

Introduction

Climate change poses health risks particularly to women^{1,2,3,4}, low income communities⁵, the elderly⁶, children⁷, people with pre-existing disease, those living in remote and hard to reach areas, displaced persons and refugees, people living with disabilities, minorities and marginalized populations. Africa, bearing the highest proportion of vulnerable populations bears the worst effects of climate change on health⁸.

Addressing the effects of climate change on health is two-faceted:

- Addressing the root causes of climate change
- Mitigating the existing effects, particularly on the most vulnerable populations.

This can be achieved by building appropriate strategies into public health policies and practices.

Examples of Effects of Climate Change on Health

1. Expansion of the range of disease-carrying insects, such as mosquitoes and ticks, leading to increased incidences of vector-borne diseases due to emergence of new endemic areas for diseases like malaria and dengue fever⁹.
2. Increased temperatures are resulting in increased risk of heat exhaustion and heatstroke, particularly among vulnerable populations like the elderly and those with preexisting health conditions.
3. Climate change has been found to enhance the formation of ground-level ozone, which is harmful to lung health, worsening respiratory problems such as asthma and bronchitis.
4. Climate change is disrupting food production and water supply, leading to malnutrition and foodborne illnesses. Changes in precipitation patterns for example flooding, are negatively impacting water quality and availability, and driving outbreaks of diseases such as cholera and dysentery^{10,11}.
5. The stress of climate-related disasters, displacement, and loss of livelihoods can lead to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. The impact of extreme weather events can have long-lasting psychological effects¹².
6. Extreme weather events such as floods and drought lead to injury, trauma, and disruption of health services, exacerbating existing health issues and malnutrition. The displacement of people due to weather events is further detrimental to their health.
7. Climate change increases the existing health disparities, as the health impacts of climate change disproportionately affect the most vulnerable populations who are already experiencing inequity in access to healthcare services.
8. Increase in drug development costs as pre-market stability testing conditions become harsher.

Strategies For Addressing The Effects of Climate Change on Health

Addressing the above challenges requires a multifaceted approach, to:

1. Transition to renewable energy, improve energy efficiency, enhance agricultural practices, promote sustainable land use and optimize and water management practices
2. Health systems strengthening by enhancing healthcare infrastructure, improving surveillance and early warning systems, availing comprehensive affordable primary healthcare.
3. Development of local adaptation and emergency preparedness plans that incorporate the health considerations of communities

4. Increasing public awareness by educating communities about the health impacts of climate change and promote preventive measures.
5. Equipping healthcare professionals with knowledge about climate-related health issues to improve patient care.
6. Adapting the policy and regulatory environment to mitigate the effects of climate change, and to regain lost ground.
7. Investing in research on climate change and effective interventions.
8. Increasing funding for health to address the intersection of climate change and health.

To make progress in reversing and mitigating the effects of climate change on health, action oriented partnerships between public sector and private sector stakeholders are required.

About the Session

This session shall bring together policy and implementation experts from public and private sectors to propose actionable strategies for minimizing and mitigating the effects of climate change on health.

Expected Outcomes

1. Enhanced awareness and improved understanding of climate-health interlinkages.
2. Identification of actionable strategies and recommendations to address the health impacts of climate change and the importance of integrating climate considerations into public health policies.
3. Formation of action-oriented partnerships between public and private sectors to implement climate health interventions.

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