

## ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY HEALTH (RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURE AND HUMAN WELL-BEING)

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### ABSTRACT

*The relationship between community health and the environment is one that cannot be ignored. The environment plays a crucial role in determining the health of a community. There is enough evidence that physical conditions of population storage living and working environment can have a significant impact on individual well-being. Environment can be defined as a sum total of all the living and non-living elements and their effects that influence human life. While all living or biotic elements are animals, plants, forests, fisheries, and birds, non-living or abiotic elements include water, land, sunlight, rocks, and air.*

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### Introduction

Environment means what surrounds us. The word environment is derived from the French word "environner", which means to encircle or surround. It may be living or non-living things. It includes physical, chemical and other natural forces. Living things live in their environment. They constantly interact with it and adapt themselves to conditions in their environment. In the environment there are different interactions between animals, plants, soil, water, and other living and non-living things.

The environment is considered one of the most important determining factors of health. Environment provides the supply and offers of resources for production. It includes both renewable and non-renewable resources like wood for furniture, soil, land, etc. The environment includes the sun, soil, water, and air, which are necessary for human life. It sustains life by providing genetic and biodiversity. Production and consumption activities of environment generate waste. The environment helps in getting rid of the garbage. Human beings enjoy the beauty of nature that includes rivers, mountains, deserts, etc. The environment are usually classified as **Natural** and **biotic**. The **Natural environment**, is consists of environmental components including **soil, water, air, and vegetation** and the **biotic environment** is created by humans, often known as **anthropogenic environments, and include structures, cities, infrastructure, and industrial**.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". This definition emphasizes that health is a holistic concept encompassing various aspects of well-being, not just the absence of illness. Complete physical, mental, and social well-being, means that individuals should not only be free from physical ailments but also experience a positive state of mental and social well-being. Not merely the absence of disease or infirmity highlights the fact that health is more than just the absence of illness. It's a positive state of being that involves a combination of physical, mental, and social factors. Holistic perspective, the WHO definition recognizes that health is a multifaceted concept and that various factors, including social, economic, and environmental conditions, can impact an individual's health.

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Environmental health is the study of how physical, chemical, biological and psychological factors in the environment affect human health. It encompasses natural factors (like climate) and those of human origin (like noise pollution or the built environment). The goal is to understand the relationship between environment and human health, prevent harm and promote well-being. Environmental health was defined in a 1989 document by the World Health Organization (WHO) as: Those aspects of human health and disease that are determined by factors in the environment. It is also referred to as the theory and practice of accessing and controlling factors in the environment that can potentially affect health. The WHO has also defined environmental health services as "those services which implement environmental health policies through monitoring and control activities. They also carry out that role by promoting the improvement of environmental parameters and by encouraging the use of environmentally friendly and healthy technologies and behaviors. They also have a leading role in developing and suggesting new policy areas.

"Community" is defined as "a specific group of people who share a common culture, values and norms, identity, interest, action, place, practice, or circumstance, and are arranged in social connection according to relationships which have developed over a period of time and may be modified in the future". In reality, communities are usually a combination of interest (people who share the same interest or experiences), action (people trying to collaborate and bring about change), place (people brought together by geographic boundaries), practice (people in the same profession or learning together) and the circumstance (people brought together by external events/situations). Community health focuses on protecting and improving the health of a defined population group within a geographical area. It involves a range of activities, including health education, promoting healthy behaviors, addressing social determinants of health, and providing access to healthcare services. Essentially, community health is about ensuring the well-being of all individuals within a community.

The present report has been prepared pursuant to resolution WHA76.17 (2023) on the impact of chemicals, waste and pollution on human health, through which the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly requested the Director-General to explore the full range of options for the future involvement of WHO in two intergovernmental initiatives of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP to establish a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution<sup>1</sup> and to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. In 2016, 13.7 million of deaths, representing 24% of global fatalities, were attributed to modifiable environmental risks. This means nearly one in four global deaths are linked to environmental conditions. The protection of people from unhealthy environments is a key priority to ensure that the health of billions is improved, in line with the relevant targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and WHO's general programme of work. The quality of the environment is a powerful determinant of human health. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 22% of the total global burden of disease in 2012, including 12.6 million deaths each year, was due to environmental risks, including exposure to air pollution, chemicals, or radiation; inadequate water quality; and poor sanitation. The effects on children are even greater; 26% of all deaths worldwide among children aged <5 in 2012 were attributable to environmental risks.

Environmental factors comprise a wide range of elements and conditions found in the surrounding environment that can impact **human activities, ecosystems, and living organisms** contributing to various diseases and disabilities. Air pollution, climate change, water pollution, global warming exacerbates these issues, leading to heat waves, floods, deforestation are significant environmental factor that has an impact on human health and the spread of infectious diseases.

The air we breathe is one significant environmental factor that has an impact on human health. Understanding the health risks associated with breathing in polluted air affects our lungs are all necessary to maintain everyone's health. Numerous air pollutants can irritate and inflame the respiratory system, Air pollution can have a more negative impact on people who already have respiratory diseases such as asthma or **chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)**. In addition to respiratory problems, air pollution has been linked to **cardiovascular problems such as heart attacks and strokes**.

Due to human activity and changes in the environment, climate change is a serious issue that can lead to illness. In order to address the health effects of climate change, we must examine factors such as extreme weather, explain how it impacts human health, and devise strategies for adaptation, mitigation, and resilience-building.

Increased temperatures can increase heat-related ailments including **heat exhaustion and heatstroke**, particularly among susceptible groups. The amount of food we can grow might vary depending on the weather, such as how hot or how humid it is. **Food insecurity**, or the lack of enough food, can result from this, as can hunger. Our health is not improved by this. The frequency and intensity of wildfires are increasing due to climate change, worsening already bad air quality and increasing preexisting diseases including **respiratory issues**.

Water that is safe and clean is essential to life. It's not merely something we require rather, it's essential to our survival. We must ensure that the water we drink is safe for our health. Waterborne illnesses such as cholera, dysentery, and typhoid fever can be brought on by **bacteria, viruses, or parasites** found in polluted water sources. Children in underdeveloped countries are excessively affected by waterborne illnesses, which greatly raise the risk of childhood mortality. **Waterborne pathogens** can cause gastrointestinal problems including **diarrhoea** when contaminated water is consumed.

An abundance of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere causes the Earth to warm, which has a negative impact on human health, the environment, and wildlife. Heat-related problems like heatstroke and heat exhaustion are more likely to occur when temperatures rise because heatwaves occur more frequently and with greater intensity. Global health trends may be impacted by the warming of some places, which might lead to more favorable conditions for disease transmission.

Deforestation is the term used to describe the widespread removal of trees that harms both the environment and humans. It harms not just the environment and biodiversity (the variety of living things), but also many facets of human health. Forests are essential for the photosynthesis that produces oxygen. Reduced atmospheric oxygen levels due to deforestation may have an impact on respiratory health. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is absorbed from the atmosphere by forests, which function as carbon sinks. Deforestation contributes to global warming by releasing carbon that has been stored. In turn, heatwaves, harsh weather, and the growth of vector-borne illnesses are some of the ways that climate change affects health. Waterborne disease transmission can be aided by deforestation as it can cause increased **soil erosion, sedimentation of bodies of water, and pollution of water supplies**. Modern civilization exposes us to numerous chemicals and poisons in our products, water, and air. To protect environmental health, it's crucial to understand exposure sources, health risks, and regulatory measures.

The health of people can be seriously harmed by solid waste, which comprises many kinds of commercial, industrial, and domestic garbage. Improper disposal, insufficient waste management procedures, and the buildup of solid waste lead to a range of health concerns. Among the main effects of solid waste on health includes, respiratory, waterborne and vector borne diseases.

Community health workers play a crucial role in promoting environmental health and promoting community health. In many communities, community health workers are at the forefront of promoting health and well-being. These workers play a crucial role in educating people on environmental factors that can affect their health. They also help to monitor and report environmental hazards and promote healthy practices such as hand washing, waste management, and safe food practices.

Community health workers need to be well equipped to deal with these issues. They need to have the necessary skills and knowledge to educate people on the health impacts of environmental factors. They need to be able to monitor and report environmental hazards to the relevant authorities. They also need to be able to respond to emergencies, such as natural disasters, and provide immediate healthcare services to affected individuals. The role of community health workers in promoting environmental health cannot be overemphasized. By promoting community health, these workers have unknowingly engaged themselves in environmental conservation. They promote healthy practices such as waste management, water conservation, and energy conservation. They also promote sustainable agricultural practices and advocate for the conservation of natural resources such as forests and water bodies.

Moreover, it is important for governments, policymakers, and other relevant institutions to prioritize the issue of environmental health in their agendas and implement policies and regulations that promote a healthy environment. Furthermore, it is essential to involve the community in the process of promoting environmental health. This can be achieved through education and awareness campaigns, encouraging community participation in environmental initiatives, and providing the necessary resources and support to empower people to take action towards a healthy environment.

## Conclusion

The Environment is considered one of the most important determining factors of health. There is enough evidence that physical conditions of population storage living and working environment can have a significant impact on community health. Environmental factors comprise a wide range of elements and conditions found in the surrounding environment that can impact **human activities, ecosystems, and living organisms** contributing to various diseases and disabilities. Community health workers play a crucial role in promoting environmental health and promoting community health. This can be achieved through education and awareness campaigns, encouraging community participation in environmental initiatives, and providing the necessary resources and support to empower people to take action towards a healthy environment. Therefore, it is important to recognize the role of community health workers and provide them with the necessary support and resources to carry out their duties effectively.

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