RIO+20 and Health

ROADS LEADING FROM THE RIO SUMMIT (UNCED) IN 1992 TO 2012

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RIO+20 and Health

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How did health get in RIO92?

- World Commission on Environment and Development (Our Common Future), 1987
- Originally driven by environmentalists and conservationists—health arguments were not on their minds
- Decision of WHO’s DG to make health and environment one of the key programme priorities of WHO, 1989
- Visit of Maurice Strong and Nitin Desai to WHO in 1991
Health at Rio 92

- Rio Declaration Principle 1
- Agenda 21
  - Social and economic dimensions (Chapters 2-8), Conservation and Management of Resources for Development (Chapters 9-22), Strengthening the Role of Major Groups (Chapters 24 – 32), Means of Implementation (Chapters 33- 40)
- Major Health and Environment (related) Chapters
  - Chapter 6 (Protecting and Promoting Human Health)
  - Chapter 9 (Protection of the Atmosphere)
  - Chapter 18 (Freshwater Quality and Supply)
  - Chapter 19 (Managing Toxic Chemicals)
  - Chapter 20 (Managing Hazardous Wastes)
  - Chapter 21 (Managing solid wastes and sewage)
  - Chapter 22 (Managing radioactive Wastes)
Chapter 6
Protecting and Promoting Human Health

Priority Programme Areas

- Meeting primary health care needs
- Control of communicable diseases
- Protecting vulnerable groups
- Meeting urban health challenges
- Reducing health risks from pollution/hazards
Health Road from Rio 92: WHO

- WHA Resolution 45.31 Health and Environment, 1992
- Corresponding Regional Strategies
- International Conference on Management of Chemicals, Stockholm, 1994 (IGFCS, IOMC)
Health Road from Rio 92

- **Millennium Development Summit (MDGs), 2000** – Health in the MDGs (poverty, primary education, environmental sustainability, etc.)

- **World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, 2002** – Plan of implementation
  - Reaffirmed the MDGs
  - Recommitted themselves to agreed targets to reduce HIV prevalence
  - Set “new” goals:
    - (1) to ensure, that by 2020, chemicals are not used and produced in ways that harm human health and the environment
    - (2) to enhance cooperation to reduce air pollution
    - (3) and to improve developing countries’ access to environmentally sound alternatives to ozone depleting chemicals by 2010
Public health and its linkages to the health of the environment is still not referred to as central to sustainable development.

The health sector still does not play a central role in decisions on sustainable development policies and strategies.

While some progress has occurred in each of the three dimensions — economic development, environmental protection and social development — evidence of convergence between those pillars and the environmental pillar and health pillar is far more limited.

There is evidence of fragmentation of policies and actions and little coherence.
Limited progress—implementation gaps since Rio 92

- Many countries are not on track for achieving key health Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- Of the 84 countries (out of 144) with available data on MDGs only 45 are on track to meet the poverty reduction target. The rest, including 75 per cent of African countries and 10 out of 12 fragile States, are not
- New and emerging challenges, in particular climate change, have been exacerbated in developing countries by poverty, competition for scarce resources, the rapid pace of rural/urban migration, and the concomitant challenges to provide food, infrastructure, and access to basic health, water and energy services. **Billions of people remain poor.**
World Economic Growth

Annual percent change

Emerging and developing economies

Advanced economies

World

* Estimates after 2007

Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2008.
How much disease could be prevented by creating a sustainable environment?

Current evidence - best conservative estimate 25%

![Graph showing attributable fraction for different sub-regions.]

World average

Source: WHO, 2009
Why Rio+20?

- The concept of SD offered tremendous excitement and hope. The time has come not only to review and assess what has been achieved on the basis of this vision, but also to build upon it and revive its promise of integration, unity and aspiration: the “spirit of Rio”.
- Political will must be recommitted to sustainable development
- Today’s different crises must be linked through effectively integrated policies, e.g.
  - Poverty and health inequality
  - Climate change
  - Freshwater quality and supply
  - Loss of biodiversity
  - Scarcity of and access to energy and raw materials
  - Financial and economic crisis
The themes of the Conference, namely the green economy in the context of SD and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for SD offer good opportunities to place health at the centre for action on SD.

The concept of the green economy is one of the several mutually complementary constructions that have emerged in recent years to enhance convergence between the three pillars of sustainable development.

The fact, however, remains that developmental and social dimensions, in particular poverty eradication and health, are not adequately covered in some of the policy prescriptions on the green economy.

Health must be linked to all three pillars of sustainable development.
How can health become an integral part of the green economy at Rio+20?

- An important strand of green economy policies is aiming at directing public investment in sustainable infrastructure (including public transport, renewable energy and retrofitting of existing infrastructure and buildings for improved energy efficiency) to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

- German Ethics Commission: “A withdrawal from nuclear power will spur growth, offer enormous technical, economic and social opportunities” .. “The withdrawal is necessary to fundamentally eliminate risks” .. “There is an ethical responsibility to combat climate change”

- The health sector must review and clearly present and advocate for the evidence about expected health impacts of greenhouse gas mitigation strategies in light of mitigation options for key economic sectors.
How can health become an integral part of the green economy at Rio+20?

- Many strategies to reduce climate change have large, immediate health benefits. Others may pose health risks or tradeoffs. Examined systematically, a powerful new dimension of measures to address climate change emerges.

- The transport, housing, electricity generation, and industry sectors offer enormous co-benefits for health through sustainable mitigation strategies.
How can health become an integral part of the Green Economy Rio+20?


Reports in the series focus on the health co-benefits of mitigation strategies in transport, household energy in developing countries, agriculture and health care facilities.

Evaluation of health impacts touches the core of a debate that has stalled climate change negotiations – the debate about who ‘gains’ – and who might ‘lose’. Looking at health co-benefits creates a different paradigm – one that is ‘win-win’ for most people, and for the planet.
Some potential key health gains from Green Economy Actions

• Energy-efficient biomass and gas cook stoves can help avert a large proportion of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) in poor countries. Over 1 million COPD deaths every year are due to indoor cook stove smoke exposure, mostly among poor women.

• Coal smoke from cook stoves kills another 36 000 people annually from lung cancer; poor women are at greater risk.

• It also can avoid 50% of all childhood pneumonia deaths (main cause of deaths in children under 5 worldwide).
How can health become an integral part of the Green Economy at Rio+20?

Some potential key health gains from Green Economy Actions

- **Potential health gains of a shift from private motorized transport to walking, cycling and rapid transit/public transport** include reduced respiratory and cardiovascular disease from air pollution and less exposure to traffic injury risks and noise stress.

- In addition, large benefits are expected from increased physical activity leading to the prevention of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

- **Health equity** can be improved by ensuring that vulnerable groups are less exposed to pollution and have better access to vital health essential resources such as clean air, water, nutritious foods, health transport and health shelter.
Key WHO Messages for Rio+20

Emphasize and advocate for

- health co-benefits of the Green Economy
- the prevention of environmentally and occupationally related NCDs
- the greening of the health sector
- health governance through healthy public policies (HiAP)

Overall, some 25% of the GBD can be avoided by known, cost-effective environmental and occupational health interventions
"The biggest enemy of health in the developing world is poverty."
(Kofi Annan)