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## Children's Environmental Health International Initiatives

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dedicated to promoting healthy environments for children

December 2009

### 2009 in Review: Key Health Issues

As 2009 draws to a close, the World Health Organization reviews the key health issues that shaped the year. 2009 saw the global financial crisis put strains on health spending while the emergence of the new H1N1 influenza virus was the first influenza pandemic since 1968. Yet in 2009 H1N1 vaccines become available and global responses were under way to support developing countries during the financial crisis.

WHO and UNICEF launched new plans to tackle the two biggest child killers – pneumonia and diarrhoea, and the number of people receiving antiretroviral therapy in low- and middle-income countries topped four million. Making hospitals safe in emergencies, a new look at women's health, global health risks, and progress towards tackling malaria also made news in 2009.



[Successes and challenges of 2009](#) (WHO podcast 30/12/2009)

*WHO/Christopher Black*

### CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NEWS

#### Press Releases

#### [WHO launches new tobacco control effort in Africa](#)

The World Health Organization is increasing its attention to tobacco control in Africa with the overall goal of preventing tobacco use from becoming as prevalent there as it is in other parts of the world. (WHO 4/12/2009)

#### [UN to Review Progress on the Millennium Development Goals](#)

With six years until the 2015 deadline to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon strongly urged governments to engage constructively in the preparations for a high-level meeting in September 2010 to review progress towards the MDGs and other international development goals. (UN Dec 2009)

#### [1.3 million Insecticide treated mosquito nets urgently needed to arrest under five deaths in Sierra Leone](#)

Child mortality and morbidity is high in Sierra Leone despite efforts by government and aid agencies. UNICEF urges that more needs to be done to stop the deaths of children under five. (UNICEF 10/12/2009)

## REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS

### [10 facts on children's environmental health](#)

All children need healthy, safe and protective environments to ensure normal growth, development and well-being. Nearly one-third of the nine million under-five child deaths every year are associated with environment-related causes and conditions. Environmental risk factors often act in concert, and their effects are exacerbated by adverse social and economic conditions – particularly conflict, poverty and malnutrition.

(WHO Dec 2009)

### [10 facts on Climate Change and Health](#)

The World Health Organization has released an updated fact file which describes current and projected effects of climate change on public health. The file explores how health risks are posed by extreme weather events, variable climates affecting food and water supplies, new patterns of infectious disease outbreaks, and emerging diseases linked to ecosystem changes associated with climate change.

### [Malaria progress shows development aid for health works](#)

Report shows dramatic scale-up of malaria control interventions in several countries, along with measurable reductions in malaria burden. Significant progress has been made in delivering life-saving malaria nets and treatments over the last few years, but the coverage of malaria programmes needs to be stepped up drastically in order to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

### [The World malaria report 2009](#)

(WHO 15/12/2009)

## In the Media

[Global warming blamed for rise in malaria on Mount Kenya](#) - global warming has caused a seven-fold increase in cases of malaria on the slopes of Mount Kenya (Times Online 31/12/2009)

[More children to be checked for lead poisoning](#) - the local government has pledged to check more children living near an industrial park in Qingyuan, Guangdong province, after 25 children were confirmed to have lead poisoning (China Daily 30/12/2009)

[Anti-smoking law among changes in Queensland, Australia](#) - tough new anti-smoking laws will fine Queensland drivers who smoke while children are in their cars \$200 from January 1 2010 (Brisbane Times 30/12/2009)

[Childhood exposure to tobacco smoke raises risk of emphysema](#) - scientists have long thought that people who quit smoking recover some of their lung function and health. That may be true, but it appears children exposed to secondhand smoke are not so lucky (Los Angeles Times 28/12/2009)

[Mercury emissions rise in Illinois](#) - mercury pollution from coal-fired power plants is increasing in Illinois even as it declines nationwide, a troubling trend for the state because emissions of the toxic metal tend to fall back to earth close to the source (Chicago Tribune 27/12/2009)

[NY scientists to study affect of everyday toxins](#) - New York scientists have been awarded a \$5 million federal grant to study long-term human exposure to chemicals in the environment (The Seattle Times 27/12/2009)

[Only 5.4% of world's population covered by comprehensive smoke-free laws](#)

Only 5.4% of the world's population was covered by comprehensive smoke-free laws in 2008, up from 3.1% in 2007, WHO reported today in its second report on the global tobacco epidemic.

[WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic 2009](#)  
(WHO 9/12/2009)

[UNICEF's five-year tsunami report highlights goals reached in relief and recovery efforts](#)

Five years after an earthquake off the coast of Indonesia triggered a massive tsunami that spread throughout the Indian Ocean, UNICEF issued a report summarizing the results of its relief and recovery programmes in the eight affected countries.

(UNICEF 18/12/2009)

[Young people commit to and demand action on climate change](#)

Gathered from all over the world, 164 young people, aged 14 to 17, issued a Declaration in Copenhagen committing to personal changes in their own lives and demanding that governments take actions to protect the world from the terrible effects of climate change.

[Children's Climate Forum Declaration](#)  
(UNICEF 4/12/2009)

## JOURNAL ARTICLES

### Air Pollution

[Traffic-Related Air Pollution, Oxidative Stress Genes, and Asthma \(ECHRS\)](#)

Genetic polymorphisms in the NQO1 gene are related to asthma susceptibility among persons exposed to local traffic-related air pollution. This points to the importance of antioxidant pathways in the protection against the effects of air pollution on asthma. *Environmental Health Perspectives*

[What is to blame for child obesity?](#) - a genetic abnormality that caused severe obesity found in a handful of children (Las Angeles Times 25/12/2009)

[Waiting On Science To Say If Plastic Chemical Is Safe](#) - the Food and Drug Administration has quietly delayed its review of BPA, a widely used plastic additive that can act like the hormone estrogen in the body (National Public Radio US 24/12/2009)

[Alert over levels of lead in children's cosmetics](#) - high levels of lead have been found in several leading brands of children's cosmetics in the past two years (Dublin Irish Independent 24/12/2009)

[China arrests father active on melamine milk issues](#) - Beijing police have formally arrested a man who organized a website for parents of children who became ill after drinking tainted milk after his own son became sick (Reuters Health 22/12/2009)

[Farming town demands answers on birth defects](#) - birth defects in the small farming town of Kettleman City in California is located just three miles from the largest toxic waste dump in the West (Associated Press 22/12/2009)

[Study suggests link between occupation and birth defects](#) - women in certain professions face a high risk of having children with physical problems (Toronto Globe and Mail 22/12/2009)

[No link seen between acetaminophen, birth defects](#) - new study findings offer reassurance to pregnant women that acetaminophen does not appear to raise the risk of birth defects (Reuters Health 21/12/2009)

[Prenatal baby aspirin not harmful to infants: study](#) - baby aspirin taken for high-risk pregnancy complications does not appear to harm brain development among very premature children assessed when 5 years old (Reuters 21/12/2009)

[Residential traffic exposure and pregnancy-related outcomes: a prospective birth cohort study](#)

Mothers exposed to residential traffic had no higher risk of adverse birth outcomes or pregnancy complications in this study. *Environmental Health*

[Fine particulate air pollution and its components in association with cause-specific emergency admissions](#)

This study found that PM<sub>2.5</sub> mass higher in Ni, As, and Cr, as well as Br and OC significantly increased its effect on hospital admissions. This result suggests that particles from industrial combustion sources and traffic may, on average, have greater toxicity. *Environmental Health*

[Variability in childhood allergy and asthma across ethnicity, language, and residency duration in El Paso, Texas: a cross-sectional study](#)

The findings of this study suggest that a community-wide environmental exposure in El Paso, delayed pulmonary development, or increased health of immigrants may be associated with allergy and asthma development in children raised there. *Environmental Health*

[Tobacco use among adults in Cambodia: evidence for a tobacco epidemic among women](#)

The tobacco epidemic in Cambodia extends far beyond cigarette smoking in men. Tobacco control that focuses only on cigarettes will not address the health burden from smokeless tobacco use in women that may be an integral part of cultural, familial, and traditional medicine practices. *Bulletin WHO*

[Sharp Rise In Autism, But Causes Are Unclear](#) -

about one in every 110 U.S. children has been diagnosed with an autism disorder, according to a new government study, a significant increase from recent years (The Wall Street Journal 19/12/2009)

[Agent Orange Poisons New Generations in Vietnam](#) -

doctors at Ho Chi Minh City's Tu Du Hospital blame the high incidence of birth defects on the use of Agent Orange during the war (Time Magazine 19/12/2009)

[Heavy metal: Some airborne particles pose more dangers than others](#) -

whenever airborne particles increase, so do deaths from heart and lung diseases. Now new evidence is emerging that some particles may be more dangerous than others (Environmental Health News 17/12/2009)

[Millions at risk as East Africa rains fail, Oxfam says](#) -

rains across swathes of East Africa have failed for the sixth year in a row, leaving millions of people facing hardship, Oxfam has warned (BBC 17/12/2009)

[Premature birth tied to later behavioral problems](#) -

children who were born prematurely and at a very low weight may have an increased risk of certain behavior problems and symptoms of depression and anxiety (Reuters Health 16/12/2009)

[Dirty air makes for wheezy kids: study](#) -

small particles from traffic and heating oil combustion may cause children younger than two to wheeze and cough (Reuters Health 16/12/2009)

## Chemicals

### [Prenatal Exposure to Organohalogenes, Including Brominated Flame Retardants, Influences Motor, Cognitive, and Behavioral Performance at School Age](#)

This study demonstrates that transplacental transfer of polybrominated flame retardants is associated with the development of children at school age. *Environmental Health Perspectives*

### [Prenatal Bisphenol A Exposure and Early Childhood Behavior](#)

These results suggest that prenatal BPA exposure may be associated with externalizing behaviors in 2-year-old children, especially among female children. *Environmental Health Perspectives*

### [Household Exposures to Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers \(PBDEs\) in a Wisconsin Cohort](#)

This study demonstrated the usefulness of the portable XRF analyzer in identifying household items that may contribute to human exposure to PBDEs. *Environmental Health Perspectives*

### [Lung Inflammation, Injury, and Proliferative Response after Repetitive Particulate Hexavalent Chromium Exposure](#)

This study shows that repetitive exposure to particulate chromate induces chronic injury and an inflammatory microenvironment that may promote carcinogenesis. *Environmental Health Perspectives*

### [The Severity of Autism Is Associated with Toxic Metal Body Burden and Red Blood Cell Glutathione Levels](#)

The severity of a child's autism coincided with the levels of toxic metals excreted in their urine after treatment with a metals removal therapy. *Journal of Toxicology*

[Botswana in acute mercury poison scare](#) - Botswana faces a public health disaster as local hospitals and clinics choke under mercury vapor contamination levels, high enough to cause acute poisoning (Sunday Standard 13/12/2009)

[EPA joins fight for safe drinking water at schools](#) - the Environmental Protection Agency's renewed focus on safe drinking water at schools returns the agency to a pivotal role protecting our water supply (The Seattle Times 13/12/2009)

[Birth weight, early weight gain may hasten puberty](#) - a relatively low birth weight and early-age weight gain may increase the likelihood of early puberty. Earlier onset of puberty has been linked to certain cancers, high blood sugar and obesity (Reuters Health 10/12/2009)

[Canada to host meeting on BPA use](#) - Canada will play host to an international meeting of health experts next year to discuss a hormone-disrupting chemical often used in food packaging (Can West News Service 8/12/2009)

[Closer look finds chains test more often, impose stricter limits on bacteria](#) - the US government has provided the nation's schools with millions of pounds of beef and chicken that wouldn't meet the quality or safety standards of many fast-food restaurants (USA Today 8/12/2009)

[Gene absence makes the kid grow rounder](#) - "holes" in the genomes of severely overweight children have revealed a new type of genetic variant that drives obesity and also increases the risk of learning difficulties (New Scientist 7/12/2009)

## Water And Sanitation

### [A Fatal Waterborne Outbreak of Pesticide Poisoning Caused by Damaged Pipelines, Sindhikela, Bolangir, Orissa, India, 2008](#)

Inappropriate use of pesticides contaminated the water supply and caused an outbreak in Orissa, India. Education programs and regulations need to be combined to ensure a safer use of pesticides in India. *Journal of Toxicology*

### [Changes in Urinary Arsenic Methylation Profiles in a 15-Year Interval after Cessation of Arsenic Ingestion in Southwest Taiwan](#)

This study showed arsenic methylation profiles that indicate increased efficiency in arsenic metabolism in residents after cessation of long-term exposure to high-level arsenic. *Environmental Health Perspectives*

## Global Change

### [Slums, climate change and human health in sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Over the coming decades, the effects of climate change will be progressively felt across the African continent. Climate change and urbanization will interact, with unpredictable effects. *Bulletin WHO*

## Reproductive Health

### [Synergistic Disruption of External Male Sex Organ Development by a Mixture of Four Antiandrogens](#)

This study shows the effect of combined chemical exposure on disrupting male sexual development and differentiation. *Environmental Health Perspectives*

[Fears Birmingham children are smoking cigarettes filled with asbestos](#) - toxic cigarettes smuggled into Britain from Russia are being sold to Midland school children for as little as forty pence a packet (Birmingham Mail 6/12/2009)

[Sick Schools 2009 National Report Released](#) - The report offers evidence of how polluted air inside and outside schools escalate health care costs, increase absenteeism, and reduce test scores (Healthy Schools 4/12/2009)

[Number of kids in daycare may affect asthma risk](#) - the more other children toddlers are exposed to at day care, up to a certain point, the lower their risk of developing asthma (Reuters Health 2/12/2009)

[Insect repellent linked to birth defects](#) - mums who used the repellent in the earliest phase of pregnancy had an increased rate of "hypospadias" in the penises of their male children (The Sydney Morning Herald 2/12/2009)

[New frontiers – and limitations – in testing people's bodies for chemicals](#) - new horizons in biomonitoring are identifying environmental exposures that may play a role in health problems, including cancer, neurological disorders and diabetes (Environmental Health News 2/12/2009)

[Bhopal water still toxic 25 years after deadly gas leak, study finds](#) - two reports say scene of 1984 disaster still has alarming levels of poisons, with one 2,400 times the WHO guideline (The Guardian 1/12/2009)

[Tall kids more apt to become heavy adults](#) - children who are relatively tall may be more likely than their shorter peers to become overweight young adults (Reuters Health 1/12/2009)

## CONFERENCE DECLARATION

### [Cannabis and Breastfeeding](#)

This review states that cannabis use and abuse of other drugs like alcohol, tobacco, or cocaine must be contraindicated during breastfeeding. Mothers who use cannabis must stop breastfeeding, or ask for medical assistance to stop cannabis use in order to provide her baby with all the benefits of human milk.

*Journal of Toxicology*

### [Residential Exposure to Traffic and Spontaneous Abortion](#)

In this cohort, living within 50m of a road with AADT of 15,200 or more was significantly associated with spontaneous abortion among African Americans and nonsmokers. *Environmental Health Perspectives*

### [Oral Exposure to Genistin, the Glycosylated Form of Genistein, during Neonatal Life Adversely Affects the Female Reproductive System](#)

These results support the idea that the dose of the physiologically active compound reaching the target tissue, rather than the administered dose or route, is most important in modeling chemical exposures.

*Environmental Health Perspectives*

### [The Perth Declaration for the Global Reduction of Childhood Lead Exposure](#)

The Pacific Basin Consortium for Environment & Health's 13th International Conference, Perth Western Australia.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### [53rd Committee on the Rights of the Child](#)

11 - 29 January 2010. Geneva, Switzerland

### [5th International Conference on Children's Health and the Environment](#)

1 – 3 February 2010. Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore, Karnataka, India.

### [4th International Conference on the History of Occupational and Environmental Health](#)

19 – 22 June 2010. California. University of California, San Francisco, USA.

## CALL FOR EXPERTS:

### [Joint FAO/WHO Expert meeting to review toxicological and health aspects of Bisphenol A](#)

October 2010, Canada

### [Links to past issues and how to subscribe](#)

#### Have news for us?

If you would like to submit information to future HECANET issues, email us at [heca@who.int](mailto:heca@who.int) with the subject line "INFORMATION FOR HECANET".

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