

# Climate Change, Shelter and Health

## How is climate change affecting health?

Climate change is already challenging people's health and well-being in many ways, overwhelmingly affecting disadvantaged and marginalised communities and exacerbating existing health inequities. Particular health issues caused or worsened by climate change include:

- conditions (e.g. cardiovascular disease) triggered or exacerbated by extreme heat and heat/humidity events
- respiratory and cardiovascular conditions related to air pollution (including from wildfire smoke)
- spread of [vector-borne](#) and water-borne diseases and spread of new diseases, including those transmitted from animals to humans
- illness, injury and death caused by people's vulnerability to floods, storms and fires
- food insecurity and associated under-nutrition and malnutrition
- clean water availability for drinking and hygiene
- effects on livelihoods, [migration](#) and [conflict](#) and disruption of health services and access to health services due to extreme weather events

Climate change also impacts mental health and psychosocial well-being:

- continual catastrophic narratives of climate change exacerbate mental distress, particularly among young people, even for individuals who are not directly affected (e.g. 'eco-anxiety')
- extreme weather events trigger severe distress
- people who meet criteria for mental illness can be more vulnerable to the effects of climate change on physical as well as mental health

## What do we already know about [Shelter and Health](#)?

There are clear connections between [living conditions and health](#). The ways that inadequate housing disproportionately impacts the health and well-being of different genders, different ages, and different abilities should be given particular attention.

The design of emergency and recovery sheltering must consider:

- Vector-borne diseases (e.g. malaria). Implications for: window and door screening, action on drainage + standing water in settlements.
- Water-borne diseases (e.g. cholera, diarrhoea). Implications for integration with WASH to improve access to safe and adequate latrines/toilets, ideally at household level. Access to adequate clean water, washing facilities - rainwater harvesting?
- Airborne diseases (e.g. Covid-19) and conditions related to overcrowding and air quality (e.g. pneumonia). Implications for ventilation, cooking space and cooking/heating fuel. Co-benefits of increasing access to clean fuels: reduced greenhouse gas emissions and particulate pollution.
- Extreme temperatures are damaging to health, especially for older and younger people. Implications for building design and materials.

Additionally, there are connections between [crises, sheltering and mental health](#):

- Living conditions during displacement have a comparable impact on people's mental health and psychosocial well-being as the initial trigger and experience of a crisis.
- HOW shelter programming is designed and implemented can protect the mental health of affected populations.
- There are opportunities to make connections between Shelter and MHPSS actors.

## How should Shelter and Settlements actors respond now?

- Adequate housing is a foundational human right. Adequate housing promotes physical and mental health.
- People without access to adequate housing are more vulnerable to climate change and its impacts on health and well-being.
- Shelter and Settlements actors have a role to play in facilitating access to adequate housing, enabling healthier homes and communities.
- Emergency shelter and post-disaster housing needs to be safer AND healthier AND account for expected environmental changes.

- What are the priorities for next steps? How do these relate to the [Climate Charter](#)?
- What **information**, **tools** and **advocacy** are needed now?

### 1. What **information/training materials** are useful? For what audiences?

- See [example summary documents](#) about shelter and health
- What specific support, resources, capacity strengthening does the Shelter sector need regarding climate change?

### 2. What **tools / skills / resources** are required?

- Healthier and safer homes and communities require cross-sectoral collaboration, data sharing and practical integration.

#### **Multi-sector and integrated working:**

- How can [integration between Shelter and WASH](#) improve health and well-being?
- How can **Shelter and MHPSS** actors collaborate to ensure attention is given to the mental health of all people involved in humanitarian crises?
- To what extent do **context analyses** include information on endemic health risks as well as climate change risk information? How to include these aspects of the context in programming?
- How can **IEC materials** incorporate health as well as safety aspects of housing?
- **MEAL**: how to capture multi-sectoral outcomes and the 'wider impacts' of shelter programming, including on health and well-being? See [What Impact? Kelling, 2021](#).

### 3. What **science** and **advocacy** are required? What are the **key messages, communication modes, and audiences**?

What are the **TOP 5 next steps**? Who, what, when?