

- Concept Note -

Gathering Storm: Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health in Climate-Induced Humanitarian Settings

Part of the Every Woman Every Child Everywhere panel series

Climate change is a rapidly growing driver of health emergencies, underscored in 2016 alone by El Niño related famine threats, devastating floods in Bangladesh, drought-linked violence around Lake Chad, and global alarm at the spread of the Zika virus.

Health, climate, and security now exist in a complex nexus that will trigger an increasing number of small and large, short-term and long-lasting humanitarian crises, with the brunt being borne by women, children and adolescents. Already, a highly disproportionate number die and suffer in crisis situations – due to the crisis itself (violence, famine, forced migration) and the impact on access to life-saving quality services.

With climate change, this trend is exacerbated, and layered on to additional effects of social disruption, nutrition, and political and financial instability. Climate is therefore now a key variable in the humanitarian planning and response, as well as vulnerability profiling, that underpins achievement of Agenda 2030's imperatives on health, gender, youth, and children.

On the heels of COP22 in Marrakesh, the Permanent Missions of Norway and the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, in partnership with Every Woman Every Child, are convening a high-level panel to integrate implementation discussions across the climate and health agenda – and identify steps to ensure that women, children and adolescents are at their hearts.

The panel will consider three main climate-linked drivers of humanitarian settings, with disproportionate health impacts on women, children and adolescents:

1. Harsher and erratic weather, as well as coastal change;
2. The spread of disease;
3. Food insecurity – political instability – migration.

Within these contexts, the panel will consider the direct experience of development and humanitarian actors in planning for and managing minimum health requirements for women,

children, and adolescents. It will look at specific interventions and programming reforms for promoting convergence between disaster risk reduction and adaptation/resilience programming.

Additionally, the panel will consider linkages between information and action across the continuum of vulnerability, crisis and response, and recovery: how should programming and spending be integrated to manage repeated cycles of climate stress, risk, and crisis?

Lastly, the panel is encouraged to comment on broader thinking on internal management culture within organizations about whether and how to integrate climate, health, and gender as cross-cutting and increasingly inter-linked practices.

The panel is the third in a series hosted by the UAE and Norway under Every Woman Every Child Everywhere, the multi-stakeholder movement that extends the UN Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health to humanitarian settings. This EWEC Everywhere series promotes an examination of policy, operational, and financing approaches, as well as leveraging women as first-responders and decision-makers.

The series was launched in conjunction with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's and US President Barack Obama's September 2016 summits on refugees and migrants. In November 2016, the series evaluated urban humanitarian crises as part of Habitat III's New Urban Agenda. The next panel on 16 March, during the Commission on the Status of Women, will take up themes of integrated planning and delivery of health, education, WASH, and other basic services.

Panel elements

The panel considers six key elements for women, children and adolescents:

- The changing scope of health needs given climate change (more disasters, more long-term stress, new locations and timing of disasters and stress) – and the likely future implications for programming and budgets;
- How development and humanitarian actors are internally responding to climate as a growing driver for health emergencies – new management, spending, advocacy, and/or other approaches?;
- The merits and modalities of including minimum health services in climate finance;
- Preventative interventions / disaster risk reduction / adaptation and resilience, to alter the health impacts of climate-linked crises when they arise;
- Leveraging women and young people as first preparers and responders;
- Coordination opportunities across such sectors as education, energy, water and sanitation, etc. to improve “whole of person” impact and cost-efficiencies in emergency response and transition to development.

The panel looks at climate change impacts on health through:

- Direct exposures (e.g. floods, storms and heat exposure);
- Indirect exposures mediated via natural systems (e.g. allergens, disease vectors and water/air pollution);
- Economic and Social Disruption (e.g. food production/distribution, forced migration).

It also takes into account that:

- Women are disproportionately involved in small scale/subsistence farming – most impacted by climate change;
- Women have much lower entitlement/access to land and credit making them far more susceptible to climate change;
- Women and children are most at risk of food insecurity and under-nutrition;
- Women and children are most at risk during migration (exploitation, human trafficking, and violence);
- Women and children are at particular risk for abuse and violence in humanitarian emergencies like war, conflict, and natural disaster.

Panel format

The panel will begin with short opening remarks from Norway and the United Arab Emirates on the rationale and intended impact of the panel series and its specific focus on climate change. It will then shift to a “Davos-style” panel discussion among humanitarian and development actors, moderated by HRH Princess Sarah Zeid, Co-chair of Every Woman Every Child Everywhere.