

Building Sustainable Health Systems: Focus on Climate Resilience

Draft Concept note for side event at CoP18

WHEN: Monday, 03 Dec 2012 18:30—20:00

WHERE: Side Event Room 4

ORGANIZERS: World Health Organization (WHO), Norway, Qatar

Potential additional Co-organisers: WMO, WFP, UNWOMEN, UNICEF; UNFPA; UNDP

Key health messages to COP18:

1. The impact on human health is the most significant measure of the harm done by climate change, but at the same time health can be a positive driving force for the climate agenda, and a means to engage the public in finding solutions.
2. Protection and enhancement of health is an essential pillar of sustainable development, and of the response to climate change. A more integrated and intersectoral approach to improving health resilience, fostering pro-poor growth, and protecting the environment, should improve policy coherence and increase efficiency.
3. Policies and investments to increase resilience to climate change have great potential for improving health, health equity and gender equality. Strengthening health systems, and enhancing population health, lower vulnerability to environmental change. Well-designed actions to mitigate climate change could bring major health gains. For example, addressing short lived climate pollutants would also reduce the 2 million deaths attributable to outdoor air pollution and the 1.3 million deaths attributable to indoor air pollution.
4. Progress in protecting and enhancing health should be tracked and monitored, both in relation to actions taken by the health sector itself, and by other health-determining sectors, such as water resources and energy.
5. Consider the role of health and co-benefits in climate finance for adaptation and climate change mitigation policies.

Background:

Climate change and health is not an issue of polluters vs. victims. The health of all populations suffer in different ways.

- Climate change acts through extreme events, diseases, and degradation of the environmental determinants of health, threatening the health of all populations (but particularly the poorest, and other vulnerable groups).
- Economic development that does not take account of environmental impacts also damages health, for example through air and water pollution.

- Over-consuming, inequitable, fossil fuelled lifestyles also harm health, including for the richest populations.

Goal of the side event:

The side event should aim to promote a sustainable development approach to safeguard and improve health. This should include guaranteeing access to health services, and environmental determinants of health, such as air, water, food and energy; and ensuring that they are resilient to climate and other shocks. It should also help to support countries in choosing sustainable long-term paths, that enhance health in the short and long term, from reducing air pollution through sustainable energy choices, to increasing access to reliable and clean energy sources for health facilities in the poorest countries.

Objectives:

The side event will address the following issues:

(1) Climate resilience:

- Ensuring that health services, and health determining sectors such as water and sanitation, are robust to climate risk.
- Using climate information to protect health through risk reduction, preparedness and response.

(2) Equitable population access to environmental determinants of health, including

- Water – rapid increase in coverage of climate resilient water and sanitation.
- Food – Guaranteeing food security, addressing quantity and quality, including reference to overconsumption.
- Clean air – monitoring and regulation of air quality.
- Energy – increased coverage, but also lower polluting, and climate resilient (e.g. renewable off grid).

(3) Obtaining health cobenefits

- Measuring, valuing and incentivizing health promoting mitigation actions, for example through actions on short lived climate pollutants to reduce air pollution.
- Using (article 4.1 (f)) of the UNFCCC (the commitment to apply health impact assessment to mitigation and adaptation policies) as an opportunity rather than an obligation.

(4) Monitoring and evaluation:

- Advocate for the importance of health in the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 MDG agenda.
- Review of health within National Adaptation Planning processes, and financial flows.

(5) Finance:

- Valuation of health adaptation costs, and co-benefits.
- Reviewing the role and potential of climate finance in protecting health from climate change and health co-benefits of climate change mitigation investments.

Panel:

We propose a panel focussing on national representatives and key UN agencies partners.

Proposed Speakers:

Welcoming remarks by head of WHO delegation, who will also moderate the discussion.

OPENING: H.E. Mr. Arvin Eikeland Gadgil (State Secretary for International Development, Norway) - Health and Sustainable Development.

His Highness The Emir of Qatar (or a relevant Minister, to be determined by the Government of Qatar).

UAE . Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Ali al Nuaimi's "A champion of opportunities for green development" (How investment in clean energy will protect health)

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Minister of Health of Ethiopia – prioritising Health in National Action Plans.

United Kingdom: Announcing UK investment in programme on climate change and health, focussing on water and sanitation (tbc).

Finland (or other Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) representative:
Representative to cover social determinants and equity.

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director (the importance of linking environmental health to climate change and sustainable development agenda, with focus on short lived climate pollutants)

Mr Michel Jarraud, WMO Secretary-General - importance of climate services for the health community and overview of the WHO/WMO collaboration under the Global Framework on Climate Services.

Outcome:

The panel should aim to identify the most effective mechanisms to continue to promote health resilience to climate change, and contribute to the aims of the UNFCCC. This should include gathering ideas for a potential global initiative on "Health and Climate".

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