Chapter 7
Building Climate Resilience in the Health Sector Through Community-Based Adaptation Strategies

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ABSTRACT

The global health landscape is increasingly shaped by the complex impacts of climate change, posing risks to human health and health systems. Building resilience in the health sector is a critical priority. This study explores the transformative potential of community-based adaptation (CBA) strategies in strengthening health systems' capacity to withstand climate-related shocks. CBA empowers communities to identify their vulnerabilities and develop context-specific resilience strategies. The study presents a comprehensive "Triple-A" framework for operationalizing CBA. The study examines the institutional and policy landscape shaping CBA initiatives. It identifies priorities to accelerate CBA uptake and strengthened institutions for mainstreaming CBA into health planning. This study makes a compelling case for CBA's transformative potential in building climate-resilient health systems. It offers a hopeful vision for a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable future for global health.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change poses significant challenges to human health and the health systems that support it. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has highlighted the wide-ranging impacts of climate change on health, including increased heat-related morbidity and mortality, the spread of infectious diseases, and the exacerbation of respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses (IPCC, 2022). The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes that the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events are expected to rise, necessitating the adaptation of health systems to ensure their resilience and ability to provide essential services to communities (WHO, 2021). The impacts of climate change on health are not evenly distributed, with vulnerable populations, such as the poor, elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions, being disproportionately affected (Watts et al., 2019).

Building climate resilience in the health sector is crucial for minimizing the adverse effects of climate change on human health and ensuring the continuity of healthcare services during and after climate-related disasters (Ebi et al., 2021). Climate resilience refers to the capacity of health systems to anticipate, respond to, cope with, recover from, and adapt to climate-related stresses and shocks (WHO, 2015). Enhancing the resilience of health systems requires a multi-faceted approach that addresses the complex interactions between climate change, health, and socio-economic factors (Haines & Ebi, 2019).

Community-based adaptation (CBA) strategies have emerged as a promising approach to enhancing the resilience of health systems by engaging local communities in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of adaptation measures (McNamara & Buggy, 2017). CBA strategies recognize the importance of local knowledge, resources, and capacities in addressing the context-specific challenges posed by climate change (Reid, 2016). By involving communities in the adaptation process, CBA strategies can help to identify and prioritize local health needs, mobilize resources, and build capacity for effective and sustainable adaptation (Ayers & Forsyth, 2009).

The objectives of this chapter are to:

1. Provide an overview of the impacts of climate change on health systems and the need for building climate resilience.
2. Discuss the role of community-based adaptation strategies in enhancing the resilience of health systems.
3. Present case studies and best practices of successful community-based adaptation initiatives in the health sector.
4. Identify key challenges and opportunities for scaling up community-based adaptation in the health sector.