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Establishment of the Climate-Proof Health Systems in Small Islands

Dear Editor,

Climate change has been acknowledged as an important global level public health concern, as it is being given due to recognition and importance in the various goals framed by the global leaders.[1,2] Preventing the deterioration of the climate across the globe is of immense significance as it casts a massive impact on the quality of air, drinking water, adequacy of food, and safe housing, all of which are important determinants of health and a better quality of life.[1,2] In fact, it has been roughly anticipated that in the absence of immediate and urgent measures to arrest climate deterioration, there will be 0.25 million deaths each year due to various climate-related causes between 2030 and 2050, which is an alarming concern.[1]

Even though all the nations are expected to face the brunt of this climate deterioration, the small islands are at a much higher risk of the same.[3] This is predominantly because of the very fact that they are the first ones to get affected, regardless of whether it is any extreme weather events (cyclone, tsunami, heat waves, etc.) or rising sea levels or even an augmented risk of the transmission of communicable diseases.[3] Further, more often than not, these islands have a weak infrastructure support to deliver health care, and thus, they are bound to have more damage or lesser ability to cope up with the challenge.[1,3]

Acknowledging the poor level of preparedness and the basic fact that we have to help these vulnerable people whose future depends on our support, it is the need of the hour to have exclusive initiatives to deal with their challenges.[1,3] In fact, a special initiative has been launched with a vision to establish health systems, which are well equipped to deal with the climate change and strategies to reduce the carbon emissions worldwide.[3] The goals proposed under the initiative include supporting the health leaders of small islands to ensure that they have a better impact within their nation and at the global level and compilation of adequate evidence to encourage investment from international welfare agencies in the field of climate change and health.[3] In addition, the formulation of policies which can improve the extent of preparedness of the health system has also been framed as a major goal.[1,3]

It is expected that this initiative will play a big role in improving their adaptability to the climate change by improving the knowledge, resources, infrastructure, and technological support, which will eventually help these small islands to have a climate-proof health-care delivery system.[3] Further, if the desired measures are implemented well, we are very much certain to keep the global rise in temperature.[1,3] However, it is quite obvious that these islands would not be able to meet the proposed goals if they are not supported by the international welfare agencies, especially the financial support, which is quite meager at present.[4] Furthermore, the affected islands or nations have to exhibit ownership for the proposed initiative and work in a concerted manner to meet the targets.[3,4]

In conclusion, to arrest the impact of climate deterioration on health in small islands, there is an immense need to do much more and that too at a rapid pace through the involvement of different concerned stakeholders. This is a must if we want these small islands to have climate-proof health systems.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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