

## HECANET June - July 2006

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\* To reflect activities in the next issue of HECANET send information to [heca@nyo.unep.org](mailto:heca@nyo.unep.org)

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## **ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS**

Articles this month refer to the new WHO publication: *"Preventing disease through healthy environments: Towards an estimate of the environmental burden of disease"*, a report on how much of the global disease burden is caused by environmental factors. In the area of air pollution, the publications listed deal with the relationship between autism and air pollutants, the exposure to pollutants during pregnancy and the UN call for new partnerships to clear African smog. An article in *EHP* presents the trends in the exposure to secondhand smoke in the U.S. between 1988 and 2002. It concludes that no level of exposure is safe and that increased effort interventions are still needed to protect children's health. Several studies examine the amount of chemicals in the human body and there is discussion on whether the adverse health effects of bisphenol A (BPA) have been recognized by industry. Regarding heavy metals, the Food and Drug Administration in the USA FDA urged producers to stop making lead-tainted lunchboxes; an article in *EHP* warns about mercury spills from gas regulators that can cause outbreaks of mercury poisonings and questions the recommendations for light tuna consumption regarding its mercury levels. A highly interesting article on pesticides published in *Pediatrics* shows that prenatal exposure to DDT, and to lesser extent to DDE, was associated with neurodevelopmental delays during early childhood. Interestingly, DDT is making a controversial return to Africa to fight off malaria. Water and sanitation articles include the report on a new solution for turning health-threatening water into safe drinking water. Another article highlights the development of health-protective drinking water levels for perchlorate. UNICEF, along with other international organizations, is helping Vietnam improve its rural water supply and sanitation conditions. Several articles warn about the effects of global change, stating that "deserts might inherit the earth" and quoting Dr. Klaus Toepfer (former head of UNEP) who warns that "climate change could destabilize the world". On his side, the new head of UNEP, Dr. Achim Steiner stresses the importance of stopping environmental degradation as a means to alleviate poverty and protect the poorest of the poor.

Different environmental health issues are identified in various parts of the world. In Asia, UNICEF sends emergency supplies to Indonesian flood victims and announces an earthquake recovery plan for Pakistan. A study shows how Indians may be at risk from mercury poisoning. A dioxin detoxification campaign will start in former U.S. military bases in Vietnam. Articles also look at China's environmental issues, with its coal-burning power plants, hundreds of families poisoned by contaminated wells and dangerous baby-bottles. Palestinians face a public health and humanitarian crisis. In Africa, the use of DDT causes new debates. Nairobi is one of the world cities with the most polluted air and UNICEF needs more funds to help Ethiopians fight drought. In the Americas, smog problems are striking again in Chile. The Honduran government is encouraging school children to recover and preserve the main watersheds. A study calculates the cost-estimates of environment-related childhood disease in Minnesota, USA, and a new act could lead to the ban of dangerous pesticides in Canada.

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

- (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) MISCELLANEOUS (a) General (b) Americas (c) Asia (d) Africa**
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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:

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/](http://www.who.int/household_water/en/)

### **(2) WHO Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI) Newsletter**

The topics raised in the July 2006 issue of the Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI) Newsletter highlights recent events as well as the newly released publications. It also includes information on the WHO Global InfoBase database and provides an update on CEH pilot indicator projects underway: i) In the African (AFRO): Initiation of indicator pilot in Zimbabwe; and ii) In the Pan-American Health Organization region (PAHO): Update on the Children's Environmental Health Indicators at the US - Mexico Border.

To access the newsletter or for further enquiries or information on past issues of the CEHI Newsletter, please visit the website

<http://www.who.int/ceh/newsletter/en/index.html> or contact: <mailto:cehindicators@who.int>

### **(3) Preventing Disease through Healthy Environments: Towards an Estimate of the Environmental Burden of Disease**

WHO has launched the report "*Preventing disease through healthy environments: towards an estimate of the environmental burden of disease*" (June 2006), that reviews how much of global disease is due to the environment. By considering only the modifiable parts of the environment, it focuses on the disease burden that could actually be prevented by creating more supportive environments. The main finding is that one quarter of all disease and one third in children is due to preventable environment factors.

Children bear the highest death toll with more than four million environmentally-caused deaths yearly, mostly in developing countries. The infant death rate from environmental causes is 12 times higher in developing than in developed countries, reflecting the human health gain that could be achieved by supporting healthy environments. Our evolving knowledge about environment-health interactions can support the design of more effective preventive and public health strategies that reduce corresponding risks to health, especially for children.

The report can be found online at

[http://www.who.int/quantifying\\_ehimpacts/publications/preventingdisease/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/quantifying_ehimpacts/publications/preventingdisease/en/index.html)

### **(4) African Environment Outlook-for-Youth (UNEP Report)**

The activities of young people in Africa have and will continue to have a tremendous impact on the environment and, for that reason, it is important that youth have access to an interesting and reliable source of information about the environment. The Africa Environment Outlook (AEO) published by UNEP provides a comprehensive analysis of status and trends of the environment in Africa and engendered participation from a wide range of stakeholders. It is considered an important tool for information dissemination on environmental issues in the region, however, it is targeted primarily at governments and policy makers and its technical nature is not particularly youth-friendly. UNEP therefore launched AEO-for-Youth, which falls within the organization's Tunza Strategy on the engagement and involvement of young people in environmental issues. The publication, which was launched on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2006, targets young people between 16 and 30 years old, as well as environmental educators, environment & youth groups, non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and Community-Based Organizations (CBO's). The AEO-for-Youth is an initiative by youth, for youth in Africa and combines the scientific information in AEO with illustrations, short case studies, poems, photos, quotes, and opinions on environmental issues submitted by African youth, in a format that appeals to young people. Some health related quotes from the publication include: "Pollution can seriously affect our health. Exposure to toxic emissions is associated with acute respiratory infections, lung diseases such as asthma and chronic bronchitis, lung cancer and pregnancy-related problems. Women are particularly vulnerable because of their traditional role as cook, which means that they spend more time

indoors and close to pollution sources"; "Principle 1 of the Stockholm Declaration clearly stipulated that a healthy environment was a fundamental human right. The OAU (which is now the African Union) and many African countries followed suit and enshrined this right in their constitutions. However, the past 30 years have seen many challenges and setbacks. Africa's environment has continued deteriorating. The resulting environmental change has left many Africans vulnerable due to increased risk and inadequate coping capability".

The publication is available at <http://www.unep.org/dewa/Africa/youth/index.htm>

### **(5) Global Burden of Disease of Solar Ultraviolet Radiation (WHO Report)**

Ultraviolet radiation from the sun causes a considerable global disease burden, including specific cancers. Much of the UV-related illness and death can be avoided through a series of simple prevention measures. The report estimates that up to 60,000 deaths a year worldwide are caused by too much exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR). Of those 60,000 deaths, an estimated 48,000 are caused by malignant melanomas, and 12,000 by skin carcinomas. The new WHO report is the first-ever systematic examination of the global health burden due to UVR. It investigates nine adverse health outcomes from excess UVR exposure. The main three, which cause the greatest burden of disease from UVR, are cutaneous malignant melanomas, and non-melanoma skin cancers developing in different cell layers of the skin (squamous cell carcinomas and basal cell carcinomas). In addition, UVR causes sunburn, skin photoageing, cortical cataracts (eye lens opacities), pterygium (a fleshy growth on the surface of the eye), reactivation of herpes of the lip (cold sores) and the rare squamous cell carcinomas of the eye.

"This global assessment of the health risks of UV radiation provides a good basis for public health action. We all need some sun, but too much sun can be dangerous - and even deadly. Fortunately, diseases from UV such as malignant melanomas, other skin cancers and cataracts are almost entirely preventable through simple protective measures," said Dr Maria Neira, Director for Public Health and the Environment at WHO.

The report notes that UVR does have beneficial effects, mainly in the production of vitamin D following skin exposure to the UVB (shorter wavelength) component of UVR. Adequate vitamin D prevents the development of bone diseases such as rickets, osteomalacia and osteoporosis. Moreover, the possible beneficial effects on some cancers and immune disorders are under investigation. WHO notes, in most cases minimal casual exposure to UVR should be sufficient to maintain vitamin D levels at a range that avoids these health problems. The dangers are much greater from over-exposure to the sun's radiation. Characteristically, sunburn is uncommon in the very young, although if it does occur, it maybe severe and even life threatening. The incidence rises through childhood and reaches a peak in adolescence and early adulthood.

The report is available at <http://www.who.int/uv/publications/solaradgbd/en/index.html>

### **(6) Toxic Chemicals and Children's Health in North America (CEC Report)**

Almost 120 million children live in North America. Many of them face economic, social and environmental challenges every day. More children than ever need daily medication to control

asthma. Others struggle to control aggressive outbursts and understand difficult learning concepts. Too many, particularly in poorer areas, suffer from gastrointestinal disease. Children who live with parents or others who smoke at home are exposed whenever a smoker lights up another cigarette. Many factors are affecting the health of these children.

One of the goals of this report, published by the Commission for Environmental Cooperation of North America (CEC) on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2006, is to focus on one of these factors: chemical releases into the environment from industrial activities. Chemical industrial releases are one important part of the puzzle but do not give a full picture of risk since chemicals from industry are only one type of pollutant. Human exposure levels to these chemicals, and other sources of pollution, are beyond the scope of this report. This report also aims to foster increased trilateral action to prevent and reduce children's exposure to harmful chemicals. Its focus is an analysis of available data on one category of pollutant, toxic chemicals from data obtained from the national pollutant release and transfer registers (PRTRs) in North America, and emphasizes the reporting of chemical carcinogens, developmental toxicants and neurotoxicants. Although at this stage the data are available only for the United States and Canada, this report discusses in specific terms the potential impacts of these substances on the health of children in North America. It also describes the limits of what we know about these impacts based on present data. With its cross-border analysis of selected PRTR data, it provides a unique North American perspective as a basis for trilateral action. The Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) released a "call for efforts to determine the sources, levels of exposure, and risks that industrial chemicals pose to children's health."

The report is available at

[http://www.cec.org/pubs\\_docs/documents/index.cfm?varlan=english&ID=1965](http://www.cec.org/pubs_docs/documents/index.cfm?varlan=english&ID=1965)

## **(7) Linking poverty reduction and water management**

The Poverty-Environment Partnership (PEP) is a network of bilateral aid agencies, multilateral development banks, UN agencies and international NGOs. It aims to address key poverty-environment issues within the framework of international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Knowledge-sharing activities undertaken by the PEP since 2001 underpin efforts to link poverty reduction and environmental management. This paper analyzes the relationship between water management and poverty reduction. All aspects of poverty are considered: this is reflected in the analysis of water's potential contribution to all of the MDGs, not just those that refer explicitly to water. The basic contention, supported through reference to a wide range of case studies, is that water management is a good investment: not only can it contribute to poverty reduction, but it can do so in ways that are affordable and, in many cases, generate wealth. Furthermore, it has a great potential to promote the health of local communities, which in turn will contribute importantly to poverty reduction. This potential is often not understood: the political prominence of water issues is all too often not translated into investment priorities. In particular, water management actions are poorly represented in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and in other key development strategies intended to focus national efforts on poverty reduction and attaining the MDGs. The paper builds on the conceptual framework developed in earlier Poverty-Environment Partnership papers through the

analysis of the contribution of different aspects of water management to four key dimensions of poverty reduction.

The report is available at:

[http://www.who.int/water\\_sanitation\\_health/resources/povertyreduction/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/resources/povertyreduction/en/index.html)

### **(8) UNEP Updated Website on Children's Environmental Health**

UNEP's New York Office has updated its website on children's environmental health. It provides an excellent overview of UNEP's work in this area, including information on current and past activities, and extensive links to the work of UNEP and its partners in this field. It also features the electronic version of the UNEP-UNICEF-WHO publication 'Children in the New Millennium: Environmental Impact on Health'(that is in the process of being updated by the three organizations). The site can be accessed at: <http://www.nyo.unep.org/ceh.htm>

### **(9) UNEP Children's Painting Competition - Winners Honoured on World Environment Day**

World Environment Day, commemorated each year on 5<sup>th</sup> June, is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action. The World Environment Day theme selected for 2006 was Deserts and Desertification and the slogan is "*Don't Desert Drylands*"! The slogan emphasizes the importance of protecting drylands, which cover more than 40% of the planet's land area. This ecosystem is home to one-third of the world's people who are more vulnerable members of society. The main international celebrations of the World Environment Day 2006 were held in Algiers, Algeria.

Sophisticated images of water and life, of desert biodiversity and of deforestation and environmental degradation dominate this year's International Children's Painting Competition on the Environment. The global winner of the fifteenth International Children's Painting Competition on the Environment is being announced to mark World Environment Day 2006. Children aged 6-14 were invited to express their hopes and fears about the world's deserts and drylands through the medium of art. In this year's competition, children from 100 countries contributed more than 8,000 paintings.

Speaking at the award ceremony, UNEP's Director of Communications and Public Information, Eric Falt, said: "The response we receive every year to this painting competition shows that children care. It also shows that their teachers, their parents and their communities care. If we are going to reverse the environmental decline that we know is happening to our land, our seas, our rivers and our air, we all need to care—and to act."

The 2006 Global Winner of the UNEP International Children's Painting Competition is 9-year-old Lau Tsun Ming from China. Speaking about his painting, Ming said: "*My picture shows two contrasting scenes of Earth. One is desertified and the other can keep its natural beauty. If people continue to ruin the environment, our surroundings will become dull and nasty.*" The three second prize winners, the global winner, as well as six regional winners who had been

chosen earlier all traveled to Algeria, with their chaperones to attend the World Environment Day celebrations that were held in the city from 1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> June 2006.

For more information on World Environment Day and on the results of UNEP Children's Painting's Competition, please go to <http://www.unep.org>

### **(10) UN-HABITAT's State of the World's Cities 2006/7: The Millennium Goals and Urban Sustainability**

It is generally assumed that urban populations are healthier, more literate and more prosperous than rural populations. However, UN-HABITAT's State of the World's Cities Report 2006/7 has broken new ground by showing that the urban poor suffer from an urban penalty: Slum dwellers in developing countries are as badly off, if not worse, than their rural relatives.

For more information, please go to <http://www.unchcs.org/pmss/getPage.asp?page=bookView&book=2101>

### **(11) UN-HABITAT's Water and Sanitation in the World's Cities 2006: Meeting Developing Goals in Small Urban Centres**

This is the second UN-HABITAT global report on Water and Sanitation in the World's Cities. This publication looks at small urban centres which tend to be overlooked, in spite of being the first tier markets and service providers for rural enterprise and development. Attaining the MDGs overall will depend to a large extent on how we can strengthen the prospects of local economic development and improve the living and working conditions of small towns and cities which, in turn, depend on access to clean water and improved sanitation. This publication has a pivotal role to play in global and local thinking on service provision, and a critical contribution to the road map to meeting the MDGs.

For more information, please go to <http://www.unchcs.org/pmss/getPage.asp?page=bookView&book=2057>

### **(12) IFCS Forum V - Chemical Safety for Sustainable Development: 25<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

The Fifth Plenary Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (Forum V), hosted by the Government of Hungary and to be held in Budapest, 24<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> September 2006. The theme of Forum V will be Chemical Safety for Sustainable Development. Representatives of all IFCS participant groups - governments, international organizations, industry, labour unions, public interest groups, and science associations - are involved in preparing the agenda and programme which includes a number of items relevant to the implementation of the Forum IV recommendations on Children and Chemical Safety (<http://www.who.int/ifcs/documents/forums/forum4/children/en/index.html>). Topics include Toys and Chemical Safety, Heavy metals - need for further global action?, Applying precaution in the context of chemical safety, and the Sound Management of Chemical and Poverty Reduction. In the Thought Starter prepared on Toys and Chemical Safety a number of case

studies are offered to illustrate various aspects of chemical safety and toys, actions for toy safety described, and an extensive list of issues presented to stimulate thinking and discussion. In conjunction with Forum V, the Government of Switzerland is organizing an all day side event on heavy metals to be held 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2006. Official documents (UN languages) and further information is available on the IFCS Forum V website:

<http://www.who.int/ifcs/forums/five/en/index.html>

### **(13) 4th Annual Conference on Children's Health and the Environment**

The Conference on Children's Environmental Health is organized annually by the Mid-Atlantic Center for Children's Health and the Environment. The center is affiliated with the George Washington University Medical Center and the Children's National Medical Center. The 2006 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference is jointly sponsored by The Mid-Atlantic Center for Children's Health and the Environment, Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region III and the Children's National Medical Center of Washington, DC and will take place on 21 October 2006.

The Conference will address clinically important issues in children's health that are affected by the environment. Children of all ages, including those in the fetal stages of development, can be affected by environmental hazards. Exposure to environmental toxins via air, water, food or soil can have a significant impact on the health of children. The conference will focus on the following areas; the built environment, heavy metals exposure and neurocognitive issues, cancer and environmental exposures and newborn outcomes and environmental exposures.

For additional information, please contact [ehaoa@gwumc.edu](mailto:ehaoa@gwumc.edu)

### **(14) WHO Europe Children's Health and Environment Training Workshop: Expansion of the CHE Train the Trainers' Network**

WHO/EURO Children's Health and Environment programme is organizing a Training Workshop from 20-22 September 2006 in Florence, Italy in order to expand the WHO Europe train the trainers' network. The workshop aims to increase knowledge and improve the capacity of health and environment professionals in the respective countries to recognize and understand the beneficial and negative influences of environmental factors on children's health; to diagnose and manage health and developmental effects linked to the environment; to raise awareness about and discuss environmental risks with patients, parents, educators and the media; to advocate in favour of healthier, safer and cleaner environments for children and high priority issues for action at the level of decision-makers; and to identify knowledge gaps and needs for cooperative research on environmental health and children. Selected modules from the WHO Package for the Health Sector will be used as training materials. Upon completion of the workshop, the participants will be expected to carry out a similar course in their own country; to develop a proposal for establishing and strengthening children's health and environment education for health and environment professionals and to serve as a focal points on capacity building in their own settings and/or other places in the WHO Europe region.

For more information please write to <mailto:childhealthenv@ecr.euro.who.int>

### **(15) Regional Conference on Better Air Quality in African Cities (BAQ-Africa 2006)**

A conference on Better Urban Air Quality in Sub Saharan Africa took place from 25 to 28 July at the UNEP headquarters in Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya. The conference had three components: a Training Session (25 & 26 July), a Policy Session (26 & 27 July) and a Ministerial Session (28 July). The Conference was jointly organised by the World Bank, the Swedish Environment Institute, the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Air Pollution Information Network for Africa, and UNEP.

For more information about the conference, please go to [http://www.unep.org/dpdl/urban\\_environment/Events](http://www.unep.org/dpdl/urban_environment/Events),  
[http://www.unep.org/dpdl/urban\\_environment/pdfs/BAQBrief.pdf](http://www.unep.org/dpdl/urban_environment/pdfs/BAQBrief.pdf)

### **(16) UNEP International Children's Conference for the Environment (ICC) in Malaysia**

Children from more than 50 countries are expected to take part in the Fifth UNEP International Children's Conference (ICC) in Putrajaya, Malaysia from 26-30 August 2006. These children are active in their schools or communities, belong to environmental clubs and are involved in environmental projects. They will participate at the event accompanied by chaperones. The Conference aims to increase children's understanding of environmental issues and of the most up-to-date technology. It provides an opportunity to build new and lasting friendships between children from different countries. A number of workshops, field trips and entertainment activities have been incorporated into the programme. The Conference will climax with a list of environmental challenges to world leaders and the United Nations. The children will also develop personal commitments which they will pursue when they return home.

For more information, please go to <http://www.unep.org/tunza/children/Events/ICC-2006/>

### **(17) Children's Environmental Health Workshop in the Cordillera Autonomous Region of the Philippines**

A workshop was organized by the Department of Health Cordillera Autonomous Regional Office together with the Philippine Society of Clinical and Occupational Toxicology, Inc and the Bureau of Fire Protection in cooperation with the University of the Philippines, College of Medicine, Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology. It took place from July 31 to August 2, 2006. The participants, who came mainly from the six provinces and one of the major cities of the region (Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Kalinga, Ifugao, Mountain Province and Baguio City), were doctors, nurses, engineers and policy-makers. The main trainers included Dr. Irma Makalinao for children's vulnerabilities and their unique exposures and Major Jose Embang from the Bureau of Fire Protection, who talked about emergency response for hazardous chemicals with special attention on how to respond to children in complex situations. In the top five causes of neonatal mortality in the region, prematurity ranks first along with respiratory tract infection and congenital anomalies. For leading causes of morbidity among children under 5 respiratory tract infection ranks first.

For more information, please contact [docirma@mydestiny.net](mailto:docirma@mydestiny.net)

### **(18) Thematic Workshop on Governance, Civil Society Participation and Strengthening Partnerships for Chemicals and Waste Management and SAICM Implementation**

The global “Thematic Workshop on Governance, Civil Society Participation and Strengthening Partnerships for Chemicals and Waste Management and SAICM Implementation” took place from 19-21 June 2006 in Geneva, Switzerland. The workshop was co-sponsored by UNITAR/IOMC with the support of the Government of Switzerland, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Secretariat of the Basel Convention. It served as a major preparatory event for national SAICM pilot projects in four countries to be supported by UNITAR in 2006- 2009 with resources from the Swiss Government. The workshop brought together around 90 representatives from developing countries, countries with economies in transition, industrialized countries, international organizations, industry, public interest, health and labour organizations, and research institutions.

For more information, please go to <http://www.unitar.org/cwg/tw/tw10.html>

### **(19) Course on "Existing and Emerging Toxic Risks in Children's Environment" in Chile**

This course is being organized in the context of the XII Congress of the Latin American Association of Toxicology and Chemical Safety and the XII Congress of the Latin American Toxicological Association (ALATOX) (21-22 August 2006, Santiago, Chile). WHO and PAHO are contributing to its organization and providing the training materials on children's environmental health from the WHO Training Package for the Health Sector. The course targets health professionals (toxicologists, pediatricians, family doctors, nurses, researchers, students and others), environmental health professionals and participants of the ALATOX congress. Its main objectives include: to disseminate new scientific knowledge on exposure to environmental toxicants during childhood/adolescence and during the critical windows of susceptibility, to analyze the main risks and to evaluate the tools and mechanisms available to protect children and communities from chemical/environmental exposures.

For more information, please go to [http://www.ritachile.cl/](http://www.ritachile.cl)  
Or contact [congreso\\_alatox@toxicologia.cl](mailto:congreso_alatox@toxicologia.cl)

### **(20) Vulnerability of the Fetus and the Infant to Ambient Pollutants and Reduced Food Intake in Pregnancy**

This symposium took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2006 in Krakow, Poland and was organized by the Chair of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine of the Jagiellonian University Medical College, the Polish Society for Environmental Epidemiology and the International Centre for Research in Biomedicine in Luxembourg. WHO (SDE/PHE) was a member of the organizing committee. The main objectives were to assess the weight of the evidence and discuss existing data on (i) the effects of prenatal and early postnatal exposure to ambient and indoor air pollutants, (ii) fetal response to changes in the intrauterine environment (e.g. due to reduced food intake, and (iii) the special fetal/childhood susceptibility to environmental pollutants. The

conference addressed also the issue of biomarkers and stressed the importance of prevention. Almost 100 professionals from Europe, the Americas and Africa participated at the event. They were clinicians, epidemiologists, toxicologists and public health officers from universities, research centres and public health agencies. This event was an excellent opportunity to learn about on-going research and interventions that a number of Eastern European countries are developing in the area of Children's Environmental Health. For more information, please go to <http://www.symposium.pl/konferencje/epidemiologia/>

### **(21) Workshop on Environmental Health at the 55th Congreso de la Asociación Española de Pediatría**

The objectives of the workshop, held on 3<sup>rd</sup> June at the Palacio de Congresos, Valencia (Spain), were to: i) increase the level of awareness about training in paediatric health and the environmental links; ii) emphasize the importance of developing the environmental health history for a patient as a useful tool to identify environmental exposure. First session - Paediatric Environmental Health in Spain and the Americas: Activities at the global level and tools developed by WHO in Children's Environmental Health were presented at the opening session of this workshop. This presentation was followed by an intervention on how to integrate environmental health in medical school curricula and provide adequate training, as well as on the establishment of the various pediatric environmental health specialty unit (PEHSU) in Spain and Argentina. The discussion outlined the various challenges of setting up PEHSU and proposals for ways forward were made. Second session: Pediatric Cancer and the Environment: This session focused on the particular links between the environmental exposure and pediatric cancer, including the links between exposure to pesticides and the rise in incidence of child leukemia, and the exposure to environmental tobacco-smoke and the effects on children. The discussion highlighted the importance of prevention and the various means of protecting children from harmful environmental exposure, as well as raise awareness of the activities developed by WHO (SDE/PHE) in this field.

### **(22) Train the Trainers Workshop in Children's Health and the Environment in Argentina**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> August 2006, the Argentinean Pediatrics Society organized in Buenos Aires the first "Train the Trainers Workshop on Children's Health and the Environment" in the context of an U.S Environmental Protection Agency USEPA-sponsored project on "Capacity-building on Children's Environmental Health among Health Professionals in Canada and Southern Cone countries: Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay". It was co-organized by the Asociación Argentina de Médicos por el Medio Ambiente – AAMMA and the International Society of Doctors for the Environment - ISDE. Selected training modules from the WHO Package for the Health Sector were used as teaching material.

For more information, please go to <http://www.aamma.org>

### **(23) Seminar on Pesticides and Children's Health: Exposure, Effects and Prevention in Farm Worker Children**

A seminar on Pesticides and Children's Health was organized by WHO on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2006. It was introduced by Dr. Maria Neira, Director of Public Health and Environment Department, and the presenter was Dr. Brenda Eskenazi, Professor of Maternal and Child Health and Epidemiology at the University of California, Berkeley and Director of an NIH/EPA Center of Excellence in Children's Environmental Health Research ("CHAMACOS" Project). The objective was to review the proven and suspected effects of low-level, chronic pesticide exposures on children's health and development. Examples were given on exposure to organophosphorous pesticides such as chlorpyrifos and malathion, that are widely used in agriculture and in the home, and on exposure to organochlorine pesticides such as dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane (DDT), that persist in the environment and are still being used in anti-malarial campaigns. The mechanisms of exposure of children were presented, as well as preliminary results demonstrating that neuro-developmental effects may be observed in small children. Some of the preventive and educational strategies to protect the population groups exposed were discussed.

#### **(24) Clean Up the World Weekend: 15th- 17th September 2006**

Clean Up the World is a community based environmental program that inspires and empowers individuals and communities from every corner of the globe to clean up, fix up and conserve their environment. Now in its 13th year, CUW, held in conjunction with UNEP, mobilises over 35 million volunteers from more than 100 countries annually, making it one of the largest community-based environmental campaigns in the world. The campaign brings together businesses, community groups, schools, governments and individuals in a range of activities and programs that positively improve local environments.

Clean Up the World Weekend is celebrated each year on the third weekend in September (15<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> September 2006). For more information, please visit the [Clean Up the World website](#)

#### **(25) World Breastfeeding Week: 1<sup>st</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> August**

The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) was formed in 1991 to act on the Innocenti Declaration (1990) to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. As part of its action plan to facilitate and strengthen social mobilization for breastfeeding, WABA envisioned a global unifying breastfeeding promotion strategy. A day dedicated to breastfeeding was suggested to be marked in the calendar of international events. The idea of a day's celebration was later turned into a week. This has become to be known as World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) celebrated every 1-7 August to commemorate the Innocenti Declaration. World Breastfeeding Week was first celebrated in 1992. Now it involves over 120 countries and is endorsed by UNICEF, WHO and FAO. The theme for World Breastfeeding Week 2006 is "Code Watch: 25 Years of Protecting Breastfeeding".

For more information, please go to <http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org/>

#### **(26) Awareness-raising Materials on Lead Poisoning**

The African Medical Research Council has joined efforts with the South African Department of Health to raise awareness on the hazards of lead poisoning. Some of the environment and health

information materials designed for the campaign (the designs for two posters, two fact sheets and a fridge magnet) are available at <http://www.mrc.ac.za/healthdevelop/materials.htm>

### **(27) Best Start Resource Centre: new display on environment and child health**

These resources are developed either independently by the Best Start Resource Centre or through collaborative efforts with other organizations and individuals. Materials range from fact sheets, brochures, decals, posters to program planning guides and reports.

Best Start Resource Centre has developed a new display on environment and child health. It measures 6 feet by 3 feet and fits on standard display boards. It rolls into a tube and is easy to ship. The display is available for loan, within Ontario, in either French or English.

For more information, please go to

<http://www.beststart.org/resources/index.html> (scroll down)

<http://www.meilleurdpart.org/resources/index.html> (scroll down)

### **(28) Activities of the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE) Latinamerica and Asociación Argentina de Médicos por el Medio Ambiente (AAMMA)**

The latest issue of the newsletter of AAMMA (Asociación Argentina de Médicos por el Medio Ambiente) highlights several training activities in children's environmental health that they are helping develop. On August 16<sup>th</sup> 2006, a one-year postgraduate course "Impact of environmental change on human health" will begin in Buenos Aires and will include field visits and case studies.

Moreover, a training workshop on children's environmental health and a round table on "Children's health and the environment in Argentina: current situation" will be organized by AAMMA, ISDE and the Argentinean Pediatrics Society as part of the events surrounding the 34<sup>th</sup> Argentinean Congress of Pediatrics (Buenos Aires, 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> October 2006). For more information, please go to <http://www.sap.org>

Other projects currently developed by AAMMA and partners include, among others, "Impact of Environmental Changes on the Health of the Children from the Southern Cone", where information will be gathered on children's environmental health in Argentina; "Capacity-building on Children's Environmental Health among Health professionals in Canada and Southern Cone countries: Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay", where over 37.000 health professionals should be trained in the area; and the project "Children's Health and the Environment: Project of intervention in the community" that encourages the development of intervention and prevention policies regarding children's environmental health.

For more information on these and other projects currently developed by AAMMA, please go to <http://www.aamma.org>

### **(29) Ecoclubs activities**

Ecoclubs is an international youth movement that promotes citizen participation. Ecoclubs are democratic civic organizations, composed of children and youth that interact with other community institutions to work towards the improvement in the quality of life of the population. In a joint effort with other institutions, their public awareness campaigns utilize participatory strategies searching for neighbours' involvement in the implementation of proposals that may be evaluated in a practical manner and that are characterized by their support. They organized several activities in many parts of the world, including, among others, the First Tri-national Meeting of "Sanitary frontiers" between Bolivia, Peru and Chile for prevention and control of vectors that took place on 15 to 17 June 2006 in Arica, Chile; the recent First International Workshop of the European Ecoclubs on 2 to 9 July in Mielno, Poland; the upcoming Workshops on Environmental Education in Central America, where innovative and artistic campaigns to raise community awareness will take place 7 to 9 September 2006 in Jalpan, State of Querétalo, Mexico; and the International Meeting of Ecoclubs in Agadir that will take place in September and aims at strengthening the ecological relationships between Africa and Latin America.

For more information on Ecoclubs and their activities, please go to <http://www.ecoclubes.org>

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## ARTICLES

### (1) AIR POLLUTION:

#### (a) Indoor air pollution

[Cancer Study Cites Hazards of Indoor Air for N.Y., L.A. Teens](#) Survey of students finds health risks for formaldehyde and dichlorobenzene in homes and schools. Teenagers in Los Angeles and New York City face a substantial cancer risk from breathing the air, largely because of toxic chemicals inside their homes and schools, a new scientific study shows. Marla Cone. *LA Times*. 22 June 2006

#### (b) Outdoor air pollution

[Exposures to Air Pollutants during Pregnancy and Preterm Delivery](#) The association between preterm delivery (PTD) and exposure to air pollutants has recently become a major concern. This study shows that relatively low concentrations of air pollution under current air quality standards during pregnancy may contribute to an increased risk of PTD. Jong-Han Leem et al. *EHP*. June 2006.

[Low-Level Ozone Exposure and Respiratory Symptoms in Infants](#) Young children may be particularly sensitive to O<sub>3</sub>, because lung development continues postnatally. At levels of ozone exposure near or below current U.S. EPA standards, infants are at increased risk of respiratory symptoms, particularly infants whose mothers have physician-diagnosed asthma. E.W Triche et al. *EHP*. June 2006.

[DENR teaches children the value of clean air](#) The EMB-DENR has adopted the strategy of making the children appreciate the value of clean air and how to help protect it. The activities may be integrated during events such as Philippine Environment Month in June, International Ozone Day on September 16 and the Philippine Clean Air Month in November. *PIA*, 7 June 2006.

[Study Links Air Pollutants With Autism](#) Children with autism disorders in the San Francisco Bay Area were 50% more likely to be born in neighborhoods with high amounts of several toxic air contaminants, particularly mercury. A mother's exposure to industrial air pollutants while pregnant might increase her child's risk of autism. Marla Cone. *LATimes*, 23 June 2006

[UN environmental chief calls for new partnerships to clear African urban smog](#) As the increasingly unbreathable atmosphere of cities in sub-Saharan Africa emerges as a key threat to the health, environment, economy and quality of life of millions of people, the head of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) today called for new partnerships to clear the air. *UN News Centre*, 26 July 2006

### **(c) Environmental Tobacco Smoke/Smoking**

[Secondhand Smoke: It's All Bad](#) The surgeon general says findings are 'indisputable': No level of exposure is safe, and the children of smokers are especially at risk. Recent results have also shown a clear link to sudden infant death syndrome. parents should protect the health of their children by stepping outside their homes before lighting up. T.H. Maugh II and E. Cline. *LA Times*, 28 June 2006.

[Trends in the Exposure of Nonsmokers in the U.S. Population to Secondhand Smoke: 1988-2002](#) Serum cotinine concentrations among nonsmokers in the U.S. population declined significantly during the 1990s. However, children and non-Hispanic blacks continue to show higher serum cotinine concentrations. They should be the focus of increased intervention efforts. J. Prikle et al. *EHP*, June 2006

[Coal Home Heating and Environmental Tobacco Smoke in Relation to Lower Respiratory Illness in Czech Children, from Birth to 3 Years of Age](#) A birth cohort was followed longitudinally for 3 years to see incidence of lower respiratory illness. Maternal smoking and coal home heating increased risk for LRI in the first 3 years of life, particularly in children not breast-fed. R.J Baker et al. *EHP*, July 2006.

### **(2) CHEMICALS: (a) General**

[Pollution in People: A Study of Toxic Chemicals in Washingtonians](#) Last year, ten Washington residents agreed to testing of their hair, blood, and urine for the presence of toxic chemicals as part of a study. This study's findings show that toxic chemicals which can cause cancer, learning problems, and infertility are likely already in all Washingtonians. *Toxic-Free Legacy Coalition Report*, May 2006.

[Polluted Children, Toxic Nation: A Report on Pollution in Canadian Families](#) [Polluted Children](#) Toxic Nation is the first Canadian study to test for harmful chemicals in children's bodies, and results show that Canadians are polluted regardless of where they live, work, play or go to school. In some cases, children had higher levels of chemicals than their parents. *Environmental Defence*. June 2006.

[Toxic cocktail found in children](#) [Study discovers wide exposure to host of pollutants](#) One of the findings: Children have pervasive exposures to pollutants, with higher concentrations of some contaminants than adults, particularly for chemicals used in many common consumer products. The average child carried a total of 23 different contaminants. M. Mittelstaedt. *The Globe and Mail*. 2 June 2006.

[Are plastic products coated in peril?](#) BPA is used to make many things, from tinted Nalgene bottles, to dental sealants for children's teeth. 130 papers have been published on the effects of low-dose exposures to BPA. More than 90 % of the government-backed studies noted adverse effects from BPA, but none of the 11 industry-backed ones. M. Mittelstaedt. *The Globe and Mail*. 2 June 2006.

[Potential Residential Exposure to Toxics Release Inventory Chemicals during Pregnancy and Childhood Brain Cancer](#) The aim of the study was to evaluate whether mothers of childhood brain cancer cases had greater potential residential exposure to Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) chemicals than control mothers during pregnancy. Further studies are needed. H.S. Choi. *EHP*. July 2006.

[Are FEMA trailers 'toxic tin cans'?](#) Even as they staved off the elements, the thousands of travel trailers that the Federal Emergency Management Agency purchased after Katrina to house hurricane victims, were exposing its inhabitants to formaldehyde gas, which is considered a human carcinogen. A pediatrician said he noticed health problems among his patients living in the trailers. *MSNBC*. 24 July 2006.

## **(b) Lead**

[Conservation Council of New Brunswick News Release](#) This exposé traces a 40-year trail of government deceit and neglect concerning the contamination of Belledune, New Brunswick by a lead smelter. A 2005 provincial health study revealed that the community had a high death and cancer rate compared to other parts of the province. *Conservation Council of New Brunswick*. 15 June 2006.

[FDA Urges Producers to Stop Making Lead-Tainted Vinyl Lunchboxes](#) Agency warns manufacturers that vinyl lunchboxes may leach lead into food, posing health risks to children. FDA's letter to manufacturers states that any lead on the surface of a lunchbox lining can be expected to contaminate food and would therefore be a prohibited food additive. *CEHCA*. 18 July 2006

## **(c) Pesticides**

[In Utero Exposure to Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane \(DDT\) and Dichlorodipenyldichloroethylene \(DDE\) and Neurodevelopment Among Young Mexican American Children.](#) Prenatal exposure to DDT, and to a lesser extent DDE, was associated with neurodevelopmental delays during early childhood, although breastfeeding was beneficial. Brenda Eskenazi. *Pediatrics*. 1 July 2006.

[Metabolic stress disinfection and disinfestation \(MSDD\): a new, non-thermal, residue-free process for fresh agricultural products](#) It can be a single alternative to post-harvest pesticides for disinfection and a likely alternative to methyl bromide fumigation or to irradiation for the post-harvest control of arthropods. M.C Lagunas-Solar et al. *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*. July 2006.

[Organophosphate Pesticide Exposure and Work in Pome Fruit: Evidence for the Take-Home Pesticide Pathway](#) Children living in households with pome-fruit workers were found to have higher concentrations of urinary dimethyl metabolites than did children of non-pome-fruit workers. Pesticides are tracked into homes of workers, where children are exposed. G.D Coronado et al. *EHP*. July 2006.

[Persistent Pesticides in Human Breast Milk and Cryptorchidism](#) Studies show that birth prevalence of cryptorchidism may have increased in some regions The association between congenital cryptorchidism and some persistent pesticides in breast milk as a proxy for maternal exposure suggests that testicular descent in the fetus may be adversely affected. I.N Damgaard. *EHP*. July 2006.

[DDT returns to battle malaria in Africa](#) Controlled indoor spraying of the infamous pesticide DDT is poised to make a comeback in countries that have tried and failed to do without it in the battle against malaria, according to a special news feature in the journal Nature Medicine. Today, malaria kills as many as 1 million people each year, 90 % of them in sub-Saharan Africa. *Reuters Health*. 31 July 2006.

#### **(d) Mercury**

[Residential Mercury Spills from Gas Regulators](#) Many older homes are equipped with mercury-containing gas regulators that reduce the pressure of natural gas in the mains to the low pressure used in home gas piping. Removal of these regulators can result in elemental mercury spills inside the home. Outbreaks of mercury poisoning have occurred, mostly in children. D. Hryhorczuk et al. *EHP*. June 2006.

[Ground-breaking Study of Imported Tuna Reveals FDA/EPA Recommendations for Light Canned Tuna Consumption Not Protective Enough](#) Some imported light canned tuna contains nearly 10 times the allowable dose of mercury for children. The advice is not protective for many pregnant women and children, especially those eating seafood from Latin America. *Defenders of Wildlife*. 5 July 2006.

### **(3) WATER AND SANITATION**

[UNICEF helps Viet Nam improve rural water supply, sanitation](#) It is estimated that nearly 17 million children have no safe water and 20 million children do not have access to proper sanitation. UNICEF has joined 13 other international organizations in a unique partnership to improve water supply, sanitation and hygiene for rural communities and schools in Viet Nam. *UN News Centre*. 25 May 2006

[Development of a Health-Protective Drinking Water Level for Perchlorate](#) Animal and human toxicity data for perchlorate was evaluated to develop a health-protective drinking water level (PHG) for the chemical. A PHG of 6 ppb was calculated by using an uncertainty factor of 10, a relative source contribution of 60%, and exposure assumptions specific to pregnant women. D. Ting et al. *EHP*. June 2006.

[Jordan: Environmentalists warn of rising pollution in Zarqa River](#) Farmers on the banks of the Zarqa River are irrigating their crops with polluted water, threatening the wellbeing of thousands of citizens. If they had access to clean water, lives of many children, particularly prone to catching the diseases through direct contact with water, could be saved. *Child Rights Information Network*. 7 June 2006.

[Annual drive to prevent diarrhoeal deaths gets underway in Afghanistan](#) Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health's two month campaign, reaching two million people, aims to reduce risks from killer disease It is backed by UNICEF and aims to safeguard the health and hygiene in a country where nearly a quarter of deaths amongst children under five are the result of diarrhoea. *UNICEF*. 19 June 2006

[A Clear Solution for Dirty Water](#) PUR™ is a modest-looking packet of powder that quickly turns turbid, health-threatening water into the kind of liquid most of us would pay to drink out of a bottle. Added to its humanitarian value in disaster relief, is also being marketed in many other parts of the world where large portions of the population lack reliable water treatment. T. Lougheed. *EHP*. July 2006.

[Lawmakers, environment officials gather over water problems](#) Lawmakers and environment officials in Amran have recently gathered over the worsening water problems. It was the first major meeting over the water shortage problems after new studies estimated the water withdrawal from underground reservoirs at 70 million cubic meters per year. Ameen Abduljalil. *Yemen Observer*. 4 July 2006.

[The Dow Chemical Company Announces Commitment to Clean Water Solutions at the United Nations](#) CEO of The Dow Chemical Company committed the Company's resources to developing new solutions for creating safer, more sustainable water supplies for communities around the world. More than 4,500 children die each day because of lack of clean water. *CSRwire*. 25 July 2006.

#### **(4) GLOBAL CHANGE**

[Toepfer Warns Climate Change Could Destabilise World](#). Global warming is hitting the poor the hardest and climate change could cause worldwide destabilisation if solutions are not found, one of the world's leading environmentalists said. "The poorest of the poor are suffering most. Our children and their children will suffer the most" Erik Kirschbaum. *Environmental News Network*. 29 May 2006

[Global warming worry flows from Arctic ice to tropical waters](#) The melting polar ice is elevating sea levels. Over the past two decades, rising sea levels have repeatedly flooded the village and spoiled its water supplies. "Skin infections, a result of using contaminated water, are common among children," says Vanuatu's climate-change adviser. P. Wiseman and C.G. Soriano. *USA Today*. 31 May 2006.

[Why deserts will inherit the Earth](#) Few places on Earth are less hospitable, less suited to human life than the Sahara desert. Yet as global warming accelerates and the prospect of profound climate change looms large, we must face the fact that vast areas of our planet will be rendered equally barren. In his new book, Fred Pearce explains how nature can turn paradise into wilderness. *MediaLens*. 5 June 2006.

## **(5) MISCELLANEOUS (a) General**

[Heavy metals may be implicated in autism](#) Urine samples from hundreds of French children have yielded evidence for a link between autism and exposure to heavy metals. If validated, the findings might mean some cases of autism could be treated with drugs that purge the body of heavy metals. The researchers restored porphyrin concentrations to normal in 12 children. *New Scientist*. 30 May 2006.

[New environment chief targets poverty](#) "What I became interested in was development and poverty - the realization that for the poorest of the poor, stopping environmental degradation and having the ability to manage it properly is the easiest way for them to work their way out of poverty." Achim Steiner, incoming head of the UN Environment Programme. Richard Black. *BBC News*. 12 June 2006.

[Slum dwellers in developing countries may be worse off than in rural areas: UN report](#). "There are two cities within one city – one ... that has all the benefits of urban living, and the other part, the slums and squatter settlements" said Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT. Child malnutrition is three to four times higher in slums than in non slum-areas. *UN News Centre*. 16 June 2006.

[Over 13 million deaths each year due to preventable environmental causes – UN report](#) "These estimates are the best to date," Acting WHO Director-General Anders Nordström said. "This new report shows how specific diseases and injuries are influenced by environmental risks" the Director of WHO's Department for Public Health and Environment, Maria Neira said. *UN News Centre*. 16 June 2006.

[One-Quarter of Disease Tied to Environment, United Nations Finds](#) WHO reports 4 million children die each year from environmental exposures. Exposures to harmful substances in the environment cause as much as 24 percent of global disease. The main diseases influenced by poor environments are diarrhea, respiratory infections, unintentional injuries and malaria. *USInfo*. 16 June 2006.

[WHO: 25% deaths a year due to killer environment](#) Tackling environmental risks could save up to four million lives a year, according to the report. Over 40% of deaths from malaria and an estimated 94% of deaths from diarrhoeal diseases, two of the world's biggest childhood killers, can be prevented through better environmental management. Kounteya Sinha. *Times of India*. 17 June 2006.

[The CHARGE Study: An Epidemiologic Investigation of Genetic and Environmental Factors Contributing to Autism](#) Causes and factors for autism are poorly understood. The CHARGE (Childhood Autism Risks from Genetics and Environment) study will address a wide spectrum of chemical and biologic exposures, susceptibility factors, and their interactions. I. Hertz-Picciotto. *EHP*. July 2006.

[UN commission adopts new limits on disease-causing contaminants in food](#) Measures to keep cancer-causing and other toxic contaminants, such as lead and cadmium, out of the human food chain have advanced a step further with the adoption of new limits by a United Nations commission that is the world's highest body on food standards. *UN News Centre*. 11 July 2006.

[Breastfeeding: A simple way to save young lives](#) In a developing country, a child who is breastfed is almost three times more likely to survive infancy than a child who is not breastfed. World Breastfeeding Week is observed in over 120 countries by UNICEF and its partners, including the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action and the World Health Organization. *UNICEF Press Centre*. 1 August 2006

## **(b) Americas**

[The Price of Pollution: Cost Estimates of Environment-Related Childhood Disease in Minnesota](#) is the first study to quantify economic impacts on Minnesota from childhood cases of asthma, learning and behavioral disorders, cancer, lead poisoning and birth defects attributable to environmental contaminants (according to a large body of scientific literature). *MCEA and IATP*. June 2006.

[Organophosphorus pesticide urinary metabolite levels of children in farmworker households in eastern North Carolina](#) Organophosphorus pesticide urinary metabolite levels in a sample of farmworker children in North Carolina are documented and compared to national reference data. Environment risk factors are delineated. T.A. Arcury et al. *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*. 27 June 2006.

[New act could ban dangerous pesticides](#). According to a new act, the federal Minister of Health of Canada is now obliged to initiate a special review of pesticides that have active ingredients banned by other member nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and

Development (OECD) due to health or environmental concerns. David Suzuki. *The Tillsonburg News*. Canada. 10 July 2006.

[Smog problems surge in Chile's capital](#) Chile's capital, home to some of Latin America's foulest air, is losing ground in its battle against pollution after hard-won gains in the 1990s. Public pressure for tougher anti-smog measures has mounted this year as the deterioration in air quality and as Santiago heads into another winter of hospital emergency rooms filled with coughing children. *CNN*. 11 July 2006.

[Going Green](#) With windmills, low-energy homes, new forms of recycling and fuel-efficient cars, Americans are taking conservation into their own hands. Agriculture is being reshaped by the growing demand for corn to produce ethanol—which can be blended with gasoline to stretch supplies, or can power on its own the growing number of "flex-fuel" cars. Jerry Adler. *Newsweek*. 17 July 2006.

[Green Schools Look to the Future](#) The Honduran government, backed by the business community, has introduced the "Green Schools" project to recover and preserve the main watersheds near Tegucigalpa. The one-year project was launched Jul. 14 in three of the capital's elementary schools. In it, children and youth between the ages of five and 18 will plant more than 2,000 trees. *Tierramérica*. 27 July 2006.

### (c) Asia

[China Warns of Toxic Baby Bottles](#) Chinese investigators have seized baby bottles made from recycled compact discs containing dangerous levels of the toxic chemical hydroxybenzene. Tests showed the bottles contained twice the permitted levels of hydroxybenzene, a chemical that dissolves in heated milk and can damage the liver and kidneys. *Environmental News Network*. 31 May, 2006

[Nepal's biogas initiative gets major funding boost](#) This project is bringing clean, efficient energy to rural communities in Nepal. It also involves attaching latrines to the biogas units to improve sanitation. Farmers will be able to use the residual material from the digesters as a fertilizer, and women and children will not have to collect firewood anymore. Arjun Adhikari. *OneWorld SouthAsia*. 24 May 2006.

[Pollution From Chinese Coal Casts a Global Shadow](#) One of China's lesser-known exports is a dangerous brew of soot, toxic chemicals and climate-changing gases from the smokestacks of coal-burning power plants. China is also the world's largest emitter of mercury, which has been linked to fetal and child development problems. Keith Bradsher and David Barboza. *The New York Times*. 11 June 2006.

[Afghanistan: UN calls on national, international forces to avert civilian casualties](#) With operations going on in southern Afghanistan, UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) spokesman said "We call on the security forces to do everything they can to ensure the safety and protection of local communities in district areas where operations are taking place". *UN News Centre*. 19 June 2006.

[Dengue fever raging across southern Vietnam](#) There's been a sharp increase in the number of children contracting dengue fever, many hospitalized in critical condition. Main reason was that most households used jars, tanks and basins to contain water, favorable conditions for mosquito reproduction. Also, hot weather accompanied by rains is to blame. *Thanh Nien News*. 21 June 2006.

[Chinese villages, poisoned by toxins, battle for justice](#) Tainted wells have spurred legal drive for cleanup, compensation. The acid seeped into the village's groundwater, poisoning the wells of hundreds of families. Children began to experience problems. Fluoride levels in the water are thousands of times higher than is considered safe. Kathleen McLaughlin. *The Christian Science Monitor*. 23 June 2006.

[Millions of Indians at risk from mercury poisoning study](#) Millions are at risk from the unregulated use of mercury in India, the world's biggest consumer after China. Mercury, sometimes called quicksilver, is found mainly mined in Europe. The heavy, silvery-white liquid metal is highly toxic, and exposure can damage the brain, nervous system and developing foetuses. *Gulfnews.com*. 24 June 2006.

[UNICEF rushes emergency supplies to Indonesian flood victims](#) UNICEF is airlifting emergency supplies of hygiene equipment and water containers to flood affected districts. "With 18 schools heavily damaged and another nine schools slightly damaged, most of them elementary, we have to also look closely at providing emergency educational support," UNICEF said. *UN News Centre*. 27 June 2006.

[Palestinian parliamentarian warns of severe public health and humanitarian disaster facing Gaza](#) Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, medical doctor, member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and head of the Palestinian National Initiative, today warned of the public health and humanitarian disaster facing the Gaza Strip. Water supplies and sewage system were critically affected *Ramallah online*. 30 June 2006.

[UN aid chief warns Gaza is on the verge of humanitarian crisis](#) Gaza is three days away from a deadly humanitarian crisis unless Israel promptly restores fuel and electricity to the densely populated area after its offensive to free an abducted soldier, the United Nations aid chief warned. In Gaza, children make up about half of the area's 1.4 million people. The Associated Press. *Haaretz*. 30 June 2006.

[Why China's galloping growth is of global concern](#) China will soon beat the US as the greatest polluter on earth. There is public bemusement that Hong Kong investors, who own 70,000 of the factories in Guangdong province, are prepared to contribute to the poisoning of their own children for the sake of a few cents saved on pollution-control measures. Victor Mallet. *The Australian*. 7 July 2006.

[UNICEF announces \\$150 million earthquake recovery plan](#) UNICEF will construct 500 schools and around 70 permanent rural health centres in areas devastated by Pakistan's October 2005 earthquake. "The rebuilding of schools and health centres is a highlight of our roadmap to

recovery in what many people have called the children's catastrophe," said UNICEF. [UNICEF Press Centre](#). 11 July 2006.

[Vietnam to clean dioxin hot spots](#) Vietnam will carry out detoxification of dioxin in several "hot spots," especially former US military bases that had stored chemical defoliants during the Vietnam War. A study on 47,893 Vietnamese veterans and families revealed that 2.95 % of children and 2.69 % of grandchildren of veterans exposed to dioxin suffered from birth defects. [Thanh Nien News](#). 19 July 2006.

[Fuel oil and fumes spill from power plant bombed by Israelis](#). Health problems are feared from the spill and from air pollution. The dark cloud over Beirut and the sea carries particulate matters that enter the respiratory system and cause different respiratory problems. Most vulnerable are children, pregnant women, the elderly and those with respiratory diseases. Rana Fil. [The Boston Globe](#). 28 July 2006.

#### **(d) Africa**

[Ethiopia: UNICEF Faces \\$43 Million Shortfall in Fighting Drought](#) UNICEF still needs nearly USD 43 million to respond to the urgent needs of millions of children and women in the drought-hit Horn of Africa. Some 200,000 of about one million children affected by the drought are estimated to suffer from acute malnutrition, outbreaks of diarrhea and water-borne diseases. [AllAfrica.com](#). 10 June 2006.

[Tanzanian Activist Speaks Out Against Spraying DDT for Malaria](#) Malaria is a devastating health problem in Africa. Unfortunately, some want to bring back widespread use of DDT for malaria control -- a "silver bullet" approach that saved lives in the 1950s and '60s but stopped working as mosquitoes became resistant to the pesticide said Jamidu Katima. [Beyond Pesticides](#). 14 June 2006.

[Kenya: Clean up the air we breathe](#). Nairobi has been picked as one of the world cities with very poor air quality due to pollution. A UN report says the burning of waste products and emission from motor vehicles have compounded the problem. The result is a low quality of life, which in turn leads to a shorter lifespan. Consequences of pollution are dire and affect all society. [AllAfrica.com](#). 1 August 2006.

[Hitting malaria where it hurts](#) Household and community responses in Africa Malaria is serious and can be fatal for children. Childhood can be a dangerous and vulnerable time. Current strategies to control malaria include getting people to sleep under insecticide treated nets (ITNs) and increasing access to fast and effective treatment of malaria cases. C. Jones. [Id21 insights](#). UK. 2 August 2006.

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