

NOVEMBER 2023

# Heat & Health

## Action Statement from the Global Heat Health Information Network

The Global Heat Health Information Network invites civil society, national governments and the international community to recognize the pressing urgency of addressing the health impacts of extreme heat and take bold, comprehensive, and coordinated actions to protect the well-being of our planet and its people.



### CONTEXT

Extreme heat is an urgent and growing threat to human health, exacerbated by the escalating effects of climate change. Rising global temperatures have led to an increase in the frequency and intensity of heatwaves, which pose significant risks to individuals and communities.

Prolonged exposure to extreme heat can lead to a range of health issues, including heatstroke, dehydration, respiratory problems, and exacerbation of existing conditions. Vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, children, and those with preexisting health concerns, are particularly at risk.

Every heat death is preventable. Saving lives demands immediate action in the form of early warning systems, multi-sectoral public policy, public health initiatives, infrastructure improvements, and mitigation of climate change to safeguard human lives.

### KEY MESSAGES

**Heat kills.** All around the world, people are dealing with the life-threatening impacts of unprecedented heat – the deadliest of all extreme weather events

**It's only getting worse.** As the pressures of urbanization and a warming planet collide, preventing heat risk now is paramount.

**We have the tools to save lives.** Rapid action by governments is needed to mitigate climate change, and apply tested solutions, from Early Warning Systems to economic and social policies, and public awareness.



# HEAT HEALTH TARGETS AND ACTIONS

To support the achievement of global policy goals, the Network calls for the following specific targets on heat health action to be implemented in all countries:

## 1. IMPLEMENT PROTECTIVE POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND REGULATIONS

- **Implement comprehensive heat action plans** in all countries that are tailored to local, regional, and national contexts, and adopt an integrated approach that combines meteorological data, public health expertise, and community engagement to effectively address heat-related health risks.
- **Establish and bolster heat early warning systems** in line with the Early Warnings for All initiative, ensuring that vulnerable populations receive timely alerts and assistance.
- **Advocate for increased climate financing**, including grants and concessional loans, to help communities build resilience to adapt to extreme heat, including low-carbon cooling options.

## 2. ENHANCE URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN TO REDUCE URBAN HEAT

- **Use policy to incentivize and facilitate investments** in heat-resilient infrastructure, including green and blue spaces, low-carbon cooling, heat-smart urban planning, and heat-reducing technologies.

## 3. ENHANCE CLIMATE AND METEOROLOGICAL CAPABILITIES TO MONITOR, PREDICT, AND PROVIDE IMPACT BASED FORECASTS AND WARNINGS

- **Develop authoritative early warning systems** to advise the government and the public of seasonal risks and heat extremes.

## 4. PREPARE THE HEALTH SYSTEM AND FACILITIES TO COPE WITH THE IMPACTS OF EXTREME HEAT

- Ensure **heat health action plans establish protocols and procedures** to manage acute heat emergencies.
- **Clinical and pharmaceutical training and preparedness** is critical for ambulatory services facilities, staffing, awareness during heat season.

## 5. PROMOTE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION ABOUT HEAT-RELATED HEALTH RISKS

- Develop and implement **targeted public education campaigns** that raise awareness about extreme heat risks and promote protective personal and social behaviours, particularly among vulnerable populations.
- Mobilize civil society to engage and reach vulnerable populations

## 6. ENCOURAGE RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION AND SHARING ON THE HEALTH IMPACTS OF EXTREME HEAT IN DIFFERENT REGIONS

- **Support research** that assesses the local and regional health impacts of extreme heat to allow for evidence-based policymaking.
- **Promote the establishment of a global heat health information repository** to facilitate international collaboration on research and the development of early warning systems.
- **Encourage international collaboration** on heat health research and data sharing to advance understanding of the health impacts of extreme heat and develop evidence-based policies and interventions.

## 7. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT NATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS TO MANAGE HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

- Create standardized protocols for healthcare professionals to diagnose and treat heat-related conditions, ensuring quality care during heatwaves.

## 8. INTEGRATE CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND HEAT ADAPTATION MEASURES INTO NATIONAL HEALTH SYSTEMS

- Strengthen health infrastructure to handle increased patient volumes during heatwaves and ensure adequate medical supplies and resources are available.
- Invest in healthcare system capacity building, including training and resources, to respond effectively to heat-related illnesses and emergencies. Support capacity building initiatives, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, to enhance their ability to monitor and respond to extreme heat events.

## 9. REDUCE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS TO MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, INCLUDING EXTREME HEAT EVENTS

- Implement policies and initiatives to reduce carbon emissions for equitable cooling access; and promote sustainable land use and transportation.
- Transition to renewable energy sources which are more reliable during heatwave events when power-infrastructure may be compromised.

## 10. MONITOR PROGRESS AND REPORT ON HEAT-RELATED HEALTH OUTCOMES.

- Establish a framework and guidance to track the impacts of heat in standardized ways; and the effectiveness of local and national interventions and adaptation strategies.

# CONSIDERATIONS TO INCREASE SUCCESS IN REACHING HEAT HEALTH TARGETS

## Integrated and Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

The broad impacts of heat demand a collaborative response and health-in-all-policies approach. Governments, health institutions, environmental agencies, and communities must work together to address heat emergencies. Experts from diverse fields like public health, labor, medicine, environment, architecture, and urban planning all play crucial roles. Integrated partnerships and information systems are key to preparing for extreme heat, bringing together expertise, and delivering timely, actionable information to reduce health risks during heatwaves.

## Heat Equity

Prioritize equity in heat action planning by addressing the vulnerabilities of different groups, and develop health protection measures for marginalized and disadvantaged communities, including low-income neighborhoods and indigenous populations,

## International Cooperation

Recognize that the impacts of extreme heat transcend national borders, and international cooperation is crucial to share knowledge, resources, and best practices in heat action planning.

## Data Sharing and Analysis

Open data principles promote transparency, collaboration, and informed decision-making in heat health. Accessible climate, health and other relevant data aids policymakers, researchers, and communities in understanding heat risks and targeting interventions to help the most vulnerable.

## Technology Innovation

Encourage the development of innovative and low cost technologies, such as heat-resilient building materials, building design, and cooling solutions, to reduce heat-related health risks.

## Community Engagement

Empower local communities to actively participate in heat action planning and decision-making processes to ensure that interventions are contextually relevant and effective, and are accessible to marginalised groups.

Learn more and  
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The Network invites interested stakeholders  
to connect with us to discuss collaboration  
and partnership opportunities.



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# HEAT HEALTH AND GLOBAL POLICY FRAMEWORKS



The COP28 Sharm–El–Sheik Adaptation Agenda:  
Health outcome target 2:

**Multi-sectoral heat action plans and health-sector action plans protect high risk populations (older persons, workers, impoverished, marginalized) for 50% of the populations exposed to extreme heat.**

Achieving this target can also help meet commitments to the Paris Agreement, Sendai Framework, Sustainable Development Goals, and Early Warnings for All initiative.



## About us

The **Global Heat Health Information Network** is an independent, voluntary, and member-driven forum of scientists, practitioners, and policy makers focused on improving capacity to protect populations from the avoidable health risks of extreme heat in our changing climate.

As an initiative of the World Health Organization and World Meteorological Organization we are dedicated to building the capacity of partners and governments to address the rapidly escalating risks posed by extreme heat.

As we convene at COP28, we emphasize that no one should die of heat, and that proactive and comprehensive measures can build community and health system resilience to rising heat.

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