

Protecting Health from Climate Change



"Strengthening health systems, and widening coverage of proven, cheap public health interventions to control climate-sensitive diseases, would accelerate progress towards the health-related Millennium Development Goals and save millions of lives. In the long term, the same actions would also reduce vulnerability to climate change. Responding to climate change is not a distraction from the business of protecting health: it is part of the same agenda."

WHO Director-General Margaret Chan

"Climate change affects every aspect of society, from the health of the global economy to the health of our children. It is about the water in our wells and in our taps. It is about the food on the table. It is about energy security and international security. It is at the core of nearly all the major challenges we face today."

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon



**United Nations System
Chief Executives Board for Coordination**

UN system-wide response to climate change

Under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General, the Chief Executives Board (CEB) brings together the leaders of 29 UN system organizations to jointly support Member States in meeting the global challenges faced by the international community.

In 2008, the CEB adopted the Climate Change Action Framework, a joint, action-oriented approach in line with the ongoing UNFCCC negotiating processes and the emerging agendas of the Parties of the Convention.

The UN system stands ready to support Member States in implementing their commitments. At COP 16 / CMP 6, it is presenting its ongoing work and practical tools available through side events, exhibits and by sharing a joint package with thematic information.

For more information on the CEB and its joint work on climate change, please visit: <http://www.unsceb.org/ceb/priorities/climate-change/>

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Objectives

Climate change may be the biggest global health threat of the 21st century. Strengthening public health services, along with a strong underlying element of preparedness, needs to be a central component of adaptation to climate change. For many years, the UN system has supported countries adapting to climate-related threats to health and welfare. In the long run, the greatest health impacts may not be from sudden and acute shocks such as natural disasters or epidemics, but from the gradual build-up of pressure on the natural, economic and social systems that sustain health, and which are already under stress in many parts of the world. These gradual stresses include seasonal changes in the availability of fresh water, regional drops in food production, and rising sea levels. These changes may lead to forced displacement, over-burdening health care systems, and increasing the risks of civil conflict.

Activities

Advocacy and awareness raising

Through publications, advocacy campaigns, and multimedia products, the UN system highlights the health opportunities for climate change adaptation measures, and the direct health benefits of well-planned preparedness and mitigation policies.

Strengthening partnerships

The UN system also works to strengthen partnerships in response to climate change challenges. It supports national health and nutrition actors to engage with national climate change processes, and works directly on country projects on health protection from climate change. It also provides technical and policy guidance to the UNFCCC and other UN mechanisms.

Enhancing scientific evidence

The UN system works with leading experts and institutions worldwide to improve the understanding and evidence base of the linkages between

Moving forward

UN agencies will continue to support Governments and other partners

- Beyond environmental and economic damage, the impact of climate change represents a toll on our most precious resource - human lives and health.
- Mitigation policies in energy, transport and agriculture sectors, if chosen appropriately, can also bring significant co-benefits for people's health and wellbeing.
- The health sector will bear most of the burden resulting from the impacts of climate change on populations and it will play a critical role in relation to adaptation and resilience.

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health and climate, the disease burden and human health costs attributable to climate change, and the effectiveness of interventions to protect and promote health through adaptation and mitigation choices.

Strengthening health systems

The UN system supports Member States in strengthening their health systems. It helps communities to identify, monitor, respond, and prepare for changes in health risks and disease burdens thereby building their resilience to the adverse effects of climate change.

Results

The public health community has worked to raise awareness of the health risks of climate change for over 20 years. The last few years have seen the development of applied projects and technical tools working at the national and community level to assess health vulnerability from climate change, and to identify and pilot adaptation measures to protect human health.