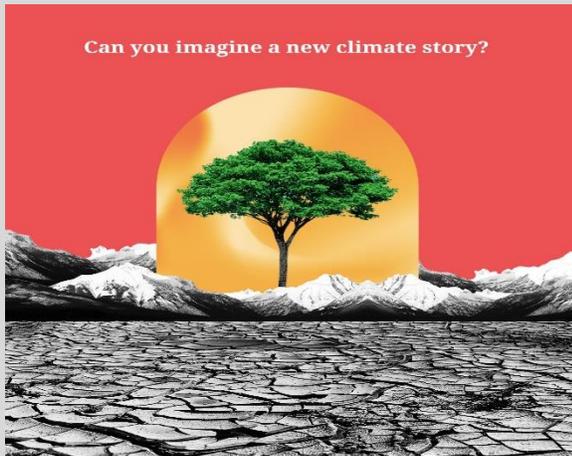


Climate Change: A Threat to Human Health



Climate change is the biggest health threat facing by human beings. Climate change is the result of anthropogenic activities resulting in the increase of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere causing extreme weather fluctuations like heat waves, floods, wildfires, drought and change in disease patterns. Deforestation, agricultural and industrial processes are contributing in a big way. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), if the world wants to eliminate the terrible health impacts and prevent deaths related to climate change, the world must limit temperature rise to 1.5°C. People in low-income and least developed countries and communities are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change because they are least able to protect themselves against the crisis.

According to the WHO special report on “Climate Change and Health 2021”, around 12% of the world’s population (930 million people) is spending only 10% of their household budget on their health. As

the poorest people in less developed countries are largely uninsured and lack social protection, health shocks and stresses make them more vulnerable, and these shocks push around 100 million people into poverty every year and the impacts of climate change worsening this trend.

Climate change is affecting health in a many ways, including deaths and illness from extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, storms and floods, the disruption of food systems, increases in water- and vector-borne diseases, and mental health issues. Furthermore, climate change is damaging many of the social determinants for good health, such as livelihoods, equality and access to health care and social support structures. These climate-sensitive health risks are disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, including women, children, ethnic minorities, poor communities, migrants or displaced persons, older populations, and those with underlying health conditions.

According to World Bank & Asian Development Bank (2021), in 2015 due to heat strokes in Pakistan over 65,000 individuals were admitted in hospitals. Flood or flash flood events may directly affect the medical services of the affected localities which in turn affect wider community, which force hospitals and dispensaries to suspend their routine activities and stop their medical services. 2010 flood in Pakistan was the worst in

the history and caused huge destructions such as deaths, migration etc.

Taking rapid and ambitious actions to stop and reverse the climate crisis has the potential to bring many benefits, including for health. Many actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions also improve air quality and are inevitable to reduce the effects of climate change such as facilitating walking and cycling and in turns it will improve health through increased physical activity, resulting in reductions in respiratory diseases, cardiovascular diseases, some cancers, diabetes, and obesity.

In countries like Pakistan, it is essential that health experts are fully involved in climate decision-making processes at all levels, to ensure health and equity considerations are well understood and accounted for when developing climate policies. Strengthening resilience and building adaptive capacity to climate change can also lead to health benefits by protecting vulnerable populations from disease outbreaks and weather-related disasters, by reducing health costs and by promoting social equity.

The recommendations in the “COP26 Special Report on Climate Change and Health” propose a set of priority actions from the global health community to governments and policy makers, calling on them to act with urgency on the current climate and health crises. The recommendations were developed in consultation with over 150 organizations and over 400 experts and health professionals. It is important for Pakistan to implement these recommendations to reduce the effects of climate change.

- Commit to a healthy, green, and just recovery from COVID-19.
- Prioritize climate interventions with the largest health-, social- and economic gains.
- Build health resilience to climate risks and create energy systems that protect and improve climate and health.
- Protect and restore nature as the foundation of our health.
- Listen to the health community and prescribe urgent climate action.
- Promote sustainable, healthy urban design and transport systems, with improved land-use, access to green and blue public space, and priority for walking, cycling and public transport.