

Population, Health, and Environment (PHE) Terminology Guide

The demand for work at the nexus of health and environment continues to gain momentum in global development. While not a new strategy, the development approach known as population, health, and environment (PHE) is increasingly recognized for its value and relevance to achieving impact across sectors. PHE and its associated terminology are evolving rapidly. Nuances, similarities, and distinctions among the related terminology can be challenging to keep up with and to use confidently. This PHE terminology guide aims to serve as a one-stop resource to support users in understanding, comparing, and adopting the relevant terminology. This guide was compiled and reviewed during 2022–2024 and draws from numerous credible, open-access sources.

Contact Kirsten Krueger kkrueger@fhi360.org if you have input or questions. Suggestions and revisions are expected and welcome.

Key PHE Definitions:

1. **Population, health, and environment (PHE)** is an integrated community-based approach that recognizes and addresses the complex relationships between people’s health and the environment. This multi-sectoral approach strives to improve voluntary family planning and reproductive health care, and conservation and natural resource management within the communities living in ecologically rich areas of the globe, which often have limited access to health care, including family planning. – [People Planet Connection](#)
2. **Population, environment, and development (PED)** is a broad, cross-sectoral approach that includes integrating population, health, and environment as well as climate change, resilience, food security, water, livelihoods, economic growth, education, demography, and governance. USAID puts it this way: PED approaches take a holistic and integrated approach to health and the environment, recognizing the connections between the health and well-being of both people and the environmental resources that they depend on. – [USAID 2021](#)
3. **Population, health, environment, and development (PHED)** is a newer term, not yet in the literature but showing up in conversation. PHED re-inserts the “H” to ensure that health remains central to the approach — and that the

health component is broad, beyond family planning and population dynamics.
– [AFIDEP](#)

4. **One Health** is an integrated, unifying approach to balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and the environment. It is particularly important to prevent, predict, detect, and respond to global health threats such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The approach mobilizes sectors, disciplines, and communities at varying levels of society to work together. This way, new and better ideas are developed that address root causes and create long-term, sustainable solutions. One Health involves the public health, veterinary, and environmental sectors. – [WHO](#)
5. **Planetary health** is the achievement of the highest attainable standard of health, well-being, and equity worldwide through judicious attention to the human systems — political, economic, and social — that shape the future of humanity and the Earth's natural systems that define the safe environmental limits within which humanity can flourish. Put simply, planetary health is the health of human civilization and the state of the natural systems on which it depends. – [Rockefeller Foundation](#)
6. **Integrated development** is the deliberate connection of the design, delivery, and evaluation of programs across disciplines and sectors to produce an amplified, lasting impact on people's lives. This method attempts to seize on the opportunities that arise when cross-sector interventions lower costs and enhance systems, services, and products, with the hope of improving development efforts. – [Devex](#)
7. **Health and environment (HE)**, like PHED, is not in the literature per se but is used in practice and shows up in conversation. It describes integration at the broadest levels of the health and environment sectors and is therefore inclusive of subsector and niche areas.

Additional terms and definitions common to climate and environment:

Environment and Climate Change

Adaptation or climate change adaptation refers to adjustments in processes, practices, and structures to respond to current and future climate change impacts. It means altering our behavior, systems, and — in some cases — ways of life to protect our families, our economies, and the environment from the adverse effects of climate change. – [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#)

Biodiversity is biological diversity and means the variability among living organisms from all ecosystems and includes the variety within species. – [United Nations Environment Programme](#)

Biodiverse-rich areas also known as “hot spots,” are areas with extremely high levels of biodiversity — or many different types of organisms and species, with some species that are endemic (found nowhere else). These areas need special conservation attention to maintain their effect on our global biodiversity. – [Conservation International](#)

Climate is the average daily weather over time and space. – [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#)

Climate change is a long-term change in the average temperature and weather patterns (for example, warmer, wetter, or drier) over several decades or longer. Such shifts can be natural, but since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels like coals, oil, and gas. – [United Nations](#)

Climate change mitigation - refers to any action taken by governments, businesses, or people to reduce or prevent greenhouse gases, or to enhance carbon sinks that remove them from the atmosphere. Such actions include individuals adopting sustainable habits and advocating for change to governments implementing regulations, providing incentives, and facilitating investments. – [United Nations Development Programme](#)

Climate crisis refers to the devastating consequences of climate change across the globe. Rising temperatures fuel environmental degradation, natural disasters, weather extremes, food and water insecurity, economic disruption, conflict, and terrorism. Sea levels are rising, the Arctic is melting, coral reefs are dying, oceans are acidifying, and forests are burning. – [United Nations](#)

Climate justice frames global warming as an ethical and political issue, rather than one that is purely environmental or physical in nature. It relates climate change concepts to social justice issues such as equality, human rights, collective rights, and the historical responsibilities for climate. – [United Nations Environment Programme](#)

Climate resilience is the capacity of a system to maintain function in the face of stresses imposed by climate change and to adapt the system to be better prepared for future climate impacts. – [United States Agency for International Development](#)

Conservation is the broad approach to preserving what is already there and attention to protecting it for the future. Conservation of ecology is maintaining the delicate balance of an ecosystem and set of wildlife to ensure threatened or endangered species are not put at risk. – [Environmental Science](#)

Environment is the biological, chemical, physical, and social conditions that surround organisms. When appropriate, the term, environment, should be qualified as biological, chemical, physical, and/or social. – [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#)

Nature-based solutions leverages nature and the power of healthy ecosystems to protect people, optimize infrastructure and safeguard a stable and biodiverse future. – [International Union for Conservation of Nature](#)

Resilience is the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth. – [United States Agency for International Development](#)

Sexual and Reproductive Health

Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health is the physical and emotional wellbeing of adolescents and includes their ability to remain free from unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortion, STIs (including HIV/AIDS), and all forms of sexual violence and coercion. – [The Open University](#)

Comprehensive Sexuality Education is a rights-based approach to providing accurate information and promoting healthy attitudes about a breadth of topics, including puberty and human development, gender identity and sexual orientation, relationships, and intimate partner violence, and SRHR (particularly contraception, sexual decision-making and consent, and STI prevention and care). – [EngenderHealth](#)

Family Planning allows people to attain their desired number of children, if any, and to determine the spacing of their pregnancies. It is achieved through use of contraceptive methods and the treatment of infertility. Contraceptive information and services are fundamental to the health and human rights of all individuals. – [World Health Organization](#)

Contraception is contraceptive methods prevent fertilization and may also disrupt pre-embryo transport or implantation. These measures are used to prevent unwanted pregnancies. – [ScienceDirect](#)

Contraceptive Prevalence Rate is the percentage of women aged 15-49 years, married or in-union, who are currently using, or whose sexual partner is using, at least one method of contraception, regardless of the method used. – [World Health Organization](#)

Demographic Dividend is the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the non-working-age share of the population (14 and younger, and 65 and older). – [UNFPA](#)

Gender is the economic, social, political, and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being women and men. The social definitions of what it means to be a woman or a man vary among cultures and change over time. Gender is a sociocultural expression of particular characteristics and roles that are associated with certain groups of people with reference to their sex and sexuality. – [JHPIEGO](#)

Gender-based violence is an umbrella term for harmful acts of abuse perpetrated against a person's will and rooted in a system of unequal power between women and men. This is true for both conflict-affected and non-conflict settings. The UN defines violence against women as, 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. – [International Rescue Committee](#)

Population Dynamics refers to the way population size and composition changes over time by birth and death rates, and by immigration and emigration. Topics examined include aging populations, urbanization, population decline, and population projections. – [Socioeconomic Data and Applications Center](#)

Reproductive Health is state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. Reproductive health implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. – [UNESCO](#)

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity. Therefore, a positive approach to sexuality and reproduction should recognize the part played by pleasurable sexual relationships, trust and communication in promoting self-esteem and overall well-being. – [Guttmacher-Lancet Commission](#)