

Helpdesk Report: General links to papers or sites on climate change and health

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Query: Links to papers or sites on climate change and health

Enquirer: DFID Malawi

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1. WHO overview

WHO: climate change and health Fact sheet No 266, January 2010

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs266/en/index.html>

Key facts

- Climate change affects the fundamental requirements for health – clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter.
- The global warming that has occurred since the 1970s was causing over 140 000 excess deaths annually by the year 2004.
- Many of the major killers such as diarrhoeal diseases, malnutrition, malaria and dengue are highly climate-sensitive and are expected to worsen as the climate changes.
- Areas with weak health infrastructure – mostly in developing countries – will be the least able to cope without assistance to prepare and respond.
- Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases through better transport, food and energy-use choices can result in improved health.

WHO: climate change and human health

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

WHO: what WHO is doing for climate and health

http://www.who.int/globalchange/health_policy/who_workplan/en/index.html

Many policies and individual choices have the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and produce major health co-benefits. For example, promoting the safe use of public transportation and active movement – such as cycling or walking as alternatives to using private vehicles – could reduce carbon dioxide emissions and improve health.

In 2009, the World Health Assembly endorsed a new WHO workplan on climate change and health. This includes:

- **Advocacy:** to raise awareness that climate change is a fundamental threat to human health.
- **Partnerships:** to coordinate with partner agencies within the UN system, and ensure that health is properly represented in the climate change agenda.
- **Science and evidence:** to coordinate reviews of the scientific evidence on the links between climate change and health, and develop a global research agenda.
- **Health system strengthening:** to assist countries to assess their health vulnerabilities and build capacity to reduce health vulnerability to climate change.

2. Research documents on Eldis

Eldis health and climate change resource guide

<http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/climate-change/health>

Eldis climate change resource guide

<http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/climate-change>

Eldis health resource guide

<http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/health>

3. Relevant publications

The implications of climate change for health in Africa

Joto Afrika Issue 5, December 2010

<http://www.africa->

[adapt.net/AA/uploads/Resources/627d874db60d46f59f4731bd4aa19d37_Final_Joto_Afrika_005.pdf](http://www.africa-adapt.net/AA/uploads/Resources/627d874db60d46f59f4731bd4aa19d37_Final_Joto_Afrika_005.pdf)

The interactions between health and climate change are clearly recognised but we still need to better understand all the possible impacts. This publication looks at several case study examples that relate to the implications in the African context.

The impact of climate change on the health of the poor

DFID, 2004

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110112172401/webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dfid.gov.uk/documents/publications/climatechange/4health.pdf>

This DFID key sheet aimed at DFID staff and development partners considers the impact of climate change on the health of the world's poor, and explores tools for adaptation to climate change. Health-related impacts of climate change include: increased water insecurity and food insecurity caused by variations in seasonal rainfall; reduced water quality due to flooding and drought, linked to an increase in water-borne diseases such as cholera and other diarrhoeal diseases; and increased humidity and temperatures, which encourage the spread of vector-borne diseases including malaria and dengue fever. Extreme climatic events or "shocks" can also disrupt health services through damage to facilities and transport networks.

The key sheet stresses that health vulnerabilities to climate change should be addressed through the strengthening of planning systems, a multi-sectoral approach, improved preparedness, and a greater emphasis on prevention. Key recommendations include: allocation of additional funds for rebuilding health services and restoring access following climatic extremes; improved water and sanitation networks to prevent disease outbreaks associated with flooding or drought; improved surveillance of disease and use of health early

warning systems, based on climate, environmental and population movement data; and continued support for preventative control of vector-borne diseases such as malaria.

Health effects of climate change in the UK

Department of Health, 2001

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4007935

The Expert Group on Climate Change and Health in the UK reported on the likely impact of climate change on health, and implications for the NHS. The report discusses public perceptions of the impact of climate change on health, and available methods for assessing health implications of climate change. It goes on to present an overview of the subject, and to discuss potential effects of measures aimed at mitigating climate change. It makes a series of tentative predictions relating to cold and heat-related deaths, food poisoning, vector-borne and water-borne diseases, disasters caused by gales and coastal flooding, effects of air pollutants and ozone, skin cancer, and measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. An annex lists members of the Expert Group. References cited at the end of each chapter.

Protecting health from climate change: connecting science, policy and people

WHO, 2009

<http://www.who.int/globalchange/publications/reports/9789241598880/en/index.html>

This report presents an overview of the science of the links between climate change and human health. It provides an update of the evidence on health risks caused by climate change, describes which populations are most vulnerable, and outlines the actions that will be necessary to protect health from climate change. Although climate change presents a very serious threat to global public health, the key messages of the report are positive.

The health sector already has at its disposal a number of effective interventions that would save lives now and reduce vulnerability to climate change in the future. In addition, there are many policy options in sectors such as transport and energy production, that could simultaneously improve health and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that cause climate change. The report notes the rapid increase in engagement by the health community on climate change and health, and outlines priority actions to further support healthy and sustainable development.

Health and Global Environmental Change

WHO, 2003

http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/91098/E81923.pdf

Methods of assessing human health vulnerability and public health adaptation to climate change.

Gender, climate change and health

WHO, 2009

http://www.who.int/globalchange/publications/reports/gender_climate_change/en/index.html

In this paper, available information on the differential links between climate change and the health of women and men has been collated and analyzed through the perspectives of: (a) direct and indirect health consequences; and, (b) the possible interaction of biological and social risk factors in determining these impacts. The overall aim of this work is to provide a framework for gendered health risk assessment and adaptation/mitigation actions in relation to climate change.

Climate change and human health – risks and responses. Summary

WHO, 2003

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

This booklet is a summary of the book "Climate change and human health - risks and responses" published by WHO in collaboration with UNEP and WMO.

Global climate change: implications for international public health policy

<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/85/3/06-039503.pdf>

This article considers the health impacts of climate change and discusses policies and interventions to address these effects. Many of the most important global killers including malaria and diarrhoea are highly sensitive to climatic conditions, yet a comprehensive strategy to support a public health response is lacking. The paper discusses preventative environmental health interventions including scaling up water and sanitation services and providing point-of-use disinfection; and examines integrated measures that address the root causes of vulnerability to natural disasters. Post flooding health effects can be reduced by adequately planned and funded health-sector responses, including interventions to control outbreaks of vector-borne and water-related diseases.

The paper concludes that climate change strains existing weak points in health protection systems and calls for reconsideration of public health priorities. The most effective priorities are likely to be strengthening of the key functions of environmental management, surveillance and response to safeguard health from natural disasters and changes in infectious disease patterns, and a more pro-active approach to ensure that development decisions serve the ultimate goal of improving human health.

Global warning and malaria: knowing the horse before hitching the cart

<http://www.malariajournal.com/content/pdf/1475-2875-7-S1-S3.pdf>

Speculations on the potential impact of climate change on human health frequently focus on malaria. Predictions are common that in the coming decades, tens – even hundreds – of millions more cases will occur in regions where the disease is already present, and that transmission will extend to higher latitudes and altitudes. Such predictions, sometimes supported by simple models, are persuasive because they are intuitive, but they sidestep factors that are key to the transmission and epidemiology of the disease: the ecology and behaviour of both humans and vectors, and the immunity of the human population. A holistic view of the natural history of the disease, in the context of these factors and in the precise setting where it is transmitted, is the only valid starting point for assessing the likely significance of future changes in climate.

4. Relevant websites

AlertNet: climate change. The world's humanitarian news site

<http://www.trust.org/alertnet/climate-change/>

Centre on global change and health, WHO Collaborating Centre

<http://cgch.lshtm.ac.uk/climate.html>

Center for Health and the Global Environment

<http://chge.med.harvard.edu/>

International Institute for Environment and Development

<http://www.iied.org/>

5. Additional information

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About Helpdesk reports: The HDRC Helpdesk is funded by the DFID Human Development Group. Helpdesk Reports are based on up to 2 days of desk-based research per query and are designed to provide a brief overview of the key issues, and a summary of some of the best literature available. Experts may be contacted during the course of the research, and those able to provide input within the short time-frame are acknowledged.

For any further request or enquiry, contact just-ask@dfidhdc.org

Do you require further consultancy work?

If you need to commission more in-depth research, or need help finding and contracting consultants for additional work, please contact;

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