

## **Climate Change: Research Needed for the Health of Vulnerable Populations**

GENEVA, 7 April 2008—The Global Forum for Health Research, an independent international foundation based in Geneva, today called urgently for research on ways to protect the health of the world's poorest populations from climate change.

The threats posed by global climate change will increase and compound the health problems of all the world's people, but particularly those in the developing world and notably large populations in Asia and Africa, including the populations of many small island states. Millions of people are at risk of health problems stemming from floods, drought, windstorms and the spread of disease enabled by warming temperatures.

"Most research relating to climate change and health conducted to date has been financed and conducted in high-income countries and has paid little attention to the particular health needs of low- and middle-income countries," concludes a report published today on the Global Forum's website [www.globalforumhealth.org](http://www.globalforumhealth.org).

Research has already shown that the developing world is likely to be severely affected by rising air temperatures and warming waters, as well as by increasing monsoons and storms. Additionally, infectious diseases are spreading into areas once too cold for them to persist. The impact on health is already being felt. (1)

Professor Stephen Matlin, the Global Forum's Executive Director, says that the key issue for the Global Forum is the urgent need for research into the direct and indirect impacts of climate change on the health of the poor. "Research can make vital contributions to mitigating the impacts of climate change on the health of the poor and to enabling adaptations to those changes that are unavoidable," he added. "In our opinion, this research must be multidisciplinary, cross-sectoral and developed with a strong focus on poverty and equity."

While the report recognizes that research to mitigate the effects of greenhouse gases and reduce their impact on climate is absolutely essential, it notes that significant climate change already appears inevitable and research on ways to respond is critical. Efforts should continue in both areas; neither stream of research can replace the other, it says.

The next steps will be to establish the research agenda on ways to counter climate change threats to the health of the world's poorest populations. Then the resources to implement priorities on the agenda must be quickly found and the results used to focus policies and action. (2)

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### *Notes for editors*

(1) According to studies by the World Health Organization, there were already 150,000 extra deaths due to climate change in 2000, with the vast majority occurring in low- and middle-income countries.

(2) The Global Forum is one of six co-organizers of the Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health, November 17-19, in Bamako, Mali, where the impact of climate change on health will be a key topic. See [www.bamako2008.org](http://www.bamako2008.org)