



World Ecology Report

Critical Issues in Health and the Environment

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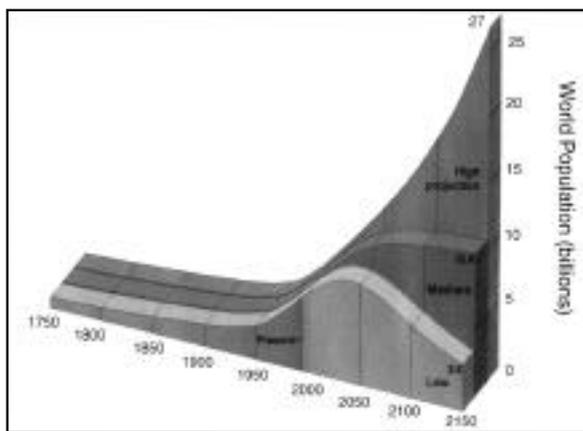
SPECIAL FOCUS: THE AGEING OF THE WORLD'S POPULATION

The *World Ecology Report* looked at global population trends in the summer of 1994, to prepare for World Information Transfer's participation in the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo, Egypt, September 1994. The ICPD will be reviewed at a special session of the UN General Assembly in June 1999. Apart from this review, the last year of the twentieth century has been declared the United Nations International Year of Older Persons. Taken together, 1999 signals the population trend for the next era. Global population is ageing.

With the continuing decline in fertility and increasing life expectancy, the population of the world will age much faster in the next half-century than it has previously. The median age increased from 23.5 years in 1950 to 26.1 years in 1998. By 2050, the median age is projected to reach 37.8 years.

GLOBAL GRAYING

Beginning in the 1980s, the United Nations became interested in such concerns as to whether older people will be the contributors to or simply beneficiaries of improved standards of living. The UN adopted in 1982, the International Plan of Action on Ageing, the first internationally negotiated action document that puts forth specific recommendations for addressing the potential effects of global ageing.



Predicting population growth is an inexact science, as this graph showing UN projections clearly illustrates. The UN now estimates that world population will be between 3.6 and 27 billion by 2150, and the difference between the two projections is only one child per women. If fertility rates continue to drop until women have about two children each--the medium range projection--the population will stabilize at 10.8 billion. If the average becomes 2.6 children, the population will more than quadruple to 27 billion; if it falls to 1.6, the total will drop to 3.6 billion.

SOURCE: National Geographic Society, 1998

The Plan of Action was anchored to the basic principle that there is a symbiotic relationship between population ageing and economic development. One basic objective of the Plan was to ensure that, as the population of the world ages, the elderly have opportunities to contribute to as well as share in, the benefits of development.

The Plan of Action was followed by three quadrennial reviews of its implementation -1985, 1989, 1993 and a separate study, *The World Ageing Situation* (United Nations, 1991). These have found one common and troubling conclusion: the elderly have come to be viewed as dependent beneficiaries of development, rather than contributors to it. Under such circumstances, the elderly may be perceived not only as obstacles to economic development but also as societal burdens who divert needed resources away from

other age groups. This "intergenerational equity issue" often gives rise to heated debate among policy makers throughout the world.

Falling fertility and smaller families have prompted recent well-publicized claims that the "population explosion" is over. On the contrary, the United Nations Fund for Population's *State of the World Population 1998* report points out, world population will continue to grow substantially for at least another 50 years. In 2050, it will be between 7.7 and 11.2 billion, with 9.4 billion considered most likely. Much of the growth will be due to

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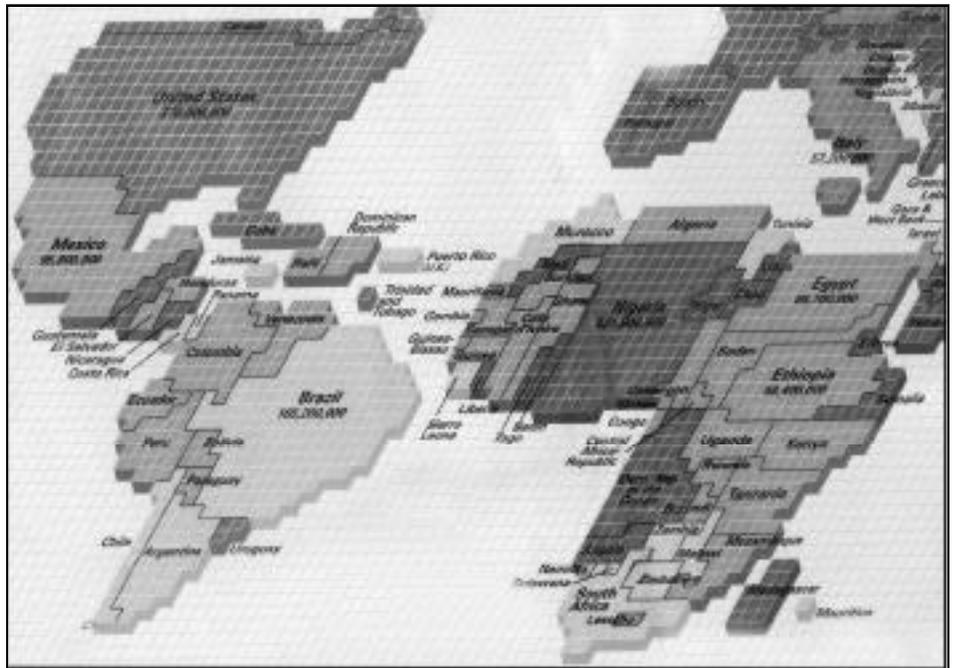


"population momentum", the inevitable result of high birth rates in the recent past.

Over the past few years, the world's population has continued on its remarkable transition from one of high birth and death rates to one characterized by low birth and death rates. At the center of that transition has been the growth in the number and proportion of older persons. Such a rapid transformation is unprecedented in the history of mankind.

The current demographic revolution is predicted to continue well into the next centuries. According to the United Nations study *The Ageing of the World's Population*, the major projections will be the following:

- One of every ten persons is now 60 years or above; by 2050, one out of five will be 60 years or older; and by 2150, one out of three persons will be 60 years or older.
- The older population itself is ageing. The increase in the number of very old people (aged 80+ years): that group is projected to grow by a factor of from 8 to 10 times on the global scale between 1950 and 2050. Currently, the oldest old constitutes 11 percent of the population aged 60 and above. (see box on the oldest-old): that group is projected to grow by a factor of from 8 to 10 times on the global scale between 1950 and 2050. Currently, the oldest old constitutes 11 percent of the population aged 60 and above. By 2150, about a third of the older population will be 80 years or older (see box).
- The majority of older persons (55 percent) are women. Among the oldest old (80 years or older), 65 percent are women.
- Striking differences exist between regions. One out of five Europeans, but one out of twenty Africans, is 60 years or older.
- In some developed countries today, the proportion of older persons is close to one in five. During the first half of the next century that proportion will reach one in four and in some countries one in two.



With one of the highest population growth rates in the industrialized world, the United States stands apart from Europe and Japan, which are projected to shrink in coming years. If American women continue averaging about two children each and immigration continues at its present pace (immigration accounts for one-third of the country's growth), the U.S. will add 120 million people in the next 50 years, the same number it has added in the past 50.

SOURCE: National Geographic Society, 1998

- As the tempo of ageing in developing countries is more rapid than in developed countries, developing countries will have less time than the developed countries to adapt to the consequences of population ageing.
- By the end of this century, the majority of the world's older persons (51 percent) will be living in urban areas. It is projected that by the year 2000, almost 78 percent of older women and more than 75 percent of older men in more developed regions will be living in urban areas. The majority of older persons of both sexes in developing regions are expected to remain rural (about 58 percent of women and 60 percent of men).
- At the individual level, it is estimated that more than 20 years will be added to the average life of an individual by the end of this century.

KIDS VS. CANES

Paradoxically, while at the same time the number and proportion of people over 65 are increasing at an unprecedented

rate, more young people than ever—over one billion between the ages of 15 and 24—are entering their childbearing years. The rapid growth of these young and old “new generations” is challenging societies' ability to provide education and health care for the young, and social, medical and financial support for the elderly. This may lead to inter-generational competition for stretched resources.

In some developing regions over the next two decades, young people will swell the workforce compared to older and younger dependents. This temporary “bulge” in the working age population relative to older and younger dependents will create a temporary opportunity to build human capital and spur long-term development before dependency levels go up again as populations age. To take advantage of this “demographic bonus,” the report emphasizes that countries need to invest in education, jobs and health services, including reproductive health care.

In response to rising numbers of older people, many industrialized countries are

considering reforms such as increasing the age of eligibility for public-sector pension funds. Whatever their design, the UNFPA report stresses, old-age security systems should guarantee a basic level of services to all, paying special attention to the needs of the most vulnerable, including the poorest, women-who make up a majority of the elderly-and the "oldest old".

Ageing populations will strain medical systems in many developing countries, which are still struggling to protect the health of younger age groups. The burden of disease will shift to older ages over the next several decades. Nevertheless, the report contends, health services should not be reoriented towards treatment of diseases affecting older people at the expense of preventive programs and services for poorer and less healthy people of all ages.

The rapid growth of adolescent and elderly populations demands a considerable investment in: 1) health care including reproductive health information and services; 2) education and job training for the young; 3) social and financial support for the elderly. Such investments have enormous practical benefits. Better health, social and financial support services can: 1) take the place of large families in providing for old age; 2) encourage smaller, healthier, better-educated families; 3) and enable older people to remain healthy, independent and productive longer.

Most developed countries may find themselves with lopsided societies that will be nearly impossible to sustain: a large number of elderly and not enough young people working to support them. The consequences will affect every program from health care and education to pension plans and military spending that requires public spending.

PACE OF AGEING

The more developed regions have been leading the process of population ageing since its onset at the beginning of this century. In 1998, for the first time the proportion of older persons exceeded that of children, respectively at 19.1 and 18.8 percent. By 2050, the more developed regions will have a very old population,

THE OLDEST-OLD

Those people aged 80 or over are often referred to as the oldest-old. They are still a rather small part of today's population: just 1.1 percent of the world's population is 80 years or older, yet it is the fastest growing population segment. For instance according to the United Nations Population Division, while total population between 1970 and 1998 grew by 60 percent, the size of the oldest-old increased more than two-fold, from 26.7 million to 66.0 million, or by 147 percent.

For the first time, the numbers of octogenarians, nonagenarians and centenarians have been estimated and projected for all countries of the world. This new information is in the 1998 Revision of the official United Nations population estimates and projections providing for the first time detailed estimates and projections of the demographic characteristics of the oldest-old, i.e. those who are 80 years or older.

According to the Revision, in 1998, 66 million persons in the world were aged 80 or over. By 2050, this number is expected to increase almost 6-fold to reach 370 million persons. Growth rates of the oldest-old will even accelerate in the future; in 2050, this population group is expected to be almost 6 times as large as today.

In past *Revisions*, the oldest-old were treated as one open-ended age group. But with its fast growth, more detailed information about the demographic characteristics of this segment of the population became increasingly more needed. The United Nation's Population Division has therefore extended the age format of its estimates and projections up to age 100 and above, showing for the first time the age groups 80-84, 85-89, 90-94, 95-99 and 100 and above.

The proportion of the oldest-old is currently (1998) largest in Northern Europe (3.9 percent), the three countries with the highest proportion of the oldest-old are Sweden (4.8%), Norway (4.2%) and the United Kingdom (4.1%). Northern Europe is followed by Western Europe (3.7 percent) and Southern

Europe (3.2 percent). The lowest proportions - at or below half a percent - are found in Africa, Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia.

In 1998, China, with 10.5 million people in this age category, has the largest number of the oldest-old; 16 percent of all people 80 or over in the world today live in China. The second largest oldest-old population lives in the United States of America (8.6 million). India has 5.7 million people in this category, Japan 4.3 million, Germany (3.1 million) and the Russian Federation (3.0 million). Together, these countries account for 53 percent of the oldest-old globally.

There will be 5 countries in 2050 with 10 million and more people age 80 or over: China (100 million), India (47 million), United States of America (27 million), Japan (12 million) and Indonesia (10 million). Together they will account for 53 percent of all the oldest-old in the world. In that same year, 2050, 13 countries are projected to have proportions of oldest-old at 10 percent or higher: Italy (14 percent), Spain, Switzerland, Hong Kong, China, Greece, Japan, Austria, Singapore, Germany, Netherlands, Macao, Sweden and Belgium.

The age distribution of the oldest-old is very steep. Octogenarians outnumber nonagenarians by a wide margin, and the proportion of centenarians among the oldest-old is extremely small. It is estimated that in 1998 about 89 percent of the oldest-old (59 million) were octogenarians (aged 80 -89) and about eleven percent (7 million) were nonagenarians (aged 90-99). The proportion of centenarians among the oldest-old was extremely small 0.2 percent or 135 thousand.

The absolute size of the oldest-old is going to change dramatically. There are two important trends to note in these projections: the older the age group, the faster it grows, and the higher its femininity ratio. The femininity ratio is 181 among octogenarians, but it is significantly higher for nonagenarians (287) and centenarians (386).

Like most of the developing world Latin America's population is growing relatively quickly but not uniformly or predictably. Bolivian women, for instance, have twice as many children (4.8) as Chilean women. In Brazil women bear an average of only 2.5 children, while in more developed Argentina women have been averaging close to 3 children each for decades. Demographer Carl Haub credits cultural preferences: "Not everyone wants 2.0 children."

Europe and Africa are going in opposite directions fast. With the highest birthrate of any continent, Africa has grown from 470 million people in 1980 to 763 million in 1998, and it is projected to grow to two billion by 2050. Women in sub-Saharan Africa bear an average 6 children each; European women average 1.4 children, too few to replenish the population. Europe is projected to shrink 12 percent by 2050, from 728 million to 638 million.

SOURCE: National Geographic Society, 1998

with the proportion of older persons projected to increase to 33 percent in 2050, while the proportion of children will decline to 15 percent. The median age passed from 28.6 years in 1950 to 36.8 in 1998 and is projected to climb to 45.6 in 2050.

Until recently, ageing has been much slower in the less developed regions. The proportion of children has declined from 38 percent in 1950 to 33 percent in 1998, while the proportion of older persons has increased from 6 to 8 percent during the same period. By 2050, the proportion of older persons will increase three-fold to 21 percent, while the proportion of children will decline by more than one third to 20 percent. The median age increased from 21.3 years in 1950 to 23.9 in 1998 and is projected to reach 36.7 in 2050. By then the less developed regions will have an age structure similar to that of the more developed regions half-a-century earlier.

This ageing process becomes more dramatic when one looks at the growth of the number of older persons. For the world, it will mean an increase from 580 million older persons in 1998 to almost two billion (1,970 million) in 2050. The

change will be relatively moderate in the more developed regions, from 226 million in 1998 to 376 million in 2050, a two thirds increase. The increase will be much more dramatic in the less developed regions, where the population aged 60 or over will be multiplied more than nine times, from 171 million in 1998 to 1,594 million in 2050.

Europe is, and is projected to remain, the major area of the world most affected by ageing. The proportion of children is projected to decline from 18 percent in 1998 to 14 percent in 2050 while the proportion of older persons will increase from 20 percent in 1998 to 35 percent in 2050. By then, the proportion of older persons will be nearly two and-a half times that of children and one in every three persons will be 60 years or above. The median age is projected to increase from 37.1 years in 1998 to 47.4 in 2050.

Southern Europe, with a proportion of children of 16 percent and of older persons of 22 percent in 1998, is the world region with the oldest population. By 2050, the proportion of children will have declined to 13 percent while the proportion of older persons will have reached 39 percent. Italy recently became the first nation in history where there are more people over 60 than there are under the age of 20. The oldest country in the world in 1998 is Italy, with 1.6 persons aged 60 or above for each person below 15 years of age, followed by Greece, Japan, Spain and Germany. The Italian city of Bologna has the lowest fertility rate in the world.

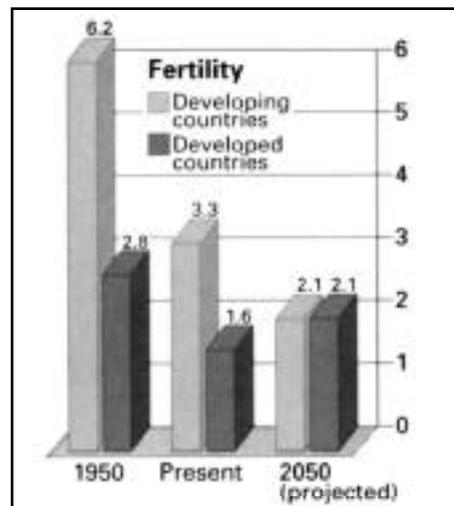
By 2050, the oldest country of the world will be Spain, closely followed by Italy, with respectively 3.6 and 3.4 persons aged 60 or above for each person below 15 years of age. The other areas of the world most touched by ageing are, in decreasing order, North America, Oceania, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Africa is the youngest major area of the world with a proportion of children of 43 percent and a proportion of older persons of 5 percent in 1998. Eastern Africa, with a proportion of children of 46 percent and a proportion of older persons of 4 percent in 1998 is the world's youngest region.

Uganda is the world's youngest country with one in every 31 persons aged 60 or over, followed by Zambia and Yeman. By 2050, Africa will still have a young age structure, with twice as many children as elderly, respectively 24 percent and 12 percent in 2050.

This demographic transition towards an older population is a process that occurs gradually, whereby society moves from a situation of high rates of fertility and mortality to one of low rates. This transition is characterized first by declines in infant and childhood mortality as infectious and parasitic diseases are controlled. Whole populations begin to age when fertility rates decline and mortality rates at all ages improve. Successive birth cohorts may eventually become smaller and smaller, as seen for more-developed nation in 1996. If projected declines in fertility and mortality in less-developed countries proceed as expected, the overall population age structure will lose its strictly triangular shape and the elderly population will increase throughout the world. As world population nears 6 billion, record numbers of young and old may push the direction of social and economic development onto new and equitable paths.

SOURCES: Specter, Michael. "Population Implosion Worries a Graying Europe", New York Times, July 10, 1998; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "Ageing, and the Oldest Old"; Wisensale, 5, "World Population Ageing: the Coming Intergenerational Equity Debate," *UN Bulletin on Ageing 2/3* 1997, Division for Social Development; UNFPA, *The State of the World Population 1998- The New Generations*; <http://www.unfpa.org/SWP>; U.S. Bureau of the Census, International Programs Center, International Data Base.



SOURCE: National Geographic Society, 1998



DID YOU KNOW?

■ During 1998, evidence continued to accumulate indicating that a significant portion of female breast cancer is preventable because it is caused by exposure to cancer-causing agents (chemicals and radiation - including hydrogenated vegetable oils) in the environment. About 182,000 new cases of breast cancer occur in American women each year, and 46,000 deaths occur annually from the disease. In the U.S., the occurrence of breast cancer has increased steadily at the rate of one percent each year for the past 40 years.

SOURCE: *Rachel's Environment & Health Weekly* #630, Dec. 24, 1998.

■ Measurements made during the past 2 years of air pollution crossing the Pacific Ocean from Asia to North America showed a burst in the concentrations of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, and other pollutants from fossil-fuel combustion. Late last April (1998). Strong dust storms in China lifted 140 million tons of fine soil particles into the atmosphere and a week later reached western North America. The thick Asian dust brought with it measurable quantities of arsenic, copper, lead, and zinc, recorded in higher air concentrations of these metals across the western United States on April 29. This data firmly indicates that pollution travels long distances. There is also suspicion that American pollution crosses the

Atlantic Ocean and lands in Europe. The concentrations of pollutants crossing an ocean are small in most cases and pose little health risk so far.

SOURCE: *Science News*, Vol. 1 54, No. 24, Dec. 12, 1998.

■ The pesticide Lindane has been used in unintended ways by Ugandans. Empty containers are often used for packaging alcohol drinks and for children's juice for school. Due to insufficient cleaning, people have ingested large doses of these pesticides causing acute poisoning. The amount of water required to wash a drum in a rural household setting is prohibitive. Drums are therefore rolled to the stream where there is adequate water. The pesticide left in drums is sufficient to cause large

cides, and other chemical compounds, have been detected in the unhatched eggs and dead offspring of the endangered golden eagle. This finding provides evidence that the birds are passing the chemicals to their young. The study was carried out from 1995 to 1997 in areas around Japan.

SOURCE: Greenpeace, as reported by Jack Weinberg, 1999.

■ Cambodian officials found at least 3,000 tons of what is suspected to be toxic waste near Cambodia's only seaport. The waste was discovered 110 miles southwest of Phnom Penh. Local scavengers suffered from skin rashes, which suggested that the waste could be the compressed ashes from an industrial toxic-waste incinerator. The Cambodian

Environment Ministry has asked experts from the UN Development Program to analyze the material.

SOURCE: (AP/San Francisco Chronicle Examiner, online, 12/16/98).

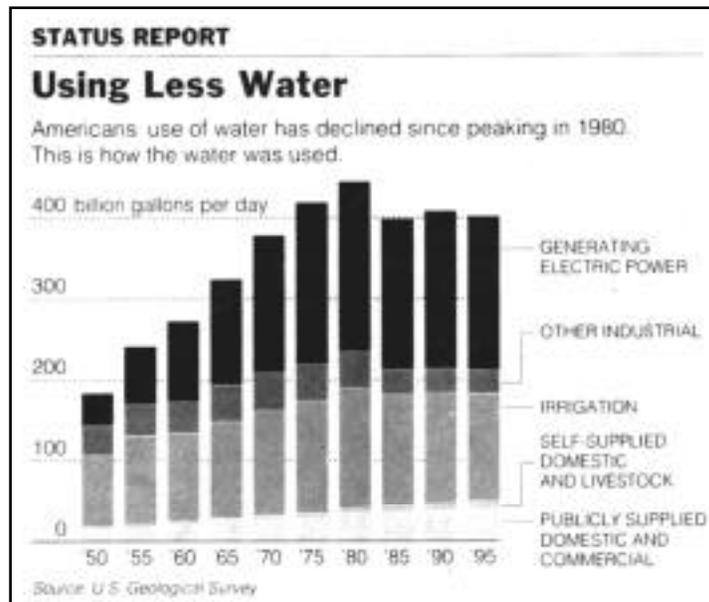
■ World Health Organization's target for controlling tuberculosis by 2000 is detained, as the 16 countries which account for half the world's TB cases refuse to take the TB epidemic seriously. The 16 countries include, Brazil, Iran, Mexico, Russia and South Africa.

SOURCE: WHO

■ Research conducted on behalf of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) by

Finland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs probed 13 cases from around the world in which NGOs formed the subject of evaluations. It found little consensus on which methods for impact assessment stand out as the most revealing or reliable. And despite growing demand from all quarters for more and better monitoring and evaluation studies, the signs are that awareness of the true impact of NGO-run development projects remains sketchy.

SOURCE: Contributed by R. Riddell et al - OECD to the 1D21 News Issue No. 19 January 11 th 1999.



SOURCE: New York Times, November 10, 1998

fish kills in those streams which receive the toxic residues. Lindane has also been used by some fishermen to kill fish. The fishermen pour the toxin onto a stream or river, killing the fish which float to the surface for the men to collect. This poisons the fish as well as the water.

SOURCE: Timothy Byakola, Climate and Development Initiatives, PO Box. 8849 Kampala, Uganda, E-mail: acs@starcom.co.ug.

■ A study conducted by the Japanese Environment Agency indicated that large quantities of PCBs, DDT insecti-

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT: *Persistent Organic Pollutants*

WIT recognizes the global health hazard caused by presence of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in the environment. The *Fall World Ecology Report* presented a background article on POPs. Here we reprint the NGO proposal to eliminate POPs developed by the NGO network known as IPEN (International POPs Elimination Network). WIT is a member of the IPEN Steering Committee and endorses the POPs Elimination Platform.

POPs ELIMINATION PLATFORM

The undersigned organizations are in agreement that:

15. The appropriate goal for a POPs convention is the establishment of a systematic and sustained Programme of Action in which all countries participate to eliminate POPs and their significant sources. This is the only course of action that can, over time, eliminate the injury that POPs cause.

16. The goal of a global POPs convention must not be defined as the "better management of risks associated with POPs." POPs do not only represent a "risk," but also a current source of significant injury to the biosphere - to humans, to wildlife and to entire ecosystems around the world. Nor is the better management of POPs and POPs releases an appropriate goal for a global POPs convention, as POPs by their very nature are unmanageable substances. We recognize, however, that the elimination of all significant POPs sources, and the remediation of POPs environmental reservoirs will, in many cases, be difficult and take time. We also recognize that POPs will remain in the environment and in the food chain for an extended period, even after global POPs elimination measures have been effectively implemented. For this reason, POPs management regimes will often be required as the longer term phase-out regimes are put in place and take effect. POPs management, however, should be viewed as a supplement to POPs elimination and not as an alternative.

17. The world's governments, through the UNEP-authorized Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), must establish a legally binding global Programme of Action designed to eliminate POPs and their anthropogenic (of human origin) sources based on the following principles:

a) The POPs Programme of Action must entail a problem solving, solutions-oriented regime, which recognizes that many countries lack the capacity to eliminate POPs and their anthropogenic source without significant external assistance. Assistance will often be required to help countries identify and make

available cost-effective alternatives to POPs and their sources, emphasizing non-toxic and non-chemical alternatives wherever possible. A meaningful POPs elimination agreement must include significant commitments for shared responsibility including external assistance as well as technical and other aid in capacity enhancement. This regime should include mobilization of funds and expertise from relevant United Nations and other public agencies and multi-agency initiatives, the private sector, NGOs, and civil society groups to actively encourage the establishment of safe, environmentally sustainable, cost-effective and efficient means to achieve desired outcomes;

b) No country or region must be asked or required to take action under a POPs agreement that is substantively harmful to the health or to the well-being of its people or environment. Special efforts must be made to ensure that health and safety are not compromised while a POP is being phased out and eliminated (particularly in the area of infectious disease control, necessary food production and other significant social or health-related matters). These should include the transfer of scientific, technological, and financial resources to help ensure a safe transition away from POPs. Moreover, a proposed alternative to a POP - even if that alternative is not a POP - should not be considered appropriate if it poses an unacceptable local or regional health or environmental threat because of toxicity or other properties;

c) Once a substance is listed as a POP, it is inappropriate to accept its continued generation and release into the environment. We reject the claim that emissions and releases of POPs can be effectively managed and controlled. When a substance is listed as a POP, the plan of action set out by the agreement should set out a time-table to stop all its uses and all its emissions. The elimination of a POP should not be gauged by its measured presence in the environment. A POP has no acceptable emission limit, no acceptable daily intake, and no acceptable level in the environment;

d) For POPs identified as UNEP action targets - the twelve already identified as well as others that may be added at a later date - the legally binding instrument should mandate a rapid, but orderly and responsible global Programme of Action that will: (i) for those POPs intentionally produced, phase out and then ban all intentional production and intentional use and also end all import, export, transfer and sales; (ii) for those POPs that are generated as unwanted contaminants, byprod-

ucts and combustion products, identify and phase-out significant anthropogenic sources. In identifying sources, consideration should be given to industrial processes, waste disposal technologies, and anthropogenic products and materials routinely associated with the generation of POPs during their ordinary life-cycle; and (iii) for obsolete POPs stocks and environmental POPs reservoirs, identify, collect and destroy the POPs by means that do not, themselves, cause hazards, generate POPs or otherwise threaten or injure health and/or the environment;

e) A workable and transparent procedure should be established for identifying new POPs beyond the original twelve as elimination targets under the global Programme of Action; criteria for identifying additional POPs should be based on environmental and health protection considerations only;

f) POPs elimination should proceed through a transition regime that is rapid, orderly and just. Unnecessary delay should not be tolerated. Phase-out transitions should proceed through a planned and orderly regime that is designed to keep economic and social costs to a minimum and to avoid disruptions and dislocations. In some cases, there will be need for transition assistance and/or other aid to specific groups of workers or communities who currently depend for their livelihood on production or use of POPs, on technologies that generate POPs or on materials that routinely generate POPs during their ordinary life cycle. When there are economic benefits as well as economic costs associated with a POPs phase-out regime, these should be equitably distributed among affected groups. In particular, the costs of clean-up and phase-out of POPs should be shared by groups responsible for their production with special attention to the private sector. Monitoring and oversight of elimination activities and financing should be conducted by independent bodies accountable to the public;

g) In addressing the special considerations addressed in points a) and b), above, and in order to assist governments, the 20 private sector, NGOs, scientists and other interested parties in all countries in expediting effective POPs-related action, it is essential that a special "clearing-house" mechanism focused on POPs be established in tandem with the global, legally binding instrument, providing interested parties with direct access to relevant sources of information, practical experience and scientific and technical expertise and to facilitate effective scientific, technical and financial cooperation as well as capacity-building;

h) As part of the global effort to identify and eliminate POPs, aggressive programs of toxicity testing should be undertaken directed to the many chemicals whose toxic effects remain unknown, evaluating these chemicals both individually and in combination, and addressing the broad range of relevant health outcomes, including carcinogenicity and mutagenicity, endocrine activity, and developmental, immune, neurological, and reproductive toxicity. Where there remains uncertainty about the effects of a POP, action should be taken consistent with the precautionary principle, which relies on the weight of evidence approach, with special consideration given to the risks to fetuses, children, and other vulnerable populations; and

i) Complementing the need for transparent processes, including meaningful public participation, throughout the negotiation of a global, legally binding POPs instrument, the resulting regime (as well as related national international and private sector activities) must likewise be as transparent as possible including measures to ensure effective public/NGO participation in decision making and the identification and development of safe and sustainable alternatives, and timely access to relevant governmental and private sector data on sources, levels, uses and whereabouts of POPs, as well as data held by those sectors regarding hazards and alternatives.

For more information about IPEN or to endorse the platform, contact Karen Perry, Physicians for Social Responsibility, at kperry@psr.org or at (202) 898-0150 x249 <http://www.prs.org/ipen/news.htm>



Everyday 214,000 acres of rainforest—an area larger than New York City—are destroyed. Rainforest plants have provided drugs for treating diseases such as cancer, Hodgkin disease, hypertension, arthritis and childhood leukemia. Only 1% of the rainforest species have been studied and countless cures for other ailments await discovery. But dozens are driven into extinction everyday by human development and at the present rate of deforestation, nearly all tropical rain forest systems will be destroyed by the year 2030.

SOURCE: Rainforest Action Network

Toxic Effects of Indoor Molds

ABSTRACT: This statement describes molds, their toxic properties, and their potential for causing toxic respiratory problems in infants. Presented at WIT's 7th International Conference on Health and Environment held at the U.N.

The growth of molds is pervasive throughout the outdoor environment. Given the proper conditions, molds may also proliferate in the indoor setting. Because Americans spend 75% to 90% of their time indoors, they are exposed to molds that are growing indoors.

Molds readily enter indoor environments by circulating through doorways windows, heating, ventilation systems, and air conditioning systems. Spores in the air also deposit on people and animals, making clothing, shoes, bags, and pets common carriers of mold into indoor environments. The most common indoor molds are *Cladosporium*, *Penicillium*, *Aspergillus*, and *Alternaria*.

Molds proliferate in environments that contain excessive moisture, such as from leaks in roofs, walls, plant pots, or pet urine. Many building materials are suitable nutrient sources for fungal growth. Cellulose substrates, including paper and paper products, cardboard, ceiling tiles, wood, and wood products, are particularly favorable for the growth of some molds. Other substrates such as dust, paints, wallpaper, insulation materials, drywall, carpet, fabric, and upholstery commonly support mold growth. Molds also may colonize near standing water.

Some indoor molds have the potential to produce extremely potent toxins called mycotoxins. Mycotoxins are lipid-soluble and are readily absorbed by the intestinal lining, airways, and skin.

DIRECT TOXIC EFFECTS FROM MOLD

The toxic effects from mold exposure are thought to be associated with exposure to toxins on the surface of the mold spores, not with the growth of the mold in the body. Until recently, there was only one published report in the United States linking air-borne exposure to mycotoxins with health problems in humans. The investigators documented that this mold was producing trichothecene mycotoxins.

The quantity of molds, including the roxi-genic fungus *Stachybotrys*, was higher in the homes of infants with pulmonary hemorrhage. Simultaneous exposure to environmental tobacco smoke appeared to increase the risk of acute pulmonary hemorrhage among infants.

Stachybotrys requires water-saturated cellulose-based materials for growth in buildings. In studies conducted in North America, it has been found in 2% to 3% of home environments sampled. Infants may be particularly susceptible to the effects of these inhaled mycotoxins because their lungs are growing very rapidly.

CONCLUSION

Very little is currently known about acute idiopathic pulmonary hemorrhage among infants. This is a newly recognized problem and knowledge is expected to be evolving rapidly. In view of the severity of the problem, environmental controls to eliminate water problems and to reduce the growth of indoor molds are wise. Until more is known about the etiology of idiopathic pulmonary hemorrhage, prudence dictates that pediatricians try to ensure that infants under 1 year of age are not exposed to chronically moldy, water-damaged environments.

Coroners and medical examiners should consider using the recent published *Guidelines for Death Scene Investigation of Sudden, Unexplained Infant Deaths*, which includes a question about dampness, visible standing water, or mold growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. In areas where flooding has occurred, prompt cleaning of walls and other flood-damaged items with water mixed with chlorine bleach, diluted four parts water to one part bleach, is necessary to prevent mold growth. Never mix bleach with ammonia. Moldy items should be discarded.
2. Pediatricians should ask about mold and water damage in the home when they treat infants with idiopathic pulmonary hemorrhage. If mold is in the home, pediatricians should encourage parents to try to find and eliminate sources of moisture. Testing the environment for specific molds is usually not necessary. It appears to be important to clean up moldy conditions before the infant is discharged from the hospital to prevent recurrent pulmonary hemorrhage.
3. Infants with idiopathic pulmonary hemorrhage must not be exposed to environments in which smoking occurs.
4. Infants who die suddenly without known cause should have an autopsy done including a Prussian blue stain of lung tissue to look for the presence of hemosiderin.

SOURCE: American Academy of Pediatrics committee on Environmental Health 1997-1998, Ruth A. Etzel, MD, PhD, chairperson

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: *Assessing Risk Exposure in Food for the Next Generation*



Reducing malnutrition should be an urgent global priority; inaction is a scandalous affront to the human right to survival. A malnourished child with his mother in Afghanistan.

SOURCE: UNICEF, State of the World's Children, 1998

We provide our children with a healthful diet to the degree that we control the ingredients in our food. Even if we eat only what we ourselves raise or catch, the foods we consume and give our offspring are subject to toxic contamination from persistent organic pollutants, or POPs. As POPs dissolve in fatty tissue and bio-accumulate up the food chain, humans, at the top of the food chain, can ingest these toxic chemicals simply by eating an ostensibly healthful meal of salmon (a fatty fish) or an obviously unwholesome American fast food burger.

POPs degrade slowly, disperse easily, and are drawn from warm to colder climates, hence they migrate toward Arctic regions contaminating the indigenous inhabitants through their diet, even though they live thousands of miles from the pollutants' source. People living in the Arctic, particularly the Inuit whose diet traditionally relies on marine mammals and fatty fish, have some of the highest body concentrations of POPs in the world. High levels of PCBs have been detected in the breast milk of Inuit women, who inadvertently feed these toxins to their infants.

According to the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN), "injury caused by exposure to POPs is often expressed, not in the exposed adult population, but in the offspring generation. Maternal body burdens of POPs are transferred through the placenta to the developing fetus and through breast milk to the nursing infant, and can cause injury at

vulnerable stages of development that may not be expressed until the infant reaches puberty or adulthood." POPs have been associated with diseases of the immune and endocrine systems including cancer, reproductive disorders and birth defects.

Several recent studies published at the end of 1998 look more closely at the relationship among POPs exposure, food and health. As reported in Environmental Health Perspectives, Dutch researchers investigated food habits from early childhood until reproductive age (25 years) comparing exposure to PCBs and dioxin - two of the most treacherous POPs - from foods in infancy, the preschool years and long term*.

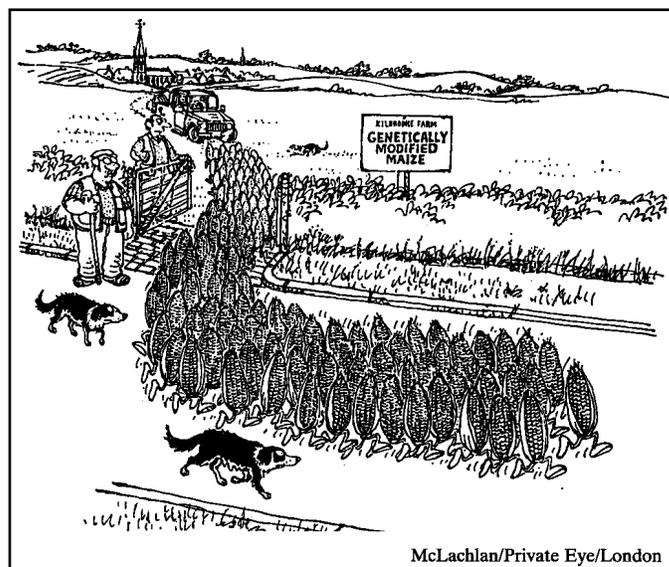
These investigators studied a group of 207 children from birth until preschool age. In toddlers, dairy products contributed 43% to PCB-TEQ (TEQ stands for toxic equivalent) and 50% to dioxin-TEQ intake. Meat and meat products contributed 14% and 19%, respectively, and processed foods 23% and 15%, respectively. Breast-feeding for 6 months contributed to the cumulative PCB/dioxin TEQ intake until 25 years of age, 12% in boys and 14% in girls. The daily TEQ intake per kilogram body weight is 50 times higher in breast-fed infants and three times higher in toddlers than in adults. Long-term dietary exposure to PCBs and dioxins in men and women is partly due to breast-feeding (12 and 14%, respectively). After weaning, dairy products, processed foods, and meat are major contributors of PCB and dioxin accumulation until reproductive age. This study highlighting the maternal transfer of PCBs and dioxins to the next generation recommends strict enforcement of the regulations for PCB and dioxin discharge and avoidance of animal products and processed foods in all ages.

Danish scientists investigating links between breast cancer and chemicals known as endocrine disruptors, a type of POPs, found that women who had the highest levels of dieldrin, in their blood

had a 200% increased chance of developing breast cancer than women with the lowest concentrations. The study also revealed that neither PCB nor DDT were clearly linked to the disease. Dieldrin was a popular chemical used in pesticides for agricultural crops including corn and cotton from the 1950s until the 1970s. Dieldrin, PCB and DDT are among the POPs "dirty dozen" (see Health and Environment column in this issue).

The typical American diet relies on meat, dairy products and processed foods - the foods most contaminated with POPs. In addition, the US diet remains high in trans-fatty acids. These fats found in hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated vegetable oils commonly used in commercial and home cooking, continue to be associated with heart disease and cancer. The diets of the Inuit, the Dutch and the Americans suggest that unhealthful eating is a globalized phenomenon. Food contamination from persistent organic pollutants is certainly a global problem affecting future generations. However, exporting the American diet - attractive as it is to young people - exacerbates this problem.

SOURCE: Dietary Exposure to Polychlorinated Biphenyls and Dioxins from Infancy Until Adulthood: A Comparison Between Breast-feeding, Toddler, and Long-term Exposure, Svati Patandin, Pieter C. Dagnelie, Paul G.H. Mulder, Eline Op de Coul, Juul E. van der Veen, Nynke Weisglas-Kuperus, and Pieter ii. Sauer, *Environmental Health Perspectives* (Vol. 107, No. 1, January 1 1999); "Pesticides Linked to Breast Cancer," Copyright 1998 Reuters Ltd. Dec 4, 1998, By Patricia Reaney; *Rachel's Environment & Health Weekly* #601, June 4, 1998; PEN



McLachlan/Private Eye/London

POINT - COUNTERPOINT

Female Genital Mutilation: Maintaining Culture or Sustaining Women's Right to Health

Widely practiced in many countries in Africa and the Middle East, female genital mutilation (FGM) or female circumcision, involves partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The often crude and painful operations not only deprives victims of sexual feelings, but may also injure them in ultimately life threatening ways.

UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, estimates that 130 million women, most of them in Africa, have undergone genital mutilation. Each year more than 2 million girls undergo the procedure some of them in infancy, the agency says. FGM in a variety of its forms is practiced in Middle Eastern countries: Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Southern Algeria. In Africa it is practiced in the majority of the continent including Kenya, Nigeria, Mali, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Mozambique, and Sudan. Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan account for 75% of cases according to UNICEF. In some countries, as many as 95% of girls are affected. In the United States it is estimated that about ten thousand girls are at risk for this practice.

Because of the large number of cases of FGM and some of the deaths it has caused, FGM is now outlawed in some European countries, specifically Britain, France, Sweden, and Switzerland. More than half a dozen African Nations south of the Sahara have now instituted bans which can be enforced with fines and jail sentences. The procedure is barred in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Ghana, Guinea, Senegal and Togo. Some other countries like Uganda frown on it. In North Africa the Egyptian Supreme Court upheld a ban on the practice last year and also ruled that the practice has no place in Islam.

A CROSS-CULTURAL AND CROSS-RELIGIOUS TRADITION

Even though FGM is practiced in

mostly Islamic countries, it is not an exclusively Islamic practice. FGM is a cross-cultural and cross-religious ritual. In Africa and the Middle East it is performed by Muslims, Coptic Christians, members of various indigenous groups, Protestants, and Catholics, to name a few.

In various cultures there are many "justifications" for these practices. A girl who is not circumcised is considered "unclean" by local villagers and, therefore unmarriageable.

One of the most common explanations of FGM is local custom. Women are often heard saying that they are unwilling to change these customs, since they have always done it this way. Oftentimes the practitioners are kept ignorant of the real implications of FGM, and the extreme health risks that it represents.

Family honor, cleanliness, protection against spells, insurance of virginity and faithfulness to the husband, or simply terrorizing women out of sex are the primary explanations for the practice of FGM.

THE PERILS TO WOMEN'S HEALTH

FGM has often been compared to male circumcision. However, such comparison is misleading. Both practices include the removal of well-functioning parts of the genitalia and are quite unnecessary. Both rituals also serve to perpetuate customs which seek to regulate and keep control over the body and sexuality of the individual. However, FGM is far more drastic and damaging than male circumcision. A more appropriate analogy would be between clitoridectomy and penisectomy where the entire penis is removed.

The term FGM covers three main varieties of genital mutilation: 1) Named after the Arabic word for the tradition, "Sunna" circumcision consists of the removal of the prepuce and/or the tip of the clitoris. 2) Clitoridectomy, also referred to as excision, refers to the removal of the entire clitoris (both

prepuce and glans), and the removal of the adjacent labia. 3) infibulation also referred to as pharaonic circumcision. This most extreme form, consists of the removal of the clitoris, the adjacent labia (majora and minora), and the joining of the scraped sides of the vulva across the vagina, where they are sewn with catgut I or thread. A small opening is kept to allow passage of urine and menstrual blood. An infibulated woman must be cut open to allow intercourse on the wedding night and is closed again afterwards to secure fidelity to the husband.

One of the major constraints of FGM is that it is often performed in unsanitary conditions. Often it is a midwife using unclean sharp instruments such as razor blades, scissors, kitchen knives, and pieces of glass. These instruments are frequently used on several girls in succession and are rarely cleaned. Antiseptic techniques and anesthesia are generally not used, or for that matter, not known.

Beyond the obvious initial pains of the operations, FGM has long-term physiological sexual, and psychological effects. The unsanitary environment under which FGM takes place results in infections of the genital and surrounding areas and often results in the transmission of the HIV virus which can cause AIDS. Some of the other health consequences of FGM include primary fatalities as a result of shock, hemorrhage or septicemia. In order to minimize the risk of the transmission of the viruses, some countries like Egypt have made it illegal for FGM to be practiced by anyone other than trained doctors and nurses in hospitals. While this seems to be a more humane way to deal with FGM and try to reduce its health risks, more tissue is apt to be taken away due to the lack of struggle by the child if anesthesia is used.

Long-term complications include sexual frigidity, genital malformation, delayed menarche, chronic pelvic

complications, recurrent urinary retention and infection, and an entire range of obstetric complications whereas the fetus is exposed to a range of infectious diseases as well as facing the risk of having his or her head crushed in the damaged birth canal. In such cases the infibulated mother must undergo another operation whereby she is "opened" further to insure the safe birthing of her child.

Girls undergo FGM when they are around three years old, though some of them are much older than that when they undergo the operation. The age varies depending on the type of the ritual and the customs of the local village or region.

It is also important to note that even though FGM is currently illegal in many countries in Africa and the Middle East, this has not reduced the number of the girls that are mutilated every year. The governments of these countries have no way of monitoring the spread and practice of FGM. However, trying to fight FGM on legal terms is ineffective since those who practice it oftentimes do not report it. FGM is also widely practiced in villages and remote places where the government does not have an easy access.



When women are respected and manage resources in a community, their own and their children's nutrition status improves.

SOURCE: UNICEF, State of the World's Children, 1998

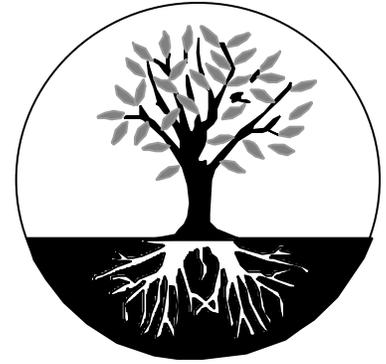
HUMAN RIGHTS

The United Nations, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization have considered FGM to be a violation of Human Rights and have made recommendations to eradicate this practice. The UNFPA named Somali supermodel, Waris Dine, Special Ambassador to speak about the horrors of the practice. A native of Somalia, born into a nomadic family, Ms Dine survived the traditional form of FGM which had already claimed a younger sister and two cousins who died from the procedure.

In the United States there are many efforts that are being made in order to abolish the practice locally and internationally. The National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers (NOCIRC), a networking organization have brought together social scientists and medical practitioners from all over the world who are fighting FGM as well as male circumcision. The Washington Metro Alliance Against Female Genital Mutilation in Washington DC has also been targeting FGM risk groups, and provides peer education for African Women by African women in WA Metro Community and interfaces with western health care providers and policy makers. In addition, Si-Kata has brought together the efforts of researchers and organizers around the United States in the hopes of exposing this practice on a national level as well as changing policies.

Education about the practice from the point of view of human rights and women's health counters the perspective of maintaining a tradition regardless of its human cost. As awareness of this practice, its origins and implications, has grown, FGM has started to come to a halt.

SOURCES: National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers (NOCIRC) POBox 2512 San Anselmo, CA 94979-2512, tel: (415)488-9883; Si-Kata POBox 204 Venice, CA 90294, tel:~ (310) 314-4833; Special Projects Fund, Population Action International 19th St, NW Suite 550 Washington, DC 20003; The Washington Metro Alliance Against Female Genital Mutilation 1 7700 New Hampshire Ave. Ashton, MD 20861, tel: (301)774-4456; Atlanta Circumcision Information Center, 2 Putnam Drive, N.W., Atlanta, GA 30342; Womens International Network News, 187 Grant Street, Lexington, MA 02173, (617)862-9431.



GOOD NEWS

■ A significant decline in birth rates in South Asia is credited to the governments of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India and their success in intensive family planning programs which include women's education, contraceptives and advice about health. Another trigger for the transition is microcredit, an idea pioneered by Bangladesh economist Muhammed Yunus and his Grameen Bank of Bangladesh that has been making loans to poor rural women. One of the requirements for loans is to have small families.

SOURCE: Scientific American, December 1998

■ The International Center for Biosciences and its Kenya-based partners have reportedly developed a fungalbased insecticide, free of powerful synthetic chemicals, to control locusts and grasshoppers. About 13 million liters of potent man-made chemicals such as malathion and fenitrothion were used in Africa between 1986 and 1989 to control the ravenous insects. The new insecticide, known as "green muscle," consists of naturally occurring strain of the metarhiziurin anisopliae fungus. Once applied, it takes six to 21 days to kill targeted locusts and grasshoppers. The center says the product kills locusts and grasshoppers only while being nontoxic to humans and other organisms. The insecticide was first used in South Africa in March 1998 and is being recommended for use by

the UN Food and Agricultural Organization. The center expects the insecticide to be on the market sometime this year.

SOURCE: Greenwire Environmental News Bulletin, Jan. 6, 1999, (from PanAfrican News Agency, 1/4/99)

■ The Government of Norway and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have signed an agreement on a UNEP project: "Strategies and Mechanisms for Promoting Cleaner Production Investments in Developing Countries". The total project cost of approximately US\$5.6 million over three years, will be funded by the Norwegian Government. It is expected that the project will contribute to pollution prevention, ecoefficiency and resource productivity. It will be coordinated by UNEP's Technology, Industry and Economics Division in Paris in five selected developing countries: Guatemala, Nicaragua, Tanzania, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe. For more information, contact: Tore J. Brevik,

Director of Information and Public Affairs, Tel. (254-2) 62-3292, Fax (254-2)62-3927; email ipainfo@unep.org

SOURCE: UNEP News Release Dec. 11, 1998/131

■ The center-left German government has decided to phase out its use of nuclear energy. Bonn has begun talks with France and Britain on how its plan to abandon nuclear energy will affect contracts with them for recycling nuclear wastes, according to a spokesman for the German Environment Ministry. German Chancellor Schroeder said that the country's exit from nuclear energy will take quite a bit longer than his junior coalition partners, the Greens, expect and noted that there was no deadline. Germany's plans to discontinue its reliance on nuclear energy comes at a time that the sole remaining functioning reactor at Chernobyl, the site of the world's worst nuclear disaster, is to be shut down for safety checks and

repairs.

SOURCE: Energy Central News, Jan 28, 1999

■ In addition to the phase out of nuclear energy in Germany, the use of wind powered electricity continues to grow. The Environmental Defense Fund (USA) has switched to a wind powered electricity provider, choosing Green Mountain Energy Resources to power its Oakland, California office.

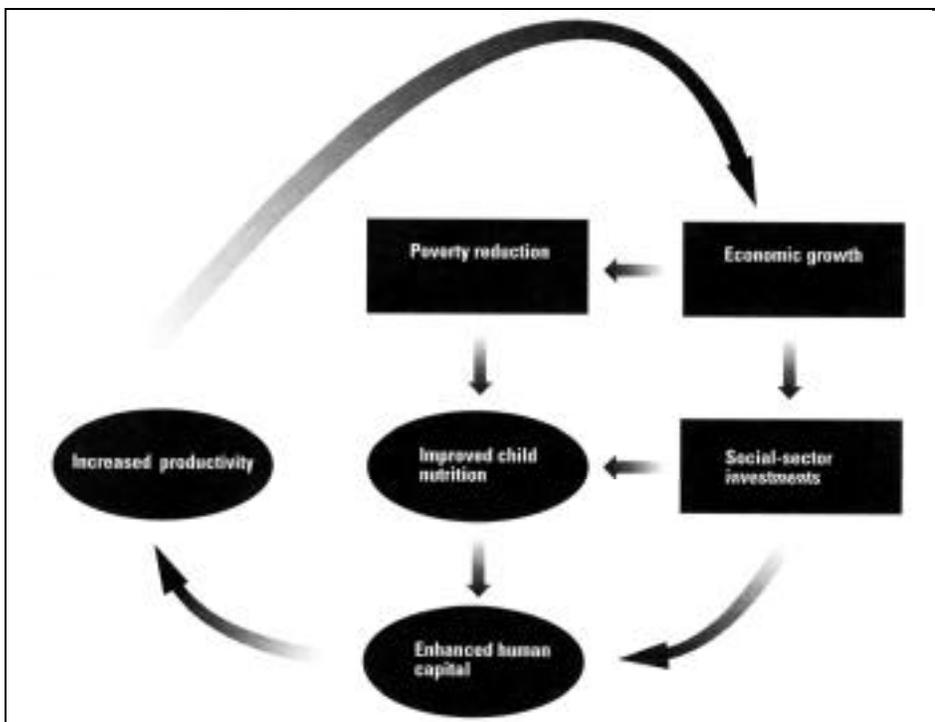
SOURCE: Energy Central News, Jan. 18, 1999

■ The Brazilian government officially recognized Raposa/Serra do Sol as the traditional land of the Ingarico, Macuxi, Wapixana and Taurepang peoples on December 11, 1998. However, there are indications that Roraima politicians and a group of ranchers who invaded Raposa/Serra do Sol are inciting violence against indigenous communities and provoking divisions among them, in order to paralyse the land demarcation process. For further information, contact Jeronimo Pereira da Silva, General Coordinator, Conselho Indigena de Roraima-CIR, Av. Sebastiao Diniz, 1672 -Bairro Sao Vicente CEP: 69.303-120 - Boa Vista - RR - Brasil, Tel/Fax: 005595224 5761, email: cir@technet.com.br

SOURCE: Environmental Defense Fund, on-line "Action Alert," 1/13/99

■ In a population that's neither growing nor shrinking and has no migration, couples will average two children each, or enough to replenish themselves. Of the world's 192 nations, 67 now have fertility rates at or below replacement levels. Because of the youthfulness of the developing world, one-third of which is under 15, even if the entire globe has reached replacement levels in 1995, the population would still grow by two-thirds before leveling off. Though the global fertility rate is still well above replacement level, the average fertility rate in developing countries has dropped from more than 6 children per women in 1950 to 3.3 in 1998 and is still falling.

SOURCE: National Geographic Society, 1998



Good early nutrition is most likely to result where there is economic growth equitable growth; when social services become affordable and accessible; and when adequate investment is made in human resources, including the empowerment of women. Good nutrition, in turn, contributes to greater productivity and thus to economic growth.

SOURCE: UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 1998

CHERNOBYL UPDATE

MORE GOOD NEWS

A study published in 1998 revealed that men who eat candy in moderation live longer than those who don't. Researchers define candy as sugar confections or chocolate. Subjects of the study were 7841 men who entered Harvard University between 1961 and 1950 and who responded to a health survey in 1988. Those who eat candy differed in several respects from those who didn't. Those who didn't eat candy were older, leaner, and more likely to smoke tobacco compared to those who did. Those who didn't eat candy ate more red meat, ate fewer vegetables or green salad, and were more likely to take vitamin or mineral supplements, compared to those who ate candy. After adjusting for age and cigarette smoking, those who ate candy lived an average of nearly a year (0.92 years) longer than those who didn't. However, those who ate candy in moderation lived even longer than those who ate a lot of it. ("A lot" was defined as "three or more times each week.") Authors of the study speculated that chocolate may be the ingredient providing life-prolonging benefits to candy eaters. Previous studies have shown that chocolate reduces the danger of heart attack. They compared chocolate to red wine, which is also believed to reduce heart disease, when used in moderation. Chocolate is also known to act as an antioxidant (tying up "free radical" oxygen molecules). Antioxidant are believed to reduce the dangers of both heart disease and cancer

SOURCE: Rachel's Environment & Health Weekly #634, January 21, 1999



Oksana, with her mother on the left and Roma Hawryliuk, WIT's Regional Director, was born after Chernobyl without arms and one leg. She is being refitted for limbs by a fund from WIT to assist her in school where she is a top student.

SOURCE: WIT Regional Office, Lviv, Ukraine

In a recent article on the work of Dr. Chain Dallas, an environmental toxicologist from the University of Georgia, he states that after investigating the genetic effects of very high levels of exposure to environmental radioactivity for the past 10 years, he finds no genetic damage in the Chernobyl animal population. He further states that he finds this very disconcerting and fears long-term genetic changes in the form of a mutation time bomb.

Notwithstanding the recent questions as to the degree of potential health damage from Chernobyl's legacy, WIT'S discussions with the Children of Chornobyl Relief Fund (Ukrainian spelling) indicate that the impact on children's health has been severe. In some areas, thyroid cancer increases 80-fold, birth defects have doubled and many children have been stricken with immune deficiencies known as "nuclear AIDS". The two nations most effected by Chernobyl, Belarus and Ukraine, report tens of thousands of premature deaths and a

significant decline in the population growth.

The current speculations regarding the lack of genetic defects or deformities in the local human and animal populations bring into focus the need for further study of this phenomenon. Following the Chernobyl explosion, the greater contamination covered several regions of Ukraine and Belarus where the population received many times the recommended lifetime dose of radiation. Everyone who lived 160 km South and downwind of the explosion received 7 rems of exposure in the first three days, whereas 5 rems per year is allowed by US nuclear power workers. The findings that the most radioactively contaminated living organisms are thriving - catfish, carp, and other fish species examined near Chernobyl show levels of radioactive contamination three to five times higher, and rodents show levels that are 10 times higher than in the U.S. - indicate the importance of further extensive research for the benefit of humanity.

SOURCE: Science Spectra. "In Hot Pursuit", Issue 1 5, 1999

Voices

■ MEETINGS

UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (UN/CSW). March 1-19, 1999, New York: Women and Health and Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women will be considered from 1-12. From 15-19, the Commission will act as the preparatory committee (PrepCom) for the Special Session of the UN General Assembly to review the Beijing Platform for Action. The Special Session will be held June 5-9, 2000 at the UN.

UN COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (CPD) meets March 22-30, 1999, New York. The segment from March 22-24 is the annual session; from 24-30 the meeting will act as the PrepCom for the General Assembly Special Session to review the ICPD Programme of Action. The Special Session will be held June 30-July 2, 1999. Contact: UNFPA, 220 E. 42nd St., NY 10017, USA. Fax: (1-212) 557-6416. E-mail: dayal@unfpa.org. Web Site: <http://www.unfpa.org/ICPD>.

UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CSD) will convene its seventh session from April 19th to 30th, 1999, UN Headquarters, New York. The main issues for the forthcoming CSD will be: Small Island Developing States, (SIDS); Sustainable Consumption and Production; Tourism; Oceans. There was also be a two day dialogue session between industry, NGOs, trade unions, local authorities and governments on Tourism. The CSD Ad Hoc Working group meeting will be from the 22 to the 26th of February 1999 on Consumption and Production Patterns, including recommendations for sustainable consumption for inclusion in the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection and Tourism. The Dialogue Sessions will take place from Monday afternoon, April 19, through the end of Wednesday the

21st, followed by the High Level Segment through Friday, April 23rd.

HAGUE APPEAL FOR PEACE, May 11-16, 1999, The Hague, Netherlands. This is an end of the century campaign dedicated to the goal of de-legitimizing war. <http://www.haguepeace.org>. For the Youth Program write to Jo Tyler or Adam Berry, Coordinators of the Hague's Youth Program in the Int'l Peace Bureau, at mailbox@ipb.org

■ World Wildlife Fund has established a Global Toxics Initiative and added a web page on the topic to their internet site at <http://www.world-wildlife.org/toxics>.

Highlights of the Global Toxics Initiative Web Site include: The latest scientific discoveries involving endocrine disruption, Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and the Global POPs treaty negotiations, Reducing reliance on high-risk pesticides in agriculture and disease vector control.

■ The Development Forum (<http://www.worldbank.org/devforum/>) is a public venue for online discussions on development issues sponsored by the World Bank. Its focal point is a series of new and ongoing moderated electronic discussions on key issues and challenges facing the development community and the world's poor, with a particular emphasis on learning from the experience of those who face these challenges in their daily lives. Discussions in the Development Forum are open to participants from around the world. In order to assure that those with limited Internet access can participate, these dialogues are conducted by means of moderated email lists, archived to the Development Forum website. The discussions will last between two and three months. The online discussion topics are:

1)* Attacking Poverty. This list invites the public to contribute its

knowledge, experiences, and questions to the World Development Report 2001 on poverty, which is currently in the early stages of preparation. The report outline is available in English, Spanish, and French on the Forum web site and participants will be able to send messages in all three languages. 2)* Les consequences de la maternite precoce l'sureducation des filles (EDUC-FILLES), Co-sponsored by l'AUPELF-UREF (Agence francophone pour enseignement superieur et la recherche). This list, in French, will examine the related issues of pregnancy and education among teenage girls, particularly in Africa. 3)* Knowledge and Information for Development (IKD) Co-sponsored by the Panos Institute London this list will discuss the role of information and knowledge as tools of sustainable development, and the challenges facing developing countries in seeking to join the global information economy. It takes as its point of departure the recent World Bank World Development Report on Knowledge for Development and the series of Panos Institute articles responding to that Report. 4)* Gender and Law (GENDER-LAW). This list will examine what the World Bank's role should be in the important legal issues affecting women in developing countries and attempt to improve understanding of how the law can be used to improve gender equity.

To subscribe now to any or all of these lists, an email account is needed. To subscribe, please send a message (do not enter a subject) to: MAJORDOMO@JAZZ.WORLD-BANK.ORG. In the body of the message, type: SUBSCRIBE WDR2001. To join the list on Attacking Poverty, SUBSCRIBE EDUC-FILLES. To join the list in French on education and teenage pregnancy in Africa, SUBSCRIBE IKD. To join the list on Information

and Knowledge for Development, SUBSCRIBE GENDER-LAW. To join the list on Gender and Law, GENDERLAW. Further information is available by contacting devforum@worldbank.org.

■ International Short Course on Agroecology, to be held at the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, University of California, Santa Cruz, August 16-27, 1999. The course is designed to give extensionists, farm advisers, trainers, NGO managers, farmers, advanced undergraduate students, graduate students, researchers, professors, and other agricultural professionals a practical, "hands-on" experience with the application of agroecological principles to the design and management of sustainable farming systems. The full course announcement is available on-line at: http://www.agroecology.org/s_hortcourse.htm The application deadline is March 1, 1999. Contact: Erie C. Ellis, Agroecology Short Course Coordinator.

■ The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will hold three public meetings to obtain public comment on two specific draft documents developed as part of the Agency's Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxic (PBT) Pollutant strategy. The two draft documents are "A Multimedia Strategy for Priority Persistent, Bioaccumulative, and Toxic (PBT) Pollutants" and "EPA Action Plan For Mercury." The first meeting on EPA's PBT pollutant strategy will take place in Washington, DC on February 16, 1999, at 9 a.m. and adjourn by noon. The second meeting on EPA's PBT pollutant strategy will take place in Chicago, IL on February 23, 1999, at 9 a.m. and adjourn at noon. The third meeting on EPA's PBT pollutant strategy will take place in San Francisco, CA on March 5, 1999, at 9 a.m. and adjourn at noon.

■ A conference entitled, "Building the Information Community in Africa" (BICA), which will be held from 22-

25 February 1999 at the CSIR Conference Centre in Pretoria, South Africa. The theme of the conference will be "Building an Enabling Environment for Telecenters in Africa - A Dialogue to Strengthen the African Information Society". BICA '99 will bring together the experiences of telecenter practitioners and assist the development of telecenters through sustainable partnerships in Africa. The conference will provide an opportunity to hear what is happening on the ground, to consolidate initiatives and to take them forward. The conference will also be a regional feeder event for Global Knowledge II, the Global Knowledge Partnership conference to be held late in 1999. For more information contact: The British Council, tel:(+27) (11) 4030-3316 ext 249 fax: (+27) (11) 339 7806, e-mail: info@bica99.org Web: <http://www.bica99.org>.

■ On line learning and training is growing in popularity and significance. The following is a listing of monthly courses offered to help people improve their use of the internet. All courses are delivered by e-mail, are two to three weeks in duration and cost between \$5.00 US and \$15.00 US The course titles include: How to Search the World Wide Web Level 2; Creating web pages with HTML Level 1; Creating web pages with HTML Level 2; Effective Use of EMail; Information is available at: <http://www.bestnet.org/~jwalker/course.htm>

■ The Electric Power '99 Conference & Exhibition will be held at the Baltimore Convention Center in Baltimore Maryland, USA from April 20 to 22, 1999. The conference theme "Generation Clean, Reliable Electricity in a Competitive Market," is devoted to key issues of a changing industry. For further information see <http://www.electricpowerexpo.com> or call 713-463-9595 for information on attending exhibiting and/or sponsorship opportunities.

■ *Free Trade of the Americas*, published by In Focus, a project of the Institute for Policy Studies and the Interhemispheric Resource Center, (April 1998) cautions against the negative impacts of the NAFTA model of economic integration. It argues for including a broader representation of society as well as including labor and environmental issues in the negotiation process. The Failed Experiment: NAFTA at Three Years is an evaluation of NAFTA at three years. This report looks at the costs of NAFTA by examining US wages, job losses, the peso crisis, labor rights, the environment and public safety. The report is issued by the Economic Policy Institute, Institute for Policy Studies, International Labor Rights Fund, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, Sierra Club, and U.S. Business and Industrial Council Educational Foundation. For more information contact Corporate Watch, P0 Box 29344, San Francisco, CA 94129; Tel: 415-561-6568; Fax: 415-561-6493; Email: corpwatch@igc.org; <http://www.corpwatch.org>

■ World Information Transfer recommends *Globalizing Civil Society: Reclaiming Our Right to Power*, by David C. Korten, (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1998). Korten once again provides an analysis of the economics of global corporate actions. Here he emphasizes the catalytic role that the non-governmental sector must play to subdue corporate power. This short book is 78 pages.

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

WIT is a non-profit, international, non-governmental organization, in consultative status with the United Nations, dedicated to forging understanding of the relationship between health and environment among opinion leaders and concerned citizens around the world. You can help us with your letters, your time, and/or your donations.

MISSION STATEMENT

We have not inherited the world from our forefathers...we have borrowed it from our children.

—Kashmiri Proverb

World Information Transfer, Inc. (WIT) is a not-for-profit (501c3) non-governmental organization in consultative status with the United Nations, promoting environmental health and literacy.

In 1987, inspired by the Chernobyl nuclear tragedy, WIT was formed in recognition of the pressing need to provide accurate actionable information about our deteriorating global environment and its effect on human health to opinion leaders and concerned citizens around the world.

WIT exercises its mandate through:

- 1. The publication of the World Ecology Report, a quarterly digest of critical issues in health and environment, published in five languages and distributed to opinion leaders around the world, and for free in developing countries.
2. Our annual conference on Health and the Environment: Global Partners For Global Solutions held at United Nations headquarters in New York since 1992.
3. Since 1995, WIT has been providing and promoting humanitarian relief to areas devastated by environmental degradation.
4. Centers for Health & Environment providing centralized scientific data pertaining to health and sustainability issues.

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WIT currently operates from headquarters in New York City with regional representative offices in Australia, Austria, Canada, China, Colombia, Egypt, Germany, Holland, Honduras, India, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Switzerland, Ukraine.

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World Information Transfer

A Non-Profit, Non-Governmental Organization in Consultative Status with the United Nations, Promoting Health and Environment Literacy.

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POINT OF VIEW: *World Wide Women*

*"To get an audience of 50 million, it took radio 38 years, for television, it took 13 years, for INTERNET, it took 4 years, and it is estimated that by the year 2000 there will be more than 200 million users." Chuck Martin author of *Net Future*, (1999).*

Every 100 days, the number of people who go onto the web doubles. Increasingly, those new Internet users are women entering a domain once dominated by men and changing cyberspace culture.

Various estimates now put women at 40 percent or more of the U.S. online population. Four years ago, (1995) women made up 3 percent of US users, according to Georgia Tech University, which surveys Internet users twice a year. Last spring, Georgia Tech researchers found that more than half the Net's newcomers were women. America Online the biggest commercial Internet service in the US with 14 million subscribers- has reported that now more than half its clients are women. Jupiter Communications, a New York research company, predicts that women will make up more than half the entire country's Internet users by 2002.

The American trend is reflected around the world. Nearly two-thirds of the people who visited Internet search tool AltaVisa's Asian site in January (1998) were women, as were 85% of April's (1998) visitors to Russia's largest Internet publisher, according to Nua, a group that tracks Internet trends. In Ireland, the proportion of women among Internet users

rose from 25 to 31 percent in the last 18 months, the Irish Internet Association reported.

In India, where the government has recently liberalized the Indian Internet market, 1.5 million Internet users are expected to be online by the year 2000, an increase of 300% from the current half million users. This expanded access to the World Wide Web will also put more women on line. ISPs, or Internet Service Providers, may face challenges in getting enough telephone lines in the four big Indian cities Bombay, Delhi, Bangalore and Madras from where about 70% of new ISP connection demand is expected to come.

Although China currently has only 5000 web sites on the net, International Data Corporation estimates that it will become the biggest market in Asia outside of Japan by 2000 and will have more than 9.4 million users by 2002.

As evidence that women want rooms of their own in cyberspace, women's sites have grown. San Mateo-based Women.com logs 2.3 million visitors every month according to its creator, Ellen Pack. The UN's WomenWatch site is an important spot for international women's issues. Amazon City, an up beat diverse site, challenges gender stereotypes as it sets out to have fun.

Electronic mail, or e-mail, communication is still the most widespread and the most important form of ICT. Email lists enable information to circulate around the world as quickly as telephone connections allow. Unlike web sites that passively

depend on visitors, email requires the active transmission of messages that themselves can call for action. For example, information about the governmental negotiations on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (mai) traversed the world on email lists, or listservs, and produced a world wide citizen's objection that shut down the international trade negotiations. Internet connectivity includes email capacity thus increasing the utilization of both by women.

In addition to telephone and electrical lines, use of the Internet requires the ability to read and write. Literacy level is the greatest impediment to Internet use. As literacy has been associated with poverty and poverty with women, the Internet would seem to marginalize women even further. However, because the web and email enable information — of all kinds - to quickly circle the globe, it has become and will continue to grow as an empowering tool, especially for women. Therefore, expanding access of girls to basic education now will ultimately bring more girls and women into cyberspace, where their voices will be heard and connected to others.

"We have a major stake in mobilizing resources that match the richness of our cultural diversity since culture and communication will become central components before long of all development policies." Federico Mayor, Director-General, UNESCO.

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"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead
