

## What's New?

Keep up to date with recent initiatives and activities that foster research and practice pertinent to EcoHealth around the world. In this issue, you can find out about:

- Synthesis Workshop on Climate and Health in Small Island States
- An International Community of Practice in Ecohealth (COPEH)
- Knowledge Translation in Vulnerable Communities: An Ecosystem Approach to Infectious Disease Control in the Americas

### SYNTHESIS WORKSHOP ON CLIMATE AND HEALTH IN SMALL ISLAND STATES

The third in a series of workshops on Climate and Health in Small Island States was held December 1–4, 2003, on Bandos Island, Maldives. The first workshop was held in Samoa in 2000 and the second in Barbados in 2002. Forty-two participants attended the third workshop, primarily representing health and environment ministries and meteorological services in island states of the Indian Ocean, Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. Sponsors included the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the U.S. National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Building on the previous two meetings, the workshop was designed to inform health scientists, practitioners, and officials of the health effects of climate variability and long-term climate change. It also addressed vulnerability, assessment, and adaptation options for small island states. Partici-

pants stressed the need for inter-sectoral collaboration in addressing the effects of climate on health.

According to the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), small island states will be particularly vulnerable to the health effects of projected climate change and associated climate variability. Improvements in climate forecast information will allow these nations to mitigate some of these effects.

Workshop participants agreed on a set of summary recommendations. A meeting report, including these recommendations and the workshop background paper, will be available from WHO. Reports of the Samoa and Barbados meetings are available at <http://www.who.int/global-change/publications/en>. For more information, contact Dr. Carlos Corvalan, World Health Organization e-mail: [corvalanc@who.int](mailto:corvalanc@who.int)

### AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN ECOHEALTH (COPEH)

Since 1996, the International Development Research Centre's (IDRC) Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health Program Initiative (Ecohealth) has fostered an ad-hoc network of Canadian and developing country researchers through its portfolio of over 70 projects, aiming to generate high-quality research results and build local capacity around the Ecohealth research framework. There is a need to move forward in consolidating this network of researchers and practitioners into a "community of practice," and strengthen capacity in the advancement and use of the conceptual framework, its methodologies and tools for research and intervention, and the links to policy development.

To this end, the Ecohealth Program Initiative is joining efforts with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to fund a South-Canada collaborative project. The overall aim is the advancement and application of knowledge on human health and environment interactions to benefit disadvantaged populations worldwide. Through an open call for applications and peer review process, funding will foster collaboration between Canadian and developing country researchers on innovative research and actions that seek to understand and intervene on the ecological, technological, economic, political, and socio-cultural forces that influence the health of disadvantaged populations. As a thematic niche, activities will focus on generating and sharing knowledge on sustainable approaches to the management of the environment and natural resources that can improve the health of communities.

This first project (2004–2008) assisting with the consolidation of COPEH focuses on the Latin American and Caribbean region, and will be followed by other regional projects working towards a global reach. Detailed information about Community of Practice is available on IDRC's website at <http://www.idrc.ca/ecohealth>.

## **KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION IN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES: AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL IN THE AMERICAS**

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In January 2004, a workshop in Cuernavaca, Mexico was held to map out a 5-year program of research entitled: "Knowledge Translation in Vulnerable Communities: A Cross-pillar Collaborative International Research Program Applying an Ecosystem Approach to Effectively Control Infectious Diseases in the Americas." The workshop was

attended by 20 participants from Canada and Mexico, with funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research on behalf of Canada's Global Health Research Initiative, which also includes the International Development Research Centre, Health Canada, and the Canadian International Development Agency.

The project aims to develop, implement, evaluate, and disseminate "ecosystem approach" methods for the effective prevention and control of infectious diseases in the Americas. Project partners and workshop participants represent a range of research and government agencies and nongovernment organizations from Canada and Mexico [<http://www.cgh.ligi.ubc.ca/>]. This diverse group links expertise in the ecosystem and contextual management of disease with state-of-the-art epidemiological, clinical and biomedical techniques in a transdisciplinary approach focused on community intervention.

In applying a community driven and holistic (rather than disease-specific) ecohealth approach, illnesses associated with three different routes of exposure (vectors, air, and water) will be addressed using common-knowledge transfer techniques and field personnel, thereby exploring the benefits of developing community capacity.

Phase 1 of the project will focus on applying an ecosystem approach to health concerns associated with 1) dengue fever and West Nile virus; 2) tuberculosis; and 3) waste water reuse. Lessons from these initial projects will then be incorporated in a new round of Phase 2 projects in Ecuador, Mexico, and Canada.

More details will be forthcoming in a featured Profile in an upcoming issue. For further information, contact Dr. Jerry Spiegel, Liu Institute for Global Issues, e-mail: [jerry.spiegel@ubc.ca](mailto:jerry.spiegel@ubc.ca)

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