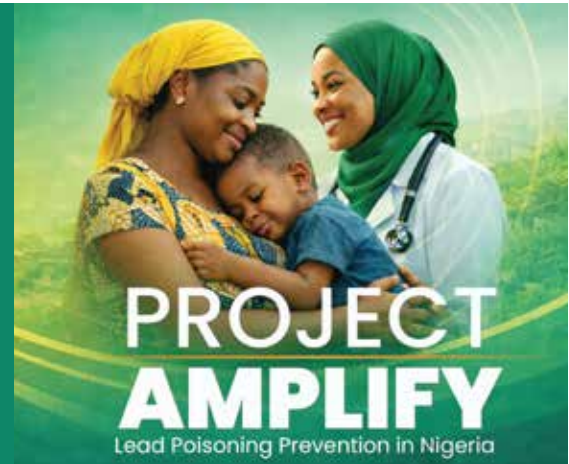


POLICY BRIEF

Mitigating the Lead Poisoning Infodemic in Nigeria

Addressing public anxiety and knowledge gaps in lead exposure response



Executive Summary

Analysis of public discourse between February 24 and March 26, 2026, reveals a high-risk information environment characterised by 68% negative sentiment and significant knowledge gaps regarding lead exposure pathways. While the National Elimination Strategy for Lead (2025–2029) and the National Policy on Cosmetics Safety and Health (2025) provide a robust regulatory framework, public perception is currently dominated by resignation and ambiguity. To prevent widespread panic and institutional distrust, an immediate transition to "Risk + Action" communication is required.

Key Findings & Evidence

Dominant narratives: Public discourse is centred on industrial pollution (32%) and child health impacts (24%), with a dangerous focus on "irreversible harm" (Social Listening Insights Report, March 2026).

Information voids: There is a critical lack of understanding regarding how lead enters the body (air, soil, water) and the specific risks associated with Used Lead-Acid Battery (ULAB) recycling (National Lead Strategy, 2025).

Emerging Risks: Misinformation is rising around renewable energy, with narratives falsely attributing lead poisoning to the use of solar devices rather than improper waste management (Social Listening Insights Report, March 2026).

Platform Dynamics: X (formerly Twitter) serves as the primary hub for real-time discourse, while web-based news drives the highest reach (308,442), highlighting its role in agenda-setting.

Policy Alignment: The 2025–2029 Framework

Cosmetics Vigilance: Utilizing the National Policy on Cosmetics Safety and Health (2025) to monitor and pull lead-contaminated traditional and modern cosmetics from the market. level testing, surveillance, remediation, and referral pathways.

Multisectoral Elimination: Leveraging the National Elimination Strategy (2025–2029) to standardize Blood Lead Level (BLL) testing and environmental remediation.action guidance to reduce confusion.

Why This Matters



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Without clear communication, the response risks three consequences:

heightened panic, reduced trust in public institutions, and delayed care-seeking or environmental reporting by affected communities.

Strategic Recommendations

1

Standardise communication terminology:

Replace ambiguous wording such as "alleged" or "possible" in public updates with plain status categories: Under Investigation, Confirmed, or Remediated.

2

Deploy "Risk + Action" messaging:

Frame lead as dangerous but preventable. Emphasise that early identification, exposure reduction, and follow-up care can significantly reduce long-term harm.

3

Clarify the solar-lead nexus:

Publicly distinguish clean energy adoption from unsafe battery handling. The risk lies in informal recycling and poor disposal of used lead-acid batteries, not in solar technology itself.

4

Strengthen the referral pathway:

Tell communities exactly what happens after a test – where to go, who follows up, what treatment or monitoring may be needed, and how environmental remediation links to health response.

Bottom line: Nigeria already has the policy tools to eliminate lead poisoning by 2029. The missing link is a coordinated information response that closes knowledge gaps, reduces panic, and gives communities clear actions to follow.