Healthy and productive lives in harmony with nature

A WHO Global Strategy for Health and Environment
The World Health Organization
Specialists working in the United Nations

WHO is a specialised agency of the United Nations system. Its work is governed by the World Health Assembly, in which governments of more than 180 countries are represented.

WHO works directly with governments in individual countries supporting them in their efforts to prevent and treat disease and improve the health and well-being of their people.

WHO provides advice, assistance and technical support to Member States and to the sister agencies and organizations of the United Nations system on all health matters.

The main standing duty in environmental health is the preparation of international scientific standards for effective environmental health.

WHO aims to contribute to the solution of environmental health problems throughout the world.
Healthy and productive lives in harmony with nature

A WHO Global Strategy for Health and Environment

World Health Organization
Geneva
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In response to Agenda 21, the action plan adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, June 1992, the World Health Organization has formulated a new WHO Global Strategy for Health and Environment. The new strategy was endorsed by the forty-sixth World Health Assembly in May 1993.

Environmental health is a long-standing concern of the World Health Organization. In 1990, the WHO Commission on Health and Environment undertook a comprehensive review of health-and-environment, the findings and recommendations of which served as the primary basis for the health chapter of Agenda 21 at UNCED.

The WHO approach to health and environment will be broadened and strengthened in order to meet its responsibilities as outlined in Agenda 21. The strategy provides a unifying framework for WHO activities by defining how and where the concept of health promoting environments should be incorporated into all its programmes. Emphasis will continue to be given to investigating the links between human health and environment and managing environmental risks to health. Capacity building, enabling all countries to evaluate and to manage environmental risks and to deal promptly with major health problems, is recognised as the key to achieving sustainable development.

In addition, the Global Strategy incorporates principles and approaches adopted at various recent regional and international fora on health and the environment. These include: the 1989 European Charter on Environment and Health; the policies and priorities for “health in the development process” and “health and environment” adopted by the Region of the Americas in 1990; the Sundsvall Statement on Supportive Environments for Health resulting from the Third International Conference on Health Promotion with that theme, organized in Sundsvall, Sweden by WHO and the Nordic countries in association with UNEP in June 1991; and existing WHO strategies for specific aspects of the programme.
Capacity building

The ability of a country to follow sustainable development paths is determined to a large extent by the capacity of its people and its institutions as well as by its ecological and geographical conditions. Specifically, capacity-building encompasses the country's human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional and resource capabilities. A fundamental goal of capacity-building is to enhance the ability to evaluate and address the crucial questions related to policy choices and modes of implementation among development paths, based on an understanding of environmental potentials and limits and of needs as perceived by the people in the country concerned. As a result, the notion of strengthening national capacities is shared by all countries.
Three clear goals

- To achieve a sustainable basis for health for all
- To provide an environment that promotes health
- To make all individuals and organizations aware of their responsibility for health and its environmental basis
Objectives for action

- To support countries in providing environmental elements required to meet basic health needs.
- To promote increased awareness and understanding of interactions between health, the environment and development among leaders and the public, so as to strengthen community action for health and sustainable development.
- To collaborate with national and local authorities in the creation of supportive environments for health.
- To promote the central role of health in decision-making and programmes on matters of environment and development, and to foster cooperation between the health sectors and related sectors in these processes.
- To strengthen capabilities for emergency preparedness and response to cover the public health aspects of disasters and violent conflicts.
- To strengthen national capacity for human resource development in work related to health, the environment and development.
- To improve technical capabilities for monitoring and assessment of environmental risks to health.
To improve technical capabilities for the management of environmental risks to health, i.e., their prevention, abatement, and control.

To strengthen local, national and international environmental health information systems, for the exchange and proper use of information.

To promote research on a progressively stronger scientific and technical basis for the wide range of interventions needed to achieve the health goals of sustainable development.

To foster environmentally safe and sound methods and technology for the effective control, prevention and treatment of disease and disability.

To promote and support other institutional and sectoral capacities for improving progressively policies, plans, legislation and actions on health, the environment and development.

These objectives are interrelated and reflect the optimum scope of work to meet the needs in all Member States. They cover the broad range of WHO activities, among which regional and country-level offices determine priorities, fix targets and decide the timing for action in particular countries or groups of countries, and they are essential to the major components of the strategy outlined in the following sections. Other factors directly related to health and the environment such as poverty, initiatives concerning women and development, the needs of women, children, and vulnerable groups including indigenous populations, displaced persons and inhabitants of small island States, permeate all areas covered by the above objectives.
A broad approach

The connections between the health of people and their physical and social environments need to be examined together in order to accurately assess and predict health problems arising from environmental factors. These inextricable connections need to be further explored and understood to find solutions which are appropriate and long-lasting. The management of environmental factors which influence people’s health requires cooperation between experts, administrators and the community, in private and public sectors, and at all levels of society.

Identifying environmental causes of ill-health

Within the health sector, programmes need to identify the environmental causes underlying ill health and address these in their interventions.

Collective responsibility

Environmental health is everyone’s concern and responsibility. WHO and all agencies and organizations working in the health sector need to ensure that health issues are understood and accepted by all as an essential part of environment initiatives and programmes. WHO will provide leadership in promoting health in the context of environment and development.
Risk management based on accurate risk assessment

Building on risk assessment as an essential first step, the strategy places new emphasis on risk management through interventions to control environmental factors which adversely affect health and to prevent or limit environmental damage.

Capacity building for long-term solutions

In order to create and maintain health promoting environments, WHO will increase country support to develop or reinforce their human, institutional, scientific, legal and information capacity.
Key components

The Global Strategy has four separate but interrelated components:

- An enhanced programme for the promotion of environmental health;
- An enhanced programme for the promotion of chemical safety;
- Broader action and collaboration throughout WHO on matters related to health and the environment;
- Stronger partnership with other international and nongovernmental organizations.

An enhanced programme for the promotion of environmental health

The WHO programme for the promotion of environmental health will lead the implementation of the Global Strategy. It will formulate and coordinate the organization’s contribution to international programmes on sustainable development relating to major environmental factors. It will also coordinate and support health and environment activities throughout WHO.

A new orientation

The WHO programme for the promotion of environmental health will organize its activities around the three major settings: rural, urban and global. The rationale behind this division of work is as follows: rural problems are distinct from urban problems, across regions and countries; there are commonalities in health-and-environment issues in rural areas of all developing countries as there are in the urban areas of all countries. In the interests of
maximizing resources, sharing of ideas and experiences across cultural and geographical boundaries and avoiding duplication of effort, an approach which takes account of, and builds on, these commonalities is the most rational and will yield the best results. Global problems, which in turn, are distinct from specifically urban or specifically rural problems and which affect the health of populations worldwide, in broadly similar ways, are best dealt with separately. The new organization is also expected to facilitate coordination and support between programmes within WHO, in their health and environment activities.

In urban areas, expanding populations and modern economic development result in special health-and-environment problems. Emphasis will be on the improvement of existing conditions and the promotion of physical and social environments that favour health. Work will aim to improve housing and human settlements, water supply and sanitation and vector control, to reduce and control air and water pollution and noise, and to improve the management of solid, liquid and hazardous wastes as well as the drainage of stagnant waters. Assistance will be provided to identify local environmental health priorities and to improve municipal governments' ability to deal with environmental conditions and health problems in an integrated manner.

In rural areas, the provision and maintenance of safe and sufficient water supplies and adequate sanitation, the health aspects of rural housing including biomass fuel use and indoor air quality, vector control in water resource management, and the safe use of agrochemicals will be emphasized. Integrating environmental health aspects in rural development plans will be a major activity.

At the global level, environmental health addresses universal problems and responds to common needs. Problems include ozone-layer depletion, the effects of climatic change, including those on small islands, deforestation, desertification and transboundary pollution, where the emphasis will be on the assessment of risks to human health in order to provide health based criteria for global and regional decisions on environment and development. Needs common to all environmental health programmes include integrated planning of national health and environment programmes, strengthening of the infrastructure for training, applied research and the management and dissemination of information.
An enhanced programme for the promotion of chemical safety

The WHO Global Strategy for Health and Environment will continue to promote the environmentally sound management of chemicals, in conformity with the principles of sustainable development and improved quality of life, through the expanded programme for the promotion of chemical safety. This programme has four main areas of activity:

- chemical risk assessment
- chemical safety communication
- chemical emergencies
- chemical risk management

WHO's work in the field of chemical safety has largely been undertaken in collaboration with ILO and UNEP through the joint International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS), the secretariat for which is located in WHO. UNCED, calling for significant strengthening of national and international efforts to achieve environmentally sound management of chemicals, has designated IPCS as the coordinator of international effort in this field and has urged increased cooperation with competent organizations in the UN system, with OECD and EC programmes and with regional and governmental chemical safety programmes.

The UNCED proposals call for the adaptation of the current concept of IPCS to cover

- activities in support of environmentally sound management of chemicals;
- mechanisms for the coordination of relevant international activities;
- an interim secretariat for the preparation of an intergovernmental meeting to be convened by the Executive Heads of WHO, UNEP and ILO, to consider the establishment of an intergovernmental mechanism for chemical risk assessment and management.
Broader action and collaboration throughout WHO on matters related to health and the environment

WHO as a whole will contribute to meeting the environmental health objectives of the Global Strategy and to attaining sustainable development. Implementation of action programmes now requires a comprehensive approach encompassing all aspects of problems related to health and the environment, combining many parallel activities, and applying the wide range of skills, resources, data and materials available in WHO programmes. Related elements of different programmes will be identified, networks and partnerships between programmes established, and resources mobilized and allocated. Activities in programmes having components related to health and the environment will receive support from others in their respective areas of expertise.

Besides the core programmes for the promotion of environmental health and chemical safety, the programmes that are involved are: (1) technical and disease-oriented programmes concerned with conditions and interventions in the physical environment; (2) technical programmes concerned with conditions and interventions in the social environment; and (3) programmes concerned with institutional development, human resources development, and resource mobilization to countries.
Stronger partnership with other international and nongovernmental organizations

An important part of the WHO Global Strategy for Health and Environment is coordination within the United Nations system and with other international organizations, bilateral donors and other appropriate governmental bodies. Cooperation with nongovernmental organizations and the private sector is being encouraged and increased. WHO continues to work with others through established channels and will also join in those being set up as a follow-up to UNCED.

Collaboration, individually and collectively, with international and other organizations is essential to WHO. Through its collaborative work, WHO encourages and helps other organizations to incorporate health matters into their programmes.

WHO establishes joint collaborative projects, particularly at country level. Such intersectoral efforts are able to address health-and-environment problems and issues more effectively by utilizing the diverse expertise of the various agencies.
Think Globally. Act Locally.
Environmental elements required to meet basic health needs

Improved levels of human health can only be achieved by meeting the basic environmental health needs: clean and safe drinking water, effective sanitation, adequate and safe food, and suitable and safe housing.

**Clean and safe drinking water**, together with food, in sufficient amounts is the most immediate need for health. Water and food contaminated with microorganisms and toxic chemicals can cause acute sickness and chronic ill health.

**Effective sanitation** prevents the spread of human excreta to water, food and hands, thereby preventing diarrhoeal diseases and parasitic worms. Storm water drainage prevents flooding and its attendant disease epidemics.

**Suitable and safe housing** prevents the spread of diseases and is a critical factor in the promotion of physical and mental health and well-being.

Rapid population growth puts increased pressure on the environment as a supplier of the resources needed for human health and well-being, and as a repository of wastes. The relationships between environmental conditions and population are complex and vary from country to country, with level of consumption as a key determinant. These relationships cannot be considered in isolation from social and economic factors. Infants, children, young people, women, displaced people and indigenous peoples are all particularly vulnerable to the health effects of poor environments.
Objective

To support countries in providing the environmental elements required to meet basic health needs

Action

- Development and promotion of activities related to the environmental aspects of basic health needs focusing on: reduction of health risks arising from deficiencies in food safety, water supply, sanitation and shelter; enabling communities to improve daily living conditions in their environments; preventing contamination by pathogens of water sources and food supplies; adapting housing for environmental control of disease vectors and pests; judicious use of chemicals and safe disposal of garbage and wastes.

- Assistance in the establishment of monitoring programmes to determine which areas have greatest need for essential services and support for the mobilization of resources for needy communities.

- Capacity building at the community level, concentrating on communities poorly served by the essential services, and emphasizing the rational and optimal use of local facilities and resources.
Increasing awareness and community action

The state of the environment is the result of human actions at the local level and beyond, all over the world. Some of these actions are harmful, some are beneficial. Some are conscious, others are unplanned.

We must be prepared to accept a new kind of development – sustainable development. In order to reconcile economic activity with global health, resources must be replenished and wasteful depletion must cease. We must become more globally oriented. Human health in the wider context of ecological health implies coordinated national, regional and global management, and the participation of all: politicians, scientists, technicians, old and young, men and women.

To turn current development practices into more sustainable forms having healthier environmental consequences, requires political leadership, supported by a well-informed and motivated public. Sustainable environmental management, therefore, depends on effective and committed community action. Awareness must be raised in all layers of society. Providing relevant information to people encourages and gains their support for national health-and-environment initiatives and programmes and reinforces health promoting individual and community action.
Objective

To promote increased awareness and understanding of interactions between health, the environment and development among leaders and the public so as to strengthen community action for health and sustainable development.

Action

- Preparing and disseminating of information on health-and-environment problems and solutions designed for different audiences, e.g. administrators, technical professionals, and the general population.

- Assisting in the incorporation of environmental aspects of health protection and promotion into school curricula and educational materials at different levels.

- Informing, through workshops and seminars, health workers and decision-makers at national, regional and community levels about, health-and-environment priorities.
Creating supportive environments for health

Good public health practice requires environments that support human health and well-being. It implies striving to improve opportunities and create settings, not only for health protection, but also for the promotion of the highest possible standard of health. Promotion of healthy life styles and fostering supportive environments involves policy makers, local government and community workers in the health and environment sectors. Together they need to make the total environment – physical, social, economic, and political – favourable rather than damaging to health and to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources.

The Healthy Cities movement brings together all urban parties and groups with legitimate interests and/or responsibilities for environmental and health conditions in order to improve the human environment through a holistic approach and concerted effort. Key arenas for action are building health public policy, creating supportive environments, strengthening community action, developing personal skills, and reorienting urban health services.

Another example is the healthy schools approach which recognizes that every aspect of school life can influence health and may be used to promote good health. The same applies to various workers' health activities in the workplace and health protection and promotion programmes focusing on vulnerable groups.
Objective

To collaborate with national and local authorities in the creation of supportive environments for health.

Action

- Fostering, through campaigns and activities, settings for human life that are safe and free from hazards to health, and encouraging people to live in a healthy way.

- Promoting the involvement of people and communities in policy making and actions for environmental health protection and promotion.

- Assisting in the establishment of network links among cities to encourage information exchange and technology transfer.

- Encouraging interaction between technical programmes and political forces within a community.

- Promoting environmental health initiatives in other sectors e.g. education, transport, housing, industry, energy, agriculture.

- Promoting programmes targeting the special needs of vulnerable groups.
The central role of health

In many countries, both developed and developing, health authorities have failed to become involved in development and environmental management. Health ministries are often remote from policy making on matters of environment and development.

Environmental health in a new and broader sense must be given proper emphasis so that preventive measures receive due attention and populations are protected from harmful exposure to environmental hazards.
Objective

To promote the central role of health in decision-making and programmes on matters of environment and development, and to foster cooperation between the health sectors and related sectors in these processes.

Action

- Collaborating with international organizations to ensure that health-and-environment aspects are incorporated into the programmes of these agencies and in global actions on the environment by supporting health related work on global conventions.

- Promoting and supporting the health sector, at country level, in strengthening its role in national socioeconomic development.

- Strengthening planning capacity at local and national government level through support to the preparation of municipal health plans.

- Strengthening the health assessment of development policies and projects through the application of health economics and risk benefit analysis.
Emergency preparedness and response

There is a growing need for local and national capacity to avert and respond to natural disasters and man-made accidents that have significant health aspects or consequences. The risks and vulnerabilities have been increased by socioeconomic development and political instability. Equally, international capacity for emergency assistance is needed in situations where national resources are inadequate.

Examples of natural disasters are: earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, epidemics. Technological disasters often result from malfunctioning of industrial plants or from the transportation and handling of hazardous material. Emergencies also frequently result from violent conflicts and warfare.

The mitigation of the public health consequences of disasters and emergencies is particularly dependent on the speed of an effective response. Fast response comes from preparedness, not only to act, but also having the appropriate information on the hazards involved.
Objective

To strengthen capabilities for emergency preparedness and response to cover the public health aspects of disasters and violent conflicts.

Action

- Collaborating with other agencies active in disaster preparedness and response to ensure that environmental health aspects are integrated into every phase of the disaster management cycle at country level and assisting in disaster relief field work whenever the need arises.

- Preparing and disseminating guidelines for the management of environmental health in disaster situations, including chemical and radiological emergencies.

- Providing support to emergency response and information centres, including training for various types of relief workers, and promotion of networking at regional and subregional levels.

- Assisting in the establishment of programmes for the prevention of poisoning by chemicals, the management of cases of poisoning, and toxicovigilance.
Human resources development

Managing and maintaining an environment for health and sustainable development requires human skills and expertise at all levels from national to local, and in various professional categories – politicians, managers, skilled and unskilled workers. The range of skills required in public and private institutions is diverse and training is needed across a broad spectrum of disciplines.

Human resources development must not be seen as an end in itself. It has to be planned to maximize the effective use of available resources. Programmes have to be tailored to respond to needs both in terms of number of staff and skills. They should strive to reduce dependence upon outside sources of trained personnel. Motivation has to be built into the system through career development structures and status.
Objective

To strengthen national capacity for human resource development in work related to health, the environment and development.

Action

- Guiding countries in identifying their human resource development needs and in establishing national human resource development plans and mechanisms for health-and-environment.

- Collaborating with countries in organizing in-service training on a wide range of topics concerning health-and-environment issues; promoting such training for relevant staff in non-health and non-environment sectors and emphasizing the importance in this training, of health economics as it relates to the environment.

- Facilitating international and national collaboration in human resource development via global networks of training institutions.

- Assisting in the development and incorporation of health-and-environment topics into the curricula of educational institutions.

- Preparing and disseminating health-and-environment materials to training and educational institutions.
Monitoring and assessment of environmental risks to health

To expand the information base on health, environment and related economic issues, national and local environmental monitoring and evaluation systems need to be established or upgraded. The level of scientific and technological capabilities must be raised so that policy makers and planners have accurate, up-to-date knowledge of situations in which health may be at risk.

Environmental health hazards arise from infectious agents, toxic chemicals, radioisotopes, other hazardous materials and ionizing and non-ionizing radiations. The size and type of the hazard depends on the amount, state and location of the hazardous material. Assessment of the hazard should be undertaken in conjunction with the analysis of health data.

For water and sanitation, information on coverage, function and utilization of facilities, operation and maintenance, and water quality provide the bases to guide managers, planners and policy makers in making important decisions.
Objective

To improve technical capabilities for monitoring and assessment of environmental risks to health.

Action

- Preparing and disseminating evaluations of the risks to human health and the environment from various types of exposure to chemicals, physical hazards and infectious agents.

- Supporting countries in evaluating environmental health hazards such as air and water pollution at the country and local levels including assessing existing health conditions, related economic and social factors, and the use of different types of technologies.

- Linking existing mortality and morbidity monitoring to monitoring of environmental hazards exposure and expanding environmental monitoring activities to include assessment of environmental health risks; promoting the use of geographically based information systems that link health or environmental information to a specific small area or location.

- Developing and applying practical methods to evaluate and compare the cost effectiveness of various options for health promoting/protection action in relation to the environment and development.

- Disseminating assessment findings in a readily usable form emphasizing the application of existing knowledge.

- Promoting the validation and harmonization of internationally acceptable methods for laboratory testing and clinical, ecological and exposure assessment studies.

- Promoting and facilitating the exchange of information on chemicals, chemical accidents, chemical risks, and hazard communication systems.
Management of environmental risks to health

Environmental health management confronts us with a multitude of challenges. These vary in type and severity and are determined to a large degree by the state of economic development. Since health and environment problems are interdisciplinary, there is a considerable need for intersectoral coordination within each country as well as at intercountry level. Comprehensive programmes are particularly important where policy change regarding land use planning, environmental impact assessment, energy or waste handling are involved. The action to be taken is dependent not only on the problems themselves but on the capacity of the authorities to respond. The long term task is to build up the scientific and technical capabilities both at the national and local levels to enable authorities to address hazards as they occur and to take the necessary preventive and control measures.

Environmental hazards control focuses on preventing or controlling the effects on health of environmental pollution and the use of chemicals. It has linkages to water supply and sanitation, housing hygiene, food safety, occupational health, and environmental aspects of vector transmitted diseases.
Objective

To improve technical capabilities for the management of environmental risks to health, i.e., their prevention, statement and control.

Action

- Providing support for the establishment of preventive planning and control programmes that give health a prominent place including cost-effectiveness analysis of various health promoting/protecting options.

- Collaborating with other sectors to facilitate transfer of technology, know-how and information, from the repositories of such knowledge and technologies, to developing countries; development and assistance for the application of decision-making models for alternative strategies.

- Capacity building, including information management support, training and technology transfer, to strengthen countries' ability to effect the necessary prevention and control measures. Activities will be directed towards enhancing capabilities and capacities of the government, private sector, academic institutions, community groups and citizens.

- Promotion of chemical risk management focusing on national capabilities and capacities to develop safety in production, importation, trade, transport, storage, use and disposal of chemicals.

- Promotion of the development and use of safer alternative chemicals and technological approaches to risk reduction.

- Promotion of activities to reduce the risks associated with chemicals, taking into consideration their entire life cycle, including development of policies and initiatives to identify and minimize human and environmental exposures to toxic chemicals.

- Establishment of environmental management as an integral part of control strategies through cooperation between disease-oriented programmes and environmental health programmes.
Environmental health information systems

Planners, decision-makers and community leaders need to be well informed of the health-and-environment situation in their jurisdiction so that they can make relevant decisions. They must also be aware of the scientific and technical developments taking place at home and abroad. In many cases, the problem is not so much lack of information as the lack of a structure to analyse it and make it available in a useful format.

Environmental health information is fundamental to the planning and management of any environmental programme aimed at health protection and promotion. In the past the necessary linkage between environmental monitoring and health status assessment has been limited in scope.

Programme monitoring is an essential element of management; it is of little, if any, value to set objectives and establish targets if progress towards their achievement is not monitored on a regular basis. Programme management information systems are needed to provide efficient mechanisms for programme planning, project monitoring and evaluation.
Objective

To strengthen local, national and international environmental health information systems, for the exchange and proper use of information.

Action

- Providing technical support for the creation or improvement of data bases for assessment and monitoring of environmental hazards to health; developing methodology to link health and environment data including environmental health indicators. This will involve assisting in the development of country environmental health profiles.

- Assistance for the establishment and operation of programme management information systems for planning and monitoring investments and resources, and evaluation. The assistance would involve testing and promoting modern and appropriate information technology and training on the use of microcomputers as an information processing tool.

- Support for the establishment of, and training in the use of, documentation centres, including toxic chemicals information systems and promoting regional and global networking to share information.
Research

For effective policy setting, decision-making and direct intervention, there needs to be better understanding of health and environment problems. Research is needed to underpin risk assessment and management, social and behavioural policy and economic decision-making.

Research is needed to achieve greater understanding of the ways in which environmental quality affects health. There are ample reasons to predict that health effects are occurring from environmental and industrial chemical and biological agents, but there exists only a limited database on which to quantify them. In particular, levels, trends and causes of chronic diseases in developing countries are poorly understood. Collective efforts of different specialists, using new methods of data collection and analysis, are needed.

Research on the use of improved technologies for the management of environmental quality in relation to health is also needed to ensure that options selected for intervention are correct and that technologies are appropriate and suitable to the local culture and economy.
Objective

To promote research on a progressively stronger scientific and technical basis for the wide range of interventions needed to achieve the health goals of sustainable development.

Action

► Establishment and support of a new research agenda on matters affecting health, environment and development.

► Improving the capacity of governments, institutions, enterprises and agencies to carry out investigations, set priorities in relation to local and national needs, and to develop national research plans for health-and-environment.

► Improving communications among researchers, decision-makers and the general population by making knowledge and information available in an understandable form.
Environmentally safe and sound methods and technology in the health sector

Action in the health sector has the potential to cause environmental damage and this must be assessed. Cost-effective ways must be devised to mitigate such effects more systematically than before. Tools to improve the decision-making process are needed. Health measures need to be weighed against each other for efficacy, cost-efficiency, safety and environmental impact. The adverse environmental impact of hospitals, medical laboratories and other health facilities would be minimized if environmental impact assessment requirements were applied during planning and development.

Areas for concern include the development and testing of new drugs, the use of pesticides for disease control, and the management of medical wastes.
Objective

To foster environmentally safe and sound methods and technology for the effective control, prevention and treatment of disease and disability.

Action

- Developing suitable methods for evaluating and monitoring environmental effects of health programmes and providing support for environmental impact assessments in planning of health facilities and programmes at country level.

- Providing evaluated information on available environmental methods for disease control and promoting safer alternative chemicals and approaches, including use limitations.

- Developing and disseminating guidelines for treating and controlling medical wastes.

- Assessing and disseminating information on the potential adverse effects of medical biotechnology applications on human health and the environment.
All countries need the capacity to protect their people against environmental hazards and to engage in international efforts to protect the global environment. Environmental health programmes need a sound institutional infrastructure, supported by technical, monetary and human resources, and current information about the hazards and risks in the country. Even with all of these in place effective management of the environmental determinants of health depends upon strong and sustained political and social commitment.
Objective

To promote and support other institutional and sectoral capacities for improving progressively policies, plans, legislation and actions on health, the environment and development.

Action

- Providing technical support, through guidelines, training, advisory services and other means for the development of the appropriate legislative framework, health based standards and regulations, and for establishing and maintaining enforcement capability.

- Providing support at country level for building and strengthening infrastructures for administering environmental health programmes including strengthening the capabilities of laboratories and environmental inspection services, and training staff in the use of modern communication and computer management technology.

- Assessing and disseminating information on the potential adverse effects of medical biotechnology applications on human health and the environment.
Planning at national level

One of the cornerstones of the implementation of the strategy will be more systematic and effective planning, starting at the national level and continuing at regional and global levels. A key recommendation of UNCED was that countries should develop national plans for sustainable development. The health sector should play a leading role in establishing those elements of national plans that relate to human health and the environment. WHO will encourage and support the health sector by cooperating in national planning as appropriate.

Organizational arrangements

The implementation of the strategy will require changes in the manner in which WHO activities to protect health and the environment are planned and implemented. The aim will be to increase horizontal programme collaboration. Relevant activities will be identified in all WHO programmes concerned, and appropriate links will be forged to implement the new strategy effectively. Action plans to guide the implementation of the work will be developed.
Meeting resource needs

A combination of direct bilateral financing of country programmes, and multilateral regional and global programme financing will be needed to implement the strategy.

Monitoring and evaluation

As the Global Strategy has been prepared in response to Agenda 21, progress in its implementation will be a measure of the degree to which WHO has contributed to the achievement of the objectives of Agenda 21 in its area of competence for matters affecting human health and the environment. A system to monitor and evaluate the progress of WHO activities will be implemented. Reports will be made to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development and other bodies as required.
This document is an abridged version of the WHO Global Strategy for Health and Environment (WHO/EH/95.2 and WHA Document A46/11) which has been printed in all official languages. The new Strategy was endorsed by the forty-sixth World Health Assembly in May 1995. This abridged version is primarily available in English and French; other languages shall be published at a later date.

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