

[Climate change and the WHO](#) [1]

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The [Campaign for Fighting Diseases](#) [3], run by Philip Stevens (formerly of the ASI), does excellent work on health policy issues in the developing world. Most recently, they have been pointing out the flaws in the World Health Organization's approach to climate change.

Although WHO claims that climate change is responsible for all manner of health threats to the developing world, the evidence suggests this is not the case. Take malaria ? contrary to NGO claims the geographical incidence of malaria seems to have little to do with climate, relating more to the wealth of a country than to its temperature. Malaria existed in Europe throughout most of history, and it was not a change in temperature than eradicated it, but economic development and its consequent change in land use.

Another example is natural disasters. We are always hearing that climate change is going to cause more natural disasters and kill lots of people (particularly in the developing world), but deaths from climate related natural disasters have in fact fallen dramatically since the 1920s. This is purely the result of economic growth and the technological advances it has brought.

The point is clear: rising wealth will reduce the incidence of malaria and lessen the human cost of natural disasters in the developing world, regardless of climate change. You would think, then, that the WHO would be doing everything it could to promote the economic development of poor countries. Yet the global emissions caps they advocate would undoubtedly hurt the poor by retarding their economic growth.

The WHO should forget environmentalism and focus on the real barriers to good health in poor countries. The taxes and tariffs many governments impose on medicines would be a good place to start.

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