



# Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI)

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Photos: WHO

## About this newsletter

CEHI newsletter has been set up to engage partners with the Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI). It aims to provide up-to-date information on relevant global, regional and national indicator activities. This newsletter does not intend to cover general Children's Environmental Health issues. We welcome your feedback and input.

To sign up or for further information, please contact us at:

[cehindicators@who.int](mailto:cehindicators@who.int) or visit: <http://www.who.int/ceh/indicators/en/>

Readers interested in receiving regular updates on children's environmental health may also subscribe to:

- HECANET Newsletter ([Healthy Environments for Children Alliance](#))
- CEHN Community Newsletter ([Children's Environmental Health Network](#))
- INCHEM Newsletter ([International Research and Information Network on Children's Health Environment and Safety](#))
- ISDE Newsletter ([International Society of Doctors for the Environment, ISDE Latin America](#))
- CHEC Newsletter ([Children's Health Environmental Coalition](#))

## New publications

### USEPA - America's Children and the Environment

The latest version of the US indicators of children's environmental health "America's Children and the Environment" is now available on USEPA's website.

The updated measures show some areas of improvement, such as further reductions in the percentage of children living in areas that do not meet the air quality standard for fine particulate matter, decreased exposure to environmental tobacco smoke and continuing decreases of lead in the blood of children.

The indicators show areas for further work, as some childhood cancers continue to increase and about 6% of women of childbearing age have blood mercury levels over EPA's Reference Dose.

Link to the report: <http://www.epa.gov/envirohealth/children>

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### CEHI in Environmental Health Perspectives

The October issue of Environmental Health Perspectives carried a story on the Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators under the EHPnet section. Dooley E (2006) Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators. *Environmental Health Perspectives*. 2006 Oct;114:A577-A579.

Link to article: <http://www.ehponline.org/docs/2006/114-10/forum.html#ehpn>

## Pilot projects

Regional pilots and CEH indicator projects are underway in Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, and North America. Each newsletter highlights two regional pilots; news on other pilots is available on the [CEH web site](#) in the indicators section (regional pilots).

### Pan-American (PAHO) pilot

#### *CEH Indicators at the US - Mexico Border*

Initial results from the United States - Mexico (US/M) Border CEHI project indicate that the under 5 mortality rate per thousand live births is low at the border compared to national averages (Fig. 1). However, rates on the Mexican side of the border remain higher than on the US side. It is difficult to gather information on some of the indicators due to differences in recording procedures and definitions between the two countries. Furthermore, obtaining denominator data (either population or live births) is difficult especially in municipalities and counties that are small and predominantly rural. Further results will become available in 2007.

For more information, please contact: Sally Edwards [edwardss@fep.paho.org](mailto:edwardss@fep.paho.org)

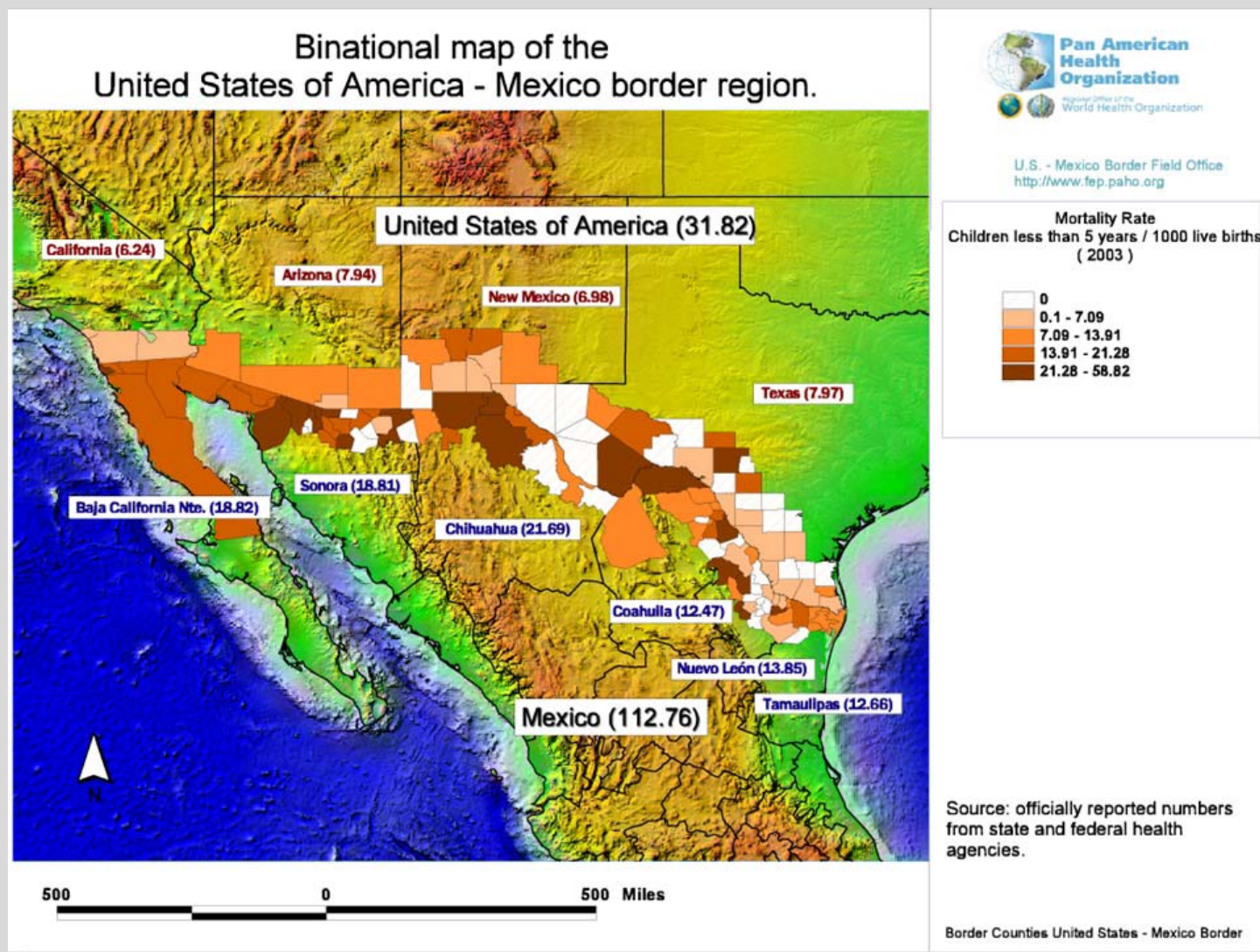


Figure 1: Map showing the mortality rates at the United States - Mexico (US/M) Border

## African (AFRO) pilot

### *Children's Environmental Health Indicator pilot in Cameroon*

The pilot project in Cameroon was initiated in May 2006 and consisted of four phases:

- Phase I: Literature review and desk assessment to gather available information on CEH;
- Phase II: Hypotheses formulation and development of survey tool;
- Phase III: Networking and survey implementation (sample size 1000 children);
- Phase IV: Data analysis, result interpretation and report writing.

The percentage of children in the sample living in proximity to stagnant bodies of water and swamps (< 50m) is 83.6%, making malaria the major risk factor for children under five years of age. The survey highlighted eight key issues for which a number of indicators were selected to be reported on: i) Indoor and outdoor air pollution; ii) Sanitation; iii) Water; iv) Hygiene & Food Safety; v) Home settings; vi) Noise; vii) Health outcomes & viii) Socioeconomic factors. The final report will become available early 2007.

**For more information, please contact:** [cehindicators@who.int](mailto:cehindicators@who.int)

## Trachoma Elimination

### *Use of Environmental Indicators in Trachoma Elimination*

WHO in consultation with external advisers is evaluating environmental indicators for use in the certification of elimination of blinding trachoma. Trachoma is a preventable eye disease that can cause blindness. Globally, the disease affects an estimated 80 million individuals, nearly exclusively in impoverished districts of poor countries with poor sanitation and hygiene. Although blinding trachoma does not manifest itself until adulthood, children are an important component in disease prevention and elimination because they are the reservoirs of *C. trachomatis*, the bacterium that causes trachoma. The main pathways of transmission which include fomites (objects transporting infectious organism), direct contact, or eye-seeking flies, place children at particular risk for infection because of the difficulty in keeping them clean and modifying their hygienic behaviour.

Historical and current epidemiological evidence demonstrates that trachoma can be eliminated and effectively controlled through environmental prevention measures. Selecting key indicators, including those that target children, is an important means by which to measure the impact of environmental interventions on trachoma. Examples of possible indicators include proportion of children with clean faces or number of children sharing a bed. One of the main challenges in this effort will be to select the minimum number of indicators that demonstrates sustained elimination and to systematically define measurement methodology to allow for accurate comparison between countries and for use in evidence-based disease elimination and prevention decisions.

**For more information on trachoma and the elimination campaign visit:**

<http://www.who.int/blindness/publications/en/>

## Other indicator activities

### CEHAPE Indicators Pilot in the West Midlands U.K.

Although there is considerable evidence that exposures to environmental risks contribute significantly to the burden of disease among children and adolescents (1, 2) the fundamentals of paediatrics – that children are not just “little adults” – have not traditionally been considered in policy-making, standard-setting or legislation. In addition, there are still gaps in our knowledge about the magnitude and regional *distribution* of hazards/risks and the environmental burden of disease among the young (3).

WHO considers the development of a set of key children's environmental health indicators as an essential step in the effort to improve children's health through safer environments. Several international policies have called for more effective collaboration on such indicators (4, 5) and a global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI) was launched at the WSSD in September 2002 in response to these concerns (6).

The Health Protection Agency is committed to supporting these initiatives and is developing a pilot project in collaboration with the Government Office, Public Health Observatory and others in the West Midlands region of the U.K. This initiative aims to describe the burden and distribution of hazards/risks and of childhood disease and injury attributable to environmental risks within a region, provide intelligence to inform appropriate interventions and monitor the impact of those interventions particularly in terms of reducing inequalities. The project is a pilot for a national system and, in particular, is focused on the local dimension (initially local authority level).

Environmental health for this project includes both the direct pathological effects of chemicals and some biological agents, and the effects (often indirect) on health and well-being of some aspects of the physical and social environment which includes housing, urban development, noise and transport.

The project has developed a set of indicators covering a range of environmental health issues including housing, air quality, noise, accidents, respiratory disease and infant mortality and is focussed on those issues where there is plausibility, relevance and an evidence base. These indicators are currently being assessed and the pilot will report early 2007.

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2. WHO (2002). *The World Health Report, 2002*. Geneva, World Health Organization.
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5. Government of Canada (2002). Banff Ministerial Statement on the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Ottawa, Government of Canada. <http://www.g8.gc.ca/2002kananaskis/20020414-en.asp>
6. Children's health and environment Developing action plans. <http://www.who.dk/document/E86888.pdf>.

## Upcoming Events

### Fourth International Conference on Children's Health and the Environment

**"Reducing environmental risks for our children" 10- 12 June 2007, Vienna, Austria**

This conference - the fourth after Amsterdam (1998), Washington (2001) and London (2004) - is organized by the International Network on Children's Health, Environment and Safety (INCHES) in collaboration with other partners, and offers a world-wide platform dealing with health problems of children caused by important environmental influences.

The main themes include: Global environmental risks for children; Best practices - actions taken - different settings; Critical windows of exposure; Settings; Environmental injustice; Children's health and socio-economic factors; New emerging diseases; and Monitoring children's exposure. The deadline for abstract submission is 1<sup>st</sup> February 2007.

**More information:** <http://www.inchesnetwork.net> or **contact:** [INCHES@umit.at](mailto:INCHES@umit.at)