

Making health system resilient towards climate variability

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New Delhi, May 26th (India Science Wire): There is very high confidence within the scientific community that “health of human populations is sensitive to shifts in weather patterns and other aspects of climate change”. IPCC’s ‘Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C’ states with high confidence that high percentages of poor in Africa and Asia would be most vulnerable due to exposure to climate-related risks for temperature increase between 1.5°C and 2°C. Furthermore, COVID-19 pandemic has globally exposed the limited preparedness and capacity of health systems in combating mass health risks of vulnerable population.

Climate services for health are an emerging field with an objective to support public health practitioners and policymakers for understanding the impact of climate change and extreme weather events on human health. Climate services can make a difference through providing actionable early warnings based on historical climate information as well as future predictions. In India, climate services are being effectively utilized for sectors such as agriculture, shipping, fishing and water resource planning, however the effective demand of climate services from the health community is very low or non-existent.

A new study, published in [Current Science](#), has examined the policy congruence at international, regional, national and sub-national level for climate services for public health, with specific focus on India and suggests a roadmap for co-developing climate services for public health sector in India. This study is an inter-disciplinary take from the perspective of climate scientists and public health professionals on the existing structures of governance, wherein the authors objectively bring out that to make a climate resilient health system, climate-related data and information needs to be routinely integrated into health science, practice, and policy making. For this, the starting point is to develop a baseline understanding of the region-specific demographic, social, and ecological determinants of health.

Globally, several international agreements and instruments have recognized the urgency for climate action. Regionally, there are diverse set of collaborations involving state as well as non-state agencies for action on climate change and health. At our level, India has implemented a series of sector specific and centrally sponsored policies aimed at achieving sustainable development. Several key policies indirectly support climate change adaptation by promoting resource efficiency and reducing exposure to health risks.

The study examines the progress so far and spells out the strategic steps (*Ten Commandments*) required to co-develop climate services for resilient public health system in India. The proposed steps include proactive partnerships, enabling institutions, creating sustainable infrastructure, strengthening capacities and investment in interdisciplinary research on climate-health linkages.

Its sheer coincidence that the study comes at a juncture when the country is fighting combined colossal impacts of COVID-19 and recent cyclonic storms Tauktae (and Yaas). This study aptly emphasizes a rethinking, reshaping and redefining of climate adaptation strategy to encompass ‘pandemic preparedness’ as in such times, climate change acts as a ‘threat multiplier’ and ‘compounds’ risks. It emphasizes the urgent need for health and climate actors of the country to

work together to combat the threat by shaping up an effective system of climate services for public health system.

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