

Guidelines for Preparing National Profiles on the Status of Children's Environmental Health

NOTE: please use the boxed headings as sub-headings in the country/local profile you develop. Use the questions as a guide for gaining information and developing an overall assessment of each area. Develop up to three paragraphs for each of the underlined headings, expanding even beyond the questions provided, as deemed necessary. Please take into account for each question the potential gender, rural/urban and ethnicity issues. Tables necessary to make a point can be annexed. The profiles should cover both existing situations, observations and ongoing activities as well as potential opportunities for actions that could be implemented at the country level.

INTRODUCTION

Overview of children's environmental health in the country

Provide a general synopsis of the country's views and position on children's environmental health, for example, the awareness level of government officials (especially in the health and environment sectors) and the acceptance of this as a distinct issue.

Key environmental issues

WHO lists 6 key issue areas: Prioritize these for the country and add any additional areas of focus so that there is one prioritized list of environmental concerns for the country.

Key causes of infant and under-five mortality/morbidity

This information is normally readily available from the WHO representation in the country. List the top five causes of illness and death for children under one, for children five and under, for children up to 14 and for children as a whole (the age of children varies somewhat from country to country. For example, some use 18 and under, some 20 and under - Define the age group that you are reporting).

Burden of disease related to environment in children

WHO has worked on this and the representation should have information on the relation of environmental threats to the burden of disease. WHO reports that environmental threats may cause up to one-third of the global burden of disease. AFRO has its estimates too. What does the country report? Are there any significant differentials between boys and girls? rural and urban children?

HIGH RISK/VULNERABLE GROUPS

Information on high risks/vulnerable groups and demographic profile of countries -

To what extent are environment and health statistics or any other statistics routinely desegregated by socio-economic status, ethnicity? Provide the approximate numbers or percentages of each ethnic population and the geographic areas they occupy Are major research or other institutions carrying any relevant work in the area? To what extent do national environmental or other sectoral policies make specific reference to ethnic groups? Is there any evidence of the impact of ethnicity, socio-economic status on the burden of disease related to environmental threats – (disease distribution and prevalence)? Are there any activities on the vulnerable groups, ethnic minorities undertaken by international institutions or Non-governmental Organizations to which an environment and health component might be added? .

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

National Policies

Are there specific national policies or stated priorities that support children's environmental health? Are there specific national policies or stated priorities that seem to run counter to the objectives of increasing protection of children from environmental threats (e.g. loose pesticide regulations, persistence of lead in gasoline despite the proven health benefits of removing it)? Is policy lacking in areas which have an impact on children's environmental health?

Health Sector

How does the health sector address environmental health in general and children's environmental health specifically? Is there legislation to protect public health from environmental hazards and is this legislation well-implemented? Is there any action to protect vulnerable sub-populations or children in particular? Are the medical, nursing and healthcare professional communities briefed or trained on environmental threats to human health? Are there specific clinics or facilities to promote environmental health or children's environmental health? What are the differences in approaches to environmental health in rural and urban settings respectively?

Environment Sector

Discuss the country's environmental legislation and its level of enforcement. Is human health a component of environmental legislation and/or is protecting human health part of the mandate of the environment ministry? Are there any specific considerations concerning children? Are specific media, such as water, air, soil, food, covered by environmental legislation? If so, list which media are covered and list any gaps. Does the environment ministry coordinate well with other ministries, such as health or education and, if so, which ones?

Education

With a focus on elementary (age 5 through age 10 or more) and high school, what are the opportunities for health and environmental education? Is there an environmental or a health curriculum taught in these grade levels? Are there schools in rural as well as city settings? Is attendance in the schools required up to a certain age? Are there differentials in male/female school attendance? Would environmental health education through elementary schools be something acceptable in the school systems?

Other pertinent ministry/sector

List other pertinent ministries to children's health and environment. For example, some countries regulate some environmental issues through agricultural ministries. Some countries have ministries of culture, science, education, welfare, and family and youth issues. What are the ministries at the national government level which would play a role in implementing a national action plan on children's environmental health? Please list them and describe the role they would play.

SOCIETY ROLE

Communities

Are there governmental units set up at the community level, such as county seats, communal or city governments? What role do they play or might they take at a local level to better protect children from environmental threats? Do they have the ability to pass local legislation? Are they charged with enforcing national legislation? Could they be enticed to carry out public information campaigns on children's environmental health?

Non-governmental organizations

Do NGO's play a strong role in building stakeholder input and public participation? What are the key NGOs (both national and international) that would become involved in a national campaign on children's environmental health? What roles might they play?

Professional Associations

Do professional associations play a strong role in building stakeholder input and public participation? What are the key professional associations (both national and international) that would become involved in a national campaign on children's environmental health? What roles might they play?

Academia

What academic institutions exist that could promote children's environmental health through research, advocacy, publications, medical education (of medical and post-graduate students and continuing medical education), development and use of the children's environmental history taking, and development and use of indicators? What role would each play and what is your assessment of their level of interest in this topic?

Private sector

Are there private companies that would likely be interested in promoting the safety and health of children in the country? For example, pharmaceutical, hygiene and cosmetic products companies, agricultural chemical companies, water companies, food and beverage producers? What role could the private sector take, such as financing, public advertisements, educational campaigns, advocating national legislation?

SCIENCE

State of the science in the country related to CEH

Has anyone in the country conducted research and published results on topics related to environmental health (e.g. the six key issues, children's settings) or children's environmental health? Does the country have a science ministry or organization in the government and do they do research and publish findings? Where? Is the environment or health legislation based on scientific findings?

Capabilities to conduct research

What institutions that promote science and research exist in the country? Does the national government invest in research and development? What types of scientific publications are released in the country? Is financing available to support research at universities, hospitals, laboratories or other facilities? Which institutions would most likely be interested in research on children's environmental health?

Research needs

List the top priority research needs around the topic of children's environmental health in the country. Is research on these topics under way? Are there barriers to conduct this research and, if so, what would help overcome the barriers? What are the top three ways in which an international organization or other countries could support research in this country?

DATA AND REPORTING

Information systems and centers

Does the country have a centralized information gathering function on children's health data? (e.g. health surveillance system, clinical case recording) Does the country have national or private information centers, for example on health, demographics or environment? Does the country require reporting of certain pediatric diseases to support public health surveillance and disease prevention and, if so, how is that information gathered? Are there poison control centers in the country and, if so, do they record information from calls in a harmonized

manner? Does the country report indicators on environment or health? Does the country put out regular reports on disease, public health or environmental conditions?

Data quality

The WHO representations are most likely involved in data gathering on health, and local UNICEF and UNDP offices probably work on information collection systems, as well. Do the staff in these offices judge data quality as good enough to be useful and representative? Are there other entities that collect data on health, environment or status of children in the country? Can the national work on MDGs help to clarify and address barriers to data quality in the country?

COMMUNICATION

Avenues of communication

What are the most effective means for disseminating information in the country (for example television, radio, newspaper)? Are these the same for both rural and urban settings? If not, list by rural and urban. What are the most effective means for communications through schools, adult literacy programs, county or local governments? What are other innovative means of communication, for example through local libraries, street theatres, radio/TV educational “soap operas,” fairs or other local events.

Success stories in communication

Do you know of any local success stories in widespread communication on important topics? For example, the use of audio and video tapes shown in primary health care centres or community gatherings. Could these success cases repeat themselves, this time carrying a message of children’s environmental health?

CONCLUSION

Summary on the status of children’s environmental health in the country and opportunities for action

Given your findings, in a page or less, summarize your assessment of the country’s ability and interest to take action to improve the environmental health of its children. What actions in this area something would be recommended? What may be the areas for natural success? What are the key barriers or areas that need to be addressed to achieve success? Who (individuals and organizations) are the key players?

ANNEXES—please provide any samples of useful or illustrative materials, such as educational, awareness building, information gathering, data collection forms, educational programs, other.

Original format prepared by M. Shimkin for PAHO (January 2003), modified by J. Pronczuk for AFRO (May 2003), with input from J. Sims and AFRO (June 2003).