

Climate Change and Health

Public Health and Environment



World Health
Organization

Impacts of climate change on human rights

Climate change is and will undermine the enjoyment of some basic human rights

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being

Climate change is also affecting the main environmental determinants of health:

- Water
- Food
- Shelter
- Air



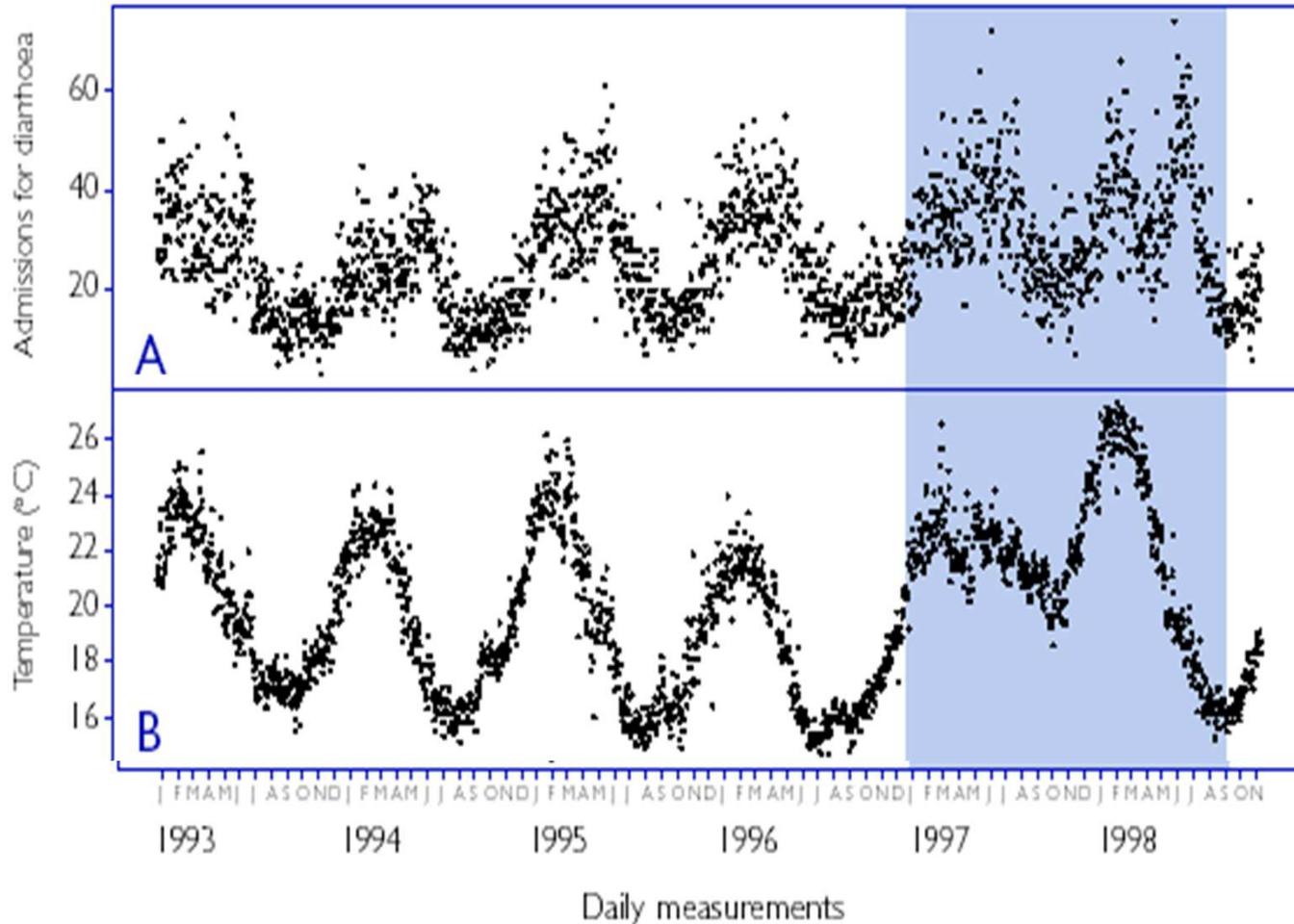
Some of the largest disease burdens are climate-sensitive

- **Each year:**
 - Undernutrition kills 3.5 million.
 - Diarrhoea kills 2.2 million.
 - Malaria kills 900,000.
 - Extreme weather events kill 60,000.

WHO estimates that the climate change that has occurred since the 1970s already kills over 140,000 per year.



Increases in diseases of poverty may be even more important



Diarrhoea is related to temperature and precipitation. In Lima, Peru, diarrhoea increased 8% for every 1°C temperature increase.

(Checkley et al, Lancet, 2000)

Health impacts are unfairly distributed



Cumulative emissions of greenhouse gases, to 2002



WHO estimates of *per capita* mortality from climate change, 2000

Map projections from Patz et al, 2007; WHO, 2009.



Health as a central principle of the 1992 Rio conference and the UNFCCC:



1992 RIO DECLARATION Article 1: *"Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a **healthy** and productive life in harmony with nature."*

UNFCCC Article 1: *"Adverse effects of climate change" : changes in the physical environment or biota resulting from climate change which have significant deleterious effects on the composition, resilience or productivity of natural and managed ecosystems or on the operation of socio-economic systems or on **human health and welfare.***

UNFCCC commitment to consider health effects of mitigation and adaptation measures:

UNFCCC Article 4.1 (f): *All Parties...shall: ...f. Take climate change considerations into account, to the extent feasible, in their relevant social, economic and environmental policies and actions, and employ appropriate methods, for example impact assessments, formulated and determined nationally, with a view to minimizing adverse effects on the economy, on **public health** and on the quality of the environment, of projects and measures undertaken by them to mitigate or adapt to climate change;*



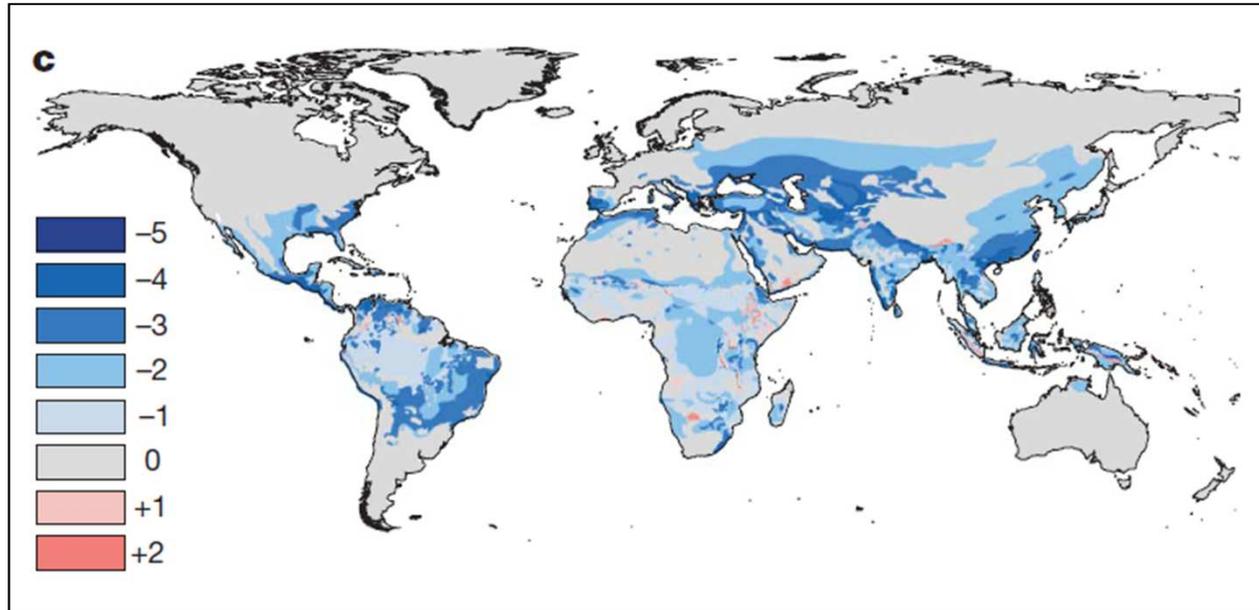
Climate change is rising on the health agenda

- Identified by WHO DG as a top priority, and selected as theme for World Health Day 2008.
- WHA 2008 resolution, Executive Board 2009 endorsement of a new WHO action plan, Regional Committee Resolutions and Frameworks for Action.
- Advocacy and awareness raising, partnerships, evidence and country support.

All led by health sector at the global, regional and national level - and most very recent.

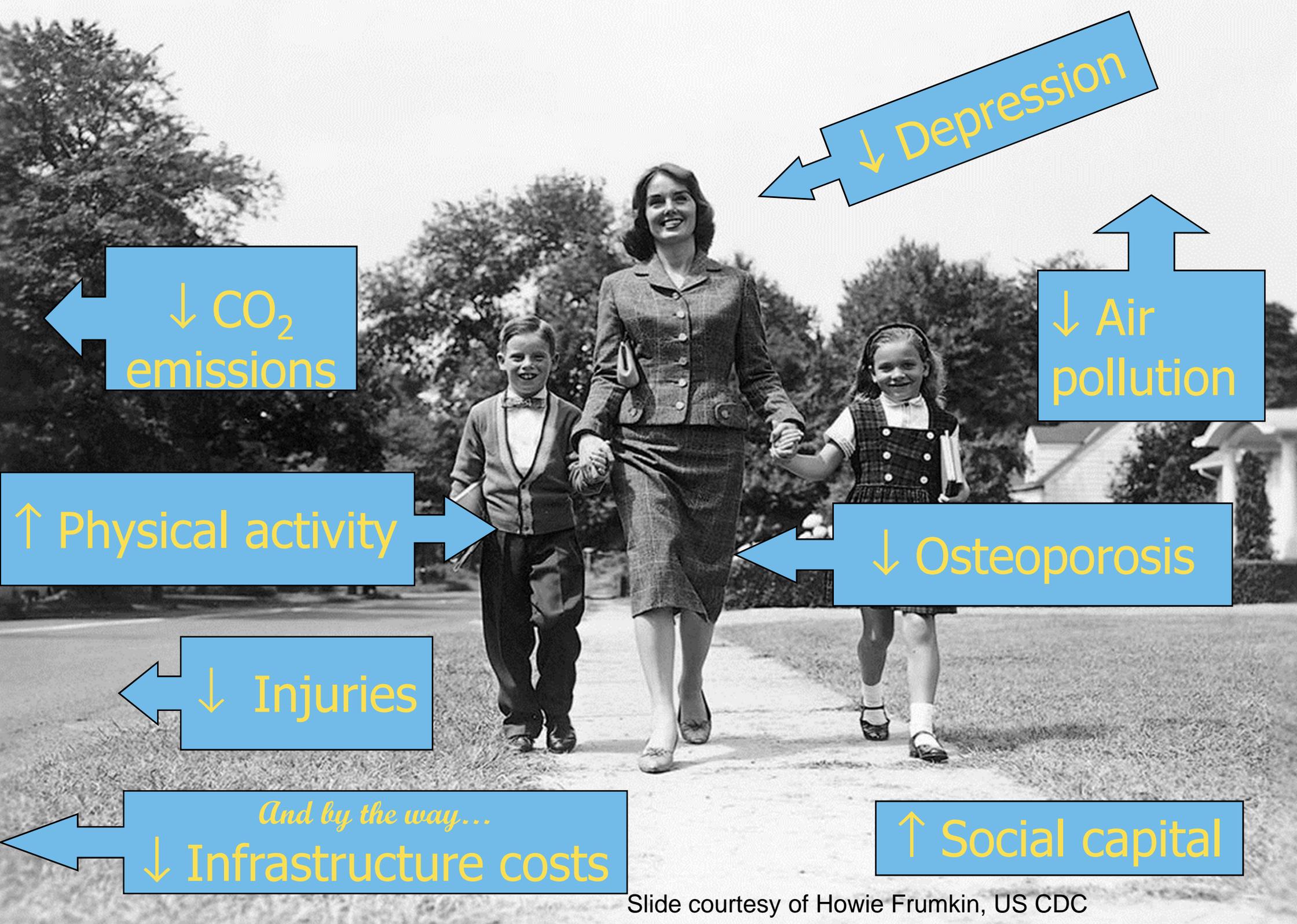


We can save lives now and adapt to climate change



Change in malaria endemicity class, 1900-present:
(*Gething et al, Nature, 2010*)

- We have proven, cost-effective interventions, from clean water and sanitation, bednets for vector control, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian aid...
- All of these deaths are preventable – **IF** health protection is prioritized, and **IF** adaptation aid is additional to ODA



↓ Depression

↓ Air pollution

↓ Osteoporosis

↑ Social capital

↓ CO₂ emissions

↑ Physical activity

↓ Injuries

And by the way...
↓ Infrastructure costs

Health reasons for everyone to get up and turn down the heat



- The exercise will do you good.
- Smoking kills you.
- And you shouldn't be eating that stuff anyway....

Conclusions



- We already know much of what to do: invest now in proven, preventive public health measures, and support healthy development choices
- Human rights, equity and gender principles inform all the work WHO is doing in supporting countries
- The health argument can make an important contribution to environment negotiations. We think health is the entry point to put in practice a human rights-based approach
- Ensure that a human right based approach to CC in all relevant processes (e.g. UNFCCC, Rio+20)



More information:

World Health Organization

<http://www.who.int/>

Public Health and Environment

<http://www.who.int/phe/en/>

Global Environmental Change

<http://www.who.int/globalchange/>

Climate Change

<http://www.who.int/globalchange/climate/>

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