

Key facts

Climate change affects health by diminishing people's access to clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter.

Climate change also increases the rate of **waterborne diseases** and **diseases transmitted by insects**.

Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is projected to cause an additional **250 000 deaths annually** from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress around the world.

Countries and areas with weak health infrastructure will be least able to cope with the impacts of climate change on health.

Health is significantly impacted by the changing climate. Due to **climate change**, people around the world struggle with food and water insecurity while also facing increased outbreaks of waterborne and vector-borne diseases. Increased pressure on scarce resources triggers climate-related migration and conflicts.

All populations will be affected by climate change, but **some are more vulnerable than others**. People living in small island developing states and other coastal regions, megacities, and mountainous regions are particularly vulnerable.

- High temperatures raise the levels of ozone and other pollutants in the air that exacerbate **diseases of the heart, lungs and circulatory system**.
- Rising sea levels, flooding, cyclones and typhoons aggravated by climate change can **destroy homes and medical facilities and disrupt other essential services**. People may be forced to move, which increases their vulnerability to **mental health problems and infectious diseases**.
- **Malnutrition and undernutrition** are likely to increase as it becomes more difficult to grow staple foods in many low- and middle-income countries and areas.

Nowhere in the world will climate change lead to more serious consequences than the **Pacific island countries and areas**. Extreme exposure to climate-related disasters, such as cyclones, floods, droughts and the long-term rise in sea levels, coupled with geographically dispersed populations in remote islands with fragile health systems, make climate change an existential threat to Pacific islanders.

WHO response

Health systems must be made more resilient in order to respond to the impacts of climate change.

WHO is working with governments to develop national climate change and health action plans. With WHO support, low-income countries in the Pacific and the Greater Mekong Subregion are starting **large-scale, multi-year projects to build climate-resilient health systems**.

In addition, Pacific island countries are working together to implement the **Pacific Islands Action Plan on Climate Change and Health as part of the Small Island Developing States Initiative**. Through the Action Plan, Pacific island countries will benefit from stronger political, technical and financial support in protecting their citizens from climate-sensitive diseases and building climate-resilient health systems.

In January 2019, WHO and the Republic of Korea agreed to establish the **WHO Asia-Pacific Centre for Environment and Health** in Seoul. The centre will help build climate-resilient health systems in the WHO Western Pacific Region, aiming to reduce deaths from climate-sensitive diseases by 10% by 2023.

WHO is also coordinating with United Nations partner agencies to ensure that health is properly represented in the broader climate change agenda.



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