

Cholera poses a serious risk in conflict-hit eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

On 13 November, WHO and health partners launched an intensive operation to prevent and control an increase in the number of cholera cases, which have tripled in some areas to 150 a week, amid the recent escalation of violence in the eastern part of the DRC. Cholera is a water-borne bacterial disease, characterized by acute watery diarrhoea and vomiting, which can rapidly lead to death if untreated. It is mainly transmitted through contaminated water and food and is closely linked to inadequate sanitation. WHO has more than a dozen staff in the area, including epidemiologists, who are working to strengthen the reporting system for cholera and other potentially life-threatening diseases, including measles and malaria.

For latest updates visit <http://www.who.int/hac/crises/cod/en/index.html>

Moving health from the margins to the heart of the climate-change agenda

The 14th Conference of the Parties (COP 14) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will take place 1-12 December in Poznań, Poland. The conference is an important half-way mark in the two-year negotiating process to reach a post-2012 climate-change agreement in Copenhagen in 2009. WHO aims to turn the attention of policy-makers to some compelling evidence from the health sector and to ensure that the health implications of climate change are fully considered in the negotiations being carried out towards the 15th Conference of the Parties. WHO will raise awareness about health as one of the main neglected impacts of climate change, state clearly what we know about climate change and its health risks, and seek to establish what we still need to know to improve the effectiveness of actions.

Third international conference on children's health and the environment

Every year, the lives of four million children under 5 years – mostly in developing countries – could be saved by preventing the effects of exposure to unsafe water, polluted air and other environmental risk factors. In an effort to raise children's environmental health in the global political agenda and strengthen policies and protective measures, WHO and the Korean Ministry of Environment are joining efforts with partners in planning an international event: 300 health professionals and experts will gather from 7-10 June 2009 in Busan, Republic of Korea for the Third WHO International Conference on Children's Health and the Environment. The Conference aims to identify existing needs and new issues, and to translate research results and new knowledge into stronger policies and effective actions.

Global initiative on radiation safety in health-care settings

A global WHO initiative to mobilize the health sector towards safer use of radiation in medicine while preventing unnecessary medical radiation exposures will get underway mid-December. In addition to national institutions, collaboration is being expanded to involve international organizations, professional associations, scientific societies and academic institutions. The strategy will be consolidated at a Technical Meeting on the Global Initiative on Radiation Safety in Health-Care Settings, WHO headquarters, 15-17 December.

Sound management of chemicals: relieving the burden on public health through the Rotterdam Convention

Asbestos alone kills 90,000 people each year. The Rotterdam Convention -- a multi-lateral agreement to promote shared responsibilities in relation to importation of hazardous chemicals -- can support public health only if all relevant chemicals are included. Protecting human health should come before trade. Raising awareness about chemical incidents impacting on public health and health service delivery is key, as well as the importance of including chemicals such as chrysotile asbestos in the Convention.

Ministers and high level participants discussed implementation of the Rotterdam Convention at a meeting in Rome, 30-31 October.

visit: http://www.who.int/ipcs/capacity_building/stockholm_rotterdam/en/index.html

November 2008, Issue 4

Worldwide, 13 million deaths could be prevented every year by making our environments healthier.

Quote of the month

Obama promises action on climate change

"Let me also say a special word to the delegates from around the world who will gather at Poland next month: your work is vital to the planet. And once I take office, you can be sure that the United States will once again engage vigorously in these negotiations, and help lead the world toward a new era of global cooperation on climate change. Now is the time to confront this challenge once and for all. Delay is no longer an option. Denial is no longer an acceptable response. The stakes are too high. The consequences, too serious."

President-Elect Barack Obama
18 November, Washington

Upcoming Events

- 1-12 December, Poznań, Poland
The 14th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- 15-17 December, WHO Geneva, Technical Meeting on the Global Initiative on Radiation Safety in Health-Care Settings

Regular Features

- Links to specific news about different topics
- Recent Publications
- Links to our Health and Environment Regional Offices



Some Facts and Figures

Environmental factors influence 85 out of the 102 categories of diseases and injuries listed in the 2004 World Health Report.

Protecting health workers from needlestick injuries

To bolster efforts to protect health workers from needlestick injuries, experts from around the world met to develop consensus around the data needed to make recommendations for primary prevention and prophylaxis.

Among other things, the workshop agreed to recommend the implementation of surveillance systems where four categories of data elements should be collected and used locally by health and safety committees in the workplace for the purpose of prevention. In 2009, WHO will work with countries in AMRO, EURO, and EMRO regions to develop surveillance networks for benchmarking data.

The annual WHO Safe Injection Global Network (SIGN) took place in Moscow, Russia, 13-15 October. For further information visit www.injectionsafety.org

International symposium identifies cultural shifts and new tools to bring research closer to policy making

In preparation for the [Fifth European Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health](#) (Italy, 2009), an International Public Health Symposium on bridging the gap between science and policy was organized in Madrid, Spain, 20-22 October, where the most recent scientific evidence was presented. WHO/Europe, international scientists, policy-makers and other stakeholders agreed on new approaches and tools to bring research closer to the decision-making process. WHO can assist by acting as a broker of knowledge, facilitating dialogue between policy and science, and helping decision-makers in accessing the best international research and in building national capacity.

Visit: <http://www.euro.who.int/symposium2008>

Selected health topics from WHO's Public Health and Environment web-sites:

Indoor air pollution:

<http://www.who.int/indoorair/en/index.htm>

Outdoor air pollution

http://www.who.int/phe/health_topics/outdoorair_aqg/en/index.html

Electromagnetic fields

<http://www.who.int/peh-emf/en/index.html>

Chemical safety:

<http://www.who.int/ipcs/en/index.html>

Quantifying environmental health impacts:

http://www.who.int/quantifying_ehimpacts/en/index.html

For all WHO's environmental health topics visit:

http://www.who.int/phe/health_topics/en/

Regional Health and Environment Links

WHO Africa: www.afro.who.int/des/phe/index.html

WHO South-East Asia Region: www.searo.who.int/en/Section23.htm

WHO Western Pacific Region: www.wpro.who.int/environmental_health/

WHO Region of the Americas: www.paho.org/Selection.asp?

WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region: www.emro.who.int/ceha/

WHO European Region: www.euro.who.int/envhealth

Publications

For a copy of PHE publications, please visit.

PHE fact sheets available at

<http://www.who.int/phe/news/en/index.html>

Essential environmental health standards in health care

http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/hygiene/settings/ehs_hc/en/index.html

Safe water, better health

http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/publications/safer_water/en/index.html

Workers Health Salud trab. (Maracay) 2008, Ene-Jun., 16(1), 53-62 Spanish

http://www.iaesp.edu.ve/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=515&mode=view

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