

## Impact of Heatwaves on children

### Why in News?

Climate change and heatwaves in particular is limiting the time children get to engage with their peers and the world around them through play.

### How heatwave affects children in India?

*UNICEF's Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI) report 2021 suggests that with a rank of 26 out of 163 countries, India is among the countries where children are most at climate risk.*

- India has been experiencing more frequent and severe heat waves, with temperatures soaring to record levels.
- **Heat wave** - It is a period of abnormally high temperatures, more than the normal maximum temperature that occurs.
- They typically occur between March and June, and in some rare cases even extend till July in India.

*A recent analysis by UNICEF revealed that South Asia has the highest % of children exposed to extreme high temperatures compared to other regions.*

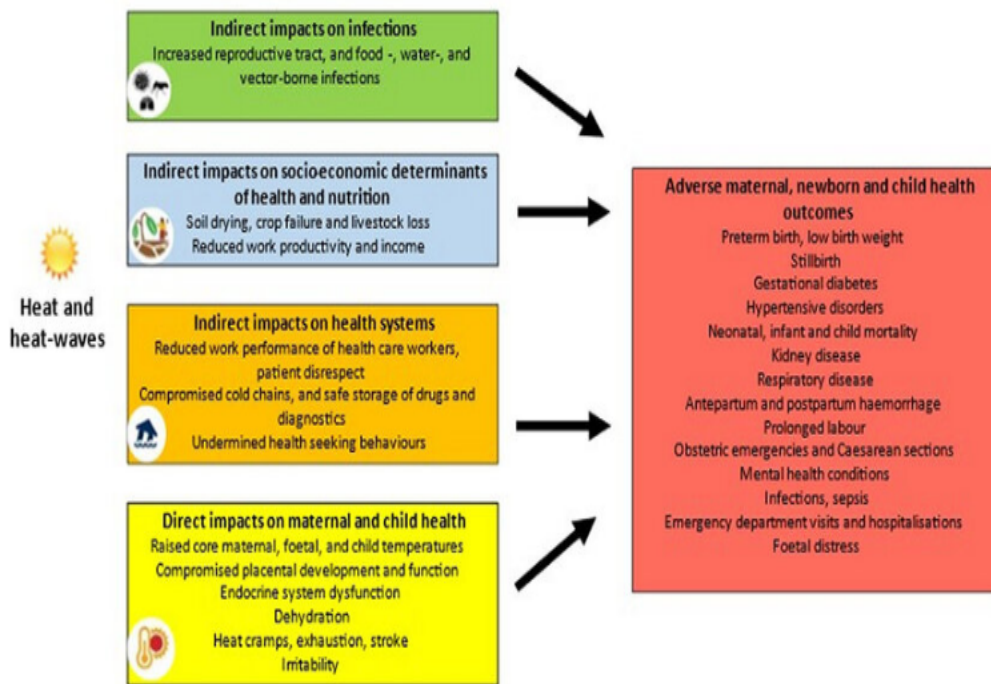
- **Reduces outdoor activities** - Heatwaves, in particular, are making *outdoor play increasingly unsafe*.

### Playing for Children's development

- **Play activity** - They are a means to process and explore the world.
- According to UNICEF, play is vital for children to build social connections, develop physical and mental health, and enhance creativity.
- **Significance** - Playful interactions contribute to the positive mental health of parents, caregivers, and children, offering respite from adverse experiences.
- **Recognition** - Enshrined in Article 31 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the right to play underscores its significance for a child's well-being and development.
- June 11, 2024 was declared as *International Day of Play by UN*.

- **Threatens health** - These extreme conditions not only limit a child's ability to play outdoors but also pose significant *health risks*.
- This can have long-term impacts on their *physical and mental health*.
- **Disturbs sleep pattern**- Heat waves can disrupt children's sleep patterns, affecting their overall health and daily functioning.

- **Increases mortality risk**- Extreme heat increases the risk of mortality in children, especially those with pre-existing health conditions.
- **Disrupts education** - Heatwaves have also led to school closures.
- **Widens inequality** - The lack of play opportunities also disproportionately *affects children from disadvantaged backgrounds*, exacerbating existing inequalities and perpetuating cycles of poverty.
- **Affects individual development** - Impact on child's physical and cognitive development leads to long-term economic impacts such as a *less skilled workforce and higher social welfare costs*.



To know more about heat wave, click [here](#)

### What are the adaptive measures need to be done?

- **Implement bioclimatic designs** - It can be used while *designing playground infrastructure* and integrate in urban planning strategies.
  - It involves *introducing green spaces and cooling corridors* within cities, which will help mitigate urban heat island effect and provide safe-play environments for children.
- **Increase access to green spaces** - *Expand opening time and access* to existing infrastructure and green spaces such as parks.
- **Delineate age-specific green spaces** - There is often user conflict in public parks along the lines of age — *older citizens versus children* and along socio-economic classes.
- **Encourage community participation** - Local communities can also come together to create shaded areas in parks where children can meet and play on warmer days.
- **Preserve architectural knowledge** - Long-term solutions should priorities preserving and adapting *vernacular architectural techniques* to implement passive heating and cooling methods.
- **Regulate play spaces** - The places earmarked for playgrounds often become

dumping grounds for solid waste.

- This leads to children spending more time inside their houses with limited avenues for socialisation and recreation.
- **Policy changes** - This dimension of planning should also find its way into State Action Plans on Climate Change and city master plans.
- **Priorities vulnerable children**- Special attention needs to be given to the needs of low-income communities.
  - *Slum rehabilitation colonies*, for instance, in outer Delhi, have extremely sparse green cover.
- **Encourage Children's participation**- Providing students with hands-on activities like biodiversity mapping and pollution assessments empowers them to address environmental issues.
  - Engaging students in local initiatives around climate, such as *carbon neutral panchayats in Kerala*, could be a promising starting point.

## References

1. [United Nations | Climate Action](#)
2. [The Hindu | Heatwaves are evaporating the right to play](#)

