

# CLIMATE AND HEALTH COUNTRY PROFILE – 2015

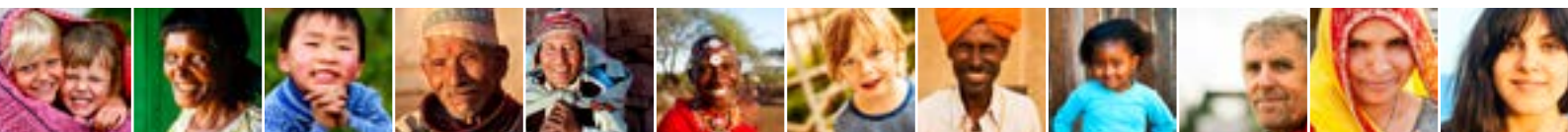
## THAILAND



World Health  
Organization



United Nations  
Framework Convention on  
Climate Change



### OVERVIEW

Thailand is a country of 67 million people<sup>a</sup> which, despite challenges, has had sustained economic growth since the late 1980's.<sup>b</sup> After many years of progress Thailand has attained upper middle income status and is likely to meet most of the Millennium Development Goals.<sup>c</sup>

A universal health-coverage scheme was established in 2002<sup>d</sup> and in 2013 total expenditure on health was 4.6% of GDP.<sup>d</sup> Investments in population health and infrastructure, though, are likely to be threatened by climate change – particularly through increased exposure to rising temperatures, extreme weather events, and sea level rise. Poverty (12.64% of the population was below the poverty line in 2012<sup>e</sup>), urban expansion, deforestation, and soil degradation may further complicate the situation, reducing community resilience and adaptive capacity.

A climate-change strategy is currently being devised, but efforts are still required to ensure the health system in Thailand is fully prepared to respond to many of the worst effects of climate change.

### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Under a high emissions scenario, mean annual temperature is projected to rise by about 4.3°C on average from 1990 to 2100. If emissions decrease rapidly, the temperature rise is limited to about 1.3°C.
- Under a high emissions scenario, and without large investments in adaptation, an average of 2.4 million people are projected to be affected by flooding due to sea level rise every year between 2070 and 2100. If emissions decrease rapidly and there is a major scale up in protection (i.e. continued construction/raising of dikes) the annual population affected by flooding could be limited to about 600 people. Adaptation alone will not offer sufficient protection, as sea level rise is a long-term process, with high emissions scenarios bringing increasing impacts well beyond the end of the century.

- Under a high emissions scenario heat-related deaths in the elderly (65+ years) are projected to increase to about 58 deaths per 100,000 by 2080 compared to the estimated baseline of about 3 deaths per 100,000 annually between 1961 and 1990. A rapid reduction in emissions could limit heat-related deaths in the elderly to just under 11 deaths per 100,000 by 2080.
- By 2070, approximately 71 million people are projected to be at risk of malaria assuming a high emissions scenario. If emissions decrease rapidly, projections indicate this number could decrease slightly to about 66 million.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

Thailand is currently implementing projects on health adaptation to climate change and is taking action to build institutional and technical capacities to work on climate change and health. Country reported data (see section 6) indicate there remain opportunities for action:

A (Draft) National Strategic Plan on Climate Change and Health B.E. 2015–2020 has been drafted; approval is being processed. This Strategic plan will be a national framework for building resilience to climate impacts and health risks which include adaptation and mitigation measures.

#### 1) Adaptation

- Increase climate resilient infrastructure, including health infrastructure.
- Build capacity for public to understand health risks and take appropriate actions to prepare and reduce climate change impacts.

#### 2) Mitigation

- Encourage public health facilities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Identify the health benefits associated with reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other climate pollutants.

### DEMOGRAPHIC ESTIMATES

Population [2013] <sup>a</sup>	67 million
Population growth rate [2013] <sup>a</sup>	0.4%
Population living in urban areas [2013] <sup>f</sup>	47.9%
Population under five [2013] <sup>a</sup>	5.8%
Population aged 65 or older [2013] <sup>a</sup>	9.7%

### ECONOMIC AND DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

GDP per capita [current US\$, 2013] <sup>g</sup>	5,741 USD
Total expenditure on health as % of GDP [2013] <sup>d</sup>	4.6%
Percentage share of income for lowest 20% of population [2010] <sup>h</sup>	6.8%
HDI [2013, +/- 0.01 change from 2005 is indicated with arrow] <sup>h</sup>	0.722 ▲

### HEALTH ESTIMATES

Life expectancy at birth [2013] <sup>i</sup>	75 years
Under-5 mortality per 1000 live births [2013] <sup>j</sup>	13

a World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision, UNDESA [2015]

b The World Bank Country Overview, 2015. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/thailand/overview>

c National Health Security Office, Thailand [2012] [Thai] [http://library2.parliament.go.th/giventake/content\\_sn/2556/d080256-31.pdf](http://library2.parliament.go.th/giventake/content_sn/2556/d080256-31.pdf)

d Global Health Expenditure Database, WHO [2014]

e Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board, Thailand [2014]

f World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, UNDESA [2014]

g World Development Indicators, World Bank [2015]

h United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports [2014]

i Global Health Observatory, WHO [2014]

j Levels & Trends in Child Mortality Report 2015, UN Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation [2015]

# CURRENT AND FUTURE CLIMATE HAZARDS

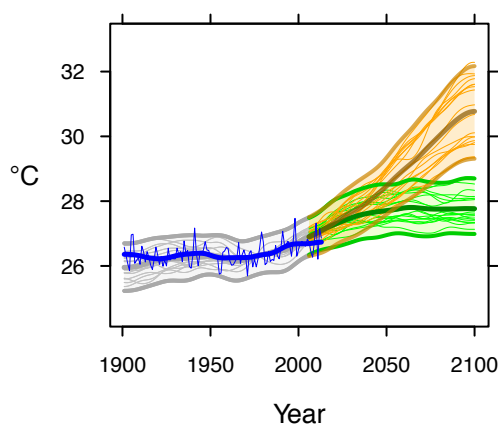
Due to climate change, many climate hazards and extreme weather events, such as heat waves, heavy rainfall and droughts, could become more frequent and more intense in many parts of the world.

Outlined here are country-specific projections up to the year 2100 for climate hazards under a 'business as usual' high emissions scenario compared to projections under a 'two-degree' scenario with rapidly decreasing global emissions. Most hazards caused by climate change will persist for many centuries.

## COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CLIMATE HAZARD PROJECTIONS

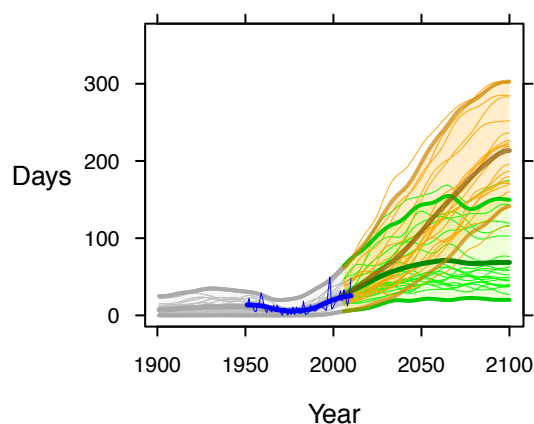
The model projections below present climate hazards under a high emissions scenario, Representative Concentration Pathway 8.5 [RCP8.5] (in orange) and a low emissions scenario, [RCP2.6] (in green).<sup>a</sup> The text boxes describe the projected changes averaged across about 20 models (thick line). The figures also show each model individually as well as the 90% model range (shaded) as a measure of uncertainty and, where available, the annual and smoothed observed record (in blue).<sup>b,c</sup>

### MEAN ANNUAL TEMPERATURE



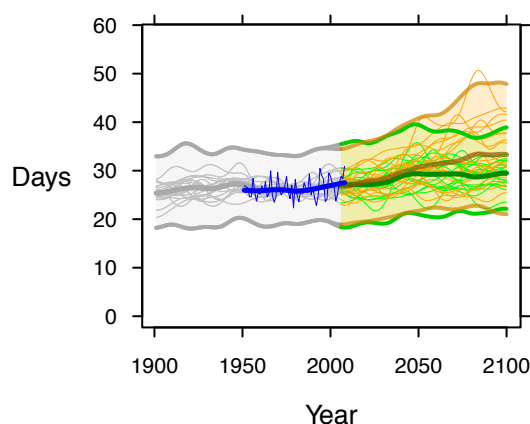
Under a high emissions scenario, mean annual temperature is projected to rise by about 4.3°C on average from 1990 to 2100. If emissions decrease rapidly, the temperature rise is limited to about 1.3°C.

### DAYS OF WARM SPELL ('HEAT WAVES')



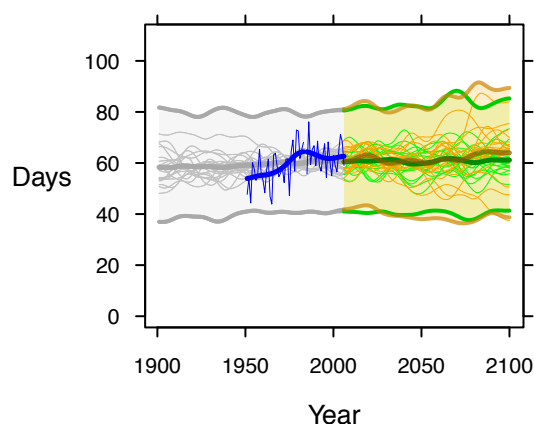
Under a high emissions scenario, the number of days of warm spell<sup>d</sup> is projected to increase from about 10 days in 1990 to about 210 days on average in 2100. If emissions decrease rapidly, the days of warm spell are limited to about 70 on average.

### DAYS WITH EXTREME RAINFALL ('FLOOD RISK')



Under a high emissions scenario, the number of days with very heavy precipitation [20 mm or more] could increase by about 7 days on average from 1990 to 2100, increasing the risk of floods. Some models indicate increases outside the range of historical variability, implying even greater risk. If emissions decrease rapidly, the risk is much reduced.

### CONSECUTIVE DRY DAYS ('DROUGHT')



Under both high and low emissions scenarios, the longest dry spell is not indicated to change much from an average of about 60 days, with continuing large year-to-year variability.

<sup>a</sup> Model projections are from CMIP5 for RCP8.5 [high emissions] and RCP2.6 [low emissions]. Model anomalies are added to the historical mean and smoothed.

<sup>b</sup> Observed historical record of mean temperature is from CRU-TSv3.22; observed historical records of extremes are from HadEX2.

<sup>c</sup> Analysis by the Climatic Research Unit and Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, University of East Anglia, 2015.

<sup>d</sup> A 'warm spell' day is a day when maximum temperature, together with that of at least the 6 consecutive previous days, exceeds the 90th percentile threshold for that time of the year.

## CURRENT AND FUTURE HEALTH RISKS DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Human health is profoundly affected by weather and climate. Climate change threatens to exacerbate today's health problems – deaths from extreme weather events, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, infectious and vector-borne diseases and malnutrition – whilst undermining water and food supplies, infrastructure, health systems and social protection systems.

### EXPOSURE TO FLOODING DUE TO SEA LEVEL RISE

Severity of climate change scenario ↓	RCP2.6	Without Adaptation	With Adaptation
		491,300	600
	RCP8.5	2,451,300	1,400

\* Medium ice melting scenario

\*\* Values rounded to nearest '00

Under a high emissions scenario, and without large investments in adaptation, an average of 2.4 million people are projected to be affected by flooding due to sea level rise every year between 2070 and 2100. If emissions decrease rapidly and there is a major scale up in protection (i.e. continued construction/raising of dikes) the annual population affected by flooding could be limited to about 600 people. Adaptation alone will not offer sufficient protection, as sea level rise is a long-term process, with high emissions scenarios bringing increasing impacts well beyond the end of the century.

Source: Human dynamics of climate change, technical report, Met Office, HM Government, UK, 2014.



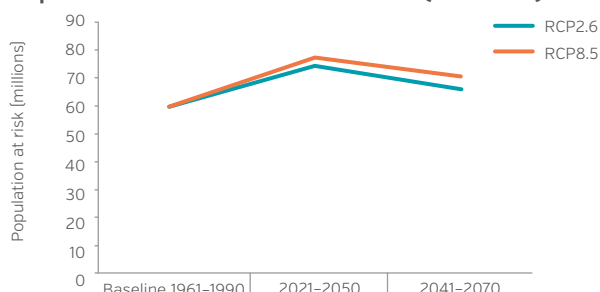
### KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH

Thailand also faces inland river flood risk due to climate change. Under a high emissions scenario, it is projected that by 2030, 244,100 additional people may be at risk of river floods annually due to climate change and 242,800 due to socio-economic change above the estimated 1.1 million annual affected population in 2010.<sup>a</sup>

In addition to deaths from drowning, flooding causes extensive indirect health effects, including impacts on food production, water provision, ecosystem disruption, infectious disease outbreak and vector distribution. Longer term effects of flooding may include post-traumatic stress and population displacement.

### INFECTIOUS AND VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES

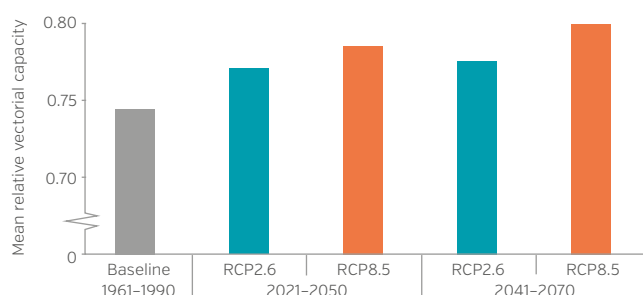
#### Population at risk of malaria in Thailand (in millions)



By 2070, approximately 71 million people are projected to be at risk of malaria assuming a high emissions scenario. If emissions decrease rapidly, projections indicate this number could decrease slightly to 66 million. The estimated baseline is 60 million people at risk per year between 1961-1990.

Source: Rocklöv, J., Quam, M. et al. 2015<sup>d</sup>

#### Mean relative vectorial capacity for dengue fever transmission in Thailand



Under a high emissions scenario, the mean relative vectorial capacity for dengue fever transmission is projected to increase from about 0.75 during the the baseline period, to 0.80 towards 2070. If emissions decrease rapidly the mean relative vectorial capacity for dengue fever transmission is projected to reach approximately 0.78, remaining only slightly closer to the baseline value.

Source: Rocklöv, J., Quam, M. et al., 2015<sup>d</sup>

a World Resources Institute, Aqueduct Flood Analyser; Assumes continued current socio-economic development trends [SSP2] and a 10-year flood plan.

b Atlas of Health and Climate, World Health Organization and World Meteorological Organization, 2012.

c Quantitative risk assessment of the effects of climate change on selected causes of death, 2030s and 2050s. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2014.

d Country-level analysis, completed in 2015, was based on health models outlined in the Quantitative risk assessment of the effects of climate change on selected causes of death, 2030s and 2050s. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2014.

## HEAT-RELATED MORTALITY

Heat-related mortality in population 65 years or over, Thailand (deaths / 100,000 population 65+ years)



Under a high emissions scenario heat-related deaths in the elderly (65+ years) are projected to increase to about 58 deaths per 100,000 by 2080 compared to the estimated baseline of about 3 deaths per 100,000 annually between 1961 and 1990. A rapid reduction in emissions could limit heat-related deaths in the elderly to just under 11 deaths per 100,000 by 2080.

Source: Honda et al., 2015.<sup>a</sup>



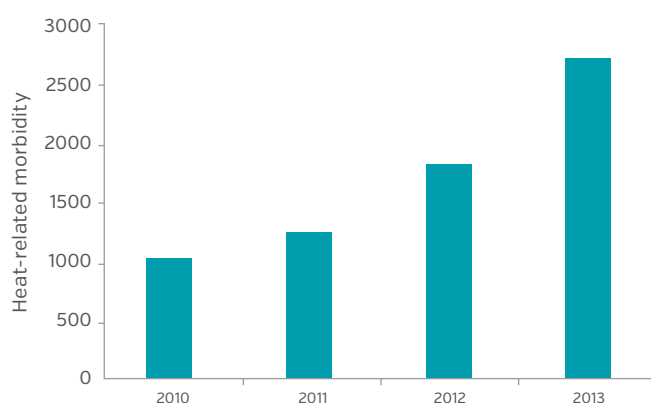
## KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH

Climate change is expected to increase mean annual temperature and the intensity and frequency of heat waves resulting in a greater number of people at risk of heat-related medical conditions.

The elderly, children, the chronically ill, the socially isolated and at-risk occupational groups are particularly vulnerable to heat-related conditions.

## HEAT-RELATED MORBIDITY AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Current heat-related morbidity in Thailand



In Thailand, heat-related morbidity has been increasing in recent years, from an estimated 1,020 cases in 2010 to 2742 cases in 2013. Over 50% of these cases are from agricultural workers. Source: Bureau of Occupational and Environmental Diseases, Thailand, 2013. Please note, cases might be under-recorded.

In addition to heat-related medical conditions, labour productivity of workers carrying out heavy labour (e.g. agricultural, construction and some industrial workers) is projected to decline significantly under a high emissions scenario with annual daily work hours declining by over 25% if global mean temperature increases by 4°C.<sup>b</sup>

## UNDERNUTRITION

Climate change, through higher temperatures, land and water scarcity, flooding, drought and displacement, negatively impacts agricultural production and causes breakdown in food systems. These disproportionately affect those most vulnerable to hunger and can lead to food insecurity. Vulnerable groups risk further deterioration into food and nutrition crises if exposed to extreme weather events.<sup>c</sup>

Without considerable efforts made to improve climate resilience, it has been estimated that the risk of hunger and malnutrition globally could increase by up to 20 percent by 2050.<sup>c</sup>

In Thailand, the prevalence of child malnutrition in children under age 5 is 9.2% [2012].<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Country-level analysis, completed in 2015, was based on health models outlined in the Quantitative risk assessment of the effects of climate change on selected causes of death, 2030s and 2050s. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2014.

<sup>b</sup> Kjellstrom, T., et al, 2015 <http://www.climatechip.org/>

<sup>c</sup> World Food Project 2015 <https://www.wfp.org/content/two-minutes-climate-change-and-hunger>

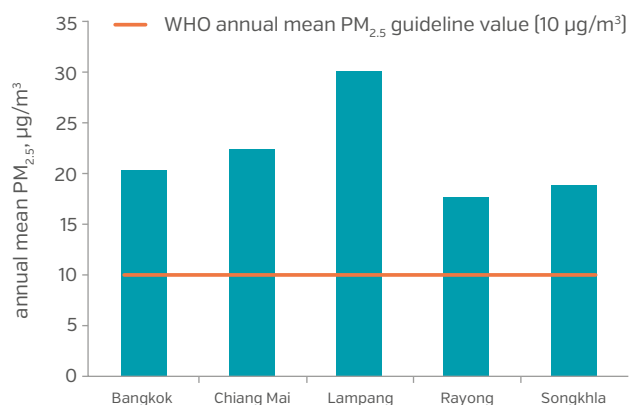
<sup>d</sup> World Health Organization, Global Database on Child Growth and Malnutrition [2015 edition]. Child malnutrition estimates are for % underweight, defined as: Percentage of children aged 0-59 months who are below minus two standard deviations from median weight-for-age of the World Health Organization (WHO) Child Growth Standards.

## CURRENT EXPOSURES AND HEALTH RISKS DUE TO AIR POLLUTION

Many of the drivers of climate change, such as inefficient and polluting forms of energy and transport systems, also contribute to air pollution. Air pollution is now one of the largest global health risks, causing approximately seven million deaths every year. There is an important opportunity to promote policies that both protect the climate at a global level, and also have large and immediate health benefits at a local level.

### OUTDOOR AIR POLLUTION EXPOSURE

Outdoor air pollution in cities in Thailand  
annual mean PM<sub>2.5</sub> (µg/m<sup>3</sup>), 2012\*



The five most populated cities for which there is air pollution data available have annual mean PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels that are above the WHO guideline value of 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.

Source: Ambient Air Pollution Database, WHO, May 2014.

\* A standard conversion for Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Lampang has been used. Please see source for more details.



#### KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH

Outdoor air pollution can have direct and sometimes severe consequences for health.

Fine particles which penetrate deep into the respiratory tract subsequently increase mortality from respiratory infections and diseases, lung cancer, and cardiovascular disease.

### HOUSEHOLD AIR POLLUTION

#### THAILAND

Percentage of population primarily using solid fuels for cooking [%], 2013



RURAL  
AREAS  
**31**



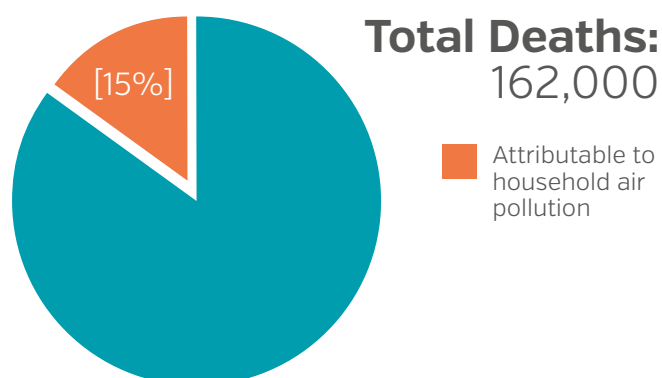
URBAN  
AREAS  
**13**



NATIONAL  
TOTAL  
**23**

Source: Global Health Observatory, data repository, World Health Organization, 2013

Percent of total deaths from ischaemic heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (18 years+) and acute lower respiratory infections (under 5 years) attributable to household air pollution, 2012.



Source: Global Health Observatory, data repository, World Health Organization, 2012.



#### KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH

Air pollution in and around the home is largely a result of the burning of solid fuels (biomass or coal) for cooking and burning of other sources (crop waste, incense sticks, mosquito coils, etc.).

Women and children are at a greater risk for disease from household air pollution. Consequently, household air pollution is responsible for a larger proportion of the total number of deaths from ischaemic heart disease, stroke, lung cancer and COPD in women compared to men.<sup>a</sup>

In Thailand, 29% percent of an estimated 750 child deaths due to acute lower respiratory infections is attributable to household air pollution (WHO, 2012).

a Annu. Rev. Public. Health. 2014;35:185-206. [http://www.who.int/phe/health\\_topics/outdoorair/databases/HAP\\_BoD\\_results\\_March2014.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/phe/health_topics/outdoorair/databases/HAP_BoD_results_March2014.pdf?ua=1)

## CO-BENEFITS TO HEALTH FROM CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

Health co-benefits are local, national and international measures with the potential to simultaneously yield large, immediate public health benefits and reduce the upward trajectory of greenhouse gas emissions. Lower carbon strategies can also be cost-effective investments for individuals and societies.

Presented here are examples of opportunities for health co-benefits that could be realised by action in important greenhouse gas emitting sectors.<sup>a</sup>

### Transport

Transport injuries lead to 1.2 million deaths every year, and land use and transport planning contribute to the 2–3 million deaths from physical inactivity. The transport sector is also responsible for some 14% [7.0 GtCO<sub>2</sub>e] of global carbon emissions. The IPCC has noted significant opportunities to reduce energy demand in the sector, potentially resulting in a 15%–40% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and bringing substantial opportunities for health: A modal shift towards walking and cycling could see reductions in illnesses related to physical inactivity and reduced outdoor air pollution and noise exposure; increased use of public transport is likely to result in reduced GHG emissions; compact urban planning fosters walkable residential neighborhoods, improves accessibility to jobs, schools and services and can encourage physical activity and improve health equity by making urban services more accessible to the elderly and poor.



### Electricity Generation

Reliable electricity generation is essential for economic growth, with 1.4 billion people living without access to electricity. However, current patterns of electricity generation in many parts of the world, particularly the reliance on coal combustion in highly polluting power plants contributes heavily to poor local air quality, causing cancer, cardiovascular and respiratory disease. Outdoor air pollution is responsible for 3.7 million premature deaths annually, 88% of these deaths occur in low and middle income countries. The health benefits of transitioning from fuels such as coal to lower carbon sources, including ultimately to renewable energy, are clear: Reduced rates of cardiovascular and respiratory disease such as stroke, lung cancer, coronary artery disease, and COPD; cost-savings for health systems; improved economic productivity from a healthier and more productive workforce.



### Household Heating, Cooking and Lighting

Household air pollution causes over 4.3 million premature deaths annually, predominantly due to stroke, ischaemic heart disease, chronic respiratory disease, and childhood pneumonia. A range of interventions can both improve public health and reduce household emissions: a transition from the inefficient use of solid fuels like wood and charcoal towards cleaner energy



### Healthcare Systems

Health care activities are an important source of greenhouse gas emissions. In the US and in EU countries, for example, health care activities account for between 3–8% of greenhouse gas (CO<sub>2</sub>-eq) emissions. Major sources include procurement and inefficient energy consumption. Modern, on-site, low-carbon energy solutions (e.g. solar, wind, or hybrid solutions) and the development of combined heat



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