

Roundtable

CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH: REPERCUSSIONS AND RESPONSES IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

22nd October 2007, The Centre, 13.30-17.30

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)¹ and World Health Organisation², climate change, including climate variability, has multiple influences on human health, in particular through the increase in temperature-related diseases (heat stress), injuries during weather-related disasters and indirectly through the expected spread of water and food-borne diseases; vector and rodent-borne diseases.

How we respond to climate change is an issue of public concern. To date, attention has focused on the likely environmental and economic outcomes. However, there is growing recognition that impacts from climate change on human health are and will be significant.

These health threats are overwhelmingly concentrated in the poorest regions of the world, in countries who have contributed least to global climate change. The Red Cross/Red Crescent observes a sharp increase in the numbers of weather-related disasters, some of them followed by diseases like cholera and rift valley fever and field workers report changes in malaria patterns in countries like Kenya and Papua New Guinea. Also dengue is reported more frequently. Those at greater risk include, in all countries, the urban poor, the elderly and children, traditional societies, subsistence farmers, and coastal populations³.

Health infrastructures in many developing countries are already stretched beyond their capacity to supply even basic healthcare. Unless adaptation mechanisms are implemented, climate change is likely to result in further demands on health services, and an increasing burden of disease.

Exposure to climate change related health risks have significant implications for meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Climate related risk assessments need to be taken into account and addressed in existing health and care programmes.

There is no doubt that the world must urgently seek solutions. Current mitigation measures to contain the phenomenon and limit its potential health effects through reducing greenhouse gas emissions are an important step to slow down the process. However, before measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions become effective,

¹ IPCC 2007 Working Group 2 report on Impacts Adaptation and Vulnerability, chapter 8 Human Health

² <http://www.who.int/globalchange/climate/summary/en/index.html>

³ IPCC, idem



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some degree of global climate change is still inevitable and its impacts on health are expected to accelerate in the coming decades.

Countries therefore face the challenge of planning appropriate measures, such as public health responses, to help their citizens cope with new threats. The health sector has an important role to play in providing measures to anticipate and prevent new climate-related threats to health.

Both decision-makers and civil society must work together to design and implement practical measures to protect health in a rapidly changing climate.

Focus

A half-day roundtable will bring together experts on climate change and health and civil society organizations with the objective of discussing both the implications of climate change on the health sector, and strategies to address them. The event will be an opportunity to share practices and experiences and to explore tools available to address the challenges of climate change.

The main questions that will be discussed are the following:

- What are the main challenges in terms of health and climate change in developing countries?
- How does the NGO sector include the impacts of climate change in their health programmes (environment/ development/ health/DRR NGOs)?
- What are the various approaches to tackle the issue?
- What experiences are there to include climate change risks in health and care programs?
- What is the European Commission strategy to address the issue?

PROGRAMME

The roundtable will be divided in three parts and the facilitator will be **Madeleen Helmer, Head of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre in The Hague.**

13.30-14.45: Opening and '**WHAT DO WE KNOW**' session to bring together the scientists and the experiences from the field.

This panel will include:

- **Dr Bettina Menne**, WHO expert from the IPCC working group II on impacts, adaptation and vulnerability
- **Prof. Christopher J. Thomas**, Chair in Ecological Modelling, mapping risks at landscape scales/ FP7 proposal to map environmental drivers of malaria risk in Africa using remote sensing/ project linking physical and social risk factors into local planning in Tanzania.
- **Dr. Lieve Van Camp**, DG Environment/ Climate strategy, international negotiations and monitoring of EU action



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14.45-15.30: 'WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT' session with speakers from the EU, WHO and NGOs to discuss existing tools.

The panel will include:

- **Dr Maria Neira**, WHO Director of the Department for the Protection of Human Environment
- **Dr. Sanjay Sinho**, Director Health programs-CARE USA
- **Stephan Singer**, WWF European Policy office, Head of the Climate Unit

15.45-16.00: Break

16.00-17.00: 'WHAT MORE COULD WE DO' session to discuss needed tools and mechanisms and to come up with concrete suggestions for next steps. The main outcomes and follow-up of this roundtable will be defined during this session.

(Do the participants reach some common positions to be shared with the EC? Will we manage to come out with questions to be asked to the European Parliament and its temporary committee on Climate Change? On which basis should we discuss this issue during the EU Development Days? Will a Climate Change Working-group be created?)

Christian Farrar-Hockley (Health and Environment Alliance) will present the main outcomes of their conference "Climate change and the challenges for public health –priorities for EU Action" (recommendations to the EC Climate Change Green Paper).

17.00-17.30: Conclusions

An exhibition hall will be available for participants who wish to present materials on their activities linked to health and Climate Change.

The roundtable will end with a cocktail to promote informal exchanges between participants.

LOCATION

The Centre, 22 Avenue Marnix, B-1000 Brussels.

CONTACTS

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