

# Call for Case Studies: Mental Health Interventions in the Face of a Changing Climate



December 10, 2024

The WHO European Centre for Environment and Health (ECEH) in Bonn, Germany is seeking examples of interventions to protect and promote mental health in the face of climate change in the WHO European Region. With this call, ECEH aims to map existing interventions related to different mental health outcomes (e.g., eco-anxiety, functional disorders), different manifestations of climate change (e.g., heat waves, loss of livelihood), undertaken at various levels (e.g., national, local), targeting different population groups (e.g., youth, frontline workers), and providing different levels of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)<sup>i</sup> (e.g., mental health care, awareness building, community strengthening).

## How will the collection of case studies be used?

The mapping of case studies will help to document activities already underway in the WHO European Region, to identify current gaps, and to promote further action. This information will feed into a planned WHO policy brief on mental health and climate change.

In addition, selected case studies may be featured as good practice examples on the WHO website, the European Climate and Health Observatory website, or during WHO led events. We will liaise with contributors of selected submissions to further elaborate on these interventions.

## What should a case study look like?

We are looking for projects, programmes, partnerships, policies, and other initiatives which aim at protecting and promoting mental health in the face of climate change as the overall goal or partial goal of a wider intervention (see endnote<sup>ii</sup> for some examples). Case studies should fulfil the following criteria to be eligible for further analysis and possibly publication:

- ☑ **Geographic region and scale:** Must be located in the WHO European Region, at any level (sub-regional, national, subnational, or local level).
- ☑ **Sector and organization:** May come from any sector or organization (e.g., governmental/public organizations, non-governmental organizations, professional organizations, organizations representing patients, youth, and other civil society groups); they are NOT restricted to the health sector.
- ☑ **Objective:** Must have a specific goal on climate change-related mental health outcomes<sup>iii</sup> in the planning and implementation phase.
- ☑ **Interventions:** May include, but are not limited to, activities related to clinical support, community support, policy development, advocacy, communication, or awareness raising.

## How to submit a case study?

You are invited to submit information through the following link:

<https://extranet.who.int/dataformv6/index.php/611299?lang=en>

It takes approximately 30 minutes to complete the case study template, which mostly consists of multiple-choice questions covering the basic details of each intervention. You will be required to provide a project summary (mandatory, max. 5000 characters); additional information on specific text questions is optional. In the final step, you are asked to provide links to any reference documents (e.g., websites, publications) and can upload pictures, maps, or graphics (optional).

**The deadline for submissions of case study interventions is January 15, 2025.** Only complete submissions can be considered for the mapping and case study selection.

Any questions can be directed to [lawlorc@who.int](mailto:lawlorc@who.int). Please be prepared for follow up emails to provide further information.

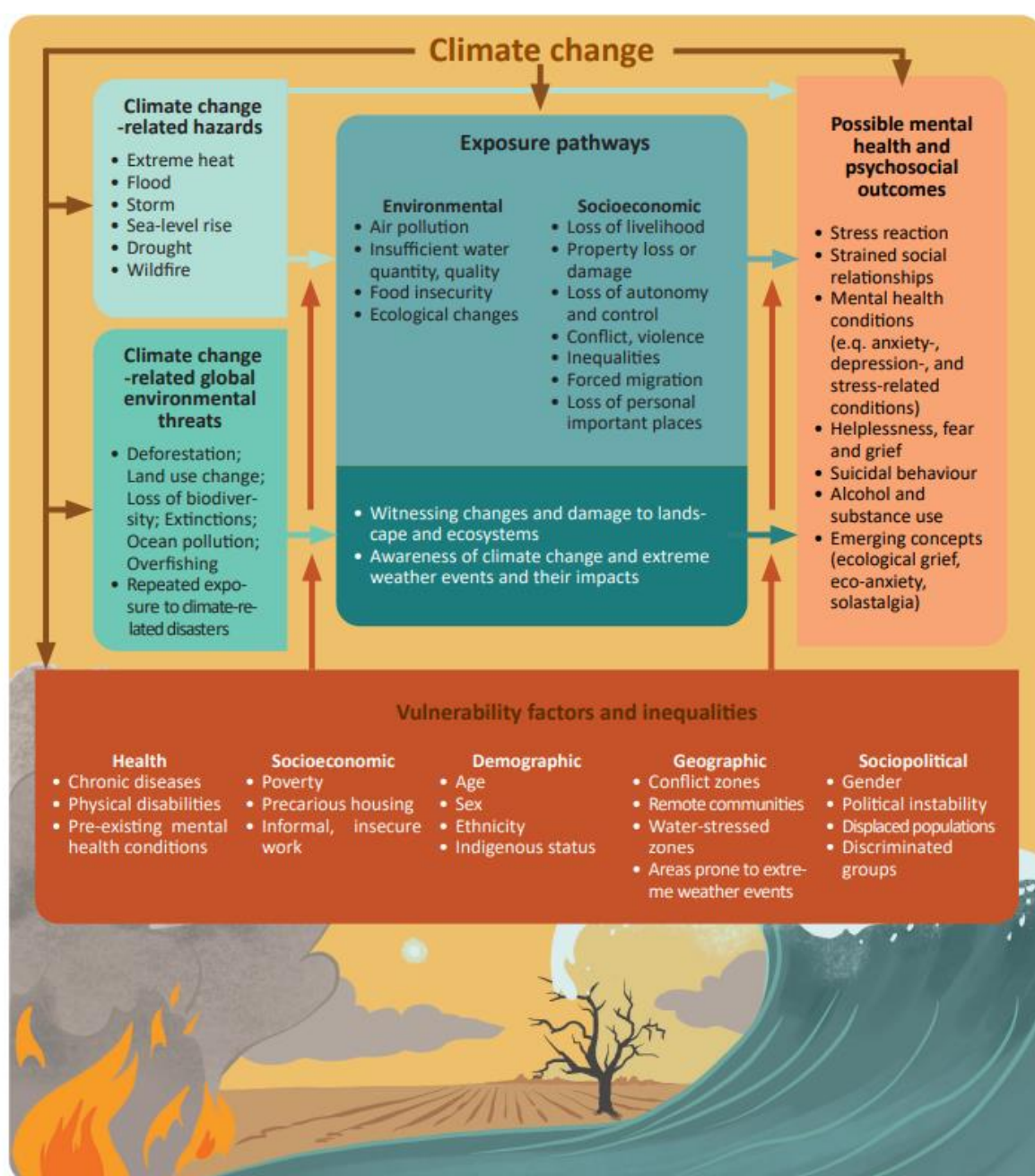
## Background to this call

Climate change poses an increasing threat to mental health and psychosocial well-being due to acute hazards and slower-onset threats.<sup>iv, v</sup> Mental health conditions can range from emotional distress and eco-anxiety to post-traumatic stress disorder (Figure 1).

Climate change also affects many of the social determinants that are already causing an increasing mental health burden globally; some groups are disproportionately affected due to their gender, age, or socio-economic situation (Figure 1). The mental health of young people and future generations is an issue of particular concern.<sup>vi</sup>

The current knowledge about the links between climate change and mental health has been summarised by WHO in a policy brief.<sup>iv</sup> The brief also presents five approaches to advance work in this area, including the integration of MHPSS into climate change strategies, plans, and programs, and vice versa.

Figure 1. Main interlinkages between climate change and mental health (WHO, 2022)<sup>iv</sup>



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- <sup>i</sup> The composite term “mental health and psychosocial support” (MHPSS) is used to describe “any type of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial well-being and/or prevent or treat mental health condition”. (IASC, 2007 quoted after: Handbook Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Coordination. Geneva: Inter-Agency Standing Committee; 2022 (<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-reference-group-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-emergency-settings/iasc-handbook-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-coordination>; accessed 10 Dec 2024).
- <sup>ii</sup> Examples of interventions (non-exhaustive list): Mental health support provided to communities during and in the aftermath of a climate-change related emergency such as a flood events; Initiatives that activate social networks and strengthen community support, for example, to address eco-anxiety among youth; Projects that aim at increasing the awareness of populations (e.g., communities, first responders, healthcare workers) on the mental health impacts associated with climate change; Interventions and support to farmers whose livelihoods are affected by climate change (e.g., droughts); Mental health programs that provide support to people with underlying mental health conditions before and after climate-related events (e.g., special notification before a heat wave); Women’s Organizations addressing the intersection of climate change, mental health, and gender-based violence; National policies and programmes that integrate mental health and climate change considerations into emergency planning, social protection and other related programs.
- <sup>iii</sup> WHO defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.” (WHO, 2022)<sup>ii</sup> Conditions may include but are not limited to depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, psychotic disorders, substance use, self-harm and suicide, pre-existing / co-morbid mental health conditions, psychological and emotional impacts such as eco-anxiety and distress from loss of home, place and community, cognitive, functional and behavioural impacts, such as impacts on everyday activities, pregnancy and childhood development, as well as mental health-related to physical health.
- <sup>iv</sup> Mental Health and Climate Change: Policy Brief. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022 (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240045125>, accessed 10 Dec 2024)
- <sup>v</sup> Cissé G, McLeman R, Adams H, Aldunce P, Bowen K, Campbell-Lendrum D et al. Health, wellbeing and the changing structure of communities. In: Pörtner HO, Roberts DC, Tignor MMB, Poloczanska E, Mintenbeck K, Alegria A et al., editors. Climate change 2022: impacts, adaptation and vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2022:1041–170 (<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/chapter/chapter-7/>, accessed 10 Dec 2024).
- <sup>vi</sup> What happens when climate change and the mental-health crisis collide?. Nature. 2024;628(8007): 235. [doi.org/10.1038/d41586-024-00993-x](https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-024-00993-x).