Reducing the impact of climate change on health

What is climate change?

- Climate change refers to any significant long-term change in normal climate conditions, such as temperature, precipitation, extreme weather events, wind pattern, snow cover and sea level rise.
- Climate change is a global problem -- impacting on human lives and health, as well as eco-systems, in a variety of ways.
- Over 150,000 deaths are estimated to occur annually as a result of extreme weather conditions.
- Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress.
- The direct impact costs to health are currently estimated to be between USD 2 - 4 billion per year.


Myanmar is one of the countries most affected by extreme weather events

- The climate in Myanmar is already changing
- Between 1981 and 2010, average temperature increased by 0.25°C.
- The pace of warming has been faster in inland than in coastal areas.
- Annual total rainfall increased slightly between 1981 and 2010, with a greater rate of increase in coastal areas than in inland.
- Recent events such as Cyclone Nargis in 2008, Giri in 2010, the extreme heat waves in 2010, and flooding in 2015, and 2018, garbage fire in Hlaingthayar township of Yangon have had disastrous impacts on Myanmar people, environment, and economy.

source: Assessing climate risk in Myanmar, technical report [https://wwf.to/30hqEtj](https://wwf.to/30hqEtj)

Coronavirus disease update

<table>
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<th>Myanmar as at 9 September 2020</th>
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<tr>
<td>confirmed cases</td>
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<td>1,807</td>
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source: Ministry of Health & Sports, 9 Sept 2020

Each of us can help end the pandemic:

- do the ‘3ws’
  - wash your hands
  - watch your distance
  - wear your mask
- avoid ‘3cs’
  - crowded places
  - close contact
  - confined poorly ventilated areas

...do practice the above always -- to protect yourself and others...

Covid19 has impacted the whole world -- with USA, India, Brazil currently carrying the highest burden.

In Myanmar, a surge of Covid19 cases is reported since 16 Aug 2020, especially in Yangon Region and Rakhine State. As at 9 Sept 2020, total confirmed cases in Yangon Region are 958 and 582 in Rakhine State.

WHO and partners are accelerating development of, and access to, Covid19 vaccine worldwide, through COVAX, an international facility. COVAX aims to deliver two billion doses of safe, effective vaccines by end 2021. In a pandemic situation, it is better to vaccinate some people in all countries rather than all people in some countries.


SEAR Ministerial Roundtable, on 10 Sept 2020, charted ways to maintain essential health services as key part of pandemic response.

What are the causes of climate change?

Many human activities are contributing to climate change, such as:

- burning fossil fuels
- cutting down rainforests and forests
- livestock farming
- using nitrogen containing fertilizers, and
- emission from vehicles and industries.

Such activities add enormous amounts of greenhouse gases, CO₂, methane and others, into the atmosphere. Increased amounts of greenhouse gases warm the planet, thus changing the climate.

What is the impact of climate change on human health?

- Climate change affects health determinants: clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter.
- High temperatures raise the levels of ozone and other pollutants in the air that increase cardiovascular, respiratory and other non-communicable diseases.
- Rising sea levels and extreme weather events destroy homes, medical facilities and other services.
- High precipitation & floods lead to:
  - increased water- and vector-borne diseases;
  - increased breeding places for vectors (e.g. mosquitoes);
  - longer disease transmission seasons;
  - reduced safe water supply.

WHO Myanmar’s support

- WHO considers climate change as an urgent, global health challenge that requires prioritized action in decades to come.
- WHO jointly with UNDP are currently supporting Ministry of Health & Sports to implement a Global Environment Facility-funded programme, 2019-2022, to help build a resilient health system.
- To do so, this programme carries out a range of key collaborative activities:
  - training of health personnel,
  - early warning system,
  - community awareness for climate-sensitive diseases,
  - health specific components of the national adaptation & mitigation plan,
  - climate-resistant water & sanitation safety plans.

What can we do about climate change?

We can do so much to protect ourselves and future generations. Everyone can help. For example:

- reduce deforestation and grow more trees;
- reduce carbon by:
  - turn off lights, computers, engines when not needed;
  - unplug electronic gadgets when they are off;
  - walk or ride a bike
- reduce, reuse, recycle paper and wastematerials to improve environmental management;
- avoid using plastic;
- save water;
- promote natural ventilation and reduce aircon
- plant and conserve mangrove forests to protect coastal communities from frequent floods;
- promote environmentally friendly business practice
- apply disaster preparedness strategies addressing heat stresses and extreme weather events.

everybody is part of the problem, hence everybody needs to be part of the solution