

HECANET *** February - March 2009

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ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS

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

This month's air pollution articles look at indoor air and asthma, and at the effects of fine particle components (PM 2.5) on respiratory hospital admissions in children. Also, a Swedish study finds that teenagers listen to their parents' advice when it comes to smoking. In the chemicals section, the management of common childhood poisonings is reviewed and chemicals with carcinogen capacity, such as formaldehyde, are found in children's bath products. A 1999-2004 survey in the U.S. reveals the levels of lead in children's blood, the source being mostly deteriorating lead paint. In Mexico, the battle for lead-free pottery goes on. Regarding pesticides, endosulfan faces growing bans around the world and the impacts of climate change on human exposure to pesticides is analysed. More than 140 countries have agreed to negotiate a treaty to cut down mercury emissions. In Brussels, the longest toilet queue record raised public awareness to sanitation and water problems, as it is estimated that 5,000 children die every day from water,

hygiene and sanitation-related issues. In the climate change area, WHO asks for stronger climate change measures to protect human health and 2,000 rural students get climate change education. Also, dengue cases are on the rise. Reproductive health articles deal with Bisphenol A being found in many soft drinks, and birth defects are a growing public health crisis.

In the Americas, Uruguay and Argentina put an end to mercury-containing thermometers, while Bolivia intends to ban hazardous pesticides. In Asia, an AoL project involves schools to tackle global warming. Global recession brings cleaner air to China. Meanwhile, in Africa, Zimbabwe remains in the grip of cholera. In Nigeria, a special squad will deal with the dumping of toxic waste. In Europe, the EU completes a 16-year pesticide review and the European Trade Union Confederation releases a list of priority chemicals.

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- (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
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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) World Health Day 2009: Save lives. Make hospitals safe in emergencies

[World Health Day 2009](#) focuses on the safety of health facilities and the readiness of health workers who treat those affected by emergencies. Health centres and staff are critical lifelines for vulnerable people in disasters - treating injuries, preventing illnesses and caring for people's health needs. Often, already fragile health systems are unable to keep functioning through a disaster, with immediate and future public health consequences.

This year, WHO and international partners are underscoring the importance of investing in health infrastructure that can withstand hazards and serve people in immediate need. They are also urging health facilities to implement systems to respond to internal emergencies, such as fires, and ensure the continuity of care.

(3) A Children's Environment and Health Strategy for the United Kingdom

[A Children's Environment and Health Strategy for the UK](#) was published on 24 March 2009. The Strategy provides a brief overview of children's health in relation to their environment in the UK and recommends areas that should be taken forward in order to protect and promote children's health and to meet the UK's commitment to CEHAPE. The development of the Strategy was informed by a public consultation and a workshop in 2008.

(4) UNEP: Global Green New Deal

The world is in the middle of a financial and economic crisis, the most serious since the Great Depression of the 1930s. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the number of the unemployed could rise from 190 million in 2007 to 210 million in late 2009. The number of people living on less than US\$2 a day could rise by some 100 million and those below US\$1 a day by 40 million. As world leaders are busy devising a new international financial architecture to prevent future economic crises and find ways to jump start recovery, there is another greater looming crisis: climate change. Economies based on the burning of carbon-emitting fossil fuels have caused melting glaciers, sea level rise, arable land beset by drought and flood, and an increase in frequency and severity of extreme weather events. These global challenges are severely impacting our ability to sustain prosperity in developed countries and achieve the Millennium Development Goals in the developing world.

Beyond the immediate bailout of financial firms and the design of the future international financial architecture, therefore, world leaders must take bold measures to resolve the multiple crises that are plaguing humankind. UNEP's initiative on a [Global Green New Deal](#), inspired by President Roosevelt's New Deal in the aftermath of the Great Depression, is to inspire and enable governments to begin the shift towards a global economy driven by massive job creation from

the growth of resource- and energy-efficient building and construction, widespread use of modern public transport in mega cities, the scaling up of solar, wind, wave, thermal, and bio energy in the total energy mix, sustainable chemicals and waste management as a highly lucrative sector, and sustainable agriculture that reflects the latest thinking in ecosystem management and biodiversity and water conservation. The road onto the green economy may be long, but we are taking the first steps now and looking forward to walking this greatest journey of the 21st century with like-minded partners.

(5) UNEP: 25th session of the Governing Council

The [25th session of the Governing Council](#) / Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was held from 16 to 20 February 2009 at the United Nations Office in Nairobi, Kenya. A global effort on mercury was agreed by Environment Ministers at the end of the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) Governing Council. The landmark decision, taken by over 140 countries, sets the stage for the lifting of a major health threat from the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

Governments unanimously decided to launch negotiations on an international mercury treaty to deal with world-wide emissions and discharges of a pollutant that threatens the health of millions, from fetuses and babies to small-scale gold miners and their families. They also agreed that the risk to human health and the environment was so significant that accelerated action under a voluntary Global Mercury Partnership is needed while the treaty is being finalized.

(6) OHCHR analytical study on climate change and human rights now available

Measures to address climate change should be informed and strengthened by international human rights standards and principles, an analytical study by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) concludes. The OHCHR study, considered by the Human Rights Council during its session from 2 to 27 March, will be made available to the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference, Copenhagen, in December.

The study bases its premises on the findings of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which in its Fourth Assessment Report dispels any remaining doubts about the reality of global warming and details a range of climate change impacts. Many of these impacts are already affecting human rights across the globe. It then discusses examples of specific human rights directly under threat in the face of climate change, such as the rights to life, food, water, health, housing, and self-determination.

The [study](#) also explores how specific groups including women, children and indigenous peoples are particularly vulnerable to the detrimental consequences of climate change.

(7) UNECE publication Daddy you can save the planet! Now in Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish.

On 20 February 2009: Ján Kubiš, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), presented the Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish versions of the coloring book "[Daddy you can save the planet!](#)"

The publication was first released in English and French in 2007, and aims to raise children's and their parents' awareness about gestures that can limit the impact of our daily activities on the environment, such as recycling paper, switching off the light when leaving a room, using a bicycle instead of a car, etc. The launch is part of UNECE's efforts to contribute to mitigating climate change and ensuring environmental sustainability.

(8) International Conference on Environmental Epidemiology. Buenos Aires, Argentina. 5 March 2009

The first "International Conference on Environmental Epidemiology" took place on 5 March 2009 at the National Academy of Medicine, Buenos Aires, Argentina. This conference was organized to share experiences on the role of the environmental epidemiology as a tool for Public Health policies and to promote research on the environmental burden of diseases. Organized by the Institute of Epidemiological Research of the National Academy of Medicine (Argentina), Asociación Argentina de Médicos por el Medio Ambiente (AAMMA), the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE). Under the technical cooperation of WHO and PAHO.

The event had 188 participants, including governmental representatives of the Ministry of Health, Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development, Secretary of Environment and Health of the City of Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires province, Santa Fe and Cordoba, and from the National Congress. There were also representatives from the different Hospitals of the City and province of Buenos Aires, National Universities, members of the Argentine Society of Pediatrics, as well as different professionals and NGOs involved in the topic. More information at www.aamma.org

(9) PEHSU session at Spanish Public Health Society. Sevilla, Spain. 4-6 March 2009.

Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units were addressed during the last Congress of the Spanish Public Health Society (SESPAS), that took place in Sevilla, Spain from 4 to 6 March 2009. For more information, please go to <http://www.sespas.es/congresosevilla2009/>

(10) Summary of the 5th World Water Forum. Istanbul, Turkey. 16-22 March 2009

The 5th World Water Forum convened in Istanbul, Turkey, from Monday, 16 March to Sunday, 22 March 2009. The Forum is the largest international event on freshwater, and seeks to enable multi-stakeholder participation and dialogue to influence water policy-making at a global level, in pursuit of sustainable development. The 5th Forum's main theme, "bridging divides for water," was addressed through six framework themes: global change and risk management; advancing human development and the Millennium Development Goals; managing and protecting water resources; governance and management; finance; and education, knowledge and capacity development. The Forum theme was explored through more than 100 thematic sessions, seven regional sessions, and a series of political processes involving local authorities,

parliamentarians, ministers and heads of State. A Water Expo, Water Fair, Children's Forum, Youth Forum and meetings of various stakeholder groups, including women, were also held.

More than 25,000 participants attended, representing governments, UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, academia, business and industry, indigenous groups, youth and the media. An additional 8,000 participants attended the Forum's Water Expo. The Forum concluded Sunday, 22 March. Its main outputs include a Ministerial Declaration and the Istanbul Water Consensus, agreed to by local authorities. More detailed information can be found at <http://www.iisd.ca/ymb/water/worldwater5/>

(11) Third World Water Development Report released

The third edition of the [World Water Development Report](#) (WWDR-3) and a companion case study volume, 'Facing the Challenges', were released to coincide with the opening of the Fifth World Water Forum on 16 March.

The triennial World Water Development Report is the United Nations System flagship report on water, a comprehensive review of the state of the world's freshwater resources. WWDR-3, entitled 'Water in a Changing World' was co-ordinated by the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), which is hosted by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

(12) World Water Day. 22 March 2009

In 2009, the theme for [World Water Day](#) was "Shared Water - Shared Opportunities". Special focus was placed on transboundary waters. Nurturing the opportunities for cooperation in transboundary water management can help build mutual respect, understanding and trust among countries and promote peace, security and sustainable economic growth.

(13) World Meteorological Day 2009: Weather, climate and the air we breathe. 23 March 2009

Each year, on 23 March, the World Meteorological Organization, its 188 Members and the worldwide meteorological community celebrate [World Meteorological Day](#) around a chosen theme. This Day commemorates the entry into force, on that date in 1950, of the WMO Convention creating the Organization. Subsequently, in 1951, WMO was designated a specialized agency of the United Nations System. This year, the theme was "Weather, climate and the air we breathe".

[The World Climate Conference-3](#), which will be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 31 August to 4 September 2009, will further explore the links between climate and health, especially looking at the impacts of climate variability and change on the occurrence of climate extremes. The Conference will engage scientists with decision-makers and policy-makers from the public and private sectors, with a session on climate and human health planned for 1 September.

(14) Translating Science to Policy: Protecting Children’s Environmental Health. New York. U.S. 30 March 30 2009

The Columbia Center for Children’s Environmental Health (CCCEH), in collaboration with its lead community partner, WE ACT for Environmental Justice, hosted a day-long [conference](#) that focused on three major environmental health concerns affecting children: air pollution, pesticides, and endocrine disruptors in consumer products. The purpose of the conference was to share research findings from the Center and other investigators over the past ten years in these specific areas, discuss interventions stemming from this research that have been implemented in New York City, and identify strategies to advance policies that will reduce and prevent environmentally-related diseases such as asthma, developmental disorders, and cancer in children living in urban communities.

(15) Postgraduate Course: Environment and Health: Impact of Environmental Changes on Health. Buenos Aires, Argentina. 1 April 2009 onwards

For more information, please visit

<http://www.aamma.org/images/PDFs/programa%20salud%20y%20ambiente2009web.pdf>

(16) A Call for Stronger Targets: Protecting the World’s Vulnerable Communities. Washington DC, U.S. 1 April 2009

Climate Law & Policy Project (CLPP) and Many Strong Voices (MSV) co-sponsored a briefing entitled “A Call for Stronger Targets: Protecting the World’s Vulnerable Communities.” The event’s focus was on the need to secure a global agreement that includes stronger emission reduction targets as a necessary means to prevent dangerous climate impacts on vulnerable communities in the Arctic and Small Island Developing States.

(17) World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development – Moving into the Second Half of the UN Decade. Bonn, Germany. 31 March - 2 April 2009

The [World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development – Moving into the Second Half of the UN Decade](#) was held in Bonn, Germany. Organizers of the conference were UNESCO and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, in cooperation with the German Commission for UNESCO. Conference participants, including over 50 Ministers and Vice-Ministers, exchanged best practices on Education for Sustainable Development from all world regions. The Bonn Declaration was adopted.

The [Bonn Dialogues on Global Environmental Change](#) were held on 1 April 2009 in Bonn. Panelists discussed the role of education, training, and adaptation and coping strategies used to deal with the world's growing environmental hazards.

(18) Arkansas Conference on Children's Environmental Health: What healthcare providers need to know". Little Rock, U.S. 3 April 2009

The US EPA, the Southwest Center for Pediatric Environmental Health, in collaboration with the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Medicine and Area Health Education Centers sponsored the "Arkansas Conference on Children's Environmental Health: What healthcare providers need to know" on 3 April 2009 at UAMS Spine Center, Little Rock. The [conference](#) was designed for primary care physicians including family practitioners and pediatricians, nurses, school health nurses, respiratory therapists, public health officials, state and local environmental health agency personnel.

(19) Toxicology and Environmental Legislation. Madrid, Spain. 20 April 2009.

Toxicology and Environmental Legislation. CEU University. Madrid, Spain, 20 April 2009. For further information, please email utrcar@ceu.es

(20) National Healthy Schools Day. 27 April 2009.

Coordinated by Healthy Schools Network, Inc., is an important day for you to promote and celebrate healthy school environments that are conducive to learning and protecting occupant health. Schools, parents, personnel, advocates, and agencies unite nationwide to promote healthy and green school environments for all children. More information at <http://www.nationalhealthyschoolsday.org>

(21) 5th World Environmental Education Congress. Montreal, Canada. 10 to 14 May 2009

The vision for this [World Environmental Education Congress](#) is Earth as our common home. Caring for this household, in which all life exists, calls for strong ecological identity, solidarity, and sound action at this critical period of the Earth's history when we need to profoundly and urgently realign human endeavour within the capacities, limits, and systems of our home. This Congress is for all educators: professors, researchers, teachers, university students, community leaders, civil servants, museum and park interpreters, consultants, journalists, artists, and all other actors in environmental education. Together, we seek to strengthen education in our neighbourhoods, villages, cities, and regions—to better inhabit Earth, our common home.

(22) Second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM2). Geneva, Switzerland. 11-15 May 2009

[ICCM2](#) will be the first opportunity to review progress in the implementation of Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) since its adoption in 2006 and the first time the ICCM will perform its official functions as a high-level international forum for multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral discussion and exchange of experience on chemicals management issues. ICCM2 will evaluate SAICM implementation so far, address emerging policy issues (nanotechnology, chemicals in articles, lead in paint and electronic waste), consider long-term financing of SAICM, take strategic decisions on the future direction of SAICM, determine future reporting arrangements, finalize certain outstanding institutional matters, exchange scientific and technical information and decide the budget and activities for the next inter-session period.

Following the completion of email consultations with interested stakeholders the draft information document and draft document setting out possible cooperative actions on the emerging issue topic "lead in paint" have been further revised and submitted to the secretariat so that the work can be incorporated into relevant conference documents for ICCM2. These documents together with compilations of input received and draft versions of the documents are available on the SAICM web site at:

<http://www.saicm.org/index.php?menuid=9&pageid=344&submenuheader>

(23) International RCE Conference, Biosphère Montreal, Canada. 13-15 May 2009

For event details and information please contact Therese Drapeau: therese.drapeau@ec.gc.ca

(24) "Health in the Americas" University of South Florida, U.S. 11- 29 May 2009

For further information, please visit:

http://www.who.int/pmnch/topics/conferences/20090511_healthinamericas/en/index.html

(25) Course on Climate Information for Public Health. Earth Institute, Columbia University, New York U.S. 1-12 June, 2009.

For further information please visit:

<http://portal.iri.columbia.edu/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=964&mode=2>

(26) WHO Third international conference on children's health and the environment. Busan, South Korea, 7-10 June 2009

The event aims at extending the recognition of children's environmental health (CEH) needs, providing a platform for the exchange of scientific experiences, for learning about research efforts and promoting protective and preventative "policies". It will also enable us to work out why existing global efforts have not progressed more rapidly and what needs to be done, both in developing and industrialized countries.

What are the international commitments for reducing mercury exposure? How to lower the blood lead levels of concern in children? Do nanoparticles represent an emerging risk? How to move towards a safer use of radiation in paediatrics? What are the roles of CEH specialized centres? Will long term studies, collaborative research, training and other tools accelerate progress on CEH? How can we influence and develop healthier policies? These and many other issues will be addressed by health and environment professionals including researchers, scientists, policy-makers and government representatives, mainly from the surrounding Western Pacific and South-East Asian countries and many other Member States, as well as organizations around the world concerned about children and the environment that will be at BEXCO, in Busan, from 7 to 10 June 2009.

REGISTER NOW! Registration open at www.keh2009.org

(27) 4th Europaediatrics 2009 "East and West, North and South: Balanced Paediatric Care in Europe". Moscow, Russia. 3-6 July 2009

[Europaediatrics 2009](#), the European Congress of paediatricians, will take place in Moscow from 3 to 6 July 2009 for the first time in the Russian history. Over 3,000 leading scientists, doctors, organizers of children's public health services from Russia and the countries of Europe will participate in the Congress. Besides European experts, representatives of the American Academy of Pediatrics, professional associations of paediatricians from China, India and the countries of Latin America will participate in the Congress for the first time.

The social events of the Congress (Opening Ceremony, Gala Dinner, etc.) will be held in the most famous historical and cultural places ("Manezh", Moscow International Performing Art Center etc.). The scientific part of the Congress will take place in the World Trade Center. The phrase offered by the Russian paediatricians -"East and West, North and South: Balanced paediatric care in Europe" became the motto of the Moscow Europaediatrics 2009.

(28) Tunza International Children's Conference on the Environment. Daejeon, Korea. 17 - 21 August 2009

For further updates please visit:

http://www.unep.org/Tunza/Children/Events/icc_2009/

(29) First World Fair of Municipalities and Health: Rights, Citizenship and Integrated Local Management for Development. Buenos Aires, Argentina. 18-21 August 2009

Argentina will be the site of the "[First World Fair of Municipalities and Health: Rights, Citizenship and Integrated Local Management for Development](#)", that will be held from 18 to 21 August in the Coast Salguero Center, Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. Authorities and experts of the numerous countries will participate in the meeting organized by the Ministry of Health of Argentina, with the support of the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO).

The purpose of the activity is to present strategies used by governments, international agencies, civil society organizations, private sector, and academic institutions for the management of local public policies to guarantee the full exercise of the right to health. It is acknowledged that implicit in the territorial nature of public policy is that its design, management and implementation will take into account both how power is concentrated and different viewpoints about the purposes of life. From the perspective of the tension between the specificity of demands and the universal nature of their responses, it is essential to guarantee participative, democratic and pluralistic initiatives that, through collective construction and strengthening of intersectoral alliances, support improvements in social and health conditions in any geographic area. In this regard, the World Fair will provide different spaces for activities to be carried out that will encourage reflection and analysis in the field of public health, through the exchange of knowledge and experiences in management, cinema-debate, conferences and the chance to visit booths sponsored by health and other ministries from Argentina and other countries,

municipalities, international organizations, civil society organizations and universities, among others.

(30) Second EAS Youth Forum. Manila, Philippines. 23-27 November 2009.

Specifically designed for young environmental enthusiasts, the [2nd EAS Youth Forum](#) (YF2) builds on the success of the 1st EAS Youth Forum in 2006, whereby the Youth Agenda for the Seas of East Asia was formulated and adopted. YF2 is a venue where young individuals in the EAS Region can be involved in addressing environmental issues and in the sustainable development of the marine and coastal areas. Second EAS Youth Forum Theme: Youth, Oceans, and Climate Change.

(31) EPA's Strategic Plan for Evaluating the Toxicity of Chemicals

To fulfill its mission to protect human health and the environment, EPA must evaluate the risks of adverse health effects resulting from exposure to chemicals in the environment. The traditional risk assessment approach relies heavily on data generated through the intentional dosing of experimental animals. While this approach has provided EPA with sound science to support regulatory decision making over the past several decades, EPA must address ever-increasing demands, including consideration of complex issues such as cumulative exposures, life-stage vulnerabilities, and genetic susceptibilities, not to mention the increasing number of chemicals and cost of toxicity testing. A new approach is proposed to address these demands, an approach based on the application of advances in molecular biology and computational sciences to transform toxicity testing and risk assessment practices.

This [Strategic Plan](#) is centered on three interrelated components: (1) the use of toxicity pathways identification and use of this information in screening and prioritization of chemicals for further testing; (2) the use of toxicity pathways information in risk assessment; and (3) the institutional transition necessary to implement such practices across EPA. This Strategic Plan describes an ambitious and substantive improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of the process by which environmental pollutants are evaluated for toxicity and risk.

(32) Malaria Atlas Project

The [website](#) provides access to a series of maps produced by the Malaria Atlas Project. Based on the recent global malaria mapping exercise detailed in Hay et al., 2009. These maps are provided in alphabetical order for each of the 87 countries for which *Plasmodium falciparum* is endemic, for three global regions, and for the entire world.

(33) NEEF's pediatric environmental health tools now available in Spanish

The tools include [Environmental Management of Pediatric Asthma: Guidelines for Health Care Providers](#) designed to help pediatric primary care providers advise families about environmental interventions to help reduce or eliminate triggers for children diagnosed with asthma, the nation's leading pediatric chronic illness. Also available in Spanish are the [Pediatric Environmental History Forms](#). This includes the screening form, a five-minute, one-page questionnaire

administered by primary health care providers to capture most of the common environmental exposures to children and a follow-up survey, with more in-depth questions, that can be administered to collect more information on specific types of exposures. National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) translated the materials in partnership with the National Hispanic Medical Association to ensure that the documents were adapted in a culturally appropriate manner.

Additional resources include Spanish-language online presentations and [supplemental resources](#) for clinicians on environmental history taking and controlling environmental triggers of asthma. The project was funded in part by the New York Community Trust and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. For more information, please visit <http://www.neefusa.org>

(34) New book: Poisoned Profits

In this book, journalists Alice Shabecoff and Philip Shabecoff directly and definitively link industrial toxins to the current rise in childhood disease and death. In the tradition of Silent Spring, [Poisoned Profits: the Toxic Assault on Our Children](#) is an account of how money can prize over children's health.

(35) Society of Toxicology: Updated website

The Society of Toxicology (SOT) has updated their [website](#) and it has a lot of nice stories, links and features now, including lead in children.

(36) The Endocrine Disruption Exchange, Inc

[TEDX](#) (The Endocrine Disruption Exchange, Inc.) is the only organization that focuses primarily on the human health and environmental problems caused by low-dose and/or ambient exposure to chemicals that interfere with development and function, called endocrine disruptors. Since antiquity, humans have known that some chemical substances in the environment can cause adverse health effects. For example, the Romans knew that sentencing prisoners to work in lead mines was a death sentence due to the toxicity of elemental lead.

(37) ATDSR Children's Exposure to Elemental Mercury: A National Review of Exposure Events

The [report](#) describes several instances where children had an elemental mercury exposure that went undetected for some time.

(38) Vote Earth 2009

On March 28 you could [VOTE EARTH](#) by switching off your lights for one hour. Or you could vote global warming by leaving your lights on. The results of the election are being presented at the Global Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen 2009.

(39) Tunza Magazine

The latest issue (Vol.6 No.4) of [Tunza](#) is available on the web. This issue is devoted to the major theme of the UN in 2009: UNite to combat climate change. It includes many interesting stories, questions and answers on the linkages between Globalization and the Environment and its impact from local to global. Go through the pages and discover what is being done around the world from combating climate change to creating the green jobs of the future to Paint for the Planet campaign.

(40) Turning the Tide

Making a change. [Turning the Tide](#) presents the stories of young people from around the world whose lives and ultimately human rights are affected by the everyday reality of climate change. All of them are actively working to help make a change.

(41) Previene

[Previene](#) is a pilot project, funded by the Italian Environment Ministry. Its objective is the investigation of the potential impact of endocrine disruptors on fertility, through appropriate biomarkers of exposure, effective dose and effect. The investigation is carried out in four areas, each modelling a different environment-and-health scenario.

(42) Epidemiological Study on Childhood Cancer in the Vicinity of Nuclear Power Plants

The German Commission on Radiological Protection (SSK) released the "Epidemiological Study on Childhood Cancer in the Vicinity of Nuclear Power Plants" (KiKK Study). The original German document with the title "Bewertung der epidemiologischen Studie zu Kinderkrebs in der Umgebung von Kernkraftwerken (KiKK-Studie)" has been translated into English. You can download the electronic version at <http://www.ssk.de/werke/volltext/2008/ssk0806e.pdf>

(43) INCHEs Launches International Film Competition

Professionals and amateurs alike are being urged to get their cameras ready for the world's first environmental health film competition. As part of the 10th Anniversary celebrations the International Network on Children's Health, Environment and Safety (INCHEs) is launching an International Film Competition on Health and Environment, sponsored by several organisations. INCHEs is a global network of organizations focused on promoting the protection of children from environmental and safety hazards.

The competition, called "Focus on Children in a Healthy Environment" and centred on the themes "Climate" and "Environmental Health" will run until 1 September 2009 and is open to all nationalities and ages. Prizes will be awarded to the winners of both categories. There are separate cash prizes for films up to 5 minutes (film clips) of duration and up to 15 minutes (short documentaries). Films are already being submitted by young filmmakers from Film schools, but also from young people, e.g. as part of school projects.

Full details of the competition's rules and regulations; information on how to submit films and an application form can be read and downloaded at www.inchesnetwork.net/filmcompetition.html

(44) Climbing Mount Kilimanjaro to Empower Youth

Young people are the future and are fundamental to providing better societies. The [Kilimanjaro Initiative](#) (KI) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) formed to address the problems of youth in the urban areas of East Africa. It aims to do so by providing young people with opportunities that will enable them to take on a constructive role in their communities. The initiative, as its name indicates, is inspired by Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa and the highest free standing mountain in the world. Every year, the KI organizes an ascent of the giant sleeping volcano, bringing together youths and community stakeholders from around the world. The climbs are a way of raising awareness of some of the problems confronted by young people and to collect funds for community-based projects aimed at youth empowerment.

In February 2009, a KI team of 35 climbers, 15 guides and 50 porters attempted to reach the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, this time under the United Nations banner of 'UNite to Combat climate change'. KI recognizes that global warming can severely affect the social fabrics and infrastructures of our communities, through extreme weather conditions and related migration flows.

(45) HENVINET: Health and Environment Network

To protect the health of populations and individuals, policies need to integrate environmental and health issues. The aim of [HENVINET](#) is to support such informed policy making. HENVINET reviews and disseminates knowledge on environmental health issues based on research and practices, for wider use by relevant stakeholders. Further, it leads to validation of tools and results with emphasis on the four priority health diseases of the European Environment and Health Action Plan (EHAP) 2004-2010, and provides structured information overview that may be used by other actors relevant to Environment and Health Strategy.

(46) Disaster Prevention for Schools

On January 9 2009, Marla Petal, PhD, gave a presentation organized by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery that covered the broad scope of safe schools with examples drawn from international sources. Topics included: disaster impacts and disaster prevention for schools, creating safe learning environments, teaching disaster prevention and preparedness, and developing a culture of safety. The powerpoint presentations used for the event are available [online](#) and offer a wealth of information on safe schools.

[Disaster prevention for schools: Guidance for education sector decision-makers](#). This guidance document asks school administrators, teachers, education authorities and school safety committees the important question "Are your schools safe?" Then, it details an approach to safeguarding the rights of all children to both education and safety. This document was published by UNISDR as part of the Thematic Platform for Knowledge and Education.

ARTICLES

(1) AIR POLLUTION:

(a) Indoor air pollution

[Indoor air can be risk for kids with asthma](#) Air they breathe at home can be worse than pollution, pollen outdoors. Many asthmatic inner-city kids are under assault inside their homes, where cigarette smoke, dust mites, mold and even cooking smells can make them sicker than car exhaust or ragweed. The number of children with asthma has risen significantly over the past two decades. S. Desmon. Baltimore Sun. 2 March 2009.

[Lung cancer deaths could be reduced by better policies to control indoor radon](#) In the UK, about 1100 people each year die from lung cancer related to indoor radon. Radon in the home is a natural air pollutant produced by the decay of uranium in the ground. Radon gas seeps into buildings through cracks and holes in the foundations and when it decays it produces particles that can enter the lungs. HEAL. 27 January 2009.

(b) Outdoor air pollution

[Indiana lawsuit claims air pollution exposes children to greater health risk](#) The suit contends that children in the region are more likely to develop cancer or other long-term illnesses that can be caused by exposure to cadmium, lead and other airborne toxins found in the area. Four schools in East Chicago ranked in the study's first percentile, among the most polluted air. C. Wilson, AP. Star Tribune. 26 March 2009.

[Compressed natural gas clears the air in Bangladesh](#) Cleaner-burning fuel is reducing dangerous levels of pollution – and saving money, too. The streets overflow with thousands of noisy honking vehicles, pedestrians, beggar children, food vendors, and stray animals. Many people move around in an auto-rickshaw that can dart around larger or slower forms of transport. L. Schroeder. CS Monitor. 25 March 2009.

[The Effects of Fine Particle Components on Respiratory Hospital Admissions in Children](#) Components of PM_{2.5} were associated with hospitalization for several childhood respiratory diseases (pneumonia, bronchitis, and asthma). Because exposure to components is ubiquitous in the urban environment, it likely represents an identifiable and preventable risk factor for hospitalization for children. B. Ostro. EHP. March 2009

(c) Environmental Tobacco Smoke/Smoking

[Teenagers do listen to their parents when it comes to smoking](#) Parents can help their teenagers to never start smoking. A Swedish study published in the open access journal BMC Public Health

has found that adolescents respond positively to their parents' attitudes towards smoking. The surveys explored the attitudes, beliefs and tobacco use of teenagers across Sweden. Science Daily. 3 March 2009.

(2) CHEMICALS: (a) General

Group finds carcinogens in kids bath products Many children's bath products contain chemicals that may cause cancer and skin allergies. Twenty-three of 28 products tested contained formaldehyde, the report says. Formaldehyde — considered a probable carcinogen by the Environmental Protection Agency, — is released as preservatives break down over time in a container. L. Szabo. USAToday. 16 March 2009.

Management of Common Childhood Poisonings Reviewed Practice recommendations to evaluate and treat common childhood poisonings are reviewed in the March issue of American Family Physician. The review highlights the evaluation and treatment of young children who unintentionally ingest toxins. Childhood poisonings require supportive treatment, monitoring and continued observation L. Barclay. Medscape. 11 March 2009.

Treated-wood woes Watch out for pressure-treated products It is used for fences, raised garden beds, formwork for patios, borders, mow strips, decks, picnic tables, pet houses and even children's play equipment. Nearly all wooden playground equipment has been treated with toxic chemicals. This is why it is recommended that children wash their hands with soap and water after coming in contact with it. L Brown. Newsreview

(b) Lead

Exposure of U.S. Children to Residential Dust Lead, 1999–2004: II. The Contribution of Lead-Contaminated Dust to Children's Blood Lead Levels CDC collected health, housing, and environmental data in a single national survey in 1999–2004. The most important source of lead exposure for children today is from lead paint as it deteriorates and subsequently contaminates settled residential dust and soil. SL Dixon. EHP. March 2009

A battle for lead-free pottery Until recently, the glaze on most Mexican pottery contained lead. This was practical: lead fuses into a shiny glaze at less than 800° Celsius, the most that artisan kilns achieve, whereas the alternatives required more than twice the heat. Potters suffered from lead poisoning, and to a lesser degree so did customers who bought their plates and cups. The Economist. 19 February 2009

(c) Pesticides

Endosulfan Faces Growing Bans around the World global opinion continues to turn against this persistent, bioaccumulative neurotoxin. The pesticide is now outlawed in more than 50 countries including the European Union, several African countries and Sri Lanka. Canada and the Philippines are considering total bans and, in Australia, momentum is growing for action on endosulfan and carbendazim. PANNA. 2009

[Impacts of Climate Change on Indirect Human Exposure to Pathogens and Chemicals from Agriculture](#) Climate change is likely to affect the nature of pathogens and chemicals in the environment and their fate and transport. Authors assess the implications of climate change for changes in human exposures to pathogens and chemicals in agricultural systems and discuss the subsequent effects on health impacts. A. Boxall. EHP. April 2009

(d) Mercury

[UN to tackle mercury menace](#) Fear sparked by global recession, strains on banks and volatile paper currencies has brought the glitter back to gold. Its value has been rising rapidly in recent months. The UN has already spent \$US7 million in six developing countries, including Indonesia, to educate miners and local suppliers about mercury. M. Richardson. The Canberra Times. 3 March 2009.

[Nations to Write Treaty Cutting Mercury Emissions](#) More than 140 countries have agreed to negotiate a legally binding treaty aimed at slashing the use of the metal mercury, with the goal of reducing people's exposure to a toxin that hampers brain development among infants and young children worldwide. Achim Steiner: culmination of a long effort to address an environmental and public health problem. J. Eilperin. Washington Post. 21 February 2009

(3) WATER AND SANITATION

[Brussels sets world record for longest toilet queue](#) A UNICEF spokesman said the event was to raise public awareness of the need and eventually funds for more pumps, wells, latrines and hygiene education for children in third world countries. "We have 5,000 children dying every day from the lack of clean water, sanitation and hygiene education -- this means one every 20 seconds" Reuters. 25 March 2009

[Zimbabwe still in the grip of cholera](#) "In a poor suburban community women and children stand in a drain collecting water. Nearby, raw sewage trickles down the road, weaving its way between piles of rotting rubbish. It's hardly surprising that cholera has claimed dozens of people in this neighborhood. Zimbabwe's infrastructure has collapsed. Sewerage pipes are broken, the drinking water is contaminated". A. Geoghegan. ABC. 17 March 2009

[Shame over sanitation hampering development-NGOs](#) About 94 % of cases of diarrhoea, which kills more than 1.4 million children a year, are preventable. In 2002 a goal was added to the original Millennium goals on development to halve the proportion of people without sanitation by 2015, a reflection that the issue is often not at the forefront of policymaking. A Hudson. Reuters. 16 March 2009.

(4) GLOBAL CHANGE

[Federal Funding Gap Cited for Research on Human Health Impacts Due to Climate Change](#) Research needs to increase by nearly \$200 million to study risks, opportunities for interventions.

Climate change will seriously impact public health, but the U.S has yet to allocate adequate research funding to understand and prepare for these impacts. [Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University](#). 26 March 2009

[Global Warming and Your Health](#) The most vulnerable individuals are the elderly, the very young and the medically infirm. And the most vulnerable people live in the poorest nations, which are least responsible for causing climate change and least able to cope with the consequences. But a pair of ailments is rising faster in rich nations than in poor ones: asthma and allergies. KM Shea. [Scientific American](#). March 2009.

[Changing climate boosts dengue cases -WHO official](#) Outbreaks of dengue fever in Asian countries are increasing because of climate change, a WHO official said. Dengue, the most widespread tropical disease after malaria, is transmitted by mosquitoes and causes fever, headaches and pains, which can lead to uncontrolled bleeding and death. Many of the victims are children N. Wong-Anan. [Reuters](#). 12 March 2009

[Health hazards demand stronger climate change measures, argues UN agency](#) Lower precipitation due to climate change causes water scarcity and reduced food production. Policymakers should consider the threat climate change poses to public health. WHO highlighted the health dimension of the issue at the three-day Climate Change Global Risks, Challenges and Decisions conference. [UN News Centre](#). 11 March 2009

[2000 Rural Students get Climate Change Education](#) "How many Earths will be needed to support our lifestyles?" Mr. Kartikeya Sarabhai. An interactive presentation on Climate Change was one of the highlights of the five-day event for rural students on the theme "Science in Everyday Life" in Bhavnagar district. The presentation emphasised how climate change was connected with developmental & lifestyle choices. [CEE](#). March 2009.

(5) REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

[Pregnant women overdosing on folic acid](#) Pregnant women may be taking excessive levels of folic acid in the misguided belief more is better for their babies' health. Professor Julie Owens, is calling for more research into the effects of large doses of the B-group vitamin, which is recommended to pregnant women because of its important role in preventing neural tube defects D. Teutsch. [Sidney Morning Herald](#). 15 March 2009.

[Tests find Bisphenol A in majority of soft drinks](#) Controversial chemical found in at least 84% of canned pop sold in Canada. The estrogen-mimicking chemical BPA, already banished from baby bottles and frowned upon in water jugs, has now shown up in significant levels in soft drinks. Cans are treated with a BPA-containing liner to prevent drinks from coming into contact with metal. M. Mittelstaedt. [Globe and Mail](#). 4 March 4 2009

[Birth Defects Surge in a Toxic World](#) Recent headlines from China are revealing a growing public health crisis: birth defects are up 40% since 2001, to 145 per 10,000. A child is born every 30 seconds with a birth defect. The Chinese estimate about one in every 69 children are born

with a birth defect. A startling 70% of birth defects come from "unknown origins." C. Gavigan. The Huffington Post. 3 March 2009

[Study Links Improved Fetal Health to Reduction in Toxic Releases](#) A new study definitively links a decline in fetal harm in the 1990s to stricter environmental controls. It proves that living near a toxic manufacturing plant poses a significant risk to fetal health. Children with low birth weight are less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to have attention deficit disorder. J Tucker. Columbia News. 12 February 2009.

(6) MISCELLANEOUS (a) General

[Heed the little voices](#) These Year Five pupils may be young but they have what it takes to do big things. Nothing and no one is too small to make a difference," said emcees Joshua James Tan Chien Wei, 11, and Shameeta Sivagurunathan, 11, both pupils from SK Taman Megah, Petaling Jaya, Selangor. That was the over-arching message at the recent launch of The Big Green Help National School Programme A. Lim. The Star. 8 April 2009

[Downturn could kill 400,000 children, warns Margaret Chan](#) 'Past recessions have provided evidence of deaths' Thousands of women and children are dying as a direct consequence of the current economic crisis which is already derailing efforts to improve maternal care and cut child death rates, she warned. "... more children will die because of lack of food or immunisation or poor water and sanitation". S. Lister. Timesonline. 14 March 2009.

[Toxin Talk: What to Tell Your Kids About Cleaning Products](#) As parents, it's important that we talk to our children about topics we wish we didn't have to discuss. From refusing drugs to dealing with strangers, there are many things that kids need to know. Every parent has his or her own list, and we think a chat about cleaning products and household chemicals should be on it. Seventh Generation. March 2009.

['Green revolution' can ensure enough food for entire world](#) – UN environment agency - Unless major changes are made – including the way food is produced, handled and disposed of around the world – last year's food crisis which plunged millions back into hunger may foreshadow an even bigger crisis in the years to come, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) said in a new report. UN News Centre. 17 February 2009

(b) Americas

[Uruguay: End of Mercury-containing thermometers](#) The Public Health Ministry decided to eradicate mercury-based thermometers due to its harmful effects on people and replace them for digital ones. The Minister advised not to break them or throw them in the trash bin and said this measure is taken within the frames ratified by Uruguay in the Kyoto Protocol. HCWH. March 2009.

[Schools Keep Bugs at Bay a Safer Way](#) A new EPA plan would cut school pesticide use by 70 percent or more, but some say children and teachers should be protected by mandates, not voluntary guidelines. IPM experts, environmental health advocates and many school officials

support the plan, though some fear it falls short of protecting children and teachers from pesticides. C. Gammon. [Scientific American](#). 9 March 2009.

[Tracking household dangers in utero](#) Canadian scientists are recruiting hundreds of pregnant women for a landmark, \$6-million study designed to track whether the household chemicals that expectant mothers encounter can trigger health problems in their children - or even alter the babies' genetic makeup, based on the notion that the environment can cause certain genes to turn on or off. T. Blackwell. [National Post](#). 3 March 2009

[Argentina: Ministry of Health issues resolution ending purchase of mercury thermometers and sphygmomanometers in the country's hospitals](#) In December last year, HCWH and the World Health Organization launched a collaborative global initiative to substitute 70 percent of all mercury-based medical devices with affordable, accurate and safer alternatives by 2017. HCWH. 24 February 2009

[Bolivia intends to ban highly hazardous pesticides](#) Eleven peasants who were taking produce to market in San Lucas died while they slept at a rural lodge where pesticides in transit were also stored. "Apparently a child took the lid off one of the bottles and the pesticide spread little by little around the place, killing the 11 people in their sleep, including the boy," a San Lucas local official said. [PANNA](#). 12 February 2009.

(c) Asia

[Care for environment vital to public health](#) Abu Dhabi: A four-day international conference on Environmental Health with over a hundred scholars, researchers and experts deliberating on the impact of a changing environment on public health. Representing the Jordan-based CEHA, affiliated to the WHO, Dr A. Johri said the link between health and environment had been "fully recognised and established". R. Absal. [GulfNews](#). 16 March 2009.

[Shanghai may test baby bath products](#) Baby products may be tested by experts from Shanghai's food and drug administration after a report that they contain chemicals which could cause cancer. Campaign for Safe Cosmetics found formaldehyde and 1,4-dioxane in "dozens of top-selling children's bath products" including products from Johnson's and Procter & Gamble, it said in a report. [ChinaView](#). 16 March 2009.

[AoL project to tackle global warming](#) The Art of Living Foundation (AoL), supported by the Department of Social Forestry, Govt of Maharashtra, is aiming to get 100 students each from 60 city-based schools for the Seed to Sapling Home Nursery' Project. The project comes under the Mission Green Earth Programme of the Art of Living, which is endorsed by the United Nations Environment Project. [Times of India](#). 14 March 2009.

[An Upside to China's Slump: Cleaner Air](#) Environmentalists can easily see an upside to China's economic slump: cleaner air. Global recession has thrown a wrench into the country's export machine. China's industrial zones are wastelands of polluted soil and water; the air is often unfit to breathe because demand for electricity by the country's export machine has forced coal-fired power plants to work overtime. A. Ramzy. [Time](#). 11 March 2009.

[Indonesia's Green School a 'seed in nature'](#) It's a Green School, and is an experiment in training the next generation to be stewards of the planet. Hidden within the jungle in Bali, just by looking at it you can tell it isn't your average place of learning. Instead of concrete classrooms, open air bamboo buildings sit nestled within the trees. It probably has the smallest carbon footprint of any school ever built. G. Fang. [ABC News](#). 11 March 2009.

(d) Africa

[Nigeria: Rivers to Check Dumping of Toxic Waste](#) Of particular reference is the pouring of corrosive water on the tarred road in residential and densely populated areas by hair dressing salons as well as companies that dispose waste chemicals in gutters around living quarters. Rivers State government has said it would set up a special squad to halt the trend. G. Onah. [AllAfrica.com](#) 16 March 2009

[Africa: Sanitation Crisis Runs Deep in Africa, Asia](#) About 40 % of the world population lives without proper toilets. Mostly in Africa and Asia, two regions that are most urgently in need of toilets and sanitation aid. Residents live under the constant threat of contracting typhoid [enteric] fever, cholera, enteritis, and malaria. Lack of toilets makes it impossible to separate drinking water from waste water [AllAfrica.com](#). 24 February 2009

[Zimbabwe cholera epidemic worsening](#) The outbreak, one of the world's largest, according to the WHO, is only getting worse. "The current food shortages make us fear of further malnutrition among the most vulnerable, starting with the under (age) five children, where any kind of infectious epidemic can start at any moment after this current cholera epidemic," Fournier explained. N. Mabuse. [CNN](#). 17 February 2009.

(e) Europe

[European Trade Union Confederation releases list of priority chemicals](#) On 31 March, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) released their priority list of chemicals to be authorised under the European Union's chemicals legislation REACH. This list includes 306 substances that ETUC wishes to be placed on the candidate list of substances of very high concern. [HEAL](#). 1 April 2009.

[EU completes 16-year pesticide review](#) Detailed human health and environmental risk assessment of some 1,000 active substances authorized for use in pesticides before 1991 has led to the removal of more than two thirds of them from the market. The risk assessment review evaluated each substance with respect to the health of consumers, farmers, groundwater and non-target organisms. [EurActiv](#). 16 March 2009
