

Have you ever been woken by a mosquito? issue No. 4.
The effect of global climate change upon humanity.

Are you familiar with that high penetrating hum that brings you from deep slumber into instant alertness in one second? That hum that evades all swotting movements, that returns just at that moment you are sinking back into sleep, that despite the barricade of nets, sprays, and the ingenious range of modern technology, indicates that a mosquito is on the front line of attack. And as you swell up red and rub in yet more anti-histamine, do you find yourself once again cursing one of the earth's smaller creatures?

Have you ever been in a country where you know that this uninvited guest, with its ability for penetrating the most efficient of barriers, is also a potential killer?

Malaria, brought about by the bite of the mosquito, is second only to AIDS as the most prevalent of killers in the developing world. 4,800 die daily from malaria, that's one child every 30 seconds. Each year, approximately 300 to 500 million people are infected and approximately three million people die as a result. Diseases like malaria, yellow fever, and lymphatic filariasis, have been largely confined to tropical regions. They are now predicted to increase and to become more widespread as a result of the warmer conditions brought about by global climate change.

Many insect carriers of disease thrive better in warmer and wetter conditions. Because of the close relationship between climate conditions and insect and rodent populations it is also predicted that there will be an increase in food-borne and water borne diseases. These will spread away from the confines of the tropics, into the mid-latitudes...that's us!

The effects of disease are not just purely physical. Long on-going illness has social implications. It is common for many people to have malaria two or three times in a year. Each time it weakens them, it breaks down their immune system, it takes them away from employment, it lessens their ability to work, to support their families, to grow their food. It affects those dependent upon them, the very structure of their community life.

Global climate change is predicted to have an increasing impact upon health around the world. Human health is dependant upon the environment. Many of the factors that lead to deteriorated environment also lead to poor health. Pollution of the

atmosphere, polluted or inadequate water supplies, and poor soil, (leading to poor crops and inadequate nutrition) all present dangers to health and add to the spread of disease. It is estimated that in the US air pollution, from combustion processes that produce ultra-fine particles from cars, lorries and power plants, is killing roughly 60,000 American each year.

On the whole, healthy humans are adaptable and can live comfortably in varying conditions and a wide range of climates. Those who are already malnourished, unhealthy, poor and vulnerable do not have that capacity. But even those of us privileged enough *not* to be suffering from malnutrition, *not* to be among the poor and vulnerable are threatened by the impact of extreme temperatures. Studies of cities during some of the extreme heat waves in Europe over the last few years, show that death rates can be doubled or tripled during days of unusually high temperatures.

It is predicted that extreme temperature conditions will become more frequent and wide spread due to global climate change.

According to the World Health Organisation 150,000 people die unnecessarily each year as a direct result of global climate change, the highest proportion of those effected are those from the developing world. Our life styles are impacting their lives.

The sad thing is, is that none of this is necessary. I'm not here to be a prophet of doom, to add to peoples heavy loads of despondency and despair. Because global climate change is *NOT* inevitable. There is the potential for change, and that change is up to each one of us. If every article that has been written about it, and all the hot air that has been spouted about could have been used to a practical effect we'd non of us have cause for concern today!

Dr. Fitz Schumaker said: "To talk about the future is only good if it leads to action now" . We must live with the knowledge that each one of us is responsible for global climate change. Every combustion source is adding to the warming of this world. None is benign; every incinerator, industrial and residential heater and boiler, car, buss, wagon, aeroplane, fire and light bulb. Everyone of us is involved. Everyone one of us has the responsibility to look at our own life and make a difference, to reduce, reuse, repair and recycle.

If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito!