

# **CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: MAJOR CONCEPTS & RISKS**

## **As applied to children in the Middle Eastern countries**

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“The human-being is the son of his environment” is an Arabic saying indicating the high influence of the environment on the overall development of the mankind. This influence is working on both ways: Positive and Negative effect. Environment provides the resources needed to allow children to grow and to develop in safety and security, and it is the source for many of the factors that threaten their survival and health. In many ways, the best way to intervene is thus through improving children’s environmental health by enhancing the social and physical world in which they play out their lives. This is more true in developing countries, Jordan included, because the environment is still presenting a lot of risk factors for the lives of these children.

Environmental hazards are becoming more and more serious and their effects are becoming more and more dangerous on the children survival. Therefore, recognition is growing that our first priority should be oriented toward this group of population. This is not because children are generally the most vulnerable and least able to help themselves, but also because it is often the events that happen in childhood that shape the rest of people’s lives. Intervention early in life can thus have lifelong benefits not just for individuals but for the society as a whole. Early intervention, however, requires rapid recognition of what needs to be done by those whose decisions control children’s world. This means not only those directly involved with children and their well-being such as parents, teachers, and medical professionals, but also the policy-makers, planners, business people, property owners and community leaders whose actions control the environment in which children grow up and live.

In the first part of this paper [ ***the concept part*** ], we are going to bring under focus the potential environmental hazards to children's lives and the ways and means to prevent these hazards as applied to developing countries in general. Under this umbrella, the following topics are discussed with applied examples from certain Middle Eastern countries:

- 1]. What is children's environmental health ??
- 2]. Why children's environmental health is becoming a major public health issue now ??
- 3]. Why are children particularly susceptible ?
- 4]. How are these concerns currently being addressed.

Appropriate recommendations on how to improve children survival and how to avoid the negative impact of these hazards on children are suggested (proposed).

In the second part of the paper [ ***the application part*** ], Jordan situation in children's environmental health will be discussed with emphasis on the following:

- 1]. National strategy for environmental health in Jordan
- 2]. Environmental situation in Jordan and its impact on children's health: Situation analysis including the following:

- Home environment: *Facts sheet about housing environmental analysis in Jordan.*
- School environment in Jordan: *Facts sheet about schools' environmental conditions in Jordan.*

- 3]. General environment : Recreation activities and green spaces in Jordan

This case study from Jordan, representing an example of environmental health in developing countries, is aiming at bringing under focus the impact of environmental hazards on children's

health and suggesting the most cost-effective and practical means and ways of preventive measures against these environmental risks (hazards).

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