

# Cultural significance of health should be incorporated into modern disaster risk reduction strategies, say researchers

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Climate change, and more precisely, recurring droughts-induced indirect and direct ravaging effects on health and livelihoods, combined with the

fragility of the existing socio-economic construct in the remote, off-grid, Arid and Semi-Arid communities, are increasingly becoming a main cultural, global and public health threat.

Needless to mention the WHO estimates of 55 million people that get affected by droughts yearly, 40% of the [global population](#) who are currently suffering related water scarcity, and 700 million victims of droughts approximated to face related displacement in just seven years, by 2030, it's of essence to take a closer look on how to best align our scientific and modern interventions through the lens of local-based realities, towards equally sustained social and environmental determinants of health amidst the growing climate catastrophe.

At the University of Eastern Finland, Institute of Public Health and Clinical Nutrition, Researchers Christian Muragijimana and Dr. Sohaib Khan took an interest in exploring and investigating further health and livelihoods impacts associated with [climate change](#) in the remote Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs), more precisely in Lopur, Northern Kenya, Turkana, where aridity accounts for as much as 80% of the total landmass of 77,000 km<sup>2</sup>.

Besides the need to grasp the attributable droughts-driven ravaging effects on health and livelihoods, and on current local and transgenerational knowledge-based coping strategies, the researchers were keen to learn how the local agropastoral communities view scientific or modern disaster risk reduction strategies.

Of the main outcomes, the study portrayed the interconnection as well as a disconnect between health and livelihoods burden associated with droughts ranging from the quadruple of health threats involving [non-communicable diseases](#), [communicable diseases](#), pandemics, and concerns related to availability, accessibility, and affordability of healthcare services, to the disrupt of family cohesion as a result of

pastoralists' mobility that entails long travels for months (sometimes a whole year or so) looking for pasture and water, concomitant with the increasing frailty of their socioeconomic construct, and more importantly, the shift from their cultural-driven coping strategies to unsustainable environmental degrading survival tactics, such as burning charcoals for business and cooking.

Based on the acquired insights, and as much as the above mentioned portrayed the growing concern of the evanesce or the shift from transgenerational knowledge-driven survival strategies to more or less explored survival tactics, as the result of unsustainable and culturally incompatible modern interventions through the lens of local-based realities, the researchers were left with a some important questions that need to be further investigated:

- What more can we learn from the on-ground and interconnectedness of community-threatening droughts-induced risks and effects on health and livelihoods through the lens of local-based coping strategies?
- How does that impact the increasing fragility of the existing socio-economic systems, adopted survival tactics, and environmental conditions?
- What are the indispensability and complementarity aspects to incorporate transgenerational knowledge-driven adaptation and coping strategies into our scientific systems towards more climate-friendly, culturally relevant, sustainable, and informed modern disaster risk reduction strategies in the ASALs, low- and middle-income countries?

The above questions will guide the researchers' further investigation at the University of Eastern Finland, Faculty of Health Sciences, where the Globe, Culture and Public Health track is dedicated to learning, supporting, fostering, and providing tools and strategies of systems

thinking to alleviate the current rising climate change and health burden, mediated by the growing emergency of climate-sensitive ecological threats on the most affected, vulnerable far-to-reach arid systems, populations, and regions that bear an inequitable burden.

Provided by University of Eastern Finland

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