

Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health (PHE)

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS, HEALTHY PEOPLE

PUBLISHED BY THE WHO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH (PHE)

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



UPCOMING EVENTS 2015

> 15–28 September

[UN General Assembly
\(UNGA 70\)](#)

> 28 Sept–2 October

[4th session of the
International Conference
on Chemicals
Management \(ICCM4\)](#)

> 11–13 October

[World Health Summit](#)

> 25–31 October

[International Lead
Poisoning Prevention
Week of Action](#)

> 13–14 November

[Live Earth Road to Paris](#)

> 19 November

[World Toilet Day](#)

> 30 Nov–11 December

[Conference of the Parties
to the United Nations
Framework Convention on
Climate Change \(COP21\)](#)

WHO strengthens focus on WASH to accelerate elimination of neglected tropical diseases

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently unveiled a [global plan to accelerate elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases \(NTDs\) by 2020](#). The new approach involves integrating water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services with four other public health interventions. Targeted WASH interventions are expected to bolster ongoing efforts to tackle 16 out of the 17 NTDs, which affect more than 1 billion of the world's poorest and most vulnerable populations. Over half a million lives are lost each year as a result of NTDs. Latest estimates indicate that more than 660 million people do not have access to improved water sources. Open defecation and lack of hygiene are important risk factors for the transmission of many NTDs. Besides advocating for basic WASH services, WHO uses four other key interventions to overcome the burden of NTDs: preventive chemotherapy; innovative and intensified disease management; vector control; and veterinary public health services. Prioritizing water and sanitation will address the determinants of many NTDs and support WHO's drive for equitable and sustainable universal health coverage.

The global plan was launched on 27 August as part of [World Water Week \(WWW\)](#) 2015 in Stockholm, Sweden. WHO was involved in many other events during Stockholm Water Week 2015.

WHO to call for urgent action to protect health from climate change

Climate change is the biggest threat to global health in the 21st century. In the run up to the climate change negotiations in Paris in December 2015, WHO plans to mobilize the health community to call for a strong and effective climate agreement that will protect health and save lives. Climate change will affect the health of people in all countries and health professionals are on the front line in dealing with the impacts of climate change. The most vulnerable populations are those that live in countries where the health sector already struggles to prevent, detect, control and treat diseases and health conditions that are highly sensitive to climate conditions, including malaria, malnutrition and diarrhoea. Climate change will highlight and exacerbate these weaknesses by bringing new pressures on public health, as a result of the greater frequency and intensity of the disease conditions in question. At the same time, many of the actions that need to be taken to address climate change will bring immediate and significant health benefits, for example by reducing the death toll from air pollution. The WHO Call to Action will be released in late September 2015.

Air pollution experts gather for WHO-hosted

Air pollution is the largest single environmental health risk, estimated to kill 1 in 8 people globally, due to heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease and cancer. At the second WHO meeting on the Global Platform on Air Quality and Health, scientists and policymakers further developed tools and methods needed to develop a data clearing-house to help countries and cities reduce exposure to air pollution, its associated burden of disease and more effectively tackle the sources of health-damaging air pollution. The 2015 World Health Assembly approved a [resolution](#) urging Member States to take preventive action to address the health impacts of air pollution. Building on the momentum created, the Global Platform on Air Quality and Health is working to advance research and policy development on both outdoor and household air pollution. The platform aims to establish a task force to improve methods of integrating air pollution data from satellite, ground monitoring and chemical models, and to further characterize air pollution sources such as transport, industry and agriculture. The new task force will also focus on household air pollution and on enhancing data collection on air pollution exposures resulting from cooking, heating and lighting in the home.



Tackling health inequalities by improving the quality of housing

The quality and environmental context of housing is increasingly considered as being one of the main dimensions of environmental inequality. Housing conditions are one of the mechanisms by which social and environmental inequality translates into health inequality. Based on the evidence available, WHO has scaled up activities to address health inequities due to substandard housing conditions and has been developing new *Housing and Health Guidelines*. First draft recommendations focus on crowding, housing accessibility and safety, thermal comfort (i.e. heat and cold), energy affordability and transport within the residential environment. Other housing-related topics, such as water, sanitation and air quality will also be addressed. The Guidelines will be finalized in the second quarter of 2016. The WHO Guideline Development Group met on 13–15 July in Morges, Switzerland. For more information, click [here](#).

Developmental origins of health and disease: Integrating environmental influences

As part of its efforts to encourage the growth of healthy children, WHO is identifying early avoidable environmental exposures during child development and feasible and sustainable interventions. Part of this work is focused on research gaps and the need for action on under-recognized and avoidable environmental exposures. A newly-published article on this topic, entitled *Developmental origins of health and disease: Integrating environmental influences*, can be read [here](#).

WHO survey on health sector priorities and sound chemicals management

The 4th session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management will take place from 28 September to 2 October 2015 in Geneva. The meeting will bring together stakeholders to identify remaining challenges and adopt strategic decisions to enable the international community to achieve the 2020 goal of sound management of chemicals in the context of the Strategic Approach to Chemicals Management (SAICM). The meeting will mark a major milestone as the final decision-making opportunity before 2020. To help capture health sector input, WHO has conducted an online survey among health-sector stakeholders to collect views on existing chemicals management priorities in the health sector. Responses were received from 51 countries and the results of the consultation will be considered by the conference. More information is available [here](#).

Facts and Figures:

WASH and NTDs

- Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is critical for prevention and care in 16 of the 17 neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) scheduled for intensified control or elimination by 2020. The strong linkage between WASH and NTDs means that progress against milestones on the eradication, elimination and control of several NTDs is highly dependent on enhanced collaboration and action on WASH.
- NTDs are prevalent in rural, vulnerable and marginalized populations, with the burden being highly concentrated among the poorest 40% – those same populations who have the least access to sustainable, adequate and affordable water supply and sanitation services and who are therefore heavily exposed to disease. This means that poor areas typically suffer the burden of multiple NTDs.

For more facts and figures click [here](#).

SELECTED HEALTH TOPICS FROM WHO'S PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT WEB SITES

[Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health \(PHE\) home page](#)

[Water sanitation and health](#)

[Air pollution and health](#)



REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT LINKS

[WHO Regional Office for Africa](#)

[WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia](#)

[WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific](#)

[WHO Regional Office for the Americas](#)

[WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean](#)

[WHO Regional Office for Europe](#)

NEW PUBLICATIONS

[Water, sanitation and hygiene for accelerating and sustaining progress on neglected tropical diseases: A global strategy \(2015\)](#)

[Progress on sanitation and drinking water: 2015 update and MDG assessment](#)

[Connecting global priorities: Biodiversity and human health](#)

[Joint WHO/WMO guidance on heatwave early warning systems](#)



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