

HECANET * December 2008 – January 2009**

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- (30) "Health in the Americas" University of South Florida. May 11- 29 2009**
- (31) International RCE Conference, Biosphère Montreal, Canada, 13-15 May 2009**
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- (33) Tunza International Children's Conference on the Environment. Daejeon, Korea. 17 - 21 August 2009**
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ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS

Summaries of articles grouped under the following themes appear below, with links to their full texts:

This month's Indoor air pollution articles look at fine and coarse indoor air particle concentration and the exacerbation of asthma symptoms in the US, while in the Dominican Republic, reducing indoor charcoal smoke may lower the burden of acute lower respiratory infections in young children. In Bangladesh, a study looks at alternatives for improving the quality of indoor air for poor families, and Levoglucosan emerges as an attractive biomarker of wood smoke. In the area of outdoor air pollution, lower socioeconomic groups are found to have a greater risk of asthma than other children at the same ozone level and a Brazilian study suggests that motor vehicle exhaust exposures may be a risk factor for perinatal mortality. Children's exposure ETS is linked to behavioural problems in boys in Cincinnati, and low parental education, unemployment, and other social factors in Germany. A new term emerges to describe the residual tobacco smoke contamination that remains after the cigarette is extinguished, "Thirdhand" Smoke. In Vietnam, ETS is associated with an increased risk of hospitalization from pneumonia for children under 5. A Study looks to establish a link between lead exposure in childhood and crime in late adolescence/early adulthood, while another study finds that BLL in children are commonly related to home renovations. A study from Thailand looks at the pesticide-specific urinary biomarkers. Other studies re-examine the techniques and models for assessing link between pesticides and leukaemia in urban and agricultural settings. In the area of Mercury, the US introduces a new law requiring young children attending licensed pre-school and child care centres to get flu vaccinations. Another article asks if access to water remains a human right or a commodity. This section also takes a look at the quality of water in Poland in 2007. Food prices and the need for international assistance increase around the world. One article explores how climate change will severely affect women, while another study looks at the social and environmental factors associated to the potential spread of Ross River virus and other deadly mosquito-spread diseases. A study in Europe looks at maternal diet and child health, while US scientists say that chemicals commonly found in food packaging and furniture may be damaging women's fertility. The UN says that more than half a million expectant and new mothers die each year, most in Africa and Asia. A study reveals that that breastfed babies have higher mental

development than those who are not. In developed countries children are found to suffer abuse and neglect much more often than is reported by official child-protective agencies, while children in the Gaza strip return to school despite the recent attacks on schools. In The USA, The National Children's Study has begun enrolling participants in January 2009. In the Americas, mental health problems are examined in children that have undergone stressful climate related events. Food allergies become more common in the USA, while California has seen that the 7-8-fold increase in the number of children with autism. In India, 5 children are reported dead after drinking milk laced with endosulfan. While a survey in Hong Kong reveals that one in five residents is considering leaving the city because of its dire air quality. While in China, there is an alarming rise in the number of babies with birth defects. In Africa, a UNICEF official has reveals that Sudan has more than 6 000 child soldiers. Lead reeks havoc through an African town, while in Zimbabwe, cholera continues to spread. One study also looks at some of the common challenges facing developing countries in improving maternal and child health. While in Europe, the Algerian education system undergoes a reform. A Swedish study reveals that drinking too much water during labour could be dangerous for women's health. While in New Zealand, the Risk Management Authority bans endosulfan and in Australia, indigenous children are found 6 times more likely to be abused than non-Indigenous children. UNICEF has also released a report highlighting the progress made for children in the area since the 2004 Indian tsunami.

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- (1) AIR POLLUTION: (a) Indoor air pollution (b) Outdoor air pollution (c) Environmental Tobacco Smoke/Smoking**
 - (2) CHEMICALS: (a) General, (b) Lead, (c) Pesticides, (d) Mercury**
 - (3) WATER AND SANITATION**
 - (4) GLOBAL CHANGE**
 - (5) REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**
 - (6) MISCELLANEOUS (a) General (b) Americas (c) Asia (d) Africa (e) Europe (f) Oceania**
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Healthy Environments for Children Alliance (HECA) is a world-wide alliance to reduce environmental risks to children's health that arise from the settings where they live, learn, play, and sometimes work, by providing knowledge, increasing political will, mobilizing resources, and catalysing intense and urgent action.

HECANET is an international mailing list dedicated to promoting healthy environments for children. The list provides updates on the activities of the Healthy Environments for Children Alliance (HECA) and its members, as well as an overview of media coverage of children's environmental health issues and relevant meetings, research findings and information and advocacy resources.

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EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

(1) HECA Developments

For more information on HECA's latest developments, please visit the Healthy Environments for Children Alliance website: <http://www.who.int/heca/en/>
International Network to Promote Household Water Treatment and Safe Storage: http://www.who.int/household_water/en/

(2) Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI) Newsletter

The CEHI Newsletter has been set up to engage partners with the Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI). To sign up to the newsletter, to contribute information or to find out more, please visit the website [WHO | Children's environmental health indicators newsletter \(CEHI\)](#) or contact: cehindicators@who.int

(3) New UN-Water and World Water Day websites

For policy makers and others working in water management, the websites have gathered the most recent reference documents, policy briefs and reports published by UN-Water and its members and partners. For the media and those interested in gaining quick insight into freshwater, the site provides, graphics, statistics, facts and figures as well as information sheets outlining major issues. The Google Custom Search feature allows you to target your searches to the UN-Water site and the web sites of our members and partners. The aim of the site is to contribute in a meaningful way to global efforts to reach the water and sanitation targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. <http://www.unwater.org/flashindex.html> and the official website for World Water day is: <http://www.unwater.org/worldwaterday/>

(4) Launch of UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report (HAR) 2009

The HAR is UNICEF's annual funding appeal for children and women affected by protracted emergencies. [This year's HAR](#) highlights the plight of children and women in humanitarian emergencies in a total of 36 countries, including Zimbabwe, Occupied Palestinian Territory and Myanmar. The report states that emergency needs in eastern and southern Africa have almost doubled, particularly in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Somalia. More than half the funds requested are for the continuation of UNICEF's support to the five largest humanitarian operations worldwide: Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The HAR also notes the challenges presented by high food prices and climate change and their effects on already vulnerable.

(5) The State of the World's Children 2009

Women in the world's least developed countries are 300 times more likely to die in childbirth or from pregnancy-related complications than women in developed countries, according to UNICEF's latest [State of the World's Children report](#). At the same time, a child born in a developing country is almost 14 times more likely to die during the first month of life than a child born in a developed one.

The health and survival of mothers and their newborns are linked, and many of the interventions that save new mothers' lives also benefit their infants. The 2009 edition of UNICEF's flagship publication, *The State of the World's Children*, highlights the link between maternal and neonatal survival, and suggests opportunities to close the gap between rich and poor countries. "Every year, more than half a million women die as a result of pregnancy or childbirth complications, including about 70,000 girls and young women aged 15 to 19," said Ann M. Veneman, UNICEF Executive Director, at the Johannesburg launch. "Since 1990, complications related to pregnancy and childbirth have killed an estimated 10 million women." Both mothers and infants are vulnerable in the days and weeks after birth – a critical time for life-saving interventions, such as post-natal visits, proper hygiene, and counseling about the danger signs of maternal and newborn health. While many developing countries have made excellent progress improving their child survival rate in recent years, there has been less headway in reducing maternal mortality. Niger and Malawi, for example, nearly cut their under-five death rates in half between 1990 and 2007. In Indonesia, under-five death rates fell to nearly a third of what they were in 1990, and in Bangladesh they fell by more than a half. The same progress has not been made in addressing health risks for mothers, who are most vulnerable during delivery and in the first days after birth. And while the rate of survival for children under five years of age is improving globally, the risks faced by infants in the first 28 days remain at unacceptably high levels in many countries. In the developing world, a woman has a 1 in 76 lifetime risk of maternal death, compared with a probability of 1 in 8,000 for women in developed countries. Approximately 99 percent of global deaths arising from pregnancy and complications occur in the developing world, where having a child remains among the most serious health risks for women. The vast majority occur in Africa and Asia, where high fertility rates, a shortage of trained personnel and weak health systems spell tragedy for many young women. The ten countries with the highest lifetime risk of maternal death are Niger, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Chad, Angola, Liberia, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea-Bissau, and Mali. A woman's lifetime risk of maternal death in these countries ranges from 1 in 7 in Niger to 1 in 15 in Mali. And for every woman who dies, another 20 suffer illnesses or injury, often with severe and lasting consequences. To lower maternal and infant mortality, the report recommends essential services be provided through health systems that integrate a continuum of home, community, outreach and facility-based care. This continuum of care concept transcends the traditional emphasis on single, disease-specific interventions, calling instead for a model of primary health care that embraces every stage of maternal, newborn and child health. "Saving the lives of mothers and their newborns requires more than just medical intervention," said Veneman. "Educating girls is pivotal to improving maternal and neonatal health and also benefits families and societies." The report finds that health services are most effective in an environment supportive of women's empowerment, protection, and education.

(6) World Malaria Report 2008

Half of the world's population is at risk of malaria, and an estimated 247 million cases led to nearly 881 000 deaths in 2006. The advent of long-lasting insecticidal nets and artemisinin-based combination therapy, plus a revival of support for indoor residual spraying of insecticide, presents a new opportunity for large-scale malaria control. [The World malaria report 2008](#) describes the global distribution of cases and deaths, how WHO-recommended control strategies have been adopted and implemented in endemic countries, sources of funding for malaria control, and recent evidence that prevention and treatment can alleviate the burden of disease.

(7) Preventable injuries kill 2000 children every day

More than 2000 children die every day as a result of unintentional or accidental injuries. Every year tens of millions more worldwide are taken to hospitals with injuries that often leave them with lifelong disabilities, according to a new report by WHO and UNICEF. [The World report on child injury prevention](#) provides the first comprehensive global assessment of unintentional childhood injuries and prescribes measures to prevent them. It concludes that if proven prevention measures were adopted everywhere at least 1000 children's lives could be saved every day. "Child injuries are an important public health and development issue. In addition to the 830 000 deaths every year, millions of children suffer non-fatal injuries that often require long-term hospitalization and rehabilitation," said WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan. "The costs of such treatment can throw an entire family into poverty. Children in poorer families and communities are at increased risk of injury because they are less likely to benefit from prevention programmes and high quality health services." "This report is the result of a collaboration of more than 180 experts from all regions of the world," said UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman. "It shows that unintentional injuries are the leading cause of childhood death after the age of nine years and that 95% of these child injuries occur in developing countries. More must be done to prevent such harm to children." Africa has the highest rate overall for unintentional injury deaths. The report finds the rate is 10 times higher in Africa than in high-income countries in Europe and the Western Pacific such as Australia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and the United Kingdom, which have the lowest rates of child injury. However, the report finds that although many high-income countries have been able to reduce their child injury deaths by up to 50% over the past 30 years, the issue remains a problem for them, with unintentional injuries accounting for 40% of all child deaths in such countries. The report finds that the top five causes of injury deaths are: Road crashes, Drowning, Burns, Falls and Poisoning. The report outlines the impact that proven prevention measures can have. These measures include: laws on child-appropriate seatbelts and helmets; hot tap water temperature regulations; child-resistant closures on medicine bottles, lighters and household product containers; separate traffic lanes for motorcycles or bicycles; draining unnecessary water from baths and buckets; redesigning nursery furniture, toys and playground equipment; strengthening emergency medical care and rehabilitation services. It also identifies approaches that either should be avoided or are not backed by sufficient evidence to recommend them. In addition to the full and summary versions of the World report on child injury prevention, [UNICEF and WHO have produced a child-friendly version which aims to inform children, aged 7 - 11 years](#), about various types of injuries and how these may be prevented. Using a mixture of facts, puzzles, games and other visual material, this document is freely downloadable For more information please contact: Laura Sminkey, E-mail: sminkeyl@who.int

(8) New tools for strengthening national legal and policy frameworks to improve child and adolescent health

WHO's Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development (CAH) firmly supports the notion that survival, optimal health and development, and access to good basic health care and services are not just basic needs, but fundamental human rights of all children and adolescents. It is therefore committed to ensuring that its work is systematically informed and guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other relevant international human rights instruments. One important aspect of the Department's work in the field of human rights is strengthening countries' legal and policy frameworks to support effective and sustained implementation of programmes, and more equitable access to services. Despite many governments' efforts to improve accessibility, utilization and quality of health services for children and adolescents, legal, policy and practice barriers continue to exist both within and outside the health sector that constrain or impede much needed progress. Systematic use of the CRC provides a supportive legal impetus for improving child and adolescent health programmes, and introduces an element of government accountability to international commitments into related planning processes. In late 2007, CAH teamed up with the Department of Reproductive Health and Research, and the Program on International Health and Human Rights at the Harvard School of Public Health, to develop a series of tools for strengthening countries' legal and policy frameworks to support child and adolescent health programmes and services.

The first tool aims to help countries apply a human rights framework to identify and address legal, regulatory and policy barriers to improving adolescents' access to sexual and reproductive health services. It enables a systematic application of human rights principles -- including non-discrimination, participation and accountability -- to policies and programming. It also enables a comprehensive examination of laws, regulations and policies to ensure they are supportive of, rather than a barrier to, adolescents' sexual and reproductive health, and are compliant with a government's international and national human rights obligations.

Field tests of the tool for assessment of adolescent sexual and reproductive health law and policy are currently under way in Sri Lanka and Tajikistan, with further application planned in the Region of the Americas in early 2009. The second tool is intended to guide governments in undertaking a rights-based situation analysis of child survival in their country by:

- applying a CRC framework to collect data on key areas of the legal and policy environment that significantly impact child health/survival programmes, services, and outcomes;
- combining this information with existing data on the national child health/survival programme;
- analysing combined data to identify strategies for strengthening national programmes and promoting child rights; and
- synthesizing and integrating findings into the child health strategic planning process.

To find out more please visit:

http://www.who.int/child_adolescent_health/news/archive/2008/24_11/en/index.html

(9) UNEP Releases Film Series Highlighting Adaptation Efforts in Africa

[Gathering Storm – The humanitarian impact of climate change](#): The UN Environment Programme (UNEP), in partnership with the UN/OCHA Integrated Resource Information

Network (IRIN), has launched a film series titled “Gathering Storm - The humanitarian impact of climate change.” The eight short videos highlight the human impact of climate change in Africa by sharing stories of how adaptation techniques, new and old, enable vulnerable communities not only to cope but to emerge stronger and more resilient. The videos highlight desertification, flooding, rainwater harvesting, malaria, erosion, drought and irrigation. The videos can be viewed on line by clicking on the following the following link: <http://www.unep.org/themes/climatechange/poznan/FLVs/movie1.swf>

(10) WHO receives funds for children's medicines research with UNICEF

WHO has received US\$ 9.7 million in grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to work with UNICEF to conduct crucial research in children’s medicines, with the aim of increasing the number of child-size medicines designed and formulated specifically for children. Currently, many medicines are only designed for adults. More than 50% of medicines prescribed for children have either not been developed specifically for children or have not been proven to be effective and safe for their use. Therefore, many children lack access to essential treatment because no suitable paediatric dosage or formulation of the necessary medicine exists, or those that do exist are not available or are too expensive. "We must take the guess work out of medicines for children," said Carissa Etienne, Assistant Director-General, WHO. "Children are suffering and dying from diseases we can treat, and yet we lack the critical evidence needed to deliver appropriate, effective, affordable medicines that might save them.” As an unsafe alternative to missing paediatric medicines, health-care workers and parents often use fractions of adult dosage forms or prepare makeshift prescriptions of medicines by crushing tablets or dissolving portions of capsules in water. Other challenges include the need for more clinical trials and research to be carried out on paediatric medicines.

"Some progress has been made on children's medicines but too many medicines are still given to children that have never been properly tested for them," said Dr Hans Hogerzeil, Director of Essential Medicines and Pharmaceutical Policies, WHO. "This work is an excellent example of coordination of United Nations agencies and key experts in the world to address this urgent problem." To read more on the Make Medicines Child Size Initiative, please visit: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2009/childsize_medicines_20090121/en/index.html

(11) Countries struggling to slow increase in child hunger

Hunger is now the biggest threat to child development across the world, with global progress on eradicating malnutrition slowing, stalling, or sliding into reverse in some countries. But a new international index from Save the Children also reveals that some poor countries are making greater progress in reducing child deprivation. For example, the new index reveals that Ethiopia and Malawi, among the poorest African countries, have made the largest reductions in child deprivation in the region while South Africa and Botswana have seen an increase in child deprivation despite being among the richest African countries and experiencing high economic growth at the same time. The Child Development Index is the world's first to give a true picture of global progress on child deprivation. No other index ranks country performances globally, monitoring and comparing progress on three key areas specific to children; health, education and hunger. Hunger is responsible for a staggering 3.5 million child deaths every year and our study

shows that progress in eradicating hunger has dramatically slowed down. In the current climate of spiralling food prices, malnutrition continues to be widely neglected. For more information download [The Child Development Index: Holding governments to account for children's wellbeing](#).

(12) Children of the World: multimedia production about children's point of view on our common earth

It's a cross-cutting activity that seeks to ensure that children from all corners of the world- their perspective, sensitivity, concerns, dreams and so on- occupy centre stage at this event. They will have a special virtual space through which they can express what matters most to them and share their visions and project for a more sustainable future with Congress participants.

Climate Change and Children: A Human Security Challenge. To carry out this project, they are hoping to elicit the participation of about 20 preschool and grade school classes from different geographical regions and diverse cultures around the world. They still need some classes, mainly from India and Middle East. The deadline is approximately in mid-February.

This project is coordinated by Nathalie Robitaille and Louis Aubin, in collaboration with Lucie Sauvé, Holder of the Canada Research Chair in Environmental Education at the Université du Québec à Montréal. This project is for all teachers and educators who are interested in integrating the relationship with the environment into their teachings. They have to assist their pupils to produce short videos and supply photographs and drawings about their living environment, highlighting the aspects they wish to preserve and those one they want to change or improve, in their own words and in their own languages. The teachers who want to take part in this project, must have access to both a video and photographic camera. Also, the organizers will provide a guide and all resources they need during the entire process. It's not necessary to edit a complete video. Simply send the video segments, photographs and drawings and they will take care of putting together the final layout. So apply for it! For any further information please don't hesitate to contact: Nathalie Robitaille: robitailenathalie@videotron.ca

(13) Climate Change and Children: A Human Security Challenge

[This Policy Review Paper by UNICEF Innocenti Centre](#), reviews the implications of climate change for children and future generations, drawing on relevant experiences in different sectors and countries of promoting child rights and well-being. It traces in considerable detail the pathways through which shifts in temperature and precipitation patterns create serious additional barriers to the achievement of the child survival, development and protection goals embraced by the international community. The role of children as vital participants and agents of change emerges as a key theme.

(14) Nonfatal, Unintentional, Non-Fire-Related Carbon Monoxide Exposures: United States, 2004—2006

[This report](#) provides the most recent estimates of CO-related ED visits in the United States. During 2004-2006, an average of 20,636 ED visits for nonfatal, unintentional, non--fire-related CO exposures occurred each year. These estimates are higher than the estimated average of 15,200 CO-related ED visits per year reported for 2001--2003. Better case ascertainment,

increased reporting, or differential in sampling errors might account for this apparent increase; however, the data in this report do not allow drawing of conclusions regarding the cause of the increased visits. During 2004--2006, children aged <5 years had the highest estimated rates of CO-related ED visits and females had higher rates than males. These findings do not correspond to findings on fatal CO exposures, which indicate higher death rates among males and persons aged >65 years. Further research is needed regarding why certain population subgroups are at higher risk for CO exposure. During 2004-2006, approximately 41% of reported cases of CO exposure occurred during the winter. This finding is consistent with previously published data on CO exposure. Increased use of home heating systems during winter, exposure to motor-vehicle exhaust by stranded motorists during blizzards, use of gasoline-powered generators during and after winter storms, and indoor use of charcoal grills, portable stoves, and space heaters all have contributed to the increase in CO exposures during winter. These findings highlight the importance of initiating and evaluating public health awareness campaigns for reducing CO exposures before and during winter months. The majority (72.8%) of patients were exposed in their homes; accordingly, prevention of residential CO exposures could substantially decrease CO-related morbidities. The findings in this report are subject to at least three limitations. First, NEISS-AIP data did not include measurements of CO levels at the location of the incident or laboratory data for biologic indicators of CO exposure. ED documentation and narratives were used as a surrogate to assign exposures. Second, toxic effects, CO source, and detector presence and activation were not reported in NEISS-AIP for >30% of cases. Although the estimates for these variables might represent the population sampled, because of missing data, they might not represent national estimates. However, distributions for these factors were similar to those previously reported. Finally, the NEISS-AIP sample represents patients treated in hospital EDs; patients who sought treatment in other types of facilities (e.g., outpatient settings) or those who did not seek treatment were not included in this report. Harmful exposures to CO, especially those occurring at home, are preventable. Basic preventive measures, including properly installing and maintaining home heating systems, installing CO detectors, and venting cooking and fuel-burning appliances, can minimize exposures. Additional public health messages geared toward at-risk populations might help reduce the number of CO exposures, especially residential and seasonal exposures. Continued surveillance of CO exposure will aid in developing prevention measures and targeted interventions.

The study clearly shows the need for continued efforts to prevent the build up of CO in homes and especially to require the presence of CO detectors in all housing units with a combustion appliance or attached garage. The Alliance, along with our colleagues at the National Centre for Healthy Housing, suggested incorporating a carbon monoxide detector requirement into the International Property Maintenance Code, a model code adopted by states and localities around the country. The proposal was rejected by committee, but will have a second shot in front of a larger group next month in Minneapolis. See http://afhh.org/aa/aa_housing_codes.htm for more information on the IPMC proposal. The MMWR article is available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5733a2.htm>

(15) Global Health Meeting Highlights International Partnerships

As part of the ongoing cooperative agreement between NIEHS and the World Health Organization (WHO), the NIEHS Division of Extramural Research and Training (DERT) hosted a mini-symposium on global environmental health December 4 in Rodbell Auditorium. The

program, which featured talks by researchers in the Americas, Asia, Europe and Africa, was chaired by NIEHS Centre for Risk and Integrated Sciences Acting Branch Chief Claudia Thompson, Ph.D., and organized with the help of a WHO employee in residence at NIEHS, Kathy Prout of the WHO Interregional Research Unit.

The talks presented research findings from around the world as one speaker after another addressed the importance of communications, training and multidisciplinary collaboration for impacting global health issues. Speakers offered specific examples of productive international collaborations and a bi-directional exchange of data and solutions. To read the full article, please visit: <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/2009/january/global-health-meeting.cfm>

(16) Healthy indoor environments protect children's health

The financial crisis could lead to greater use of cheap heating fuels and burning of waste at home, increasing risks to children's health. This adds urgency to discussions taking place in preparation for the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in 2010. On 28–29 January 2009, European policy-makers are gathered in Luxembourg at the Thematic Meeting on Healthy Environments to recommend actions and policies to protect children's health from poor indoor air quality, obesity and injuries. "There is increasing evidence that disputes the assumption that children are safe in their own homes," says Dr Marc Danzon, WHO Regional Director for Europe. "For too long, health systems have not done enough to promote healthy indoor environments. Public health authorities must protect those most vulnerable to environmental health hazards, especially when more people are at risk due to the economic crisis." On the 28th January, European countries gathered to strengthen the commitments they made in the 2004 Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE) to substantially reduce children's mortality and morbidity by improving the quality of indoor air. The WHO Regional Office for Europe is developing guidelines on this topic and recently reviewed examples of effective interventions, including adopting health-oriented building standards, providing financial incentives for switching to cleaner alternatives for heating and cooking, improving and maintaining indoor stoves, and quitting smoking. Healthy behaviour reduces disease and death; more determined action by citizens depends on the provision of scientifically sound and user-friendly information to parents and caregivers. To read full press release, visit:

http://www.euro.who.int/eprise/main/WHO/MediaCentre/PR/2009/20090126_1?language=

(17) Sweden ban all uses of mercury

The Government today decided to introduce a blanket ban on mercury. The ban means that the use of dental amalgam in fillings will cease and that it will no longer be permitted to place products containing mercury on the Swedish market. "Sweden is now leading the way in removing and protecting the environment from mercury, which is non-degradable. The ban is a strong signal to other countries and a Swedish contribution to EU and UN aims to reduce mercury use and emissions," says Minister for the Environment Andreas Carlgren. The Government's decision means that products containing mercury may not be placed on the Swedish market. In practice this means that alternative techniques will have to be used in dental care, chemical analysis and the chloralkali industry. The Swedish Chemicals Agency will be authorised to issue regulations on exceptions or grant exemptions in individual cases. The new

regulations enter into force on 1 June 2009. To read the full news release, please visit: http://www.precaution.org/lib/09/swedes_ban_mercury.090115.htm

(18) Global Partnership Launched

On the 5th December 2008, Health Care Without Harm and the World Health Organization launched a global partnership to substitute mercury-based medical devices with safer, accurate and affordable alternatives. The announcement came during the opening of the South Asian Conference on Alternatives to Mercury in Health Care, an event sponsored by the two organizations and the Indian NGO Toxics Link. “This initiative aims to replace no less than 70 percent of all mercury thermometers and blood pressure devices around the world with digital and aneroid alternatives within the decade” said Alexander von Hildebrand, Regional Adviser for Chemical Safety for WHO’s South East Asia Regional Office. “It is our goal to significantly reduce the threat posed by mercury spills to patient and worker health, as well as the global environment.” Several countries have already taken steps to mandate safer, accurate and affordable alternatives to mercury-based medical devices. It is virtually impossible to find a mercury thermometer in the United States today, while the European Union has banned them outright, as has Taiwan. The Philippines has mandated a phase-out of all mercury medical devices over the next two years, while hundreds of hospitals in Latin America—from Mexico to Brazil to Argentina are moving towards alternatives. To read the full news release, please visit: <http://www.noharm.org/details.cfm?type=document&ID=2100>

(19) IFCS Forum VI Final Report, Executive Summary available in all UN languages

The Sixth Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (Forum VI) was held 15-19 September 2008 in Dakar, Senegal hosted by the Government of Senegal. Seventy-one governments participated in the meeting, together with representatives from twelve intergovernmental organizations (IGO) and representatives from thirty-nine non-governmental organizations (NGO). The theme of Forum VI, Global Partnerships for Chemical Safety Contributing to the 2020 Goal, was chosen to bring renewed focus to the integral role partnerships have in achieving the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) goal that by 2020 chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.

The fundamental working premise of the IFCS is to enable and engage all relevant stakeholders in the dialogue with an aim to understand everyone's issues and concerns. The contribution of all relevant stakeholders is important to formulate practical solutions, actions and strategies to address issues and concerns arising from the use of hazardous chemicals. Following the guidance provided by IFCS participants at Forum V and the invitation of the International Conference on Chemicals Management in February 2006, Forum VI provided countries and other stakeholders the opportunity to consider their priority topics and emphasize their special needs and concerns with respect to improving chemicals management. The plenary topics at Forum VI included nanotechnologies and manufactured nanomaterials: opportunities and challenges; substitution and alternatives; international transport of lead and cadmium via trade: an international concern; and ecologically based integrated pest management and integrated vector management: key elements of pesticide risk reduction strategies. To view report in English and other UN

languages, please visit: <http://www.who.int/ifcs/documents/forums/forum6/report/en/index.html> (Executive Summary, is also available in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish).

(20) Summary of the 11th meeting of the Task Force on health aspects of long-range transboundary air pollution (LRTAP). Bonn, Germany

30 experts from 19 parties of the LRTAP Convention evaluated the progress of the activities related to the assessment of impacts of air pollution on health in the countries that are signatories of the Convention, in particular in eastern European, Caucasus and central Asian countries. Approaches to the monitoring of health effects were discussed to inform the Working Group on Effects on currently existing options in Europe and on proposals for the future. The TF also agreed on the assessment of health risks of ozone in Europe and updated the assessment of health impacts of particulate matter. The need to undertake an assessment of health risks of emissions from biomass combustion, both in the context of forest fires and wood burning in domestic setting, was discussed. To view report, please visit: http://www.euro.who.int/air/activities/20050418_1

(21) Successful Conference in India

The First South Asian Conference for the Elimination of Mercury in Health Care took place in New Delhi, India on December 5-6. Organized by the Indian-based Toxics Link and Health Care Without Harm, in Association with WHO and UNEP, the event was attended by health care leaders from throughout South Asia. Read the Conference Declaration please visit: <http://www.noharm.org/details.cfm?type=document&id=2102>

(22) NewGeneris 3rd Annual Consortium Meeting

The 3rd Annual Consortium Meeting of NewGeneris will take place at the Stockholm University, Sweden, on 2-4 February, 2009. As part of the meeting, a workshop on “Oxidative stress in newborns and consequences for children’s health” is taking place on February 5, 2009. Please visit: <http://www.newgeneris.org/Default.aspx?tabid=69&newsid421=93&> to download the programme.

(23) National Environmental Public Health Tracking Conference. Washington, USA. 24 - 26, February 2009

This conference will serve as the platform for CDC to officially launch its National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network (referred to as Tracking Network). This is a nationwide network of integrated health and environmental data to be used to provide information in support of actions that improve the health of communities. Since 2002, CDC's National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program led the initiative to build the Tracking Network, drawing from a wide range of stakeholders with expertise from Federal, state, and local health and environmental agencies; nongovernmental organizations; and schools of public health. Anticipated attendees are any person or organization engaged in the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Program or interested in learning more about tracking. Website: <http://www.blsmmeetings.net/cdctrackingconference/>

(24) WHO International Workshop on Heavy metals and children's environment and health. Montevideo, Uruguay. 1-3 March 2009

The threats posed to children's health through metals exposure in air, food, beverages/water and soil are well established. New technology and methodologies have brought to light the previously unrecognized immune, nephrotoxic, neurodevelopmental, and genotoxic impacts of metals exposure to the developing fetus and to children. There is a need to acknowledge these issues, design better studies, and identify critical windows of susceptibility in order to implement good prevention strategies and adequate policies. These require a multisectoral approach, involving health and environment. WHO will contribute to an international workshop in Montevideo, Uruguay, 1-3 March 2009 on Heavy Metals and Children's Environmental Health to address some of these issues.

(25) ECNIS/NewGeneris Stakeholders' Workshop: Food and environmental cancer risks for adults and children. Brussels, Belgium. 16 March 2009.

ECNIS (Environmental Cancer Risk, Nutrition, and Individual Susceptibility) in collaboration with the NewGeneris project has organized a stakeholder workshop on "Food and Environmental Cancer Risks for Adults and Children", in Brussels, in the context of ECNIS 4th Annual meeting in Brussels. The Workshop, which forms part of the 4th Annual General Meeting of the ECNIS consortium, is being implemented in collaboration with EU DGs for Research and Sanco, and is open to all stakeholders interested in environmental health, especially those involved in cancer risk assessment, policy development in the area of cancer prevention, environmental health and consumer organisations, industry and patient advocacy groups. The programme and other details of the Workshop are found on the projects' webpages. Attendance of the Workshop is free of charge. Advance registration is strongly encouraged (on-site registration is also possible). Further information may be obtained by visiting the websites of ECNIS and NewGeneris (<http://www.newgeneris.org/>).

(26) Course on Climate Information for Public Health. Earth Institute, Columbia University, New York USA, 1-12 June, 2009.

The International Research Institute for Climate and Society, in partnership with the Centre for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), and the Mailman School of Public Health are pleased to announce the Summer Institute 2009 course on Climate Information for Public Health. The Summer Institute will expose participants to data, methods and tools for integrating climate change, and climate variability into public health decision-making processes. It will include presentations, seminars and opportunities for participants to discuss integrated work with leaders in their respective fields, and to gain hands-on experience with analytic tools. For further information please visit:

<http://portal.iri.columbia.edu/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=964&mode=2>

(27) Focus On: 3rd Children's World Water Forum. Istanbul, Turkey. 16 - 22 March 2009.

The World Water Forum is the main water-related event in the world, aimed at putting water firmly on the international agenda. A stepping stone towards global collaboration on water problems, the Forum offers the water community and policy-and-decision-makers from all over the world the unique opportunity to come together to create links, debate and attempts to find solutions to achieve water security. In the framework of the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul, children are a crucial stakeholder in water deliberations and decisions to “Bridge Divides for Water”. Read more by clicking on our logo. For important dates and further information, please visit: <http://www.worldwaterforum5.org/index.php?id=2486>

(28) Partnership for Clean Indoor Air Forum. Kampala, Uganda. 23-29, March 2009

Join the largest gathering of household energy (HHE) and health leaders as more than 200 practitioners share the latest developments in technologies, fuels, monitoring and evaluation, research and make new commitments to reduce exposure to indoor air pollution (IAP). Please check the website for information: www.pciaonline.org

(29) Translating Science to Policy: Protecting Children's Environmental Health. Columbia University, New York, 30 March, 2009

A conference and forum presented by the Columbia Centre for Children's Environmental Health (CCCEH), in collaboration with WE ACT for Environmental Justice Celebrating the CCCEH's 10-year anniversary, presenting key research findings and progress in community outreach and translation, and working towards needed policy changes for the next decade. Please RSVP to Swapna Mehta, E-mail: cccehconference@columbia.edu

(30) UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development – "Young ESD Voices from around the World". Bonn, Germany. 31 March-2 April, 2009.

One day before the opening of the World Conference, a workshop with 25 young people from around the world with demonstrated engagement in Education for Sustainable Development will take place in Bonn, Germany. Participants of the workshop will also take part in the World Conference. Workshop results will be presented at the Conference. Young people between 18 and 35 years of age are invited to submit applications for participating in the workshop "Young ESD Voices from around the World" and in the World Conference itself by 9 February 2009. Applications must include a letter of motivation (one page) describing the applicants' engagement in Education for Sustainable Development, the motivation for applying and a short description of what is intended to be done as follow-up to the Conference. Moreover, curriculum vitae should be submitted. For further information please visit: http://www.esd-world-conference-2009.org/fileadmin/download/Youth/ESD2009_U35_CfP.pdf

(31) "Health in the Americas" University of South Florida. May 11- 29 2009

Based on the 2007 edition of PAHO's Health in the Americas, this course addresses the issue of health as a human right and examines critical determinants of health and disparities that persist in the Region. Specifically, this course aims to:

1. Evaluate the current health situation and trends in the Americas.

2. Discuss the health care systems and programs developed within the Region.
3. Provide a systematic approach to the analysis of the health situation in the Americas, while focusing on statistics from within the Region.

For further information, please visit:

http://www.who.int/pmnch/topics/conferences/20090511_healthinamericas/en/index.html

(32) International RCE Conference, Biosphère Montreal, Canada, 13-15 May 2009

The goals of the RCE Conference of the Americas are very ambitious and reflects the range of needs and aspirations of participants: its aim is to identify new opportunities for growth and the potential resources (financial and in-kind) available to make local projects a solid and successful reality. The Conference will have ESD (Education for Sustainable Development) thematic workshops that are open to 5 Weec participants, ESD thematic meetings open only to the RCE network, continental meetings, a panel discussion on ESD, meeting on strategies and operations and capacity building workshops. The first day of the Conference will overlap with the last day of the 5th World Environmental Education Congress (5th Weec), creating a fabulous synergy and adding a value of extraordinary power, able to strengthen the idea that it's only through the instrument of education we could really change the future in a direction of sustainability.

For event details and further information please contact Therese Drapeau: therese.drapeau@ec.gc.ca

(33) Call for Abstracts – WHO Third international conference on children's health and the environment. Busan, South Korea, 7-10 June 2009

Every year, the lives of four million children under 5 years - mostly in developing countries - could be saved by preventing the effects of exposure to unsafe water, polluted air and other environmental risk factors. In an effort to raise children's environmental health in the global political agenda and strengthen policies and protective measures, WHO and the Korean Ministry of Environment are joining efforts with partners in planning an international event. Over 300 health professionals and experts will gather from 7-10 June 2009 in Busan, Republic of Korea for the Third WHO International Conference on Children's Health and the Environment. The Organizing Committee welcomes the submission of abstracts for oral and poster presentation at the CEH 2009. The abstract should be submitted on-line at www.ceh2009.org by March 1, 2009. Notification of acceptance of abstract will be via email by March 15, 2009.

(34) Tunza International Children's Conference on the Environment. Daejeon, Korea. 17 - 21 August 2009

The United Nation Environment Programme in cooperation with UNEP National Committee for the Republic of Korea will be hosting the 2009 Tunza International Children's Conference on the Environment in Daejeon, Korea from the 17 to 21 August 2009. The Conference whose theme will be *Climate Change: Our Challenge* will collectively bring together about 400 participants (aged 10 to 14) from over 100 countries. The delegates will be introduced to the new Tunza Strategy (2009-2014), and will discuss their role in the implementation of the Strategy. The delegates will also give suggestions on the themes for the 2010 International Children's Conference on the Environment. The four-day Conference will culminate in resolutions on

climate change to be presented to the Children's Climate Forum in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009. For further updates please visit:
http://www.unep.org/Tunza/Children/Events/icc_2009/

ARTICLES

(1) AIR POLLUTION:

(a) Indoor air pollution

[In-Home Particle Concentrations and Childhood Asthma Morbidity](#) In the present longitudinal study, fine and coarse PM concentrations measured indoors were associated with increased asthma morbidity, including more frequent respiratory symptoms and rescue medication use, among inner-city minority children.. EHP. December 2008.

[Indoor Charcoal Smoke and Acute Respiratory Infections in Young Children in the Dominican Republic](#) Exposure to charcoal smoke increases the risk of Acute lower respiratory infection (ALRI) in young children, an effect that is probably mediated by RPM (respirable particulate matter). HighWire Press. December 2008.

[Improving indoor air quality for poor families: a controlled experiment in Bangladesh](#) The analysis concludes that if cooking with clean fuels is not possible, then building the kitchen with porous construction material and providing proper ventilation in cooking areas will yield a better indoor health environment. Policy Research Working Paper. 1 December 2008.

[Urinary LG as a Biomarker of Wood Smoke Exposure: Observations in a Mouse Model and in Children](#) Levoglucosan (LG), a sugar anhydride released by combustion of cellulose-containing materials, is an attractive candidate as a biomarker of wood smoke (WS) exposure in both mice and children. EHP. January 2009

[Household Exposure to Paint and Petroleum Solvents, Chromosomal Translocations, and the Risk of Childhood Leukaemia](#) The association of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL) risk with paint exposure was strong, consistent with a causal relationship. We based analyses on data from NCCL Study. EHP. January 2009.

(b) Outdoor air pollution

[Chronic Exposure to Ambient Ozone and Asthma Hospital Admissions among Children](#) This study looked at the association between chronic exposure to air pollution and adverse health outcomes. It found that younger children and those in low socioeconomic groups have a greater risk of asthma than do other children at similar ozone level. EHP. December 2008.

[Air Pollution and Childhood Respiratory Allergies in the US](#) This study examined whether air pollutants are associated with childhood respiratory allergies in the US. The results demonstrate adverse health for children living in areas with chronic exposure to higher levels of O₃ and PM_{2.5} compared with children with lower exposures. EHP. January 2009.

[Traffic-Related Air Pollution and Perinatal Mortality: A Case–Control Study](#) This study used information collected from 14 districts in São Paulo, Brazil, regarding risk factors for perinatal deaths. The results suggest that motor vehicle exhaust exposures may be a risk factor for perinatal mortality. EHP. January 2009.

(c) Environmental Tobacco Smoke/Smoking

[Link Between Tobacco Smoke And Behavioural Problems In Boys With Asthma Strengthened With New Study](#)— Boys with asthma who are exposed to ETS have higher degrees of hyperactivity, aggression, depression and other behavioural problems, according to researchers at Cincinnati Children's Hospital. ScienceDaily. 5 December 2008.

[Socioeconomic determinants of children's ETS exposure and family's home smoking policy](#) The results of this study suggest that low parental education, unemployment, low household equivalent income, non-German nationality, single-parent family and family size were associated with children's ETS exposure at home and in cars. The European Journal of Public Health. January 2009.

[Beliefs About the Health Effects of "Thirdhand" Smoke and Home Smoking](#) Parents who smoke often open a window or turn on a fan to clear the air for their children, but experts now have identified a related threat to children's health that isn't as easy to get rid of: third-hand smoke. Paediatrics. January 2009.

[Environmental tobacco smoking exposure is associated with an increased risk of hospitalized pneumonia among children under 5 years old in Vietnam](#) In total 353,512 individuals were enrolled in the study. The results show that children's exposure to ETS, result in 44,000 excess hospitalizations due to pneumonia annually. Thorax. January 2009.

(2) CHEMICALS: (a) General

[The UK Childhood Cancer Study: maternal occupational exposures and childhood leukaemia and lymphoma](#) this study held interviews with parents of 1881 leukaemia and lymphoma cases (0–14 years) and 3742 controls, collected job histories recording exposure to 8 specific agents. It used a novel method of exposure assessment method. HighWire Press. December 2008.

[Immune cell counts and risks of respiratory infections among infants exposed pre- and post-natally to organochlorine compounds: a prospective study](#) The suggested PCB and p,p'-DDE modulation of infection risks may have consequences for the health development during childhood. Environmental Health. 4 December 2008.

[Intrauterine Exposure to Environmental Pollutants and Body Mass Index during the First 3 Years of Life](#) In this study the researchers demonstrated that intrauterine exposure to DDE and PCBs is associated with BMI during early childhood. Future studies are warranted to confirm these findings. EHP. January 2009

[Health Canada has little to say about cell phone risks for kids](#) Close to a dozen countries worldwide have issued warnings about children using cell phones, but Health Canada has no similar message for Canadians. France, the UK, Germany, Belgium, Israel, Russia and India are also advising children limit their use of cell phones. CBC. 22 January.

(b) Lead

[Dentine lead levels in childhood and criminal behaviour in late adolescence and early adulthood](#) This study sought to examine the linkages between Pb exposure in childhood and crime in late adolescence/early adulthood. Although lead exposure was associated with criminal behaviour, these associations however were weak. J Epidemiol Community Health. December 2008.

[A Framework for Widespread Replication of a Highly Spatially Resolved Childhood Lead Exposure Risk Model](#) The spatial childhood lead exposure risk models used in this study, guide resource-constrained institutions how best to expend their efforts in preventing and mitigating lead exposure risk in their communities. EHP. December 2008

[Windblown Lead Carbonate as the Main Source of Lead in Blood of Children from a Seaside Community: An Example of Local Birds as "Canaries in the Mine"](#) Isotopic data and mineralogic and particle size analyses indicate that the inhalation pathway could have been a significant contributor to PbBL. EHP. January 2009

[Elevated Blood Lead Levels in Children Commonly Related to Home Renovations](#) The results of this study indicate that, during 2006-2007, the elevated BLLs of 139 (14%) of the 972 children with BLLs >20 µg/dL were related to Repair, Renovation and Painting (RRP) activities. MMWR. 30 January 2009.

(c) Pesticides

[Urinary pesticide metabolites in school students from northern Thailand](#) This study evaluated exposure to pesticides among secondary school students aged 12–13 years old in Chiang Mai Province. Children of farmers had significantly higher urinary concentrations of urinary metabolites (used as biomarkers of exposure). ScienceDirect. December 2008.

[Residential exposures to pesticides and childhood leukaemia](#) Investigators of the NCCL Study have undertaken a comprehensive assessment of residential pesticide exposure, including: quality control of self-reports; home pesticide inventory; collection and laboratory analyses of ~600 home dust samples; and geographic information. HighWire Press. December 2008.

[Assessment of environmental exposures from agricultural pesticides in childhood leukaemia studies: challenges and opportunities](#) A model developed in California was presented that allows

one to estimate individual-level residential proximity to pesticide applications by linking addresses to pesticide application data and land-use information and some validation data. HighWire Press. December 2008

(d) Mercury

Meeting Report: Methylmercury in Marine Ecosystems The group concluded that current understanding of Hg in marine ecosystems across a range of habitats, chemical conditions, and ocean basins is severely data limited. An integrated research and monitoring program is urgently needed. EHP. December 2008.

Law on Flu Vaccinations May Be Tested The state's new law requires young children attending licensed pre-school and child care centres to get flu vaccinations will be tested this week when thousands of children return to classrooms and playrooms after. The requirement applies to children between 6 months and 5 years who are attending licensed day care and preschool programs. Neverdem. 5 January 2009

Action on the global mercury pollution Some 60 years after the Minimata poisoning hit the headlines, international action on global mercury pollution is again rising on the global thermometer. Next month governments will meet for UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum with an international response to this notorious heavy metal high on the agenda. Asashi. 14 January 2009.

(3) WATER AND SANITATION

Drinking water quality in Poland in 2007 (Polish) Quality of drinking water in Poland is under constant control, which is held by National Sanitary Inspection. The following article presents differences in spatial allocations in scope of public water supply systems and drinking water quality in Poland in 2007. Medycyna Srodowiskowa. January 2009.

Water is a human right In a world running out of clean, accessible water, the question of who decides its allocation is crucial. Is access to water a human right or just a need? Is water a common good like air or a commodity like Coca-Cola? Who is being given the right or the power to turn on or off the tap? San Francisco Chronicle. 22 January 2009.

(4) GLOBAL CHANGE

Climate Variability, Social and Environmental Factors, and Ross River Virus Transmission: Research Development and Future Research Needs The analysis indicates that there is a complex relationship between climate variability, social and environmental factors, and RRV transmission. Different strategies may be needed for the control and prevention of RRV disease at different levels. EHP. December 2008.

Women demand bigger say in U.N. climate talks The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said poor women in developing countries will be affected most by climate change, because of its impact on agriculture, food security and water management - traditionally

women's tasks. It also said they are more likely to be killed in disasters caused by extreme weather. [Reuters](#). 8 December 2008.

[Good News for Research into the Health Impacts of Climate Change](#) The Australian Government's National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF), National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and the CSIRO have identified health and climate change as a strategic priority for research, and \$10 million is being provided to fund the effort. [DEA](#). 27 January 2008

[UNICEF feels the pinch of the food price crisis](#) As Ethiopia struggled with high food prices and a lack of relief aid in 2008, UNICEF, initiated one of the biggest responses to fight severe malnutrition ever undertaken. UNICEF estimates that it will need 600 to 1,000 tonnes of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) a month in Ethiopia, but availability will "remain a major issue" in 2009. [Reuters](#). 28 January 2008.

[Humans adapting to climate change help mosquitoes spread disease](#) Humans adjusting to water shortages caused by global warming could help a dengue fever-carrying mosquito expand into new parts of Australia, according to a new study. People hoarding water in ever-more parched swathes of the country already affected by climate change create perfect breeding grounds for the deadly insects. [EFP](#). 29 January 2009.

(5) REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

[Plutonium from Above-Ground Nuclear Tests in Milk Teeth: Investigation of Placental Transfer in Children Born between 1951 and 1995 in Switzerland](#) The findings demonstrate that plutonium found in milk teeth is caused by fallout that was inhaled around the time the milk teeth were shed and not from any accumulation during pregnancy through placenta transfer. [EHP](#). December 2008.

[A European Study on Maternal Diet during Pregnancy and Child Health](#) aims to make a difference in providing data on prenatal exposures and in relating this to dietary questionnaires during pregnancy. The project also seeks to establish biomarkers of effect that may provide information on whether a given exposure results in changes indicative of increased disease risk. [Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev](#). January 2009

[Urgent action needed to cut maternal deaths-UNICEF](#) A global effort to reduce deaths during pregnancy and childbirth is likely to fail unless action is taken to improve health care in the developing world. More than half a million expectant and new mothers die each year, most in Africa and Asia, where obstetrical and post-natal care is often unavailable and many pregnancies are complicated by HIV. [BBC](#). 15 January 2009.

[Chemicals 'may reduce fertility'](#) Chemicals commonly found in food packaging, upholstery and carpets may be damaging women's fertility, say US scientists. A study published in the journal *Human Reproduction* measured levels of perfluorinated chemicals (PFCs) in the blood of 1,240 women. Those with higher levels were more likely to take longer to become pregnant. [BBC](#). 29 January 2009.

[Toxic or not](#) researchers analyzed three studies on the intake of dioxins through breast milk and their outcome on health. The studies indicated that babies exposed to dioxins had slightly higher levels of thyroid hormones and lower blood platelet counts but that did not adversely affect the child's health. The studies revealed that breastfed babies had higher mental development. [Down to Earth](#). 2 Feb 2009.

(6) MISCELLANEOUS (a) General

[Study: Most Child Abuse Goes Unreported](#) Children in highly developed countries, including the US, UK, Australia and Canada, suffer abuse and neglect much more often than is reported by official child-protective agencies. Researchers estimate that 4-16% of children are physically abused each year in high-income nations. [Time](#). 2 December 2008.

[Poor Children's Brain Activity Resembles That Of Stroke Victims, EEG Shows](#) In a study by scientists at UC Berkeley's Helen Wills Neuroscience Institute and the School of Public Health report that normal 9- and 10-year-olds differing only in socioeconomic status have detectable differences in the response of their prefrontal cortex. [ScienceDaily](#). 6 December 2008.

['Thousands made slaves' in Darfur](#) Strong evidence has emerged of children and adults being used as slaves in Sudan's Darfur region, a study says. Eyewitnesses also say the Sudanese army has been involved in abducting women and children to be sex slaves and domestic staff for troops in Khartoum. [BBC](#). 17 December 2008.

[Obesity 'set before age of five'](#) Childhood obesity is set before the age of five. Compared to children in the 1980s, today's youngsters are fatter and most of their excess weight gain happens before school age, they will say. This suggests initiatives to prevent childhood obesity should be started before school. [BBC](#). 17 December 2008.

[Defeat Malaria? Yes We Can](#) Two studies published in the New England Journal of Medicine reported promising news about a malaria vaccine candidate that GSK, is developing in collaboration with the Malaria Vaccine Initiative, a program of the NGO PATH, the Gates Foundation, and scientists from Europe, North America and Africa. [The Wall Street Journal](#). 17 December 2008.

[A Major Milestone for the National Children's Study \(NCS\)](#) In January 2009, the NCS will begin enrolment and data collection at the first of the initial, or Vanguard, locations, in Duplin County, North Carolina, and in Queens, New York. In spring 2009, the remaining five Vanguard locations will join them. [EHP](#). January 2009.

[India's real-life slumdogs](#) Slumdog Millionaire, which tells the rags-to-riches tale of an orphan from a slum in Mumbai, won four Golden Globe awards and has been nominated for 11 Baftas. But there is little upbeat about the slums and some newspapers have criticised Boyle for romanticising the slums. [Telegraph.uk](#) 16 January 2009.

[As early recovery work begins, the toll of conflict on Gaza's children is clear](#) With the return of children to school in Gaza, UNICEF is providing essential educational equipment and materials to re-establish learning and recreational activities, create safe environments, and help restore a sense of normalcy for children in Gaza. Reports so far estimate that seven schools were completely destroyed, and many more were damaged. [UNICEF](#). 26 January 2009.

(b) Americas

[Many Children Lack Stability Long After Storm](#) After more than three years of nomadic uncertainty, many of the children of Hurricane Katrina are behind in school, acting out and suffering from extraordinarily high rates of illness and mental health problems. Their parents, many still anxious or depressed themselves, are struggling to survive. [NYTimes](#). 4 December 2008.

[Preventing Food Allergy—Is It Possible?](#) For reasons not totally understood, food allergies are on the rise, and affected children are two to four times as likely as unaffected kids to have related conditions such as asthma or other allergies. About 3 million children under 18 had food allergies in 2007, 18% more than in 1997. [Allergy and Asthma](#). 15 December 2008.

[UC Davis M.I.N.D. Institute Study Shows California's Autism Increase Not Due To Better Counting, Diagnosis](#) A study has found that the 7-8-fold increase in the number children born in California with autism since 1990. This increase cannot be explained by either changes in how the condition is diagnosed or counted. [MedicineNewsToday](#). 8 January 2009.

(c) Asia

[Endosulfan kills Indian schoolchildren](#) 43 students at a boarding school in Ranchi, Jharkhand, were hospitalized after drinking milk laced with endosulfan, 5 of the students died. Endosulfan is under consideration for global action under two international treaties: the Rotterdam Convention and the Stockholm Convention. [PANUPS](#). 4 December 2008.

[UN urges better built schools after 2008 collapses](#) The UN called for action around the world to build safer schools after natural disasters killed thousands of children from China to Haiti in 2008 because of poor construction. The worst episode was in China where thousands of children died when a devastating earthquake hit Sichuan. [Reuters](#). 23 December 2008.

[1 in 5 considering leaving Hong Kong due to pollution: survey](#) One in five Hong Kong residents is considering leaving the city because of its dire air quality, a survey released Monday has found, raising fears over the financial hub's competitiveness. The findings equate to 1.4 million residents thinking about moving away. [TerraDaily](#). 5 January 2009.

[China birth defects 'up sharply'](#) A senior family planning official in China has noted an alarming rise in the number of babies with birth defects, a Chinese media report says. Environmental pollution was a cause of the increase. The coal-mining heartland of Shanxi province had the biggest problem. [BBC](#). 1 February 2009.

(d) Africa

[Kenya: Hiding from the cruellest cut](#) Hundreds of girls between seven and 17 are seeking refuge in church compounds in western Kenya to avoid the ritual removal of their clitorises, a practice that remains common despite its illegality. According to a UNICEF-commissioned study, the practice is still prevalent in most of Kenya. [IRIN](#). 17 December 2008.

[Sudan 'has 6,000 child soldiers'](#) There are as many as 6,000 child soldiers, some as young as 11 years old, in the war-torn region of Darfur, the head of Unicef in Sudan says. Ted Chaiban said some children were linked to rebel movements, others to government-backed militia and some were fighting alongside the Sudanese army. [BBC](#). 23 December 2008.

[Lead for car batteries poisons an African town](#) First, it took the animals. Goats fell silent and refused to stand up. Chickens died in handfuls, then en masse. Street dogs disappeared. Then it took the children. Toddlers stopped talking and their legs gave out. Women birthed stillborns. Infants withered and died. [Salon.com](#). 3 January 2009.

[Zimbabwe cholera cases top 60,000](#) More than 60,000 people in Zimbabwe have now been infected by cholera, the World Health Organization (WHO) says. This figure had been described by the UN's health agency and other agencies as being the "worst case scenario" in the epidemic which broke out in August. 30 January 2009.

[Nigeria: Still On Dangers of Generator's Fumes, Noise Pollution in Lagos](#) Generator fumes can be very dangerous to healthy human living, in both residential and highly industrialised areas in Lagos, such as Ikeja, Yaba, Lagos Island, Victoria Island and Ikoyi, among others. [AllAfrica](#). 21 January 2009.

[Improving Maternal and Child Health in Difficult Environments: The Case For "Cross-Border" Health Care](#) To make health service delivery work in difficult environments, several challenges must be addressed as each has to overcome one or more "traps" of bad governance, civil war, and/or being landlocked. [Pubmed](#). January 2009.

(e) Europe

[Doubts raised over measles target](#) The UK has been named as one of the worst countries in Europe for measles, with case levels dashing global hopes of eradicating the disease by 2010. The Lancet study says that in 2006-7 most of the 12,000 cases in Europe were found in the UK and four other nations. [BBC](#). 7 January 2009.

[In Algeria, a Tug of War for Young Minds](#) The government is urgently trying to re-engineer Algerian identity, changing the curriculum to wrest momentum from the Islamists, provide its youth with more employable skills, and combat the terrorism it fears schools have inadvertently encouraged. [NY Time](#). 23 June 2008.

[Childbirth drink danger revealed](#) Women who drink too much water during labour are at greater than normal risk of a potentially dangerous condition, say scientists. A Swedish study, published

in the journal BJOG, revealed women who drank more than 2.5 litres during labour had a 25% chance of hyponatraemia. [BBC](#). 30 January 2009.

(f) Australasia

[NZ Bans Endosulfan](#) The New Zealand's Environmental Risk Management Authority has announced it will ban Endosulfan. Endosulfan, already banned in 55 countries, is an insecticide that has triggered international action because of its toxicity, persistence in the environment and its ability to accumulate up the food chain. [PANUP](#). 15 December 2008.

[Fourth Anniversary of Indian Ocean Tsunami](#) Four years after the Indian Ocean Tsunami claimed the lives of more than 200,000 people and devastated towns and communities. UNICEF has released its 2008 Tsunami report highlighting progress made for children since the 2004 catastrophe. [UNICEF Australia](#). 24 December 2008.

[Indigenous child abuse doubles in NT: study](#) A new study has found abuse of Indigenous children in the Northern Territory has doubled in the period between 2007 and 2008. The report from the Institute of Health and Welfare also shows Indigenous children were 6 times more likely to be abused than non-Indigenous children. [ABC](#). 22 January 2008.
