Putting health back into the climate change negotiations

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Climate change and health

- “Climate Change is the biggest global health threat of the 21st century” - The Lancet

- IPCC – poor countries and poor people especially vulnerable to climate change

- UNFCCC – health has a strong strategic position

- NAPAs: 95% of LDCs identify health as a priority sector BUT only 30% have adequate health assessment or response plan.
The problem:

- **Health** is poorly represented in the operating mechanisms for climate change convention.

- Specifically:
  - in adaptation planning and associated funding allocation
  - in mitigation plans and funding streams such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).
Costs of No Action!

- Climate Change will add at least US$ 4-12 billion in annual health costs (for preventing additional cases of malnutrition, malaria and diarrhoeal disease) by 2030.

- Potential underestimation (assumption about future disease burden and spread), Parry et al. (2009)

- International funding for health adaptation is currently less than 1% of this figure.
Large burden of disease linked to climate and environment

- Undernutrition kills 3.5 million
- Poor water and sanitation kills > 2 million
- Indoor air pollution kills > 2 million
- Malaria kills 900,000
- Extreme weather events kill 60,000
- Undetermined impact on diseases spread of vectors affected by climate or weather
Increasing burden of Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

- The burden of NCDs is increasing in LDCs (and everywhere)
- NCDs may cause impoverishment and are a barrier to development (systems, costs, financing)
- 2/3 deaths each year are attributable to NCDs and 80% of these deaths occur in less developed countries
- Developing countries → Double burden of disease
What we know:

- **Mitigation:** We know that well designed actions to mitigate climate change could bring major health gains. Win-Win.
  - NCDs (transport, housing, health sector) can be mitigated/prevented through “smart growth” – “green growth”.

- **Adaptation:** Diseases trap households in cycles of illness and poverty
  - need to increase HH resilience → adaptation.
  - Health is an important pillar of sustainable development.
How can we achieve this?

- **Human Development Lens** – use human development impact/health outcomes to guide decision-making

1. Improving and protecting the health of the most vulnerable is an important **adaptation strategy** – building resilience.

2. There are important co-benefits for health through the implementation of **mitigation** strategies - “smart growth”.

3. Translate the strategic framework into practical health adaptation programmes
How can we achieve this?

- **Tracking and Monitoring** the progress in health outcomes of all programmes from (all) sectors (agriculture, transport, infrastructure, housing).

  1. Adaptation programme – building resilience
  2. Mitigation strategies – promoting “smart growth”.

- Increase awareness of the **efficiency gains** (intersectoral work) \(\rightarrow\) **Value for Money**.

- **Budget for health** adaptation and mitigation interventions (BUT without creating another vertical programme).
Challenges and Opportunities:

- How can we engage the private sector?
- How we improve current investments by strengthening their health outcomes?
- Could we develop mechanisms that create a market for green technologies with co-benefits on health? i.e. Advance Market Commitment has done for vaccine.
- Opportunities to improve health equity.
- The poor are the most affected by climate change, i.e.:
  - 40% if urban growth is in slums,
  - Many low-income cities are in need of cost-effective, health climate change mitigation strategies.
Conclusion

- There is an unanimous agreement that climate change affects health of the most vulnerable communities with less capacity to adapt.
- Health outcomes/ impact should guide decision-making about other CC decisions.
- There is a need to translate a strategic framework into **practical actions**.
- Health should be part of an integrated approach to respond to Climate Change threat.
- Window of opportunity: Durban and RIO+20
- Shift mentality: health outcomes should guide choices about climate change.