



**Answer to the Call for input
OHCHR report “Realizing children’s rights through a healthy environment”**

1. Please share any information or evidence on the impact of environmental degradation, pollution or childhood exposure to hazardous substances on children’s rights, including the right to health

No specific point to mention. Plenty of publications exist showing the impact of environmental pollution to children’s right to health

2. Please identify noteworthy and globally significant examples of good practices towards ensuring children’s rights through a healthy environment, including good practices to harmful levels of air pollution and hazardous substances, such as pesticides or other toxic chemicals

We would like to mention some initiatives taken at national level to reduce/mitigate children’s exposure to hazardous substances and/or indoor or outdoor air pollution:

National Health and Environment Action (NEHAP) plans:

France will soon be starting its 4th NEHAP, starting this year. These national action plans have generally a focus on protecting pregnancy and childhood from the impacts of environmental pollution. These action plans cover different topics related to environmental health.

Protective measures can include (selection):

- **Control the absence of banned chemicals of very high concern** in various consumer products, including toys, textiles, etc. with a focus on consumer goods for children.
- **Monitor indoor air quality in schools, and deliver a tool to help improving indoor air quality** - <https://www.ecologique-solidaire.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/Surveillance%20de%20la%20qualit%C3%A9%20de%20l%27air%20enfants%20%202018-2023%20-%20collectivit%C3%A9s.pdf> and <https://www.ecologique-solidaire.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/Guide-complet-QAI-web.pdf> (French)
- **Insert a mention of chemicals risks in the maternity record book** delivered to all pregnant women (page 5). Strengthening the information and awareness of pregnant women enables an indirect protection of early childhood from environmental toxicants - https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/carnet_de_maternite_bd_2016v02.pdf (French)

More information on the NEHAPs: <https://www.ecologique-solidaire.gouv.fr/plan-national-sante-environnement-et-plans-regionaux-sante-environnement> (French)

National Strategies on Endocrine disrupting chemicals:

Since 2014, France has adopted national strategies on EDCs, which have a focus on children and pregnant women, and include objectives of reducing exposure, mainly through awareness raising among the general public.

A new website called “Agir pour bébé” has been recently launched, with a section dedicated to a healthy environment: <https://www.agir-pour-bebe.fr/fr/aller-vers-un-environnement-sain>

More information on the strategies : <https://solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/actualites/presse/communiqués-de-presse/article/perturbateurs-endocriniens> (French)

Pesticides: A number of municipalities and cities have committed to implement a Zero Pesticide programme. Since the creation of the label “Healthy Land, municipalities without pesticides” (“Terre Saine, communes sans pesticides”), 317 municipalities have been awarded with the label. A total of



5,000 municipalities in France have committed to reducing or eliminating the use of chemical pesticides in public spaces.

More information: <https://www.ecologique-solidaire.gouv.fr/206-communes-labellisees-leur-demarche-zero-pesticide> (French)

3. What legal and other measures are in place to ensure that activities of companies do not damage the environment, either domestically or in other countries? What are the main gaps and challenges experienced in this regard?

One general remark is that to our knowledge, the prevention of pollutions is not sufficient or efficient to protect the populations, including children, who may be exposed.

Several aspects, gaps and challenges should be taken into account:

- The **historic soil pollution** which was caused by companies and industrial activities in a more or less recent past, and requires vast amount of money and resources to be adequately treated and lead to remediation/decontamination. In France, we can mention several former industrial mining sites, such as Saint-Felix-de-Pallieres, or those of the Orbiel valley, where several children were intoxicated with arsenic following floodings.
- **Industrial sites** (especially those classified as Seveso according to EU legislation) are still not adequately controlled, and/or measures to ensure security are not sufficient, as shown recently by an accident in a chemical company in Rouen (Lubrizol), which is still being investigated but included a minimum of 5,000 tonnes of chemicals burning, including several types of substances of concern. Children are among the first to suffer from that kind of tragic accidents, with potential long-term consequences.
- **Investigations on environmental causes of diseases** are being hampered by the absence of data, but most often by the impossibility to cross information, due to several gaps: format of information, poor quality of information, data gaps, data covered by confidentiality and not accessible, etc. These obstacles make it hard to establish a causality with diseases occurring (in children) possibly caused by environmental pollutions. This can include : malformations at birth, children's cancer, etc.

4. Please provide information on national laws and policies to ensure that companies undertake environmental and human rights due diligence and do not contribute to abuses of children's rights.

No specific point to mention. We have not investigated this point enough in detail to contribute.

5. What measures are in place to fulfil children's right to participate and be heard in decisions affecting their rights and environment, including their right to remedy in the case of violations of their rights linked to pollution or exposures to hazardous substances?

Given that our activities focus more on information and awareness raising, we do not have specifically investigated this aspect.

Regarding the participation of children and their rights to be heard in decisions affecting their rights and environment, we do not know of specific measures. Adults do already face major obstacles to be heard, and participate in decision-making, and if existing, procedures and processes such as public consultations for instance, are not adapted at all to children.



Regarding the right to remedy, we can only mention a recent case, outdoor air pollution and its consequences in France, such as :

In June 2019, an administrative judge ruled that the state failed to act to protect a mother and her daughter from outdoor air pollution, violating the French Code of Environment, and an EU directive. More information: <http://montreuil.tribunal-administratif.fr/Actualites/Actualites-Communiques/Communique-de-presse-du-25-juin-2019> (French)

6. How are environmental risks to children being monitored and measured in your country?

Different programmes and projects are being developed and implemented to strengthen the monitoring and measurement of the impacts and consequences of environmental risks to children's health :

Risk assessment activities by ANSES, the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety - this can cover different aspects, including (selection):

- Contamination of food, with a specific study on "Total Diet Study" of children under 3 - <https://www.anses.fr/en/content/anses-provides-access-data-its-study-dietary-exposure-children-under-three-years-age-0> (English)
- Presence of chemicals of concern in everyday products, including products specifically designed for children: toys, diapers, etc. - <https://www.anses.fr/en/content/substitutes-phthalates-toys-no-health-risk-detected-children-under-three-years-age-0> - <https://www.anses.fr/en/content/anses-recommends-improving-baby-diaper-safety> (English)
- Impact of indoor air pollution on children's health etc.
- Exposure of children to radiofrequency waves - <https://www.anses.fr/en/content/exposure-children-radiofrequencies-call-moderate-and-supervised-use-wireless-technologies> (English)

Biomonitoring programmes at national level, by Agence Sante Publique France :

- **The ELFE study :**
ELFE is the perinatal part of the French biomonitoring programme. It focuses on 18,000 children born in 2011.
More information : <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1438463916301092> (English)
Exhaustive information (French), including links to several publications (English) <https://www.santepubliquefrance.fr/etudes-et-enquetes/cohorte-elfe>
- **The ESTEBAN study :**
ESTEBAN is the Health Study on Environment, Biomonitoring, Physical Activity and Nutrition : it covers adults (18-74 years) and 1,104 children (from 6 to 17).
More information: <https://www.santepubliquefrance.fr/presse/2019/polluants-du-quotidien-donnees-inedites-chez-les-enfants-et-les-adultes> (French)

Inserm, the National Institute for Health and Medical Research

performs a wide range of studies on the consequences of exposure to environmental pollutants on children's health (including during *in utero*), which of course also affect their right to health.

Selection

- Air pollution traffic impact on children's leukemia - More information : <https://presse.inserm.fr/en/study-of-leukaemias-in-children-living-close-to-heavily-used-roads/20616/>
- Prenatal exposure to endocrine disruptors and behavioural problems in children - More information: <https://presse.inserm.fr/en/prenatal-exposure-to-endocrine-disruptors-and-behavioral-problems-in-children/29573/>



- Impacts of exposure to insecticides on cognitive development - More information : <https://presse.inserm.fr/en/impact-of-environmental-exposure-to-insecticides-on-the-cognitive-development-of-6-year-old-children/19531/>
- How does pollution affect the placenta? – More information: <https://presse.inserm.fr/en/quel-impact-de-la-pollution-atmospherique-sur-le-placenta/31777/>

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