

## Activities related to human health

Dr R K Pachauri, May 15, 2012

TERI has been working on a number of issues which have a very close nexus with human health. Colleagues might remember that in the GREEN India 2047 study we had actually come up with an estimate of 2.5 million people dying annually in India as a result of indoor air pollution. The basis for this was a comprehensive study that we carried out measuring the exposure of residents in single room dwellings to pollutants largely from combustion indoors. Since we did not have in-house expertise in epidemiology, we worked with epidemiologists outside to relate these exposure levels to estimated morbidity and mortality. We have been working on climate change since 1988, and one of the major impacts of climate change is on human health.

The question that comes to mind is whether and to what extent TERI should get into the area of health in such a way that we can supplement effectively a lot of the other work that we are doing. A colleague mentioned to me the other day that she has been diagnosed for Vitamin D deficiency, because obviously we spend very little time out in the sun (unless you are a TERI cricketer). This is clearly an indication of a lifestyle related deficiency, and we know that lifestyle diseases are on the increase throughout this country. Hence, if TERI is to get into the area of human health, we should emphasize the preventive aspects of this subject. It is entirely possible for us to join hands with a good hospital group, and set up for instance a medical college and hospital, say, in Hyderabad where we have land. We could also possibly set up a preventive health unit in the NCR area. We have opportunities to explore and choices to make.

Whatever we do, I think we should take a decision soon on what it is that we should initiate in this area of knowledge and expertise. If the decision is not to do anything, that also needs articulation with clarity. This takes me to what Mr Narasimha Rao, one of the brightest Prime Ministers we have had said "some times not to take a decision is in itself a decision". Perhaps colleagues could tell me what they feel on the subject, and then we can develop plans appropriately without delay.