



PRE-COP28 POLICY DIALOGUE

NEXUS BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND HEALTH

VENUE: BANGABANDHU INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTER (BICC)

DATE: 15.11.2023

BACKGROUND

Climate change presents a formidable challenge to global health. In Bangladesh, where the effects of climate change are acutely felt, the impact on public health is increasingly evident. The interplay between climate change, air pollution, and human health is a matter of great concern. Climate-sensitive diseases, mental health issues, non-communicable diseases, and sexual and reproductive health rights are all influenced by the evolving climate conditions. If global warming trends continue to follow the worst-case trajectory, the burden on public health systems could become overwhelming. Vulnerable populations, particularly the young and the elderly, as well as those residing in densely populated urban areas, are at the greatest risk.

Bangladesh must seize the opportunities provided by international platforms like COP28 to garner support for addressing climate-sensitive health issues as a country at the forefront of climate change. Failing to do so could undermine the progress Bangladesh has achieved over the past half-century and hinder the realization of Vision 2041.

COP28 will host the first Health Day and climate-health ministerial that aims to build consensus on priority actions for the health system's response to climate change. In Bangladesh, development partners and the Ministry of Health and Family Affairs (MoHFA) have applied to hold side events at the Bangladesh country pavilion to feature this new theme.

As a preparation for the COP, the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) and the Embassy of Sweden organized a pre-cop event titled "Health-Climate Change Nexus in Preparation for the Upcoming UN COP28" to foster an informed and constructive discussion on the intersection of climate change and health. This event aims to provide a platform for key stakeholders from government, international and non-governmental organizations, youth, and experts to share insights, exchange knowledge, and explore potential policy measures addressing the health impacts of climate change. The event took place at BICC on 15th November and was attended by almost 40 people from the government, CSO, and research organizations attended the event.

THE GUESTS

The event was honored by the presence of Honorable Mamunur Rashid, Joint Secretary (WH), HSD, MoHFW, who graced the occasion as the chief guest. Also in attendance were esteemed guests including H.E. Alexandra Berg von Linde, Ambassador of the Embassy of Sweden; Prof. Mizan R. Khan, Deputy Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development; Nayoka Martinez Backstrom, First Secretary & Deputy Head of Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden; Daniel Novak, First Secretary/Program Specialist in the Health Sector at the Embassy of Sweden; and numerous individuals from the CSO community, youth community, and research organizations.

DISCUSSION

The event commenced at 2:00 PM with a gracious introduction by MS Joyee Chakma, Youth Representative at ICCCAD, who skillfully guided the proceedings as the Master of Ceremonies. At the onset, she conveyed her sincere appreciation to the participants for their presence and provided a concise overview of the event (refer to Table-1). The event unfolded with a compelling speech, culminating in closing remarks from the chief guest. Two thematic sessions ensued, accompanied by valuable audience feedback and input.

Table-1: Session Plan

Session	Lead
Opening speech	Professor. Mizan R. Khan, Deputy Director, ICCCAD
Welcome Speech	H.E. Alexandra Berg von Linde, Ambassador, Embassy of Sweden in Dhaka
Session: Burden of Climate Change and pollution on Physical and mental Health	Ifffat Mahmud, Senior Operation Officer & Wameq Reza, Health and Nutrition Specialist, The World Bank
Moderate Session –Audience Input	Moderator: Dr. Daniel Novak, First Secretary-Health, Embassy of Sweden in Dhaka
Session: Burden of Climate Change on communicable diseases and SRHR	Prof Mohammad Robed Amin, Line Director NCDC, DGH
Moderate Session –Audience Input	Moderator: Professor. Mizan R. Khan, Deputy Director, ICCCAD
Final Remarks	Hon. Md. Mamunur Rashid, Joint Secretary (WH), HSD, MoHFW;
Vote of Thanks	Nayoka Martinez Backstrom, First Secretary-Development, Embassy of Sweden in Dhaka



OPENING REMARKS

The program commenced with an inauguration led by Prof. Mizan, Deputy Director of ICCCAD, who expressed gratitude to all attendees for their presence. He took a silent moment in memory of Dr. Saleemul Huq, former Director of ICCCAD, offering condolences and recognizing Dr. Huq's substantial contributions to the global field of climate change.

Prof. Mizan R. Khan underscored the critical importance of addressing health concerns within climate change negotiations. He drew attention to the widening gap between climate change science and policies, emphasizing the need for evidence-based research on health risks. Additionally, he called for increased research-based advocacy on issues related to heat stress and health risks.

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My experience in negotiation is, that health is a neglected topic and UNCCC doesn't have any formal program on Health

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Climate Change science making more and more perfect and policies are going other directions, Thus there is a growing gap

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-Prof. Mizan R. Khan



WELCOME SPEECH FROM H.E. ALEXANDRA VERG VON LINDE, AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY OF SWEDEN

H.E. Alexandra Berg von Linde initiated her speech by acknowledging the absence of Dr. Saleemul Huq. She underscored that the influence of the health sector remains largely unexplored in the global agenda. Commending Bangladesh for its exemplary leadership in climate initiatives, she expressed anticipation for the country to persist in spearheading efforts to address the impacts of climate change on health.

In particular, she emphasized the repercussions of climate change on women's reproductive health and brought attention to the health risks associated with urban heat islands and mental illness. H.E. Alexandra Berg von Linde highlighted Sweden's commitment to a long-term partnership with Bangladesh to build a resilient health system. She stressed the imperative to develop a comprehensive health adaptation plan and expressed optimism that this policy dialogue would identify specific health challenges and solutions in Bangladesh. This, in turn, would enable participants to delineate priority issues for the government's future endeavors.

**“ Our focus in now, a resilient health system
development in Bangladesh ”**



THE THEMATIC SESSION-1: BURDEN ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND POLLUTION ON PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH:

Iffat Mahmud, Senior Operations Officer, and Wameq Raza, Health and Nutrition Specialist, from The World Bank, presented the findings of their recent study on climatic variables, air pollution, and mental health. During their presentation, they illustrated the correlation between climate change variables and air pollution, emphasizing their impact on both mental and physical health. Notably, they elucidated the relationship between temperature and the outbreak of dengue this year, demonstrating how climate change variables influence the prevalence of infectious diseases like dengue. Wameq Raza further expounded on the air pollution scenario in various areas of Bangladesh, detailing its associations with both mental and physical health. Below are some key highlights from their presentation.



PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

- Dengue and some other infectious diseases are highly associated with temperature-raising.
- Western regions of Bangladesh is more polluted than the eastern region of Bangladesh and Dhaka is the most polluted city.
- There is a strong positive correlation between temperature and productive cough, breathing difficulties, and lower respiratory tract infections.
- Temperature and PM (Particle Pollution) have strong positive correlations with depression and anxiety.

SUGGESTIONS FROM THE PRESENTER

- Improved data collection system for better prediction of weather and associated impact on health outcomes is necessary.
- Enhancing the public health response mechanism can be accomplished through community-level screening and outreach initiatives.
- Strengthening the response to mental health issues can be achieved through raising awareness, enhancing assessment mechanisms, and facilitating efforts to address identified shortcomings.
- Engage in further research to improve the understanding of the topic is important

THE THEMATIC SESSION-1: BURDEN ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND POLLUTION ON PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

AUDIENCE INPUT ON THE SESSION: 01

Following the presentation, Mr. Daniel invited individual comments and feedback from the audience. He also urged participants to propose priority areas related to the discussed topic that could be emphasized at COP 28. The attendees conveyed profound concern about the escalating temperatures and the growing incidence of heat stroke cases in Bangladesh in recent years. Audience suggestions for improvement encompassed various sectors and are outlined below:

EVIDENCE GENERATION & KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

- There remains a notable gap in evidence and research concerning the impact of climate change on the health sector. Both government and non-government organizations should prioritize the generation of robust evidence.
- Introducing a shared knowledge platform could facilitate learning from the outcomes and results of other climate and health-related projects. This would contribute to reducing the duplication of interventions.
- Access to data should be universal, with open availability being crucial. All data generators should ensure access for all stakeholders to promote widespread use.
- Real-time data is imperative for climate and health research. The Government of Bangladesh should establish a mechanism for the swift production and access to real-time data.
- Implementing short courses on climate change and health could play a vital role in increasing awareness among the public and mitigating associated risks.



THE THEMATIC SESSION-1: BURDEN ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND POLLUTION ON PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

AUDIENCE INPUT ON THE SESSION: 01

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

- The Government of Bangladesh ought to formulate a participatory action plan for health.
- Well-designed policies backed by evidence should be a priority.
- Policies and plans should incorporate the involvement of private sectors, recognizing their significance in both production and financing.
- The identification of diseases linked to climate change is crucial, and the establishment of guidelines for an early warning system for climate-induced diseases would be beneficial.
- All development projects should integrate a mechanism aimed at minimizing pollution and its associated health impacts.

COLLABORATION & COMMUNICATION

- Collaborative efforts are essential, and collective action should be prioritized.
- Effective communication with other organizations is vital. Coordination is key, and organizations should communicate their project plans to align efforts effectively.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT & INCLUSION

- Empowering youth to actively address crises is imperative.
- Capacity building for the youth in the climate change and health sectors is necessary.
- Inclusivity is crucial in the adaptation plan, with representation from underprivileged and high-risk groups.

FINANCING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

- Adequate funding is of paramount importance, requiring sufficient allocations for the climate and health sector



THE THEMATIC SESSION-2: BURDEN OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES AND SRHR

Prof Mohammad Robed Amin, Line Director, NCDC, DGH delivered a comprehensive presentation on Non-communicable Diseases (NCD), Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and the interconnection with climate change. During his presentation, Prof Amin emphasized the significant effects of salinity on women's sexual and reproductive health.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PRESENTATION

- Hypertension is linked to exposure to extreme weather conditions
- The prevalence of hyperglycemia is higher in coastal areas compared to other regions of Bangladesh.
- There is a potential connection between environmental factors and behaviors contributing to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).
- Excessive dietary salt intake is associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes.
- The choice of household construction materials is linked to indoor temperature.
- Climate change exacerbates global inequality in maternal nutrition.
- Poor air quality is associated with negative birth outcomes.
- Climate-induced migration amplifies inequality in healthcare utilization.
- Climate change is linked to early marriage and contributes to pregnancy complications and other adverse outcomes.



THE THEMATIC SESSION-2: BURDEN OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES AND SRHR

AUDIENCE INPUT ON THE SESSION

An open discussion session was facilitated by Prof. Mizan Khan. Where participants actively engaged in a fruitful discussion. Some of the colleagues also shared their study findings and outcomes on similar content discussed by Prof. Amin. Suggestions from the participants are:

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

- The development of a National Health Adaptation Plan is currently imperative.
- Building a resilient health system should be the foremost priority for the Bangladesh Government.
- The promotion and implementation of green health should be promoted and practiced.
- The national adaptation plan should conscientiously integrate the health sector.
- The existing pollution control law in Bangladesh lags behind WHO and other guidelines; it requires revision and proper implementation.
- All adaptation and mitigation measures should consider the six building blocks of the health system to foster a health-resilient community.
- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) should be included in the adaptation plan.
- Urgent promotion of the health insurance system is needed for Bangladesh.
- The establishment of a dedicated government institute on Environmental Health could play a vital role in promoting climate change and health.

RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION

- Climate change risks vary across the country, necessitating a contextual health assessment in different geographical areas.
- Further research is required to investigate the causes of the high mortality rate.
- The development of a community-based surveillance system could aid in generating local data.
- An international common knowledge-sharing platform is needed to understand how countries with similar geography, such as India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, are experiencing health problems and their solutions.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

- Training and capacity building for health workers are necessary.
- Adequate resource allocation and mobilization are crucial.
- Geophysical variables for risk assessment are necessary before any disaster.

THE THEMATIC SESSION-2: BURDEN OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES AND SRHR

AUDIENCE INPUT ON THE SESSION 2

MONITORING AND EARLY WARNING SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT:

- Health risks vary with different weather and climatic conditions, requiring an early monitoring and warning system.
- Monitoring the carbon footprint in the health system can contribute to the development of a green health system.
- Establishing a mechanism to monitor the government's previous climate commitments is essential.

LEADERSHIP AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

- Promoting climate-transformative leadership with accountability and good governance is essential.
- Local leadership and ownership are important.
- Educating a significant number of youth volunteers about climate change and its health impacts is necessary.
- Involving youth in the development and implementation of the Health National Adaptation Plan is crucial.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

- A multispectral approach is imperative to mitigate climate risks in the health sector

INCLUSION

- Ensuring the health needs of the most vulnerable groups (women, children, adults, disabled individuals) during emergency situations is essential.



REMARKS FROM THE CHIEF GUEST

Mr. Rashid extended his appreciation to all participants for their concerns, recommendations, and contributions in identifying priority areas for the upcoming COP. Echoing the sentiment expressed by UN Secretary Antonio Guterres that "We entered the era of Global Boiling", he conveyed his deep concern about the urgency of the current situation. Emphasizing the importance of preparation, prevention, and response in addressing health challenges due to climate change, he highlighted the need to establish a group of climate health ambassadors to confront these challenges.

Mr. Rashid stressed the necessity of youth empowerment, acknowledging the commitment of the younger generation to drive change on both national and international platforms. He reiterated the importance of a comprehensive approach that involves all stakeholders, recognizing that the government alone cannot combat climate change. He earnestly called on everyone to step forward with a collaborative spirit, emphasizing the collective effort required to address the complex issues at hand.

“ We have some obligations, the change will not come in a single day, and you also have to work. Health is no longer solely the responsibility of the health and planning department, but has become intricately linked with the Department of Environment and Climate Change ”



CLOSING:

The dialogue concluded with closing remarks from Nayoka Martinez Backstrom, First Secretary and Deputy Head of Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden in Dhaka. In her concluding statements, she conveyed gratitude to both the speakers and participants. She emphasized that the health issue links not just to the climate adaptation and loss & damage agendas, but also with mitigation through increased work with green and resilient healthcare systems. Lastly, she expressed optimism for future collaboration and experience sharing, saying that the event today has planted the seeds of a broader platform on climate and health, and this should be followed up after COP 28.



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The health sector is an area of
Climate Action, not just for
adaptation and loss &
damage, but also mitigation.
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PARTICIPANT LIST

SL	Name	Organization	Designation
1	Farzana Misha	BRAC University	Assistant Professor
2	Prof. Malay Kanti Mridha	BRAC University	Professor
3	Rashid Zaman	British High Commission	Health Adviser
4	Dr. Md. Shafiqul Islam	British High Commission	Health Adviser
5	Imran Hossain	Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF)	CVF fellow
6	Jyotiraj Patra	Concern worldwide	Programme Director (Management)
7	Prof. Md. Robed Amin	Directorate General of Health Services	Line director NCDC
8	Sadia Jahan Rothi	Eco Network	Board director
9	Shamim Ahmed	Eco Network	Founder and Director
10	H.E. Alexandra Berg von Linde	Embassy of Sweden	Ambassador
11	Dr. Daniel Novak	Embassy of Sweden	First secretary -Health
12	Nayoka M. Backstorm	Embassy of Sweden	First Secretary-Environment & Climate Change
13	Mostafizur Rahman	Embassy of Sweden	National Programme Officer
14	Dr. Zahirul Islam	Embassy of Sweden	Health Adviser
15	Sofia Soneborg	Embassy of Sweden	Intern
16	Prof. Mizan R khan	ICCCAD	Deputy Director
17	Juel Mahmud	ICCCAD	Project Manager
18	Maria Aktar	ICCCAD	Assistant Manager
19	Ahsan Habib	ICCCAD	IT Support Officer
20	Joyee Chakma	ICCCAD	Youth Representative
21	Naznine Nahar	ICCCAD	Project Officer Youth
22	Magnus Mayeen Ahmed	ICCCAD	COMMS Head
23	Habibur Rahman	ICCCAD	Research Officer
24	Gausia Islam Keya	ICCCAD	Project Assistant
25	Tamanna Hannan	ICCCAD	Research Intern
26	Nafis Imtiaz	ICCCAD	Research Intern
27	Dr. Monzoor Ahmed Hanifi	icddr,b	Head of the Climate Change and Health
28	Dr. Peter Kim Streatfield	icddr,b	Health System and Population Studies
29	Mahin Al Nahian	icddr,b	Research Investigator, Climate Change and Health
30	Dr. Rubhana Raqib	icddr,b	Senior Scientist, Immunobiology, Nutrition and Toxicology
31	Dr Mohammad Ferdous Rahman Sarker	Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR)	Senior scientific officer & program manager
32	Aruba Faruque	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW)	Adolescent Ambassador for Climate & Health
33	Md Firoz Khan	North South University	Associate Professor
34	Abdus Salam	Partners in Health & Development (PHD)	Managing Director
35	Mr. Tajwar Hoque	Sajida Foundation	Director
36	Dr. Hamain Ahmed	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Health Officer
37	Didarul Alam	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Consultant, Environmental Health
38	Dr. Dewan Md. Emdadul Hoque	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	Health System specialist
39	Azmal Hossain	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	
40	Wameq Raza	World Bank	Senior Health specialist
41	Iffat Mahmud	World Bank	Senior Operation Officer
42	Sohanur Rahman	Youthnet	Youth climate activist