

# **Climate Change, Equity, and Health: Philanthropic Opportunities**

**Karla Fortunato • HEFN • Dec. 16, 2014**

**[Kfortunato@hefn.org](mailto:Kfortunato@hefn.org)**

# BRING FUNDERS TOGETHER



**LA FRACKING TOUR – JAN 2014**



**HEFN ANNUAL MEETING –  
OCT 2014**



**DATA SHARING FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH & JUSTICE  
JUNE 2014**



**GLOBAL GATHERING ON CLIMATE,  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & JUSTICE OCT 2014**

# PROVIDE INFORMATION



ISSUE BRIEF

## Catalyzing Change

A Funder Guide on Protecting People and the Environment from Toxic Chemicals



In just over a century, thousands of chemicals have been released into the environment and into human bodies. Most are untested for safety, and regulation is weak.

Chemicals have improved many aspects of life, yet the rapid spread of synthetic chemicals and materials throughout society also has triggered serious concerns. Decades of research have demonstrated that both naturally occurring and human-made chemicals can have devastating impacts on health and healthy development.

To help protect people and the environment, philanthropy is catalyzing many efforts to reduce toxic threats and shift society towards safer alternatives.

### ■ Introduction: Rising Concern about Chemicals

Many substances found in nature are known to be toxic, such as heavy metals like lead or poisonous gases like radon. Naturally-occurring toxins are released into the environment, for instance when companies use them in products that end up as waste or when fossil fuels are burned.

In recent decades, chemists also have developed a staggering number of synthetic (human made) chemicals – more than 50 million in the last 50 years. It took 33 years to get the first 10 million chemicals registered with the American Chemical Society, but just nine months for the last 10 million.<sup>1</sup>

Today more than 85,000 chemicals are registered in the U.S. for use in commerce, with about 2,000 new chemicals introduced each year. Synthetic chemicals have found their way into food, water, air, and almost all consumer products. Many also are now being found in human bodies, even in the bodies of newborn infants.

Scientists have conclusively demonstrated that many naturally occurring and synthetic chemicals can be toxic. With the dramatic uptick in everyday chemical exposures – and public concerns about it – philanthropy is learning from research about what this means for health. Understanding today's common exposures and their health impacts is a critical first step towards reducing harm and preventing disease.

### ■ Research Results: Linking Chemicals and Health

Extensive research has expanded knowledge about how people are exposed, health impacts of exposure, and which groups are most vulnerable to exposure. This section outlines basic research takeaways that may be relevant to grantmakers considering potential investments.

#### How People Are Exposed

People are exposed on a daily basis to a range of chemicals. What they are exposed to depends upon the conditions where they live, learn, work, and play. Routes of exposure may include:

- Ingestion of chemicals in food or water;
- Inhalation of chemicals in the air, either indoors or outside;
- Absorption of chemicals through the skin or eyes; and
- In utero and transgenerational transmissions of chemicals from parent to child.<sup>2</sup>

The National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has found hundreds of chemicals in Americans' blood and urine.<sup>3</sup> While some chemicals pass through the system quickly, others bio-accumulate, staying in body tissues and building up over time.<sup>4</sup>

817 Silver Spring Avenue, Suite 310 • Silver Spring, MD 20910 • Tel: (301) 585-0500 • E-mail: info@hefn.org • www.hefn.org

## Giving InSight

A Blog for and about Funders Focused on Health and the Environment

Filter by Major Issue

- Any -



### Science is good? You bet it is.

September 29, 2014 by Grant Oliphant

A just-published Yale University study finding that people who live near natural gas wells suffer from higher rates of respiratory and skin ailments than people who live farther away has come under fire from pro-drilling industry associations. The Yale-led study, conducted in southwestern Pennsylvania with funding from The Heinz Endowments, was clear in its scope and limitations. It sought to determine whether living in close proximity to a gas well correlates with health effects of any kind.

Tags:

[read the full post](#)



### Building Power Tools: Data-Sharing for Environmental Health and Justice

August 1, 2014 by Kathy Sessions

What do people organizing for environmental justice, advocating for healthier housing and building materials, mapping hotspots of pollution and poverty, or monitoring impacts of



ISSUE BRIEF

## Healthy Environments, Healthy People

A Funder Guide on Improving Environmental Conditions for Health



Scientists have confirmed what many people know from life experience: everyday environmental conditions affect health. Substantial research has found that pollutants worsen health outcomes, both individually and in combination with genetic and socioeconomic factors.<sup>1</sup> This information creates a new opportunity for philanthropy concerned with health: many health problems may be reduced or prevented by improving environmental conditions.

Environmental health – the study of and work on environmental conditions impacting health – is a dynamic area of philanthropy.<sup>2</sup> Grantmakers concerned about health, conservation, community development, and environmental justice are investing in environmental health because they recognize that:

- People are affected by the environment, and people affect the environment.
- Understanding how the environment affects health creates significant opportunities to prevent disease and proactively protect people.
- Building awareness of health stakes in environmental conditions helps build support for environmental protection.
- Everyone deserves to live in environmental conditions that make a healthy life possible.

Philanthropy is helping to expand knowledge about the connections between health and the environment. It also is helping put that knowledge into action to improve environmental conditions where people live, learn, work, and play.

### ■ Sources of Knowledge:

#### Linking the Environment and Health

Information about how the environment is impacting health can come from a wide range of sources. Very often, people living in a community make the first connections between environmental conditions and their health. It might be residents experiencing headaches from air pollution, a grandmother concerned about contaminated water and cancers in her neighborhood, or a school nurse treating an unusually high number of asthmatic children.

The public health and medical communities also regularly contribute to the knowledge base about health and the environment. From a 19<sup>th</sup> century doctor named Dr. John Snow who first connected London's cholera outbreak to contaminated drinking water, to the President's Cancer Panel reporting in 2009 on environmental cancer risk, public health and medical professionals often help track disease patterns and potential causes.<sup>3,4</sup>

In the U.S., for example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention direct a national environmental health tracking network.<sup>5</sup> The public health community is active internationally as well; a 2006 World Health Organization (WHO) report cited environmental risk factors as responsible for nearly a quarter of all disease and as contributors to 80 percent of the diseases WHO tracks.<sup>6</sup>

Environmental biologists, toxicologists, and other researchers also are critical sources of information. For decades, a wide array of researchers have been studying and deepening basic understanding about how the environment affects health. The knowledge base continues to expand, including through work of scientists in universities, industry, and government entities like the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.<sup>7</sup>

817 Silver Spring Avenue, Suite 310 • Silver Spring, MD 20910 • Tel: (301) 585-0500 • E-mail: info@hefn.org • www.hefn.org

# WEBINARS • BLOGS • FUNDER BRIEFS

# EMAIL UPDATES • FUNDER CALLS

# CLIMATE FOR HEALTH: PHILANTHROPIC OPPORTUNITIES

# SUPPORT COLLABORATION



# HOW CAN FUNDERS ENGAGE ON CLIMATE & HEALTH?



**PROTECTION**



**PREVENTION**



**TRANSFORMATION**





# PROTECTION

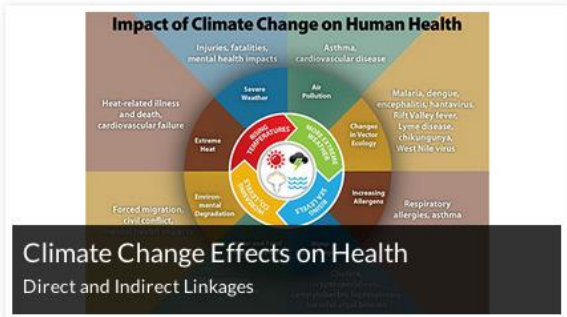
 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives. Protecting People.™

 MENU  SEARCH

## Climate and Health

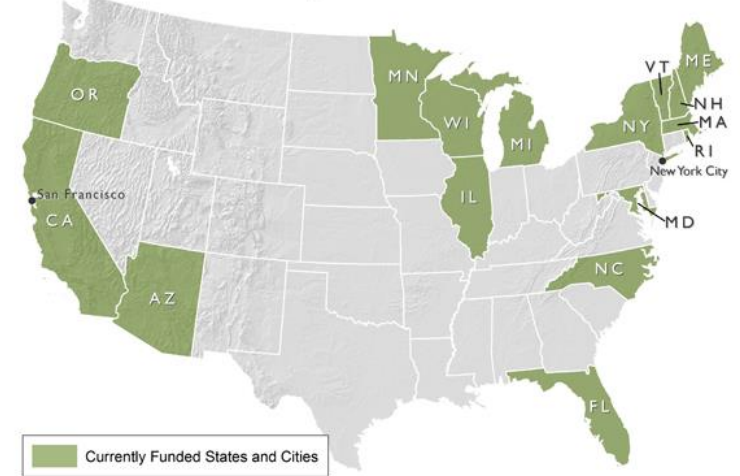
 Recommend  Tweet  Share

Widespread scientific consensus exists that the world's climate is changing. Some of these changes will likely include more variable weather, heat waves, heavy precipitation events, flooding, droughts, more intense storms, sea level rise, and air pollution. Each of these impacts could negatively affect public health. While climate change is a global issue, the effects of climate change will vary across geographic regions and populations. CDC's Climate and Health Program is helping state and city health departments prepare for the specific health impacts of climate change that their communities will face. [More »](#)



### Technical Assistance

#### CDC Climate Ready States and Cities Initiative



- [Arizona Department of Health Services](#) 
- [California Department of Health](#) 
- [Florida Department of Health](#) 



# PREVENTION

## Taking The Lead On Air Pollution

[← VIEW MORE FUNDER STORIES](#)



**TO LEARN MORE, VISIT:**

[The Heinz Endowments' Environment Program](#)

[H Magazine profile on the Breathe Project](#)

**MEMBER REFERENCE:**

[Heinz Endowments](#)

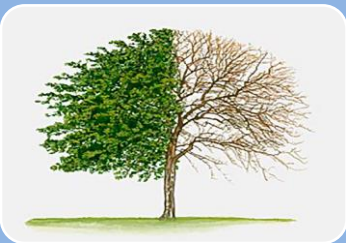
**MAJOR ISSUE:**

### Heinz Endowments Initiative Raises Awareness & Support for Cleaner Air

#### Pinpointing the Problem

Pittsburgh's air is cleaner than it has been in decades, yet its air quality still ranks as one of the unhealthiest in the country. While the highly visible soot and smoke of Pittsburgh's industrial past are gone, the region remains burdened with high levels of fine particulate matter, ground-level ozone (smog), and toxic air pollutants that are often nearly invisible. The relatively clear skies of today's Pittsburgh contribute to residents' perceptions that air quality is a low priority. Yet particulates, smog, and air toxics pose a serious health threat with links to increased risks of respiratory and cardiac diseases, stroke, birth outcomes like premature birth and low birth weight, cancer, and early death.

Between 1995 and 2011, southwestern Pennsylvania-focused [The Heinz Endowments](#) awarded \$32 million to improving air quality, but concluded that its investments had not had the degree of immediate impact the region needed. An Endowments-funded study in 2011 confirmed the region's air quality was still among the worst in the country. It also found that a major portion of its pollution was from local sources, meaning the region had the power to make its air much cleaner. Later in 2011, the



# TRANSFORMATION

## Revealing And Remediating Hidden Hazards

[VIEW MORE FUNDER STORIES](#)



### The Liberty Hill Foundation Funds Clean Up and Green Up Campaign

#### Revealing Critical Gaps

After years of hearing about cancers, birth defects, lung disease, and other environmentally-linked health problems in poor and minority Los Angeles neighborhoods, the [Liberty Hill Foundation](#) took action. In 1996 Liberty Hill helped found the Los Angeles Collaborative for Environmental Health and Justice. The Collaborative connects academic researchers with organizations from low-income communities and communities of color to study, fund, and support environmental justice work on relationships between toxic exposures and race, income status, and health. Funding partners also include: the California Endowment, California Wellness Foundation, Ford Foundation, Frances Fund, Hewlett Foundation, and Marisla Foundation.

Their work revealed critical gaps in information. Publicly collected data was presenting only a partial picture of toxic air pollutants in neighborhoods. The Foundation and its collaborative partners concluded that drawing official data together with local knowledge could help target efforts to make these communities healthier and more vibrant.

#### TO LEARN MORE, VISIT:

- [Hidden Hazards: A Call to Action for Healthy, Livable Communities](#)
- [Up in the Air: The Fight for Clean Air in Boyle Heights](#)

#### MAJOR ISSUE:





# THANK YOU!

- HEFN'S WEBSITE: [WWW.HEFN.ORG](http://WWW.HEFN.ORG)
- FUNDER STORIES:  
[WWW.HEFN.ORG/CONNECT/FUNDER\\_STORIES](http://WWW.HEFN.ORG/CONNECT/FUNDER_STORIES)
- CDC'S CLIMATE READY STATES & CITIES INITIATIVE:  
[WWW.CDC.GOV/CLIMATEANDHEALTH/CLIMATE\\_READY.HTM](http://WWW.CDC.GOV/CLIMATEANDHEALTH/CLIMATE_READY.HTM)
- INTERESTED IN THE CLIMATE FOR HEALTH BRIEFING PAPER? CALL OR EMAIL: [KFORTUNATO@HEFN.ORG](mailto:KFORTUNATO@HEFN.ORG) / 301-565-0500