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Topic 1: The Impact of Climate Change on Human Health

It has become evident that climate change poses several threats to public health, especially in India. First, the increased frequency of natural disasters caused by climate change has led to more frequent heat and cold waves, and it has also facilitated the spread of vector-borne diseases, such as malaria and the dengue fever. Seeing as India, a developing nation, has a high-density coastal population, and a large portion of the population dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, its population is particularly vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change. In order to address this consequence, India has formulated a Health Mission in its National Action Plan Against Climate Change. This mission aims to “analyze epidemiological data, identify vulnerable population and regions, build knowledge base and expertise, increase awareness and community participation.”[[1]](#footnote-1). In addition, the government of India has put in place many programs, such as the Integrated Disease Surveillance Program and the National Vector Borne Disease Control Program, and with this, it aims to eliminate malaria by 2030. [[2]](#footnote-2)

In terms of its national development, India has put forward and promoted the idea of a sustainable and healthy lifestyle to its population, based on a traditional way of life, based on values of moderation and conservation.1 It remains that the most effective method to reduce the impacts of climate change on the population’s health is to reduce GHG emissions, which can be done by implementing a variety of mitigation and adaptation strategies. In the meantime, a variety of adaptation strategies can be put into place in order to reduce the number of illnesses, injuries and deaths caused by diseases and the number of natural disasters caused by climate change. This can be done by increasing the population’s ability to respond to natural disasters. In addition, another adaptation strategy, which is often said to be the “most important, cost-effective, and urgently needed”3 would be to improve public health infrastructure. This includes “public health training, more effective surveillance and emergency response systems, and sustainable prevention and control programs”3. In addition, increased education and awareness of the issue are also extremely important, as they would allow people to make more informed decisions that would ensure long-term sustainability, reducing the impacts of climate change on public health.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Overall, India acknowledges that the most effective way to protect public health would be to reduce GHG emissions and thus, climate change. Before this is achieved, India would encourage developed nations to help developing countries to improve public health sectors, in order to adapt to the impacts of climate change in the short-term.

Topic 2: Climate Refugees

India is at a high risk for the impacts of climate change. In fact, along with Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, and the Philippines, it is one of the most vulnerable nations to the impacts of climate change in South Asia. As a result of climate change, there have been an increase in the number of cyclones, floods, droughts and ingress of seawater, which contaminates fresh water sources. All of these natural phenomena lead to migration, and create climate refugees. The issue of climate refugees has also created political tensions in India. Due to its proximity to Bangladesh, thousands of climate refugees from this country illegally enter India, seeking refuge in the West Bengal region. These climate refugees often live in poverty, but the government lacks the resources and then financial means to be responsible for their welfare, since there are already millions of Indians living in poverty. Thus, there are often clashes between Indian locals and Bangladeshi migrants over the limited resources of the region. These displaced people must be officially recognized as climate refugees before nations begin to take responsibility for the well being of these people. [[4]](#footnote-4) [[5]](#footnote-5)

India formed the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) in 2006, with the purpose of responding to natural disasters, whether they be floods, earthquakes or cyclones, in an efficient manner, in order to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries. The NDRF has 12 battalions located throughout the country, and it is made up of thousands of employees. In the ten years that it has been in operation, the NDRF has saved almost 550,000 lives. In addition to responding to national disasters, the NDRF also runs many “community preparedness programs”. Evidently, the NDRF has been very successful at aiding the population following environmental disasters. Therefore, India believes that it would be beneficial for countries situated close to each other to collaborate on the creation of a Natural Disaster Emergency Response Plan, especially if these countries do not have the resources and the means to formulate individual plans. This could help minimize the damage caused by environmental disasters. [[6]](#footnote-6)

Seeing as the cause for climate refugees, climate change, is the consequence of the past actions of most countries, and an issue that affects almost every nation in the world, but especially Southern countries, India believes that it is every country’s responsibility to assist in the management of these refugees, including more developed, Northern countries. One method to dealing with environmental refugees would be to set up an international, environmental migration fund, which would mainly be funded by industrialized countries, as suggested by the Norwegian Refugee Council.5

Topic 3: Steps to Enforce the Paris Agreement and Further Reduce Green House Gas Emissions

After the Paris Agreement was passed, India was the 62nd country to ratify the Paris Climate Change Agreement on October 2nd, 2016. As part of India’s national plan to limit global temperature rise, it has set a goal to produce 40% of its electricity using non-fossil fuel sources by 2030. In addition, India is planning to plant enough trees to act as a sink for 2.5 billion tons of carbon dioxide and would encourage other, more developed nations to share their knowledge on technologies that would help reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Overall, India aims to find the balance between human development and the preservation of natural resources, and thus, believes that environmental sustainability should be fully integrated into developing nations’ developmental plans, with the help of developed countries.[[7]](#footnote-7)

In order to respond to climate change, India has taken on a two-pronged approach, which has been successful so far. One mitigation strategy that has been implemented is the development of a clean and efficient energy system. India is working on expanding its use of solar power throughout the nation. Between 2005 and 2015, solar power capacity increased from 3.7 MW to 4060 MW, and India is aiming to increase this capacity to 100 GW by 2022. The government is also in the process of solarizing its 55,000 petrol pumps around the country, with 3135 pumps having been solarized to date. Other mitigation strategies that have been implemented are increasing the energy efficiency of industries, developing more environmentally sustainable urban centers, promoting efficient waste disposal, which includes the promotion of “waste to energy conversion projects”, and the development of a greener transportation network. India has seen successes in all of these approaches, and aims to further develop these programs in order to better reduce GHG emissions.7

Adaptation strategies are extremely important in India, since there is widespread poverty throughout the nation, and most of the population is dependent on sectors that are affected by climate change for their livelihood. Thus, a large portion of India’s population is vulnerable to the effects of climate change. India has adopted many adaptation strategies. In fact, five of the eight missions in the National Mission on Climate Change include adaptation strategies in various sectors such as agriculture, water, forestry, and the Himalayan ecosystems. In terms of agriculture, over two thirds of India’s population relies on this sector for their livelihood, and it accounts for 40% of the nation’s food production. However, this sector is already being affected by climate change: there have been several droughts and floods in recent years, and has faced a lot of climate variability. In response to this, India created the National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture, which aims to enhance food security and protect resources, such as water and land, as well as promote the development of new technologies and cultivation practices that consume less water and are more resilient to climate changes. [[8]](#footnote-8)

Overall, India has implemented many different strategies in order to reduce climate change. It would encourage more developed nations to assist developing nations in reducing their GHG emissions, and would like to remind all nations that reducing GHG emissions is everyone’s shared responsibility. Climate change sees no borders, and every nation’s population faces the impacts of the global phenomenon to some degree.

1. "India Ratifies Paris Climate Change Agreement." The Two-Way: Breaking News from NPR. Accessed November 07, 2016. <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/10/02/496305658/india-ratifies-paris-climate-change-agreement>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Majra, J. P., and A. Gur. "Climate Change and Health: Why Should India Be Concerned?" Indian Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. 2009. Accessed November 07, 2016. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2822161/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Majra, J. P., and A. Gur. "Climate Change and Health: Why Should India Be Concerned?" Indian Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. 2009. Accessed November 07, 2016. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2822161/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “Climate Resilience and the Climate Refugees: A Study of Indian Sunderbans." Resilience in a Time of Uncertainty. Accessed November 07, 2016. <http://indigenous2015.org/Sahana_BOSE>.

   5 Lal, Neeta. "A Precarious Fate for Climate Migrants in India." Inter Press Service. Accessed November 07, 2016. <http://www.ipsnews.net/2016/05/a-precarious-fate-for-climate-migrants-in-india/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. "About Us." NDRF Website. Accessed November 07, 2016. <http://ndrfandcd.gov.in/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. "India Ratifies Paris Climate Change Agreement." The Two-Way: Breaking News from NPR. Accessed November 07, 2016. <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/10/02/496305658/india-ratifies-paris-climate-change-agreement>. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. "India Ratifies Paris Climate Change Agreement." The Two-Way: Breaking News from NPR. Accessed November 07, 2016. <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/10/02/496305658/india-ratifies-paris-climate-change-agreement>. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)