

Protecting health from climate change



World Health Organization



WHO/Hans Everts

WHO Global Programme on Climate Change & Health

WHO's actions on climate and health

WHO provides a comprehensive programme to protect health from climate risks, and to ensure that actions to mitigate climate change also protect and improve people's health. It provides the health dimension to the implementation of the 2015 Paris agreement on climate change, and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Why climate change matters to health

- ◆ The ultimate impact of climate change is on our most precious resource - human lives and health.
- ◆ The responsibility for protecting lives ultimately falls on the health sector. Investing in health resilience to climate risks can save lives both now, and in the future.
- ◆ There is an opportunity to promote policies that both reduce carbon emissions, and improve health, particularly reducing the over seven million annual deaths from air pollution,
- ◆ The health sector has large energy demands. Ensuring energy access for health facilities, while reducing their environmental footprint, can both increase climate resilience and significantly reduce global carbon emissions.

What WHO is doing

WHO has worked on health protection from climate change for over 25 years. From 2008, WHO Member States committed to a World Health Assembly resolution, and a WHO workplan, to strengthen the health response to this risk, through four objectives;

Raising awareness

Effective action on climate change and health requires the engagement of the global health community, and the support of the general public. WHO provides leadership, evidence-based information and training materials, and works with a range of partners, to promote effective climate and health policy.

Strengthening partnerships

WHO leads the health components of the UN system-wide response to climate change. This includes representing health in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process, implementing partnerships such as the joint WHO/WMO joint office on climate information for health, and providing the health input into key cross-sectoral initiatives such as the Climate and Clean Air Coalition.

Enhancing scientific evidence

WHO leads, guides and monitors research on the disease burden and health costs attributable to climate change, and effective interventions to protect and promote health, including gaining the health benefits of mitigation policies. The Organization also develops assessment tools, and measures and reports national progress, through WHO/UNFCCC climate and health country profiles.

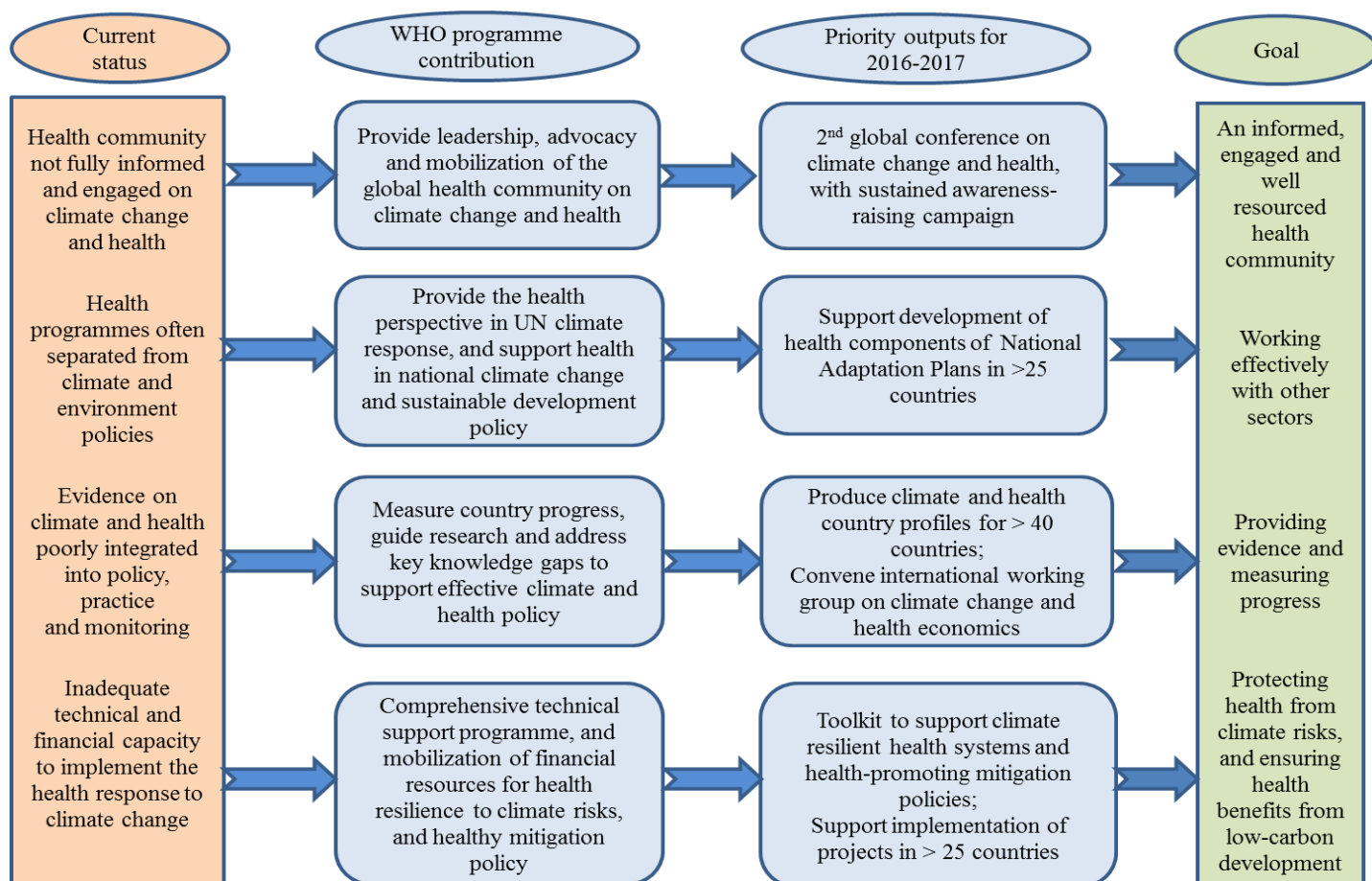
Implementing the health response

WHO applies its policy and technical capacity to help strengthen the climate resilience of national health systems and communities, and to gain health benefits of mitigation policies. The programme builds capacity to assess, address, and monitor health risks and opportunities, and develop and implement national health adaptation plans in all WHO regions.



WHO has an active and long-standing programme on protecting health from climate change, guided by a World Health Assembly resolution.

Through its country, regional and headquarters offices, WHO leads the health component of the overall UN response to this global challenge. WHO provides policy and technical guidance, and programme support, to strengthen the health system response to climate change, and to ensure that health is considered in decisions made by other sectors, such as energy and transport.



Programme achievements to date

- ◆ Mobilization of commitment by 193 Member States, resulting in World Health Assembly Resolution on climate change and health.
- ◆ Representation of the health community in the UN system response to climate change, and within the global climate change negotiations, contributing to the integration of health within the 2015 Paris climate agreement.
- ◆ Development of a comprehensive support programme for countries to assess vulnerability, develop adaptation plans, and use climate information to increase health resilience to climate change.
- ◆ Assessment of the evidence of potential health benefits of climate change mitigation measures in key sectors, from household energy to transport.
- ◆ Support for development of health components of national adaptation plans in 40 countries; assessments of health vulnerability and adaptation to climate change in over 30 countries, and implementation of major projects to pilot adaptation to climate change in 18 low and middle income countries.
- ◆ Monitoring, assessment and reporting of country specific risks, opportunities, and implementation progress, through climate and health country profiles.

Facts and Figures

- ◆ By 2030, climate change is expected to cause over 250 000 additional deaths each year.
- ◆ Over 95% of Least Developed Countries identify health as a priority sector for adaptation.
- ◆ Less than 1.5% of international finance for climate change adaptation is currently allocated to health projects.
- ◆ Each year, air pollution causes over 7 million deaths, and outdoor air pollution alone causes over US\$2.5 trillion in uncompensated health damages.
- ◆ Pricing carbon in line with health and other environmental damages can be expected to decrease outdoor air pollution by half, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by over 20%, and raise over US\$3 trillion each year in revenue.

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<http://www.who.int/globalchange/en/>