

Will a warmer planet be a sicker planet?

Change in world climate influences the functioning of many ecosystems and poses risks to human health. In 2005 a report by the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimated that climate change contributes to 150,000 deaths and 5 million illnesses each year.

Mainstream **scientific opinion on climate change** is that warming over the last 50 years has resulted primarily from the increased proportion of CO₂ in the atmosphere caused by human activity. But, while the debate continues on the human and non-human induced causes for global warming, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has predicted that :

- Global mean surface temperature will rise by 1.4-5.8°C between 1990 and 2100, with greatest warming over land areas and at high latitudes.
- This will be the greatest rate of warming that humans have experienced over the last 10000 years.
- The frequency of weather extremes is likely to change, resulting in an increased risk of floods and drought. There will be fewer cold spells, but more heat waves.
- Global sea level is projected to rise by 9-88 cm by 2100

Climate change impacts will not be evenly distributed around the world. Some regions are expected to be more affected than others. Small island states, for example, are amongst the most vulnerable. Many other developing countries are not only insufficiently prepared for potential environmental challenges but even less so for the health-related impacts. It is currently accepted by the majority of the scientific community that the potential threats of a warmer climate to human health are related to changes in frequency and transmission of infectious diseases, temperature fluctuations and extreme weather events, air and water quality.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Rising average temperatures will likely extend the geographic ranges of disease-carrying organisms like mosquitoes, rodents and bats, with the risk of bringing disease to areas where the population is not immune and/or lacks adequate public health facilities. Today, insects and insect-borne diseases are already being reported at high elevations in East and Central Africa, Latin America and Asia. Malaria is circulating in highland urban centres, such as Nairobi, and rural highland regions, like those of Papua New Guinea. *Aedes aegypti*, the mosquito carrier of dengue and yellow fever, has been limited by temperature to an altitude of about 1,000m. In the past thirty years it has been found at 1,700m elevation in Mexico

and 2,200m in the Colombian Andes. The WHO has recently warned that Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Turkey are potential danger zones for malaria.

Other diseases often associated with hot weather, like the West Nile Virus (WNV, transmitted by a mosquito), Cholera and Lyme disease, are spreading throughout North America and Europe because increased temperatures allow disease carriers to thrive in areas once considered too cold for them to survive. Since 1990 outbreaks of WNV encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) have occurred in Romania, Czech Republic, Russia, Israel, US and Canada.

EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS

Extremely hot temperatures increase the number of people who die on a given day for many reasons: people with heart problems are vulnerable because their cardiovascular system must work harder to keep the body cool during hot weather; heat exhaustion and some respiratory problems increase.

An increase in the frequency of storms and floods may result in more event-related deaths, injuries, infectious diseases and stress related disorders. Extreme weather events are already having, and will continue to have, profound impacts on public health. More so, in most cases, than the warming itself. Prolonged droughts for example, fuel fires - releasing respiratory pollutants, while floods can create mosquito-breeding sites and flush microbes and chemicals into bays and estuaries, causing outbreaks from organisms like *E. coli*.

Examples include the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch (1998), when nourished by a warmed Caribbean; Honduras reported 30,000 cases of cholera, 30,000 cases of malaria and 1,000 cases of dengue fever. In February 2000 torrential rains and a cyclone inundated large parts of Southern Africa and the floods in Mozambique killed hundreds, displaced hundreds of thousands and spread malaria, typhoid and cholera. More recently, in July 2005, the flooding in Mumbai unleashed epidemics of mosquito-borne diseases (malaria and dengue fever), water-borne diseases (cholera and other diarrhoeas), and rodent-carried and water-borne bacterial disease (such as leptospirosis, which can cause meningitis, kidney disease and liver failure).



Dr Zelia Araujo-Muggli graduated from medical school in her native Portugal. She is a member of the UK Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, and has worked as a paediatrician in Portugal, the UK and Oman. She is a Shell spouse and mother of two children.

AIR AND WATER QUALITY

Warm temperatures can increase the concentration of ozone at ground level. The natural layer of ozone in the upper atmosphere blocks harmful ultraviolet radiation from reaching the earth's surface, but in the lower atmosphere, ozone is a harmful pollutant. Ozone damages lung tissue, and causes particular problems for people with asthma and other lung diseases. Even modest exposure to ozone can cause healthy individuals to experience chest pains, nausea, and lung congestion.

Studies also show that warmer temperatures raise pollen and moulds counts, both of which markedly worsen the symptoms of allergy sufferers. A 2002 study showed that ragweed - a potent allergen producer - grew up to 61 per cent faster under the conditions expected by 2050. Researchers have also found that in addition to causing more weeds to grow, increased levels of carbon dioxide also encourage each individual weed to release more pollen.

Ultraviolet radiation, which will increase as a result of depletion of the upper atmosphere ozone layer, has a number of adverse effects on human health. These include increased risks of various forms of skin cancer and the weakening of the human immune system, and increased risk of eye disorders such as cataract problems.

TAKING ACTION

In the past, climate change has been driven by changes in the Earth's orbit around the sun, and by volcanic eruptions and the movement of continents. It is only now that humanity has established a large enough presence on the planet to itself affect climate. As the evolutionary biologist E.O. Wilson put it: "Humanity is the first species to become a geophysical force."

If you wish to have a more active role in climate change, you can, for example learn about calculating your carbon footprint (a measure of the amount of carbon dioxide emitted through the combustion of fossil fuels as part of your daily life) and what you can do to reduce it. There are several websites where you can find about this:

www.bestfootforward.com/carbonlife for a simpler calculation or www.resurgence.org/carboncalculator for a more detailed calculation

To find out more about the action Shell is taking on climate change, go to www.shell.com/climate

ON THE NEWS

Green electricity at Shell offices, Netherlands

- NoordzeeWind is a 50/50 joint venture between Shell WindEnergy and Nuon, and the power generated by NoordzeeWind is more than enough to power Shell's three largest office complexes in the Netherlands: Group Headquarters in The Hague and the research and technology centres in Amsterdam and Rijswijk.
- These three sites consume electricity at the rate of 66,000 megawatt-hours (MWh) per year.
- NoordzeeWind wind farm off the coast from Egmond aan Zee, comprises 36 wind turbines, each with a capacity of 3 megawatts (MW) resulting in a production of about an average of 360,000 MWh per year.
- A typical Dutch household currently consumes about 3,400 kWh, which means that the three Shell sites jointly consume as much electricity as 19,400 households.

Source: Shell's INTERVIEW magazine issue 105

Responsible guests - the green way

Gianna Minton

Gianna Minton is half Dutch and half American (raised mostly in the US). She has been living abroad since 1990, and previous postings with her husband Keith have included The Hague and Muscat. Previously involved in the education field, Gianna was 'reborn' as a marine biologist during her time in Oman. She spent six years researching whales and dolphins, obtaining her PhD (focusing on Arabian Sea humpback whales) from the University of London in 2004. She is now living in Miri with two young daughters, following up on research conducted in Oman and trying to establish a dolphin research project in Sarawak.

We live on the island of Borneo, a place that evokes images of wild impenetrable jungle brimming with exotic wildlife and native peoples living in harmony with their environment. In our lush green garden on the Shell camp in Miri, we view a daily parade of the most beautiful butterflies, birds and insects. A family of hornbills nested in our friends' tree, and occasionally we are treated to the sight of a four foot monitor lizard or a cobra slithering through the grass. But not far from our enclave, trees are being felled at an alarming rate, forest fires rage across the island and vast tracts of primary rainforest are being replaced with oil palm plantations. Never have we lived somewhere that made us feel so close to nature on the one hand, and so painfully aware of the destruction we are causing to our planet on the other.

At times the media's portrayal of deforestation, industrialisation and climate change can cause us to feel such despair that it is overwhelming. Al Gore's recent film, "An Inconvenient Truth", sat on our DVD shelf for six weeks before we plucked up the courage to watch it. But when we finally did, the messages were clear and manageable. The changes promoted came down to the three R's of living in greater harmony with the environment: Reducing use of resources; Reusing as much as possible and Recycling.

For those of us on postings in Europe or Australia, it is easier to live by the three R's than it is in other countries. Strict

standards have encouraged the automotive industry to produce more fuel-efficient cars; fuel is too expensive to waste on big four-wheel drives or unnecessary trips across town; gas and electricity are costly and therefore not to be wasted on overheating/overcooling homes. Nappy services are available better enabling parents to use cloth nappies; people are generally required to separate rubbish for recycling and are provided with the necessary bins and incentives to do so; and supermarkets don't provide free bags thereby encouraging shoppers to reuse their old bags or bring in cloth ones.

However in some Shell locations being 'green' can be more challenging. In Miri and Muscat for example, petrol is relatively cheap, a flat rate is charged in Shell houses to cover the utility bills (so less incentive to reduce energy), recycling facilities are often hundreds of kilometres away, and plastic bags are handed out with even the smallest of purchases. In these locations we need to think more creatively to find ways to reduce our families' impact on the environments of our host countries.

There are countless sources of information on the small but worthwhile things that can make a difference such as car pooling, turning off appliances when they're not in use, adjusting your thermostat by one degree and so on. But there are a few things that seem to be particularly suited to expat life:

Reduce your impact on local wildlife and habitats. On excursions into the sea, desert, jungle or plains, make sure you follow guidelines to minimise disturbance to wildlife - keep to established paths rather than breaking new ground, and refrain from feeding, touching or collecting plants or animals. Think about planting native species of plants in your garden; these will attract local birds and butterflies, and will help keep the local ecosystem in better balance.

Reuse: Many families with young children that used cloth nappy services "back home", are now resorting to disposables while on postings abroad, some packing several years' worth of nappies into their sea freight before departure. One child



Wings over the world

Andrew Rudge

can use up to 5,500 nappies between birth and potty training; this could take up a lot of container space, and even more in a landfill once they are used. Many people are put off by the 'messiness' that using cloth nappies might entail, however cloth nappy systems have improved greatly over the years with most now using paper liners to eliminate a lot of the mess. Choosing to use cloth nappies can make a significant difference in the amount of non-recyclable waste your family generates. The proposition gets even more attractive if you are living in a warm sunny climate where nappies can be dried on the clothesline, and even more convenient if you are living in a setting where house-help is readily available, such as in the Middle East, Africa or Asia.

Recycle: No official recycling facilities in your neighbourhood? You may find an enterprising local person who can use your aluminium cans, bottles, yoghurt pots, milk bottles or take-away containers. In Miri, amahs often collect these for their families, who either find recycling opportunities or use the containers to sell homemade food products at markets and stalls. Schools may also have uses for old boxes, toilet rolls and other materials for art projects.

These suggestions may seem trivial, but by changing at least some of our daily habits, we can become more responsible guests in our host countries.

For more tips see www.climatecrisis.org or <http://globalwarming-facts.info/50-tips.html>

If you're interested in finding out how easy cloth nappy systems are and how they can be obtained, see <http://www.bambinomio.com> or <http://www.thenappylady.co.uk>.

Ah, airports! While travelling back to Schiphol it struck me that there are some fairly odd airports and airport rituals around the world. Take Dehli, for example. A nice enough airport in its way, but at one time the Indian love of bureaucracy (a present from the British) meant visits to almost a dozen different desks to get things checked - including health. Upright and breathing? Fit to fly!

And what about Lisbon? The only capital city with the airport in the middle. But watching the planes skim the roofs is nothing to the old days of looking down on jumbo jets as they threaded their way through the tower blocks to Hong Kong's Kai Tak.

No jumbos in Courchevel, in France, which sports the shortest - and possibly the steepest - of Alpine runways. And it certainly used to be cheaper to park a plane for a week than to park a car. Even so, one pilot tried to avoid paying by bouncing up the runway, over the airport bar and into the deep, soft snow outside the Altitude 21 restaurant.

At Male, in the Maldives, flights come in over impossibly blue water set with paradise islands like green and gold jewels. Officials gently remove any alcohol before sending you on your way to a resort where you'll pay three times as much for that precious nectar. That is, unless you're in the know and have decanted your gin or vodka into empty plastic water bottles before flying in! Either way, the real treat is to complete your journey with a seaplane hop to the island of choice.

Back here, in 2007, lunch over, I can look forward to landing at Schiphol, taxiing 20 or 30 kilometres, getting off the plane and into an airport bus for a trip so long that it ought to include refreshment stops and a tour guide, then into the terminal for a brisk 20-minute hike to the baggage hall. Happy landings and tot ziens!



What's in Damascus for me?

Syria Outpost

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Annina Neidhardt



Elisabeth Holyak

We Shell expat partners are very impressive people. Every three or four years we go to a new posting and we reinvent ourselves. We succeed by becoming someone different, according to what's on offer in the new posting. Job? Study? Volunteer? New hobbies? Stay at home with the kids? What's in it for me this time?

We looked at our expatriate community in Damascus and realised that many partners had found something in it for them and we'd like to share their experiences with you. This is not a hearts and flowers sell on a posting in Damascus - well, not entirely - but rather read it as a tribute to those partners who have made things happen for them in Damascus. What is there for you to do in the 'cradle of civilisation'? Can you get a job in the city said to be the oldest, continuously inhabited city in the world? (With apologies for paraphrasing to Atlastours.net.)

Well, to start with, the tourist blurb is all true. There's no getting away from the fact that Damascus is dripping in history

and it's all there for you to step in to and experience for yourself. So far so good. But what about the gritty day to day reality of life as a Shell expatriate partner in Damascus?

It's 10am on a Monday morning. Think about what you would normally be doing and compare it to our snapshot of what is happening in Damascus:

Litska Yntema is a General Practitioner and has been in the United Nations Palestine Refugee Camp in a suburb of Damascus for two hours now. After a relatively quiet start the waiting room is packed with women and children. In her voluntary job at UNWRA (United Nations Works and Refugee Agency) she is going to see about a hundred children aged from 0-3 years old and pregnant ladies this morning, so no time to waste as at 2pm she has to be back at the Damascus Shell Club for a meeting with her other colleagues in Outpost Syria.

Helen Robertson is one of four Duty Managers at the Damascus Shell Club. 10am Monday morning finds her



Wendy Doherty

checking stock cupboards and placing food and drinks orders after her meeting with the Chef and Head Barman. Then it's a routine safety and hygiene check of the club premises and a last minute change to the staff duty rota when she hears of a staff absence. Helen is new to expatriate life and left her job as head of a school for autistic children in Scotland to "have an adventure later in life". "The plan was to have time for further postgraduate study, but now I'm so busy with my job, new hobbies and socialising that I don't think that'll be possible!" Elisabeth Holyoak is in her office in the Damascus Shell Club where she is the Catering Manager. "I had my eye on this job when Steve and I were here for our familiarisation visit and I heard rumours that the catering manager would be leaving within the next year." This morning she's planning weekly menus and has a meeting in half an hour with the club's Social Secretary to discuss special catering for the upcoming Murder Mystery Dinner. Then she's going in the kitchen to do what she loves best - cook.

Swiss native Annina Neidhardt has a background in Environmental Engineering, but this morning at 10am she's in her Arabic class having a heated debate with her fellow students over the topic of the day; 'Should women work outside the home?' "With 30 students from such diverse countries as Japan, Iran, Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, China and Europe you can imagine we get very intense as we all have our opinions!" says Annina. Due to the limited opportunities to work in her profession in Syria, Annina has immersed herself in learning to read, write and speak Arabic and is now fluent.

Wendy Doherty is outside the Italian Hospital with Sister Bridgitte, an Irish nun, loading her car with food and clothing parcels for some of the poor, sick and elderly of Damascus. "The gratitude for the parcels is obvious and even with so little to offer, each household invites us to stay for coffee – typical Syrian hospitality". Wendy can be out for half a day if they are delivering locally, or a whole day if they go out to the villages and visit the Bedouins. "My work with Sister Bridgitte is a humbling and rewarding experience".

Victor Muli has just finished feeding and changing his 4 month old daughter and is hoping she'll go down for her morning nap so he can continue his on-line music theory course he's doing with the Berklee School of Music in the US. Victor, from Kenya, is a professional singer and graphic designer and is writing his own songs. "Studying on-line means I can enjoy time with my daughter and also have the time to concentrate on my ambitions for my music career".

Jacqueline Vernoooy and her 18 month old daughter, Marieke, are on their way to the International Toddler Group. Every



Victor Muli

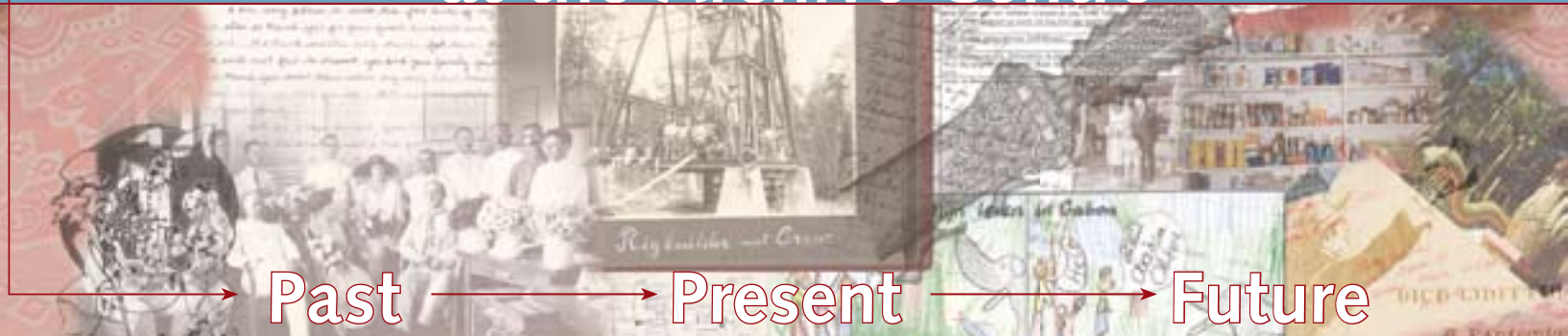
Monday at 10 o'clock around 15 parents take it in turns to host the morning when the children can play and have fun with their friends. "It's a nice way to meet up with people from Embassies, UN agencies and international schools", says Jacqueline. At 2pm when the babysitter comes in Jacqueline joins her Outpost colleagues in the Damascus Shell Club for the team meeting. "The combination of being able to work and spend time with my daughter is excellent here!"

By 10am Claudia Groff has already sent her two older sons to school, done an hour's yoga practice at home and now it is time to go and play in the park with Thomas, her 18 month old son. Claudia, from Colombia, has a background in psychology and family therapy but in Damascus she's looking after her family and teaching yoga two evenings a week at the Damascus Shell Club. Thomas is enjoying the time on the swings with his mum and mum is looking forward to teaching her group of yoga enthusiasts: "Tonight is intermediate level and who said yoga cannot be a workout? You should see the group after 60 minutes of power yoga!" What's in Damascus for you? As much as you want to find as long as you don't mind making an effort to look.

Claudia Groff



A good year at the Archive Centre



Jo Parfitt

A year has passed since Jo Parfitt and Julia Kohnert joined the Archive Centre. In that time there have been many changes. Jo Parfitt provides an update.

WEDNESDAY WORKSHOPS

Workshops have been provided most Wednesdays during school term, and will continue to be provided in the upcoming year. The workshops include:

Give your memories a voice - a general introduction to the Archive and its writing and oral history projects and concludes with letting you have a go for yourself.

Journal your journey - how to write an effective journal about your life overseas and teaches you how to do two pieces of writing there and then.

Making memories - oral history in action, when we discuss a chosen topic and record the resulting discussion, which is then transcribed and archived.

Meet the archives - led by our Archivist, and shows you how our collection can be used for research.

We can also take our workshops to other Outposts when we're invited. In the last year we have led Give Your Memories a voice in Aberdeen, Assen and Houston, and a trip to London is planned for this summer.

PUBLISHING PROJECT

Thanks to a huge team of volunteers we are turning samples from our collection into a book, to be published in October, that will show those who cannot come to The Hague exactly what kind of material we have while demonstrating its importance.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Subsequent to a workshop led by Professor Fridus Steilen and the purchase of three top quality digital voice recorders we

have begun recording and transcribing the stories of current and retired Shell people, ably helped by a team of trained volunteers.

NEW STATUS AS A CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

In January this year we became an independent 'Stichting' funded by a generous endowment from Shell. We still retain a valuable symbiotic relationship with Global Outpost Services (GOS) though are now managed by a board of directors, not GOS.

ELECTRONICS!

Our new web address is www.outpostarchive.com and all our email addresses link to that site. For general purposes you can contact us at everyarchive@outpostarchive.com. Our phone number remains the same. Although we retain our place on www.globaloutpostservices.com our new website is more dynamic. Thanks to the volunteer help of Mega, who used to work on the GOS site, you can now contribute online, download a depositor's declaration and join our blog. And talking of the blog, we would like to recruit willing volunteers based anywhere in the world willing to add to the blog regularly.

NEW NAME

Oh yes, and we have dropped the word 'family' from our name and are now the Outpost Archive Centre. This is because we are not focussed only on the stories of those who are married with children, but we want to hear from singles and childfree people too.

SIGN UP TO @RCHIVE NEWS

If you would like to know more about us then please sign up to our quarterly newsletter. To do this you can drop an email to ros.cutts@outpostarchive.com or sign up at our new website.

It has been a year of change, but good change and we hope that you will take a look at our new website and get involved with us wherever you may live in the world.

Coming up in the next issue in September 2007:

Focus on MOSCOW

Contributions by 15 July 2007 welcome (janet.carson@shell.com)