

## Development of a Core Curriculum on Climate Change and Its Health Implications

### Background

Climate change is any long-term significant change in the “average weather” that a given region experiences. It is likely to have a significant impact on the global environment. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (*IPPC,2007*) reports:

- an increasing trend in mean surface air temperature in SEA during the past decades with 0.1-0.3 °C increase per decade between 1951-2000
- the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events have also increased in recent decades. There are more heat waves such as increase in the number of hot days and warm nights;
- significant increase in the number of heavy precipitations events; and
- an increase in the number of tropical cyclone.

The report prepared by the Global Humanitarian Forum, *Anatomy of a Silent Crisis*, focused on the human impact of climate change and indicates that:

- every year climate change leaves over 300,000 people dead, 325 million people seriously affected, and causes economic losses of US\$125 billion; and
- four billion people are vulnerable, 500 million people are at extreme risk which represent averages based on projected trends over many years.

Today, the world experiences over 400 weather-related disasters per year with almost 90 million people requiring immediate assistance due to personal injury, property loss, exposure to epidemics, disease, or shortages of food and fresh water.

Climate change has serious impact on the four dimensions of food security: (i) food availability; (ii) food accessibility; (iii) food utilization; and (iv) food system stability.

The direct threats of climate change to human health include:

- heat stress;
- vector-borne diseases ;(malaria, dengue)
- water-related diseases like diarrhea
- malnutrition

Indirectly, climate change could cause injuries and deaths as a result of landslide, flash floods, and tropical cyclones.

The most vulnerable ecological and socio-economic systems are those with the greatest sensitivity to climate change and the least ability to adapt. The most vulnerable people are the landless, poor and isolated. Southeast Asia is considered as one of the most vulnerable region to climate change due to :

- its long coastlines;
- high concentration of population and economic activities in coastal areas
- heavy reliance on agriculture for livelihood
- high dependence on natural resources and forestry in most countries

Efforts are currently being exerted to tackle the issue of climate change at the international, regional and national levels. The International framework for action recommends a prudent response to climate change which is to adopt a portfolio of actions aimed at mitigation, adaptation and research.

### **Rationale**

The academe and the health professionals have a role to play in ensuring that every individual understands the concept and implications of climate change given the fact that:

*“there is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years are attributable to human activities”.*

Recognition of everybody that climate change is an issue of importance and has enormous implications on health will contribute to advocacy efforts and political actions to tackle mitigation and adaptation. The most important need is to empower countries and communities to understand climate implications and to take action. Health professionals and academia have an important role to play in this arena. Academics should lead advocacy within their own area of influence. Advocacy efforts should be implemented to ensure that the health implications of climate change should be placed high in the agenda of every research and development funder, philanthropists, academic journal, scientific conference, professional meeting, and university and/or school curriculum.

The SEAMEO TROPMED Network is composed of training and research institutions. These institutions have the opportunities through its academic programme offerings to ensure that the Network is fulfilling its role in advocacy efforts in climate change.

Climate Change and Its health implications was the topic for the Thematic Symposium during the 49<sup>th</sup> GBM of SEAMEO TROPMED Network. The body unanimously agreed that climate change is a legitimate concern of the Network especially since all areas of

concern of the Centres are important considerations of the issue. The Network committed to undertake several activities for the next 12 months two of which are to :

- ✚ The Network should bring the issue into a higher level of discussion (ministerial level) utilizing different approaches and channels and starting with the SEAMEO officials
- ✚ A core curriculum should be developed that can be integrated into the training programs of the Network and can also be shared with the member countries for utilization.

A policy forum on Climate Change and Health Implications to address the first commitment is planned to be organized back to back with the 50<sup>th</sup> GBM of the Network scheduled on 7-9 September 2011 in Bangkok.

This consultative meeting is being organized by the Network to fulfill the second commitment.

### **Purpose of the Meeting**

Develop a core curriculum on climate change and its health implications that can be integrated in the course/program offerings of the Centres

### **Specific objectives**

- Review existing course materials on climate change and health implications
- Identify competencies needed by proposed trainees
- Develop educational goal
- Define course objectives
- Develop the outline for the course
- Identify module writers

### **Duration, Date**

A three-day consultative workshop will be organized tentatively scheduled 28-30 June 2011 in Bangkok, Thailand.

### **Participants**

Representatives from the three Regional Centres and the Network Office, representatives from selected member countries and climate change expert will be invited.