

Solving childhood lead poisoning in Georgia: A global example

Georgia offers a powerful case study – showing how rapid, coordinated action can drive dramatic progress in reducing childhood lead poisoning, while underscoring that the work is not yet finished.



Mapping the path to zero (2018–19)

Responding to a national survey that found 41 per cent of children had elevated blood lead levels, Georgia established an interministerial working group and plan to tackle the issue.



Strengthening national systems for prevention (2020–ongoing)

Georgia bolstered national prevention systems by tightening regulations, improving laboratory capacity, launching state health programme and strengthening parliamentary oversight. A pilot surveillance system, now scaling nationwide, has already shown a 59% decline in elevated blood lead levels in pregnant women.



Accelerating action in high-risk areas (2020–ongoing)

Georgia continues to actively investigate industrial sources and legacy contamination.




Driving global advocacy, collaboration and technical excellence (2024–25)

Georgia, as a member of the Partnership for a Lead-Free Future, shares its success at global forums like the WEF, demonstrating that the lead crisis is solvable.



Healthy Environments
for Healthy Children



unicef  | for every child

© UNICEF/UN0640666/Dejongh

unicef 
for every child

Ending Childhood Lead Poisoning by 2040

For just \$2 per child over 15 years – less than 15 cents annually – a US\$1.6 billion investment can end childhood lead poisoning.

Vision

We envision a lead-free future for every child. By uniting governments, industry and partners, we can cut lead poisoning in half by 2033 and end it entirely by 2040, unlocking the potential of a generation.

UNICEF and partners of the [Partnership for a Lead-free Future](#) can turn modest investments into monumental gains in human potential and economic growth. This is one of the smartest, highest-impact investments in global health today, delivering proven solutions where they're needed most.

Every dollar of global support can unlock nearly four more in national investment in-kind, empowering countries to build the lasting infrastructure and interventions needed to end lead exposure permanently.



© UNICEF/UN1789855/Giri

UNICEF/Geo-2023/Tsetskhiaidze

Why now?

Lead poisoning is one of the most overlooked crises facing children today, with 1 in 3 children globally having high blood lead levels, stealing potential, limiting futures and costing economies trillions. Even the smallest amounts of lead can irreversibly harm brain development, causing lost intelligence, diminished learning, behavioural problems and lifetime income losses of up to 12 per cent in low-income countries.

But just as the problem is devastating, the solution is clear. We know exactly where lead lurks – contaminated spices, cosmetics, paints, cookware, unsafe recycling of lead-acid batteries, contaminated sites and water systems. We also know what works: surveillance and regulation, health system strengthening and community awareness. Countries that once faced dangerously high exposure rates have already achieved sharp declines.

We know what works. We know what it will cost. **The time is now to invest in children** – the solutions are proven, the tools are ready and the pathway is clear.



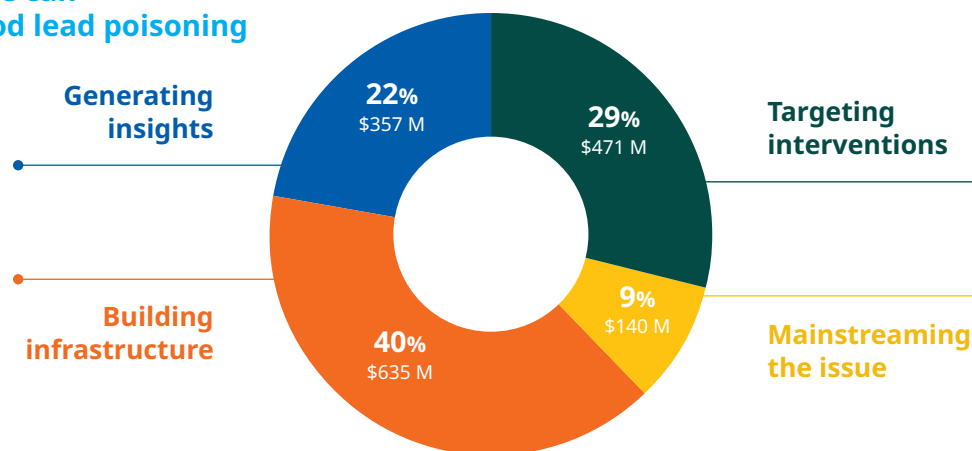
Investment pathways



Generating insights Mapping the path to zero

We identify the children and communities most at risk, creating a data-driven blueprint for action that ensures every dollar is targeted for maximum, life-saving impact. Capturing the scale of childhood exposure and its root causes builds the business case for investment and drives national commitment. Through targeted assessments and policy dialogue, stakeholders can align behind fully funded, multisectoral action plans – integrating lead elimination into health, environmental, and development agendas and establishing the non-negotiable foundation needed to end childhood lead poisoning.

For \$1.6 B, we can end childhood lead poisoning



Building infrastructure Strengthening national systems for prevention

We build the permanent national systems of regulation, surveillance, and enforcement that create accountability and drive results. Countries set binding regulations to remove lead from consumer products and enforce environmental standards that safeguard industrial practices. Building strong operational capabilities is essential to track children's blood lead levels, monitor products and industries, enforce compliance, and equip health systems to identify, test, and treat lead poisoning. Prevention must also be embedded across the ecosystem – engaging schools, caregivers, health professionals, regulators, and industry leaders with the knowledge and tools to protect every child.



Targeting interventions Accelerating action in high-risk areas

We target the largest sources of lead pollution head-on – turning hazardous industries into safe, sustainable markets, restoring contaminated sites and infrastructure to unlock healthier, more prosperous communities. By scaling-up safe and modern battery recycling, we protect workers and minimize lead pollution. We also prioritize national programmes to identifying and cleaning up toxic sites, address high-risk water infrastructure and create the conditions for lead-free future.



Mainstreaming the issue Driving global advocacy, collaboration and technical excellence

We must unite global partners to elevate childhood lead poisoning as a policy and funding priority, ensuring it becomes mainstreamed across health, environmental, and development agendas. The Partnership for a Lead-Free Future coordinates global advocacy, mobilizes financing and accelerates country-led action plans. Globally, partners work together to share technical expertise – supporting governments as they design effective policies, strengthen regulatory enforcement, modernize industries and track progress. By connecting nations, sharing best practices, and aligning investments, we build the momentum and technical excellence needed to achieve a lead-free future for every child.