



Climate Change and Global Health

For Prelims: Climate Change, fossil fuels, food insecurity, heatwave, zoonotic diseases, communicable disease, WHO

For Mains: Impact of Climate change on Global Health, Environmental Pollution & Degradation

Why in News?

According to the Lancet Countdown report on Health and Climate Change: Health at the Mercy of Fossil Fuels, **reliance on fossil fuels is increasing the risk of disease, food insecurity** and other illnesses related to heat.

What are the Findings of the Report?

- **Impact on Health:**
 - **Climate change affects the social and environmental determinants of health** — clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter.
- **Population Exposed to Heatwave:**
 - **Rapidly increasing temperatures exposed people**, especially vulnerable populations (adults above 65 years old and children younger than one) to 3.7 billion more [heatwave](#) days in 2021 than annually in 1986–2005.
- **Infectious Diseases:**
 - The **changing climate is affecting the spread of infectious disease**, raising the risk of emerging diseases and co-epidemics.
 - For instance, **it records that coastal waters are becoming more suited for the transmission of Vibrio pathogens.**
 - The **number of months suitable for malaria transmission has increased** in the highland areas of the Americas and Africa.
 - The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) has predicted that between 2030 and 2050, **climate change is expected to cause approximately 2,50,000 additional deaths** per year, from [malnutrition](#), [malaria](#), [diarrhoea](#) and heat stress.
- **Food Security:**
 - **Every dimension of food security is being affected by climate change.**
 - **Higher temperatures threaten crop yields directly**, with the growth season shortening for many cereal crops.
 - **Extreme weather events disrupt supply chains**, thereby undermining food availability, access, stability, and utilisation.
 - The **prevalence of undernourishment increased during the Covid-19 pandemic**, and up to 161 million more people face hunger in 2020 than in 2019.
 - This situation is now worsened by [Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#).
- **Fossil Fuel:**
 - The **Russia-Ukraine war has led many countries to search for alternative fuels to Russian oil and gas**, and some of them are still turning back to traditional thermal energy.

- Even if it were a temporary transition, renewed interest in coal could reverse gains in air quality and accelerate climate change that threatens human survival.

What are the Suggestions?

- **Health-Centric Response:**
 - **A health-centred response to the coexisting climate, energy, and cost-of-living crisis** provides an opportunity to deliver a healthy, low-carbon future.
 - **Improvements in air quality will help prevent deaths resulting from exposure to fossil fuel-derived ambient PM2.5**, and the stress on low-carbon travel and increase in urban spaces would result in promoting physical activity which would have an impact on physical and mental health.
- **Transition to Balanced and More Plant-Based Diets:**
 - An **accelerated transition to balanced and more plant-based diets would help reduce emissions from red meat** and milk production, and prevent diet-related deaths, besides substantially reducing the risk of [zoonotic diseases](#).
 - This sort of health-focused shifts would **reduce the burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases**, reduce the strain on health-care providers, and leading to more robust health systems.
- **Global Coordination:**
 - **Global coordination, funding, transparency, and cooperation between governments**, communities, civil society, businesses, and public health leaders is required to reduce or prevent the vulnerabilities that the world is otherwise exposed to.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. 'Climate change' is a global problem. How India will be affected by climate change? How Himalayan and coastal states of India will be affected by climate change? **(2017)**

[Source: TH](#)

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