



CLIMATE CHANGE

The greatest health need of this century?

From exposing larger numbers of people to heatwaves to increasing the risk of infectious disease, climate change is already having profound effects on human health. Acting as a disease amplifier, climate change augments existing threats such as the spread of Zika to new geographies or severe malnutrition that accompanies drought.⁴⁵⁰ By 2030, some suggest that climate change will cause an additional 250,000 deaths each year from malaria, diarrheal disease, heat stress, and undernutrition alone.⁴⁵¹

Climate change also closely links to air pollution, with the extraction and burning of fossil fuels being major sources of pollutants and CO2 emissions. Air pollutants were responsible for nine million premature deaths in 2015 – representing 16% of all deaths worldwide and three times more than AIDS, TB, and malaria combined.⁴⁵²

Environmental pollution is a clear risk factor contributing to acute and chronic respiratory disease, with children particularly at risk. In 2012, ambient air pollution was responsible for three million deaths worldwide, and 169,250 child deaths under five.⁴⁵³ In many high-income countries, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is already the cause of the lengthiest hospital stays.⁴⁵⁴

Without collective action, we can expect more of the same. According to WHO, the Paris Climate Agreement is as much a public health treaty as it is a framework for saving the planet from irreversible damage.

CLIMATE CHANGE ISN'T JUST HURTING THE PLANET – IT'S A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY.

Christiana Figueres,
Former Executive Secretary, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change⁴⁵⁸

WHAT INTERVENTIONS ARE NEEDED TO RESPOND TO THE HEALTH CHALLENGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE?

Some solutions are offered in work already underway.



Several biologics are in development that target a cure for **respiratory disease**.⁴⁵⁵



The **Smart Health Facilities Initiative** and **Smart Hospitals Toolkit** is being implemented through the Pan American Health Organization in the Caribbean with the aim of supporting governments of selected countries to assess and prioritize vulnerability reduction investments in their health facilities.⁴⁵⁶



In high-income countries, the **CDC's Changing Climate program** identifies the US populations most vulnerable to impacts, predicts future trends, creates systems to detect and respond to emerging health threats, and designs programs to manage health risks now and in the future.⁴⁵⁷

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