



**World Health
Organization**

Climate change and health

AIDE-MÉMOIRE

For enhanced country action on climate change



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Climate change is the biggest health threat facing humanity. It significantly impacts human lives and health by threatening the fundamental elements of good health, such as clean air, safe drinking water, nutritious food, and secure shelter. Climate change also contributes to humanitarian emergencies through various extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, wildfires, floods, and droughts.

Additionally, climate change exacerbates health inequalities and forces the displacement or migration of affected communities.

The primary contributors to climate change include fossil fuel combustion from energy generation, industry, transportation, as well as certain agricultural practices, deforestation, and land-use changes. These activities release greenhouse gases and other pollutants into the atmosphere, driving global temperature increases and altering weather patterns, which in turn affect human health and well-being.

WHO support to countries

1. Supports countries to assess and monitor the health risks of climate change; vulnerabilities of health care facilities to climate change; and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of health systems and facilities.
2. Provides technical assistance and tools to estimate health co-benefits of climate change mitigation in other sectors, such as reducing the impacts of air pollution or improving health, to support prioritization of actions with the greatest health gains.
3. Provides technical assistance, guidance and tools for developing health-informed national climate processes and plans and climate-informed health strategies, plans and programmes.
4. Assists in accessing climate finance for health.
5. Supports countries to implement interventions to reduce climate change impacts on health and build climate resilient and low carbon health systems.
6. Conducts global monitoring, and supports national monitoring, of climate change and health progress.
7. Supports climate change and health capacity building, such as training programmes, resources and materials, and technical guidance to strengthen national capacities.
8. Provides technical assistance to strengthen climate resilience and decarbonisation of health systems and facilities, including through the Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health (ATACH)

✓ Checklist

Situation assessment

- ☐ Health risks of climate change assessed, in the health sector and key health-determining sectors
- ☐ Health co-benefits of climate action assessed
- ☐ GHG emissions of key contributing sectors and vulnerabilities to climate change of health care facilities assessed

Policies & actions

- ☐ Intersectoral cooperation established
- ☐ Strategies and actions for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other climate-changing pollutants in place
- ☐ Strategies to address climate-sensitive health risks developed
- ☐ Health integrated in UNFCCC processes and plans, including the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and Long-term Low Emissions Development Strategies
- ☐ Actions to build climate resilient and low carbon health systems implemented
- ☐ Finance for health-promoting climate action accessed
- ☐ Assessments of climate risks and vulnerabilities included in water and sanitation safety planning
- ☐ Climate-informed health surveillance and early warning systems in place

Awareness raising & capacity building

- ☐ Information and guidance on health effects, personal protection, vulnerable population groups and recommended mitigation behaviours accessible
- ☐ Comprehensive education on ecology, environmental protection and sustainability, climate change and health included from kindergarten through university

Key elements for country action

Governance

- Ensure engagement of the health sector in cross-sectoral mechanisms for adaptation and mitigation and to protect health from climate change.
- Designate a climate change and health focal point in the Ministry of Health to work with relevant climate-sensitive health programs to build climate resilience.
- Ensure that health co-benefits are considered in all relevant policies outside the health sector and prioritize policies with the greatest potential health gains.
- Increase awareness about the health benefits of tackling climate change among decision makers and the public.
- Develop a national strategy on health and climate change.

Healthy mitigation across sectors

- Phase out fossil fuels.
- Reduce greenhouse gases and other climate-changing pollutants across all sectors, including energy, industry, environment, food, agriculture, building and land use.
- Establish, enforce and monitor air quality standards, based on the WHO Air Quality Guidelines.
- Identify and quantify health co-benefits of mitigation actions in other sectors to drive climate action and prioritize health gains.
- Raise awareness about the health, climate and other environmental benefits of changing behaviours related to food choices, transportation, and consumption.

Healthy adaptation across sectors

- Design public spaces resilient to climate change and natural disasters by integrating green (parks, trees) and blue (wetlands, permeable surfaces) infrastructure.
- Conduct Health Impact Assessments for policies and programmes in sectors such as transport, water, food and agriculture, and WASH, in coordination with the Ministry of Health.
- Assess climate risks and vulnerabilities of drinking water and sanitation systems and implement actions to increase climate resilience.
- Designate an agency to coordinate preparedness and response activities and disseminate information about heat-related health impacts.
- Implement context-specific adaptation actions to promote crop diversity and resilience and biodiversity to improve nutrition.
- Support communities to effectively prevent and respond to health risks of extreme weather events.

Climate resilient and low-carbon health systems

- Assess and monitor climate change and health vulnerabilities, including in health care facilities, and GHG emissions of health systems and facilities.
- Implement safe, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health care facilities.
- Ensure a sufficient number of health workers are trained to manage the health effects of climate change.
- Establish integrated disease surveillance and early warning systems and greenhouse gas tracking to inform timely action.
- Integrate information on current and projected climate hazards in health programmes to increase climate resilience and reduce GHG emissions.
- Develop and implement a national research agenda on climate change and health and use evidence to inform policy.
- Access climate finance for health.

Additional information:



Main resources:

- <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/who-country-support-on-climate-change-and-health--visual-guide>
- <https://www.who.int/health-topics/climate-change>
- <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>
- <https://www.who.int/tools/compendium-on-health-and-environment/climate-change>

Please note that this aide mémoire provides summary information on climate change and health only. More detail on environment, climate change and health are provided in various other materials and additional aide mémoires on specific topics.