

HECANET * December 2007 - January 2008**

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ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS

Air pollution begins with the association between phthalates in dust and allergic diseases among Bulgarian children. Beijing halts outdoor school sports activities on polluted days. Another interesting study in Environmental Health Perspectives found an association between particulate matter air pollution and postneonatal infant mortality. Researchers in India are shocked to find that children take to tobacco before they are 10 years old. In France, smoking has been fully banned in public places since the beginning of the year. In the chemical section, there are warnings about different chemicals in baby products, from baby shampoos to baby bottles. Lead is found in yet more children's toys and in traditional medicines. A very interesting new tool for classification of acute pesticide poisoning is available. The ESCALE study finds a possible association between domestic use of pesticides and the etiology of childhood haematopoietic malignancies. Regarding water and sanitation articles, perchlorate could be harming babies and the Papua New Guinea Government calls to investigate pollution in river and streams in the Northern Province. Many publications address climate change and how it affect human health, predictions are worrisome as WHO's Director General calls for the preparation for unprecedented challenges. In reproductive health, a study correlates prenatal PCB exposure and thymus size at birth and another looks at the way the environment can impact the way our genes work.

In the Americas, Peru's children suffer from malnutrition, as a tropical disease is heading towards the U.S. After a strong campaign, the Chilean Health Secretary will ban lindane. In Asia, the war has had a great impact on people and the environment in Iraq. Climate change threatens Bangladesh. In Africa, plastic bags, e-waste and other kinds of waste abound in the environment. Children in Sierra Leone have the lowest chance in the world of surviving until age 5. The European Commission proposes strict limits on chemicals in toys and parts of Italy are invaded by waste and others by Chikungunya. Finally, in Oceania, another vector-borne disease, malaria climbs into warmer highlands.

Summaries of articles grouped under the following themes appear below, with links to their full texts:

- (1) AIR POLLUTION: (a) Indoor air pollution (b) Outdoor air pollution (c) Environmental Tobacco Smoke/Smoking**
- (2) CHEMICALS: (a) General, (b) Lead, (c) Pesticides, (d) Mercury**
- (3) WATER AND SANITATION**
- (4) GLOBAL CHANGE**
- (5) REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**
- (6) MISCELLANEOUS (a) General (b) Americas (c) Asia (d) Africa (e) Europe (f) Oceania**

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

For more information on HECA's latest developments, please visit the Healthy Environments for Children Alliance website: <http://www.who.int/heca/en/>
International Network to Promote Household Water Treatment and Safe Storage: http://www.who.int/household_water/en/

(2) Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI) Newsletter and Upcoming International Workshop

The CEHI Newsletter has been set up to engage partners with the Global Initiative on Children's Environmental Health Indicators (CEHI). To sign up to the newsletter, to contribute information or to find out more, please visit the website [WHO | Children's environmental health indicators newsletter \(CEHI\)](#) or contact: cehindicators@who.int

Upcoming: International Workshop on Children's Environmental Health Indicators: Five Years After the Global Commitment at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Hammamet, Tunisia. 10-11 April 2008. The workshop will assess progress made to date on developing children's environmental health indicators and outline directions for future work. For more information, go to www.who.int/ceh or contact cehindicators@who.int

(3) World Health Day 2008: protecting health from climate change

World Health Day on 7 April 2008 marks the founding of the World Health Organization and is an opportunity to draw worldwide attention to a subject of major importance to global health each year. In 2008, World Health Day focuses on the need to protect health from the adverse

effects of climate change. The theme "Protecting health from climate change" raises the profile of health dangers posed by global climate variability and change. It was selected because overwhelming evidence shows that climate change presents growing threats to international public health security - from extreme weather-related disasters to wider spread of such vector-borne diseases as malaria and dengue. Through increased collaboration, the world will be better prepared to cope with climate-related health challenges. Actions include strengthening surveillance and control of infectious diseases, ensuring safer use of diminishing water supplies, and coordinating health action in emergencies.

Its [web site](#) will emphasize the importance of the theme, provide information and tools to help organize activities in local areas, and feature information from around the world about how the Day is recognized. It will be updated regularly leading up to the Day and throughout 2008. The site will provide a place to let others know what you are doing to mark World Health Day, and build global momentum to "protect health in a changing climate". The World Health Day 2008 toolkit to help organizers of activities will be available soon on the web site. For enquiries, email whd2008@who.int

(4) World Cancer Day

Only 100% smoke-free environments protect children and families from the very serious health problems that breathing second-hand smoke causes. Do not allow anyone to smoke in your home. Demand that all indoor public places be 100% smoke-free. Around 700 million children - almost half of the world's children - breathe air polluted by tobacco smoke, particularly at home. On 4 February 2008, [World Cancer Day](#) directed a simple message to parents: "Second-hand smoke is a health hazard for you and your family. There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke. Give your child a smoke-free childhood."

(5) WHO: Fuel for Life

WHO has just published "Fuel for life: household energy and health" in French and Spanish. "Energie domestique et santé : des combustibles pour vivre mieux" and "Energía doméstica y salud: combustibles para una vida mejor" also include the results of the assessment of the burden of disease due to solid fuel use at national level. The publications can be downloaded from <http://www.who.int/indoorair/en/> and printed copies can be ordered at <http://www.who.int/bookorders>

(6) UNEP: The Volvo Adventure

[The Volvo Adventure](#), in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is an educational award programme for young people, between 10 and 16 years of age, designed to encourage environmental awareness and activity among future decision makers. Teams of youth were invited to submit environmental project proposals for support through this programme. The best projects will be invited to attend the finals at the Volvo Adventure Award conference, which is held in Göteborg every May. The conference will enable participants to present their projects and to share

their ideas with other young people from all over the world. The three best entries will receive grants that will enable them to continue their project work.

(7) UNICEF: Climate Change and Children

[Climate Change and Children](#) examines the effects of climate change on children – and examines how climate change has evolved from an ‘environmental’ issue into one that requires collective expertise in sustainable development, energy security, and the health and well-being of children. Young people speak directly through comments and letters collected by UNICEF’s Voices of Youth, child delegates to the 2007 UNEP African Regional Children’s Conference for the Environment and the 2007 World Scout Jamboree, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme.

(8) UNICEF: Progress for Children, 6th issue

The [sixth issue of Progress for Children](#) reports on the status of child-specific targets set by world leaders at the May 2002 UN General Assembly Special Session on Children. This special edition examines more than 35 key indicators in the four broad areas identified at the Special Session as requisite to building ‘A World Fit for Children’. It also analyses the Millennium Development Goals and provides information on the state of child protection.

(9) UNICEF State of the World’s Children 2008

[The State of the World’s Children 2008](#) provides a wide-ranging assessment of the current state of child survival and primary health care for mothers, newborns and children. It examines lessons learned in child health during the past few decades and outlines the most important emerging precepts and strategies for reducing deaths among children under age five and for providing a continuum of care for mothers, newborns and children.

(10) UN Cyberschoolbus

Children and young people can now ask a question about the UN or a global issue on the UN's agenda directly to the UN's Secretary-General. The UN Cyberschoolbus, the UN's global teaching and learning project, is pleased to offer primary, intermediate, and secondary school students around the world, the opportunity to send questions to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon between now and 31 March 2008. Learn how you can submit your question on the [UN Cyberschoolbus](#) website. The website is an education resource and also provides classroom materials for schools about the UN and global issues.

(11) United Nations Climate Change Conference. Bali, Indonesia. 3 - 14 December 2007

The Conference, hosted by the Government of Indonesia, took place at the Bali International Convention Centre and brought together more than 10,000 participants, including representatives of over 180 countries together with observers from intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations and the media. The two week period included the sessions of the Conference of the

Parties to the UNFCCC, its subsidiary bodies as well as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. A ministerial segment in the second week concluded the Conference.

The conference culminated in the adoption of the Bali roadmap, which charts the course for a new negotiating process to be concluded by 2009 that will ultimately lead to a post-2012 international agreement on climate change. Ground-breaking decisions were taken which form core elements of the roadmap. They include the launch of the Adaptation Fund as well as decisions on technology transfer and on reducing emissions from deforestation. These decisions represent various tracks that are essential to achieving a secure climate future.

For more information, visit the conference website at http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_13/items/4049.php.

(12) 8th National Conference on Science, Policy, and the Environment: Climate Change Science and Solutions. Washington DC, U.S. 16-18 January 2008

Climate Change Science and Solutions was an opportunity for dialogue with leading scientists, policy makers, industry leaders, educators, and other solutions-oriented innovators to develop comprehensive strategies for protecting people and the planet against the threat of climate change.

The three-day conference was held 16-18 January 2008, at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, DC. An interactive agenda featured skill-building workshops, targeted breakout sessions, plenary sessions, and symposia that provided participants with an expansive understanding of climate change solutions and how to achieve them. The conference videos and draft recommendations are available on the [website](#).

(13) Delhi Sustainable Development Summit 2008: “Sustainable Development and climate change”. Delhi, India. 7-9 February 2008.

[The Delhi Sustainable Development Summit](#) (DSDS) is an annual event which has become the most important gathering of leaders drawn from various parts of the world concerned about global sustainable development. According to IPCC, ‘ Sustainable development can reduce vulnerability to climate change, and climate change could impede nations’ abilities to achieve sustainable development pathways’. The problem of climate change is a global problem requiring a collective solution, which has developed as a consequence of intensified unsustainable patterns of development since the beginning of the industrial revolution.

Hence, to address the problems of climate change DSDS 2008 will focus on “Sustainable Development and Climate Change”. The two processes of the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC as well as of the 13th Conference of the Parties under the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) will add great value in the deliberations of DSDS 2008 which will benefit from leaders of public opinion and global stature who will contribute to the substance of the discussions towards a post 2012 era. The event is co-organized by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (Government of India) and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI).

(14) 6th Respiratory Symposium of Respiratory Diseases Study Group Sri Lanka. Colombo, Sri Lanka. 9-10 February 2008

Respiratory Diseases Study Group Sri Lanka will be holding its 6th Respiratory Symposium on the 9-10 February 2008 at Hilton Hotel Colombo, Sri Lanka . For more information, contact Dr Kirthi Gunasekera at 94 777 878747

(15) Indoor Air Quality and Health. Teleconference. 12 February 2008

The quality of our indoor environments affects our well-being and productivity. In addition, the risk of disease is increased by factors such as indoor air pollutants, toxins and microbes on surfaces, and

human contact. John Spengler, Ph.D., Harvard School of Public Health's Department of Environmental Health will lead the teleconference. The seminar starts with a brief summary of our current understanding of ambient air pollution health concerns. Contrasting outdoor air to indoor air as a public good, it is seen that the policy debate about regulating indoor environments is still quite confused. A pollutant-specific framework rather than a comprehensive framework has characterized public and private responses to indoor air quality to date. Examples include formaldehyde, asbestos, radon and now moulds. Contemporary topics of moulds and synthetic organic compounds illustrate the continuing concerns about the health of indoor environments.

For more information on the teleconference and logistical information on how to participate, please go to www.ehinitiative.org or contact Laura Abulafia at Laura@aaidd.org

(16) Second International Conference on Health & Biodiversity. Galway, Ireland. 25-28 February 2008

The [Second International Conference on Health and Biodiversity](#) COHAB 2. Galway, Ireland. 25 - 28 February 2008.

(17) The 4th Annual Brussels Climate Change Conference 2008. Brussels, Belgium. 26-27 February 2008

After a series of high profile events related to climate change throughout 2007 such as the G8 summit or the major economies meeting, the climate change negotiations during the COP13 in Bali have accepted a roadmap for the negotiations for a post-2012 climate change agreement. After taking stock of the state of negotiations, this joint Centre for European Policy Studies/Epsilon conference will explore the key issues for the post-2012 agreement. [The 4th Annual Brussels Climate Change Conference](#) focuses upon EU and global issues relating to climate change, and in particular looks at the following issues: post-2012 after Bali and before the Hokkaido G8 summit; progress of EU integrated energy and climate package, burden-sharing renewables and technology; EU Emissions Trading Review with a focus on investment; transport.

(18) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: “Let’s Go Outside for Health – Health Professionals’ Roundup Meeting”. Arlington, U.S. 29 February 2008.

On 29 February 2008 in Arlington, Virginia, U.S., the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s “Let’s Go Outside for Health – Health Professionals’ Roundup Meeting” will take place. The goal of this meeting is to continue outreach to health and healthcare professionals regarding the health and conservation benefits of regular outdoor play in a natural environment. Information from this meeting will be used to develop a “Let’s Go Outside for Health” toolkit for health professionals. Climate change and poor health trends in our children are the best indicators of the importance of the interrelationship between human and environmental health. A new report entitled, “The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds” from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) concludes that free and unstructured play is healthy and, in fact, essential for helping children reach important social, emotional and cognitive developmental milestones as well as helping them manage stress and become resilient. This important conclusion from a leader in the health community substantiates claims made by environmentalist, Rachel Carson, when in 1959 she stated, “Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.”

During Let’s Go Outside for Health – Health Professionals’ Roundup Meeting, participants will: write outreach messages that will raise the awareness of health professionals regarding the importance of outdoor activity and contact with nature for overall health and well-being; write sample prescriptions that a health professional can use to prescribe regular outdoor activity and contact with nature to clients; outline three national level activities that will raise national awareness among health professionals regarding regular exposure to nature. In addition, noted speakers including Dr. Howard Frumkin, from the Centers for Disease Control and Dale Hall, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will provide perspectives on the connection between human and environmental health. For more information, please contact robin_bunch@fws.gov

(19) Short course: Improving accessibility to water and sanitation facilities for physically vulnerable groups in low-income countries. 17-19 March 2008. Loughborough, UK

Physically vulnerable people might include a range of users who experience difficulty using ordinary facilities, such as frail older people, disabled people, small children, pregnant women and people who are injured or sick, including people living with HIV/AIDS. The focus will be on both individual household and communal, public and institutional facilities in poor rural and peri-urban areas of low/ middle-income countries.

The [course](#) aims at providing an introductory course to increase awareness of the issues of accessibility for physically vulnerable people to water and sanitation facilities, possible approaches to improving accessibility, and practical starting points for their own work. Participants will leave with a better understanding of: the obstacles and challenges facing physically vulnerable people in accessing and using water and sanitation facilities; possible approaches, including technical solutions and service delivery processes, to address these issues; plans and practical starting points for implementation to improve inclusion. The course format

will include lectures, whole/ small group discussions, problem solving scenarios, role-play, and practical small group activities. Written hand-outs will be provided. It is expected that participants will be from a range of backgrounds, including from the WATSAN engineering and public health sectors, and from disability/gender/ social development sectors. It is likely to be of interest to staff of UK/Europe-based NGOs, consultants, or international students currently studying in the UK. No previous knowledge or experience in this area is necessary. Deadline for registration is 11th February 2008. For more information, contact Tracy Wootton at wedc-admissions@Lboro.ac.uk

(20) 3rd Euro-Asian Conference on Hazardous Waste & Human Health. Istanbul, Turkey. 27-30 March 2008.

The Euro-Asian Association for Children's Environmental Health and the Organizing Committee of the 3rd Euro-Asian Conference on Hazardous Waste and Human Health are pleased to invite you to the 3rd Euro-Asian Conference on Hazardous Waste and Human Health to be held in Istanbul, Turkey in March 2008. The conference in Turkey is the third of a series of conferences designed to identify solutions to human environmental health problems and to facilitate the establishment of sustainable collaborative programs around the world. The previous conferences were held in 2005 and 2006 in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

The subjects of this conference will cover all aspects of human disease resulting from exposure to environmental contaminants, both those due to chemical agents and infection, and will also include impacts of climate change on human health. The conference will consist of plenary sessions, symposiums, workshops and poster sessions. Deadline for abstracts: 3 March 2008. Deadline for registration: 21 March 2008. For more information, please visit the [conference website](#).

(21) 2008 National Asthma Forum: Sharing, Learning, and Taking Action Together. Washington DC, U.S. 1-2 May 2008

In May 2008, asthma leaders from across the U.S will gather in Washington, D.C., to discuss the most effective community-based strategies for managing asthma and achieving positive outcomes and results. The [2008 National Asthma Forum](#) aims at sharing best practices, learning from award-winning programs and developing concrete strategies to build or strengthening programs.

(22) FAO: High-Level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy. Rome, Italy. 3-5 June 2008.

Securing world food security in light of the impact of climate change may be one of the biggest challenges we face in this century. An estimated 850 million people in the world today suffer from hunger. Of those, about 820 million live in developing countries, the very countries expected to be most affected by climate change. Governments, international organizations, civil society, the private sector and other actors, must work together to address these challenges and to devise appropriate strategies and responses.

The recent thirty-fourth session of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Conference called for a series of expert meetings on climate change and bioenergy, to be held between January and April 2008 and two stakeholder consultations aimed at civil society organizations and the private sector. The expert meetings and stakeholder consultations will be followed by a [High-Level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy](#) to take place 3-5 June 2008. The High-Level Conference will be informed by work undertaken and findings which emerge from the expert meetings and stakeholder consultations.

(23) Sixth session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety. Dakar, Senegal. 15-19 September 2008

Sixth session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety. Dakar, Senegal. 15-19 September 2008. An overview of the agenda topics is available on the [IFCS Forum VI website](#). Information on the working groups preparing the plenary agenda topics is available on the [IFCS website](#)

Substitution is a strategy of risk reduction through implementing solutions to prevent human and environmental exposure to certain chemical hazards while still achieving the intended goal. To replace harmful substances and processes with less harmful ones or with non-chemical alternatives, can be an effective strategy to reduce risks to human health and the environment. The IFCS Forum Standing Committee Working Group preparing the Forum VI session on the topic of substitution and alternatives is compiling case studies, examples and tools relevant to substitution and alternatives. The compilation will provide additional background information for the Forum VI session. For this contributions are welcome. Please send information – published papers, reports, presentations or web sources of information – to the IFCS Secretariat at ifcs@who.int

The [website](#) has been modified recently in order to be more easily accessible

(24) Environmental Performance Index 2008

Policymakers in the environmental field have also begun to recognize the importance of incorporating analytically rigorous foundations into their decision-making. However, while policymakers are calling for increased intellectual rigor in environmental planning, large data gaps and a lack of time-series data still hamper efforts to track many environmental issues, spot emerging problems, assess policy options, and gauge effectiveness. The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) seeks to begin to fill these gaps and, more broadly, to draw attention to the value of accurate data and sound analysis as the basis for environmental policymaking.

The [2008 EPI](#) was launched at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The Index, produced by a team of environmental experts at Yale University and Columbia University, found that Switzerland tops the global list of countries ranked by environmental performance. The 2008 EPI ranks 149 countries on 25 indicators tracked across six established policy categories: Environmental Health, Air Pollution, Water Resources, Biodiversity and Habitat, Productive

Natural Resources, and Climate Change. The EPI identifies broadly-accepted targets for environmental performance and measures how close each country comes to these goals.

(25) Activities of the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE) and Asociación Argentina de Médicos por el Medio Ambiente (AAMMA)

Postgraduate Degree Course on Children's and Women's Environmental Health. Buenos Aires, Argentina. The course starts on 9 April 2008. Organized by: Institute for Human and Health Development of the City of Buenos Aires and AAMMA / ISDE Latin America (ISDE LA). Postgraduate degree course that complements Resolution 2.479 (Ministry of Health of the City of Buenos Aires) to implement the Program on Environmental Health. Training on diagnosis, prevention and management of women's and children's diseases related to the environment.

International Seminar: "Environmental and Health: Investigation for production and development" Quito, Ecuador. 2-4 April 2008. Organized by Dr. Raúl Harari, ISDE LA Vice-President, with the support of ISDE Italy.

ISDE Workshop on Health and Environment. Salsamaggiore, Parma, Italy. 17-20 April 2008. It will include session on Climate Change and Health.

10th Chilean/Argentinean Paediatrics Workshop. Coyhaique, Chile. 27-28 March 2008. Organized by: Chilean Paediatrics Society (SOCHIPE), Argentinean Paediatric Society (SAP). 27 March 2008: Workshop on: the Role of the Patagonian Paediatrician on Children's Environmental Health (CEH). Organized by ISDE and International Network on Children's Health, Environment and Safety (INCHES).

For more information on these and other news and projects, please visit: www.aamma.org and www.isde.org

(26) Green Schools Programme

The [Green Schools Programme](#) is an 'inspection' or 'survey' of the school done by its students on its environmental practices (environmental auditing). The students form teams and go around the school on an exploratory journey and find out what's happening? – to the water, energy, land, air and waste in the school. How is the school managing these issues? And the fun part is that till now the school was giving out report cards but now the students prepare a report card of the school on its environmental performance. The audit is done with the help of an interesting handbook called the Green Schools Programme Manual. This manual gives a step by step guidelines on how to conduct an environmental audit in the school. Every year thousands of students are producing report cards of their schools and helping them improve and move towards becoming Greener schools.

(27) Reach Shoppers' Guide

Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) has launched a new [publication](#) to inform women about their consumer's rights in the new EU chemicals policy, Registration, Evaluation,

Authorization and Restriction of Chemical substances (REACH). REACH entered into force in June 2007 and companies are obliged to provide consumers, upon request, information about hazardous chemicals in the consumer products they are marketing.

(28) Secret History of the War on Cancer

A deeply personal account of the War on Cancer by Devra Davis. The War on Cancer set out to find, treat, and cure a disease. Left untouched were many of the things known to cause cancer, including tobacco, the workplace, radiation, or the global environment. The world in which we live and work overlooks sometimes whether we get cancer. The War on Cancer was run by leaders of industries that made cancer-causing products, and sometimes also profited from drugs and technologies for finding and treating the disease. Filled with compelling personalities and never-before-revealed information, The Secret History of the War on Cancer shows how we began fighting the wrong war, with the wrong weapons, against the wrong enemies — a legacy that persists to this day. Available in bookshops.

(29) Clearing the Air: Hidden Hazards of Air Fresheners

Air fresheners have become a staple in many homes and offices, marketed with the promise of creating a clean, healthy and sweet-smelling indoor atmosphere. But this Natural Resources Defense Council [issue paper](#) shows that many of these products contain phthalates - hazardous chemicals known to cause hormonal abnormalities, birth defects and reproductive problems. To protect consumers, government action to conduct more thorough tests and enact basic measures to limit exposure to phthalates is urgently needed.

ARTICLES

(1) AIR POLLUTION:

(a) Indoor air pollution

[Stove for the Developing World's Health](#) The World Health Organization estimates that 1.6 million people a year die of health effects resulting from toxic indoor air. The problem disproportionately falls on women and children who spend hours each day around the hearth. The problem does not only afflict the poorest populations. Envirofit will offer a variety of stoves [NextBillion.net](#). 22 January 2008.

[Asthmatic Symptoms among Pupils in Relation to Winter Indoor and Outdoor Air Pollution in Schools in Taiyuan, China](#). There are few studies on associations between children's respiratory health and air pollution in schools in China. Indoor chemical air pollutants of mainly outdoor origin could be one of the risk factors for pupils' respiratory symptoms at school. Z. Zhao. [EHP](#). January 2008.

[The Association between Phthalates in Dust and Allergic Diseases among Bulgarian Children](#) Studies identified associations between the concentration of phthalates in indoor dust and allergic symptoms in the airways, nose, and skin. The study shows an association between concentration of DEHP in indoor dust and wheezing among preschool children in Bulgaria. B. Kolarik. EHP. January 2008.

(b) Outdoor air pollution

[Association of Black Carbon with Cognition among Children in a Prospective Birth Cohort Study](#) The possible neurodegenerative effect of air pollution remains largely unexplored. Higher levels of black carbon predicted decreased cognitive function across assessments of verbal and nonverbal intelligence and memory constructs. SF. Suglia. American Journal of Epidemiology. 1 February 2008.

[Beijing halts outdoor school sports activities on polluted days](#) Beijing, host to the 2008 Olympic Games, will cancel outdoor school sports activities whenever heavy air pollution triggers health concerns, state press said. On days with heavy pollution, or great humidity, (outdoor) sports classes will be completely cancelled and instead indoor courses on sports theory will be held. AFP. 16 January 2008.

[Air Pollution and Postneonatal Infant Mortality in the United States 1999–2002](#) Several studies have found a relationship between particulate matter (PM) air pollution and infant mortality. This study supports PM air pollution being a risk factor for respiratory-related postneonatal mortality and suggests that ozone may be associated with SIDS in the United States. T. Woodruff. EHP. January 2008.

[A clear pattern of risk emerges from city smog](#) L.A.'s air pollution is hardest on kids. The closer to a freeway they live, play or attend school, the more likely it is that their developing lungs' capacity will be reduced. Because lung capacity diminishes as we grow older, children exposed to air pollution may enter adulthood with the deck stacked against them.. E. Cline Davis. LA Times. 10 December 2007.

(c) Environmental Tobacco Smoke/Smoking

[Children take to tobacco before 10](#) Smoking usually starts as an experiment among children but soon turns addictive. Researchers across the country have found to their shock that children take to tobacco before they turn 10. Another trend is the gap between boys and girls using tobacco has fallen considerably. WHO will lead a battle against tobacco-induced cancer. R. Sujatha. The Hindu. 3 February 2008.

[Proposed Senate bills take aim at threats to children's health](#) Threats to children's health are pervasive in the environment, a Senate committee was told as it heard testimony on a range of bills to reduce the risks: Senate Bill 6287 would make it an infraction to smoke tobacco in a vehicle if children 13 or younger are present. Other bills involve mercury and lead. K. Durbin. The Columbian. 29 January 2008.

[Smoking ban takes effect in France](#) France's drastic measure to curb smoking went into effect with a full ban on lighting up in cafés, restaurants and discos, an enormous change for a country where the cigarette first found its place as a lifestyle symbol. A New Year's Day reprieve allowed revellers their last drags in public places before the law took effect. [International Herald Tribune](#). 2 January 2008.

(2) CHEMICALS: (a) General

[Study warns of chemicals in baby items](#) Baby shampoos, lotions and powders may expose infants to chemicals that have been linked with possible reproductive problems. The chemicals, phthalates, are found in many ordinary products including cosmetics, toys, vinyl flooring and medical supplies. They are used to stabilize fragrances and make plastics flexible. L. Tanner. [Yahoo News](#). February 2008.

[The Baby Bottle Blues](#) Worries about the safety of some plastics is driving a demand for better options. Few consumers used to think about the materials baby bottles were made of. Plastic-toy recalls last summer, combined with news of the NIH panel's conclusion, have sent parents searching for safer materials and manufacturers scrambling to meet demand. A. Kuchment. [Newsweek](#). 14 January 2008.

(b) Lead

[Long-ago lead exposure, and possibly other pollutants, may hasten old-age mental decline](#) Scientists found that the higher the lifetime lead dose, the poorer the performance across a wide variety of mental functions, like verbal and visual memory and language ability. From low to high dose, the difference in mental functioning was about the equivalent of aging by 2 to 6 years. [Newser](#). 27 January 2008.

[Toy maker Ty Inc. fights recall of lead-tainted dolls](#) A popular toy maker is refusing to pull a lead-tainted doll from store shelves across Illinois, challenging a state law governing lead content in toys, the state says. Ty Inc., best known for its Beanie Babies, says United States federal law takes precedence over the Illinois statute concerning its Jammin' Jenna dolls. [Daily Herald](#). 22 January 2008.

[Folk remedies common cause of lead poisoning](#) Traditional medicines sicken thousands of children each year. The dangerous medicines are sold by folk healers known as curanderas and in ethnic grocery stores and neighborhood shops that offer herbs and charms. They are usually brought by travelers in their suitcases, thereby slipping past government regulators. [MSNBC](#). 22 January 2008.

[New lead danger found](#) Scientists headed by a researcher at the University of Rhode Island found a link between early exposure to lead in the environment and the onset of Alzheimer's disease in old age. They found that the lead exposures at a young age reprogram the way genes express themselves during the individuals' lives. Specific genes became more active. PB. Lord. [Projo.com](#). 11 January 2008.

(c) Pesticides

[Acute pesticide poisoning: a proposed classification tool](#) Acute pesticide poisoning (APP) accounts for significant morbidity and mortality worldwide. Developing countries are particularly susceptible. This document sets to create a standard case definition to facilitate identification and diagnosis of all causes of APP. JG. Thundiyil et al. Bulletin of the World Health Organization. 30 January 2008

[Accumulation of persistent organochlorine contaminants in milk and serum of farmers from Ghana](#). Daily intakes of DDTs and HCHs to infants through human breast milk were estimated, some individual farmers (DDTs) and all farmers (HCHs) accumulated OCs in breast milk above the threshold for adverse effects, which may raise concern on children's health. Ntow WJ. Environ Research. January 2008.

[Pesticides May Up Asthma In Farm Women](#) Allergy Protection From Growing Up On Farm Cut In Pesticide Users. Farm women who use pesticides are more likely than nonusers to develop allergic asthma as adults. This is particularly strong for the 60% of farm women who grew up on a farm. 10 of 31 analyzed pesticides were linked to allergic asthma. D. DeNoon. CBS News. 28 December 2007.

[Household Exposure to Pesticides and Risk of Childhood Hematopoietic Malignancies: The ESCALE Study \(SFCE\)](#) The study findings strengthen the hypothesis that domestic use of pesticides may play a role in the etiology of childhood hematopoietic malignancies. The findings raise the question of the advisability of preventing pesticide use by pregnant women. J. Rudant. EHP. December 2007.

[Association of Thyroid Hormone Concentrations with Levels of Organochlorine Compounds in Cord Blood of Neonates](#) Thyroid hormones are regulators of brain development. Results suggest that environmental chemicals may affect the thyroid system of human neonates. Animal experiments show that pollutants, can interfere with thyroid hormone homeostasis. J. Maervoet. EHP. December 2007.

(d) Mercury

[Mercury from vaccines disappears quickly](#) Mercury from vaccines seems to disappear rapidly from the blood, returning to pre-vaccination levels in one month. The findings bolster the argument that a mercury-based vaccine preservative doesn't cause autism in children, but it's unclear from the study whether some mercury may linger elsewhere in the body. C. Johnson. Yahoo News. 30 January 2008.

[Coexposure of Neonatal Mice to a Flame Retardant PBDE 99 \(2,2',4,4',5-Pentabromodiphenyl Ether\) and Methyl Mercury Enhances Developmental Neurotoxic Defects](#) Studies indicate exposure to pollutants during human development can have deleterious effects on cognitive development. PBDE can interact with MeHg causing neurotoxic effects. C. Fischer. Toxicological Sciences January 2008.

(3) WATER AND SANITATION

[In the Trenches for Clean Water](#) Water, our most basic need, is poised to be the most baffling challenge of the 21st century. It is being ignored wantonly at a time when more than 1 million people per year die from its scarcity and contamination. 97 percent of the world's water is undrinkable ocean. Children under age five account for at least 90% of water-related deaths. S. Garlick. ENN. 16 January 2008.

[Common water pollutant could harm babies](#) A chemical pollutant that is commonly found in water supplies could harm nursing babies, even lead to mental impairment in extreme cases. Perchlorate, an industrial pollutant linked to thyroid ailments-has been found in US drinking water and a survey is currently under way to find out its extent and impact in the UK. Telegraph. 3 December 2008.

[Call to investigate water pollution](#) The Papua New Guinea Government must immediately conduct investigations into the pollution of rivers, streams and creeks in the Northern Province. 70 per cent of the province is in desperately need of fresh water. If the matter is not addressed many babies in the province are likely to die. Papua New Guinea Post. Post-Courier Online. 14 December 2007

(4) GLOBAL CHANGE

[UN must coordinate action to address climate change, says new report](#) “The United Nations needs to be more than merely the sum of its parts,” UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon writes in the report. “The challenge is to develop and implement effectively integrated economic, trade, social and environmental policies on mitigating and adapting to climate change.” Un News Centre. 31 January 2008

[Climate change to hit health above economy: study](#) Climate change will have potentially devastating consequences for human health, outweighing global economic impacts, researchers said, calling for urgent action to protect the world's population. Infectious diseases cannot be stabilized in circumstances of climatic instability, refugee flows and impoverishment. Reuters. 25 January 2008.

[Report to the Executive Board, 122nd session](#) Climate change is now accepted as a reality by world leaders. It was the job of scientists to make the case for taking this threat seriously. Now that the case has been convincingly made, public health must move onto the scene in full gear. Humanity is the most important species endangered by climate change. M. Chan. DG WHO. WHO. 21 January 2008.

[Red Cross says changing climate worsens disasters](#) Climate change is making it harder for many people to access clean water and food, and widening the spread of malaria and dengue fever. The 186 national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies pledged at a strategy-setting conference in November to boost aid to those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Reuters. 21 January 2008.

[Children turn to canvas for climate change](#) The 16th International Children's Painting Competition on the Environment invited children to paint about threats and solutions for Climate Change. A. Steiner, UNEP's Director, said: "It is the children who will witness in their lifetimes the largest impacts if the world does not move to address this challenge". The New Nation. Bangladesh. 3 January 2008.

[As Temperatures Rise, Health Could Decline](#) The effects of climate change are diverse. "We are not dealing with a single toxic agent or a single microbe where we can put our finger with certainty on an exposure and the response," said JA. Patz, a physician and epidemiologist at the University of Wisconsin. "Climate change affects everything." D. Brown. Washington Post. 17 December 2007.

[Climate Change Poses Dangerous Health Risks - WHO](#) "Some of the major killers are climate sensitive" said M. Neira, WHO's director of public health and environment. "We are concerned about malnutrition related to lack of agricultural production, about diarrhoea due to water scarcity and sanitation, and about seeing an increase in dengue and malaria". S. Katyal. Planet Ark. 13 December 2007.

[Climate change and health: preparing for unprecedented challenges](#) This century, climate change – a fifth horseman, a new threat of a magnitude unknown to human experience – will ride across our promising landscape of public health. It will ride on a collision course with all the fits and starts of our progress, sometimes fragile, sometimes fundamental. M. Chan, DG WHO. WHO. 10 December 2007

[Nobel peace laureates call for actions on climate change](#) The two winners of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize Sunday called on world leaders to take "strong and concrete actions" to combat climate change. Gore and Pachauri urged children and youths to get involved in climate change issues at school and elsewhere. Global warming is a question of survival of civilization. Xinhuanet (China). 9 December 2007.

(5) REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

[Maternal Smoking, Alcohol Consumption, and Caffeine Consumption during Pregnancy in Relation to a Son's Risk of Persistent Cryptorchidism: A Prospective Study in the Child Health and Development Studies Cohort, 1959–1967](#) Maternal caffeine consumption during pregnancy may increase cryptorchidism risk. M. Mongraw-Chaffin. American Journal of Epidemiology. 1 February 2008.

[Dioxin Exposure, from Infancy through Puberty, Produces Endocrine Disruption and Affects Human Semen Quality](#) Exposure to TCDD in infancy reduces sperm concentration and motility, and an opposite effect is seen with exposure during puberty. Exposure in either period leads to reduction of estradiol and increased FSH. These effects are permanent. P. Mocarelli. EHP. January 2008.

[Prenatal PCB Exposure and Thymus Size at Birth in Neonates in Eastern Slovakia](#). Animal studies show immunotoxic effects for PCBs, including thymic atrophy and suppressed immune

responses. The study provides the first evidence that PCB exposure in neonates is associated with a smaller thymic volume, suggesting possible impaired immunologic development.. HY Park. EHP. January 2008

Lasting genetic legacy of environment Environment can change the way our genes work. Stress and diet could be affecting the genes of future generations leading to increased rates of obesity, heart disease and diabetes. The environment may affect not just a child in the womb, but the instructions to the egg and sperm cells which become the next generation. M. Durrani. BBC News. 20 December 2007.

Drinking Water with Uranium below the U.S. EPA Water Standard Causes Estrogen Receptor-Dependent Responses in Female Mice The data support the conclusion that uranium is an endocrine-disrupting chemical and populations exposed to environmental uranium should be followed for increased risk of fertility problems and reproductive cancers. S. Raymond-Whish. EHP. December 2007.

Chernobyl: Relationship between the Number of Missing Newborn Boys and the Level of Radiation in the Czech Regions A negative impact of radiation manifested as a loss of newborn boys in Nov. 1986. This loss correlated with level of radioactivity. The ¹³¹I probably played a role because of its up-take during primary saturation of fetal thyroid by iodine. M. Peterka. EHP. December 2007.

(6) MISCELLANEOUS (a) General

How green is their growth Economic progress can help to ease environmental woes, just so long as the governance is good too. Among the global killers (especially of children) in which the environment plays a role are diarrhoea, respiratory infections and malaria. Indeed, everyone will gain if poor countries find a way to leapfrog over the phases of development. The Economist. 24 January 2008.

First two years in a child's life key to adult development Moreover, children undernourished in the first two years, who put on weight rapidly later in childhood and in adolescence, are at high risk of chronic diseases related to nutrition, such as high glucose concentrations, hypertension and increased levels of harmful fats in their blood. Effective action could avert much stunting. Irin. 17 January 2008

Continued Exposure to Maternal Distress in Early Life Is Associated with an Increased Risk of Childhood Asthma Maternal distress in early life may play a role in development of childhood asthma. The study found a higher risk of childhood asthma in children exposed to maternal distress after birth and onward. AL. Kozyrskyj. American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine. January 2008

(b) Americas

PERU: For Peru's Indians, Lawsuit Against Big Oil Reflects a New Era Oxy (Occidental Petroleum) is a company that pulled a fortune from this rain forest from 1972 to 2000. Maynas

and other Achuar leaders blame the company for wreaking environmental havoc by dumping toxic wastewater directly into rivers and streams, and leaving many of the people ill. K. Hearn. CorpWatch. 31 January 2008

[Tropical disease headed towards U.S., health officials warn](#) Expanded migration of a mosquito that transmits the disease, increased urbanization, and rising temperatures and rainfall — possibly caused by global warming — have helped fuel an alarming global resurgence of the disease. This increases the likelihood that it could strike even harder in the U.S. T. Pugh. McClatchy News. 14 January 2008.

[Peru: Suffer the children: Malnutrition amid growing plenty](#) So why does malnutrition remain so prevalent? One reason is that in the Andes it generally manifests itself as stunted growth. Many Peruvians believe that people of Andean Indian descent are naturally short. Malnutrition is invisible. Children who don't eat well in their first 2 years will face learning difficulties. The Economist. 10 January 2008.

[Chilean Health Secretary will ban lindane as a result of RAP-Chile's strong campaign](#) Years of public pressure and advocacy by Alliance for a Better Quality of Life, resulted in banning of lindane import, production, retail and use. This official announcement targets lindane's use in public health as active principle in lice and scabies treatments for human beings and animals. PANNA. 13 December 2007.

(c) Asia

[Authorities clueless: Carcinogen NP in a large number of products in India](#) India consumes between 40,000 and 44,000 tons of NPEO every year. 20% is consumed by the textile industry, 22% goes into pesticides, 15% into metal cleaning products, 18% is used by leather manufacturers and 25% by makers of paints, detergents and personal care products. AP. Dutta. Down to Earth. February 2008.

[Warning over dust particles](#) Pollution Control Department says some people should avoid outdoor activities. More fine-particle dust is expected to blanket Bangkok, for the third day running, so children, the elderly and people with respiratory problems should avoid outdoor activities or undertake activities that could stir up dust in areas with hazy weather. J. Pongrai. The Nation. 18 January 2008.

[Lawyers Say Asian Courts Are Not Enforcing Environmental Laws](#) A number of developing countries in Asia have in recent years adopted laws to protect the environment. Lawyers gathering for a U.N. environment conference in Bangkok, say many courts fail to enforce environmental laws. The children and the women will force the authorities to do things L. Ramirez. VOA News. 14 January 2008

[Greens highlight Iraq destruction](#) The war in Iraq is having an irreversible impact on the country's people and the environment, said Environmental Friends Society (EFS) president Khawla Al Muhannadi. Depleted uranium used in American weapons has seeped into the

country's soil, sand and rivers and is causing cancer in children and deformities in newborns. R. Torr. [Gulf Daily News](#). 13 January 2008.

[Climate change: A threat for Bangladesh](#) Prognosis is more extreme floods in a country already devastated by floods; less food for our country in which half the children already don't have enough to eat; and less clean water, waterborne diseases being already responsible for 24% of deaths. Climate change will take form in floods, salinity intrusion and droughts. M. Galib. [The Daily Star](#). 11 January 2008.

(d) Africa

[When Plastic Attacks](#) Only 10% of trash in Africa makes it to dumps, leaving the rest to be burned in acrid bonfires or rot in communities. South Africa, Rwanda, Tanzania, Somaliland, Kenya and Uganda have all passed laws banning or restricting the use of the polyethylene culprit, and Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho and Tanzania are considering following suit. A. Manitsas. [Conscious Choice](#). 1 February 2008.

[Child mortality highest in Sierra Leone](#) A newborn in Sierra Leone has the lowest chance in the world of surviving until age five, and the prospects are almost as bad for children in Angola and Afghanistan. In 2006, nearly 9.7 million children died worldwide before their fifth birthdays, mostly from diarrhea, malaria or malnutrition, UNICEF declared in its annual report. [MSNBC](#). 22 January 2008.

[Africa: An Admiral Wages War on Malaria](#) Every day, 3,000 African mothers bury children killed by malaria. It is the leading cause of death for children under 5 in the continent. The "Malaria Initiative" goal is to reach 85% of the most vulnerable groups – children under 5 and pregnant women – with proven and effective prevention and treatment measures. C. Cobb, Jr. [AllAfrica](#). 11 January 2008.

[Southern Africa: WHO warns of high levels of malaria](#) WHO was particularly concerned about parts of the region where seasonal or epidemic malaria was common. In endemic areas, such as Mozambique with high levels of transmission, newborn children, who are protected in their first months of life by the antibodies of their immune mothers, could be more vulnerable. [IRIN](#). 2 January 2008.

[Uganda: Kazo SS Reaches Out to Community](#) Kazo Secondary School Red Cross Students Club have joined local leaders in Kazo-Muganzirwazza zone, Kawempe division to clean wells, plant trees and do other community work. Through the club, students made friends with a secondary school in Denmark and will exchange academic and social ideas. S. Balagadde. [AllAfrica.com](#). 18 December 2007

[E-waste threatens kids](#) Dandora is the largest refuse dump in the 4.5-million-strong Kenyan capital, and with 2000 tons of fresh waste every day, it holds the dubious distinction of being a member of the "dirty 30" club of the world's most polluted sites. Children get lead from inhaling fumes, from picking objects from the ground, from the dust on vegetables. L. Peytermann. [Cooltech](#). 14 December 2007.

(e) Europe

[Commission proposes strict limits on chemicals in toys](#) New toy safety measures proposed by the Commission primarily aimed at banning toxic chemicals have received a cautious welcome from European consumer organizations amid fears that they do not ensure adequate protection for children. Concerns over phthalates in toys have been particularly prevalent. [EurActiv.com](#). 28 January 2008

[Naples waste linked to death and disease](#) Among people living closest to the least-regulated waste-disposal sites, the mortality rate was 12% greater than normal for women and 9% greater for men. Fatal liver cancers were more common (up 29 % for women and 19 % for men) and there were increases in congenital malformations of the nervous and urinary systems. R. Pomeroy. [Reuters](#). 17 January 2008.

[As Earth Warms Up, Tropical Virus Moves to Italy](#) Chikungunya is spread when tiger mosquitoes drink blood from an infected person and pass the virus on when they bite again. Tiger mosquitoes first came to southern Italy with shipments of tires from Albania about a decade ago but their habitat has expanded northward as temperatures have risen. E. Rosenthal. [New York Times](#). 23 December 2007

(f) Oceania

[Helen Clark: My plan for a sustainable future](#) Healthy children are the most likely to succeed at school. A programme on preschool checks will aim to identify early the estimated 5 % of children who have conduct disorder and/or severe antisocial behaviour. Among these children will be some of the next generation of violent criminals if we don't act. H. Clark. [The New Zealand Herald](#). 31 January 2008.

[Global warming could hit rural health](#) Global warming could hit human health in remote Australia hard by causing irregular disease distribution and extreme weather, according to a new study. Aborigines could be among those worst affected since many of them live in remote areas. Altered weather patterns would bring changes in the distribution of vector-borne diseases. [News.com.au](#) 10 January 2008

[Malaria Climbs Into Warmer Highlands](#) As world warms and mosquitoes thrive, malaria climbs into New Guinea Highlands. International health authorities say more than 1 million people die each year of malaria, caused by a parasite transmitted by the bite of female anopheles mosquito. IPCC has projected that mosquito-borne tropical diseases would spread to new areas. [ABC News](#). 8 December 2007.
