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ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS

Articles in this issue refer to air pollution inside the home and how it can affect the health of the child as well as that of the pregnant woman. Air pollution levels are alarming in Nepal's Kathmandu. In the U.S, nearly one child out of 3 lived with a smoking adult in 2004. In the chemicals section, articles deal with how chemicals can cause obesity and how dangerous chemicals are still found in children's goods. Lead in paint is still an issue for African communities and the subject of lead in lunchboxes is revisited. Regarding pesticides, an article in EHP explores a perinatal cohort in Mexico, DDE exposure and neurodevelopment. Also, a childcare centre in Australia was shut down after it was found it was built on an old pesticides site. In mercury-related issues, a new UN-backed voluntary programme seeks to curb toxic mercury pollution. The UN also marked World Water Day with calls for integrated management of the resource and two articles deal with perchlorate in water. Many articles this month refer to the warnings, including the UN's, regarding global warming and its health consequences.

In the Americas, Argentina suffers the impact of floods, toys in Alaska are recalled due to high lead levels and 1 in 50 children in the U.S has autism according to a new survey. Also, the whole American continent would be seriously affected by global change. In Asia, another arsenic hot spot was found in an area of Cambodia, where groundwater also contains high levels of manganese. In Karachi, industrial pollution is growing fast and toxic waste has killed 5 children. In Africa, Guinea worm disease persists in Savelugu, in Ghana and Nigeria suffers from high infant mortality and water-related diseases. Finally, Europe's children are regularly exposed to levels of pesticides in food that exceed safety limits.

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) Reproductive Health (c) Americas (d) Asia (e) Africa (f) Europe**

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). It aims to provide up-to-date information on relevant global, regional and national indicator activities.

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) WHO's photo and video contest, "Images of Health and Disability"

Finalists have been selected and now it's time for the public to vote and choose the winners of the 2007 Photo and Video Contest "Images of Health and Disability" with this year's special theme "Health and Environment". After reviewing all the entries, the contest jury selected 15 finalists in the colour photo category, followed by black & white and video entries with 10 finalists in each category, and digital with 5 finalists. The Jury selection criteria included artistic quality and creativity as well as relevance and power of message for this year's special theme highlighting health and environment, and the overarching contest theme of health and disability.

To cast your vote please visit either www.who.int/phe or click on <http://www.who.int/classifications/apps/icf/photocontest> For each picture/video please insert your rating from 1-10 with 1 as the lowest and 10 as the highest score. Public voting is only available for the pre-determined finalists. You can also send your comments on the picture or video by using the comments box next to the photo or video image. Online public voting is open from Friday, 23 March, until Monday, 30 April. In the final selection of winners, the public vote and the Jury's selection will each count fifty percent. The winners will be announced at

this year's World Health Assembly, 14-23 May 2007. Once the selection of winning entries has been completed, the winners will be notified via email at the contact information that was provided on the entry form.

WHO's [Department of Public Health and Environment](#) (PHE) partnered with the [International Classification and Functioning Disability and Health](#) (ICF) to launch this year's theme aimed at raising awareness on the importance of ensuring healthier and more enabling environments through powerful still and moving images, and videos.

(4) Environmental Health Criteria 237: Principles for Evaluating Health Risks in Children Associated with Exposure to Chemicals. WHO.

Scientific knowledge in recent years has demonstrated that children are a vulnerable population subgroup with special susceptibilities and unique exposures to environmental factors that have important implications for public health practices and risk assessment approaches. The heightened susceptibility of children derives primarily from the unique biological and physiological features that characterize the various stages of development from conception through adolescence, as well as, from certain behavioural characteristics and external factors that may result in increased exposure levels. This new volume in the Environmental Health Criteria (EHC) Series provides a systematic analysis of the scientific principles to be considered in assessing health risks in children; taking into account their unique susceptibilities. The terms “children” and “child” as used in this report include the stages of development from conception through adolescence. This new EHC builds on previous volumes addressing methodologies for assessing risks in children: EHC 30, “Principles for Evaluating Health Risks to Progeny Associated with Exposure to Chemicals During Pregnancy” (WHO, 1984) and EHC 59, “Principles for Evaluating Health Risks from Chemicals During Infancy and Early Childhood: The Need for a Special Approach” (WHO, 1986). The central focus of this volume [EHC 237](#) is on the “child” (developing embryo, fetus, infant, etc.) rather than on a specific environmental agent, target organ, or disease. Thus, it addresses the difficult task of integrating all what is known about both exposure information, toxicity data, and health outcome at different life stages, which is especially challenging when data are limited for particular life stages (e.g., during pregnancy). The book will be useful to public health officials, research and regulatory scientists, and risk assessors. To order the book in hard copy, please go to: <http://www.who.int/bookorders>

(5) Stop disaster game: UN children's video game

From raging wildfires, devastating floods and towering tsunamis to roaring hurricanes and cataclysmic earthquakes, children can now learn how to respond to and mitigate disasters through a new internet video game launched today by the United Nations, the latest in a series of such UN web tools. “Education is essential for reducing children risks to disasters,” UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) Director Salvano Briceño said: “Children are the future mayors, architects, builders, school teachers and citizens of tomorrow. If we teach them about disaster risk reduction from an early age, they will understand why it is vital to build houses, schools and hospitals in safe locations, to have early warning systems in place and reduce disasters,” he added of the game, which features in colourful panels various levels of play

in guarding against or mitigating the impact of an advancing wall of flames, waves and other hazards. Drought may soon be added to the menu.

The free project, "[Stop disaster game](#)", part of ISDR's campaign on education called "Disaster risk reduction starts at school, teaches youngsters how to build safer villages and cities against disasters." "Children will learn how the location and construction materials can make a difference when disaster strikes and how early warning systems, evacuation plans and education can save lives and livelihoods." UN experts believe that had such systems and plans existed at the time of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami scores of thousands of the more than 200,000 lives lost could have been saved.

Produced by Playerthree, an English company, and downloadable in less than three minutes, the game gives players different types of missions to accomplish within a specific budget and time limit before a simulated hurricane, earthquake, flood, tsunami or wildfire strikes. They have to choose between five scenarios with three levels of difficulty and the winners will be the ones who save more people and livelihoods.

(6) Green week: Lessons from the past, challenges for the future. Brussels, Belgium. 12-15 June 2007

Linking in with the festivities for the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, [Green Week 2007](#) will look back at 50 years of European environmental policy and will look at the future. Discussions will include reviewing past actions and identifying successes and failures, and looking at the challenges of the future as well as looking at what has been achieved. Green Week will provide a unique opportunity for debate, exchange of experience and best practice among non-governmental organizations, businesses, various levels of government and the public.

(7) Celebrate National Healthy Schools Day. 30 April 30 2007

Every child in every school community should have an environmentally safe and healthy school that is clean and in good repair. Schools in poor condition on the outside often have indoor environmental problems that affect children's health and learning. [Celebrate National Healthy Schools Day](#) is co-sponsored by Collaborative for High Performance Schools Building Green, Council of Educational Facility Planners-International, Green Seal, National School Plant Managers Association, Leaders of the Coalition for Healthier Schools and US EPA.

(8) CEHAPE Intergovernmental Midterm Review (IMR). Vienna, Austria. 13 to 15 June 2007

In accordance with the Budapest declaration, which was adopted at the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health in Budapest 2004, an [Intergovernmental Midterm Review](#) (IMR) will be held in Vienna on 13-15 June 2007. The IMR is hosted by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management together with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Health and Women. The aim of the meeting is that countries report back to WHO on the status of implementation of the Budapest Conference Declaration through the development of children's environment and health action plans (CEHAPE); the

progress achieved so far will be examined, and also the challenges still faced by Member States will be assessed. Another goal is to contribute to the development of the agenda of the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health that shall take place in 2009.

In parallel with the IMR, an NGO and youth meeting will be convened to insure that all stakeholders can report back on the implementation of commitments and express their concerns and suggestions towards the implementation of [CEHAPE](#).

(9) 10th International Congress on Combustion By-Products and their Health Effects. Ischia, Italy. 17-20 June 2007

Emissions from combustion sources continue to be a controversial environmental issue. The risks associated with the widespread use of combustion have increased our awareness of the emissions of dioxins, other organic pollutants, NO_x and SO_x, complex mixtures, metals, and fine particulate matter. The goal of this [10th International Congress on Combustion By-Products and their Health Effects](#) is to provide an international forum to discuss topics on the origins, fate, and health effects of combustion. This field has gained significant relevance to worldwide environmental policy, as risk-based programs increasingly rely on the ability of advanced scientific research to provide mechanistic, diagnostic, and analytical answers to complex problems concerning air toxic exposure.

The Congress proposes a forum for advanced learning through emphasis on internationally-known invited speakers, advanced scientific and engineering research presentations and an extensive poster session. This focus provides an extensive learning experience and knowledge exchange for all participants, but primarily for students, as special emphasis is placed on attracting abstracts and encouraging participation from graduate students. Other forums related to air pollution and combustion processes do not provide the specialty venue of combustion-derived air toxic pollutants from which student researchers can present and share their research while learning from other students as well as leading researchers in their field. Researchers and practitioners have the opportunity to interact and discuss recent developments and future goals in the control of combustion by-products and the effects of exposure on human and ecological health. Plenary speakers will present up to date research and reviews on combustion emissions and their health impacts.

(10) Training for European Paediatricians in children's environmental health. Murcia, Spain.

The Paediatric Environmental Health Unit of Murcia, Spain is looking for European paediatric residents interested in being trained in children's health and the environment. For more information, please go to www.pehsu.org or send an email to ortega@pehsu.org

(11) Stockholm Convention COP-3. Dakar, Senegal. 30 April to 4 May 2007

Third meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Stockholm Convention. Dakar, Senegal. 30 April to 4 May 2007. For more information, please go to http://www.pops.int/documents/meetings/cop_3/default.htm

(12) 4th International Conference on Children's Health and the Environment. Vienna, Austria. 10 to 12 June 2007

4th International Conference on Children's Health and the Environment. Vienna, Austria. 10 to 12 June 2007. For more information, please go to <http://www.inchesnetwork.net> or send an email to inches@umit.at

(13) Tunza International Youth Conference 2007. Leverkusen, Germany. 8 to 12 September 2007

Tunza International Youth Conference in Leverkusen, Germany. 8 to 12 September 2007. For more information on the Conference and to submit a nomination from your organization please go to <http://www.unep.org/tunza/youthconference>

(14) 14th International Symposium on Environmental Pollution and its Impact on Life in the Mediterranean Region with focus on Environment and Health. Seville, Spain. 10 to 14 October 2007

14th International Symposium on Environmental Pollution and its Impact on Life in the Mediterranean Region with focus on Environment and Health. Seville, Spain. 10 to 14 October 2007. For more information, please go to <http://www.mesaep.net/symp2007/first.html>

(15) WHO Training in Reproductive Environmental Health. Geneva, Switzerland. 26 February 2007 to 28 March 2007

The Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research (GFMER), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Association for Maternal and Neonatal Health (IAMANEH) have initiated a postgraduate research training programme on reproductive health. The 2007 training took place in WHO, Geneva, from 26 February 2007 to 28 March 2007. During a special session, environmental influences on pregnancy and perinatal health were addressed. The primary aim of this session was to acquaint trainees with the most recent knowledge about the environmental influences on pregnancy and perinatal health, facilitate a critical appraisal of the strength of the supporting scientific evidence, enable students to identify and address priority environmental influences and encourage students to consider these influences, both beneficial and negative, in their research methodology and scientific writing. 30 participants from different health backgrounds on reproductive health and sexual health and different origins attended. For more information on the training, please visit the webpage of the GFMER at www.gfmer.ch

(16) Environmental Health Is a VERB! Building Healthy Children. Houston, U.S. 16 March 2007

The third pediatric environmental health symposium, [Environmental Health Is a VERB!](#) Took place on 16 March 2007 at the Denton A. Cooley Auditorium, The Texas Heart Institute, St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital in Houston. It had a spectacular program this year, as well as several

related events, including a children's art exhibition, an area bus tour, a walking tour of the LEED-certified University of Texas School of Nursing and Student Community Center--one of the best examples of sustainable architecture in the U.S., and an acclaimed play, *Blood Diamonds* that explored the human and ethical dimensions of illness in communities potentially caused by exposure to environmental toxicants. The symposium was specifically designed to be very action oriented, encouraging each attendee to create and implement his or her own list of specific actions to help make communities healthier places for children.

(17) World Water Day 2007. 22 March 2007.

'Coping with Water Scarcity' was the theme for [World Water Day 2007](#), which is celebrated each year on 22 March. This year's theme highlighted the increasing significance of water scarcity worldwide and the need for increased integration and cooperation to ensure sustainable, efficient and equitable management of scarce water resources, both at international and local levels. Speaking at the World Water Day celebration at FAO Headquarters in Rome, FAO Director-General Dr Jacques Diouf called coping with water scarcity the "challenge of the 21st century".

The bulk of that challenge lies in finding more effective ways to conserve, use and protect the world's water resources. Global population is expected to reach 8.1 billion by 2030. To keep pace with the growing demand for food, 14 percent more freshwater will need to be withdrawn for agricultural purposes in the next 30 years. "As population grows and development needs call for increased allocations of water for cities, agriculture and industries, the pressure on water resources intensifies, leading to tensions, conflicts among users, and excessive strain on the environment," said Dr Diouf. Climate change has raised the stakes. Global warming has been blamed for more frequent droughts. Climate change has also intensified storms and flooding, which destroy crops, contaminate freshwater and damage the facilities used to store and carry that water. Smallholder farmers, who make up the majority of the world's rural poor, often occupy marginal lands and rely on rainfall to sustain their livelihoods, making them particularly vulnerable to climate variability.

In addition to the main World Water Day Ceremony at FAO Headquarters, hundreds of other celebrations, such as the march in Harare, Zimbabwe pictured above, took place across the globe.

(18) Playing It Safe: An Environmental Health Forum. Toronto, Canada. 23 March 2007

Ontario's Maternal, Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre and the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE) were pleased to co-host [Playing It Safe: An Environmental Health Forum](#), on Friday March 23, at the BMO Institute of Learning in Scarborough (Toronto). This event gave an opportunity to service providers working on health promotion initiatives to enhance the health of expectant and new parents, newborns and young children. In addition to presentations by keynote speaker, Dr. Lynn Marshall, delegates had the opportunity to attend 2 interactive workshops, a panel presentation and exhibitor displays. Concurrent sessions included: Environmental Risks: The Basics; Childproofing in Child Care Settings; Emerging Issues; Neurodevelopment and Endocrine Disruption; Pesticides: Health Impacts and Alternative Strategies; Climate Change, Air Quality and Asthma; Childproofing

Tips to Play it Safe; Consumer Products: You Are What You Buy; Children's Environmental Health and Policy Change.

(19) Workshop on Chemical Safety and Public Health. Santa Fé, Argentina. 23 March 2007

The workshop was intended for decision-makers, educators, health and environment professionals interested in a deeper knowledge on the links between chemical safety and health, specially children's environmental health. Organized by the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE), Asociación Argentina de Médicos por el Medio Ambiente (AAMMA), International Network on Children's Health, Environment and Safety (INCHES) and Unidad de Sustancias y Productos Químicos de la Secretaría de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sustentable de la Nación. For more information please go to <http://www.aamma.org>

(20) National Recommendations for Preconception Care: The Essential Role of the Family Physician. CDC

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have published national recommendations for improving preconception health and health care in response to unfavorable aspects of the health status of women and children in the United States. The publication explains that the national recommendations are part of a strategic plan for improving preconception health through the provision of clinical care as well as the promotion of changes in individual behaviors, health policy, and public health strategies. The concept of preconception care has been articulated for well over a decade but has not become part of the routine practice of family medicine. Because all women of reproductive age presenting to the primary care setting are candidates for preconception care, the essential and critical role of family physicians in the provision of preconception care is apparent. As a specialty, we are now challenged to devise ways to effectively translate the concept of preconception care into clinical reality. These were published in the January-February issue of the [Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine](#)

(21) EPA's 2007 Children's Environmental Health Awards and other EPA activities on children's environmental health

[EPA's 2007 Children's Environmental Health Awards](#). Applications for the 3rd annual Children's Environmental Health Excellence Awards are available, and applications are due June 15th. The award categories, open to all, domestic and international, are: Building Health Professional Capacity, Corporate Leader, Promoting Healthy School Environments, and Science Achievement.

National Children's Study. The National Children's Study is proposed to be the largest and longest study of children's health and development ever planned in the United States. It will look at how the environment influences the health and development of 100,000 children in 105 locations across the United States from before birth—and in some cases before conception—to age 21. Children included in the Study will proportionately represent the ethnic and economic diversity of the nation's children. Congress appropriated \$69 million for the National Children's Study in the FY 2007 budget signed by President Bush on February 16. On March 1, the

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development issued a request for proposals to award contracts to up to 20 new study centers. These centers will manage operations in up to a total of 30 communities or study sites across the United States. For more information about the Study or to join the National Children's Study listserv, please visit www.nationalchildrensstudy.gov

[Child-Specific Exposure Factors Handbook 2006](#) (External Review Draft). This draft is an update of the Child-Specific Exposure Factors Handbook 2002 interim final. The latest version reflects EPA's recommended set of childhood age groups identified in its recent "Guidance on Selecting Age Groups for Monitoring and Assessing Childhood Exposures to Environmental Contaminants". The Handbook provides a summary of statistical data on various exposure factors used in assessing children's exposures, including: drinking water consumption; soil ingestion and mouthing behavior; inhalation rates; dermal factors including skin surface area and soil adherence factors; consumption of retail and home-grown foods; breast milk intake; and activity pattern data.

[Guide to Considering Children's Health When Developing EPA Actions](#). This Guide is designed to help Agency staff involved in developing actions determine whether Executive Order 13045 or EPA's Children's Health Policy applies to an Agency action and, if so, how to implement the Executive Order and/or EPA's Policy. Since the issuance of the first EPA's Rule Writer's Guide to Executive Order 13045 in 1998, EPA has published several new guidance documents relating to risk assessment, regulatory policy and action development. The Guide was revised to reflect these new developments. In addition, this Guide integrates EPA's Policy on Children's Health with the Action Development Process, and provides an updated listing of additional guidance documents.

Protecting Children from Environmental Health Risks in the Next Decade. 2007 marks the 10th Anniversary of Executive Order 13045 - "Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks." The Order requires each federal agency to identify and evaluate environmental health and safety risks that may hinder children's health. A series of activities is being planned to recognize the significance of the anniversary—beginning with an Anniversary Event on April 26, 2007. The monthly Web Cast Series will provide an opportunity for individuals in the children's environmental health and allied fields to hear from the leading researchers and practitioners on a wide range of current children's environmental health topics. The first web cast, in May, will be on global climate change and children's environmental health. For more, see www.epa.gov/children

American Public Health Association. Grantees will present the results of their two year grants to build health professional capacity during a session at the 2007 annual meeting of the American Public Health Association in Washington DC in November. The innovative projects, unique collaborations and the lessons learned will be discussed at a session entitled "Children's Environmental Health: Toward Sustainable Understanding, Interventions, and Policies Worldwide". The panellists will represent projects of the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation, the National Center for Healthy Housing, the University of Massachusetts Lowell, Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility and the International Pediatric Association.

Schools Chemical Cleanout Campaign (SC3) National Launch and Recognition Ceremony. EPA and other federal organizations will be launching a national campaign that builds on successful local and state efforts to address chemical mismanagement in K-12 schools. EPA is teaming up with schools and industry to build a national network that will provide schools with access to technical expertise in their communities. EPA also is launching a web-based toolkit that helps schools responsibly manage chemicals by cleaning out outdated and unwanted chemicals and improving chemical management policies and practices. For more information contact Kristina Meson at meson.kristina@epa.gov

(22) Pan-European Children's Environment and Health: Best Practice Contest and Awards

A [contest](#) has been launched for the best projects in Pan-European Children's Environment and Health to share inspiring, innovative and concrete activities that have made a difference in improving children's environmental health across the 53 country that comprises the Pan European Region of the World Health Organization.

The contest, which is made possible thanks to the financial support of the Government of Austria aims to highlight some of the excellent projects that are helping to reduce the harm to children from environmental hazards, such as unsafe water, polluted air, injuries and chemicals. A fifth award will go to the best project managed by young people. The five awards of 1,000 Euros each will be presented to successful applicants, 15 of whom will be invited to come to Vienna where the high-level Intergovernmental Mid Term Review Conference will take place in June 2007. The contest and award for best practice in Pan-European Children's Environment and Health has been developed jointly by ISDE Austria, Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL), Eco-Forum and Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF). The deadline for participating in the contest is 27 April 2007.

(23) Belgian report on POPs in mother's milk

The project "[POPs in mother's milk](#)" deals with the implementation of the Stockholm Convention on POPs. It represents the Belgian contribution to the fourth round of the World Health Organization on this topic. It reflects the results of measures taken in order to reduce environmental pollution as well as contamination in the food chain. Results of the 2006 survey show that DDE is still present in breast milk more than 30 years after it was banned. According to the report of the project, prenatal exposure to DDE results in delays to the psychomotor development of the child.

(24) Report on chemicals risks and children's health

Commissioned by the Swedish Government, the Swedish Chemicals Agency (KEMI) announced an upcoming report presenting proposals for measures to reduce chemical health risks to children. For more information, please go to the [KEMI website](#)

(25) Child Labor

The purpose of this report published in January 2007, is to provide a detailed overview of the state of the recent empirical literature on why and how children work as well as the consequences of that work. [Child Labor](#), forthcoming in The Handbook of Development Economics Volume 4 is a survey of the child labor literature in economics aimed at graduate students interested in child labor.

ARTICLES

(1) AIR POLLUTION:

(a) Indoor air pollution

[Within- and Between-Home Variability in Indoor-Air Insecticide Levels during Pregnancy among an Inner-City Cohort from New York City](#) Residential insecticide use is common. Data is poor on levels indoors. Insecticides were persistent in the home with little variability in air concentrations and contributed to chronic maternal inhalation exposures during pregnancy. R. Whyatt. [EHP](#). March 2007.

[Air in the home could affect infant health](#) Compounds found in air in the home could pose more of a health risk to breast-fed babies than chemicals they are exposed to through their mother's milk, researchers in the United States said. They found that a nursing infant's exposure to gases known as VOCs from indoor air was 25-135-fold higher than from breast milk. [Reuters](#). 13 February 2007.

(b) Outdoor air pollution

[Northern haze too much for UN](#) The UN refugee agency and other international organisations based in Mae Hong Son province are evacuating officials and families with respiratory problems - and may evacuate entirely. Mae Hong Son municipality mayor, launched a campaign to urge residents to help solve haze pollution, which threatens the health of people. C. Satta. [Bangkok Post](#). 21 March 2007.

[Alarming Air Pollution](#) The quality of air in the Kathmandu valley has been deteriorating over the years. Air pollution in the bowl shaped valley poses severe health risks. Vehicular emissions are attributed to be the major cause for this. The number of vehicles plying on the capital roads are increasing every year. Something must be done to abate this trend. [The Rising Nepal](#). 6 February 2007.

[IOM: The Economics of Better Environmental Health](#) Over the past two decades, studies have strengthened the link between air pollution and specific respiratory ailments, yielding better valuations for the pollution-related costs of illness and pinpointing the benefits of environmental regulations. Work remains to be done in linking air pollution to other health outcomes. J. Gilbreath. EHP. February 2007

(c) Environmental Tobacco Smoke/Smoking

[Children Living with Adult Smokers, United States, 2004](#) Secondhand smoke is harmful to the health of the general population and particularly hazardous to children. Nearly 1 of every 3 children under 18 years lived in a family with at least one adult smoker. Likelihood of a child living with an adult smoker declined as family income and adult education levels increased. S. Machlin. MEPs. November 2006.

(2) CHEMICALS: (a) General

[NGOs argue for stricter EU pesticide curbs](#) NGOs made a renewed call for tighter EU controls on pesticides, particularly to protect vulnerable groups. Grandjean recently suggested the existence of a "silent epidemic" of neurodevelopmental problems in children linked to exposure to chemicals including pesticides. Pesticide manufacturers argued that evidence was misleading. WBCSD. 8 March 2007

[A Thousand Threats](#) Cancer-causing chemicals don't work alone, but in tandem. Scientists argue for increased vigilance. Childhood cancer, while still rare, is more common than in the past, and most cases occur in children with no known inherited risk of the disease. Exposure to minute amounts of hormones early in life can deform reproductive tracts, lower birth weight. D. Davis. MSNBC. 5 March 2007.

[Chemical exposure may cause obesity](#) Early exposure to chemicals in plastics and pesticides can make humans more prone to obesity, a University of Missouri researcher says. Certain environmental substances called endocrine-disrupting chemicals can change the functioning of a fetus' genes, altering a baby's metabolic system and predisposing him or her to obesity. Science Daily. 16 February 2007.

[Toxic Chemicals Banned From Children's Goods](#) Chemicals that can harm children's health will be banned from children's goods. The chemicals are said to be endocrine disrupters or likely to cause other health problems. The ministry would propose a bill to prevent certain chemicals from being used in products for children under 13 years old. B. Ji-sook. The Korea Times. 13 February 2007.

(b) Lead

[Lead in Paint: Three Decades Later and Still a Hazard for African Children?](#) We suggest that the African public health community strengthen their efforts to prevent lead poisoning in African children through a holistic approach that includes the promulgation and enforcement of

appropriate legislation as well as research to identify further sources of exposure to lead. A. Mathee. EHP. March 2007.

[Consumer Protection Agency Covered Up Risks from Lead in Children's Lunchboxes](#) CEH has tested hundreds of lunchboxes bought from store shelves and received from concerned parents, and has initiated legal action against the retailers and manufacturers of these products. CEH has created industry-wide reformulation of vinyl lunchboxes to eliminate lead threats. CEH. 18 February 2007

(c) Pesticides

[In Utero p,p'-DDE Exposure and Infant Neurodevelopment: A Perinatal Cohort in Mexico](#) : A critical window of exposure to DDE *in utero* may be the first trimester of the pregnancy, and psychomotor development is a target of this compound. Residues of DDT metabolites may present a risk of developmental delay for years after termination of DDT use. L. Torres-Sánchez. EHP. March 2007.

[Organic for infants](#) Organic food costs more, but sales are booming. It's not just for grown-ups - there's organic baby food, too. Baby food is usually made from condensed fruits and vegetables. This means that the pesticide residue can sometimes be concentrated as well. So you'll get higher levels than in regular food. Pesticides can pose a bigger risk for children than for adults. 9News. 19 February 2007.

[Childcare centre was on pesticides site](#) Western Australia is conducting a review of all its childcare centres after a centre was shut down after it was found to have been built on an old pesticides site. The Health Department will now test the site for pesticides and heavy metals and assess the risk to 70 or more children who were at the centre in Carlisle. N. Perpitch. News.com.au. 16 February 2007.

(d) Mercury

[Mercury Contamination of Fish Warrants Worldwide Public Warning](#) The health risks posed by mercury contaminated fish is sufficient to warrant issuing a worldwide warning to the public, especially children and women of childbearing age, to be careful the fish they eat. There is now scientific evidence of methylmercury's toxic health effects, particularly to the fetus. Science Daily. 12 March 2007.

[Separation of Risks and Benefits of Seafood Intake](#) Fish and seafood provide important nutrients but may also contain toxic contaminants, such as methylmercury. Adverse effects of methylmercury exposure from fish and seafood are likely to be underestimated by unadjusted results from observational studies, and the extent of this bias will be study dependent. E. Budtz-Jørgensen. EHP. March 2007.

[Mercury Use is a Hospital Management Issue](#) We don't use lead in medical devices or building materials in healthcare because we know it's toxic, causing neurological problems. We do,

however, still use mercury – a metal which has been accused of silently destroying IQ points in society by interfering with the mental development of young and unborn children. Health Care Without Harm. March 2007.

[New UN-backed voluntary programme seeks to curb toxic mercury pollution](#) Governments have two years to see whether a voluntary programme to reduce health and environmental threats from toxic mercury is working or if a legally-binding treaty is needed to curb the heavy metal linked with many medical problems, including neurological damage to babies. UN News Centre. 14 February 2007

(3) WATER AND SANITATION

[UN marks World Water Day with calls for integrated management of vital resource](#) Of the hundreds of millions of people currently facing water shortages an estimated 425 million are children. In many parts of the world women and children often walk long distances to fetch water for their families. Access to clean drinking water is critical for the health of children. UN News Centre. 22 March 2007.

[Evaluation of the U.S. EPA/OSWER Preliminary Remediation Goal for Perchlorate in Groundwater: Focus on Exposure to Nursing Infants](#) The OSWER PRG for perchlorate can be improved by considering infant exposures, by incorporating a relative source contribution, and by being responsive to any changes in the RfD resulting from the new CDC data. G. Ginsberg. EHP. March 2007.

[Fingerprinting perchlorate sources](#) A new technique identifies the origins of perchlorate even after microbes break it down. Perchlorate, found nearly everywhere, has become a fiery topic over the past few years. It occurs both naturally and as a residue from explosives and rocket fuel, interferes with thyroid function and is particularly dangerous to children's health. ES&T online. 28 February 2007.

[Lakeside towns in east Africa to benefit from UN scheme on water, sanitation](#) UN-HABITAT tasked with promoting environmentally sustainable housing has launched a joint project with Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda to improve the water and sanitation facilities of six towns by Lake Victoria. They will build public water kiosks and sanitation facilities for schools. UN News Centre. 9 February 2007

(4) GLOBAL CHANGE

[Draft of new international climate report warns of droughts, starvation, disease](#). Hundreds of millions of Africans and tens of millions of Latin Americans who now have water will be short of it in 20 years. By 2050, more than 1 billion people in Asia could face water shortages. By 2080, water shortages could threaten 1.1 billion to 3.2 billion people. AP. International Herald Tribune. 10 March 2007.

[It's not just about climate](#) By reducing pollution, destruction of habitats, introduction of alien species and overharvesting of wild species such as fish, we can address some of the key reasons

for the current rate of extinction. In doing so, we will also be making our children and grandchildren better able to adapt to the less stable climate they will, unfortunately, inherit. A. Djoghla. BBC News. 2 March 2007.

Global warming: enough to make you sick Rising temperatures are redistributing bacteria, insects and plants, exposing people to diseases they'd never encountered before. A report from the World Health Organization estimated that in 2000 about 154,000 deaths around the world could be attributed to disease outbreaks and other conditions sparked by climate change. J.Chong. LA Times. 25 February 2007.

On three continents UN agencies rush aid to hundreds of thousands of flood victims UN today stepped up aid to hundreds of thousands of flood victims on three continents: a \$9.2 million flash appeal for 350,000 Bolivians, rushing in health care and \$7.6 million in emergency funding for 142,000 Mozambicans, and sending food for 6,000 families in the Philippines. UN News Centre. 23 February 2007.

Heating planet 'makes children sick' Global warming will take a toll on children's health, according to a new report showing hospital admissions for fever soar as days get hotter. The new study found that temperature rises had a significant impact on the number of pre-schoolers presenting to emergency departments for fever and gastroenteritis. T. McLean. Herald Sun. 22 February 2007.

The turning point on global warming Insect-borne diseases will spike as tropical ecosystems expand; hotter air will exacerbate the pollution that sends children to the hospital with asthma attacks; food insecurity from shifting agricultural zones will spark border wars; and storms and coastal flooding from sea-level rise will cause mortality and dislocation J. McCain. Boston Globe. 13 February 2007.

UN warns of more natural disasters linked to global warming Global warming is likely to result in more typhoons and hurricanes and more severe droughts, a UN agency said, underlining the need for preparatory action by governments. In Bangladesh, communities switched to raising ducks rather than chickens, as the former can float in a flood. Agence France-Presse. Inquirer.net. 8 February 2007.

(5) MISCELLANEOUS (a) General

Are energy needs worth kids' health? Is our choice of energy generation increasing cancer risks for our children. Connections between radiation, gene mutation and cancer have been studied extensively for decades. Risk of cancer for females due to radioactive sources exceeds the risk for males by 37.5 percent and is significantly more pronounced in children. R. Becker. NC Times. 7 March 2007.

High levels of stress may physically scar a child's brain, a study suggests US scientists discovered a brain structure involved with memory and emotion had shrunk in children with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Experts already know a person's genes and environment

play a role, and that having PTSD as a child increases the risk of depression and anxiety in adulthood. [BBC News](#). 5 March 2007.

[Filling the Translation–Policy Gap](#) Formulating health policy without understanding the environment's influence on health can be compared to building an airplane without understanding physics. Focusing knowledge, efforts, and resources on solving environmental health and human disease problems, environmental health policy training would allow public health to soar. C. Portier. [EHP](#). March 2007.

[Kids Take 'Tears of Trees' to Kenya](#) A group of Malaysian schoolchildren was in Nairobi recently to discuss environmental awareness with students and leaders of other nations. After the group's performance, UNEP executive director Achim Steiner congratulated the group for its efforts and the message that it brought from Malaysia. H. Shazwin Azizan. [RedOrbit](#). 26 February 2007.

[Keep it Simple Science, The cause of those disorders and diseases that can't be found](#) Some of us are still carrying around chemicals long since banned. Our mothers may have passed some onto us and even the children of today may receive these toxins and others from their mothers. Then you can add the toxins that the children are exposed to in their life. A. Moses. [American Chronicle](#). 20 February 2007.

[National Children's Study Announces Plans to Expand Study and Begin Recruitment](#) The National Children's Study is moving forward and stepping up preparations to recruit eligible women and their families. The increased pace of Study preparations is possible because of a recent Congressional appropriation of funds for fiscal year 2007. [The National Children's Study](#). 16 February 2007.

[Environment Ministers Rise to the Challenge of Globalization and UN Reform](#) UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Forum Rediscovered Responsibility for Environmental Pillar of Sustainable Development. A programme to reduce health and environmental threats from toxic mercury pollution was agreed at the close of a gathering of environment ministers. [UNRIC](#). 14 February 2007.

[Study finds increase in mental illness amongst children](#) A new psychological study of modern children has found an alarming increase in the incidence of a number of mental illnesses. The Danish study of 700,000 children born in the 1990s found that the number of Tourette Syndrome cases had doubled, and there were three times as many kids diagnosed with ADD. E. Bourke. [PM](#). 7 February 2007.

(b) Reproductive health

[Can babies be protected from alcoholic moms?](#) Research suggests that sins of mothers won't inevitably be visited on children. Even if a pregnant woman drinks heavily it may be possible to offset some of the toxic effects on her baby's brain after she gives birth. Choline might be able to

"reduce some of the adverse behavioral effects of early alcohol exposure." C.Goldberg. Boston Globe. March 5 2007.

One Great Big Plastic Hassle Short-circuiting hormones can disturb everything from human development to reproduction and immunity. Even the tiniest hormone variation at certain critical points in fetal development can have an effect on a child's health. Pediatricians often talk to parents concerned by the accelerated rate of their daughters' sexual development. J.Akre. Common Ground. March 2007.

Exposure to Hexachlorobenzene during Pregnancy and Children's Social Behavior at 4 Years of Age Prenatal exposure to current concentrations of Hexachlorobenzene (HCB) in Spain is associated with a decrease in the behavioral competence at preschool ages. These results should be considered when evaluating the potential neurotoxicologic effects of HCB. N. Ribas-Fitó. EHP. March 2007.

Cryptorchidism and Maternal Alcohol Consumption during Pregnancy Regular alcohol intake during pregnancy appears to increase the risk of congenital cryptorchidism in boys. Counseling of pregnant women with regard to alcohol consumption should also consider this new finding. Cryptorchidism is a risk factor for testicular cancer and fertility problems. I. Damgaard. EHP. February 2007.

Exposure to Environmentally Relevant Doses of the Xenoestrogen Bisphenol-A Alters Development of the Fetal Mouse Mammary Gland Humans are routinely exposed to BPA that leaches from plastic consumer products. Alterations in mammary gland phenotypes observed at puberty and adulthood in perinatally exposed mice have their origins in fetal development. L.Vandenberg. Endocrinology. 2007.

(c) Americas

Americas Targeted By Global Warming From North To South Global warming will hit the Americas hard, generating more violent storms and heatwaves, rising sea levels and threatening native Inuit habitat in the north, while Latin America will face a heightened risk of water shortages, species extinction and even hunger, UN experts say in an upcoming report. M. Hood. Terradaily. 2 April 2007.

Argentina: Failing to Prepare for Foreseeable Floods Unusually heavy rainfall has once again highlighted the vulnerability of a vast area in eastern Argentina to the effects of climate change. The preliminary toll of the catastrophe is 12 deaths, tens of thousands of people evacuated, 3.5 million hectares of land under water, highways and roads flooded, and bridges down. M. Valente. IPS. 2 April 2007.

U.S. far ahead of Canada on lead contaminants Is Canada turning a blind eye to the impacts of lead exposure on the health of children? Despite the recent attention being paid to environmental issues, there is evidence indicating Canadian children are being ignored. Adverse effects of lead exposure in children include reduced intelligence, developmental delays. D. Boyd. Hamilton News. 14 March 2007.

[Toy on Alaska shelves recalled due to high lead levels](#) Consumer advocates said an increase in the levels of lead found in children's toys is alarming. The bans are leading to a call from the Consumer Product Safety Commission to ban all levels of lead in toys, no longer allowing even trace amounts. "Low" levels of lead can lower a child's IQ by 5 points. M. Downey. KTUU. Alaska. 14 March 2007.

[Environment Meets Health, Again](#) Recognizing the improvements that a children's health initiative could bring about, President Clinton ordered that all agencies develop strategies to improve the health of children, and mandated cabinet-level meetings to make it happen. After a cautious start, each agency recognized that it had large impacts on children's well-being. R. Jackson. Science. 9 March 2007.

[1 in 150 Children in U.S. Has Autism, New Survey Finds](#) Approximately one in every 150 children in the U.S. has autism or a closely related disorder, a figure higher than most recent estimates, according to a federal survey, the most thorough ever conducted. Trace amounts of mercury in childhood vaccines are behind the growing number of diagnoses. R. Weiss. Washington Post. 9 February 2007.

(d) Asia

[Urbanisation and the environment](#) UNEP believes that providing improved sanitation to the slums will protect freshwater resources and the sea into which all rivers flow, besides helping to save the lives of many of the thousands of children who die every day from preventable diseases associated with the lack of safe water and poor hygiene (Bangladesh). S.I. Reza. Financial Express. 23 February 2007.

[Disease warning as pollution rises](#) Bahrain and other Arab countries must do more to protect the environment or face the consequences as more people fall ill through pollution, a UNEP official warned. The deterioration of the environment in terms of water and air pollution and industrial development has a direct impact on the health of the population. G. Bew. Gulf Daily News. 21 February 2007.

[Another arsenic hot spot](#) High arsenic concentrations in shallow Cambodian groundwater wells could pose health risks for more than a million people. The contamination problem includes arsenic and manganese. Although arsenic's human health effects are clear, only recently have studies indicated an association between manganese and neurotoxic effects in children. ES&T. 14 February 2007.

[KARACHI: Industrial pollution growing fast](#) The speakers at a consultative meeting on industrial pollution expressed grave concern over the damage caused to citizens' health and the environment by industrial effluent and vowed to raise the issue at different fora. They said toxic waste had killed five children and seriously injured 20 others in recent incidents. Dawn. Pakistan. 12 February 2007.

[Environmental Recklessness Blamed for Jakarta Floods](#) About 60 percent of the Indonesian capital Jakarta is flooded following days of torrential rains. 50 people have died and 512,170 have been made homeless in the worst floods to hit Jakarta and surrounding areas in five years. Many developers have not paid enough attention to the ecological impact of projects. ENS. 12 February 2007.

(e) Africa

[Kenya: Sh2.7 Billion Set Aside for Waste Control](#) The Government has launched Sh2.7 billion plan to eliminate harmful industrial chemicals and persistent organic pollutants. In humans and animals, persistent organic pollutants accumulate in tissues with high lipid content and are passed on to children in the uterus and through breastfeeding. J. Ratemo. The East African Standard. 21 March 2007.

[Guinea worm disease persists in Ghana](#) Just one worm can discharge a million eggs. So hundreds of people using a dam can practice safe water use and one 3-year-old child can ruin the communal effort. Guinea worm does not kill its victims but debilitates them, at huge cost to communities already among the world's poorest in Ghana, specially in Savelugu. AP. The Dallas Morning News. 17 March 2007.

[Older, wiser but Ghana is less green at 50](#) The loss of the forests harms Ghana's ability to absorb damaging greenhouse gases while some tree and wildlife species have been lost as well. Drier weather this year has also led to power cuts, reducing water levels and hydroelectric power generation. Ghana turns 50 this month. While it may be older and wiser, it is also less green. O.Ryan. Reuters. 5 March 2007.

[The Water Crisis](#) UN documents show that 1.8 million children die from diarrhoea. 433 million school days are lost while almost 50 percent of people in developing countries are suffering at any given time from at least one health problem caused by lack of water. With high infant mortality, and water-related diseases, Nigeria needs to face another line of battle. B. Alade. Nigerian Tribune. 21 February 2007.

[Kenya: UNEP Calls for a Ban On High Sulphur Diesel](#) UNEP Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PCFV) says use of high sulphur diesel is contributing to environmental degradation. Emission of high levels of particulate matter and sulphur dioxide is detrimental to human health. PM is the main cause of bronchitis and respiratory problems in children. K. Senelwa. AllAfrica.com. 20 February 2007.

[South Africa Needs an International Environment for Sustainable Development](#) South Africa requires an international environment conducive for financing for sustainable development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Deputy Minister R. Mabudafhasi said. Children are hungry, their bodies stunted and deformed as a result of malnutrition. B. Mlangeni. BuaNews. AllAfrica. 6 February 2007.

(f) Europe

[Europe's children "paying the price" for current pesticide use](#) Rising rates of mental and behavioural disorders could be slowed by tighter EU pesticide regulation. Children are regularly exposed to levels of pesticides residues in food that exceed safety limits and to “cocktails” of different pesticides. No protection is currently available for children eating normal food. HEA/PANEurope. March 2007.