



Office of Children's
Health Protection

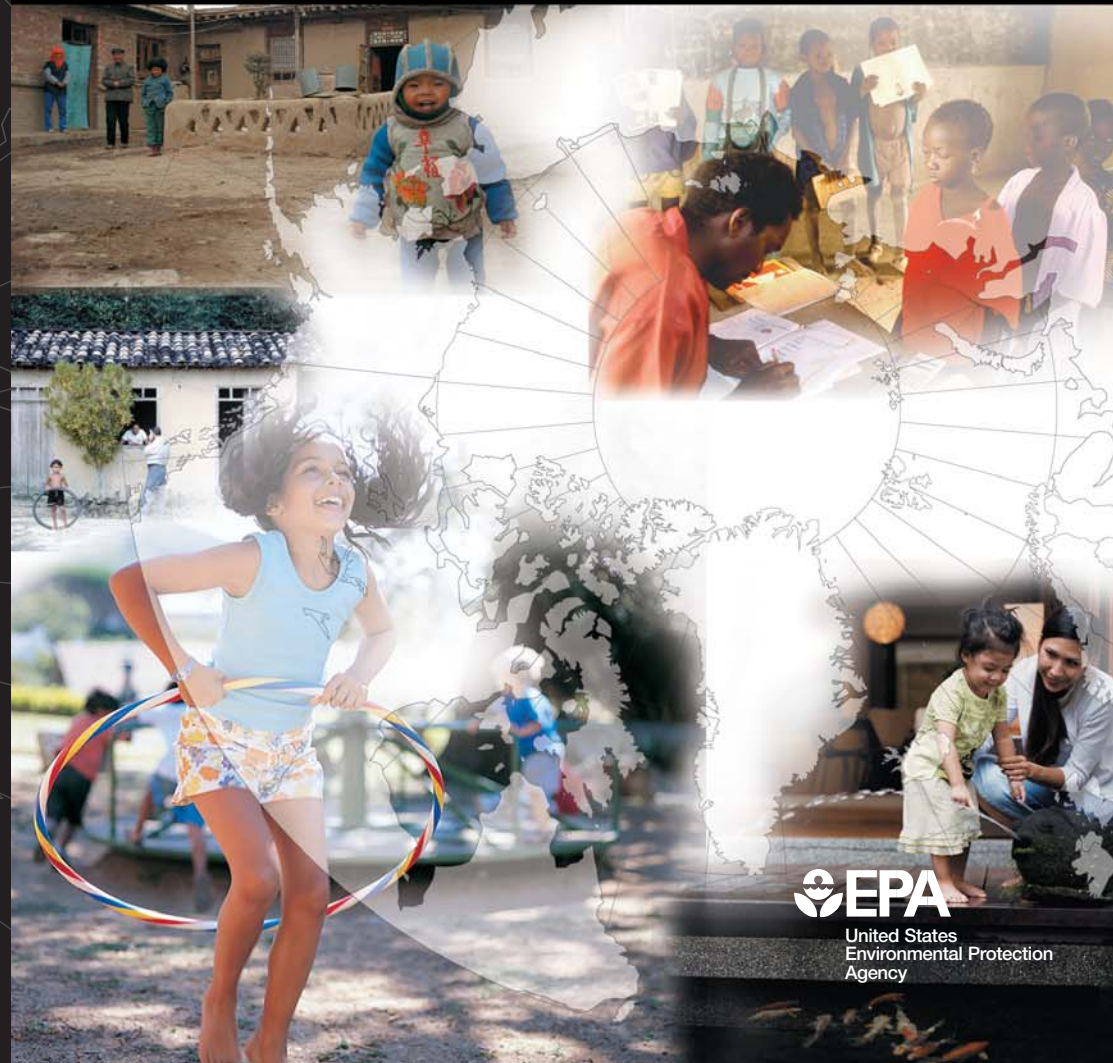
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CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: A CALL FOR GLOBAL PROTECTION



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Throughout the world, parents have the same basic goal for their children: to live happy, healthy, and productive lives.

Children are our future, numbering over 1.6 billion worldwide and representing boundless potential. Child survival hinges on the availability of basic needs to support life: of these, a healthy environment is fundamental. But children everywhere are negatively affected by environmental conditions. While industrialized countries grapple with asthma, developmental disorders, and childhood exposure to chemicals and toxic substances, developing countries face these problems *plus* the added burden of insufficient access to safe drinking water, inadequate housing, poor sanitation management, and unsafe food supplies.

Many of the health problems that result from environmental factors can be prevented, managed, and treated. This is why the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considers risks to children when setting standards. You can play a role, too. Learn about children's environmental health and take action to prevent children from exposure to risks.

Children's Health Suffers Due to Environmental Factors

Acute Respiratory Infections account for 2 million deaths in the world's children each year, and more than 64 million children become sick with acute respiratory infections every year. Indoor particulate matter, largely the result of burning dirty fuel, and outdoor pollutants, such as ozone, greatly increase the incidence and severity of respiratory illness.

Diarrhea kills two million children annually, and millions more endure the disease several times a year. Although medical treatment for diarrhea is saving many lives, the underlying environmental conditions that foster diarrhea still remain, including lack of clean water and sanitation facilities.

Malaria is responsible for the death of more than 1 million children per year, and is the second leading cause of death in children of ages 5 to 14. Uncontrolled vector populations, inadequate housing, and insufficient solid waste management contribute to malaria incidence.

World Leaders Improve Children's Environmental Health

The world pays a heavy toll for children's poor environmental health: sick days lost from school, medical expenses and disability, productivity lost by parents missing work to care for their children, and the personal agony that childhood sickness and death cost parents and families. Environmental-related illnesses and deaths can be prevented, treated, and managed—and the knowledge exists to overcome them.

Countries have succeeded in coming together to share ideas and resources, develop international agreements and action agendas, and hold each other accountable for their fulfillment. Over the past 10 years, world declarations on children's rights and sustainable development have succeeded in cultivating a global focus on children's environmental health. Among other successes, blood lead levels in children have dropped dramatically wherever lead in gasoline has been eliminated. Multi-organizational efforts are underway to find cost-effective alternatives to DDT that both control malarial vectors and minimize exposure to dangerous chemicals. Most recently, the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children promised, "We will give every assistance to protect children and minimize the impact of natural disasters and environmental degradation on them."

"The future of our children lies in leadership and the choices leaders make." — Nelson Mandela & Graca Machel

Leaders in governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, private industry, and individuals can:

- Resolve to gather information on children's environmental health in their countries;
- Commit to international children's environmental health indicator development and use;
- Support research on children's environmental health issues;
- Educate parents and caregivers on ways to protect their children from environmental hazards;
- Develop tools for health care providers to increase prevention and ensure proper care of children with environmental-related illnesses;
- Craft policies and programs at the national level; and
- Enhance international cooperation to prevent childhood exposure to environmental contaminants.

For more information, visit
www.epa.gov/children

**Children are 30% of the
world's population, but
100% of our future.**