



# Summary on environment, climate change and health for WHO representatives and other country staff

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**This summary is an introduction to support World Health Organization (WHO) representatives and other country staff in their leadership and operational roles, and it provides an overview of key opportunities and resources to improve health and to reduce environmental risks.**

Globally, environmental pollution and other environmental risks cause 24% of all deaths, and these deaths are largely preventable. A shift towards policies and actions that minimize risks to health and promote health and sustainable personal and societal choices will reduce environmental risks to health. These changes will result in many more people enjoying good health, living in appealing and unspoiled environments and in fewer people requiring health care, which will lower health care expenditures.

An overview of the connections among the environment, climate change and health is presented in *Healthy environments for healthier populations: why do they matter, and what can we do?*

## What can WHO country staff do to reduce environmental risks to health at the country level?

**Actions that WHO representatives can do are grouped within two main objectives.**

### **1. Strengthen and support the role and direct actions of the health sector.**

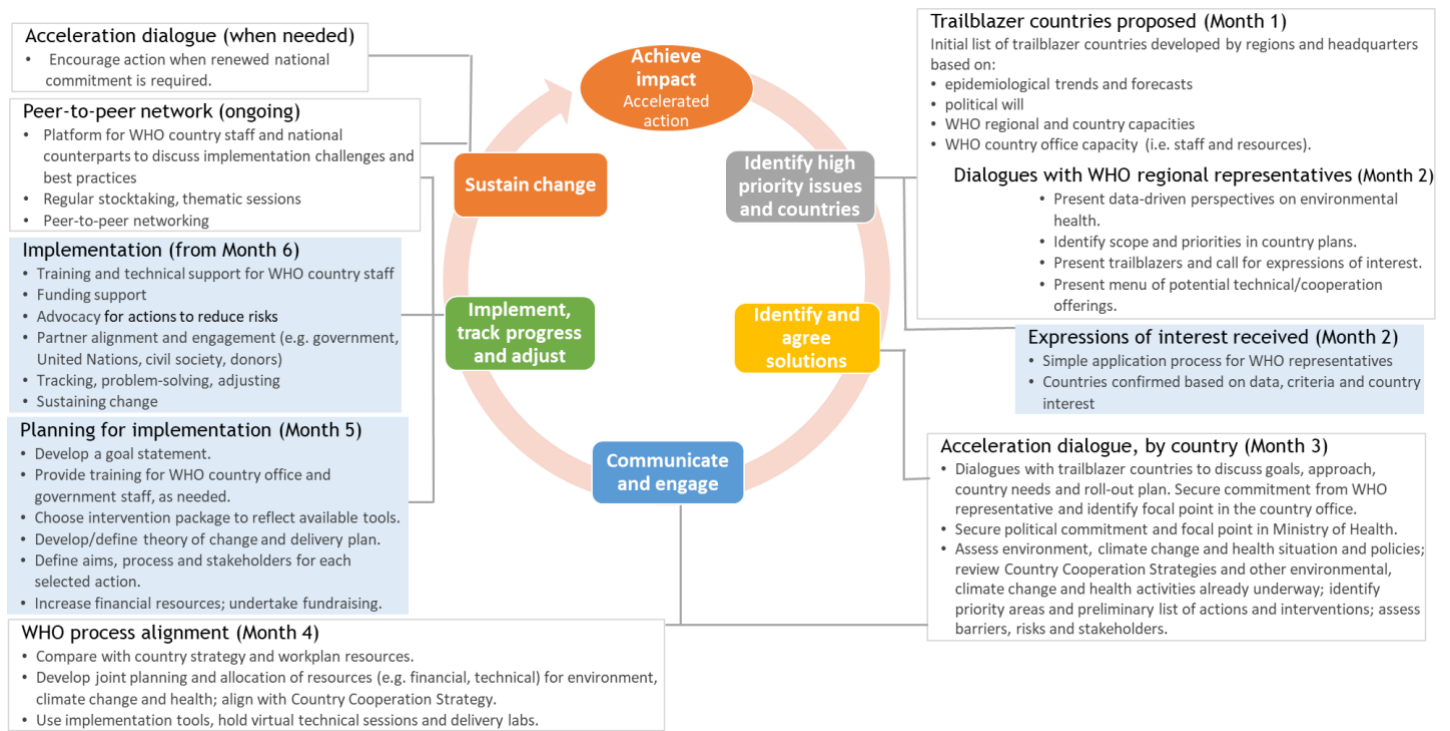
- Provide opportunities for learning about and applying tools to address environmental, climate change and health issues.
- Implement or strengthen surveillance and monitoring of environmental health risks, resulting diseases and environmental health interventions.
- Promote the integration of environmental health interventions into public health interventions and programmes.
- Identify and facilitate WHO technical support, such as for implementing guidelines and road maps.
- Improve access to drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), as well as energy, and climate-friendly and climate-resilient health care facilities.

### **2. Strengthen collaboration between the health sector and other sectors that develop policies with a large impact on health, such as energy, transport, land use, labour, housing, industry, agriculture, water and sanitation, and others.**

- Promote health-relevant monitoring and surveillance of environmental risks, such as of chemicals of concern and air pollution.
- Foster action on the environment, climate change and health, and promote the integration of relevant guidelines and standards into national regulations, such as for air quality, transport, land use, agriculture, labour, water and sanitation, and environmental exposures.

A structured acceleration plan (Fig. 1) can be useful to guide the efficient implementation of actions.

**Fig. 1. Environment, climate change and health acceleration plan: three-level partnership in trailblazer countries**



Source: Adapted from Evidence, policy, impact: WHO guide for evidence-informed decision-making. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021 (<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/350994>).

# Actions and resources for key topics in the environment, climate change and health

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## Air pollution

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### Selected actions

- Promote implementation of the [WHO air pollution guidelines](#).
- Promote policies on clean energy production and use, emission regulation, healthy transport and health-promoting land use.
- Promote public awareness campaigns.

### Selected resources

- Air pollution infographics (pp. 7–11) in [Healthy environments for healthier populations: why do they matter, and what can we do?](#)
  - Compendium of WHO and other United Nations (UN) guidance on health and environment [website]: [Guidance on air pollution and health](#)
  - [WHO health topics page](#) on air pollution
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## WASH

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### Selected actions

- Support monitoring through the Joint Monitoring Programme, global analysis and assessment of sanitation
- Promote implementation of [WHO drinking-water and sanitation](#) guidelines, and WASH regulations that include health-based targets.
- Promote access to safely managed WASH services and improved wastewater management.
- Foster implementation of hygiene interventions.

### Selected resources

- WASH infographics (pp. 15–19) in [Healthy environments for healthier populations: why do they matter, and what can we do?](#)
  - Compendium of WHO and other UN guidance on health and environment [website]: [Guidance on WASH and health](#)
  - [Water, sanitation, hygiene and health: a primer for health professionals](#)
  - [WHO health topics page](#) on WASH
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## Solid waste

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### Selected actions

- Promote implementation of a solid-waste management system.
- Foster policies to encourage waste reduction.
- Promote awareness campaigns about waste reduction and hazardous wastes.

### Selected resources

- Compendium of WHO and other UN guidance on health and environment [website]: [Guidance on solid waste and health](#)
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## Chemicals

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### Selected actions

- Foster implementation of [WHO's Chemicals road map and International Health Regulations \(2005\) and chemical events](#).
- Promote implementation of the health aspects of the [Minamata Convention on Mercury](#) (e.g. in medical devices, skin lightening products).

### Selected resources

- Chemical safety infographics (pp. 23–25) in [Healthy environments for healthier populations: why do they matter, and what can we do?](#)
- Compendium of WHO and other UN guidance on health and environment [website]: [Guidance on chemicals and health](#)
- [WHO health topics page](#) on chemical safety



## Radiation

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### Selected actions

- Foster legislation and policies to protect the public, workers and patients from radiation.
- Promote awareness campaigns about harmful radiation, including X-rays, ultraviolet (or UV) radiation and radon.

### Selected resources

- Radiation infographics (p. 27–29) in [Healthy environments for healthier populations: why do they matter, and what can we do?](#)
- Compendium of WHO and other UN guidance on health and the environment [website]: [Guidance on radiation and health](#)



## Climate change

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### Selected actions

- Foster policies to reduce carbon emissions.
- Promote clean energy systems and public transportation.
- Promote climate-resilient societies and health systems.

### Selected resources

- Climate change infographics (p. 31–33) in [Healthy environments for healthier populations: why do they matter, and what can we do?](#)
- Compendium of WHO and other UN guidance on health and environment [website]: [Guidance on climate change and health](#)
- [WHO health topics page](#) on climate change



## Workplaces

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### Selected actions

- Foster national policies addressing occupational safety and health.
- Foster cooperation between the health and labour sectors.
- Support implementation of essential occupational health interventions.

### Selected resources

- Workplace infographic (pp. 39–41) in [Healthy environments for healthier populations: why do they matter, and what can we do?](#)
- Compendium of WHO and other UN guidance on health and environment [website]: [Guidance on priority setting for action \(including workplaces\)](#)
- [WHO health topics page](#) on occupational health



## Health care facilities

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### Selected actions

- Support the provision of adequate and reliable WASH services, waste management and electricity.
- Promote the protection of health care workers from hazardous exposures, such as harmful radiation, chemicals and biological agents.

### Selected resources

- Health care facilities infographics (pp. 51–53) on key risks to health in [Healthy environments for healthier populations: why do they matter, and what can we do?](#)
- Compendium of WHO and other UN guidance on health and the environment [website]: [Guidance on priority setting for action \(including health care facilities\)](#)

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Guidance on other relevant topics in health and the environment is available, such as on protecting [nature and health](#), [safe environments and mobility](#), [safe and healthy food](#), and other [priorities for action](#).