

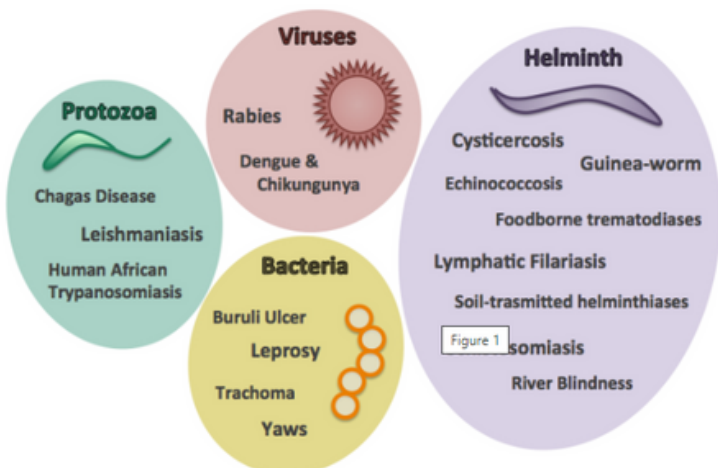
THE DOUBLE BURDEN OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND NEGLECTED TROPICAL DISEASES ON AFRICAN HEALTH: AN URGENT CALL FOR ACTION

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Climate change is a global challenge that affects everyone, but it disproportionately affects the health of people living in low- and middle-income countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In this region, the burden of climate change is compounded by the prevalence of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), which are endemic in many areas. The double burden of climate change and NTDs presents a significant threat to the health and wellbeing of millions of people in Africa, making urgent action necessary.

Neglected tropical diseases are a group of parasitic and bacterial infections that are prevalent in tropical and subtropical regions, where poverty, poor sanitation, and lack of access to clean water are common. These diseases, including dengue fever, leprosy, river blindness, and trachoma, affect over 1.5 billion people worldwide, with sub-Saharan Africa being the most affected region. NTDs cause chronic disability, disfigurement, and reduced productivity, which have serious economic and social consequences for individuals, communities, and countries.

Neglected Tropical Diseases



Climate change exacerbates the spread of NTDs by creating favorable conditions for disease vectors and hosts to thrive. Warmer temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns, and increased humidity create ideal conditions for the survival and reproduction of insects, such as mosquitoes, sandflies, and tsetse flies, that transmit NTDs. Climate change also affects water availability and quality, which can lead to the spread of waterborne diseases like schistosomiasis and Guinea worm disease.

The double burden of climate change and NTDs is a significant challenge for African health systems. The already fragile health systems in many African countries are ill-equipped to handle the increasing burden of NTDs, which are often neglected in favor of more high-profile diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. The added burden of climate change exacerbates the situation, making it even more difficult to control and eliminate NTDs.

To address the double burden of climate change and NTDs, urgent action is needed. African governments and international organizations must prioritize NTDs in their health agendas and invest in interventions that prevent and control these diseases. These interventions include the use of insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent mosquito-borne diseases, mass drug administration to treat and prevent NTDs, and improvements in water, sanitation, and hygiene. Climate change mitigation efforts must also be prioritized to reduce the impact of climate change on NTDs. These efforts include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting sustainable agriculture, and improving access to clean energy. Health systems must also be strengthened to better respond to the double burden of NTDs and climate change.

In conclusion, the double burden of climate change and NTDs presents a significant threat to African health, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Urgent action is needed to prevent and control NTDs and mitigate the impact of climate change. By addressing the double burden of climate change and NTDs, we can improve the health and wellbeing of millions of people in Africa and reduce the economic and social burden of these diseases.