

## WHO SUBMISSION ON NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLANS

The World Health Organization welcomes the opportunity to submit its views on the National Adaptation Plans.

Human health is one of the key priority areas of the UNFCCC and it is a central concern in climate change, highlighted in Article 1 of the UNFCCC. Beyond economic and environmental impacts, the well-being of the human population and the capacity of the human race to survive are at stake. Health impacts are among the highest concerns of the general public in relation to climate change, and surveys of UNFCCC delegates show that they consider that health issues should have a higher prominence in UNFCCC discussions<sup>1</sup>.

### **Strengths and weaknesses of current coverage of health in national adaptation plans**

The UNFCCC has guided countries to include health within their national adaptation assessments. To assess the degree to which this has been reflected in national adaptation planning, particularly in developing countries, WHO undertook a review of the coverage of health in National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) in September 2010. Nearly all of the 41 NAPAs reviewed consider health as being one of the sectors on which climate change will have an impact. However only just under a quarter of the NAPAs were considered to be comprehensive in their health-vulnerability assessment<sup>2</sup>. Notable gaps in vulnerability assessments include a lack of baseline epidemiological data for the diseases and medical conditions specified that would be affected by climate change, and a description of the trends anticipated in these disease and conditions. In most plans, there are no specific health protection objectives, targets or articulation of the public health strategy or national disease prevention and control programme under which they would be implemented. In many instances this results in inadequate adaptation actions and the proposed projects are for the most part insufficient in terms of scope, size and resources.

Important implementation activities are taking place on climate change and health, but these are largely disconnected from the previous NAPA process. A recent systematic scoping review of intervention projects which aim to protect human health from climate change identified more than forty eligible health focused intervention projects, including several of significant size<sup>3</sup>. However, none of these is directly linked to the outcome of the NAPA process. This disconnect may help to explain the relative lack of investment in

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<sup>1</sup> Singh, S., U. Mushtaq, et al. (2011). "The importance of climate change to health." *Lancet* **378**(9785): 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> Manga, L., Bagayoko, M. et al. (2010). Overview of health considerations within National Adaptation Programmes of Action for climate change in least developed countries and small island states. [http://www.who.int/phe/Health\\_in\\_NAPAs\\_final.pdf](http://www.who.int/phe/Health_in_NAPAs_final.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> The review identified 18 currently active implementation projects in non Annex-1 countries that have a budget of over US\$500,000. This included seven countries participating in a project on health adaptation to climate change in Eastern Europe and Central Asia coordinated by the WHO Regional Office for Europe, funded by the German Government; seven in a global project coordinated by WHO and UNDP funded by the GEF; three run by WHO country offices funded by Spain through the MDG-F, and one run by UNDP funded by the GEF.

health protection from climate change. It is estimated that current international support for health adaptation is only approximately 0.5% of the health-damage costs sustained from climate change.

### **Possibilities for improved coverage of health within national adaptation plans**

In recent years the health community has become much more engaged on climate change issues. There are now strong political mandates at the global level, through a 2008 World Health Assembly resolution (WHA 61.19)<sup>4</sup> on climate change and health, and through equivalent commitments at Regional level. These include, for example, the Libreville Declaration and the Luanda Commitment, through which African Ministers of Health and Environment have jointly proposed a regional framework for health adaptation to climate change, with similar commitments being made in the Americas, European, Eastern Mediterranean, South-East Asian and Western Pacific Regions. These political mandates are also supported by advances in technical guidance, and in health adaptation projects. The health community is therefore much better equipped to engage in the new round of national adaptation planning that is now under discussion.

WHO would therefore propose to support national adaptation planning through the following activities, consistent with the goals of the UNFCCC, and the requests of WHO Member States through the above mentioned World Health Assembly Resolution:

- 1) Awareness raising and guidance to support greater health sector engagement in climate-change adaptation programming at national, regional and global level.
- 2) Technical and policy support for vulnerability, impact, and adaptation assessment based on newly-revised guidance produced by WHO and the Pan-American Health Organization, following consultation with health and environment practitioners.
- 3) Integration of adaptation measures within a comprehensive approach to strengthening health systems to protect populations from the impacts of climate change.
- 4) Sharing of lessons learned and technical resources from the range of WHO pilot projects on health adaptation to climate change, through the Nairobi Work Programme and other UNFCCC mechanisms, as appropriate.
- 5) Technical and policy support for new projects and programmes on health adaptation to climate change, following the mandates and mechanisms outlined above.

The actions outlined above would be facilitated by:

- 1) Continuation of UNFCCC endorsement for greater engagement of the health community in adaptation planning at national, regional and global level.
- 2) Continued efforts by the UNFCCC and its parties, to align policy and technical guidance for climate change adaptation with health and wider sustainable development goals, in line with Article 4.1 (f) of the Convention.
- 3) Identification of health protection among the priorities for support under the funding mechanisms of the UNFCCC.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.who.int/globalchange/A61\\_R19\\_en.pdf](http://www.who.int/globalchange/A61_R19_en.pdf)