



Children's health and the environment

A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Edited by
J. Pronczuk-Garbino, MD



World Health
Organization

Children's health and the environment

A global perspective

A RESOURCE MANUAL
FOR THE HEALTH SECTOR

J. Pronczuk-Garbino, MD
Editor-in-Chief



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Jenny Pronczuk de Garbino, MD
Editor-in-Chief

Preface

Children face the excitement of a changing world, with many opportunities and challenges; but they also encounter formidable barriers to their health, development and well-being in the form of environmental threats. During recent decades, new knowledge has emerged about the special vulnerability of children to environmental risks in the places where they live, learn and grow. Children's and adolescents' exposure to chemical, physical, and biological risks at home, in school, in the playground, at work and elsewhere deserves our immediate attention and needs to be recognized as an important threat to their development and survival. Action to reduce the risks is required at global, regional and national levels.

In 1999, a Task Force on Children's Environmental Health was set up by the World Health Organization (WHO). Its activities culminated at the International Conference on Children's Environmental Health: Hazards and Vulnerability, in March 2002, with a pledge to promote action enunciated in the Bangkok Statement. WHO was urged to *"incorporate children's environmental health into the training for health care providers and other professionals"*. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002, WHO called for a global movement to create healthy environments for children. The proposal of a global alliance was backed by many countries, as well as by representatives of non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academia and international organizations. This worldwide call to action was the first of its kind, recognizing children, both girls and boys, as the essence of sustainable development and binding nations together in the search for healthy and safe lives for children.

As one of the action steps towards the protection of children's health and environments, WHO has produced this resource manual for health care practitioners. The manual, inspired by the American Academy of Pediatrics *Handbook of pediatric environmental health* (1999 and 2003), is intended as an introductory resource tool for health care professionals around the world, and especially in developing countries, who aim to increase their knowledge and

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