
Environment and climate



© Kingship Chakravarty / Photoshare: A grandmother and her grandchildren plant a tree in a drought-stricken rural area of West Bengal, India.

Language English

Action across energy production, transport systems, and food systems challenges will produce benefits for both health and environment.

Climate change and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are two of the defining challenges of the 21st century, each posing significant threats to health and sustainable development. Climate change is projected to have increasingly damaging effects on communities and economies over the coming decades, set to cause several hundred thousand deaths annually by 2030.

“Climate change affects us all, but it does not affect us all equally. Those who are least able to cope are being hit hardest” - Ban Ki-moon, 2013

NCDs and climate change are intrinsically linked, and as such can be addressed in tandem. Key areas for co-benefit action exist across energy production, transport systems, and food systems. These sectors are leading sources of emissions which contribute to air pollution and global warming. Outdoor air pollution alone is responsible for 3.7million deaths annually, due to cancer, respiratory disease, and cardiovascular disease. Emissions can be reduced through transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy, promoting active transport such as walking and cycling, and enabling access to locally produced, unprocessed, plant-based diets. These latter two interventions also serve to combat physical inactivity and poor nutrition.

Notably, urban areas frequently serve as a nexus of activities across these areas, offering widespread opportunities to intervene, and with high populations in a concentrated area who can in turn benefit from the impacts of policies and programmes implemented.

Indoor and outdoor pollution impact directly on mortality from respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease and cancer, and interventions such as promotion of active transport and sustainable food systems contribute to prevention of all major NCDs through reducing physical inactivity and poor nutrition.

Paris Agreement on climate change

In December of 2015, under the auspices of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#) [1]), world leaders met in Paris for COP21, and agreed on strategies to achieve goals to combat climate change. Health is included in the preamble of the [Paris Agreement](#) [2] (in terms of the right to health), and in the section on short term actions from 2016-2020.

The Agreement emphasises the need for a whole of society approach, with countries agreeing in the preamble and paragraph 134 the need to engage civil society, the private sector, financial institutions, municipal authorities and communities in the response to climate change.

The concept of health as an adverse effect of climate change is embedded in the agreement, with a reference to the human right to health included in the preamble, and health cited as an incentive for short term action between 2016 and 2020. Follow the link below to read the full Paris Agreement of 2015.

"Given the potential of climate change to reverse the health gains from economic development, and the health co- benefits that accrue from actions for a sustainable economy, tackling climate change could be the greatest global health opportunity of this century... A public health perspective has the potential to unite all actors behind a common cause - the health and wellbeing of our families, communities, and countries."
- 2015 Lancet Commission on Health and Climate Change

Habitat III

'Habitat III' is the *Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development*, to take place in October 2016 in Quito, Ecuador. The objectives of this conference are to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable urban development, assess accomplishments to date, address poverty and identify and address new and emerging challenges. The Conference will result in a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented outcome document: the New Urban Agenda, which will aim to promote a new model of urban development that is able to integrate all facets of sustainable development to promote equity, welfare and shared prosperity. The Habitat III process therefore presents an opportunity to ensure that NCDs and health are firmly integrated into urban planning processes and considerations.

Find out more about the [Habitat conferences here](#) [3].

Related Resource: [NCDs and climate change: Shared opportunities for action](#) [4]

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[1] <http://newsroom.unfccc.int/paris/>

[2] http://unfccc.int/documentation/documents/advanced_search/items/6911.php?preref=600008831

[3] <http://mirror.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=831>

[4] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/resources/ncds-and-climate-change-shared-opportunities-for-action>

[5] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/cop21-historic-climate-change-agreement-reached-in-paris>