



WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DAY 26th SEPTEMBER 2019

THEME: Climate change challenges, time for global Environmental Health to act in unison

Climate change impacts on vulnerable communities and a call for Environmental Health Practitioners to play a pivotal role in adaptation strategies and measures to protect communities against the challenges of climate variability at a grassroots level.

Climate change is increasing risks to human health and to health systems that seek to protect the safety and well-being of populations. The largest health risks will be in those communities and populations currently impacted on by climate related diseases.

Direct and indirect health impacts associated with climate change are caused by rising temperatures, altered precipitation patterns as well as increasingly severe and frequent extreme weather events. Direct health impacts arise from hazards such as heat-waves, droughts and storms and indirect impacts come from exposures to disease vectors, air and water pollution. Rising carbon dioxide levels, which contribute to climate change, may also reduce the nutrient value in staple crops. This could increase food insecurity among some populations, particularly those in developing countries.

Extraordinary gains to global population health achieved in recent decades are at risk of reversal due to the expected impacts of climate change. The efforts of countries to achieve key sustainable development goals (SDGs), under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are threatened by climate change, (e.g. SDG 1 – No poverty; SDG 2 – End hunger; SDG 3 – Good health and well-being; and SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation). As a result, there could be many more millions of people living in poverty.

Countries that lack adaptive capacity, vulnerable populations, (e.g. indigenous people, people relying on agricultural livelihoods) and certain regions facing severe challenges, such as drought, are more vulnerable to its impacts. Thus, climate and environmental changes place at risk the fundamental human resources for health, such as shelter, clean water, air quality and food security and quality. A range of social factors can act to either exacerbate the health impacts of the environmental effects of climate change or to help mitigate them with public health interventions.



International Federation of Environmental Health

Many of the health impacts from climate variability and change can be lessened or avoided through well-designed adaptation measures. Health adaptation refers to “ the process of designing , implementing, monitoring and evaluating strategies, policies, and measures intended to reduce climate change related impacts and to take advantage of opportunities”. Health authorities and researchers, from international to local level, recognize the serious threats to health that climate change poses and are taking protective measures to reduce current impacts and future risks.

Environmental Health Practitioners (EHPs) have for decades played a critical role in monitoring and controlling the quality and health of the human environment. They now have an equally important role to play with regards to adaptation strategies and measures to protect communities against the challenges of climate variability at grassroots level. Evidence-based information about current and possible future risks to health, vulnerable populations, and effective adaptation options is needed so as to prepare individuals and communities for the health impacts of climate change.

This includes identification of innovative adaptations for use by environmental and public health officials to understand and respond to more severe and possibly compounding effects of future climate change, such as threats from tipping points and shock events that are outside of the range of current experience. Greater capacity building that facilitates assessments from local to national and International scales will support collaborative efforts to protect health from current climate hazards and future climate change challenges.

We encourage all member organizations and regional groups, academic associates and associate members and national governments to set up local initiatives and events to celebrate World Environmental Health Day.

We specifically request Universities and schools to encourage and support their students in producing short videos on topics important to them.

Regarding information about planned national/ regional initiatives as well as short videos, we will provide opportunity for this to be displayed on the specific page on the IFEH website www.ifeh.org/WEHD. This opportunity is open to all regardless of membership of the IFEH.

Please send information about your initiatives to the webmaster, Henning Hansen, email address: henning.hansen@ifeh.org

We are looking forward to hear about your 2019 initiative in order to pursue the intentions behind our World Environmental Health Day.

Dr. Selva Mudaly
President