

"The biggest threats to children's health lurk in the places that should be the safest - home, school, and community. Every year, over 5 million children ages 0 to 14 die, mainly in the developing world, from diseases related to their environments."

**Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General, WHO**

"...[W]e must build on the momentum generated by the Healthy Environments for Children Alliance... to mobilize knowledge, political will, and resources for the reduction of environmental risks to children's health."

**Kofi A. Annan, Secretary-General, UN**



For further information on HECA or to find out how your organization can become involved please contact:

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World Health Organization

Shape  
the future  
of life



Healthy  
Environments  
for Children  
Alliance

*Acting to safeguard children's environments can save millions of lives, reduce disease and provide a safer, healthier world for our children's future*

## A Global Crisis

More than five million children die each year from environment-related diseases and conditions such as diarrhoea, respiratory illnesses, malaria and unintentional injuries. Millions more children are debilitated by these diseases or live with chronic conditions linked to their environment, ranging from allergies to mental and physical disability.

***This suffering is not inevitable. Most of the environment-related diseases and deaths can be prevented using effective, low-cost and sustainable tools and strategies.***

The challenge is to implement these successful strategies on a national and global scale to provide all children with a healthy place to live, learn and play.

***Tackling environmental threats requires a concerted, coordinated approach.***

People from many different sectors should be involved (e.g. health, education, housing, energy, water and planning). By working together, policy-makers, government officials and community members such as parents, teachers and health workers, can build on existing programmes and adapt interventions to local needs.



**The Healthy Environments for Children Alliance is a world-wide Alliance to intensify global action on environmental risks to children's health that arise from the settings where they live, learn, play, and earn.**

## Creating Healthy Settings

### ***In homes***

- Safe, adequate water supply, sanitation and food preparation facilities
- Good domestic hygiene
- Safe household fuels and cooking stoves
- Safe use and storage of chemicals
- Safe siting, structure and furnishings



### ***In schools***

- Clean running water and separate sanitation facilities for boys and girls
- Well-constructed and maintained buildings
- Protection from violence, noise, traffic and industry
- Safe play areas

### ***In communities***

- Clean air and water resources
- Smoke free public spaces
- Adequate waste water drainage and waste management
- Safe recreational areas, and road traffic safety

## Healthy Environments for Children Alliance (HECA)

WHO is working with various partners and groups around the world to establish a global alliance to tackle environmental threats to children's health. The Healthy Environments for Children Alliance (HECA) was launched in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. By drawing on the strengths of many different parties, HECA aims to mobilize support and intensify global action to make children's environments safe and healthy.

### ***Core functions of HECA***

- Ensure advocacy and awareness-raising
- Provide knowledge, information exchange and expertise for decision-making
- Promote effective policies and action at all levels, in all sectors
- Support countries and communities in creating and maintaining healthy environments for children
- Monitor and evaluate progress

### ***Targeted action***

HECA will target action areas in which it can make the most difference and add value. A major initial emphasis will be on the relatively neglected home environment, where young children spend the majority of their time, and where risks interact and expose children to a range of ill-health conditions.

### ***Get involved***

For further information, or to find out how your organization can become involved, please visit [www.who.int/heca](http://www.who.int/heca) or contact the HECA secretariat at [heca@who.int](mailto:heca@who.int) © WHO 2003