Keeping neighborhoods safe from toxics

by Diana Reiss-Koncar

In San Diego, along with other cities in the United States, many people in poor communities are exposed to dangerous amounts of pollution from industries. Twenty years ago, a group of friends from several of San Diego’s poor, mainly Latino neighborhoods came together to put a stop to the air pollution and toxic (poisonous) waste. They formed the Environmental Health Coalition (EHC).

In 1995, EHC trained a group of respected women from the community to become neighborhood organizers (activists). They called themselves SALTA (in English, this means Latinas Taking Action for Environmental Health). In 1997, EHC hired 5 of the promoters to work as community organizers. Hiring women from the neighborhoods to be organizers has helped communities stay informed about environmental health problems and protect their health. Each organizer works with 50 families in her neighborhood to give them news and mobilize them for community meetings on health issues. As a result, EHC has almost 1,000 people who participate in community actions to protect their health.

The organizers also did a health survey and found that many people in their communities had breathing problems. Methyl bromide (a toxic chemical which causes birth defects) was being sprayed to kill insects in a nearby warehouse, and was causing toxic problems caused by toxics in the air so they can work to protect their community’s health. Their success is a great example of the good things that can come from community organizing.

SALTA and community members protested burning toxic waste in their neighborhood and hundreds of people protested the burning. They even stopped it. They were doing it because they had been using the local power plant to dump toxic chemicals. Before the Padres could build the stadium, the power plant had to be torn down and had permission to burn it where it was. But SALTA quickly realized that the danger of burning the waste right in the neighborhood. Sixty community members participated in a demonstration against the burning and TV and newspaper reporters came to cover the event.

The Padres worried that if the protests continued people would think they were only concerned about business and not the community. The Padres and the power plant called SALTA the next day to ask them to negotiate. After 3 weeks of talks with SALTA, the Padres agreed to take the toxic waste away and burn it far from any community. And they also promised not to use dangerous chemicals to kill rats and insects in the new stadium.

It could have been very difficult to organize people in the community to protest against such a popular baseball team as the Padres. “Many of us are baseball fans, especially the men,” says one SALTA activist. “But the health of our community comes first. We did what we had to do. And everyone is satisfied.”

SALTA is now training 9 new groups to learn about health problems caused by toxics in the air so they can work to protect their community’s health. Their success is a great example of the good things that can come from community organizing.

The Women’s Health Exchange is a publication of the Hesperian Foundation.

The Hesperian Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to helping people in poor communities throughout the world care for themselves and their communities by providing tools and resources for informed self-care. We believe that people can and should take the lead in their own health care.

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We would like to hear from people who have used this newsletter in their community. Write to us about your experience! (Canada)

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In Pakistan, women’s rights and environmental health go hand in hand

Women’s Health Exchange

A resource for education and training

A Hesperian Foundation Publication

Issue No. 7*, 2001

In Pakistan, women’s rights and environmental health go hand in hand

Around the world, women struggle to meet basic needs for food, clean water and firewood. When the environment is damaged, this struggle is even harder. Because women experience environmental problems directly, they need to be included in solving them. When they are, the entire community benefits.

But there are many barriers that prevent women from participating in community decision-making. These barriers may include traditional beliefs about women’s roles, unjust laws, poverty and lack of education. Promoters in the Pakistani organization Shirkat Gah believe that by doing environmental health work they can address these barriers. They teach women about environmental health and work with them to make their communities safer. Activities that focus on improving environmental health can give women the opportunity to participate in their community and show their ability to resolve problems.

Like many places around the world, Pakistan has serious environmental problems. These problems affect both men and women, but women suffer in specific ways. For example:

Pesticide Poisoning. In Pakistan, women do most of the work picking cotton and planting rice. The fields are often heavily sprayed with pesticides and other harmful chemicals. Women can be exposed to pesticides in the fields as well as from contact with polluted water. When exposed to pesticides, women can get blisters on their hands and necks, nausea, headaches, eye infections and asthma. They also face a higher risk for cancer, miscarriage and giving birth to children with health problems. But women rarely get the information they need to protect clothing they need for protection.

Poor Nutrition. Pakistan’s farmland is used more and more to grow crops that are sold outside the country. This means people must buy vegetables and grains they once grew themselves. Poor village women cannot pay for foods they need to stay healthy and they are often the last to eat whatever food there is. Many rural Pakistani women suffer from anemia because they do not eat enough good food. When women are weak from anemia, they can experience bleeding as well as infection during childbirth.

Harder Work. Pakistani village women have always worked long days. They collect firewood and water; plant and gather food, cook; family meals, maintain their homes, and care for children and animals. But their work is becoming even more difficult. When women live close to fields treated with pesticides, the water sources they depend on can become polluted. Some women must walk more than 16 kilometers to find clean drinking water. Many women also spend half their day searching for firewood, because wood is so scarce. With so much work, women have little time for themselves or to participate in community meetings and other activities.

Shirkat Gah brings women together to talk about health problems and the environment. They use activities that help women share their knowledge about their communities, identify problems and find solutions as a group. For example, a group of women in a rural region of Punjab came together to discuss why their children were getting so many infections. They realized that the cause was trash piling up in the streets of their village. The women decided they would collect the trash and burn it. Later an environmental workshop organized by Shirkat Gah, they realized that smoke from the fires was hurting their eyes and lungs. The women decided that a safer way to get rid of the trash would be to turn it into compost.
A healthier environment and more equality for women

The world economy is now organized to work in favor of the rich countries and the transnational corporations. The poor countries of the South reap small benefits from the wealth these corporations make, and they end up paying many hidden costs. This economic “development” has many names: modernization, globalization, free trade. Whatever you call it, it is poisoning our rivers, our farmlands and our air; and making life harder for everyone, especially for women.

Poor countries are pressured to pay hidden costs by accepting environmental damage as part of development. Many activities that bring income — mining, logging, cash-crop farming, factory work — damage the natural environment and lead to crowded living conditions, poor sanitation, a larger gap between rich and poor, and increases in diseases like cancer, asthma and others. In the end, we pay more for the problems these activities cause than we gain.

When people desperately need income, they have to make hard choices. These choices would be hard enough if people were in charge of their own development. But it is, people often feel they have no choice but to surrender their own health to the demands of the profit system in the hope they will be rewarded later on. But usually the reward never comes. What comes instead is more sickness and more poverty.

This newsletter talks about women’s groups who are struggling to improve their communities’ health through environmental action. These are not issues that can be handled alone — it takes a whole community. The following pages provide some activities that can help to make environmental problems visible to your community.

By Noemi Danao,
former director of Environmental Health Education Center in Nicaragua (CESESMA)

Our organization CESESMA does environmental health education in rural Nicaragua. Over time, we have learned that to create a healthy community, everyone must be involved.

In the early 1990s, we worked mainly in schools. We provided teacher trainings and developed activity manuals for teachers. One of the goals of our manuals was to help teachers include topics like self-esteem, children’s rights, preventive health and natural resource protection in their lessons. Many teachers participated in our programs and as a result, many children benefited. The program changed in 1996 when a new regional Ministry of Education director ended our school-based program. We then had to give up our work or change our program to be based in the community.

We knew the school-based approach to environmental work had some weaknesses. Less than half of rural children go to school, so we were not reaching the other half. We were also dependent on the Ministry of Education’s approval, and we could not talk openly about controversial themes like gender roles, child rights and population. Most importantly, we knew that the struggle for healthier communities needs more than just education in the schools. The whole community must become more able to challenge and improve harmful conditions.

It was not easy to change the focus of our program from the schools to the communities. Our small staff was mostly made up of former teachers, not community organizers. We needed to learn new skills and hire more people, and we needed to create a new identity. Community organizing means each person must work many hours and it requires a lot of work: house-to-house visits, surveys, talking with community and municipal leaders, and so forth. This is even more difficult when people live far from each other and transportation is a problem. A one-hour meeting held in a community 10 kilometers from our office could easily take a whole day. Sometimes, poor communication or confusion about the time of meetings meant there would be no participants or no facilitator.

But because there were very few groups working in the rural area and especially because we worked with children, community leaders supported our efforts. We continued to work unofficially with teachers and the local school. Some teachers also worked after hours with children who did not attend school, and eventually some became full-time community educators. We also began what we called ecological mini-projects: organic vegetable gardens, reforestation, community clean-up days, and other projects chosen by the children themselves. These projects were all carried out by children in the community.

We also began to hold workshops to rally others to participate actively in preserving their environment and community. At first we organized workshops with parents. Later we began to work with other groups like water committees, women’s groups, community leaders, midwives and health promoters. We also completed a community assessment and helped start community improvement projects like latrine building, soil protection and better waste disposal. We even re-started health brigades that had been inactive for some time. CESESMA also facilitated collaboration among communities, other organizations and municipal governments.

A community-based program takes time and determination. It may also require a different idea of what success means. We used to measure success by how many teachers we trained, manuals we distributed, schools and students we reached, or lessons we developed. But now we know that this is only one part of success. Long-term success means a healthy community with an environment that will be able to meet the needs of future generations.

Although this vision of a healthy community may not be a reality now, we know that the seeds are being sown. In any community where we have worked, you may see a group of children with a teacher, farmer or parent planting an organic vegetable garden on donated land. This is success.

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Pollution and poverty are hidden costs of the profit system

The cost of caring for a family and maintaining a household is often invisible or hidden. This is because caring for a family or husband is taken for granted as “women’s work.” And because women’s work is not paid for, it is not seen as a cost. Environmental and economic damage is another hidden cost in our communities. Both of these kinds of hidden costs can have harmful results on our health — as women know.

When a corporation makes a product, it has to pay certain costs: the wages of the workers, the packaging and transportation of the product, it has to pay certain costs: the wages of the workers, the

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Newest book from Hesperian

The Hesperian Foundation is proud to announce the first book in our Early Assistance series, Helping Children Who Are Blind and community support for children with vision problems. The book is designed to help caregivers of children, from birth through age 5, who do not see. Since children learn and develop more in the first years of life than at any other time, helping very young children learn to use their other senses can help them develop to their full potential. Helping Children Who Are Blind has examples of many activities to try with young children as well as information about the causes of blindness, how to treat and prevent eye problems, etc.

Blindness and environmental health

The major cause of blindness in the world is the lack of vitamin A in the food that many people eat. What does this nutrition problem have to do with the environment? When powerful agricultural corporations convinced farmers to plant large areas of land in rice, they often destroyed centuries of traditional farming practices. Thus, people no longer plant some land in rice and some land in fruit and vegetables. These fruits and vegetables used to provide important nutrition, including vitamin A. Now people must buy vegetables, but they are often too costly or unavailable. This is causing an increase in blindness.

Now Monsanto, a large corporation, wants to introduce a kind of genetically modified rice that contains vitamin A. Genetically modified foods (GMF) are food products that have been changed in laboratories in ways that would not happen naturally. Companies that make them claim that GMFs will feed more people or be more nutritious than traditional crops. But vitamin A rice will not provide the other nutritional benefits of vegetables. And no one knows how this rice will interact with the rest of the environment (including people). Also, farmers may have to buy seed rice from Monsanto and pay the corporation every year to use their rice seed.

A better solution would be to stop growing only one kind of food, and grow and eat a balanced diet. Since the large corporations would not profit from that solution, they often work against it. Something is terribly wrong when corporations that make them claim that GMFs will feed more people or be more nutritious than traditional crops. But vitamin A rice will not provide the other nutritional benefits of vegetables. And no one knows how this rice will interact with the rest of the environment (including people). Also, farmers may have to buy seed rice from Monsanto and pay the corporation every year to use their rice seed.

A Community Guide to Environmental Health

From pesticides to deforestation, from toxic waste to oil drilling, environmental destruction is making people sick all over the world. The Hesperian Foundation is hard at work on a new book to help communities in their struggle for environmental health.

The book will:
- Describe community-based strategies to identify health and environmental problems.
- Provide information about illnesses that may be caused or worsened by problems with the environment, and look at ways to prevent these problems.
- Give instructions on how to make useful small-scale tools like low-fuel wood stoves and water filters that can help protect the environment while improving people’s health.
- Share stories and strategies of groups from around the world that have responded to environmental threats to their communities’ health.

We are looking for stories from groups and individuals around the world that have organized around environmental health issues both successfully and unsuccessfully. Contact us by phone, fax, mail or e-mail and share your lessons with us:

Environmental Health Book Project
Hesperian Foundation
1919 Addison St., Suite 304
Berkeley, CA 94704 USA
phone: 01-510-845-1447
fax: 01-510-845-0539
e-mail: envirowalk@hesperian.org

And to the many groups and people who have already helped by sharing their experiences, stories, games, tools, techniques and lessons, THANK YOU!

With your help, we expect to finish the book in four years.

Training guide

Why organize a health walk in your community

We depend upon the land we live and work on, the air we breathe and the water we drink. Yet we often do not think about how we are using these resources. During a health walk, people take a closer look at their community. They try to find things that may be causing health problems, like a contaminated water source, uncovered latrines or scarce firewood.

The activities described in “How to do a health walk” can be used in many different ways. The general goal is for everyone to better understand the connection between our surroundings and our health. When a health walk is done as a group, people share with each other what they know about problems. Then they can work together on possible solutions. The more people involved, the better.

The next pages are a sample plan for how to do a health walk. You will need to adapt it to your own community. You may also find useful ideas in the “Ways to Focus on the Environment” starting on page 6.

▲ To learn more about a particular problem

Usually, a health walk is organized after people have already identified a particular problem. It may be an environmental problem, such as unsafe drinking water or air pollution. A health walk can help people understand how this problem affects their health. Or a health walk can focus on a health concern such as children sick with asthma or diarrhea, possibly caused by the air or water in the community. Focusing on people’s concerns during a health walk can motivate them to become active.

▲ To identify problems in your community

Sometimes health walks can be used as a way to identify problems that people may not have noticed before. By looking carefully at the whole community, a health walk can be an opportunity for people to voice many concerns and wishes. Together, the group can agree about what problems to focus on and then consider what actions to take.

In our community, more and more children have asthma. We did a health walk to look at air quality, and noticed there were a lot of idling buses near our homes giving off smelly fumes.

We asked the health workers and agricultural extension agents to lead a health walk on pesticides and other farm chemicals.

We learned about the dangers of breathing in or touching pesticides, and how they contaminate our water and soil. We also learned that there are ways to keep both crops and people healthy by using pesticides carefully, and as little as possible.

This health walk guide was produced by Sarah Shannon, Elaine Knobbs and Aryn Four, with the help of Martha Carlough, René Córdova, Naomi Danas, Nancy Harris, BA Lora, Amy K. Liebman, John McCracken, and Rob Rosenfeld

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Women’s Health Exchange 3
How to do a health walk

1. Look at changes over time.

Thinking about how things have changed over the years is often a useful way to start. People can think of the ways in which the water, air and land may have become less healthy for everyone. For example, before beginning a health walk you can ask the older members in the community to describe how things were 20 or 30 years ago. Were there more trees, more water? Was the air cleaner? Was the water cleaner? What else has changed? Where were the houses then, where are they now? Are there more houses? More traffic? More roads? Are people growing different crops or growing them in a different way?

Then ask people to think about whether these changes in their surroundings might be affecting the health of the community. Based on this discussion, the group can identify some issues they want to look more closely at as they do a health walk.

Here is a story from a group in Honduras:

30 years ago the hills above our village were forested and beautiful. But we started cutting down trees to use the land for cattle grazing, and more families started moving into the hills because there was nowhere else for them to go. Now most of the trees have been cut down and there are many more people living on the hillsides than before. There is less water in the stream and it is much dirtier.

Even though we knew that these things had changed, we never gave it much thought. It wasn’t until we talked about it as a group that we realized that the loss of trees on the hillside was one of the reasons our water is now scarce and contaminated. We realized that the dirty drinking water was causing more diarrhea and illness in our children. The health worker explained that this was caused by bacteria in the water from human waste and from the cattle that were grazing above the creek.

Someone else reminded us about the mudslide that happened a few years ago during a very heavy rain. Fortunately no one was hurt, but many homes were washed away. We decided that this was a health problem too.

2. Learn more about a particular problem.

Sometimes it helps to learn about a particular environmental health problem before you start a health walk. You might find radio programs, books, brochures or newspaper articles helpful in gathering more information to present to others in your community. It may help to present this information in creative ways by using songs, games, puzzles or plays. You can find examples of these activities in Helping Health Workers Learn, chapters 1, 4, 11, 12, and 13. Another way to learn more is to have people from outside the community present information or join the health walk. They can share their knowledge and point out problems that local people may not notice.

Better cooking stoves can prevent illness and help the environment

Smoke from cooking fires affects many women all over the world and contributes to lung infections that kill 4 to 5 million children each year. Women who breathe in too much cooking smoke are much more likely to get lung disease and certain kinds of mouth, throat and lung cancers.

Smoky cooking fires that use a lot of wood harm women’s health in other ways too. Smoke is caused when wood doesn’t burn completely, so smoky fires use more wood than clean fires. Women who spend many hours a day searching for wood to cook their families’ meals must search harder and longer as more trees are cut down. And without trees, the soil blows away or is carried away by rain, and the land becomes less fertile.

Making better stoves

In the 1980s, big non-governmental organizations in Kenya, East Africa tried to design a cooking stove that would save wood and make less smoke. The first stoves they designed had many problems. One stove had an opening that did not even match the size of most pots! Then a group called the Renewable Energy Development Project created a stove called the Jiko that looks like a bucket with a ceramic lining. Because it uses less wood and makes less smoke, half of Kenyan families now use it to cook their meals. The Jiko costs $2 to $5 and saves 590 kilograms of fuel each year per family (worth about $65 — a fifth of what most urban families earn each year).

Successful stove projects depend on women’s participation and a design that works for the women who will use it. There are many different kinds of improved stoves that save fuel and make less smoke. Here are three organizations you can contact to learn more about stove projects:

Information Services Unit, Intermediate Technology Schumacher Centre for Technology and Development Bourton Hall, Bourton on Dunsmore Rugby CV23 9QZ, United Kingdom Phone: 44-0-1788 661100 Fax: 44-0-1788 661101

Centre for Rural Technology 80574 Hazelton Road Cottage Grove, Oregon 97424 USA Phone: 01-541-942-9198 Fax: 977-1-257922 For complete instructions on how to make this stove, see Where Women Have No Doctor, page 396.
Ways to focus on the environment

Pesticides

Pesticides are chemicals used to control pests and kill insects that eat crops. Some pesticides are very poisonous and can kill you within a day. Other pesticides can cause people to develop cancer years after they were first exposed. And pesticides can cause women to have a higher risk of having a miscarriage or a child with birth defects.

Ask yourself:
What pesticides are used near us?
Where are they used, and who uses them?
During a health walk, you can see where pesticides are stored and how containers are thrown away. Pay attention to houses and water sources near fields where pesticides are used. Look for other places where people may be at risk of contact with pesticides and their containers. Think about ways to make these places safer.

There are many ways you can grow healthy crops using less pesticides or none at all. Sustainable agriculture uses methods like rotating crops and growing different plants together to keep away insects.

Water quality

Pesticides, human and animal waste, and waste from factories can all make water unsafe to drink. Although you usually cannot see these contaminants in the water, a health walk can help a group find out how these things get into the water and make it unsafe to drink. For example, you can see fields near streams that are sprayed with pesticides, or look for places near the water source where people or animals shit.

Ask yourself:
Where does our drinking water come from?
Is it from a well, a spring, a river?
Do we have clean and safe latrines or bathrooms? How can we keep them clean?
During a health walk, look for places where people and animals shit and discuss how to clean them up so that sicknesses like diarrhea will not spread.

Air quality

People need to breathe clean air to stay healthy. Smoke from cooking fires, burning garbage, fumes from cars and buses, and toxic smoke from factories and power plants can cause many health problems such as asthma, lung infections and even lung and throat cancer. Some of the worst air pollution comes from incinerators — big factories where garbage is burned.

Ask yourself:
Does the air in our community seem polluted?

On a health walk you can look for sources of air pollution and think of how to make the air cleaner.

Flies and waste (shit)

Germs that cause diarrhea, blindness and other health problems live in human and animal waste. Germs get on our hands if we don’t wash after going to the bathroom. If waste is left out in the open, or if a latrine is left dirty or uncovered, it attracts flies and other insects. They land on the latrine and then fly off and land on people’s food or bodies.

These germs can also get into drinking water if a latrine is too close to the water source or if people shit near the river where people get their water.

Ask yourself:
Where does the waste from our community go?
Do we have clean and safe latrines or bathrooms? How can we keep them clean?

During a health walk, look for places where people and animals shit and discuss how to clean them up so that sicknesses like diarrheea will not spread.

5. Discuss the causes and effects of the problems.

The most important part of the health walk is to talk about it afterwards! This helps the group create a shared understanding of the problems by exploring what the causes and health effects are.

Ask everyone to share with the group what they saw during the walk and to list the problems they saw. The facilitator can write this list of “problems” on a chalkboard or on large sheets of paper. You can also draw pictures to represent the problems that the group found — especially if not everyone in the group is comfortable reading.

Then ask everyone to think about the “causes” of each of these problems. Write or draw these ideas in a column next to the problem list. Then ask the group how each problem affects the health of people in the community. Write or draw the different “health effects” related to each problem in a column next to the problem.

3. Plan your walk.

It helps to make a list of things to look for during the health walk that are related to a particular health concern, or you can list more general things to observe. Read “Ways to focus on the environment” on the next few pages for ideas.

The group should decide together on what areas to walk through and what places to visit.

Your group may prefer to form teams to walk through different parts of the community. Creating mixed teams of men and women, or of younger people and older people, can be useful because everyone in the group will notice different kinds of problems. Or you may decide to make one team only men and one only women. Teams grouped this way may notice particular kinds of problems and feel more free to discuss them. It can also be interesting to talk about why the teams see different or similar problems.

4. Walk!

Agree on what time the group should gather again to discuss what everyone has found. Ask someone in each team to remember or write down the problems that the team finds during the walk.
6. Take action.

Actions can either try to get rid of a problem or reduce the harmful effects of a problem. To think about possible actions, ask the group to look over the list they have made of problems, causes and health effects.

Try to solve the problem

Looking at the list of causes, the group can think of possible solutions to address the problems. For example, since cooking with green wood causes smoky air in houses, some communities have built stoves that use gas or electricity instead of wood. Others have looked at why there is only green wood left in their forests and have started a tree planting program.

Reduce the effects of the problem

Completely solving the problem often takes a lot of time, so it is also important to look at ways to reduce some of the harmful effects in the meantime. Ask the group to look over the list of health effects and to find ways to reduce the harm. For example, better ventilation with doors and windows can reduce the smoke in a house. Sometimes a few changes to a stove can be made so that it makes less smoke. (For information on how to make a safer stove, see page 9.)

Once the group has decided on possible actions, they can begin to work on a plan and take the first steps toward reaching their goal.

Ways to focus on the environment

Garbage

Garbage can be harmful if it is not handled in a safe way. Garbage feeds rats and flies, which can spread germs that make people sick. When people burn garbage, it fills the air with unhealthy smoke. This can cause lung infections and make asthma much worse. Burning plastic and batteries is especially dangerous. It can be safe to burn garbage, but it should be done away from where people live and work. Garbage can also be buried, but only away from sources of water or where food is grown.

Garbage is a big problem but it is easy to fix, especially if we begin at home. You can use “the three R’s”:

Reduce: Try not to use products that have a lot of packaging. Like junk food.

Reuse: Reuse jars, cans and bags instead of throwing them away after use.

Recycle: To recycle is to break down garbage and make it into new products. In some places, glass, paper, cardboard, aluminum and plastic can be recycled. Another way to recycle is to make compost — turning organic garbage like food scraps into fertilizer for gardens and fields.

To recycle effectively you must separate plastic, glass, paper and metal from food scraps. Even if your community has no way to recycle, by separating the garbage into what can be burned, buried or composted, you will reduce the amount of litter and prevent many health problems.

Ask yourself:

Where does our garbage go?

Is there a safer way to get rid of it?

Are there ways to make less garbage?

A health walk can bring attention to the piles of garbage people are used to seeing every day. You can talk about why garbage collects where it does, and look for better places to put it. You can also make your health walk a clean-up walk where people pick up trash along the way.

Toxic waste

Factories, power plants and other industries often create toxic waste. Toxics are poisons that harm people’s health. Some toxics cause harm immediately. Others cause harm that you can only see after a long time. Toxic waste can spread far from where it starts. For example, toxic smoke from factories can drift to nearby neighborhoods. Toxic waste dumped in rivers and streams or buried in landfills contaminates our water and soil.

Toxic waste can cause all kinds of health problems. It can increase people’s chances of getting cancer. It can make it harder for women to get pregnant. It can cause terrible birth defects. It can even slow children’s learning ability. Different kinds of toxic waste can cause different health problems.

Ask yourself:

Is toxic waste being dumped, burned or buried near where we live?

Are toxic materials used or produced where we work?

Toxic waste is expensive to handle properly. And because it is often caused by factories owned by big corporations, it usually takes long-term social action to force these companies to control it.

We should try to wash all the food we eat so that the outside of the food won’t have pesticides on it.

We should wear protective clothing like long pants, long-sleeved shirts, gloves and boots.

Children should be kept away from fields that are being sprayed! We can make warning signs.

We need to be safe even as we are trying to use less pesticides. Are there ways we can protect ourselves from pesticides while people are still using them?

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