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International Federation
of Environmental Health

World Environmental Health Day 2024

26th September

Theme:

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: CREATING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES THROUGH
DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION**

Background for the 2024 WEHD Theme

Climate Change and disaster risks are fundamental threats to sustainable development, the living and health conditions for all humans on the globe and the reduction of poverty. The negative impacts threaten to roll back decades of development gains.

Building resilient and sustainable communities means addressing both climate change and disaster risks, and integrating these risks, as well as potential opportunities, into development planning and budgeting. Environmental Health is a core discipline – among lots of other important disciplines as a concerted and holistic approach is needed - in getting this done – both before disasters – during disasters and after disasters.

Efforts to reduce disaster risks and climate change risks have co-existed for a long time, and in the last two decades, they have increasingly been linked. Besides combatting Climate Change by reduction in the use of fossil fuels and CO₂ emission – driving the climate change- we must strengthen our initiatives in terms of mitigation and adaption – as climate change is already here – and natural hazards driven by climate change increasingly go into full disasters. The needed response to avoid disasters is Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives and planning which include climate change mitigation and adaptation and for future policy action to promote successful coordination to create resilient communities.

There is a growing recognition that vulnerability and exposure to disaster risk and climate change impacts are driven to a great deal by social, cultural, economic, and political factors, including multi-dimensional inequalities, discrimination, and marginalization (IPCC, 2014b).

Therefore, a rethink is thus urgently needed to better integrate disasters, climate change and developmental issues in theory and practice and enable transformational change in how we foster sustainable development.

The initiatives regarding Disaster Risk Reduction is very much driven by the UN Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Sendai Framework works hand in hand with the other 2030 Agenda agreements, including The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, The Addis Ababa Action Agenda on



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Financing for Development, the New Urban Agenda, and ultimately the Sustainable Development Goals. The Sendai Framework for DRR is endorsed by the UN General Assembly. The UNDRR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction) is tasked to support the implementation, follow-up and review of the Sendai Framework.

The IFEH is a partner with the UNDRR under the system Science and Technology Partnership.

The redirected focus on climate action and DRR is advanced through UNDRR's flagship initiative, Comprehensive Disaster and Climate Risk Management (CRM).

How climate change will drive disaster risks of:

- **CYCLONES:** Under 2.5 degree Celsius of global warming, the most devastating storms are projected to occur up to twice as often as today. (Bacmeister et al; 2018).
- **DROUGHT:** The number of people suffering extreme droughts across the world could double in less than 80 years (Pokhrel, 2021).
- **FLOODS:** For each 1 degree Celsius of global warming, extreme daily precipitation events may intensify by about 7% (IPCC, 2021).
- **HEATWAVE:** Heat stress from extreme heat and humidity could annually affect 1.2 billion people by 2100 (Dawei Li et al; 2020).
- **INFECTIOUS DISEASES:** By 2050, mosquitoes that transmit diseases like Malaria could reach an estimated 500 million people (Ryan et al; 2020).
- **SEA LEVEL RISE:** Coastal flooding events could threaten assets worth up to 20% of the global GDP by 2100 (Kirezci et al; 2020).
- **WILDFIRE:** By 2030, fire season could be three months longer in areas already exposed to wildfires (Ross, Gannon & Steinberg, 2020).

From the above, it becomes clearer the critical role Environmental Health plays in addressing Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction to create resilient and sustainable communities. The scope of work carried out by Environmental Health Professionals covers a range of interventions needed to address climate change and disaster risks impacts.

To mention a few aspects i.e.

- Infectious Disease outbreaks
- Air Pollution
- Water-borne diseases
- Food Safety and security
- Water Pollution
- Drinking water supply



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- Wastewater management
- Disposal of the dead
- Vector borne disease control.
- Emergency shelters
- Ports and border control
- Hazardous waste
- Taking part in design of Emergency and DRR Planning
- Taking part in informing the public about health risks and how to avoid risks.
- Taking part in building back better
- Housing and health

Disaster Risk Reduction is part of the sustainable development goals (SDG) which will help ensure that these goals will be maintained and achieved in the face of changing climatic conditions and disaster events and prove to be truly sustainable.

The IFEH assisted in the creation of the deeper lying indicators for the SDGs for some parts regarding DRR.

We are at a crossroads. Climate change is undermining the ability to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

We hope that all IFEH member organisations – associated members – associated academics members - as well as not members of the IFEH – but being Environmental Health related institutions or organisations etc. will use this opportunity – **World Environmental Health Day 2024** – to produce initiatives on the topic – or Environmental Health in general – and to let us know (in advance or after) by informing our IFEH webmaster: webmaster@ifeh.org about the initiative – and then the IFEH – after a review by our webmaster - will post information (for free) on the IFEH website.

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