

NHC 2019 - Climate Change and Health - Role of the Health Sector

Concept Note

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Problem: Climate change is the greatest public health challenge of the 21st century. If unaddressed, it threatens to undo several decades of public health gains. Globally, rising temperatures, increased precipitation and rainfall have resulted in greater frequency of climatic events ranging from fires, floods, droughts and heatwaves. Air quality, inextricably linked with climate change, is at threat causing increasing respiratory and cardiovascular morbidity and mortality, vector-borne diseases are increasing, our water resources are depleting affecting agricultural production, and the resultant direct and indirect impacts on health, nutrition and economic development span across all ages and genders. Low and middle-income countries with the most vulnerable populations are likely to be worst affected, given weaker health systems and poorer infrastructure. This translates into further widening of existing health and economic inequities.

The Source - Climate change resulting from growing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from human activities (anthropogenic) are of increasing concern as this is a prime cause for global warming. If GHG emissions continue at current rates, rising temperatures can have potentially harmful effects on ecosystems, biodiversity and human health and livelihoods. In India, the major sources of anthropogenic carbon dioxide (major component of GHG) emissions come from combustion of fossil fuels, principally coal, oil and natural gas, apart from deforestation, changes in land use, soil erosion and agriculture (including livestock). **Reducing our carbon emissions therefore becomes of prime importance.**

Role of Health sector: Charged with being **first responders to climate change, hospitals have a key role to play.** Strengthening health infrastructure and preparing communities for the emerging health threats from expanding geographies of vector-borne diseases like dengue and malaria, threatened food and nutrition security, health hazards arising due to air pollution, extreme and unanticipated events such as floods, cyclones, heat waves, cold waves, salt water intrusion (due to rising sea levels) to mention a few; will greatly contribute to building up of **climate resilient hospitals and communities.**

Climate mitigation and adaptation - **The health sector is paradoxically also a source of carbon emissions, being one of the most energy-intensive service sectors.** It contributes to greenhouse gases throughout care delivery, by energy consumption, transport, waste generation and by sourcing products and technologies from carbon-intensive supply chains for pharmaceuticals, medical devices, food and other products. Worldwide, the health sector contributes to 5% of GHG, with considerable regional differences, and accounted for about 2.6 billion of 52 billion metric tons of CO₂ emitted globally in 2011.

Although this seems like a small proportion, **the health and environmental co-benefits of decarbonizing our healthcare and building climate-smart health systems are huge.** Exemplars of sustainable health sector practices ranging from moving to 100% renewable energy, energy-efficient buildings, sustainable transport, water and food consumption, procurement and waste treatment practices are steadily increasing and promise a growing movement towards reducing our healthcare carbon footprints with tangible health and environmental co-benefits.

Objectives and expected outcomes of the National Health Conclave, 2019

With the concerns discussed above, **the Association of Healthcare Providers of India (AHPI) and the Centre for Environmental Health (CEH)**, a Center of Excellence within the **Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI)** are organizing a one-day conclave dedicated to the health impacts of climate change in India and appropriate risk mitigation and adaptation strategies, with specific focus on the health sector. The conclave will cover talks and panel discussions on the theme and is proposed to conclude with an inspiring concert themed - **"LET US LIVE"**, featuring **Grammy award-winning composer, music producer and environmentalist, Mr. Ricky Kej**.

The proceedings of the Conclave will be compiled into a **WHITE PAPER on Climate Change and Health - Role of the Health Sector** and submit it to the government to sensitise the policy makers to act on it and also to the hospitals for implementation.

The CONCLAVE, as the name suggests, will bring stakeholders including government, research institutions, academia, industry, community and international agencies on one platform to find a lasting solution.

The various stakeholders include:

Academic organizations:

Industry/Associations:

Research Organizations:

Governmental Organizations:

Hospitals:

Knowledge partners/Others:

For any further clarifications, please feel free to contact us at:

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