengthening chemical management through policy reforms, stakeholder engagement, promotion of safer chemical alternatives, and adoption of sustainable production practices. The project aims to achieve measurable outcomes, including reduced use of COCs and POPs in textile processes, lower environmental releases of harmful chemicals, decreased exposure for workers and communities, and documented evidence of chemical risk reduction, ultimately contributing to a safer, healthier, and more sustainable textile sector.

Preparatory and Internal Planning Phase

In June 2025, following earlier re-engagement discussions, ESDO focused on administrative consolidation and technical preparation to align national activities with the regional framework led by BSCRC-SEA. A half-day internal technical session finalized the 2025 Work Plan, activity sequencing, timelines, and team responsibilities, while financial allocations were adjusted for factory mapping, stakeholder consultations, and gender activities. The draft Work Plan and Budget was submitted to BSCRC-SEA for feedback and endorsement. After initial clarifications, implementation proceeded, internal coordination mechanisms were established across research, field, and finance teams, and by the end of June 2025, ESDO was ready to relaunch full project implementation and engage stakeholders in July.



Resumption and National Workshop Implementation

July 2025 marked a turning point as ESDO resumed on-ground implementation following two years of limited activity, focusing on coordination with the DoE and BSCRC-SEA to officially restart national operations.

Key Activities

- **Workshop Preparation and Coordination:** Inspected DoE Auditorium for readiness on 3 July and held preparatory meetings on 7 and 9 July to finalize agenda, speakers, and logistics.
- **National Consultation Workshop (13 July):** Organized and facilitated a workshop on POPs and Chemicals of Concern (CoCs), attended by ministries, industrial associations (BGMEA, BKMEA), academia, development partners, and NGOs; sessions covered management priorities, safer-chemical alternatives, and institutional coordination.
- **Post-Workshop Technical Coordination:** Follow-up meeting on 14 July defined next steps; between 15–22 July, ESDO collaborated with BSCRC-SEA to draft the National Work Plan and Budget (2025–2027), integrating field feedback.

Outputs & Outcome

The Workshop Report was submitted and acknowledged, the National Work Plan and Budget (2025–2027) drafted, and the Q3 activity schedule finalized. The workshop re-launched Bangladesh's participation in the regional programme and strengthened ESDO's credibility and collaboration with DoE and key textile stakeholders.



Initiation of Factory Mapping and Database Development

Following July's strategic meetings, August focused on collecting baseline information on textile wet-processing units to establish a national chemical-use inventory. In July, ESDO inspected the DoE Auditorium and held preparatory meetings to finalize the agenda, speakers, and logistics for the National Consultative Workshop. On 13 July, the workshop on POPs and Chemicals of Concern (CoCs) was successfully conducted, attended by ministries, industrial associations (BGMEA, BKMEA), academia, development partners, and NGOs, covering management priorities, industry challenges, safer-chemical alternatives, and institutional coordination for inventory preparation. ESDO managed all documentation and submitted the Workshop Report to BSCRC-SEA. Post-workshop coordination defined next steps for stakeholder consultations, mapping methodology, and survey design, and between 15–22 July, ESDO collaborated with BSCRC-SEA to draft the National Work Plan and Budget (2025–2027), integrating field feedback and national priorities. By the end of August, a database of 250 wet-processing factories was completed, and the mapping framework was approved for field testing, providing Bangladesh's first comprehensive dataset on textile wet-processing facilities and a solid baseline for inventory development and policy analysis.



Stakeholder Coordination and Policy Alignment

In September 2025, activities focused on institutional consolidation, strengthening coordination mechanisms, and integrating factory mapping into national policy frameworks. ESDO and DoE held a high-level coordination meeting at DoE Headquarters to finalize the 2025 Work Plan and Budget, agree on timelines for mapping verification, supplier engagement, stakeholder workshops, pilot site identification, and baseline data validation. During the month, ESDO also prepared a draft stakeholder list and concept note for establishing the National Working Group (NWG), including representatives from DoE, MoI, MoC, BGMEA, BKMEA, academia, and civil-society experts. The NWG is designed to provide policy oversight, technical validation, and ensure transparency in project implementation. By the end of September, the 2025 Work Plan and Budget were finalized, the draft NWG list circulated, a coordination framework for quarterly review meetings established, and institutional cooperation solidified, creating a bridge between industry data collection and national chemical management policymaking.



Gender Integration and Advanced Coordination

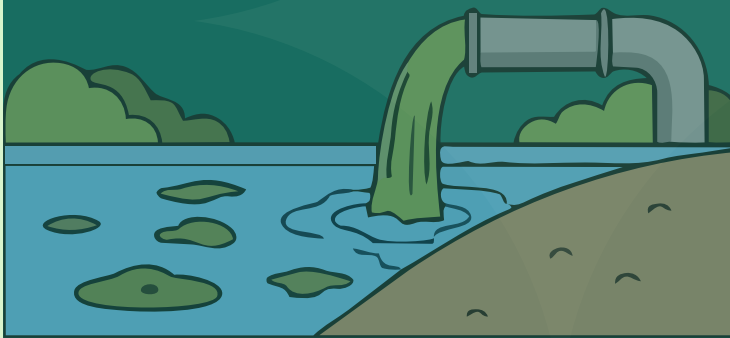
In October 2025, the project focused on mainstreaming gender perspectives and finalizing policy coordination mechanisms. A joint Regional–National Gender Coordination Meeting was held on 28 October between the Regional Gender Expert, Dr. Khondaker Golam Moazzem, and the National Gender Expert, Ms. Siddika Sultana, with participation from BSCRC–SEA, DoE, and ESDO. The meeting served as an introductory alignment session for gender integration, discussing the Gender Action Plan (GAP), identification of gender indicators for baseline surveys, standardization of ESDO’s draft survey questionnaire, development of a quarterly gender activity report template, and sharing of supporting documents on risk mitigation and stakeholder engagement. Simultaneously, ESDO continued providing technical assistance to DoE to align project deliverables with national chemical-management priorities, initiated recruitment of National Experts, submitted the Project Progress and Financial Reports, provided CVs of four candidates, and completed the initial chemical-use database. Ms. Siddika Sultana was appointed as the Gender Expert. By the end of October, gender coordination meeting minutes were documented and shared, commitments secured for quarterly gender reporting, gender mainstreaming integrated into the revised national work plan, and continuous coordination maintained with BSCRC–SEA. These efforts consolidated Bangladesh’s gender mainstreaming roadmap, ensuring that upcoming field activities will adopt inclusive, gender-responsive methodologies.



Planning, Legal Coordination, and Field Implementation

Following October's gender mainstreaming efforts, November–December focused on planning, inter-agency coordination, legal framework understanding, and initial field activities. ESDO finalized and submitted the 2026 budget and work plan, prepared documents for the Vietnam regional meeting, and held coordination meetings with BCRC-SEA, UNAP, and PMU. A technical consultation with the UNAP Regional Legal Expert strengthened understanding of regulatory frameworks, while DoE issued a formal letter enabling factory visits. Field visits to selected textile facilities were conducted, generating preliminary data for baseline validation.

The National Work Plan and Budget (2025–2027) was finalized, the National Consultative Workshop conducted, a factory mapping framework and database of 250+ wet-processing mills completed, a draft National Working Group established, gender mainstreaming mechanisms implemented with a National Gender Expert appointed, institutional coordination with BSCRC-SEA and national partners strengthened, and preliminary data from field visits collected for baseline validation.



Resumption and National Workshop Implementation



Technical Coordination Meeting with DoE



Policy and Technical Support



Factory Mapping



Project

BUILDING ZERO WASTE COMMUNITY FOR A POLLUTION-FREE BANGLADESH

ESDO has been actively working to build Zero Waste communities in Bangladesh, aiming to transform waste from a liability into a resource while promoting environmental sustainability, community health, and economic opportunities. Through this initiative, ESDO engages local communities, waste pickers, and stakeholders to adopt practices such as composting, organic farming, rooftop gardening, and responsible waste recovery, guided by the principles of Zero Waste, minimizing waste generation, eliminating harmful disposal, and maximizing reuse and recycling.

Building on its experience in developing Zero Waste models in Bangladesh and drawing lessons from global best practices, ESDO is now implementing the project “**Scaling the Zero Waste Community Model: Biogas, Composting, and Circular Economy**”, funded by the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA). This project focuses on decentralized biogas and composting systems, circular economy solutions, and capacity building for communities and waste workers. It also promotes public-private partnerships, supports small and medium enterprises in waste-based businesses, and tests scalable models for sustainable financing.

Through this effort, ESDO continues to advance sustainable waste management, contribute to climate action, and create replicable models for Zero Waste communities that align with SDG Targets 11.6, 12, 13, and 14.

Zero Waste Video Documentary Screening and Community Consultation



On January 15, 2025, the Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO), in collaboration with GAIA, hosted a successful 'Zero Waste Video Documentary Screening and Community Consultation' at Betgari Union, Gangachara Upazila, Rangpur. This impactful event was part of the International Zero Waste Month 2025, emphasizing practical solutions for sustainable waste management and showcasing the community's inspiring journey toward a Zero Waste Village.

As part of the International Zero Waste Month (IZWM) 2025 celebrations, ESDO organized a webinar titled "Advancing Zero Waste Solutions for Organic Waste Management" on 14 January 2025 (3:00–5:00 PM BST) via Zoom. The event aligned with the 2025 IZWM theme, "Organics and Climate," highlighting the crucial role of proper organic waste management in reducing climate impacts and promoting sustainable consumption and production practices.

Youth representatives and academic experts shared strategies for reducing organic waste and promoting sustainable practices. Over 150 participants, including students and youth groups, joined to discuss actionable steps toward a zero-waste future.

Advancing Zero Waste Solutions for Organic Waste Management



ESDO's Executive Director, Siddika Sultana, and Assistant Program Officer, Maliha Hoque, actively participated in the GAIA Sub-Regional Meeting, which brought together 61 participants from 35 organizations across nine countries.

GAIA's South Asia Subregional Meeting and Consultation

Compost Fertilizer Production



ESDO promoted organic waste management in Pramanikpara and Sahapara through compost fertilizer training. 50 participants (29 in Pramanikpara, 21 in Sahapara) learned waste segregation, compost preparation, and benefits for sustainable agriculture. The initiative transforms household organic waste into valuable compost, supporting environmental sustainability and local livelihoods.

Biogas Plant Installation

To advance renewable energy and efficient waste use, ESDO facilitated biogas plant setup for 3 households (2 in Pramanikpara, 1 in Sahapara). The initiative reduces reliance on firewood and fossil fuels while utilizing household and livestock waste, contributing to cleaner, energy-efficient rural communities.



Women Entrepreneurship Development



ESDO empowered 20 rural women (11 in Pramanikpara, 9 in Sahapara) through skill-based training in bag sewing, kantha stitching, embroidery, and paper bag making. The program fosters eco-friendly livelihoods, builds income opportunities, and strengthens women's role in community waste reduction.



2025 FIELD ACTIVITIES



Project

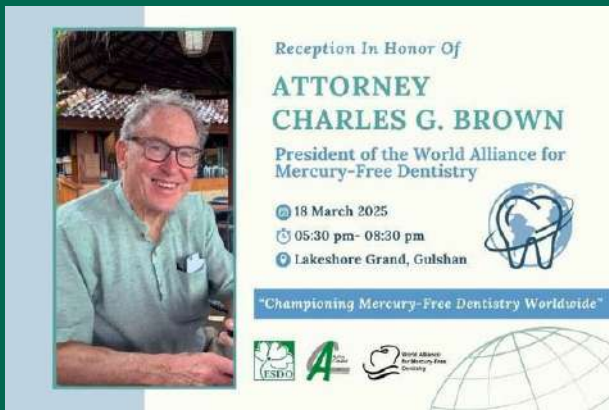
Mercury-Free Dentistry for Environmental Health

In 2013, the Asian Center for Environmental Health was established to support the ESDO-WAMFD initiative to phase out mercury in dentistry across South and Southeast Asia. The program promotes mercury-free dental practices, supports the Minamata Convention's implementation, and fosters collaboration among governments, NGOs, and international partners.

Dental amalgam, a major source of mercury exposure, poses serious risks to human health and the environment. Mercury vapor from fillings can harm fetuses and children, and occupational exposure endangers dental professionals. Amalgam waste also contaminates air, water, and soil, converting into toxic methylmercury that enters the food chain. With safer alternatives like glass ionomers and resin composites available, countries are now shifting toward mercury-free dentistry.

Key Achievements of 2025

- Launched the Asian Center for Environmental Health website as a regional hub for research and advocacy.
- Conducted free mercury-free dental camps, reaching 300 people, including 150 students.
- Implemented school campaigns empowering youth for a mercury-free future
- Advanced integration of mercury-free dentistry into the BDS curriculum, pending BMDC approval.
- Strengthened policy engagement with MoEFCC, DoE, and MoHFW for mercury control.
- Participated in Asia-Pacific regional meetings to promote mercury-free dentistry.
- Held bilateral discussions in Thailand with regional partners to enhance collaboration.
- Ms. Siddika Sultana represented Bangladesh at COP-6, contributing to the global decision to phase out dental amalgam by 2034.
- Strengthened partnerships with professionals, academia, media, and international organizations to advance mercury-free dentistry.



Advancing Mercury-Free Dentistry in Bangladesh: Reception in Honor of Attorney Charles G. Brown

The Environment and Social Development Organization -ESDO and the Asian Center for Environmental Health held a reception on 18 March 2025 at Lakeshore Grand, Dhaka, honoring Attorney Charles G. Brown, President of the World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry. The event reaffirmed Bangladesh's commitment to the Minamata Convention and advancing mercury-free dentistry.

Policy & Regulatory Advancements

The reception highlighted ESDO's collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change to advance mercury-free dentistry in Bangladesh. With Dr. Fahmida Khanom in attendance, discussions focused on policy reforms, stronger regulations, awareness, and sustainable implementation through joint efforts.



The initiative highlighted the urgent need to include mercury-free practices in dental education and professional training in Bangladesh. Supported by WHO, the revised Bachelor of Dental Surgery 2024 curriculum has been approved by the Center for Medical Education under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and awaits final approval from the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council. At a reception attended by dental experts, policymakers, and representatives from MoEFCC and ESDO, participants discussed integrating mercury-free principles into training, building capacity, and promoting collaboration.



Advancing Mercury-Free Dental Education

Launch of the Asian Center for Environmental Health Website



Regional knowledge exchange:

Research and evidence-based advocacy:

Capacity building and training:

Collaboration and networking:

The website of the Asian Center for Environmental Health (ACEH) was formally launched by Attorney Charles G. Brown, marking a significant step toward regional collaboration on environmental health issues. The platform is designed to serve as a comprehensive hub for knowledge sharing, research, advocacy, and partnership among governments, public health professionals, academicians, civil society, and international organizations.

Strengthening Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration for Mercury-Free Dentistry



The event united dental professionals, government officials, academics, and healthcare experts to advance mercury-free dentistry in Bangladesh and South Asia. It reinforced Bangladesh's leadership under the Minamata Convention, promoted policy reform and awareness, and launched the Asian Centre website to strengthen regional collaboration for mercury elimination and public health protection.

Promoting Safe Dentistry through a Free Mercury-Free Dental Camp in Ashulia

The Ghoshbag community in Ashulia, Savar, faces growing environmental and public health risks due to the unchecked expansion of textile and garment industries, leading to air and water pollution, soil contamination, and health issues among children, women, and industrial workers. In response, ESDO, in collaboration with MT Dental Center and sponsored by Medi Plus, organized a free dental camp and awareness campaign on 20 July 2025 at Sher-e-Bangla Model High School. The activities aimed to provide oral health services and educate the community on the hazards of mercury-based dental amalgam while promoting safe, mercury-free dental practices.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH



AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

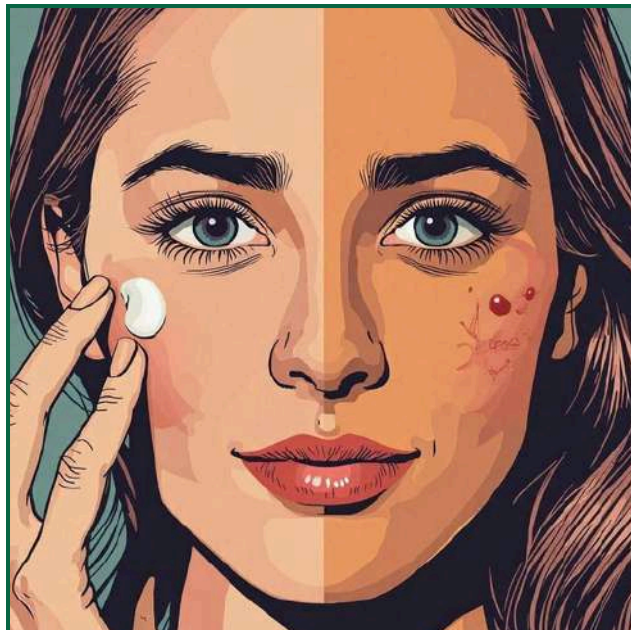
Promoting a Mercury-Free Future at Sher-e-Bangla Model High School

As part of its commitment to mercury elimination, the Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO) organized an awareness campaign on Mercury-Free Dentistry at Sher-e-Bangla Model High School, Ashulia. The event educated students about mercury's health and environmental risks, encouraged safe dental alternatives, and inspired them to become advocates for a mercury-free, healthier, and sustainable future.

Project

ASSISTING IN THE IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY IN BANGLADESH

To address the growing threat of mercury-containing cosmetics, particularly skin-lightening products (SLPs), the Environment and Social Development Organization -ESDO, in collaboration with the European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and the Zero Mercury Working Group, is implementing a comprehensive initiative to protect public health and the environment while supporting Bangladesh's compliance with the Minamata Convention on Mercury. The project focuses on reducing mercury exposure, raising consumer awareness, and promoting safer alternatives through market monitoring, laboratory testing, and policy advocacy. It engages consumers, sellers, and policymakers, emphasizing women and youth, the primary users of SLPs. In partnership with key government agencies, ESDO strengthens regulatory enforcement and combats illegal cross-border and online sales of mercury-laden cosmetics. Through awareness campaigns, policy dialogues, and regional collaboration, the initiative strives to foster a mercury-free cosmetics market in Bangladesh and safeguard both people and the planet.



Survey on Mercury-Containing Skin-Lightening Products (SLPs) to Assess Usage and Awareness



The ESDO team conducted detailed surveys among 730 consumers and 75 sellers to assess the use, availability, and awareness of mercury-containing skin-lightening products. Findings revealed high usage, online purchases, and marketing-driven demand, while knowledge of mercury limits was limited. The data provides evidence for awareness campaigns, regulatory enforcement, and policy advocacy to reduce mercury exposure and protect public health.

Market Surveillance on Mercury-Containing Skin-Lightening Products (SLPs) to Assess Usage and Awareness

ESDO conducted comprehensive market surveillance in Bangladesh to assess the availability of mercury-containing skin-lightening products (SLPs), including banned items and those previously found with high mercury. Physical and online markets were monitored, revealing widespread circulation, misleading labeling, and significant regulatory gaps. Findings highlight the growing role of e-commerce in distributing hazardous products and the urgent need for stronger enforcement and targeted interventions.



Follow-Up Research: Assessment of Mercury Concentration in Skin-Lightening Products (SLPs)



ESDO, in collaboration with EEB, Zero Mercury, and Ban Toxics, conducted follow-up research to assess mercury concentration in skin-lightening products (SLPs).

1. Sample Collection

ESDO collected twenty creams from markets and online, including banned and high-risk products, with key details recorded to track trends and identify prohibited items..

2. Mercury Testing

Ban Toxics tested all samples, and 18 exceeded the 1 ppm mercury limit, highlighting enforcement gaps and ongoing risks. The findings emphasize the need for stronger regulation, market surveillance, and public awareness, supported by partner collaboration for reliable testing and public health protection.

Media Briefing: “Toxic Glow: Mercury in Skin Lightening Products in Bangladesh”



On 19 June 2025, ESDO, EEB, and BAN Toxics revealed alarming findings: 22 of 26 tested skin-lightening creams contained mercury far exceeding the 1 ppm safety limit; one sample had 24,800 ppm. The study, conducted using XRF technology, highlights a severe public health threat.

Workshop on “Building a ZeroWaste Lifestyle and Raising Awareness on Mercury-Free Skin Lightening Products”



ESDO hosted a day-long workshop at Green Village, Lalmonirhat, engaging 30 local youth on zero-waste lifestyles and mercury-free skin-lightening products. Through interactive sessions and hands-on activities, participants learned about health risks, sustainable choices, and environmental responsibility, empowering them to become advocates for safe, eco-friendly practices in their communities.

Strategic Policy Meetings with Government Stakeholders

ESDO held a policy dialogue with BSTI to present evidence on mercury-containing skin-lightening products, discuss regulatory gaps, and strengthen enforcement, market monitoring, and public awareness, aiming to align national actions with the Minamata Convention and ensure safer cosmetics in Bangladesh.

ESDO engaged with MoEFCC officials in a national-level policy dialogue, providing technical inputs on mercury-containing products and the Minamata Convention. The meeting strengthened regulatory alignment, improved inter-ministerial coordination, and guided revision of Bangladesh’s exemption application for effective compliance.

Community Outreach

Online Media Campaign

ESDO launched a digital awareness campaign on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube to educate the public, especially young consumers, about the risks of mercury in skin-lightening products. Using short videos, infographics, and visual messages in both Bengali and English, the campaign shared information on health risks, regulations, and safer mercury-free alternatives. Thousands of users engaged with the content through shares, comments, and discussions.

Outcomes:

- Increased awareness among women, young people, and the general public about the risks of mercury-containing products and the benefits of safer, mercury-free alternatives.
- Greater engagement on online platforms, prompting community discussions and peer sharing of information.

School-Level Awareness Campaign



Recognizing the importance of educating the next generation, ESDO conducted interactive awareness sessions in schools, reaching 300 students. Sessions incorporated educational materials such as posters and fact sheets to make learning engaging and memorable. Students were encouraged to share knowledge with their families and peers, amplifying the campaign's impact and fostering community-level awareness about mercury risks.

Activities Conducted:

- Distribution of educational materials covering mercury-related health risks and safer cosmetic alternatives.
- Interactive sessions and scenario-based discussions on chemical safety and product choices.
- Demonstrations highlighting how to identify mercury-containing SLPs and banned products.

Outcomes:

Improved awareness among students about mercury hazards, with over 95% of participants demonstrating understanding of mercury's health risks in post-session assessments. Students actively reported awareness of banned and high-mercury products to family members, promoting knowledge-sharing within communities.

Project

ADDRESSING CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON LEAD POISONING IN BANGLADESH

The joint initiative by ESDO and UNICEF, "Addressing Children's Environmental Health with a Particular Focus on Lead Poisoning in Bangladesh," addresses the alarming issue of lead contamination that poses severe health risks, especially to children. With Bangladesh ranking fourth globally in lead-related fatalities, the project targets industries like paints and batteries, where lead exposure remains rampant, and informal recycling practices exacerbate the issue. The initiative spans from December 2023 to December 2025, aiming to reduce lead exposure through regulatory reforms, industry engagement, and public awareness.

Key Findings and Major Achievements

- Produced comprehensive national evidence on lead exposure from paints, battery recycling, consumer products, and environmental hotspots.
- Contributed to the draft National Strategy and Action Plan for a Lead-Free Bangladesh (2025–2035).
- Strengthened multisectoral coordination with government agencies, regulators, and private sector stakeholders.
- Identified regulatory gaps, unsafe recycling practices, and environmental contamination, supporting policy reforms.
- Enhanced awareness through youth programs, school clubs, university engagement, and media workshops.
- Encouraged private sector willingness to adopt safer practices with clear policies and incentives.

2025 Activities

Stakeholder Consultation on Draft Policy Brief on Paint

The consultation provided a platform to discuss regulating industrial paints under a 90-ppm lead limit to align with global standards and protect public health. Key gaps identified included the lack of industrial paint standards, weak enforcement, and limited monitoring capacity.

Recommendations included adopting a national standard, mandatory lead testing, stronger regulatory authority, clear enforcement mechanisms, and integration into existing environmental frameworks. Coordination across ministries and economic measures such as incentives for lead-free materials and penalties for non-compliance were emphasized to support SMEs.

Participants also highlighted the need for systematic market surveillance, regular inspections, laboratory testing, labelling, certification, and traceability to ensure consumer protection. The guidance from this consultation is now being incorporated into the draft policy brief to advance a lead-free paint sector in Bangladesh.



Key Informant Interviews with Informal ULAB Sector Owners, Employees, and Surrounding Community Members



Informal ULAB (Used Lead-Acid Battery) recycling continues to expand in Bangladesh due to high profits, low investment needs, weak regulatory enforcement, and easy access to scrap batteries. Limited awareness of health risks and a lack of alternative livelihoods keep workers and small operators engaged in these unsafe and unregulated practices.



Evaluation of Lead Demand, Supply Chain Dynamics, and Informal Sector Dependence on ULAB Recycling through Consultation Workshop

ESDO held a consultation workshop with workers, factory owners, and stakeholders to discuss challenges in informal ULAB and e-waste recycling and explore pathways to formalization. Participants learned about health and environmental risks, shared safety gaps, and highlighted needs such as PPE, training, health check-ups, and regulatory support, emphasizing that collaboration across industry, government, and civil society is essential for safer, formalized recycling systems.



Consultation and dialogue with BSTI, civil society organizations, the private sector, and academic institutions

ESDO, BSTI, and UNICEF jointly organized a national consultation with civil society, industry, and academia to address lead exposure in Bangladesh. The dialogue emphasized strengthening regulations, improving compliance, expanding lab capacity, and accelerating standards for paints, with BSTI's leadership supported by multi-stakeholder collaboration seen as key to a safer, lead-free environment.



During the dialogue, ESDO and UNICEF presented evidence on lead contamination trends and public health impacts, complementing BSTI's regulatory perspective. Together, the three partners facilitated discussions on enforcement gaps, import controls, laboratory capacity, and the need for greater transparency around compliance. Industry participants raised concerns about cost pressures, while academic and civil society experts stressed the urgency of accelerated standard-setting and expanded testing.

MEDIA ROUNDTABLE & WORKSHOP

Media Roundtable to sensitize editors, senior media personnel, key media personnel, and policy makers

ESDO organized a media roundtable to raise awareness among journalists and policymakers about the risks of lead in paints and the need for stronger enforcement of Bangladesh's lead-free agenda. The session shared study findings, discussed regulatory gaps, and equipped media professionals with evidence and technical knowledge to report accurately, advocate for safer practices, and support a Lead-Free Bangladesh.



Media raised key concerns on penalties, lead bans, import gaps, and health risks to children



Journalist Orientation Workshop Strengthened Reporters' Knowledge and Capacity on Key Issues

ESDO's Journalist Orientation Workshop enhanced reporters' knowledge on lead poisoning, its health risks, and evidence-based reporting, connecting them with experts to strengthen media advocacy and public awareness on lead contamination in Bangladesh. Participants learned that despite being a severe and irreversible health threat, especially for children, lead poisoning remains widely underreported, misunderstood, and overlooked in mainstream media.

The sessions covered :

- Understanding lead exposure and impacts
- National contamination patterns and evidence
- Policy standards, gaps, and enforcement
- Skills for accurate evidence-based reporting
- Ethical reporting and community engagement
- Interactive discussion and Q&A session
- Commitment to ongoing collaboration

KNOWLEDGE SHARING WITH YOUTH

Youth Rally & Human Chain for International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week



As part of ILPPW 2025, ESDO organized Youth Rallies and Human Chains in Shahbagh, engaging over 300 students and volunteers to raise public awareness on lead poisoning. The events gave youth hands-on experience in advocacy, communication, and leadership, empowering them as active ambassadors for a lead-safe Bangladesh.



Art for Change: Open Forum and Discussion on “Lead-Safe Paints” – Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka

ESDO organized the “Art for Change” workshop with the University of Dhaka, engaging 150+ youth artists on lead-safe paints. Participants learned about toxic pigments, public health risks, and safe practices, while exploring how art can drive social change through awareness campaigns, posters, and murals promoting lead-free paints in homes, schools, and communities.



Development of the National Strategy and Multilayer Action Plan for Lead-Free Bangladesh (2025-2035)

Building on UNICEF and ESDO's work, MoEFCC is finalizing the National Strategy and Multilayer Action Plan for a Lead-Free Bangladesh (2025–2035). A multisectoral working group, including government, UNICEF, ESDO, Pure Earth and other stakeholders, drafted the strategy through technical and policy meetings. After a national validation workshop with health, industry, education, and civil society representatives, inputs are being incorporated, with the final plan set for official launch soon, advancing national lead elimination efforts.



Consultative Workshop on Developing the National Strategy and Multi-Year Action Plan for a Lead-Free Bangladesh (2025–2035)

On 23 August 2025, MoEFCC, with technical support from UNICEF, ESDO, and Pure Earth, convened a national workshop to review and validate the draft National Strategy and Multi-Year Action Plan for a Lead-Free Bangladesh (2025–2035). Sixty representatives from ministries, regulatory agencies, academia, civil society, and development partners provided multisectoral feedback. The workshop highlighted lead poisoning's impact on 36 million children, reviewed key exposure sources, and proposed strengthening enforcement, surveillance, laboratory capacity, and stakeholder coordination. Group discussions refined strategic priorities, KPIs, and communication plans. Participants committed to supporting the strategy's finalization, marking a milestone toward a lead-free Bangladesh by 2035.

ASSESSING LEAD IN PAINTS IN BANGLADESH: EVIDENCE FOR POLICY ACTION AND MARKET TRANSFORMATION

ESDO, in collaboration with Instiglio and the Lead Exposure Elimination Project (LEEP), implemented a comprehensive study to assess the current status of lead in paints across Bangladesh. The project combined desk review, market surveys, key informant interviews, and laboratory analysis to generate robust evidence on compliance with the national 90 ppm lead standard. A total of 161 paint samples were collected from major markets in Dhaka and Chattogram and analyzed at an internationally accredited laboratory using ICP-OES following NIOSH 7303 method .

The findings revealed that 42% of tested paints exceeded the national limit, with significantly higher concentrations observed in certain locally available and imported products. While major manufacturers demonstrated strong compliance, gaps remain among smaller and informal producers, as well as in unregulated paint categories such as industrial and spray paints. The study also identified low levels of labeling (21.6%) and limited awareness among retailers, alongside the widespread use of industrial paints for decorative purposes, highlighting critical regulatory and enforcement challenges .

The project generated key outputs including a national study report, policy recommendations, stakeholder engagement outcomes, and media dissemination, contributing to increased awareness and policy dialogue on lead exposure.

The evidence is expected to support strengthening enforcement, expanding regulations to industrial paints, improving market surveillance, and advancing Bangladesh's transition toward a lead-free paint market.

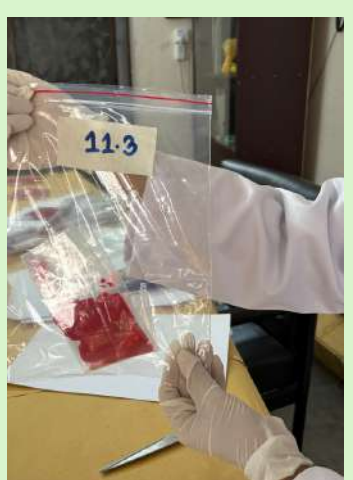
Major Outcomes / Results

- 42% of paint samples (68 out of 161) exceeded the national standard of 90 ppm lead, confirming ongoing market presence of non-compliant products.
- High lead concentrations were detected in several samples, with levels reaching up to 190,000 ppm, indicating the continued use of lead-based pigments.
- Large and multinational manufacturers were found to be largely compliant, demonstrating significant progress following the 2018 regulation.
- Spray and industrial paints exhibited high levels of non-compliance and remain outside current regulatory coverage, posing additional exposure risks.
- Only 21.6% of products carried “lead-free” or similar labels, with cases of misleading labeling identified.
- Retailer awareness was low, with more than half of sellers unaware of the national lead standard and compliance status.
- Industrial paints are commonly used for decorative purposes, increasing the risk of household exposure.
- The findings confirm a two-tier market system—compliant major brands and a smaller but significant informal segment supplying high-lead paints.



Dissemination and Follow-up Actions

The findings of the study were formally disseminated through a national press briefing, engaging media representatives, policymakers, and key stakeholders, including officials from BSTI and the Department of Environment. The briefing helped bring national attention to the issue of lead in paints and strengthened dialogue between regulators, industry, and civil society. Following the dissemination, BSTI conducted independent follow-up testing in their own laboratories, demonstrating increased regulatory interest and response. Building on this momentum, ESDO, with support from Instiglio and LEEP, is now advancing next steps for continued engagement with BSTI, focusing on strengthening monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, as well as initiating targeted engagement with non-compliant manufacturers to support transition toward safer, lead-free production practices.



The background image shows a brick building on the right and a body of water on the left. In the foreground, there is a large, messy pile of trash, including plastic bags, paper, and other debris, floating in or near the water. The scene suggests environmental pollution in an industrial area.

Project

MULTI-ACTOR PARTNERSHIP FOR IMPROVED DUE DILIGENCE IMPLEMENTATION IN THE TEXTILE SECTOR VIA WORKER & COMMUNITY-BASED MONITORING

The Ashulia region has become a major environmental hotspot due to the rapid, unregulated growth of textile and garment industries. Untreated wastewater, industrial emissions, and waste dumping have polluted air, water, and soil, posing serious health risks to nearby communities and workers. To address this, ESDO, along with FEMNET e.V., BILS, and partners, is implementing the project “Multi-actor partnership for improved due diligence implementation in the textile sector via worker & community-based monitoring” (2023–2026)

Through field visits in Ghoshbag and Kathgora, ESDO-trained community members documented their issues with pollution and related health problems, including skin diseases, respiratory illness, and malnutrition. ESDO also organized medical and dental camps, community workshops, and awareness programs to build local capacity and promote solutions. These collective efforts have strengthened accountability, empowered communities, and advanced sustainable, rights-based practices within Bangladesh’s textile sector.

ESDO team providing training to community members to perform monitoring



ESDO organized training sessions in Kathgora and Ghosbag to strengthen community monitoring using the CBM toolkit. The sessions guided community members and garment workers in documenting health and environmental issues, capturing photo/video evidence, and accurately completing toolkits. As a result, community members are now more aware of chemical hazards and capable of contributing reliable data to support ongoing monitoring efforts.



Field Visit to Ashulia for CBM Data Collection

Ashulia, Savar, hosts around 1,100 textile factories, causing severe environmental pollution and health risks. Many factories bypass wastewater treatment due to weak enforcement, discharging hazardous effluents openly. ESDO monitors these impacts in Kathgora and Ghosbag, advocating for stricter regulations to protect community health and the environment.



Workshop on Community Reflection & Action

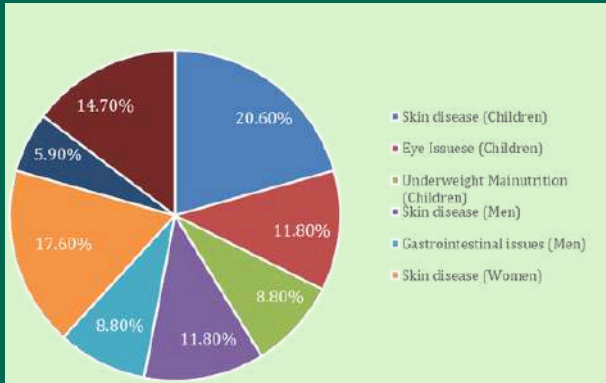
During April, ESDO conducted two community workshops in Ghosbag and Kathgora, engaging residents, garment workers, women, children, and the elderly. The sessions shared findings on chemical pollution from textile industries, discussed health impacts and preventive measures, and provided a platform for the community to voice concerns and suggest solutions.



Free Medical Camp Empowers Ghosbag and Kathgora Communities

On 28 April and 8 May, ESDO and AGROHO Society jointly organized a medical camp in Ghosbag and Kathgora, providing free consultations, health guidance, and medicines. Residents, including children, women, the elderly, and garment workers, actively participated and appreciated the initiative addressing urgent health and environmental challenges.

CBM Toolkit Data Analysis



ESDO analyzed CBM toolkit data from Kathgora and Ghosbag, Ashulia, to identify key health and environmental impacts of textile pollution. Interviews with 30 families highlighted the most vulnerable groups, including men, women, and children, providing insights for monitoring exposure, assessing well-being, and guiding targeted mitigation and advocacy efforts.

Health Impacts:

Health data collected from January to April 2025 in Ashulia indicated a significant number of illnesses linked to exposure to hazardous textile waste. Common health problems included skin diseases, respiratory issues, and persistent fatigue, with women and children being the most affected groups. Reported cases involved skin rashes, asthma, and eye irritation, while many elderly residents experienced cardiovascular complications. These findings highlight the serious and ongoing public health risks faced by communities living near textile industrial pollution.

Environmental Concerns:

- Water pollution reducing fish production, affecting livelihoods.
- Soil contamination lowering agricultural yields.
- Air pollution contributing to respiratory illnesses.
- Property degradation due to chemical exposure (rusted roofs, fragile walls).

Sampling & Analysis:

- Wastewater and soil samples collected collaboratively by ESDO, volunteers, and SGS Bangladesh.
- Samples labelled with GPS coordinates; lab protocols strictly followed.
- High levels of heavy metals (Pb, As, Cd, Cr) and PFAS detected.



Industrial Pollution Sparks Severe Health and Environmental Emergency

Between January and April 2025, the environmental and health situation around Nayanjhali Khal in Ghosbag deteriorated drastically due to continuous industrial wastewater discharge from surrounding textile and garment factories. Rising water levels, foul odors, and toxic fumes severely impacted residents, causing widespread skin diseases, respiratory problems, digestive issues, cardiovascular complications, malnutrition, and, in children, alarming burn-like symptoms. Environmental degradation was evident, with corroded metal structures, decaying vegetation, and surging mosquito and fly infestations. CBM toolkit data reflected worsening conditions across men, women, and children. Community members recommended urgent interventions, including mobile medical support, strict wastewater regulation, improved sanitation, vector control, and compensation with infrastructure restoration.

Hair Sampling Initiative to Assess Mercury Exposure in Industrial Communities

On 26 May 2025, the Environment and Social Development Organization -ESDO conducted a hair sampling initiative in the industrially affected communities of Ghoshbag and Kathgora in Ashulia, Savar. The activity aimed to assess mercury exposure using non-invasive sampling methods and raise awareness about environmental health risks.

The initiative focused on vulnerable groups such as garment workers, women, and the elderly living in areas affected by rapid and unregulated industrial growth. ESDO's trained team collected hair samples following international protocols, and the samples are being sent to the National Institute for Minamata Disease (NIMD), Japan, for mercury analysis. Despite minor challenges such as cultural sensitivities and electricity disruptions, the activity was successfully completed and contributed to community-based monitoring and advocacy on mercury-related health risks in Bangladesh.

Community Dental Camp and Environmental Health Awareness Initiative



On 20 July 2025, the Environment and Social Development Organization -ESDO, in collaboration with MT Dental Center and sponsored by Medi Plus, organized a free dental camp at Sher-e-Bangla Model High School to serve residents of Ghoshbag and Kathgora communities. The initiative aimed to provide essential oral healthcare services while raising awareness about public health and environmental risks linked to hazardous chemicals from nearby textile industries.

Around 300 community members—including children, women, elderly residents, and garment workers—received free dental check-ups, consultations, and oral hygiene guidance from professional dental surgeons. Medi Plus toothpaste was also distributed to encourage better dental care practices. In addition to medical services, the camp included awareness discussions on the health impacts of industrial pollution, helping strengthen community knowledge on both oral health and environmental safety.



Container Group Meeting



On July 22, 2025, ESDO and BILS jointly held the 3rd Container Group Meeting at New Cheers Restaurant, Dhanmondi, with donor support. Chaired by Mr. Syed Marghub Murshed, the event reviewed findings from community and worker monitoring, assessed pollution impacts in Ghoshbag and Kathgora, and discussed future strategies for improving community health and environmental sustainability.

Core Group Meeting



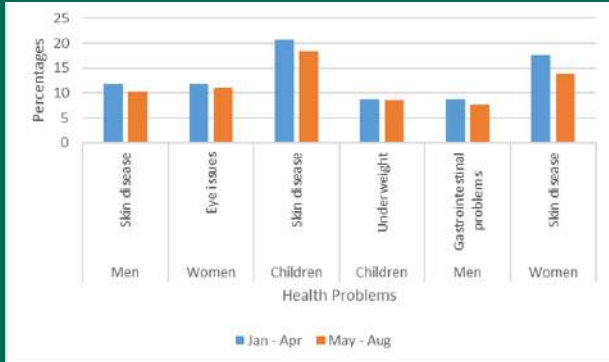
As outlined in the project framework, a Core Group Meeting was held on 20th August 2025, jointly organized by Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies and ESDO at the BILS office in Dhanmondi, Dhaka. The meeting served as an important platform to review ongoing project activities and strengthen collaboration among stakeholders.



Medical Camp Empowers Ghosbag and Kathgora Communities

Between May and December 2025, ESDO and AGROHO Society jointly organized several free medical camps in Ghoshbag and Kathgora, providing consultations and medicines to children, women, elderly residents, and workers. The initiative improved healthcare access strengthened community trust, and highlighted urgent needs such as safe drinking water and preventive health awareness.

CBM Toolkit Data Analysis 2nd Phase



Regular field visits were conducted in Ghoshbag and Kathgora to collect Community-Based Monitoring (CBM) data. The visits tracked the health and environmental impacts of hazardous textile waste through direct community engagement and on-site supervision, providing valuable insights for ongoing monitoring and intervention.

Health Impacts:

Health data from May to August 2025 showed ongoing illnesses linked to hazardous textile waste in Ashulia. Skin diseases, respiratory issues, and fatigue persisted among residents, with women and children most affected. Cases included rashes, asthma, and eye irritation, while elderly individuals suffered cardiovascular problems, underscoring severe, sustained public health risks.

Environmental Concerns:

During the reporting period, Ghoshbag and Kathgora continued to face severe environmental contamination. Untreated industrial wastewater persisted in canals, while soil tested positive for heavy metals. Water quality showed minimal improvement, and air pollution from factory emissions and traffic remained high, posing ongoing ecological and public health risks to the community.



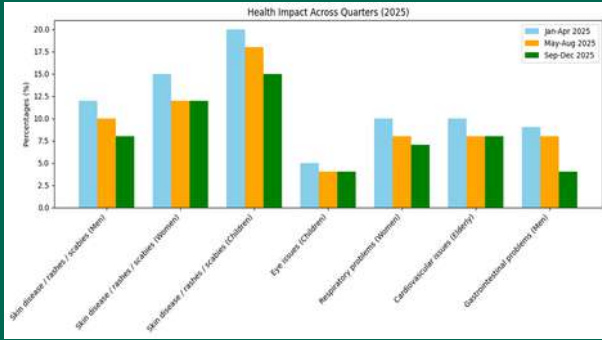
Industrial Pollution Sparks Severe Health and Environmental Emergency

Ensuring Safe Drinking Water



ESDO and AGROHO Society held a community discussion on installing water filtration systems in Ghoshbag and Kathgora. Residents actively participated, suggesting accessible locations and pledging support. The initiative aims to provide free, safe drinking water, addressing a critical health need and promoting long-term community well-being.

CBM Toolkit Data Analysis 3rd Phase



Regular field visits in Ghoshbag and Kathgora have been conducted to gather Community-Based Monitoring (CBM) data, tracking the health and environmental effects of hazardous textile waste. Through direct engagement with residents and on-site supervision, these visits continuously provide valuable insights to support ongoing monitoring and intervention efforts.

Health Impacts:

Between September and December 2025, residents experienced noticeable health improvements. Skin diseases, rashes, scabies, and eye irritation declined, especially among children. Women saw reduced asthma attacks, coughing, and skin irritation, while men reported fewer skin issues. Elderly residents experienced some relief from cardiovascular and respiratory problems, reflecting overall improved community health.

Environmental Concerns:

During the reporting period, only minor environmental improvements were observed, with textile and garment factories continuing to discharge untreated wastewater into canals and surrounding areas, maintaining chemical and biological contamination risks. Water quality showed slight visual improvement, but the canals remain unsafe, while air quality continues to be poor due to emissions, dust, and odors, causing persistent respiratory discomfort among residents and highlighting ongoing ecological and health challenges.



Industrial Pollution invades human health calling for immediate measures

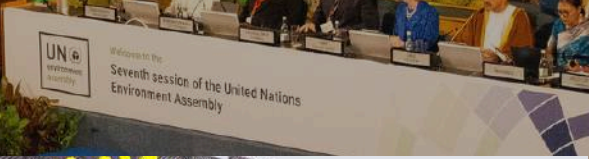
Safe Drinking Water Initiative



IESDO and AGROHO Society are working to install water filtration systems to provide free and safe drinking water for the communities. The planning and coordination process is ongoing, with continuous collaboration between the organizations and residents to move forward with the installation and operation of the filtration systems.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

This year, ESDO representatives actively participated in five international conventions, delivering vital interventions and sharing valuable insights and recommendations



BRS COPS 2025

Empowering Environmental Sustainability: ESDO's Role in Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions (BRS COPS)



The 2025 COPs for the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions, themed “Make visible the invisible: sound management of chemicals and wastes,” will take place from 28 April to 9 May in Geneva, Switzerland. The high-level segment will gather ministers and stakeholders to address chemical and hazardous waste challenges, focusing on strengthening waste management, improving chemical safety, phasing out harmful chemicals, preventing illegal transboundary waste movement, and fostering collaboration among governments, industries, and civil society.

Advancing Sustainable Textiles- Addressing Hazardous Chemicals and Protecting Communities at BRS COPS 2025

On May 4, 2025, ESDO Bangladesh hosted a BRS COPS side event in Geneva on hazardous chemicals in textiles. Experts, including Dr. Shahriar Hossain and Dr. Farhina Ahmed, urged stricter regulations, EPR schemes, and global cooperation to eliminate toxic chemicals and promote sustainable, accountable textile production.



BRS COPS 2025 Side Event: Addressing Textile Waste- A Call for Basel Convention Amendment

At the 2025 BRS COPs, Siddika Sultana (ESDO) called for Basel Convention reforms to end textile waste colonialism, urging producer accountability and circular solutions as Bangladesh and the Global South bear the brunt of fast fashion's pollution.



BRS COPS 2025 Side Event: Advancing a Rights-Based Approach and Environmental Justice Through the BRS Conventions

At the BRS Conventions in Geneva, Siddika Sultana (ESDO) emphasized linking environmental protection with human rights, urging stronger enforcement, funding, and global cooperation for a just and sustainable future.

MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY – SIXTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP-6)



The Sixth Conference of the Parties (COP-6) to the Minamata Convention on Mercury was held from 3-7 November 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting gathered government delegates, civil society organizations, technical experts, and international partners to advance mercury reduction efforts globally.

BANGLADESH DELEGATION AND ESDO'S PARTICIPATION



The Bangladesh delegation included Dr. Fahmida Khanom, Focal Point and Additional Secretary, MoEFCC, and Ms. Siddika Sultana, Executive Director of ESDO. Dr. Shahriar Hossain of ESDO and Dr. Mosharraf Hossain Khandker of the Asian Centre for Environmental Health attended as observers. The delegation contributed actively to discussions on mercury-added products, enforcement, and public health protection.

BANGLADESH DELEGATION AND ESDO INTERVENTIONS AT COP-6

At COP-6, Bangladesh and ESDO emphasized the elimination of mercury-containing products, including skin-lightening cosmetics (SLPs) and dental amalgam. Bangladesh and ESDO strongly supported the amendment to Annex A to phase out dental amalgam by 2034. They supported listing SLPs for regulatory scrutiny, stronger market surveillance, and removal of illegal products, including online sales, while promoting public awareness campaigns and international support to strengthen laboratory capacity, customs training, and safe disposal.

The delegation highlighted challenges in managing imported mercury-added products and limited laboratory and waste management capacity, calling for capacity building, technology transfer, and stronger enforcement. While there is no artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) in the country, Bangladesh supported global ASGM governance, responsible supply chains, and timely reporting. Cross-cutting efforts included engaging communities, women, and youth, and addressing mercury-related health risks for women and children, reinforcing Bangladesh and ESDO's commitment to public health, environmental protection, and effective Minamata Convention implementation.



COP30 was held from 10-22 November 2025 in Belém under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The conference took place during record-breaking global warming (1.55°C in 2024) and delays in countries submitting updated climate plans. Discussions focused on emission reduction, adaptation, climate finance, technology transfer, loss and damage, and progress under the Paris Agreement, while also highlighting gender equality, a just transition, and inclusive climate action for developing countries. For Bangladesh and the Global South, COP30 offers hope through tripled adaptation finance, Just Transition support, and focus on methane and waste management, yet caution remains due to unclear fossil fuel phase-out and financing, requiring strong follow-through for equitable climate action.

ESDO Joins Bangladesh Delegation, Actively Engages in COP30 Dialogue

- With global partners such as Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives, Zero Waste Europe, and others, ESDO helped highlight methane reduction from the waste sector.
- The delegation promoted organic waste management, zero-waste solutions, and circular economy approaches linked to climate action.
- Participation in side events emphasized alternative climate solutions beyond energy, especially for developing countries.
- ESDO also stressed the need for a just transition that includes informal workers and marginalized communities.

Based on COP30, Bangladesh should embed waste-sector methane reduction in NDCs, mobilize climate finance for community-led waste infrastructure, ensure wasteworker inclusion, establish robust MRV systems, and pursue South-South cooperation to share practices and access support.

LOW-METHANE IN ACTION REDUCING ORGANIC WASTE IN DHAKA

COP 30 side event



The “LOW-Methane in Action” event highlighted Bangladesh’s efforts to reduce methane from Dhaka’s 70% organic waste. LOW-M and NDC 3.0 strategies—composting, anaerobic digestion, landfill gas recovery, and circular economy—promote emissions reduction, Just Transition, and inclusive work, with knowledge sharing and financing for scalable, decentralized solutions.

Panel discussion:

Panelists discussed scaling methane reduction in Global South cities, community-led solutions, financing gaps, lessons from Philippine and European biowaste initiatives, policy frameworks, and LOW-M implementation for Dhaka’s organic waste management.



Md. Ziaul Haque, Additional Director General, Department of Environment (DoE), Bangladesh: Reaffirmed national support for NDC 3.0 and LOW-M initiatives.



KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Speaker: Dr. Shahriar Hossain, Senior Technical Advisor, ESDO

- Bangladesh’s NDC 3.0 aligned with the ROW Declaration
- Dhaka’s LOW-M portfolio: pilot community composting, source-separated waste collection, integrated landfill recovery
- Technical interventions: composting, anaerobic digestion, small-scale local processing
- Social co-benefits: jobs, public health, reduced landfill pressure
- Gaps: capacity-building, policy integration, financing mechanisms
- Future targets: 80% organic waste diversion by 2026, 100% by 2030

OECPR

The Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OECPR) session held from 1–5 December played a critical role in shaping the policy and negotiation groundwork for the Seventh United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7).

The discussions reflected the growing urgency among member states to advance ambitious yet practical environmental governance, particularly on issues related to pollution, chemicals and waste, circular economy, and climate–nature linkages.

ESDO observed that while negotiations demonstrated strong commitment to consensus and alignment with existing multilateral environmental agreements and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) strategic frameworks, key debates persisted around financing, capacity-building, and the balance between mandatory and voluntary commitments.

For ESDO, the outcomes underscored the importance of ensuring that global environmental decisions remain inclusive, science-based, and responsive to the realities of developing countries, especially in strengthening implementation mechanisms and supporting national capacities.

Overall, OECPR laid a vital technical and political foundation for UNEA-7 and upcoming global processes, including negotiations on chemicals and pollution governance.



SEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY UNEA-7



UNEA-7 and OECPR-7 convened amid climate, biodiversity, and pollution crises, providing a platform for Member States and stakeholders to negotiate, assess progress, and strengthen collective action, shaping UNEP's strategic direction, work programme, and environmental policies.



Dr. Shahriar Hossain, ESDO Secretary General, attended the 7th High Ambition Coalition (HAC) & Friends Ministerial Meeting and shared his valuable insights

UNEA-7 Highlights

UNEA-7 adopted 11 resolutions and 3 decisions, addressing climate resilience, chemicals and waste, minerals management, youth participation, wildfires, glaciers, and emerging issues, like AI and antimicrobial resistance. Some ambitious proposals, including deep-sea protection, were dropped, leaving outcomes seen as limited but incremental progress for global environmental governance.

“Toxic Skin Bleaching- A Growing Global Health Threat”

Siddika Sultana, Executive Director at ESDO, joined the Key Event on “Toxic Skin Bleaching - a Growing Global Health Threat” at the UNEA, addressing the rising global dangers of toxic skin-bleaching products, alongside Dr. Farhina Ahamed, Secretary at the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh.

**YOUR SKIN TELLS A STORY .
KEEP IT SAFE FROM MERCURY**

Bangladesh highlighted the integration of NBSAPs, NDCs, and NAPs with budget allocations, presenting a model for aligning environmental priorities with national planning during the High-Level Dialogue on Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society Approaches.



Dr. Shahriar Hossain during the Opening of High-Level Segments (HLS)



We need tighter cooperation on chemicals and waste. Communities in the Global South continue to shoulder the health and ecological burden of hazardous products, weak enforcement, and irresponsible production systems. We cannot leave Nairobi without a clear path to safer chemicals management, stronger controls, and support for countries working to transition toward non-toxic circularity.

THE FIFTH SESSION OF INC

The Inter-Governmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5.2) on Plastic Pollution



The second segment of the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5.2), held in Geneva, concluded without an agreement on the highly anticipated Global Plastics Treaty. Despite progress in technical negotiations, deep political divides over the scope, ambition, and financing of the treaty stalled an outcome due to a lack of consensus. For Bangladesh and other Global South countries, this outcome reflects the urgent need to amplify voices that demand equity, justice, and ambition in the treaty process. Unfortunately, stalemates on key issues were noted. Countries disagreed on production reduction targets, financial mechanisms, and technology transfer, blocking the adoption of a consolidated treaty text. With INC-6 approaching, the treaty process remains uncertain but crucial. Global South leadership, including Bangladesh, will be vital in ensuring a binding and ambitious agreement.



REGIONAL MEETINGS

Advancing a Plastic-Free Asia Pacific: Break Free From Plastic (BFFP) Asia Pacific Regional Consultation 2025



From 27–29 October in Negombo, Sri Lanka, the Break Free From Plastic (BFFP) Asia Pacific Regional Consultation 2025 gathered participants from 16 countries and 54 organizations to review progress and set priorities for the next decade. As an active network member, ESDO participated in key sessions on False Solutions and Just Transition. Khalilur Rahman and Noshin Naila represented ESDO in discussions on plastic pollution, waste trade, chemical safety, and just transition, and joined the nurdle hunt activity. During the 10-Year Action Plan session, Ms. Naila highlighted ESDO’s initiatives on zero-waste roadmaps, methane reduction, and policy advocacy, emphasizing upstream, system-shifting approaches.

Nurdle Hunt: On October 27, during the BFFP Asia Pacific Regional Consultation 2025, a nurdle hunt was held on Negombo Beach, Sri Lanka. Noshin Naila, Senior Research and Campaign Associate, Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO), joined the activity and helped collect nurdles from the beach.

IPEN South Asia Regional Meeting



Held in Negombo, Sri Lanka, the three-day meeting brought together partners from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal to strengthen regional collaboration on chemical safety. Discussions focused on plastics and toxic additives, PFAS, EDCs under the GFC, lead, pesticides, and waste trade. ESDO representatives Siddika Sultana and Sadmeen Sadaf Jahan presented Bangladesh updates and contributed to technical discussions, including PFAS contamination and policy gaps. The meeting also advanced the South Asia 2030 Strategy, emphasizing harmonized standards, stronger import controls, and coordinated regional advocacy.

REGIONAL MEETINGS

ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR COP-6 OF THE MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

The Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Sixth Conference of the Parties (COP-6) to the Minamata Convention on Mercury was held on 23–24 September 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting gathered government delegates, civil society organizations, technical experts, and international organizations from the region to prepare for COP-6 negotiations and strengthen cooperation on mercury reduction efforts.



Discussion on Mercury-Containing Skin-Lightening Products (SLPs)

The meeting highlighted ongoing circulation of mercury in SLPs despite the 2025 global ban, mainly via local markets and online trade. Participants stressed strict enforcement, stronger surveillance, e-commerce regulation, and regional cooperation to tackle cross-border challenges. Broader Minamata priorities, including dental amalgam phase-out, ASGM, and mercury waste management, were also discussed.

Plenary Intervention by ESDO :

Ms. Siddika Sultana, Executive Director of ESDO, highlighted the following:

- Urgent need for stronger implementation of Annexes A and B, particularly for cosmetics and SLPs.
- The continued circulation of mercury-containing skin-lightening creams in the Asia-Pacific region, especially through online platforms, is a major barrier to effective enforcement.
- The importance of closing regulatory gaps, strengthening surveillance, and raising public awareness to ensure the zero-mercury standard is practically enforced.

REGIONAL MEETINGS

Knowledge Lab Session: Side Event at Minamata Convention (COP 6)

“Perú, Bangladesh, and Regional Efforts Showcase Pathways Toward Mercury-Free Dentistry in the Americas and Asia”. The Knowledge Lab highlighted the global transition toward mercury-free oral health care and recent amalgam bans in Europe, with increasing attention to Asia and the Americas. Perú presented its newly adopted legislation—the strictest in the mercury-impacted Amazon region—demonstrating commitment to reducing mercury exposure in vulnerable populations. Bangladesh was acknowledged for its ongoing multi-sectoral efforts toward mercury-free dentistry in Asia, reflecting coordination across government institutions, civil society, and dental colleges, with ESDO noted as a supporting partner. India and other regional countries were also recognized for their initiatives and collaborative efforts in the region to accelerate the phase-out of dental amalgam.

//////

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

PARTIES PERÚ AND BANGLADESH PRESENT PROTOTYPES FOR MERCURY-FREE DENTISTRY IN THE AMERICAS AND ASIA

MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY

Knowledge Lab

Date
Thursday, 6
November, 2025

Time
14:00–14:45 CEST

Organizer
World Alliance for
Mercury-Free
Dentistry

//////

World Alliance for Mercury-Free Dentistry

THE MAJOR WEBINARS ATTENDED IN 2025



Webinar on “Organics and Climate”

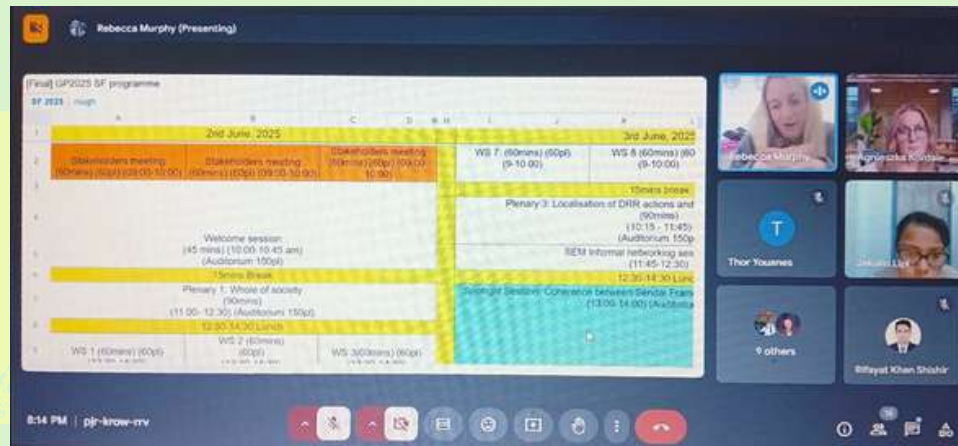
ESDO celebrated International Zero Waste Month 2025 with a webinar themed “Organics and Climate,” attended by 150 participants, including students, youth groups, and Green Club members. The event featured a keynote on “Zero Waste for a Climate-Resilient Future,” panel discussions on composting and zero waste practices, and an interactive Q&A. Key takeaways highlighted the importance of reducing food waste, composting, and using reusable items to combat climate change by cutting methane emissions.

Webinar on IPEN BRS COPs Key Messages for Regional Meetings

On March 6, 2025, IPEN hosted a webinar moderated by Lia Esquillo to discuss key messages for regional meetings ahead of the BRS Conventions. Sara Brosche advocated for listing new chemicals under the Stockholm Convention, opposing exemptions like UV-328, and called for mandatory POPs labeling and broader bans on harmful chemicals. Lee Bell highlighted Basel Convention guidelines for managing POPs-contaminated sites using sustainable technologies and provided updates on waste management. The session concluded with announcements on upcoming preparatory meetings, emphasizing civil society's role in shaping chemical and waste policies.



Webinar on IPEN BRS COPs Key Messages for Regional Meetings



On February 25, 2025, the SEM DRR NGO Constituency met to prepare for the 8th Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR 2025) in Geneva. Key topics included updates on the SEM situation, concerns over USAID funding cuts, and the GPDRR 2025 agenda. Participants were encouraged to register and share their participation plans. The meeting stressed joint collaboration for vulnerable communities and discussed policy suggestions for disaster risk reduction. Representatives, including ESDO from Bangladesh, pledged collaborative efforts to address disaster risks and promote sustainable development, concluding with a call for continued engagement ahead of GPDRR 2025.

ILPPW 2024 Bright Futures Begin Lead Free

104 events
306 activities
52 countries



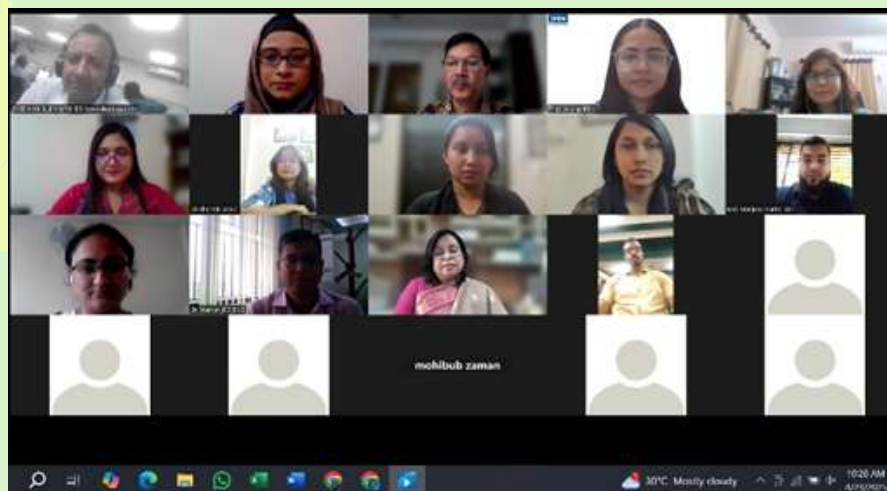
World Health Organization

Webinar on Global Alliance on Lead Paint Elimination

On February 27–28, 2025, ESDO attended the Lead Paint Elimination Meeting, organized by the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint. The event brought together international organizations, governments, and NGOs to review progress and plan next steps for eliminating lead-based paints globally. Key topics included updates on regulations, industry engagement, and reformulation efforts, with a focus on advocacy, policy enforcement, and technical support to address lead paint use in 48 countries. Successful case studies, like the Philippines' lead-safe standards, were highlighted. Discussions emphasized strengthening compliance, updating guidance, and expanding industry collaboration. Future actions prioritized monitoring, awareness campaigns, and legal support to accelerate progress.

Strategic Pre-Briefing on BRS 2025: Uniting Asia for Chemical Safety

ESDO and IPEN co-hosted a virtual pre-COP briefing to address hazardous chemical waste challenges in Asia ahead of BRS COP 2025. Key discussions emphasized evidence-based policies, regional collaboration, banning toxic waste trade, gender-responsive approaches, and strengthening Asia's voice in global chemical governance. The event laid the groundwork for unified action toward a toxic-free future, with ESDO leading regional advocacy efforts.



Pre-COP 6 Webinar Featuring “The Hidden Threat in the Mirror: Ending Mercury in Skin-Lightening Products (SLP)”

On February 25, 2025, the SEM DRR NGO Constituency met to prepare for the 8th Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR 2025) in Geneva. Key topics included updates on the SEM situation, concerns over USAID funding cuts, and the GPDRR 2025 agenda. Participants were encouraged to register and share their participation plans. The meeting stressed joint collaboration for vulnerable communities and discussed policy suggestions for disaster risk reduction.





Collaborating for a Lead-Free Bangladesh

ESDO and Instiglio have partnered up for a Lead-free Bangladesh! By combining resources, the organizations worked jointly to advance policy advocacy for stricter regulations, build public awareness campaigns to educate communities, and form actionable solutions for a safer and healthier environment.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS, NEW AVENUES FOR CHANGE!

As part of ongoing efforts to address community health, ESDO partnered with AGROHO Society, recommended by the donor for its expertise in health and water services. Following a site visit and community engagement, AGROHO recognized the urgency of the issues. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 13 April 2025, establishing joint actions to improve health outcomes, including installing water filtration systems, providing mobile healthcare, distributing medicines, mobilizing volunteers, and conducting community outreach programs.



New Partnership with AGROHO Society



ESDO Partnered with LP4Y

In 2025, ESDO strengthened its commitment to youth empowerment and environmental sustainability through a strategic partnership with Life Project 4 Youth (LP4Y). On 19 February 2025, ESDO and LP4Y formally signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at ESDO's Dhaka office, marking the beginning of a collaborative effort to empower youth and promote ecological awareness in Bangladesh. Under this partnership, ESDO and LP4Y are working together to equip young people with knowledge and skills for sustainable living, waste reduction, and community engagement through joint training programs and outreach activities. Their collaboration also includes capacity-building workshops that foster zero waste lifestyles and raise awareness about environmental and health issues, furthering youth participation in sustainability initiatives.

NEW PARTNERSHIPS, RENEWED JOURNEY!

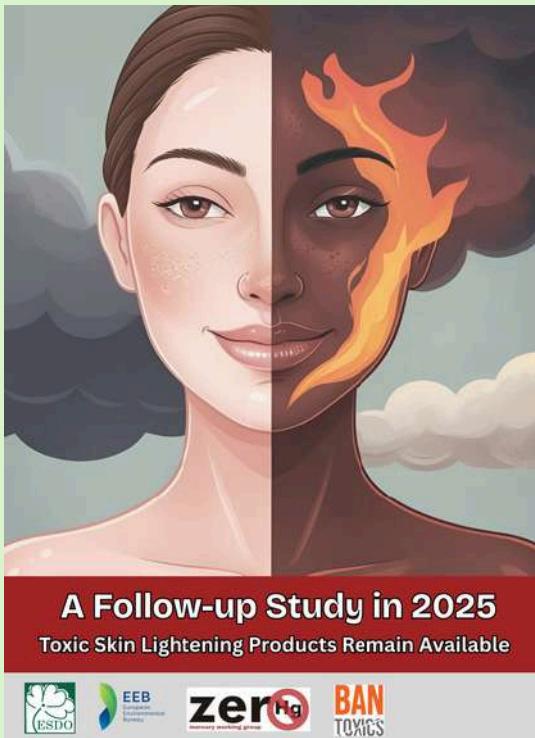


ESDO and SGS Collaboration

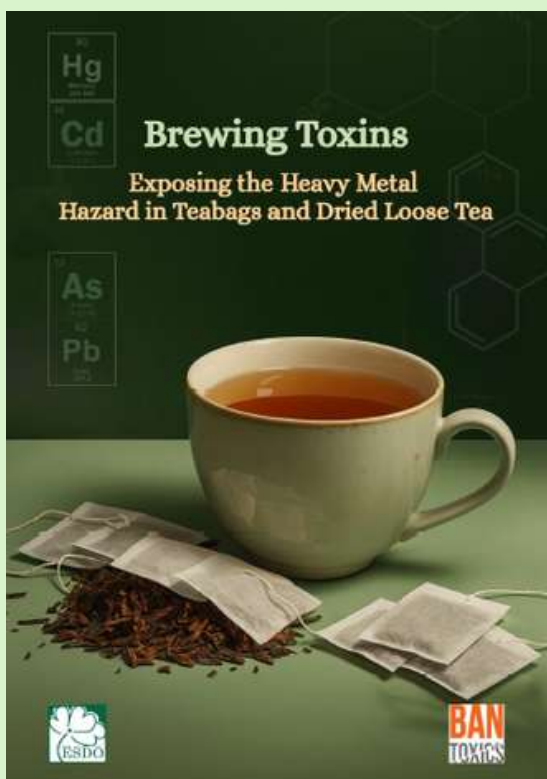
On March 16, 2025, a formal meeting at the SGS Bangladesh office marked the establishment of a partnership between SGS Bangladesh and Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO) through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Representatives discussed laboratory services and explored opportunities for technical cooperation, followed by a tour of the Chemical and Heavy Metal Labs. The meeting was attended by Dr. Shahriar Hossain, Siddika Sultana, Khalilur Rahman, Rafiqul Islam, along with Masroor Hossain and Hafizur Rahman, formalizing collaboration in environmental testing and capacity building.

Hidden Hazards in Everyday Products

Toxic Threats Exposed by ESDO



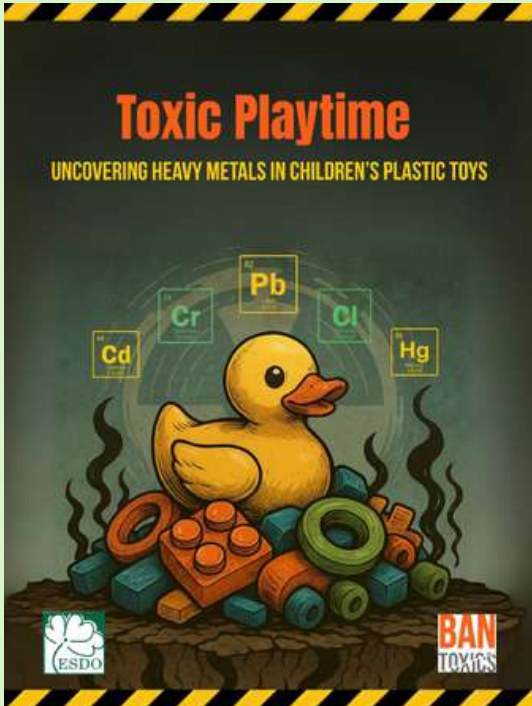
According to the study findings, out of the 22 products that tested positive for mercury, three have been banned by the Bangladesh Standard Testing Institution (BSTI). These include the above-mentioned two well-known brands and Goree Beauty Cream with Lycopene. Despite the ban, these products remain easily accessible in local markets and on online platforms. Additionally, several skin lightening creams were found to contain dangerously high levels of mercury, including FEIQUE Herbal Extract Whitening Freckle Removing Cream (15,500 ppm), Parley Beauty Cream (10,000 ppm), and Kim Whitening Ginseng and Pearl Cream (7,400 ppm).



The study tested 13 tea samples — 12 teabags and one loose-leaf — collected from local markets and found alarming levels of toxic heavy metals in the teabag packaging. Contamination levels far exceeded safety limits, with Chromium reaching 1,690 ppm (safe limit 5 ppm), Lead up to 51 ppm (limit 5 ppm), Mercury as high as 108 ppm (limit 0.3 ppm), and Arsenic exceeding 14 ppm (limit 2 ppm). Such elevated concentrations pose serious health risks for regular tea drinkers, underscoring the urgent need for regulatory action and public awareness. Such contamination, experts warn, poses serious risks to millions of regular tea drinkers in Bangladesh.

Hidden Hazards in Everyday Products

Toxic Threats Exposed by ESDO



A study finds toxic metals—lead, cadmium, mercury, and chromium—in 70 colorful toys from Dhaka's Chawkbazar using XRF testing with BAN Toxics. The study is particularly significant because currently, there is a regulatory vacuum. Currently, there are no legally enforceable chemical safety standards, mandatory testing mechanisms, or labeling requirements for toys. Moreover, imported toys from China and India often arrive without chemical safety reports or origin traceability, further compounding the crisis. The study highlighted children under the age of five are under heightened risk.



2025 ESDO study finds 42% of paints in Bangladesh exceed the 90 ppm lead limit; one sample hit 190,000 ppm; over 2,000× the safe level. 57.8% of all samples (93 out of 161), fell within the safe range of 90 ppm, which are mostly top-tier multinational and national brands (e.g., Berger, Asian Paints, Nippon, Elite etc.). While 42.2% (68 out of 161) exceeded the limit of 90 ppm, 26.2% contained more than 1,000 ppm lead, and 3.1% exceeded 50,000 ppm. These brands are mostly small, local, or unregistered manufacturers lacking laboratory testing facilities or regulatory oversight.

SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

NOTHING IS A WASTE!

The 5 R's of ZERO WASTE LIFESTYLE

- ✓ Refuse
- ✓ Reduce
- ✓ Reuse
- ✓ Rethink
- ✓ Rot (compost)

ESDO © Environment & Social Development Organization-ESDO

Plastics Alternatives

NO TO PLASTIC

#break free from plastic

ESDO © Environment & Social Development Organization-ESDO

World Habitat Day

Cities account for 70% of global carbon emissions. Let's act together, support sustainable housing, reduce urban inequality, and protect our shared habitats.

Join the Global Environmental Movement

Think Sustainable & Act for Better Habitats

LET THE EARTH BREATHE

ESDO © Environment and Social Development Organization-ESDO

WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH Day

Human health and environment are intricately connected

What you send to nature comes back to you

ESDO © Environment & Social Development Organization-ESDO

ON THIS World Soil Day

STRIKE A DEAL WITH NATURE

GIVE	RECEIVE
✓ Protection to soil health	✓ Food and Clean Water
✓ Farewell to toxins and harmful chemicals	✓ Storage for vast amount of carbon and climate change mitigation
✓ Encouragement to organic farming	✓ Booming biodiversity
	✓ Regulated water cycles

ESDO

#CleanAirNow

International Day of Clean Air for Blue Sky

What are you doing for clean air for blue skies?

ESDO © Environment and Social Development Organization-ESDO

SOCIAL MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

সীসা মুক্ত ভবিষ্যৎ
শুরু হয় এডভোকেসি দ্বারা

কার্যকর নীতিমালা চাই
উৎপাদকদের অর্থপূর্ণ প্রণোদনা দিন।

ESDO IEP UNICEF

GAIA DELEGATION

#COP30

United Nations Climate Change COP30 BRASIA

World
RIVERS
Day

- Supporting agriculture
- Shaping landscapes
- Supporting biodiversity
- Sustaining lives
- Maintaining Watercycle
- Raising civilizations

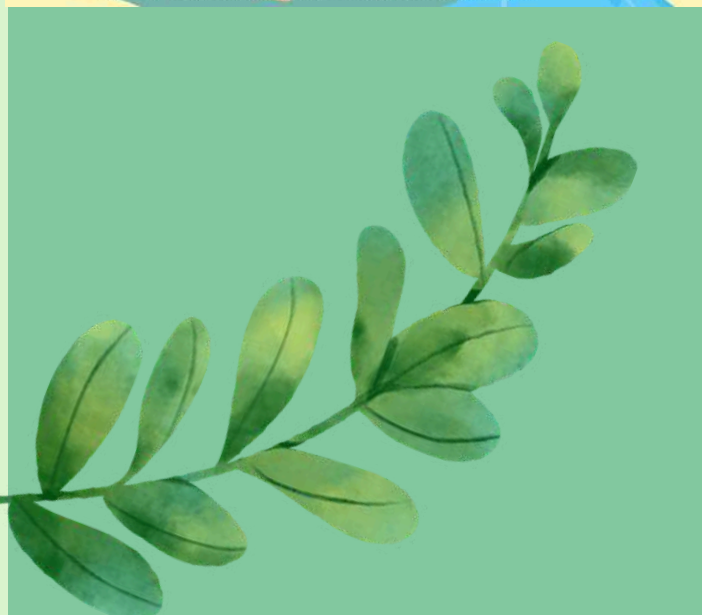
ESDO © Environment & Social Development Organization-ESDO

BAN LEAD

“ A child’s growing body absorbs 4–5 times more lead than an adult. ”

Source: World Health Organization (WHO)

ESDO IEP UNICEF World Health Organization



POPs : INVISIBLE TOXINS LASTING DAMAGE!

POPs are Persistent Organic Pollutants, a group of toxic chemicals that are highly resistant to degradation.

Impacts of POPs in Health:

- ✓ Immune System Damage
- ✓ Hormonal Disruption
- ✓ Affecting Growth, Reproduction
- ✓ Neurological Impacts, Cancer Risk

“ Say no to toxic chemicals ”

Protect crops without poisoning your soil, Choose sustainable solutions.

Ensure safe disposal & treatment of Industrial chemical waste too.

ESDO © Environment and Social Development Organization-ESDO

ESDO'S MEDIA PRESENCE

THE BUSINESS STANDARD

TOXIC MERCURY LEVELS IN POPULAR SKIN CREAMS

WHO's mercury safe limit for skin care products: 1ppm or 1mg/kg

22 of 26 creams sold in Bangladesh have dangerously high mercury levels

BRANDS WITH HIGH CONCENTRATIONS

- Due Beauty Cream - 24,800 PPM
- Golden Pearl Beauty Cream - 20,700 PPM
- FEIQUE Herbal Freckle Cream - 15,500 PPM
- Parley Beauty Cream - 10,000 PPM
- Jiaoli Whitening Night Cream - 5,340 PPM
- Collagen Plus Night Cream - 4,120 PPM

Banned by BSI, yet still sold - Goner Beauty Cream, Golden Pearl Beauty Cream

Products originate from Pakistan, China, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, Bangladesh

HEALTH RISKS

- Skin absorbs the mercury in creams
- Washed cream residues pollutes water bodies, enters food chain
- Health risks include nervous system damage, organ failure
- Mercury exposure can harm eyes, lungs, kidneys, immune system

Bangladesh Post

MISCELLANEOUS

Shocking mercury levels found in skin creams sold in Bangladesh

THE BUSINESS STANDARD

HEALTH

Study finds alarming levels of heavy metals in toys sold in Bangladesh

Md Jahidul Islam
17 July, 2025, 02:50 pm
Last modified: 18 July, 2025, 02:49 pm

The study, conducted using advanced x-ray fluorescence (XRF) technology from the Philippines, examined 70 hard plastic toys that were sourced from Dhaka's largest toy distribution hub, Chawkbazar

RELATED NEWS

Toy industry holds promise, but policy gaps stunt export growth: Experts

Govt to provide policy support to plastic toy industry: Commerce secy

daily sun

Metropolis

Skin creams packed with toxic mercury: Study

The Daily Star

Lead level high in some local paints

Wed Oct 29, 2025 12:00 AM
Last update on: Wed Oct 29, 2025 12:00 AM

ESDO survey finds over 40% of paint samples exceed legal lead limit

Despite compliance by major multinational and national paint brands with legal lead limits, many local and unregistered manufacturers produce paints containing dangerously high levels of the toxic metal, posing a serious public health risk.

A recent survey by the Environmental and Social Development Organisation (ESDO) found that 42.2 percent of 161 decorative paint samples tested exceeded the permissible lead limit of 90 parts per million (ppm).

THE BUSINESS STANDARD

HEALTH

Alarming levels of heavy metals found in tea bags: ESDO study

TBS Report
18 September, 2025, 03:25 pm
Last modified: 19 September, 2025, 04:04 pm

Experts warn that such high contamination poses long-term health risks for regular tea drinkers

daily sun

Bangladesh

Savouring tea with cadmium, chromium, lead, mercury, arsenic, uranium

ESDO study reveals heavy metals in popular tea brands

Daily Sun report, Dhaka
Updated: 19 Oct 2025, 03:51 PM v

NEWAGE

High concentrations of lead found in paints

Reflection

The successes and challenges faced in 2025 have only made us stronger. In 2026, we renew our commitment to advancing environmental governance and to doing our part to make the world a better place. We look forward to stepping into new waters and forming new collaborations. We are ready to face the challenges that come with bold environmental and social ambitions head-on. In this journey, we seek the support of our partners and well-wishers.





Healthy environment is the foundation of social justice and sustainable development



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