

HECANET February 2005



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ARTICLES

As evidenced in the large number of articles contained in this month’s HECANET, children’s environmental health issues continue to receive prominent coverage. Quite some media attention was devoted to developments at the international level, most significantly, various relevant children’s environmental health issues addressed by UNEP’s Governing Council session (including mercury, lead, and infectious disease), and the entry into force of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. National legislation was also closely covered by the press, particularly in the US (“Clear Skies”, mercury emissions from coal-fired power stations), and the EU (proposed ban on mercury exports). A number of major studies were released this month, including: a study of New York City newborns found that prenatal exposure to air pollution can cause genetic changes that have been linked to cancer, a study linking children's respiratory problems with traffic pollution, the effects of diesel fumes, the impacts of mercury pollution on the health of US children and the US economy, flame retardants in food, rocket-fuel in breast-milk, using water-bugs to combat dengue fever, improved water and sanitation for health, and the link between environmental change and disease. Children’s environmental health issues in developing countries were also covered, including: deadly air in Hong Kong, forest-fire haze in South-East Asia, chemicals pollution in a South African river, childhood lead poisoning issues in Brazil, Peru, Tanzania and South Africa, mercury contamination in the Philippines, childhood pesticide poisoning in India and Chile, DDT use to combat malaria, and safe water supply and sanitation in the tsunami zone in South-East Asia and meeting basic needs in South America. Summaries of articles grouped under the following themes appear below, with links to their full texts:

- (1) AIR POLLUTION: (a) General (b) Indoor air pollution, (c) Outdoor air pollution**
- (2) CHEMICALS: (a) General, (b) Lead, (c) Pesticides, (d) Mercury (e) Fire retardants (f) Rocket Fuel**

(3) WATER AND SANITATION

(4) MISCELLANEOUS

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

The Healthy Environments for Children Alliance would like to thank all those who submitted proposals in response to the "Request for Applications" that was widely disseminated through networks and partners working in the area of children's environmental health. As a result of the process, which included pre-screening, internal and external review of all proposals prior to final decisions being taken, 16 projects will be supported in 13 countries throughout the world. Countries undertaking activities are the following: Central African Republic; Kenya; Rwanda; Uganda; Bolivia; Nicaragua; Pakistan; Yemen; Djibouti; India; Nepal; Mongolia; Samoa. Summaries of projects will be posted on the HECA website as well as results from project activities as these become available. For more information on these projects please contact the [HECA Secretariat](#).

(2) UNEP – Outcome of GC-23/GMEF related to children's environmental health

The [23rd Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum](#) (GC-23/GMEF), held 21-25 February 2005 at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, considered a number of issues of direct relevance to children's environmental health, particularly as it relates to: (i) chemicals - mercury, lead, cadmium and the development of a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM); (ii) water and sanitation and human settlements (in the context of preparations for UN General Assembly's high-level summit review of the UN Millennium Declaration in September 2005); and (iii) and new and re-emerging infectious diseases.

Chemicals: Under an expanded [mercury programme](#), Governments asked UNEP to conduct a study on the amounts of mercury being traded and supplied globally. Action is to be taken on improving the communication of the risks of mercury to vulnerable groups – these include

pregnant mothers whose babies may be at risk if they eat too much mercury-contaminated fish or marine mammals such as seals. Governments agreed to promote 'best available techniques' for reducing mercury emissions from chemical factories and other industrial sites. They agreed to develop partnerships to reduce mercury pollution with the first pilot projects to be in place by September. Likely partnerships include ones to reduce emissions of mercury from coal fired power stations, from chlor-alkali plants and from pollution linked with gold mining. Governments will make experts and information on environmentally-friendly techniques available to those countries and industries requesting assistance. UNEP has been asked to publicize the success of these partnerships through publicity campaigns and through a dedicated web site. Governments agreed to review the success of the new programme in two years time, to assess whether further action is needed and, if this is deemed so, review a wide range of options including the possibility of a legally binding treaty.

Progress was also made on two other heavy metals, with UNEP requested to conduct a global assessment of cadmium and lead transport. Governments want to better understand how the two heavy metals move through the atmosphere, seas and rivers in order to establish whether action at a global level is needed to address the health and environment effects. Cadmium, which is found in products such as batteries, is a known toxin linked with respiratory and gastro-intestinal problems and in acute cases, kidney and skeletal effects. Lead is linked with a variety of health problems including brain damage in young children and effects on the body's cardiovascular and reproductive systems.

Governments also urged further progress in the development and then implementation of the [Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management \(SAICM\)](#), as called for in the WSSD Plan of Implementation. UNEP was asked to make provision for activities to support developing countries and counties with economies in transition in implementing the SAICM, once adopted, taking into account the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building. The Bali Strategic Plan which was adopted at the GC-23/GMEF will help focus UNEP's work including support for developing countries on the national level in areas ranging from waste and data gathering to environment law and environmental health. It was noted that at a regional meeting in Nigeria in May 2004, African governments adopted a position on the SAICM, which emphasized that SAICM should, among other activities: Ensure that children and other vulnerable populations are protected from the risks of chemicals.

Water and sanitation and human settlements: Environment ministers and heads of delegations held a discussion on the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals within the context of gender and environment, and policy issues related to water, sanitation and human settlements. The Governing Council President's summary of the discussions will serve as a contribution to the summit meeting of the General Assembly on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The summary includes a section on water and sanitation which specifically acknowledges that "Millions die every year from water-borne diseases, which in some countries account for a high proportion of total illnesses. Environmentally unsustainable water use has a disproportionate impact on women and children, whose needs must be accorded the highest priority".

In the context of the Ministerial level discussions, Governments had been asked to submit summaries of innovative practices to reach the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation (JPOI). The US submitted information on its [Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units Network](#), which aim to reduce environmental health threats to children; improve access to expertise in pediatric environmental medicine and strengthen public health prevention capacity. The summary notes that this work could be replicated in other countries/regions. More information is available on the [initiative's web-site](#).

New and Re-emerging Diseases: UNEP's latest [Global Environment Outlook Year Book 2004/2005](#), launched at the UNEP GC-23/GMEF, devoted a section under 'Emerging Challenges—New Findings' to the emergence and re-emergence of infectious diseases, based on new research by some of the leading experts in the field. GEO notes that "Infectious diseases remain the leading cause of death in the world, accounting for about 15 million deaths per year – approximately 25 per cent of total global mortality. The impact is greatest in the developing world. In Africa and South Asia, infectious diseases are the underlying cause of two thirds of all deaths, killing mostly children and young adults".

The GEO Yearbook also devoted a chapter to 'Gender, Poverty and the Environment', which, *inter alia*, cited a 2002 report by WHO which ranked indoor air pollution, mainly from wood-fuel smoke, as the fourth largest health problem in developing countries. "It is estimated to kill 2 million women and children in developing countries every year and also causes respiratory and eye diseases". The chapter also addresses a number of other children's environmental health issues, including: the lack of clean water, which is "responsible for waterborne diseases among children – one of the major causes of child disease and mortality"; "Carrying heavy water jars over long distances during pregnancy can result in premature births, prolapsed uterus or back injuries"; "Poor nutritional levels can make people particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases, and age and gender may exacerbate this risk. Malaria, for example, is more likely to cause serious problems or death in young children or pregnant women. During pregnancy, it can cause severe anaemia, and it can also harm the foetus, increasing the chances of abortion, premature birth, stillbirth, intrauterine growth retardation and low infant birth weight. Malnutrition, persistent bouts of diarrhea from unclean water and intestinal worms in the mother can also retard the growth of the foetus by causing anaemia. Estimates attribute 20 per cent of maternal deaths in Africa and 23 per cent in Asia to anaemia during pregnancy".

In a decision taken by Governments at the GC-23/GMEF on 'Keeping the world environmental situation under review', they noted the importance of environmental management in controlling emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases and in that connection: (a) called upon Governments to promote cooperation between health and environmental authorities in order to control emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases; (b) and requested UNEP's Executive Director to keep the human health aspects of environmental change under review in cooperation with the scientific community and relevant international organizations, in particular the WHO.

(3) WHO-UNEP Health and Environmental Linkages Initiatives (HELI) and the WHO-led Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI)

The WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO) and the Centre for Environmental Health Activities (CEHA) in Amman (Jordan), is planning a Regional Consultation Workshop on HELI and CEHI in collaboration with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) 29-31 March 2005. The specific objectives of the workshop are: (i) Capacity building and training on environmental health risk assessment techniques (e.g. Risk assessment of the environmental burden of disease at national and local level); (ii) Promotion of incorporation of environment and health considerations into policy making on both national and regional levels; (iii) Capacity building of environment and health professionals, for identifying and responding to policy-makers needs for scientific information and decision-support tools in environment and health, and on monitoring the status of children environmental health; and (iv) Planning the expansion phase of HELI and CEHI within the EMRO region. For further information, please contact the [HELI Secretariat](#) or the [CEHI Secretariat](#).

(4) WHO-EURO European Centre for Environment and Health

Case studies of actions to improve children's health and environment: This project contributes to the implementation of the Children's Environment and Health Action Plan for Europe (CEHAPE), recently adopted by the member States of the WHO European Region at the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health (Budapest, 2004). The CEHAPE is meant to specifically address the environmental risk factors that most affect the health of European children. In particular, it calls for "ensuring the exchange of information, experience and best practices on relevant existing health and environmental measures and their implementation". It also calls for WHO Europe to "develop, collect and disseminate information on evidence-based interventions". To aid them in the implementation of the CEHAPE, Member States asked the WHO to develop a catalogue of case studies on actions to improve children's health and environment. This catalogue would enable sharing of knowledge about planning and implementation with other Member States that may want to carry out similar actions. A draft version of a Case Studies Summary Book was launched at a side event at the Budapest Conference and presented an initial collection of country experiences. This project will expand on previous work and will use the [Children's health and environment questionnaire](#) (CHEQ) as a mechanism to document and review actions and policies to support the implementation of the CEHAPE and corresponding child health initiatives. Upon receipt of the CHEQs, the case studies will be reviewed with the aim of incorporation into another policy instrument, the CEHAPE Table of child-specific Actions (ToA). The case studies will also be assembled in an updated publication to be widely disseminated. Whereas the CEHAPE Table of Actions will present countries with a "menu of actions" and their relevant evidence base, the CHE catalogue of country case studies will give member states an inventory of practical implementation experiences to encourage sharing of knowledge about planning and implementation of actions to improve children's health and environment. [Completed CHEQs/case studies](#) are requested by 18 March 2005. The CHEQ can be returned either as [an email-attachment](#) or by mail to: WHO Regional Office for Europe, European Centre for Environment and Health, Children's Health and Environment Programme, Via F. Crispi 10 – 00187 Rome, Italy.

"Implementing Environment and Health Information System in Europe: ENHIS", is a project co-financed by the EC DG Sanco and the partner institutions from 11 member states. Its objective is to establish a comprehensive information and knowledge system (ENHIS) that will generate and analyse environmental health information to support relevant policies in Europe, and focusing on

those addressing children. More information available on the project's [first technical meeting](#) (Bonn, Germany, 09-11 February 2005), work on [children's health and environment indicators](#), and the [Children's Health and Environment Action Plan for Europe](#) (CEHAPE).

(5) WHO-PAHO: Health and Environmental Ministerial Meeting of the Americas (HEMA)

The Health and Environmental Ministerial Meeting of the Americas (HEMA) will take place in Mar del Plata, Argentina, on June 18 and 19, 2005. Children's health and environment is likely to feature prominently on the agenda.

(6) UNEP - Children's World Summit for the Environment

UNEP and the Aichi Prefectural Government of Japan will host the first [Children's World Summit for the Environment](#) in Toyohashi and Toyota cities, Japan, from 26 to 29 July 2005. The Summit will bring together up to 1,000 children, aged 10 to 14 years, and adult chaperones to review the implications of environmental problems to their livelihood. The Summit will endeavour to increase children's understanding of environmental issues through the sharing of experiences and opinions and will provide an opportunity for them to collectively voice their concerns for the environment. It will also inspire them to initiate and implement community environmental projects and to remove ethnic barriers while creating new relationships that will last well beyond the Summit.

(7) International Network on Children's Health, Environment and Safety (INCHES)

The WHO Executive Board admitted [INCHES](#) into official relations with WHO. NGOs in official relations are invited to governing bodies and other intergovernmental conferences. INCHES can so bring forward more activities from network members. INCHES has presented a work-plan with activities for the coming years, such as making training modules for health care providers in addition to modules that WHO has produced. INCHES will be cooperating in organizing international conferences and workshops with WHO. INCHES will play a consultative role using those members of the INCHES network that can provide knowledge and expertise on certain fields in children's health and environment. INCHES will also play an active role in the HECA movement, which brings together many governmental and NGOs.

Call for fact-sheets: INCHES received quite a few fact-sheets or links to fact-sheets on the internet. These fact-sheets are mainly in English. INCHES is calling members to send their available fact-sheets in other languages to be added to the database. INCHES is calling all its members to send fact-sheets about any item on children's environmental health. They could be in any language, ranging from lead poisoning, asthma, allergies, chemical, ventilation at school, etc. INCHES is trying to build a very complete overview which we also share with the HECA network. Please [send an electronic version](#) or hard copy of the fact-sheets, as soon as possible, to the INCHES address: INCHES, P. O. Box 163, 6950 AD Dieren, the Netherlands.

(8) Pesticide Action Network

The pesticide Action Network Update Service (PANUPS) issued a [resource pointer on children's environmental health](#), with links to information on: Grassroots Environmental Education, Indicators to Improve Children's Environmental Health (a WHO report), 2nd Edition of Pediatric Environmental Health, and the School Pesticide Reform Coalition.

(9) Environmental Mural Mile - Art Miles Mural Project

On Earth Day 2005 (April 22) there will a gala unveiling of 660 Environmental Murals in Denver, Colorado, intended to break the Guinness Book of World Records for the longest painting in the world. The Environmental Mural Mile is one of 12 miles that are being created by the [Art Miles Mural Project](#) in support of the UNESCO Decade for the Culture of Peace and Non Violence Among Children of the World (2001-2010). To date over 1,300 murals have been painted by over 30,000 children and adults from over 100 countries, proving that environmental issues are high on the list of concerns for people worldwide. The City of Denver has initiated a positive instrumental supportive effort as a real Community Involvement effort with 140 schools and organizations creating environmental murals in preparation for the event and to have a visible presence. Those efforts can be seen by clicking on "Welcome Mural Teams" on the Art Miles Mural Project website. A full "how to", including curriculum and lesson plan that can be adapted by any school across the nation. Painters have honored Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai, Jacques, Philippe and Alexandra Cousteau, and John McConnell with incredible mural tributes. The Art Miles Mural Project is a 100% volunteer 501.c3 Non profit organization and welcomes donations of in-kind or other types of support. For further information please [contact the organizers](#).

ARTICLES

(1) AIR POLLUTION: (a) General

[Asthma On the Increase - Says WHO](#) Experts are struggling to understand why asthma rates world wide are on average, rising by 50% every decade. WHO outlined some of the strongest risk factors for asthma development as exposure, especially in infancy to indoor allergens. Even urbanisation appears to be correlated with an increase in asthma. Adeze Ojukwu. [Daily Champion](#), Lagos. 10 February 2005.

[Study finds asthma 'stabilising'](#) Childhood asthma may have stabilised for the first time in decades. The reason for this trend is still unclear. We mustn't be complacent as the UK has the highest prevalence of severe wheeze in children aged 13-14 years worldwide. "We suspect that there has been a change in some environmental factor... but further research will be needed." [BBC News](#). 24 February 2005.

(b) Indoor air pollution

[Fire Wood to Remain Main Source of Energy](#) Biomass energy will remain Uganda's source of energy in rural areas even if the government policy on Rural Electrification Programme succeeds. "The private sectors and NGOs are free to come up with new methods of reducing the indoor air pollution." Martin Luther Oketch. [The Monitor](#), Kampala. 24 February 2005.

[Breathe easy in the home](#) Pollution inside, where urban dwellers spend up to 90% of their time, can be worse than outside. Research in Britain followed 14,000 children from before birth - those from homes where air fresheners and aerosols were used often during pregnancy and early

childhood were more likely to have diarrhoea and earache. Wendy Champagne. Sydney Morning Herald. 24 February 2005.

Toxins in home continue to cause danger Most people feel safe in the privacy of their own home, yet lead, carbon monoxide, radon, asbestos and toxic molds can make their way into a home and cause harm to its inhabitants. Unborn babies, infants, young children and senior citizens are especially at risk. Sandra Orlett. Cox News Service. 2 February 2005.

Is your home a health hazard? The air inside a home, especially a new or remodeled one, can be more polluted than outside air and can sometimes endanger the health of its occupants. Spengler is helping to direct research in which volunteers wear air-sampling backpacks to measure contaminant levels in their homes, schools, and office environments. Chris Berdik. Boston Globe. 17 February 2005.

The colic connection Infant colic may afflict as many as 28% of US infant, yet the root causes remain a mystery. Researchers speculate that maternal smoking during or after pregnancy may result in gastrointestinal dysregulation and thus increase the risk of infant colic. "It is significant that colic might have an environmental basis". M. Nathaniel Mead. Environmental Health Perspectives. 2 February 2005.

Tobacco Treaty - a Groundbreaking Global Victory The first global public health treaty ever adopted - the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control - will enter into force. Once we clamp down and don't let the tobacco corporations promote addictive and deadly products in the way that they have, we're not going to see as many kids getting hooked. Gustavo Capdevila. IPS. 25 February 2005.

World anti-smoking pact in force A global treaty aimed at dissuading children from smoking and helping adults kick the habit came into force with the UN saying it could save millions of lives. WHO applauded the strong warnings on packages and the eventual ban on tobacco advertising and sponsorship laid down in the world's first international public health treaty. Reuters. CNN. 27 February 2005.

Anti-tobacco treaty labelled toothless A global anti-tobacco treaty came into force, but a leading expert said it needed strengthening fast. There are an estimated 1.2 billion smokers. WHO surveys show that smoking rates among 13- to 15-year-olds are about 20%, health officials fear a disease time bomb as the world's population grows. AP. Sydney Morning Herald. 28 February 2005.

Wood Stoves and Indoor Air Quality Burning any fuel in a home has potential impacts on indoor air quality due to the combustion pollutants that result from burning materials. There are severe health effects of exposure to these pollutants, and those most at risk are the elderly, infants, fetuses, and individuals with asthma, and other respiratory illnesses. Debbie Wilburn. Access North Georgia. 17 February 2005.

Flaster: Stand to fight school air quality Members of Stand for Children voted to embark on a campaign to monitor and improve indoor air quality in schools. "I feel it's incredibly important

to educate parents about these dangers that we can't even see. Some toxins are being linked to learning disabilities and obviously can affect kids' health." Ana Flaster. Lexington Minuteman, Massachusetts. 10 February 2005.

(c) Outdoor air pollution

[Mothers' Exposure to Air Pollutants and Chromosome Damage in Babies](#) A new study of 60 newborns in New York City reveals that exposure of expectant mothers to combustion-related urban air pollution may alter the structure of babies' chromosomes while in the womb. "This evidence that air pollutants can alter chromosomes in utero is troubling." Newswise. 15 February 2005.

[Study links prenatal exposure to pollutants to genetic changes in babies](#) A study of New York City newborns found that prenatal exposure to air pollution can cause genetic changes that have been linked to cancer. Researchers found about a 50 percent increase in the level of persistent genetic abnormalities in the infants who had the higher levels of exposure. Karen Matthews. AP. 16 February 2005.

[Auto and plant emissions linked to fetal harm](#) Air pollution from traffic and power plants seems to cause genetic changes - the kind linked to cancer - in developing fetuses, a federally funded study concluded. Babies whose mothers were exposed to higher pollution levels had 53% more aberrations in their chromosomes. [Registration required]. Seth Borenstein. Philadelphia Inquirer. 16 February 2005.

[Air Pollution Can Affect Fetal Development, Scientists Say](#) Exposure to urban air pollution can affect the chromosomes of a developing fetus, a new study suggests. Babies born to mothers exposed to high levels of urban air pollution appear to have a greater chance of chromosomal abnormalities than those whose mothers breathed cleaner air. Sarah Graham. Scientific American. 16 February 2005.

[Bad city air boosts kids' risk of cancer](#) Toxics spewed from tailpipes and factory smokestacks can damage the genes of fetuses in the womb, raising a child's risk of getting cancer later in life, a new study among New York City newborns shows. Rivka Bukowsky & Paul Shin. New York Daily News. 16 February 2005.

[Air Pollution Damages Babies in Womb -Study](#) Babies' DNA can be damaged even before they are born if their mothers breathe polluted air, according to a study published on Tuesday. "This is the first study to show that environmental exposures to specific combustion pollutants during pregnancy can result in chromosomal abnormalities in fetal tissues." Reuters UK. 25 February 2005.

[Cancer is Air 'Born'](#) The city's heavily polluted air can cause genetic abnormalities in babies that are linked to a higher risk of cancer — before they even leave the womb, according to a chilling new study. "Cancer is a disease of accumulated genetic damage, and this new finding shows this process can begin in utero." Marsha Kranes & Tatiana Deligiannakis. New York Post. 16 February 2005.

[Air pollution can damage babies' DNA](#) Prenatal exposure to air pollution can lead to genetic changes in babies which can be linked to increased risk of cancer, according to a US study. The study by Columbia University followed 60 newborns and their non-smoking mothers in low-income New York City neighborhoods. [China View](#). 15 February 2005.

[Pollution is linked to fetal harm](#) Exposure to air pollution, even in the womb, may be linked to genetic changes associated with an increased risk of cancer, researchers said. While the researchers cannot estimate the precise increase in cancer risk, she said, the findings underscore a need for government to take steps to protect children. [Registration required]. AP. [New York Times](#). 16 February 2005.

[Pollutant tied to genetic harm](#) The vulnerability of children to genetic damage from environmental pollutants demands policies be enacted to prevent cancer, scientists and environmentalists said yesterday. This follows publication of a study of 60 babies that links their prenatal exposure to an air pollutant to damages that can lead to cancer. Delthia Ricks. [Newsday](#), New York. 17 February 2005.

[Study links traffic, student ailments](#) The first study in the nation to link children's respiratory problems with traffic pollution found a 7 percent higher rate of asthma and bronchitis in children attending schools near busy roads and freeways. "This adds to the body of evidence that vehicle pollution has adverse health effects." [Registration required]. Denis Cuff. [Contra Costa Times](#), California 22 February 2005.

[The deadly air of Hong Kong](#) Smog from China kills 15,000 a year. One country, one foul environment. A previous study showing that 17,000 people are hospitalized every year because of air pollution-related ailments. "Some people say they don't want to come here because of their kids - asthma and all that." Martin Regg Cohn. [Toronto Star](#). 26 February 2005.

[Forest Fires Shroud SE Asian Cities in Haze](#) The haze is less severe than the thick blanket of forest-fire smoke that descended on the region in 1997 and 1998 and cost an estimated \$9 billion in damage to farming, tourism and transport. It has caused temporary closure of schools in Sumatra and prompted warnings of unhealthy levels of air pollution in several parts of Malaysia. [Reuters](#). 28 February 2005.

['Super-smog' warning](#) Chemicals in exhaust fumes react with pollen and other particles in the air, turning them into irritants capable of triggering asthma and respiratory illnesses. The findings will be of great concern to parents. With almost one and a half million children living with asthma, Britain has one of the highest rates in Europe. Mark Prigg. [Evening Standard](#), London. 10 February 2005.

[Group Warns of Health Risks From Diesel Emissions](#) Emissions from diesel engines will continue to kill thousands of Americans each year as newly introduced rules will take years to take full effect, according to a report. 13 million diesel engines in the US, including school buses, spew pollutants into the air. [Registration required]. Shankar Vedantam. [Washington Post](#). 23 February 2005.

[The Diesel Opportunity](#) Deadly effects of diesel fumes came into focus as it was estimated that they kill about 21,000 U.S. citizens per year. Diesel soot induces allergic reactions, not limited to asthma, causing children to miss thousands of school-days - a primary cause of school dropout, consequent low self-esteem, and subsequent life-failure. Rachel's Environment & Health News. 24 February 2005.

[Enviro group: diesel fuel kills 20,000 yearly](#) Over 20,000 Americans die prematurely each year as the result of illnesses triggered by pollution from diesel engines. There are 13 million diesel engines in the US, including 800,000 school buses. Cleaning up diesel engines would save an estimated 100,000 lives between now and 2030, the report said. Joan Lowy. Scripps Howard News Service. 23 February 2005.

[Diesel Exhaust Shortens 20,000 American Lives a Year](#) Diesel fumes cut short the lives of more than 20,000 Americans each year, according to a report. "This is a significant risk and threat to public health but it is one for which we have a solution. We can reduce that risk by 90%." The study calls on Congress for money to retrofit school buses J.R. Pegg. Environment News Service. 23 February 2005.

[Help residents breathe easier](#) Based on EPA data from 1999, a report released Tuesday said diesel emissions caused about 900 premature deaths in New Jersey that year. In addition, it was responsible for 1,400 nonfatal heart attacks, 18,000 asthma attacks, 1,300 cases of acute bronchitis and 27,000 cases of respiratory symptoms in children. Asbury Park Press, New Jersey. 25 February 2005.

[Cut diesel engine idling time, save lives, says study](#) Diesel fumes from school buses, trucks and construction equipment -- which cause 540 premature deaths, 707 non-lethal heart attacks and 11,459 asthma attacks every year in Cook County alone -- can be slashed by half statewide in five years, according to a new study released Tuesday. Gary Wisby. Chicago Sun-Times. 23 February 2005.

[Democrats want limit on idling buses](#) School buses idling outside are putting your children's health at risk, Iowa lawmakers warned Tuesday. A group of Democrats wants to limit the amount of time school buses are allowed to idle with engines running while children are present, in an effort to curb diesel emissions. Tim Higgins. Des Moines Register, Iowa. 2 February 2005.

[Pumped up about cleaner fuel](#) Biodiesel is all around us, in ferries, buses, garbage trucks, passenger cars, tractors, Army trucks, sailboats and more, yet only one in four people knows about this alternative, non-toxic fuel made from vegetable oil. The Breathable Bus Coalition wants to get school buses to switch from diesel to biodiesel blends. Kristin Dizon. Seattle Post-Intelligencer. 18 February 2005.

[First student buses to get emissions control equipment](#) First Student buses operated for the Hamilton County Schools will be getting retrofit with equipment designed to cut down on pollution emissions. Bob Colby, executive director of the Air Pollution Control Bureau, said the

program will be funded through a \$100,000 EPA grant. [The Chattanooga, Tennessee](#). 9 February 2005.

[Lawmakers propose limits on school bus emissions](#) A group of Democratic lawmakers wants to place limits on school bus emissions and pesticide use at schools to reduce potential environmental hazards to Iowa children. Studies have shown children are far more vulnerable to the effects of pollution than adults. [Purchase required]. Charlotte Eby. [Sioux City Journal](#). 2 February 2005.

[Frenchtown schools supersize fleet of french-fry smelling buses](#) An EPA grant is helping the district run eight of its 23 buses on biodiesel, fuel made from agricultural and recycled oils. "The main thing I've noticed with biodiesel is that you don't get that dark smoke, so the kids won't be breathing it as much. So it's much healthier for our young ones." Tyler Christensen. [Missoulian News](#). 7 February 2005.

[Guest opinion: Bush plan would let polluters breathe easier](#) Montanans should be alarmed to learn that Congress is considering legislation that would weaken the Clean Air Act. Nearly 48,000 children in Montana live within 30 miles of a coal-fired power plant, the area in which the greatest health impacts of air pollution are felt. Robert Perks. [Billings Gazette](#), Montana. 16 February 2005.

[Dirty Politics, Foul Air](#) 95 million people breathe toxic air, yet the Bush Administration is working to weaken the 'Clean Air Act', with the absurdly titled "Clear Skies Initiative." At the Pittsburgh school, overlooking the dark gray plumes from two electric power plants, there are so many children with asthma the school nurse alphabetizes the inhalers. Rebecca Clarren. [The Nation](#). 24 February 2005.

[I have the job of protecting the health of city residents](#) The air along the Wasatch Front is increasingly dangerous to our health. Our children and the elderly, as well as those with respiratory and cardiac diseases, are the populations most vulnerable to the consequences of bad air, but all of us pay a price with every unhealthy lungful we inhale. Rocky Anderson. [Salt Lake Tribune](#), Utah. 26 February 2005.

[Indiana is put on first-of-its-kind pollution alert](#) The Indiana Department of Environmental Management issued an alert after a stagnant weather pattern caused fine-particle concentrations to rise to unhealthy levels. Fine particles are linked to respiratory and cardiac problems, and are especially dangerous for children and the elderly. Tammy Webber. [Indianapolis Star](#). 2 February 2005.

[Air pollution alert extended](#) State environmental officials have extended an air pollution alert through today for the Indianapolis and Terre Haute areas and northwest Indiana, warning that the elderly, children and people with heart and lung problems should limit outdoor activity. Tammy Webber. [Indianapolis Star](#). 4 February 2005.

[Mild weather has downside: 1st winter dirty-air alert](#) Soot pollution trapped over much of the urban Midwest led Illinois officials Wednesday to issue their first-ever wintertime alert for dirty

air. Even healthy adults and children are cautioned against heavy physical activity outdoors. Michael Hawthorne. Chicago Tribune. 3 February 2005.

Unhealthy air sparks warning Air quality in Detroit is forecast at unhealthy levels, a rarity in wintertime blamed in part on unusual weather conditions. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, people with heart or lung disease, older adults and children could have serious health effects and should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Bob Gross. Daily Oakland Press, Detroit. 4 February 2004.

Hazy shade of winter: Why Iowa battles unhealthy air Unhealthy air blanketing Iowa was a winter brew of ammonia and vehicle exhaust. The microscopic soot has been linked in various studies to premature death, increased hospital admissions and emergency-room visits and lung disease. Children, the elderly and those with asthma are most at risk. Perry Beeman. Des Moines Register, Iowa. 11 February 2005.

Winter pollution adds to breathing problems In a rare occurrence, this winter's weather has produced an alarming amount of air pollution. When the air quality reaches 150, it is considered unhealthy for some people, especially children, the elderly and those with breathing problems such as asthma. Oralandar Brand-Williams. Detroit News. 4 February 2005.

(2) CHEMICALS: (a) General

Report: Chemical mixes can affect nerve growth A study on the combined effects of pollutants on nervous system development could potentially explain the unusually high incidences of autism among children in Massachusetts. Local parents had pressed government officials to investigate pollution and environmental factors. Kirk Moore. Ashbury Park Press, Massachusetts. 1 February 2005.

Drought may be factor in leukemia As residents wait for tests that may show why children are developing leukemia, scientists are looking into drought as a suspect. "It may take tungsten and other metals to initiate leukemia in children who are genetically predisposed. A contributing factor to this process is the drought, when everything becomes airborne". Carla McClain. Arizona Daily Star. 7 February 2005.

Chemical poisons found in KZN River High levels of chemical poisons have been found in the Mvoti River. Although the toxicity of dioxin-like chemicals varies considerably, the most dangerous forms have been known to affect the immune and reproductive systems as well as brain development, and cause liver damage, birth defects and cancer. Tony Carnie. The Mercury, South Africa. 10 February 2005.

How toxic are we? Bill seeks clues Two senators introduced a bill that could offer clues to how toxic chemicals contribute to disease. It would establish a voluntary program to find out the amount of chemical contaminants in people. Longtime national breast milk monitoring programs in Sweden have led to the ban of certain synthetic chemicals. Rebecca Vesely. Oakland Tribune, California. 18 February 2005.

[Oakland Assemblywoman Introduces Two Environmental Health Bills](#) One bill would ban toxic chemicals in children's toys and baby bottles. The other would require chemical manufacturers to provide more information on chemicals they use. Phthalates, often used in plastic children's toys, have been linked to reproductive birth defects, asthma, and hormone disruption. CBS 5, California. 13 February 2005.

[Schools' chemical cleanups unfunded](#) The discovery of toxic, explosive and radioactive chemicals sitting on shelves in schools has grabbed the attention of lawmakers, who want to pump money into a cleanup effort. "Clearly it just doesn't make any sense to be having our students in classrooms where there are hazardous chemicals." John Richardson. Portland Press Herald, Maine. 9 February 2005.

[Bill would clear toxics from schools](#) A pilot program, in which 18% of Maine's high schools were cleaned up, revealed 6,500 pounds of hazardous waste in high school science labs, maintenance departments, art rooms and nurses' stations. A bill would provide money necessary for the remaining schools to get a professional cleanup. Susan Cover. Kennebec Journal, Maine. 10 February 2005.

[Lawmakers Consider Funding To Cleanup Toxic Chemicals In Schools](#) Lawmakers are considering setting aside money for the cleanup of toxic, explosive and radioactive chemicals sitting on shelves in middle and high schools across Maine. Proposals would speed up a cleanup program that uncovered hazards like mercury and mustard gas ingredients in science labs. AP. Maine Today. 9 February 2005.

[The Cruel Saga of Asbestos Disease](#) During the 1970s and 1980s, tens of thousands of diseased asbestos workers brought product liability lawsuits. Scientists found the wives and children of asbestos workers were dying through exposure to the relatively small amounts of asbestos dust husbands and fathers were bringing home on their work clothes. Paul Brodeur. Los Angeles Times. 18 February 2005.

[Prosperity Turned to Poison in Mining Town](#) In the town of Libby, Montana, dust from a mine, now known to be contaminated with a particularly deadly form of asbestos, has caused high rates of lung cancer among its workers, and left their children coping with lung abnormalities. [Registration required]. Carrie Johnson & Dina ElBoghdady. Washington Post. 8 February 2005.

[Grace under pressure](#) It's rare for an American corporation to face criminal charges for breaking environmental laws, but the U.S. Justice Department indicted Grace & Co. for asbestos contamination in Montana. The area's lung cancer rate is 3% higher than norms, and the sick and dying aren't just former employees, but also spouses, children and neighbors. Editorial. Denver Post. 10 February 2005.

[Message on the Environment](#) A federal grand jury has handed up an indictment claiming that W.R. Grace & Co. knowingly endangered the lives of workers, Libby residents and customers by conspiring to hide dangers. A prosecutor said 1,200 people became ill from the asbestos, and some have died. Among the ill are children who played in piles of waste ore. Herald Tribune, Florida. 15 February 2005.

(b) Lead

[Industry's hidden environment costs](#) Contaminated soil threatens the health of some two million people in Brazil, say authorities. Attention is focused on children because their bodies absorb more lead and they suffer more from the effects of lead poisoning, which can damage the central nervous system. Mario Osava. Tierramerica. 22 February 2005.

[Leaded fuel use ends this year, Parliament told](#) Leaded motor fuel in Tanzania comes to an end this year, as the country joins the rest of the world to phase out the fuel. According to studies, phasing out leaded petrol is of critical importance for human health as it will save a significant number of people from diseases that build up slowly from lead poisoning. Henry Lyimo. Guardian, London. 5 February 2005.

['Move to unleaded' is government's clear message](#) Plans to phase out leaded petrol by 2006 will not affect old car owners as there are many alternatives that will keep their cars running. Lead has been shown to be carcinogenic and cause respiratory problems. Whether these alternatives containing other metals are any better than leaded petrol is up for debate. The Star, South Africa. 15 February 2005.

[Doe Run study shows lower blood lead levels in Peru](#) Doe Run Co. said Thursday blood lead levels among employees and residents near its copper and zinc smelter in La Oroya, Peru, have declined 31% from when the company bought the facility in 1997. In addition, blood lead levels among high-risk children have fallen 17%. St. Louis Business Journal. 10 February 2005.

[Archbishop seeks help in cleanup of lead pollution](#) A Catholic archbishop from Peru visited St. Louis as part of a growing effort to address health and environmental problems surrounding a lead smelter in the Andes Mountains. A study by independent public health workers in 2002 found that nearly 100% of La Oroya's 18,000 children have lead poisoning. Sara Shipley. Saint Louis Today. 16 February 2005.

[Lead: Children more susceptible](#) Shauntel is one of about 30 children who have been poisoned by lead in Guilford County since 2000. Because of the lead poisoning, Shauntel is more likely than her peers to drop out of school and to commit violent crimes. She may struggle more and succeed less through no fault of her own. Elyse Ashburn. News & Record, North Carolina. 6 February 2005.

[Lead in Environment Causing Violent Crime – Study](#) Lead may not only be affecting children's intelligence but may cause a significant proportion of violent crime, a researcher argued. "When environmental lead finds its way into the developing brain, it disturbs neural mechanisms responsible for regulation of impulse. That can lead to antisocial and criminal behavior." Yahoo! News. 18 February 2005.

[Smelter committed to cutting blood-lead levels](#) The operators of Port Pirie's lead smelter in South Australia says they will consider a proposal to link their licence to blood-lead levels in the

city's children. About 60 per cent of Port Pirie's children under the age of five have lead levels above safe world health limits. [ABC](#), Australia. 16 February 2005.

[Coming soon : the facts on lead in school water](#) Seattle Public Schools are preparing a more extensive package of information for parents on lead contamination in school drinking water. The document is intended to get needed information out to parents troubled by last year's tests that found widespread lead contamination in school drinking water. Deborah Bach. [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#). 2 February 2005.

[City leaders: Lead paint has to go](#) Council members voiced concerns about children poisoned after exposure to chipping lead paint and lead-ridden dust in rental houses and apartments. Over 7,000 children in North Carolina have tested positive during the past 10 years for having dangerous levels of lead in their blood. Stan Swofford & Elyse Ashburn. [News & Record](#), North Carolina. 23 February 2005.

[Getting the lead out means rewriting law](#) The state law that protects children from lead poisoning caused by ingesting paint chips or peelings found in older homes isn't working. If the child's lead level doesn't reach a preset threshold, Health Department personnel can't force landlords to make repairs. [News & Record](#), North Carolina. 2 February 2005.

[Court urged to hold paint makers responsible for lead](#) Attorneys for a Milwaukee boy who suffered brain damage after ingesting lead paint at two rental homes as a toddler argued that Wisconsin should allow lead poisoning victims to recover damages from the makers and sellers of lead paint. Tom Held. [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#). 2 February 2005.

[Old city buildings are tested for lead paint](#) As part of a renewed enforcement effort, the EPA has ordered \$80,000 in repairs in 31 city apartments contaminated with lead paint. Children are most susceptible to lead poisoning, which may cause learning disabilities, hyperactivity and brain damage. Neil Katsuyama. [Yale Daily News](#). 1 February 2005.

[City officials may oppose lead paint legislation](#) Lawmakers said they will oppose Gov. Ehrlich's lead paint legislation unless he restores funds he cut from the city's lead paint enforcement funds. His bill would require earlier action to treat children with lead poisoning and reduce hazards in housing once a child has been poisoned. [Registration required]. Ivan Penn/Tom Pelton. [Baltimore Sun](#). 16 February 2005.

[Md. officials defend city lead-paint program cuts](#) Officials defended a proposal to cut funding for a city lead-paint program and increase spending on state enforcement of lead regulations. Leaders gathered at the home of a girl who had been poisoned by lead to call on Ehrlich to restore funding to Baltimore's lead-paint programs. [Registration required]. Alex Dominguez. [Baltimore Sun](#). 15 February 2005.

[Getting the lead out](#) Gov. Ehrlich Jr.'s lead-poisoning initiative is, on balance, a step forward for at-risk children, yet Baltimore legislators are opposing its proposed budget cuts. More than 1,180 city children under age 6 were diagnosed with elevated lead levels in their blood in 2003, and

thousands of city houses and apartments still aren't safe. [Registration required]. Baltimore Sun. 18 February 2005.

[City wants lead-paint funding back](#) Mayor Martin O'Malley and other city leaders gathered at the home of a girl who had been poisoned by lead to call on Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. to restore funding to one of Baltimore's lead-paint programs. Ehrlich's budget eliminated the program, which enforces compliance with lead-paint regulations. [Registration required]. Laura Vozzella. Baltimore Sun. 7 February 2005.

[Residents criticizing lead paint legislation](#) Dozens of Baltimore residents and community leaders urged lawmakers to support tougher enforcement and increased funding to combat lead paint poisoning, instead of legislation they criticized. The proposal is part of a nationwide effort to end childhood lead poisoning by 2010. [Registration required]. Ivan Penn. Baltimore Sun. 17 February 2005.

[Lead law has its first charge](#) Despite the ban on lead paint in homes, thousands of children are poisoned each year in Detroit alone. Poisoning can permanently reduce IQ, create behavior problems and damage the central nervous system. Hugh McDiarmid Jr. Detroit Free Press. 24 February 2005.

[Landlord charged under new anti-lead law after boy falls ill](#) A landlord could face jail time after a 23-month-old boy became severely ill with lead poisoning. Jay-Lin Jackson, now 2, was hospitalized in late August with fatigue, weight loss and fever. A 2003 report by the state showed that as many as 20,000 Michigan children under 6 may be affected by lead poisoning. Detroit Free Press. 23 February 2005.

[Greensboro landlords concerned about lead paint rules](#) During the past 10 years, dangerous levels of lead have been diagnosed in the blood of at least 7,000 children. Lead paint has been linked to lower IQs, behavioral problems, attention deficit disorder and learning disabilities. It also can kill. [Registration required]. AP. Charlotte Observer, North Carolina. 27 February 2005.

[New rules cut health risk from lead in children's jewelry](#) The Consumer Product Safety Commission has announced new enforcement guidelines to reduce the health risks from lead in children's metal jewelry. Lead poisoning in children is associated with behavioral problems, learning disabilities, hearing problems and growth retardation. [Registration required]. Paul Wenske. Kansas City Star. 9 February 2005.

[Officials ask stores to pull Mexican candy, citing lead](#) Officials have asked retailers to pull 2 brands of Mexican candies because of high lead levels that could be harmful to children. "There are currently no known or suspect cases of lead poisoning in children who ate these products, but we want to remove any potential sources of products that do not meet federal standards." Denver Post. 10 February 2005.

[Lead Dangers: In Dishes](#) Lead-blood levels have plummeted, yet there are still nearly a million children in the United States who have enough lead in their blood to cause irreversible damage to their health. The centers for disease control says fighting the problem means eliminating lead

paint in homes and restricting some table ware and other products. Shelby Zarotney. News 9, Ohio. 25 February 2005.

[Critics assail NASCAR for burning leaded gas](#) "Because of the clear public health threat, lead is being eliminated from gasoline throughout most of the world". "If Kazakhstan can eliminate lead from gasoline, why can't NASCAR?" Lead levels in the blood of U.S. children have dropped dramatically as a result of phasing-out leaded gasoline. Joan Lowy. Scripps Howard News Service 28 February 2005.

(c) Pesticides

[Kids fall prey to pesticides](#) A report on children working in cotton fields in Raichur, India has found that children exposed to pesticides have slow physical and mental growth; poor reflexes; and low stamina. All the effected children shared the inability to perform simple play-based exercises simply because they have been exposed to pesticides over a period of time. The Navhind Times, India. 4 February 2005.

[Pesticide Poisonings In Chile Show Sharp Increase](#) There were 285 victims of pesticide-related poisoning in November and December 2004. Any new law should restrict where fumigation can take place to avoid repeats of a 2003 incident where 30 children suffered chemical poisoning after an aerial fumigation near their school. Emily Byrne. Santiago Times, Chile. 4 February 2005.

[EU warns on DDT](#) The Government should not use DDT for malaria control before the wider implications are considered, the EU has warned. It has been detected in human breast milk, is acutely toxic to birds and highly toxic to fish. There is, therefore, no doubt that DDT contaminates the food chain. Josephine Maseruka. New Vision, Kampala. 3 February 2005.

[Personal view: Health agencies must stop demonising DDT – it saves lives](#) As I found out the hard way, malaria is back and poised to strike down still more of the children, many orphaned, of post-tsunami Sri Lanka. It can be stopped, but only if ill-informed prejudice against DDT, the insecticide, is dropped. Roger Bate. Business Telegraph. 7 February 2005.

[Farm Workers: Protect against pesticides](#) Farm workers receive too much exposure to some of the most dangerous pesticides. We must protect the health of workers and their families, exposed by clothing or drifting spray. California monitors air conditions for some pesticides, protecting those who live, work and go to school around sprayed fields. Editorial Board. Seattle Post-Intelligencer. 27 February 2005.

[Group asks schools to cut pesticide spray](#) A group calling for a reduction in pesticide spraying within schools is making its case to two area school boards this week. "Our basic stance is that there's no such thing as a safe pesticide for children. Kids and pesticides don't mix, and a lot of medical science has indicated that." Mindy B. Hagen. The Herald-Sun, North Carolina. 21 February 2005.

[When rat poison manufacturers complained about regulations, the EPA rolled over](#) Between 2001 and 2003, the AAPPC reported nearly 60,000 cases nationwide of poisonings by rodenticides, more than for any other pesticide. Many of these incidents involve children because the poisons often come in the form of pellets that are placed as bait on the floor. Joshua Kurlantzick. [Mother Jones](#). February 2005.

[Banned rat poison may still pose threat](#) A highly toxic rodent poison, banned worldwide since 1984, may still pose a risk to public health due to its continued illegal sale and use, according to a team of medical experts. A 15-month-old infant developed permanent brain damage as a result of exposure to the highly toxic substance. Charnicia E. Huggins. [Reuters](#). 28 February 2005.

(d) Mercury

[Action on Heavy Metals among Key Decisions at UNEP Council Meeting](#) Under an expanded mercury programme, governments have asked the UNEP to conduct a study on the amounts of mercury being traded and supplied around the world. Mercury, a heavy metal linked with effects such as damage to the nervous systems of babies. Press Release. [UNEP](#). 25 February 2005.

[UN environmental agency to study mercury supply in bid to curb health risks](#) UNEP was asked today to conduct a study on the amounts of mercury being traded and supplied around the world in an effort to reduce the health and environmental risks from the heavy metal that has been linked with a wide range of medical problems, including neurological damage to babies. [UN News Centre](#). 25 February 2005.

[Pact to curb mercury is rejected](#) A global treaty proposed to fight mercury pollution has been rejected at a meeting in Kenya. The EU said the pact was required to curb the use of the toxic heavy metal, known to cause nerve damage and harm children in the womb. But the meeting of UNEP's Governing Council backed a system of "voluntary partnerships". Richard Black. [BBC News](#). 25 February 2005.

[World environmental officials weigh proposals to cut mercury emissions](#) Environmental ministers will be asked to choose between strict curbs on mercury proposed by the EU and a voluntary approach advocated by the US. Mercury found in 1 out of 6 Americans exceeds levels that could cause neurological and developmental damage in a fetus/infant. Marla Cone. [Los Angeles Times](#). 24 February 2005.

[U.N. to Debate How Best to Curb Mercury](#) At a meeting in Kenya, European ministers will seek deadlines and bans on the global pollutant, but the U.S. opposes a binding treaty. The amount of mercury found in one out of six Americans exceeds levels that could cause neurological and developmental damage in a fetus or infant, according to the US/EPA. Marla Cone. [Los Angeles Times](#). 22 February 2005.

[Governments Move to Assess and Control Mercury Pollution](#) Governments have asked UNEP to conduct a study on the amounts of mercury being traded and supplied around the world that

could be a first step towards a legally binding treaty to control mercury pollution. Mercury is linked with effects such as damage to the nervous systems of babies. [ENS](#). 25 February 2005.

[UN Environment Program Seeks Reduction of Harmful Mercury Emissions](#) Delegates from 140 countries agreed to pursue voluntary measures to reduce emissions of mercury. A proposal to adopt a binding agreement regulating mercury was rejected. Mercury has been known to cause damage to the nervous systems of babies. Cathy Majtenyi. [Voice of America](#). 25 February 2005.

[With US isolation, UNEP faces clearer priorities in cleaning nature](#) A US decision to block upgrading of the status of UNEP and talks on a mercury ban has left the UN's environment arm with clearer priorities, diplomats say. UNEP's top board failed to launch talks on a treaty to ban mercury, a metal linked to serious ailments in pregnant women and children. AFP. [Yahoo](#). 26 February 2005.

[US blocks plans on UN environment body](#) The US has blocked attempts to up the status of the United Nations' environmental arm and to launch formal talks on an European Union-backed treaty to ban mercury, which is linked to serious ailments in pregnant women and children, diplomats say. AFP. [ABC News Online](#). 26 February 2005.

[Moves to have global treaty to ban mercury waste of time: US](#) Moves to launch formal talks on an EU-backed treaty to ban mercury is a waste of time, the United States said, pushing instead its own global initiative to cut emissions. Mercury can cause brain damage in unborn children and infants and possibly impair their nervous systems. AFP. [Yahoo](#). 26 February 2005.

[Mount Sinai Study Shows Impacts of Mercury Pollution on the Health of our Children and the American Economy](#) Reductions in IQ due to mercury pollution affect between 300,000 and 600,000 American children each year and will cost the US an estimated \$8.7 billion in lost earnings annually, according to a [study in Environmental Health Perspectives](#). Press Release. [U.S. Newswire](#). 28 February 2005.

[New Study Shows Impact of Mercury Pollution: \\$8.7 Billion Lost Annually Due to Poisoning in the Womb; Study Published Before Senate Committee, EPA Decide on Mercury Reduction Plans. Before they take their first breath, as many as 600,000 babies may suffer permanent brain damage from their mothers' exposure to mercury. Press Release. \[Physicians for Social Responsibility\]\(#\). 28 February 2005.](#)

[Study: mercury costs billions in lost productivity](#) The study estimates that between 317,000 and 637,000 of the 4 million children born each year in the US are exposed in the womb to mercury levels above EPA's safety level. The health and societal impacts of mercury "are very analogous to lead," said Dr. Landrigan, a co-author of the study. Joan Lowy. [Scripps Howard News Service](#). 28 February 2005.

[IQ Loss Linked to Mercury Costs \\$8.7B](#) Lower IQ levels linked to mercury exposure in the womb costs the US \$8.7 billion a year in lost earnings potential. Mount Sinai Center for Children's Health and the Environment combined studies to determine hundreds of thousands of

babies are born every year with lower IQ associated with mercury exposure. Devlin Barrett. Associated Press. 28 February 2005.

[SouthCot to probe mercury contamination in T'boli](#) The provincial government of South Cotabato is planning to conduct a separate investigation on the reported mercury contamination of a river near a gold rush area in T'boli town. Concerns were raised over the health of the children in T'boli town who swim along the tributaries of the Kematu river. Allen V. Estabillo. MindaNews, Philippines. 8 February 2005.

[European Commission proposes ban on mercury export](#) The European Commission proposed on 31 January a strategy against mercury pollution, aimed at reducing the global supply and protecting European citizens from its effects. Exposure to mercury is particularly harmful to young children and can damage the nervous system, brain and kidneys. Marit Ruuda. EU Observer. 1 February 2005.

[EU Commission Proposes Phasing out Exports to Combat Mercury Pollution](#) The European Commission announced plans to reduce mercury pollution, including phasing out all mercury exports by 2011. It also plans to inform people about the dangers of mercury and research the effects of dietary exposure for women of childbearing age and for children. Environmental News Network. 1 February 2005.

[What Mercury Problem?](#) Later this month, Europe and other industrialized regions will grapple with the problem of mercury pollution. The US, apparently, will continue to pretend it doesn't exist. Mercury has become so common in fish that pregnant women and young children, the most vulnerable, are warned to severely limit their consumption of seafood. Editorial. Los Angeles Times. 14 February 2005.

[Heavy Metal Madness](#) A report aims to downplay the overwhelming evidence that mercury from coal-burning power plants poses a significant health risk. Two claims are particularly stunning, one is: "There has been no credible evidence of harm to pregnant women or their unborn children from regular consumption of fish." Amanda Griscom Little. Grist. 24 February 2005.

[Dangers of Mercury Pollution Overstated, House Republicans Say in Report](#) Dangers of mercury pollution in the environment have been overstated, the House Resources Committee says in a report issued in anticipation of new regulatory proposals. EPA estimates that 8% of American women of childbearing age have enough mercury in their blood to put a fetus at risk. John Heilprin. ENN. 16 February 2005.

[It's hard to swallow this mercury report](#) A report downplayed the potential risk of consuming fish with mercury or exposure to the toxin through industrial pollution. Yet studies show that eating canned tuna in high amounts can lead to mercury poisoning and there are worries that mercury can disrupt the development of fetuses and young children. Bob Condor. Seattle Post-Intelligencer. 21 February 2005.

[EPA Inspector Finds Mercury Proposal Tainted](#) EPA ignored scientific evidence and protocols in order to set limits on mercury pollution that would line up with the administration's approaches

to power plant pollution, according to the agency's inspector general. Mercury has a range of health effects, especially on young children and pregnant women. Shankar Vedantam. Washington Post. 4 February 2005.

[EPA faults findings on mercury](#) EPA's inspector general said that the Bush administration violated scientific practices and regulatory requirements in drafting a proposal to control mercury emissions from power plants. About 600,000 babies born in the U.S. each year may be exposed to dangerous levels of mercury in the womb. Alan Miller/Tom Hamburger. Los Angeles Times. 4 February 2005.

[EPA accused of a predetermined finding on mercury](#) The EPA's inspector general has charged the agency's senior management with instructing staff members to favor industry. Mercury, which can damage the neurological development of fetuses and young children, has been found in increasingly high concentrations in fish in the United States. Felicity Barringer. New York Times. 4 February 2005.

[EPA Says White House Flunks Mercury Safety](#) The Bush administration overlooked health effects and sided with the electric industry in developing rules for cutting toxic mercury pollution. The toxic metal can cause neurological and developmental problems, particularly in fetuses and young children. John Heilprin. Kansas City Star. 3 February 2005.

[EPA overlooked health impact](#) EPA fell short of its own requirements by "not fully analyzing the cost-benefit of regulatory alternatives and not fully assessing the rule's impact on children's health." It "confirms that the administration's proposal to regulate mercury compromises children's health for the benefit of corporate profits." John Heilprin. Environmental News Network. 4 February 2005.

[New EPA regulations tainted from the first](#) Inspector General, Nikki Tinsley, said that EPA staff essentially prepared their report on industrial mercury emissions in reverse, knowing from the first that their conclusion needed to be - and working toward that goal. High-levels of mercury are hazardous - especially to infants and pregnant women. The Republican, Massachusetts. 7 February 2005.

[Muddying "Clear Skies"](#) The inspector general of the federal EPA has ripped into proposed changes in the Clean Air Act that would permit industry to increase mercury emissions. FDA warns pregnant women and young children from eating large amounts of certain fish. [Purchase required]. Journal News, New York. 6 February 2005.

[Politics of pollution](#) Rising degree of evidence that mercury rule is flawed. Last year, a coalition of national environmental groups analyzed federal tests and found that more than half of the fish sampled in America's lakes and reservoirs contain levels of mercury so high that they're unsafe for consumption by children and women of child-bearing age. Herald Tribune, Florida 10 February 2005.

[Friends in high places](#) The EPA watchdog has confirmed that regulations to control toxic mercury from power plants are being developed to benefit industry. Scientists have established

that mercury released into the air and introduced into the food chain through contaminated rivers and lakes can cause neurological impairment in developing fetuses. Editorial. Toledo Blade, Ohio. 10 February 2005.

[Effects of mercury decision may drift north](#) 'Vicious debate' over U.S. emissions limit is key to Canadians' health, critics warn. The issue of reducing the amount of mercury, which can damage the neurological development of fetuses and young children, has been simmering for several years in both countries. [Purchase required]. Estanislao Oziewicz. Globe and Mail, Canada. 10 February 2005.

[1991 Memo Warned of Mercury in Shots](#) A 1991 memo from Merck & Co. shows that executives were concerned that infants were getting an elevated dose of mercury in vaccinations. 6-month-old children would get a mercury dose up to 87 times higher than guidelines for the maximum daily consumption of mercury from fish. Myron Levin. Los Angeles Times. 8 February 2005.

[Report: Merck worried about mercury in vaccines](#) A memo from Merck shows executives were concerned about high levels of mercury in children's vaccinations nearly 8 years before officials disclosed a similar finding. 6-month-old children who received shots could get a mercury dose up to 87 times higher than guidelines for maximum daily consumption of mercury from fish. USA Today. 8 February 2005.

[Mercury/vaccine bill would provide 'firewall protection'](#) A bill would prohibit vaccines that contain mercury from being administered in Minnesota unless there are exceptional circumstances. It's pushed by parents, teamed with independent researchers who have uncovered the connections among vaccine schedules, mercury exposure and autism. Craig Westover. St. Paul Pioneer Press. 9 February 2005.

[Vaccine findings confirm fears](#) Parents of children with autism said this week's revelation that at least one pharmaceutical company knew of the high levels of mercury in vaccinations years before disclosing it further supports their suspicions that the poison causes neurodevelopmental disorders. Marisa Lagos. San Francisco Examiner. 10 February 2005.

[Mercury and mad hatters](#) Even though mercury exposure was recognized as a health threat as far back as 200 years ago, the chemical was unbelievably used as an ingredient in children's vaccinations until just recently. Merck & Co. is under legal fire from parents who allege that the mercury caused autism and other brain disorders in their children. Press Telegram, Los Angeles. 9 February 2005.

[The push for mercury-free vaccines](#) North Babylon pediatrician, Dr. Hitner assures parents he will avoid thimerosal, a mercury-containing compound used for decades to preserve vaccines. "This goes beyond money," he said yesterday, adding that many doctors share his view. "It has long been known that mercury is not a good thing for children." Dawn Wotapka. Newsday. 11 February 2005.

[Bill targets mercury in vaccines](#) A Broadneck Peninsula couple is promoting a state bill that would ban the use of mercury or other heavy metals in vaccines for children younger than 3 and pregnant women. Specifically, critics point to a vaccine preservative called thimerosal that contains nearly 50 percent mercury. Pamela Wood. The Capital. 10 February 2005.

[Health Watch: More warnings about mercury in fish](#) Officials advise pregnant and nursing women and children to avoid fish high in mercury. However, in light of recent studies: "I'd like to see the advisory expanded to cover a safe level for mercury consumption for all. No mercury is what we want. There has never been a safe level found for mercury." Dr Kim Mulvihill. CBS 5, California. 8 February 2005.

[Mercury awareness increasing through county efforts](#) Scientists have recently been linking mercury to behavioral disorders and have pointed out that parents, teachers and health care professionals have noticed a dramatic increase in the number of children on Ritalin, a drug typically prescribed for hyperactivity and attention deficit disorders. Doreen Leggett. The Register, Massachusetts. 17 February 2005.

[The Greening of Evangelicals](#) There is growing evidence that evangelicals are beginning to go for the green. Several environmental groups are attempting to make alliances with the Christian right on specific issues, such as global warming and the presence of mercury and other dangerous toxins in the blood of newborn children. Blaine Harden. Washington Post. 6 February 2005.

[On its own, Pennsylvania must regulate mercury](#) In absence of federal leadership, Pennsylvania needs to protect women and children against mercury, a neurotoxin silently seeping from power-plant smokestacks. Exposure can impair children's motor skills, attention span, memory and language development. [Registration required]. Philadelphia Inquirer. 10 February 2005.

[N.H. mustn't wait for EPA to take action on mercury](#) EPA scientists have determined that as many as 600,000 children annually may be exposed to unsafe mercury levels in utero, putting them at a heightened risk for disabilities like mental retardation, cerebral palsy, deafness and blindness. Portsmouth Herald, New Hampshire. 16 February 2005.

(e) Fire retardants

[Common foods laced with chemical](#) Foods consumed, such as salmon, ground beef, cheese and butter, are laced with flame retardants, according to research. A concern is the impact on children who are exposed to these chemicals over a long period, and could develop physical and developmental problems. Andre Picard & Avis Favaro. [Purchase required]. Globe and Mail, Canada. 14 February 2005.

[Flame retardants building up within us](#) New research shows that household dust is the principal source of exposure to flame retardants. Scientists believe regular exposure may lead to serious learning and developmental problems. Toddlers in particular are ingesting significant amounts of polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs). [Purchase required]. Andre Picard. Globe and Mail, Canada. 15 February 2005.

[Studies find flame retardants in household dust](#) Recent studies have found that flame retardant chemicals are making their way into our food supply and showing up in breast milk. In the case of toddlers, who are low to the ground and in closer contact with the carpets/sofas and ground dust, 90% of their body levels are coming from house dust. Lloyd Robertson. CTV, Canada. 14 February 2005.

[CTV study finds flame retardants in many foods](#) Recent studies have found that the chemicals are somehow finding their way into our food. The flame retardants are called PBDEs, and these chemicals are quickly contaminating our bodies, showing up in Canadian breast milk and U.S blood samples. Avis Favaro CTV, Canada. 14 February 2005.

[Fire retardant bans slow to come in Canada](#) With worrying studies finding flame retardants in food, dust and in breast milk, Europe has taken steps to ban the most dangerous chemicals. And yet similar action is not happening in Canada. Levels have since decreased in Europe, whereas in North America PBDE levels in breast milk and blood are rising. Lloyd Robertson. CTV, Canada. 16 February 2005.

[The Gorilla in the Closet](#) Katrina Friedman was alarmed to discover the milk she was feeding her infant was contaminated with a chemical that had been implicated in neurodevelopmental disorders in animals. The revelation came following her participation in a study that tested the breast milk for the presence of flame-retardants. Andy Isaacson. East Bay Express, California. 17 February 2005.

[Bill addresses chemicals in breast milk](#) A proposed ban on flame retardants to protect developing children is personal for Rep. Vicki Berger. The Salem Republican's nursing grandson could have been drinking chemicals that are added to furniture and plastics to reduce fires. Flame retardants have been found in women's breast milk. Beth Casper. Statesman Journal, Oregon. 24 February 2005.

(f) Rocket Fuel

[Rocket-Fuel Chemical Found in Breast Milk](#) Scientists reported that perchlorate, a toxic component of rocket fuel, was contaminating virtually all samples of women's breast milk and its levels were found to be, on average, 5 times greater than in cow's milk. Infants and fetuses are the most vulnerable to the thyroid-impairing effects of the chemical. Marla Cone. Los Angeles Times. 23 February 2005.

[Fuel chemical found in mothers' milk](#) A toxic chemical used in rocket fuel was found in virtually every sample taken in a new study of nursing mothers' milk, but researchers said it is too early to know whether the perchlorate levels are dangerous. Perchlorate has been linked to thyroid ailments, and is considered particularly dangerous to children. Betsy Blaney. Associated Press. 24 February 2005.

[Rocket Fuel Fed to Newborns](#) Nursing mothers could inadvertently be feeding their newborns nearly twice the recommended amount of perchlorate. Perchlorate in high doses blocks the

uptake of iodine. Iodine deficiency has been linked to thyroid disorders in developing children, which can slow brain development and lead to mental retardation. Amit Asaravala. Wired News. 24 February 2005.

[Toxic chemical found in breast milk across US](#) A chemical normally found in rocket fuel, fireworks and explosives that has been linked to birth defects was discovered in breast milk samples in 18 US states, according to a study. It comes less than a week after EPA unveiled a new safety dose for the contaminant that has been criticised as too lenient. Scott Streater. Sydney Morning Herald. 26 February 2005.

[Experts: Keep nursing](#) A study that found perchlorate contamination in human breast milk is significant, but the results are being misinterpreted, said the head of the panel that investigated the toxic chemical. "There have been some studies that have shown even with some environmental contamination, babies are far better off with breast milk than formula" Laura Frank. Rocky Mountain News. 25 February 2005.

[Rocket fuel contaminant found in women's breast milk](#) Researchers found a contaminant from rocket fuel in women's breast milk at 5 times the average level found in dairy milk. This study of perchlorate, indicates that the majority of breast-feeding infants would be exceeding the safe daily dose set by the National Academy of Sciences. Jane Kay. San Francisco Chronicle. 23 February 2005.

[High levels of perchlorate found in U.S. mothers' milk](#) The first sampling of perchlorate in breast milk from nursing mothers in the US reveals levels which expose infants to concentrations of the contaminant that are 20 times higher than the safe dose recently recommended by a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) committee. Rebecca Renner. Environmental Science & Technology. 23 February 2005.

[Perchlorate and Iodide in Dairy and Breast Milk](#) A study identified the presence of perchlorate in all seven brands of dairy milk randomly purchased from grocery stores in Lubbock, TX. Perchlorate inhibits iodide uptake and may impair thyroid and neurodevelopment in infants. Andrea Kirk et al. Environmental Science and Technology. 22 February 2005.

[EPA Sets Reference Dose for Perchlorate](#) The U.S. EPA has established an official reference dose of 0.0007 mg/kg/day of perchlorate; a daily exposure level that is not expected to cause adverse health effects in humans. For fetuses, infants and children, perchlorate can cause lowered IQ, mental retardation, loss of hearing and speech, and motor skill deficits. Environment News Service. 21 February 2005.

[EPA rule blasted: Activists: New perchlorate standard too soft](#) A new federal safety standard for toxic perchlorate used in rocket fuel and explosives announced Friday in the nation's capital amounts to an irresponsible gamble that could harm children and unborn babies, safe drinking water advocates in California said. Guy McCarthy. San Bernardino County Sun, California. 18 February 2005.

[EPA issues perchlorate standard](#) EPA issued its safety standard for perchlorate. There is concern that standards could protect polluters instead of sensitive populations. Perchlorate can inhibit the thyroid gland's iodine uptake, reducing its production of hormones that regulate metabolism and growth in children. Carrie Simmons. Westford Eagle, Massachusetts 24 February 2005.

[EPA Sets Safe Dose For Perchlorate](#) Move will lead to new cleanup guidance for Superfund sites. New research suggests that human breast milk across the U.S. holds unexpectedly high levels of perchlorate. Breast-fed babies, on average, drink more than two times NRC's recommended safe daily dose, the lead author says. Cheryl Hogue. Chemical and Engineering News. 28 February 2005.

[Rocket fuel chemical poses health risk to kids](#) US/EPA has set new health goals for a chemical that's found in the groundwater, but some groups are worried the goals aren't strong enough to protect infants and fetuses. They're right to be concerned. For one thing, the goals are based on adult exposure, but children are more harshly impacted. Editorial. Maine Today. 28 February 2005.

[State's Senators React to Perchlorate Findings](#) A small study that found a rocket fuel chemical in breast milk drew quick reaction from California's U.S. senators Wednesday. Perchlorate has been linked to thyroid disorders because it inhibits the body's ability to absorb iodine -- which is critical for infants' brain development. [Registration required]. Barbara F. Ostrov. Mercury News. 24 February 2005.

[Residents Urged to Fight Cancer Causing Agents in Water](#) A campaign in California is encouraging unity in response to high incidences of thyroid disease, cancer, attention deficit disorders, and learning disabilities due to rocket fuel in water. At highest risk are pregnant women, infants, children and those whose immune systems have been compromised. Cheryl Brown. Black Voice News. 1 February 2005.

(3) WATER AND SANITATION

[Millennium Project : Focusing on improved water and sanitation for health](#) A silent humanitarian crisis kills some 3900 children every day and thwarts progress towards all the Millennium Development Goals. 4 of every 10 do not have access to even a pit latrine; nearly 2 in 10 have no source of safe drinking water. Jamie Bartram, Kristen Lewis, Roberto Lenton, Albert Wright. The Lancet. 26 February 2005.

[Dirty water kills thousands daily – experts](#) Unsafe drinking water and poor sanitation kill 4 000 children every day, global health experts said on Friday. The researchers said realising the goals of eradicating extreme poverty, creating primary school education and reducing child mortality would be difficult without solving the water problem. Karin Strohecker. IOL. 25 February 2005.

[Unsafe Water and Poor Sanitation Causes 4000 Children to Die Each Day](#) More people are affected by the negative impact of poor water supply and sanitation than by war, terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction combined. This 'silent humanitarian crisis' kills some 3900 children

everyday and thwarts progress to the MDG's, especially in Africa and Asia. Medical News Today. 25 February 2005.

Red Cross says lack of clean water, sanitation kills as many as Indian Ocean tsunami every month More than 3 million people die annually from diseases spread through dirty water and poor sanitation facilities, but their plight rarely gets the same publicity as a single natural disaster, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said in a report. Sam Cage. PlanetSave Network. 24 February 2005.

Water bug aids dengue fever fight The battle against dengue fever is being won in Vietnam thanks to a tiny water predator, experts say. Scientists, with the help of local children, have been placing the bug into water tanks where the mosquitoes which carry the disease breed. "It is not a universal answer, but has the potential to make an important difference in rural communities." BBC News. 11 February 2005.

Low-tech pilot project eradicates dengue fever Australian and Vietnamese researchers report on a relatively cheap way to control the mosquitoes that spread dengue fever, without resorting to insecticides. Researchers took advantage of a microscopic crustacean. Communities distributed the crustaceans, school children helped seniors and songs were used to get the word out. CBC News. 11 February 2005.

Green solution to dengue peril Dengue fever, a growing threat in poor tropical countries in Asia and Africa, is being gradually rolled back in Vietnam thanks to a low-tech, grassroots and environmentally friendly strategy. School children gave support to the aged and sick; songs, plays and quiz nights were organised which conveyed the campaign message. Agence-France-Press. 11 February 2005.

Tsunami threat to water supplies Fresh water supplies in countries hit by the Asian tsunami are under serious threat, according to a UN report. Drinking water sources have been contaminated by salt water and sewage. Hazardous materials such as toxic waste and asbestos from buildings may also be in the water in some areas. BBC News. 22 February 2005.

Tsunami Zone Spared Major Disease Outbreaks Officials are relieved that fears of disease after the tsunami have not been realized. It was feared that poor living conditions and lack of clean water and sanitation could lead to cholera, dysentery and other diseases. "Timely access to health facilities and services for mothers and babies must be a priority". Environment News Service. 11 February 2005.

Tsunami relief focuses on safe water systems An American Indian relief effort, of indigenous to indigenous, is under way to deliver safe drinking water systems to communities in Asia suffering from the devastation of the tsunami. Without safe drinking water, waterborne diseases will claim lives, especially the lives of young children and elderly. Brenda Norrell. Indian Country Today. 8 February 2005.

Latin America Fails to Deliver on Basic Needs Privatization is rejected, foreign investment is plummeting and the challenge is being returned to states perhaps less equipped than a decade ago.

The trend is not unique to Bolivia, where a lack of clean water contributes to the death of every tenth child before the age of 5. [Registration required]. Juan Forero. New York Times. 22 February 2005.

[A race to fix a 30-year-old 'solution'](#) In a scene repeated in more than a dozen countries from Hungary to Chile to the United States, tens of millions of people are drinking from arsenic-tainted wells. Ironically, these wells were dug from the 1970s to the present to provide clean water. Now, researchers are racing to fix this mistake. Mark Clayton. Christian Science Monitor. 17 February 2005.

[NEA Announces Million-Dollar Challenge to Provide Safe Drinking Water](#) NEA announced the establishment of a prize of \$1 million for a practical technology that can prevent the slow poisoning of people as a result of arsenic contamination of drinking water. Arsenic-contaminated water affects tens of millions of people, especially in developing countries. Press Release. National Academies. 1 February 2005.

(4) MISCELLANEOUS

[Environmental Change May Be Boosting Diseases - UN](#) Environmental changes wrought by population movement, destruction of habitats and other factors may be behind a resurgence of infectious diseases, which cause about 15 million deaths annually. In Southeast Asia and Africa, they account for two-thirds of all deaths, the majority children and young adults. C. Bryson Hull. Planet Ark. 22 February 2005.

[Infectious Diseases Capitalizing on Environmental Decline](#) Scientists are linking a rise in new and previously suppressed infectious diseases with environmental changes. If environmental degradation is not checked then the Millennium Development Goals will be harder to achieve. Children who are ill find it harder to attend and concentrate at school. Press Release. UNEP. 21 February 2005.

[World: Environmental changes are spreading infectious diseases – UN](#) Dramatic environmental changes now sweeping the planet are promoting conditions for a rise in new and previously suppressed infectious diseases, including malaria and bilharzia, according to a UNEP report. “Children who are ill find it harder to attend and concentrate at school”. UN News Center. 22 February 2005.

[Report: environmental changes increase disease](#) Deforestation, global warming, urban sprawl and other environmental changes are contributing to dramatic increases in new and previously suppressed infectious diseases, according to UNEP. 500 million malaria cases each year result in 2.7 million deaths. Most victims are children under 5. Joan Lowy. Scripps Howard News Service. 21 February 2005.

[Climate change increases diseases: report](#) Loss of forests and rapidly growing cities are causing the spread of new and previously suppressed infectious diseases, says a UNEP report. Climate changes can cause havoc to people's lives, causing frequent bouts of illnesses among children

and raising the incidence of "climate-sensitive" malaria and dengue. New Kerala, India. 23 February 2005.

Ministers From 100 Countries Tackle Environmental Threats Environmental changes are responsible for an upsurge of new and previously suppressed infectious diseases, finds a report presented to some 100 environment ministers gathered in Nairobi for the UNEP Governing Council meeting. Environment News Service. 23 February 2003.

The Millennium Project: the positive health implications of improved environmental sustainability Polluted sources of drinking and bathing water cause widespread and severe health problems, and are especially lethal to children. Acute respiratory infections linked to indoor air pollution kill 1.6 million people per year, mostly children and women. Yolanda Kakabadse et al.. Lancet. 19 February 2005.

UNICEF Warns of a "Global Tsunami" Against Children A UNICEF panel discussion of it's 2005 "State of the World's Children" report, Carol Bellamy summed up childhood poverty, its causes and its effects-AIDS, armed conflict, child labor, lack of consistent international interest and funding, environmental instability, child trafficking-as a "global tsunami". Jennifer Mascia. IPS. 17 February 2005.

Why do kids get sick? A massive new study of 100,000 children and their parents aims to find out what's ailing America's children. Like heart disease, many of the childhood disorders afflicting growing numbers of children are likely to have more than one cause. They are the result of genetics interacting with environment, biology triggered by social circumstance. Susan Brink. US News. 21 February 2005.

21 years will be spent finding what makes kids unhealthy The National Children's Study is designed to sort out the complex roles that genes, diet, chemical exposures, families and neighborhoods have on a broad range of conditions plaguing our children. Asthma has become the most common disease in childhood. Jim Ritter. Chicago Sun-Times. 14 February 2005.

Plastic Carrier Bags Declared Environmentally Unfriendly According to UNEP discarded plastic bags block gutters and drains, choke farm animals and marine wildlife and pollute the soil as they break down. They can even fill with rainwater, offering ideal breeding grounds for malaria-carrying mosquitoes. UNEP launched a children's book that alerts communities to the menace. Europaworld. 25 February 2005.

States Seek Tougher Environmental Laws Legislators from six Midwestern states Tuesday announced a regional effort to enact tougher laws protecting children from environmental dangers. "We have a new commitment in the region to work with our colleagues in surrounding states to better protect our children from pollution and toxic chemicals". Mike Glover. Kansas City Star. 2 February 2005.

Cities are now the frontline of poverty This century Africa will shift from a predominantly rural continent to an urban one. Many burgeoning African cities are catastrophically under-provided

for. Infant mortality rates can be as bad as or worse than in rural areas; water-related and communicable diseases are even more rife. John Vidal. [Guardian](#), UK. 2 February 2005.

[Arctic climate: The heat is on](#) A study paints a sobering picture of the impacts of global warming on Arctic peoples and ecosystems. They already face high levels of organic pollutants that have drifted north and contaminate human breast milk. With disproportionate warming in the Arctic, the region is again being poisoned from afar. David Tenenbaum. [Environmental Health Perspectives](#). 2 February 2005.

[Health warning issued for global warming](#) If Earth's climate warms in coming decades, heavy smog and extreme weather events could increase health risks. Global warming would cause an increase in difficult days for those affected by ozone pollution, such as people suffering with respiratory illnesses like asthma. Robert Roy Britt. [LiveScience](#). 21 February 2005.

[X-rays added to cancer list. Some viruses also among carcinogens on federal registry](#) X-rays and some viruses were put on the government's list of cancer-causing agents. X-rays were listed as they can cause leukemia and thyroid, breast and lung cancers. Childhood exposure is linked to an increased risk for leukemia and thyroid cancer. Jane Kay. [San Francisco Chronicle](#). 1 February 2005.

[NJ hosts hearing on study of radiation in baby teeth](#) Children who live near nuclear plants carry lifelong radioactive residue, according to a group. The "Tooth Fairy Project" examines the baby teeth of children who grow up near nuclear reactors, saying the data may hold clues to stemming increases in childhood cancer. AP. [WNBC](#), New Jersey. 16 February 2005.

[Youth Leaders Retreat to Chart Environmentally-Friendly Path for Planet](#) A new generation of environmental leaders will be put through their paces when they converge on Nairobi, for the biannual UNEP Youth Retreat. Participants will outline how they can contribute in their own countries towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Press Release. [UNEP](#). 16 February 2005.

[Number of leukemia cases brings parents together](#) Since 2001 at least six children have been diagnosed with leukemia. Two have died. Parents of those children and several adults who are also fighting leukemia are concerned the cases seem concentrated enough that they could signal something gone awry in the environment. Karen Tolkkinen. [AP](#). 18 February 2005.

[FDA Panel Urges Warnings on 2 Eczema Drugs](#) A prescription cream and an ointment that millions of Americans use to control eczema should carry strong warnings to alert consumers that the drugs may increase the risk of some forms of cancer, especially among children, a federal panel concluded yesterday. [Registration required]. Rob Stein. [Washington Post](#). 16 February 2005.
