



सत्यमेव जयते

Ministry of Health And Family Welfare
Government of India

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Amrit Mahotsav

BEST PRACTICE DOCUMENT CLIMATE CHANGE AND MENTAL HEALTH



National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE



National Programme
on Climate Change
and Human Health

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I. INTRODUCTION

Objective and scope

This best practice document is intended to provide policymakers and Mental Health practitioners in development cooperation agencies with information and advice on how to mainstream climate change and its effect on Mental Health. It is a joint endeavour by the National Centre for Disease Control and various Centre of Excellence in response to the rapidly changing climate.

Objective: Promote understanding of the implications of climate change on mental health and the associated need to mainstream climate adaptation in every state of the country.

- Identify appropriate approaches for integrating mental health adaptation into development policies at national, state and district levels
- Identify practical ways to educate and reach out to people about mental health and Climate change.

Structure

The best practice document is divided into following parts:

Part I – Understanding the Challenge

Part II- Adaptation

Part III – Integrating Climate Change and Mental Health Adaptation at National, State and District Levels

II. UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES

The relationship between climate change and mental health is a newly recognized, but rapidly growing concern. As the impacts of climate change become more widespread and severe, they will have significant and far-reaching consequences for individuals and communities worldwide. Climate change impacts, such as heat-related deaths, the spread of vector-borne diseases, and reduced access to natural resources, are already affecting the basic elements of life, such as access to water, food production and health. These impacts will also have indirect consequences on mental health, including the development of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.

To address the interplay between climate change and mental health, it is essential to consider the impacts of climate change on both physical and mental health, and to develop integrated and comprehensive responses. This will require collaboration between health and environmental sectors, as well as the integration of mental health considerations into climate adaptation and mitigation strategies..

The impacts of climate change are expected to become more severe and widespread in the coming years, highlighting the need for immediate and effective action. While it is important to implement mitigation strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it is equally crucial to implement adaptation measures to help communities cope with the consequences of climate change.

One effective way to build resilience against the impacts of climate change is to invest in poverty reduction, improved nutrition, education, environmental management, and sustainable livelihood options. A population that is healthier, better educated, and has greater access to resources will be better able to cope with the challenges posed by climate change, including its impacts on mental health.

However, to truly address the issue of climate change and its impacts on mental health, it is crucial to incorporate this into mainstream health policies, economic policies, development projects, and international aid efforts. Climate change is not just an environmental issue, but a multi-dimensional challenge that affects health, education, economic growth, and social stability. To address this complex challenge, a comprehensive and coordinated approach is required that considers the interplay between physical and mental health and the impacts of climate change on both.

Target audience

The best practice document on climate change adaptation and mental health is specifically aimed at state-level decision-makers, health care providers, and those responsible for the delivery of mental health services. This includes State nodal officers, teams responsible for the District Mental Health Program (DMHP), medical officers, Community Health Officers (CHOs), and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs).

However, the best practice document can also be useful to a wider audience, including development practitioners, climate change negotiators, practitioners, and policy analysts. These individuals and communities can benefit from a deeper understanding of the development processes and governance contexts that influence decisions on climate change adaptation, as well as the interplay between physical and mental health and the impacts of climate change.

Therefore, it is important to ensure that the best practice document is widely disseminated and easily accessible to all relevant stakeholders, including those working at the local, national, and international levels. This will help build a shared understanding of the importance of addressing the mental health impacts of climate change, and encourage the development and implementation of effective adaptation measures that promote resilience and well-being.

III. ADAPTATION

Adaptation is a crucial aspect of mitigating the impacts of climate change on both human and natural systems. It involves a range of changes, including behavioural, structural, and technical modifications. The duration, scope, purpose, and implementing agents of adaptation measures can vary, ranging from short-term to long-term, localised to regional, autonomous to planned, passive to active, and private to public. Examples of adaptation methods include mental health facilities, diversification of livelihoods, flood defence systems , and land-use planning. The need for adaptation to changing environmental and climatic conditions is not a new concept. Throughout history, societies have had to adjust to fluctuations or changes in their climate, using a variety of strategies and information gathered from previous climatic events. Extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, have forced society to respond and cope with these challenges. It is important to recognize that adaptation is not a one-time solution but an ongoing process that requires continuous monitoring, evaluation, and improvement.

Climate change brings with it unprecedented and novel risks that are beyond the scope of historical experience. These risks include rising temperatures and sea levels, changes in precipitation patterns, melting of glaciers and permafrost, and increased intensity and frequency of natural disasters such as droughts, heat waves, floods, and hurricanes, leading to mental health problems. Historical experience cannot be relied upon as a guide for adapting to these impacts. Despite a long history of dealing with climate variability, many societies and sectors remain inadequately prepared for current climate conditions. To enhance resilience to the current climate and better prepare for the impacts of climate change, adaptation must be undertaken by a diverse range of actors, including individuals, communities, civil society, governments, and private entities. Effective adaptation will require these actors to consider and internalise the current and future risks associated with climate change while considering the uncertainties involved.

Adaptation is crucial in addressing the mental health impacts of climate change. Climate change not only affects physical health but also mental well-being, as it can lead to stress, anxiety, and depression due to environmental degradation, displacement, and loss of community and cultural heritage.

Adaptation strategies that focus on mental health include

- Promoting coping mechanisms: This can involve providing awareness, education and training on mental health issues/stress management and coping strategies, as well as promoting traditional healing practices in communities.
- Building community resilience: This can be achieved by strengthening community networks, promoting community involvement in adaptation planning, and encouraging collective action to address the impacts of climate change.
- Increasing access to mental health facilities and support services: This can be achieved by increasing funding for mental health services and establishing mental health clinics in vulnerable communities.

In addition to these strategies, policy changes are also needed to effectively address the mental health impacts of climate change. This can include:

- Incorporating mental health considerations into climate adaptation planning: Mental health impacts should be considered in the development of climate adaptation plans and policies.
- Integrating mental health services into disaster response and recovery efforts: Mental health services should be made available to individuals affected by climate-related disasters and should be integrated into disaster response and recovery efforts.
- Providing support to vulnerable populations: Vulnerable populations, such as women, children, and indigenous communities, are disproportionately affected by the mental health impacts of climate change. Policies should provide support to these populations to address their specific needs and concerns.

IV. INTEGRATING CLIMATE CHANGE AND MENTAL HEALTH ADAPTATION AT NATIONAL, STATE AND DISTRICT LEVELS

For this best practice, the "National level" encompasses authorities or organisations with nationwide responsibility. National-level authorities have an influence down to the state, municipal and local levels. Government agencies have a role to play in facilitating the integration of adaptation at the national level. Ministries of Planning and Finance will be central to mainstream climate change adaptation into the policy planning process, and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to support adaptation.

Improving access to national-level climate information

One of the most significant requirements for making educated adaptation decisions is that they are based on the best available knowledge about the country's present and future climate impacts. This contains data on present climate and extremes, climate change forecasts, and effect and vulnerability assessments. Identify priority activities that respond to their urgent and immediate Mental health needs.

At the central level

Center for Environmental and Occupational Health, Climate Change and Health (CEOH & CCH) Division of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) will be involved in

- Provision of technical inputs and support to state and UTs on the various components of the programme, including awareness generation, capacity building, health care preparedness, inter-sectoral coordination, and research and development
- Execution of the components of NPCCHH.
- Monitor progress of implementation of all the components of the programme.
- Obtain reports from States on various activities under the programme
- Production and dissemination of prototypes standard guideline, manual, modules, IEC materials for training and awareness generation on climate change and health issues
- Intersectoral coordination with central agencies, NGO and other organisations
- Support States and UTs for development of health adaptation plan and operational guidelines for climate sensitive health issues.
- Organising periodic review meetings, field observations, workshops, meetings regarding implementation of NPCCHH.

- Strengthening health care preparedness through green measures and surveillance systems
- Strengthening of health care system by involving premiere institutes and organisations for development of guideline, training manual, IEC etc

State Level:

The States are responsible for implementing programme activities in conformity with the national guidelines through the State Environment Cell established at Department of Health and Family Welfare.

State level Committee: The State to constitute State Governing Body for policy decision with respect to climate change and human health and State Level Task Force for implementation of the State Action Plan for Climate Change and Human Health (SAPCCHH) in their State/UT.

State Environment Cell is supported by State Nodal Officer and Consultant at the State level for rolling out the programme activities.

- Awareness generation through IEC, mass media on climate sensitive health issues
- Organising and coordination of all training, capacity building programmes, meetings on climate sensitive health issues
- Analysis of all data received form the district and transmitting to the centre
- Coordination with other related programs in the State /District on climate change and human health along with intersectoral coordination
- Implementation of State Action Plan on Climate Change and Human Health
- Monitor programme, review meetings, field observations.
- Timely issue of warning/ alerts to health professionals and related stakeholders as well as general public through campaign or using mass media
- Social mobilisation against preventive measures through involvement of women self-help groups, community leaders, NGOs etc.

District Level:

The focal point of all programme related activities at the periphery is the District Environmental Cell established at the Office of Chief Medical Office.

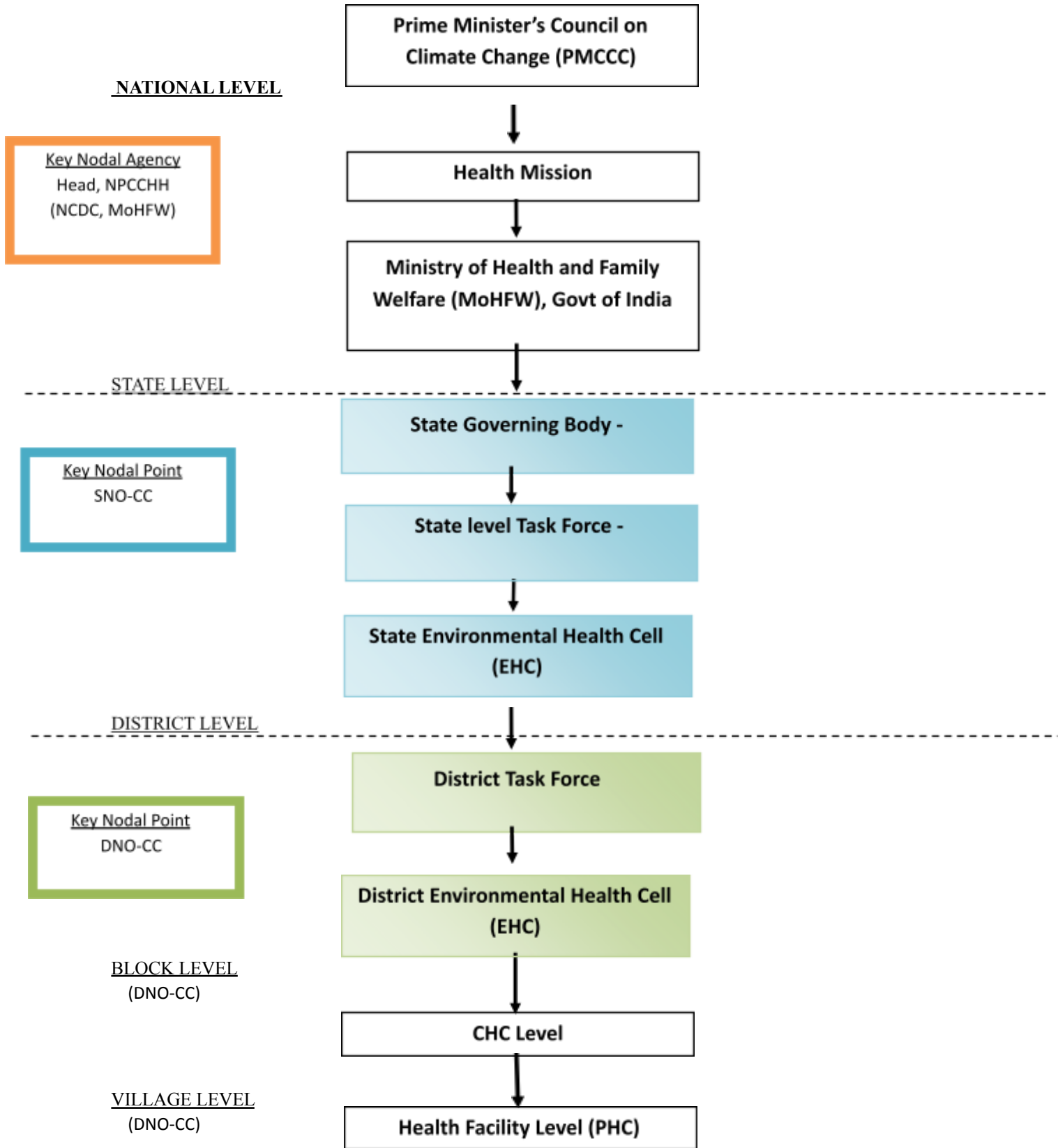
District level Committee: The District to constitute the District Level Task Force for

implementation of the District Action Plan for Climate Change and Human Health.

District Environmental Cell is headed by District Nodal Officer plays a key role in functioning of the programme activities

- Awareness generation through IEC, mass media on climate sensitive health issues
- Vulnerability assessment and risk mapping of climate sensitive health issues
- Organise training/ workshop and meetings with respect to climate sensitive health issues
- Implementation of District Action Plan on Climate Change and Human Health.
- Maintain physical, financial, epidemiological profile for climate sensitive health issues.
- Timely issue of warning/ alerts to health professionals and related stakeholders as well as general public through campaign or using mass media
- Social mobilisation against preventive measures through involvement of women self-help groups, community leaders, NGOs etc.

STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL FLOW OF ACTIVITIES



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