

Flood response in Pakistan

The World Health Organization (WHO), health authorities and other partners, are operating 1200 mobile health teams in the flood-affected areas of Pakistan. They are delivering urgently needed services including primary health care to millions of people. The most frequent health conditions observed are acute diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections, skin diseases and suspected malaria. Laboratory-confirmed cases of *Vibrio cholera* o1 have been reported sporadically from a number of places in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Sindh and Punjab. With large numbers of acute diarrhoea cases being reported in flood-affected districts, WHO underscores the need to provide safe drinking water and appropriate hygiene and sanitation to prevent the spread of waterborne diseases. WHO is continuing its intense efforts to bridge the links between the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH) and health clusters, deploying specialists to ensure appropriate environmental health standards — particularly sanitation and water quality — exist in health-care facilities and temporary settlements for displaced people. Updates are issued in [the weekly epidemiological bulletin](#).

Second Inter-Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment in Africa

African Health and Environment Ministers will gather in Luanda, Angola, 23-26 November for the Second Inter-Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment. This landmark conference aims to sustain the political commitment made by Ministers at the Libreville Conference in 2008, to enhance intersectoral actions and mutual benefits for human health and the environment, as part of sustainable development in the African region. The conference will address progress made by countries in the implementation of the Libreville Declaration, identify country-level actions and agree on the continent's health and environment top priorities with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The four-day conference is expected to adopt a *Statement for Africa* on climate change and health for the 16th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Cancun, Mexico in December 2010. The first announcement is now available in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#).

Housing, climate change and health

Investments in housing and construction policies for improving the energy efficiency of buildings represent great potential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Buildings also have a major role in protecting people from extreme weather events that may result from climate change. For both these reasons, many countries are developing programmes to improve the energy efficiency of buildings; this is expected to contribute to economic recovery and become a key element in 'greening' the economy. WHO is convening a key workshop on housing, health and climate change to provide a health perspective. The practical guidance to proposed improvements in the built environment are to be enacted in response to climate change, including mitigation and adaptation measures, such as in energy efficiency. The meeting will also make recommendations about the need for a wider set of science-based guidance for healthy housing and buildings to be led by WHO. The workshop will be held 13-15 October, Geneva, Switzerland.

Stockholm World Water Week

Stockholm World Water Week 2010 marked the 20th anniversary of this international event. The conference was themed 'The Water Quality Challenge' and focused on integrated approaches in water quality management and the effectiveness of various regulatory, technical and socioeconomic measures. Many of the workshops and seminars during the week highlighted public health aspects such as preventive strategies, especially water safety and sanitation safety plans, and the need to better integrate health and sanitation into integrated water resources management. Recommendations included greater political commitment and an 'institutional revolution' supporting both human and ecosystem health and partnerships at all levels. Participants voted unanimously in favour of the *2010 Stockholm Statement*, which recognizes that water is at the core of achieving all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The statement urges the MDG Summit (on 20-22 September in New York) to 'fully recognize and act upon the fundamental roles of water resources, drinking water, sanitation and water for all'. Visit [www.worldwaterweek.org](#) for more information on the programme, presentations and outcomes.

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

Secretary Clinton Announces Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton announced the formation of the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, a new US\$50 million dollar public-private partnership to save lives, improve livelihoods, empower women and combat climate change by creating a thriving global market for clean and efficient household cooking solutions. Exposure to smoke from traditional stoves and open fires – the primary means of cooking and heating for three billion people in developing countries – causes almost 2 million deaths annually, with women and young children affected most. That is a life lost every 16 seconds. The Alliance, led by the United Nations Foundation, will bring together leading foundations, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, corporate leaders, governments and UN agencies to help overcome current barriers and stimulate a thriving global market for clean cookstoves. Cookstove smoke contributes to a range of chronic illnesses, and acute health impacts such as early childhood pneumonia, emphysema, lung cancer, bronchitis, cardiovascular disease and low birth weight. The event took place in New York, 21 September 2010. To learn more about the Alliance please visit [www.cleancookstoves.org](#). WHO flyer—*Towards clean household energy for all* [click here](#).

Upcoming events

11-15 October:

[Water: Crisis and Choices, Asian Development Bank and partners Conference, Manila, Philippines](#)

13-15 October:

Workshop on housing, health and climate change, Geneva, Switzerland

23-26 November:

2nd Inter-Ministerial Conference on Health and Environment, Angola

29 November-10 December:

[COP16, UN Climate Change Conference, Cancun, Mexico](#)

Facts and figures

Nearly half of the deaths among children under 5 from acute lower respiratory infections (ALRI) are due to indoor air pollution.

Nearly 2 million people die every year from household air pollution. Along with children, women are the most vulnerable. Of these deaths, 44% are due to ALRI in children, 54% from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and 2% from lung cancer.

'Energy poverty', including lack of access to electricity for at least 1.6 billion households (many of which are also those using solid fuels and traditional stoves), constrains opportunities for socioeconomic development.

[Towards clean household energy for all](#)

Are mobile phones detrimental to your health? WHO updates its research priorities for radiofrequency fields

Telecommunication technologies based on radiofrequency (RF) transmission are ubiquitous: radio, television, mobile phones and, more recently, WiFi. Increased exposure to RF fields has made its effects on human health a topic of concern for scientists and the general public. The new [WHO Research Agenda for Radio-frequency Fields](#) identifies specific research needs in basic science relevant to health risk assessment, as well as public concern and risk communication in meeting public health needs. The new research agenda identifies four priority action areas: (a) studies of RF electromagnetic field effects on children of different ages; (b) the effects of early-life and prenatal exposure on development and behaviour, and on ageing and neurodegenerative diseases (animal studies); (c) monitoring exposure levels for new and emerging RF technologies; and (d) addressing the concerns of the general public around mobile telephony, investigating risk communication formats and risk perception.

Children's environmental health: from knowledge to action

WHO estimates that up to 25% of the global burden of disease is due to preventable environmental exposures. Children are especially vulnerable, with increased exposure having more extreme consequences on them. An unborn child's health can also be affected because the environment can influence gene expression and organogenesis. The resulting burden of disease is unevenly distributed, with children in developing and low-income countries having the greatest exposure, while still having to cope with traditional threats, including lack of access to safe water, poor sanitation and hygiene, and infectious diseases. Emerging environmental exposures are greatly threatening children's health, including the effects of rapid globalisation, an upsurge in urbanisation, transboundary chemical transport, and unsustainable consumption. [Read the full article](#).

Selected health topics from WHO public health and environment pages

[Indoor air pollution](#)

[Children's environmental health](#)

[Electromagnetic fields](#)

[Millennium Development Goals \(MDGs\)](#)

[Water, sanitation and hygiene](#)

[Click here for all WHO public health and environment health topics](#)

Regional Public Health and Environment links

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[WHO Regional Office for the Americas](#)

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

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New publications

Flyer: [Towards clean household energy for all](#)

[Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Standards for Schools in Low-cost Settings](#) (French)

[Essential Environmental Health Standards in Health Care](#) (French)

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