

Environmental Health Update

Sustainable Development and Healthy Environments

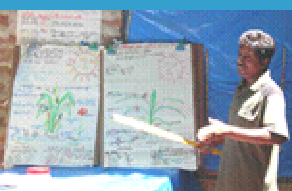


No. 1

September 2006

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Message from Dr Samlee Plianbangchang, Regional Director

Twenty five percent of the global burden of disease attributed to environmental risk factors makes WHO's focus on environmental health a prime necessity. Present trends of environmental degradation and its associated public health risks add to the concern. More than 13 million deaths that occur annually are due to preventable environmental causes says the WHO report on preventing disease through healthy environments. An estimated 94 percent of deaths from diarrheal diseases, and about 40 percent from malaria, two of the world's biggest childhood killers now, could be prevented through better environmental management. What more evidence do we need!

Many of us are already aware that environment plays a very crucial role in maintaining and promoting the health of the community. However, many more need to be

oriented to this thinking. Addressing this is by no means easy – as such actions straddle a multitude of sectors and disciplines. Managing the quality of our water and air, our use of chemicals, the safe disposal and management of our city garbage and hazardous wastes, and ensuring the sustainability of a safe and salubrious living and work environment requires both an acute awareness of the risks and benefits of a neglected versus a well managed environment. These difficulties must be overcome – with efforts that are energetic and persistent, to bring greater clarity and meaning to this important area of our work. Only then can our converging efforts flow! To this end, I would like to wish well for the success of this e-newsletter – to bring this needed clarity and enthusiasm. Good luck!

SDE Welcomes all Readers

It's all about SHARING!!

Partnership is about sharing. And we can do that only through connecting and creating the dialogue necessary for knowledge and information to pass through to others with whom we want to share. This newsletter, Environmental Health Update (EHU) is an attempt to do just that. To first connect with our WHO and affiliated technical community, and through us to others who can benefit from this exposure.

In the confines of our offices, each day is a flood of information – of who is doing what, where, how, and why. We read some, save some, throw some, don't even look at some, and share some. We would like to contribute more systematically to that sharing – those information that can make us a more empathetic team rather than a mechanical one. It is through conscious perceiving of each

other's work in real time that we can create this empathy and cohesiveness of resolve in the work we do for our common cause. This common cause is the mission of our work in WHO – promoting public health through the protection of the human environment.

In this and the following monthly issues of the EHU we hope to roll out, we will attempt to share amongst ourselves and our partners in EH action, information concerning interesting emerging issues and experiences, missions to countries by colleagues, recently completed and up-coming events, and progress reports of project implementation. To ensure continuity and success of the newsletter, I would like to ask you all to please send in your news and views in regular contribution.

Welcome to our First Issue!!

Dr Abdul Sattar Yoosuf

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Focus of the Month

Healthy Food Markets

Simple food markets probably arose naturally to provide the newly settled populations of early times with their food needs. Over the centuries, food markets have evolved with civilization, often serving as commercial and social centers for their communities and each with a unique history of traditions. Today, food markets are often the most important source of food for urban consumers, particularly in developing countries. However, such markets have been implicated in the spread of serious epidemic diseases, including poisonings by toxic chemicals. Food markets are, therefore, critical settings not only for promoting health and nutritional status, but also for preventing disease and injury.

WHO'S HEALTHY FOOD MARKET INITIATIVE – In many of our countries, rapid urban growth has overwhelmed the capacity of municipal authorities. As a result, many markets are often unplanned, uncontrolled, and underfinanced. With this in mind, WHO developed the concept of Healthy Food Markets as an approach for ensuring food safety and environmental health in market places. Interest in the concept of Healthy Food Markets has been substantial with pilot projects being



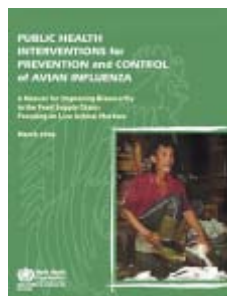
implemented or planned in cities throughout the world. Undertaken within the framework of the existing WHO Healthy Cities Program, these pilot projects seek to

improve the health of urban dwellers, especially those with low-incomes.

Through raising awareness of unsatisfactory health and environmental conditions and by mobilizing community participation through partnerships, local agencies and institutions identify and implement appropriate and sustainable solutions. The World Health Organization has prepared "A Guide to Healthy Food Markets", which is intended to assist interested parties in the planning, management and evaluation of pilot projects in their cities.

AI and HEALTHY FOOD MARKET in Indonesia: a

new initiative – As a part of the national efforts to prevent and control the spread of the avian influenza (AI) virus in Indonesia, the Ministry of Health developed the multi stakeholder national Healthy Food Market (HFM) Programme. Indeed, while current existing information on avian influenza (AI) outbreaks and in particular the investigations related



to human cases are still inconclusive in terms of clearly defining all the risk factors, the current understanding of AI transmission indicates that live animal markets and wet markets can present a high risk for AI transmission between both animals to animals and animals to humans. Live animal markets where animals are held, slaughtered, dressed and sold are called wet markets. In most developing countries including Indonesia, wet markets are a normal feature of traditional food markets. Transmission of AI from animals to humans could occur through direct contact with infected poultry, either live or slaughtered, or indirectly via food, air, water and surfaces contaminated by their faeces, blood, feathers and/or meat.

Several such pathways prevail in the majority of wet markets in Indonesia. AI and food safety and other related experts and consultants from WHO, FAO, OIE and donor agencies could contribute to the HFM Program in Indonesia. {Source: Mr Alexander Hildebrand}. For more on these, please visit the website: www.searo.who.int/fcspublications

SDE News



WHO publication entitled "Preventing Disease through Healthy Environments – Towards an estimate of the environmental burden of disease" was launched on 16 June 2006 in Geneva.

The report, *Preventing disease through healthy environments – towards an estimate of the environmental burden of disease*, is the most comprehensive and systematic study yet undertaken on how *preventable* environmental hazards

contribute to a wide range of diseases and injuries. The report estimates that as much as 24% of global disease is caused by environmental exposures which can be averted. Well-targeted interventions can prevent much of this environmental risk. The report further estimates that more than 33% of disease in children under the age of 5 is caused by environmental exposures. This report provides an opportunity to increase awareness and understanding of the importance of the health and environment linkages among diverse target audiences thereby help to make public health and environment an important priority on the world's political/health/development agenda. It is an interesting shift in the perspective of our programme to put more overt focus

on disease prevention and the public health dimension. The report can be found on the website: http://www.who.int/entity/quantifying_ehimpacts/publications/preventingdisease/en/index.html

Ms Susanne Weber-Mosdorf, Assistant Director-General, SDE WHO/HQ participated in the 59th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia which was held in Dhaka from 22 to 25 August 2006. During this visit, she met with the staff working in the area of indoor air pollution, Arsenic in water and Hospital waste.

Bhutan prepares to go for water safety plans

The Development Workshop on Water Safety Plan (WSP) for Rural Piped Scheme was held at Wangchug Hotel, Taba, Thimphu from August 21-23, 2006. The workshop was attended by the 21 participants from Dzongkhag Engineering and Health units from Bumthang, Chhukha, Paro, Thimphu and Trongsa; engineers from the Department of Urban Development and Housing, Ministry of Works and Human Settlement; City Corporation, Phuentsholing and officials of the Public Health Engineering Division (PHED), Ministry of Health.



SDE Staff Profile

As this is the first issue, we would like to introduce the Regional SDE team. The work of promoting Sustainable Development and Healthy Environments in South-East Asia is carried out by a team of dedicated staff in the

EH in the News

Second South Asia Conference on Sanitation (SACOSAN-II), 20-22 September 2006 in Islamabad, Pakistan

The overall goal of the Conference is to accelerate the progress of sanitation and hygiene work in the South Asia so as to enhance its peoples' quality of life in fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals and the commitments made in the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The conference will also review progress made in implementation of the Dhaka Declaration of the 1st South Asian Conference on Sanitation, reiterate

WHO Regional Office in New Delhi, and in the Country Offices in SEAR countries. Structurally, Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, the Deputy Regional Director oversees the working of the Regional SDE functions. The following are your Regional SDE technical contacts:

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political commitment in each country of the region for furthering the sanitation agenda, facilitate development of country-specific as well as regional frameworks for sanitation, share experiences and lessons learnt in sanitation and hygiene promotion, increase outreach of sanitation agenda in the region.

The conference is being organized by the Ministry of Environment, Government of Pakistan, with the support and cooperation of ActionAid Pakistan, DFID, International Water Association, Mercy Corps Pakistan, Plan Pakistan, UNDP, UNICEF, WaterAid, Water and Sanitation Program-South Asia and WHO/Ministry of Health. For more, please visit <http://www.environment.gov.pk>

Visits and Missions

Recent

The Joint WHO/FAO/ Regional Workshop for the Sound Management of Hazardous Waste was held in Jakarta, Indonesia 26th – 29th June 2006.

The participants were from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor-Leste. The huge challenge posed by accumulated pharmaceutical wastes from post tsunami donations was highlighted during the meeting. This problem affected not only Indonesia in Banda Aceh Province and more recently in the post earthquake Yogyakarta area, but also other tsunami struck countries like in Sri Lanka. Thousands of tons of outdated drugs, are stored in poor conditions.



Segregated Obsolete pharmaceuticals

The introduction of these substandard drugs stocks into the market represents two major public health risks: Sale to and consumption of substandard drugs by the unwary public, and Environmental pollution from either leakage to soil and groundwater or release of potentially toxic gases into the atmosphere from ill-monitored waste incineration recommended, inter alia. Mr Alexander Hildebrand, Regional Advisor for Food and Chemical Safety conducted this workshop. For more, please visit the website: www.searo.who.int/fcspublications

The Meeting of the Interim Advisory Board for the preparation of the Regional Health and Environment Ministers' Forum, was held in Manila, Philippines from 4-5 September 2006. The Interim Advisory Board is the technical body selected from Regional centers of

excellence, which will provide the technical input to the Ministers' Forum to be held in Bangkok on 7-8 December 2006. This Initiative is a joint effort coordinated by WHO (WPR and SEAR), UNEP, and ADB to promote inter-sectoral action for health and environment. The Ministers will deliberate on six key environmental issues. These are water supply, hygiene and sanitation; air quality, solid and hazardous wastes; toxic chemicals; climate change; and emergency preparedness and response. From SEAR countries, Thailand's MOH, and Indonesia's MOE are the interim Chair Institutions for two of these areas – Chemical and Climate change respectively. Other four Chair Institutions are from WPR countries. SEARO was represented by Dr A Sattar Yoosuf in this meeting.

Inter-Agency Integrated Vector Management Mission comprising of representatives from MoH, Ministry of Agriculture, FAO, SEARO visited Sri Lanka during the period 11-24 June 2006.

The main objective was to determine the effectiveness, sustainability and replicability of the Integrated Pest Management and Integrated Vector Management (IPVM) approach used in the IPVM pilots in Sri Lanka through discussions and field visits. This approach is based on the Farmers Field Schools (FFS) or community driven/ need based methodology. The purpose of the IPVM



programme is to test how farmers can learn about ecology and management of water borne disease vectors in wet land rice eco-systems and to test how the outcome can help farmers to organize their communities for an improved management of "Mosquito" population. For more, please visit the website: www.searo.who.int/fcspublications

Upcoming Events

H.R.H Princess Chulabhorn, Princess of Thailand, will be visiting SEARO on 10 November 2006. Her Royal Highness is the President of the Chulabhorn Research Institute (CRI), a WHO Collaborating Center for "Capacity Building and Research in Environmental Health Science Technology". During this visit, she will make a presentation to the SEARO staff. Dr Sattar Yoosuf would be the focal point for the technical activities for this visit.

For information please contact:

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