

## Children's Environmental Health International Initiatives

This is an international mailing list provided by [WHO](#) and [UNEP](#) dedicated to promoting healthy environments for children

Nov/Dec 2019

### WHO HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE SURVEY REPORT: TRACKING GLOBAL PROGRESS

This report presents global findings from the 2017/2018 WHO Health and Climate Change Survey completed by national health services. Regular updates on key health and climate change indicators empower policy makers to make more informed choices to assess the implementation of policies and plans, identify gaps in evidence, and better understand the barriers to achieving health adaptation and mitigation priorities. This report provides a vital snapshot of the overall progress that governments have made in the field of health and climate change to date, as well as insight into what work remains in order to protect their populations from the most devastating health impacts of climate change. The findings presented cover three key areas: leadership and governance, evidence and international climate finance. In 2015, the first WHO Health and Climate Change Survey was conducted with just over 40 country participants. In this second iteration, coverage had more than doubled with 101 country and territory respondents. Read the full report [here](#). *World Health Organization*

### UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE COP25

The annual UN climate conference was the longest on record when it concluded on 15 December 2019. The conference was designed to take the next crucial steps in the UN climate change process. Following agreement on the implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement at COP 24 in Poland last year, a key objective was to complete several matters with respect to the full operationalization of the Paris Climate Change Agreement. COP25 saw a call for stretching the Nationally Determined Contributions in 2020. Additionally, for the first time ever, national Ministers of Finance attended COP25 to

### CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NEWS

#### Press Releases

#### [WHO hosts dialogue on climate change and health](#)

The World Health Organization (WHO) Asia-Pacific Centre for Environment and Health in the Western Pacific Region hosted a dialogue with residents of Seoul, including students of the Graduate School of Public Health of Seoul National University where the event took place. International experts from WHO and leading Korean scientists spoke with young people about threats to health posed by pollution and climate change and priority actions to address them. Dr Marco Martuzzi, Head of the WHO Asia-Pacific Centre for Environment and Health in the Western Pacific Region, said: "Every single hour, 400 people die in our Region due to environmental factors. These are all tragedies, and they are largely preventable. If our environment was healthier – if air, water and soil were cleaner, and work environments were healthier, millions of people could live longer, better lives." Environmental health experts highlighted the wide-ranging impacts of environmental pollution and climate change on health. These include mental health and other chronic conditions such as heart and lung disease, stroke and cancer, to diseases such as dengue and malaria which are spread by mosquitoes and affect increasing large populations due to changing climate and environmental factors. WPRO (12/12/2019)

#### [Meet the youth standing up for our environmental rights](#)

What a year it has been. For the environment, not a good one. But for youth around the world, an outstanding show of courage, determination and fearlessness. Wildfires raged in Russia in July and the Amazon in October, prompting a state of emergency in the former and a spike in breathing problems among children in the latter. Delhi's toxic

discuss green economies and green employment opportunities. Delegates from the general investment sector, nongovernmental organizations and indigenous groups discussed and promoted the need for nature-based solutions to climate change. In his closing speech UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed his disappointment that member states had not been able to come to a stronger consensus in committing ambitious targets on mitigation, adaptation and finance in order to tackle climate change. He also reiterated the UN's commitment to do what science tells us is necessary to reach carbon neutrality in 2050 and a no more than 1.5-degree temperature rise. Click [here](#) to read more about the conference.

## WEBSITE LAUNCH

The Global Initiative on Advancing Children's Right to a Healthy Environment, with the support of the Government of Slovenia and UNEP, has launched its website. The Global Initiative calls for a drastic change to the current status quo in which children's rights are consistently overlooked with respect to environmental harm and action. The Global Initiative seeks to secure recognition and implementation of children's right to a safe and healthy environment. Core objectives include; empowering children and youth, increasing the capacity of states and other relevant stakeholder and promoting children's rights to live in a safe and healthy environment. Relevant reports, videos and news articles can be found [here](#) on the website.

## WHO INAUGURAL HEALTH FOR ALL FILM FESTIVAL

Film has the unique ability to make us feel. To make us laugh, cry and think. Through the creation of compelling human-interest stories, filmmakers have the potential to influence health and catalyze change. Films are a powerful way to raise awareness, improve understanding and encourage action. That's why in May 2020, on the occasion of the 73rd World Health Assembly, WHO will host the first-ever Health for All Film Festival in Geneva. Whether you are an amateur filmmaker seeking to tell the story of change-makers in your community through the lens of your smartphone or you're working with a production company to promote dialogue around global health challenges and solutions, WHO wants to see your story. The Health for All Film Festival aims to put storytelling power in the hands of

smog in November prompted the government to declare a public health emergency, forcing schools to close. Children were on the front line of a crises they played no part in creating. Every day, around 93 per cent of the world's children under the age of 15 years (1.8 billion children) breathe air that is so polluted it puts their health and development at serious risk, says the World Health Organization. And yet, as environmental crises unfolded across the world, it is children who have dared to step up, to defend our environmental rights. Greta Thunberg's stirring speech in January at the World Economic Forum in Davos, where she cried out "Our house is on fire", sent alarm bells ringing throughout the year. Her urgent calls to action were echoed by youth around the world, who gathered for the largest climate strikes ever seen, across the globe. As the increasingly bleak science such as that most recently outlined in the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Emissions Gap Report, continues to document the failings of governments around the world to tackle the crisis, the world's youth are already on it. UNEP (10/12/2019)

## [Climate risks to health are growing but prioritized funding lacking to safeguard human health from climate change](#)

Safeguarding human health from climate change impacts is more urgent than ever, yet most countries are not acting fully on their own plans to achieve this, according to the first global snapshot of progress on climate change and health. The new report draws on data from 101 countries surveyed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and reported in the *2018 WHO Health and Climate Change Survey Report*. Countries are increasingly prioritising climate change and health, with half of the countries surveyed having developed a national health and climate change strategy or plan. Worryingly, only about 38% have finances in place to even partially implement their national strategy of plan, and fewer than 10% channelling resources to implement it completely. "Climate change is not only racking up a bill for future generations to pay, it's a price that people are paying for now with their health," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization. "It is a moral imperative that countries have the resources they need to act against climate change and safeguard health now and in the future." WHO (3/12/2019)

people and seeks to showcase the role of individuals and communities as champions for health and well-being. Filmmakers are invited to submit short videos in the following three categories; video reports, animation videos or videos about nurses or midwives. To find out more click [here](#) or watch the submission video [here](#).

## ONLINE TRAINING

### [Climate negotiations for health professionals](#)

The World Health Organization and Climate Tracker have developed an online training course that aims to give a comprehensive understanding of the ongoing global climate change negotiations. It also suggests ways in which health professionals can better incorporate health aspects into these negotiations. The course is free of charge and should take around 2 – 4 hours to complete. It is divided into 6 modules, which are: introduction to health and climate, history of the climate negotiations, the Paris Agreement, current negotiation topics, health in the negotiations; and health in negotiation streams. By the end of the training course participants will have to go through a final test and receive a completion certificate. The course is available here through the [course platform for the climate and health training](#), and you can download the [final slides here](#).

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL DECLARATION ON CHILDREN, YOUTH AND CLIMATE ACTION

On December 9, 2019, during the UN Climate Change Conference COP25, a historic step was taken as governments from around the world signed the Intergovernmental Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action. They united around a strong commitment to accelerate inclusive, child and youth-friendly climate policies and action at national and global levels, including the need to enhance their participation in decision-making. The Declaration reflects priorities identified by children and youth throughout the world and has been signed so far by the governments of Chile, Costa Rica, Fiji, Luxembourg, Monaco, Nigeria, Peru, Sweden and Spain. The Declaration can be read in full [here](#).

## JOURNAL ARTICLES

### **Air Pollution**

[Smoked tobacco, air pollution, and tuberculosis in Lao PDR: findings from a national sample](#)

### [New report exposes horror of working conditions for millions of sanitation workers in the developing world](#)

Millions of sanitation workers in the developing world are forced to work in conditions that endanger their health and lives, and violate their dignity and human rights, according to a report released today. Sanitation workers provide an essential public service that is key to safeguarding human health. They are often the most marginalized, poor and discriminated against members of society, carrying out their jobs with no equipment, protection or legal rights. “A fundamental principle of health is “first do no harm”. Sanitation workers make a key contribution to public health around the world – but in so doing, put their own health at risk. This is unacceptable,” said Dr Maria Neira, Director, Department of Public Health and Environment, WHO. “We must improve working conditions for these people and strengthen the sanitation workforce, so we can meet global water and sanitation targets.” The report on the plight of sanitation workers in the developing world is jointly authored by the International Labour Organization, WaterAid, World Bank and World Health Organization to raise awareness of the de-humanizing working conditions and to push for change. It is the most extensive global study to date on the issue, and part of a growing body of work on sanitation workers. WHO (14/11/2019)

### [New development models to drive growth and employment for youth in Africa](#)

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) today launched the Global Environment Outlook-6 (GEO-6) for Youth in Africa report on the margins of the 17th session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN). The report analyses the economic opportunities that Africa’s natural resources can provide for job creation and sustainable development. It also provides a package of solutions to tackle Africa’s youth unemployment through the Green Economy. Africa’s youth remains the most hit by unemployment. One-third of Africa’s 420 million youth aged 15 to 35 are unemployed. Of these, 35 per cent are vulnerably employed and 19 per cent are inactive. These numbers will increase dramatically unless urgent actions are not taken. UNEP (14/11/2019)

### [Improving adolescent health in the Caribbean](#)

While young people (aged 10-24) account for a quarter of the population of the Caribbean, they continue to experience disproportionate barriers

In 2017, more than half of the global burden of incident tuberculosis (TB) came from the Western Pacific region. In Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), the high rates of tobacco use and use of polluting biomass fuels for cooking (e.g., wood, charcoal, crop waste, dung) represent significant risk factors for TB. The purpose of this study was to determine the association between self-reported smoking and TB; and exposure to air pollution (from both cooking fires and environmental tobacco smoke) and TB among adults in Lao PDR. The study analyzed data from the 2012 National Adult Tobacco Survey (NATSL) of Lao PDR—a multi-stage stratified cluster sample of 9706 subjects from 2822 households located in all 17 provinces. Utilizing a nationally representative sample and inferential, multivariable methods, we observed a significant increase in odds of self-reported TB among those who smoked tobacco (OR = 1.73, 95% CI = (1.00 to 2.98)). Larger multivariable models identified independent contributions from exposure to tobacco pipes (OR = 21.51, 95% CI = (6.34 to 72.89)) and communal outdoor fires (OR = 2.27, 95% CI = (1.15 to 4.49)). An index measuring combined exposure to smoked tobacco, environmental tobacco smoke in enclosed workspace, indoor cooking fire, trash fires, and other outdoor communal fires also showed a positive association (OR per added exposure = 1.47, 95% CI = (1.14 to 1.89)). The findings of this study underscore the need for multi-sectoral collaboration between tobacco control, environmental health, TB prevention and treatment programs, national authorities, policy makers, civil groups, and the private sector to address the convergence of potential risk factors impacting respiratory health in Lao PDR.

### **Chemicals**

#### [New toxicology tools and the emerging paradigm shift in environmental health decision-making](#)

Numerous types of rapid toxicity or exposure assays and platforms are providing information relevant to human hazard and exposure identification. They offer the promise of aiding decision-making in a variety of contexts including the regulatory management of chemicals, evaluation of products and environmental media, and emergency response. There is a need to consider both the scientific validity of the new methods and the values applied to a given decision using this new information to ensure that the new methods are employed in ways that enhance public health and environmental

when it comes to accessing health information and quality services that respond to their needs. This issue was top of the agenda at the First Caribbean Congress on Adolescent and Youth Health, that took place last October in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, to promote the health and well-being of adolescents and youth in the Caribbean. During the event, the Director of the Pan American Health Organization, Carissa F. Etienne, highlighted a series of actions that can be taken to address the needs of this demographic and ensure they live happy, healthy and prosperous lives. As well as the barriers ensuring access to quality health services for youth, a number of other disparities exist that also have a negative impact on health outcomes for young people. These include the disproportionate burden of poverty, underemployment and unemployment, as well as low educational outcomes, among other factors. PAHO (6/11/2019)

### **In the Media**

#### [Hazardous Sydney smoke turns up heat in Australia's climate politics](#)

Devastating bushfires that blanketed Australia's largest city with hazardous smoke this week have heightened public anger and raised political pressure on the government to do more to tackle climate change. While cooler weather eased fires and haze around Sydney on Wednesday, the thick smoke that covered the city on Tuesday has triggered protests and prompted one conservative lawmaker to break with his party by directly linking recent weather to carbon emissions. "We are in the middle of the worst drought in living memory, this is the second hottest year on record," New South Wales Environment Minister Matt Kean, from the centre-right Liberal-National coalition, told the Australian Broadcasting Corp Radio. "Yesterday smoke was causing some of the worst air pollution in Sydney that we've ever seen - this is climate change." Sydney choked in some of the worst pollution seen in the city on Tuesday as more than 100 fires raged across the east coast, turning the daytime sky orange, obscuring visibility and disrupting public transport services as air quality plunged. The New York Times (10/12/2019)

#### ['Bhopal's tragedy has not stopped': the urban disaster still claiming lives 35 years on](#)

The residents of JP Nagar have no way to escape their ghosts. This ramshackle neighbourhood, on the outskirts of the Indian city of Bhopal, stands just metres away from the chemical factory which

protection. In 2018, a National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAEM) workshop examined both the toxicological and societal aspects of this challenge. The objectives of this study were to explore the challenges of adopting new data streams into regulatory decision-making and highlight the need to align new methods with the information and confidence needs of the decision contexts in which the data may be applied. Many of the statutes that regulate chemicals in the environment place a high priority on the protection of public health and the environment. Moving away from the sole reliance on traditional approaches and information sources used in hazard, exposure, and risk assessment, toward the more expansive use of rapidly acquired chemical information via *in vitro*, *in silico*, and targeted testing strategies will require careful consideration of the information needed and values considerations associated with a particular decision. In this commentary, we explore the ability and feasibility of using emerging data streams, particularly those that allow for the rapid testing of a large number of chemicals across numerous biological targets, to shift the chemical testing paradigm to one in which potentially harmful chemicals are more rapidly identified, prioritized, and addressed. Such a paradigm shift could ultimately save financial and natural resources while ensuring and preserving the protection of public health

### **Climate Change**

[The 2019 report of The Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: ensuring that the health of a child born today is not defined by a changing climate](#)

The Lancet Countdown is a comprehensive annual assessment tracking links between climate change and human health. This year's report outlines how two potential emissions pathways — business-as-usual and meeting the goals of the landmark 2015 Paris climate agreement — will impact human well-being. The 2019 report presents an annual update of 41 indicators across five key domains: climate change impacts, exposures, and vulnerability; adaptation, planning, and resilience for health; mitigation actions and health co-benefits; economics and finance; and public and political engagement. The report represents the findings and consensus of 35 leading academic institutions and UN agencies from every continent. The science of climate change describes a range of possible futures, which are largely dependent on the degree of

exploded just after midnight on 2 December 1984 and seeped poison into their lives forever. The blackened ruins of the Union Carbide plant still loom untouched behind the factory walls. It remains the world's worst industrial disaster, which saw 40 tons of toxic methyl isocyanate gas released into the air, killing over 3,000 instantly and condemning hundreds of thousands to a future of prolonged pain, cancer, stillbirths, miscarriages, lung and heart disease and the drawn out deaths of everyone around them. This week marks the 35th anniversary of the disaster yet the injustice suffered by the people of Bhopal remains stark and unrelenting. The official death toll is still disputed but an estimated 574,000 were poisoned that night and upwards of 20,000 people have died since from related conditions. No one from Union Carbide was ever tried for the gross negligence that led to the gas explosion, despite multiple criminal charges being brought against them in India. No clean-up operation of the chemical waste — which was already being dumped into the local community before the explosion — has ever been conducted. The Guardian (8/12/2019)

[Government studying widely used chemicals linked to health issues](#)

Two decades after concern emerged about a class of chemicals used in everything from Teflon pans to firefighting foam, the federal government has started the first in a series of detailed studies of the impact the chemicals have had on human health. The goal is to determine what role the chemicals, known generally as PFAS, play in a long list of health conditions including thyroid, kidney, liver, cardiovascular and autoimmune diseases, among other ailments. The studies will involve thousands of adults and children in eight communities nationwide, and the findings will help determine just how extensive of a clean-up is necessary at sites where groundwater or drinking water supplies have been contaminated. This is hardly an academic matter in communities like Warminster, a suburb of Philadelphia, where Hope Martindell Grosse grew up just across the street from the now-defunct Naval Air Warfare Centre. The base is one of about 200 military installations around the country where groundwater has been contaminated by the chemicals, including at least 24 where drinking water was affected. Ms. Grosse and several members of her family have had a series of health problems, including autoimmune disease, cancer and other unusual conditions, such as a missing set of adult teeth in both of her daughters. A conversation with voters across the

action or inaction in the face of a warming world. The policies implemented will have far-reaching effects in determining these eventualities, with the indicators tracked here monitoring both the present-day effects of climate change, as well as the worldwide response. Understanding these decisions as a choice between one of two pathways—one that continues with the business as usual response and one that redirects to a future that remains “well below 2 degrees Celsius”—helps to bring the importance of recognising the effects of climate change and the necessary response to the forefront.

*The Lancet*

### **Conflict and Environmental Health**

[Solving the jigsaw of conflict-related environmental damage: utilizing open-source analysis to improve research into environmental health risks](#)

Investigation of the environmental impacts of armed conflict has been made easier in recent years with the development of new and improved methods for documenting and monitoring environmental damage and pollution. For decades, research into conflict-linked environmental damage and its links to human health have been overlooked and research underfunded, hindering a complete humanitarian response and effective post-conflict reconstruction. Recent developments in the field of open-source investigation have shown promising results due to the increased use of mobile phones, access to the internet and freely available methods for remote observation by satellite. Utilizing and analysing these sources of data can help us to understand how conflicts are associated with environmental damage, pollution and their negative impacts upon public health. Further research and development in this field will help to inform more effective humanitarian responses, mitigate risks to health and identify priorities for post-conflict reconstruction programs. Data-driven open-source research can also strengthen international discussions on state accountability for military activities and build a case for the responsibility of warring parties to protect the environment as well as the people who depend on it.

*Journal of Public Health*

### **E-waste**

[Soil elemental concentrations, geoaccumulation index, non-carcinogenic and carcinogenic risks in](#)

country. And a guiding hand through the endless news cycle, telling you what you really need to know. The New York Times (5/12/2019)

[‘Flood’ of toxic Chinese toys threatens children’s health](#)

Government officials are facing a ‘flood’ of dangerously contaminated Chinese toys. Phthalates found in children at harmful levels in 13 out of 15 EU countries. National officials have blocked 248 models of toy (likely tens of millions of units) from sale so far in 2019 after tests revealed illegal levels of toxic chemicals. Of these, 228 (92%) were categorised as “serious risk”; 219 (88%) came from China; and 127 (51%) were contaminated with phthalates, a plastic additive. Toys were the single most problematic good blocked, followed by motor vehicles and electrical appliances, though inspections are usually not random. The findings come from the EU Rapex system, which alerts officials across Europe about dangerous consumer goods. European Environmental Bureau (28/11/2019)

[How exposure to pollution affects educational outcomes and inequality](#)

Millions of tons of hazardous wastes have been produced in the United States in the last 100 years and have been dispersed into the air, water, as well as on and under the ground. Toxic waste sites are widespread across the country. Although we do not currently have comprehensive evidence on which pollutants are most harmful, the evidence we do have is worrisome and suggests a source of inequality that has not yet been explored in depth. Since African American, Hispanic, and low-income families are more likely to live in close proximity to sources of pollution like toxic waste sites, where housing is less expensive, it is possible that exposure to pollution is one mechanism through which poverty produces negative cognitive and health outcomes. Three causal studies have recently been conducted on this topic to assess the extent to which pollution exposure might affect children’s cognitive and behavioural outcomes. Brookings Institute (20/11/2019)

[Ban lead-based paint for healthy children](#)

Development activists and experts at a Dhaka, Bangladesh seminar urged the government to outlaw lead-based paint to prevent children’s exposure to lead in paint chips and dust in buildings and homes. Childhood lead poisoning is considered to be the most preventable

### [functional areas of an informal e-waste recycling area in Accra, Ghana](#)

This study assesses the distribution, contamination and human health risks of major, minor and trace elements in the topsoil and subsoil of two informal e-waste recycling sites in Accra, Ghana. Metal concentrations in Agbogbloshie exceeded the Dutch Soil intervention values with exceedances of 72%, 57%, 57%, 38%, 16%, 2% for Cu, Zn, Pb, Ba, Cd and As respectively. Metal concentrations in Ashaiman exceeded the Dutch Soil intervention values with exceedances of 62%, 57% and 46% for Cu, Zn and Pb respectively. Geoaccumulation indices indicated that the topsoils of the burn area and dismantling areas of Agbogbloshie e-waste recycling site were strongly contaminated by Pb and uncontaminated by Cr, Fe, As and Ba. Lead (Pb) contributed greatly to non-carcinogenic ingestion hazard quotient for residents living near Agbogbloshie and Ashaiman e-waste recycling sites while arsenic (As) presented carcinogenic risks to children from the dismantling area topsoils. Non-carcinogenic risks from ingestion were significant with children being more susceptible to non-carcinogenic ingestion risks than adults. Non-carcinogenic risks from dermal exposure were negligible. Hazard quotients of Pb for children in burn area topsoils and dismantling area topsoils were 7.4-7.6-fold greater than that for adults. The mean geoaccumulation indices values of Pb and Cu indicated extreme contamination of topsoils with these elements. A "novel environmental assessment tool" based on the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ASTDR) total impact points confirmed Pb and Cu as the most toxic elements.

*Chemosphere*

### [Short-term variability in levels of urinary phosphate flame retardant metabolites in adults and children from an e-waste recycling site](#)

In the present study, urine samples (n = 258) were collected from adults (n = 42) and children (n = 22) in an electronic waste (e-waste) recycling site. The concentrations and compositions of six di-esters, or the metabolites of phosphate flame retardants (PFRs), were measured at different time points on consecutive days. Bis(2-chloroethyl) phosphate (BCEP), dibutyl phosphate (DBP), bis(1,3-dichloro-2-propyl) phosphate (BDCIPP), and diphenyl phosphate (DPHP) were detected in more than 50% of urine samples. The median concentrations of BCEP, DBP, BDCIPP, and DPHP were 2.43-4.80, 0.09-2.65, 0.46-0.89, and

environmental health hazard that young children face. On Sunday, speakers underlines the urgent need to address lead poisoning at a round table, *International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action 2019*, organized by the Environment and Social Development Organization (ESDO). Experts said lead-based paints are particularly dangerous for children because the brains of children are developing. Exposure to lead can seriously harm a child's health, including damage to the brain and nervous system, stunted growth and development, learning and behavioural problems, and hearing and speech problems. Dhaka Tribune (15/11/2019)

### [Climate change poses threat to children's health worldwide](#)

The health effects of climate change will be unevenly distributed and children will be among those disproportionately harmed, according to a new report from the medical journal *The Lancet*. The report compared human health consequences under two scenarios: one in which the world meets the commitments laid out in the Paris Agreement and reins in emissions so that increases in global temperatures remain "well below 2 degrees Celsius" by the end of the century, and one in which it does not. The report, published Wednesday, found that failing to limit emissions would lead to health problems caused by infectious diseases, worsening air pollution, rising temperatures and malnutrition. The New York Times (13/11/2019)

### [Dutch government cuts speed limit to 100km/h to reduce air pollution](#)

The Dutch prime minister, Mark Rutte, has taken what he has described as the "rotten measure" of cutting the maximum speed limit on roads in the Netherlands to 100km/h (62mph) after being ordered by the courts to cut pollution. The reduction from the current limit of 130km/h followed a Dutch court ruling earlier this year that found government policies breached EU rules in regard to the protection of nature reserves from ammonia and nitrous oxide. The new limit will be introduced in 2020 and will be the joint lowest in the EU along with Cyprus. Cars will be allowed to drive at the current speed limit between 7pm and 6am, a period covering only about 8-10% of total traffic in the country. The Guardian (13/11/2019)

### [The hidden cost of gold: birth defects and brain damage](#)

0.66-1.83 ng/mL in adult urine samples, respectively. For children, the median concentrations of BCEP, DBP, BDCIPP, and DPHP were 1.23, 0.08, 0.06, and 0.29 ng/mL in morning urine samples, and 1.86, 0.12, 0.14, and 0.27 ng/mL in nightfall urine samples, respectively. Nightfall urine had generally higher levels of di-esters than those in morning urine for both adults and children ( $p < 0.05$ ). Children had significantly lower concentrations of di-esters than adults, indicating the occupational exposure risks of PFRs for adults. Significant correlations were observed in levels of BDCIPP (3 out of 6 groups of samples) and DPHP (2 out of 6 groups of samples) in couples ( $p < 0.05$ ). Significant correlations between parents and boys were only observed in BCEP levels in nightfall urine samples, and in DBP levels in morning urine samples ( $p < 0.05$ ). The results suggest that di-ester concentrations in e-waste recycling workers are highly variable depending on the time that samples are collected, which could further influence the estimation of human exposure to PFRs.

*Chemosphere*

## **New Publications**

### [Mercury in cosmetics and skin lightening products](#)

Mercury-containing skin lightening products are hazardous to health and as a result have been banned in many countries. Even in some countries where such products have been banned, they are still advertised and available to consumers via the Internet and other means. Mercury can be eliminated from skin lightening products by working with health and environmental ministries and raising public awareness about the dangers to health from mercury and other hazardous chemicals (such as hydroquinone) in skin lightening products. To stop the manufacture, import and export of skin lightening products in line with the Minamata Convention, regulatory actions by governments are needed – including training of customs agents – as well as major media and advocacy campaigns.

*World Health Organization*

### [Are climate change policies child-sensitive? A guide for action: summary](#)

The scientific community has sounded the alarm. Climate change is a global emergency and we have little more than a decade to undertake the urgent and unprecedented action required to limit global temperatures to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Beyond that time, the risks of deadly

Thousands of children with crippling birth defects. Half a million people poisoned. A toxic chemical found in the food supply. Accusations of a government cover-up and police officers on the take. This is the legacy of Indonesia's mercury trade, a business intertwined with the lucrative and illegal production of gold. More than a hundred nations have joined a global campaign to reduce the international trade in mercury, an element so toxic there is "no known safe level of exposure," according to health experts. But that effort has backfired in Indonesia, where illicit backyard manufacturers have sprung up to supply wildcat miners and replace mercury that was previously imported from abroad. Now, Indonesia produces so much black-market mercury that it has become a major global supplier, surreptitiously shipping thousands of tons to other parts of the world. The New York Times (9/11/2019)

### [World's worst air: India's pollution crisis in perspective](#)

On November 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> air pollution in New Delhi reached this year's highest levels, with some indices showing PM2.5 levels as 407 and 500, respectively. Having already declared a public health emergency, authorities in New Delhi ordered schools to close and limited the number of cars on the roads. India's air pollution problem extends far beyond the more than 20 million residents of New Delhi. Its northern belt is one of the most densely populated parts of the planet. The industrial hub of Kanpur, home to 3 million people, is followed by 13 Indian cities on a World Health Organization (WHO) list of places with the worst air. Reuters (09/11/2019)

### [Delhi's smog blamed on crop fires – but farmers say they have little choice](#)

The pounding beats of bhangra music blare out of Satish's tractor as it roars across the charred, black earth of his farm. Fresh seeds are scattered in its wake. Yet hanging thick in the air, over this scene of new beginnings, is the tell-tale smoky stench of what came before. Like tens of thousands of farmers in India's northern states of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, Satish, whose farm sits on the outskirts of the rural Haryana village of Gharaunda, had recently cleared his fields of old rice crop stubble to make way for wheat by setting it alight. The practice was banned when its contribution to the mounting pollution crisis in nearby Delhi and across northern India became impossible to ignore but deprived of equally cheap and easy alternatives of preparing the fields,



drought, flooding, heatwaves, extreme weather and poverty will significantly worsen for hundreds of millions of people. Children will continue to suffer the most under the impacts of climate change. With this in mind, UNICEF has set out to examine current national climate policies/plans to ascertain how child-sensitive they are and provide recommendations on how to strengthen the focus on children's rights, including actionable and measurable results for children. Despite the many ways climate change impacts them, children are consistently overlooked in the design and content of climate policies and related processes. In order to overcome this lapse, this report assesses the current landscape of national climate change policies and plans and the degree to which these are child sensitive.

*United Nations Children's Fund*

### [Health, safety and dignity of sanitation workers: an initial assessment](#)

Sanitation workers provide an invaluable service that many of us notice only when confronted with locked, blocked, or filthy toilets; overflowing septic tanks; or beaches contaminated with sewage. These workers are vital to the proper functioning of the sanitation systems that underpin daily life, and many more are needed to achieve the ambitious agenda of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6. Yet sanitation workers are often invisible and too often subject to conditions that expose them to the worst consequences of poor sanitation: debilitating infections, injuries, social stigma, and even death in their daily work. Workers' rights need to be recognized; workers need freedom and support to organize as a labour force; and their working conditions need to be improved and progressively formalized to safeguard health and labour rights to ensure decent working conditions, as called for by SDG 8. The World Bank, World Health Organization, International Labour Organization, and WaterAid have joined forces in the year of "no one left behind" to shed light on this neglected issue. This report, the most extensive global exploration of the topic to date, analyzes the problems, explores good practices, and sets out actions to improve the health, safety and dignity of sanitation workers. *World Bank Group, World Health Organization, International Labour Organization and WaterAid*

farmers have continued to flout the law. As record-breaking pollution threw Delhi into a state of crisis this week, and the city was shrouded in a thick brown smog with toxins over 50 times the levels deemed healthy, crop burning – which began in earnest in late October and is due to continue for the rest of the month – was labelled as the chief culprit. According to the government environment agency, almost 50% of Delhi's pollution was from crop burning. *The Guardian* (8/11/2019)

### [New Delhi, choking on toxic air, declares health emergency](#)

A toxic, throat-burning cloud has settled over India's capital, swallowing national monuments, sending people to emergency rooms and prompting officials on Friday to declare a public health emergency and close schools for days. Air pollution in parts of New Delhi rose to levels around 20 times what the World Health Organization considers safe. By Friday afternoon, officials in the capital region had halted all construction projects, planned to limit the number of vehicles on roads, urged people to stay inside and shut several thousand primary schools until Tuesday. *The New York Times* (01/11/2019)

## EVENTS

### [The WHO Inaugural Health for All Film Festival 2020](#)

Geneva. 16, 21, 22 May 2020.

### [Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Second Annual Conference Clinical Climate Change Protecting Patients and Improving Health Outcomes in the Climate Crisis](#)

New York City. 24 January 2020.

### [The 10th International Conference on Children's Health and the Environment](#)

Amsterdam, the Netherlands. 22 – 24 April 2020. INCHES is calling for abstract submissions to be presented at the conference. Submissions are due by 15 January 2020 and can be submitted at <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=10thinches>

## VIDEO

Click [here](#) to watch Hungarian actor Alföldi Róbert read aloud "Air pollution and child health" from the 2019 edition of *Early Childhood Matters*. *International Step by Step Association, Partners Hungary Alapítvány*

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