

The right to health in Vietnam and the impact of climate change

Abstract: Climate change is a global challenge that seriously affects human health and the enjoyment of human rights, especially the right to health. Vietnam is highly vulnerable to climate change due to its geographical conditions, which increases health risks and puts pressure on the health system, particularly for vulnerable groups. The article analyses the right to health in the context of climate change in Vietnam, as recognized in both international law and Vietnamese legislation. Although Vietnam has made notable progress in healthcare, climate change continues to pose serious challenges to the effective realization of the right to health. The article, therefore, highlights the need for stronger policies and actions to better protect the right to health for all.

Keywords: Climate change; Impact; Right to health; Vietnam

1. Introduction

The right to health is one of the most fundamental human rights, which means that every person has the right to live in conditions that allow them to reach the highest possible standard of physical and mental health. This includes, inter alia, access to healthcare services, safe water, nutritious food, proper housing, and a clean and safe environment. Furthermore, the right to health is not only about receiving medical treatment when people are sick, but also about preventing diseases and promoting overall well-being as well as collaborative trans-national research and action for promoting health for all (Robert & Ruth, 2010), as known "*global health*". It is also clear that this right is recognized in international law, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (hereinafter 'UDHR') 1948 and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereinafter 'ICESCR') 1966, which both affirm that health is an essential condition for living a life with dignity.

Vietnam, a developing country located in Southeast Asia, has made great progress in improving public health and expanding access to healthcare for its nearly 100 million citizens (Cuvelier, 2023). The government has built a legal framework to protect this right, including the 2013 Constitution and various health-related laws. These laws ensure that people have equal access to health services and are protected from threats to their health and well-being. Vietnam, however, faces many challenges in fully realizing the right to health, especially due to environmental problems and the growing impacts of climate change which has become one of the most serious global threats to human health in the 21st century, such as, rising temperatures, sea-level rise, floods, storms, and droughts are affecting people's living conditions and increasing the spread of diseases. It is also important to note that, in addition to Vietnam, a country with a long coastline and large river deltas, the impacts of climate change are particularly severe. Coastal areas are facing more frequent flooding and saltwater intrusion, which affects clean water supplies and

agriculture. Extreme weather events also damage health facilities, limit access to medical care, and increase health risks for vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly, and the minorities.

This study, therefore, was chosen because it reflects an urgent issue that connects human rights, public health, and environmental protection. To this end, it helps us understand how Vietnam is working to protect people's health under changing climate conditions, and what more can be done to ensure that everyone enjoys their right to health in both law and reality.

2. Methodology

This article adopts a qualitative and interdisciplinary research approach to examine the relationship between climate change and the right to health in Vietnam. In addition, it is also important to note that the study is based on human rights-based research approach as well as legal analysis, combining international human rights law, Vietnamese legislation, and climate change policy documents. Due regard must, therefore, be paid to the following:

First, the research reviews relevant international legal instruments on the right to health, including international human rights treaties, United Nations reports, and policy documents related to climate change and health. This helps establish a normative framework for understanding State obligations regarding health protection in the context of climate change.

Second, the article analyzes Vietnam's domestic legal and policy framework, including constitutional provisions, and national climate change strategies. This legal analysis is used to assess how the right to health is recognized and implemented in Vietnam and how climate-related health risks are addressed at the national level.

Third, the study examines secondary sources such as reports from international organizations, academic literature, and policy studies to identify key climate-related health impacts and vulnerable groups in Vietnam. These sources provide practical evidence to support the legal analysis and highlight existing gaps and challenges.

Finally, based on the combined legal and policy analysis, the article proposes practical and context-specific recommendations to strengthen the protection of the right to health in Vietnam in the face of climate change. This methodology allows for a comprehensive understanding of the issue by linking legal obligations with real-world health and climate challenges.

3. The right to health in Vietnam

The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action in 1993 clearly stated: *"All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis. While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in*

mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms” (The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, 1993). More specifically, *“All human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible and interdependent; equal attention and urgent consideration should be given to the implementation, promotion and protection of both civil and political, and economic, social and cultural rights”* (American Association for the International Commission of Jurists & International Commission of Jurists, 1993). Human rights are the basic freedoms and protections that every person should enjoy, no matter their nationality, gender, religion, or social background. They are universal and belong to all people simply because they are human. The UDHR states that all people are *“born free and equal in dignity and rights”* (United Nations, 1948) showing that human rights are meant to protect human dignity in every society. Nevertheless, in some specific situations, certain human rights must be given priority in the implementation, and conversely, the exercise of other human rights may need to be restricted. In this regard, one of the rights that is often prioritized in such contexts is the right to health. This is because protecting public health is essential for the safety and well-being of the whole population, and in emergencies or special circumstances, it may require temporary restrictions on other rights.

Similarly, it is important to keep in mind that the obligation of the State to ensure human rights, specifically the right to health, has been affirmed by the international community in a number of important legal instruments, accordingly Article 12 (1) of the ICESCR 1966: *“The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health”* (General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI), 1966) as well as Article 25 (1) of the UDHR 1948: *“Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control”* (United Nations, 1948), is very important because it affects a person’s life, safety, and ability to live with dignity. Good health allows people to work, study, and participate fully in community life. According to the World Health Organization, health is *“a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being”* (WHO, n.d.), not just the absence of disease. This means the right to health is essential for ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live a safe, meaningful, and productive life. Additionally, it is particularly important to pay attention to Articles 2 and 3 of the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms stipulate that each State has the primary responsibility to protect, promote, and implement human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as States must adopt necessary legislative, administrative, and other measures to create appropriate social, economic, political, and legal conditions that allow all individuals to enjoy these rights in practice. At the same time, human rights should be implemented within a domestic legal framework that is consistent with the Charter of the United Nations and the State’s international human rights obligations, ensuring the effective promotion and protection of these rights (General Assembly resolution 53/144, 1998).

In Vietnam, the right to health is written clearly in Article 38 of the 2013 Constitution. It states that *“Everyone has the right to be protected, to receive health care, and to be treated equally in the use of medical services, and has the obligation to comply with regulations on disease prevention, medical examination, and treatment. All acts that threaten the life and health of others and the community are strictly prohibited”* (The National Assembly of Vietnam, 2013). This constitutional rule provides a strong foundation for building a fair health-care system. To carry out this right in real life, in addition to the main legislative act as the Constitution of Vietnam referred to above, specific provisions on healthcare are also set down by the Vietnamese Government in sector-specific legislative acts such as the Law on Protection of People’s Health 1989, the Law on Medical Examination and Treatment 2009, the amended Health Insurance Law 2014, and the Pharmacy Law 2016. These laws help guide how the health system should work, how services should be provided, and how people can access medical care. In recent years, Vietnam has made noticeable progress in improving public health. For example, the national immunization program has rebounded strongly after COVID-19: in 2024 Vietnam achieved around 99% coverage for the first dose of the diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine (up from 80% in 2023). This helped cut the number of “zero-dose” children (i.e. children who receive no vaccine) from about 274,000 in 2023 to just about 13,000 in 2024 (UNICEF, 2025). In the field of HIV/AIDS, Vietnam has developed a comprehensive prevention and treatment program covering the full continuum: prevention, testing, treatment, and maintenance. As of 2024, around 183,000 people are on antiretroviral therapy; over 97% of them have viral suppression, which greatly reduces transmission risk (VOV Vietnam, 2024). Public-health capacity has been strengthened with support from international partners such as Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): e.g. Vietnam boosted its lab network, expanded surveillance of antimicrobial-resistance, reinforced influenza surveillance, and trained hundreds of public-health workers under Field Epidemiology Training Programs in all 63 provinces (CDC Global health, 2025). Furthermore, the average life expectancy is around 73 years (Kim Anh, 2025), showing better overall health conditions. More than 90% of the population now has health insurance (Vietnam Social Security, 2023), which makes medical services more affordable and accessible. Vaccination programs (Nena, 2026) have also reduced the number of infectious diseases, especially among children.

However, equal access to health care remains some certain limitations. People living in big cities usually enjoy better medical services, while those in rural and mountainous areas may face many difficulties. Some local health centers lack equipment, and patients often have to travel long distances to receive proper treatment (International Trade Administration, 2024). This creates a clear gap between regions. Another major issue is overcrowding in hospitals. Many central and provincial hospitals receive more patients than they can handle. This leads to long waiting times, limited space, and heavy pressure on doctors and nurses. In some areas, there are not enough trained medical workers, making it harder for people to receive quality care (Cuvelier, 2023). Although Vietnam has achieved important results, more effort is needed to make sure everyone has equal access to health services. Improving health-care facilities in remote areas, increasing the number of medical workers, and reducing hospital overcrowding will be essential steps.

To this end, ensuring fairness in access is key to fully protecting the right to health for all Vietnamese people, as promised in the Constitution.

4. The impact of climate change on the right to health in Vietnam

In 2020, United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, stated that *“Climate change is the biggest threat to our survival as a species and is already threatening human rights around the world”* (Guterres, 2020). The seriousness of this threat comes from the severe impacts of climate change, which affect not only the lives of individuals and communities but also the natural environment as well as the authors, Michael Burger and Jessica A. Wentz, show that climate change poses an enormous threat to the lives and well-being of individuals and communities across the world. Climate change will have a profound effect on the enjoyment of human rights for billions of people (Burger & Wentz, 2015). It is thus clear that climate change is widely recognized as one of the most serious threats to the enjoyment of human rights. Estimates of the annual economic cost of loss and damage in developing countries alone amounted to at least \$435 billion in 2020, a figure that is expected to rise to at least \$580 billion by 2030, excluding non-economic losses and damages. Projected losses and damages escalate with every increment of global warming, while limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius would substantially reduce them (The Secretary-General, 2024). Therefore, climate action is needed at all levels, especially at the national and local levels.

In this regard, climate change and the right to health are strongly interconnected. More specifically, climate change undermines the physical, social, and environmental conditions required for good health, while effective climate action is essential to protect and promote the right to health for present and future generations. Moreover, based on the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stated that climate change is a multiplier of existing health vulnerabilities, including food insecurity and limited access to safe water, improved sanitation, healthcare and education, and that the most effective measures to reduce vulnerability in the near term are program that implement and improve basic public health (Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change (IPCC), 2023).

Similarly, in addition to the challenges on the right to health in Vietnam referred to above, it is important to keep in mind that the right to health is also severely affected by, the impact of global contemporary issues, climate change. This is already affecting the health and safety of many people in Vietnam. More specifically, rising temperatures, unpredictable weather, and changes in rainfall patterns are creating new risks and making old problems worse. Hotter days can lead to heat stress and dehydration, while heavier rains increase flooding and the spread of waterborne diseases. At the same time, longer dry seasons cause droughts that limit clean water supplies and damage crops. These impacts are being felt across the country, from the northern mountains to the Mekong Delta (Department of Climate Change, 2023). However, some communities are more vulnerable than others. People living in rural areas, low-income families, ethnic minority groups, and coastal communities often have fewer resources to protect themselves, making it harder for them to recover from climate-related health problems. One major concern is the rise of vector-borne diseases, especially dengue fever and malaria (Hoang

et al., 2025). Warmer temperatures allow mosquitoes to breed faster and survive in more places. Rainfall patterns have also become irregular, creating more standing water where mosquitoes can lay eggs. As a result, dengue outbreaks are becoming more frequent and more intense in both urban and rural areas. In Northern provinces, where dengue used to be rare, cases are now appearing more often. This shows that climate change is helping mosquitoes expand into new regions.

Climate change also affects food and water security (Van Tho, 2022). In the Mekong Delta, saltwater intrusion has become a serious problem. Because of rising sea levels and reduced freshwater flow, salty water moves deep into farmland. This harms rice crops, vegetables, and fruit trees, reducing food production. It also affects drinking water supplies, forcing many families to rely on stored water or water transported from other places. Poor diet and unsafe water increase the risk of malnutrition, diarrhea, and other health problems, especially among children.

Additionally, some groups are more affected than others. Poor households have fewer resources to adapt (Tran et al., 2021). When crops fail or water becomes unsafe, they suffer the most because they cannot easily buy clean water or new seeds. Elderly people are more vulnerable to heat stress during long heat waves, which are becoming more common. Children are at higher risk of dehydration, malnutrition, and infectious diseases. Coastal communities face repeated storms, flooding, and erosion, which threaten their homes, livelihoods, and mental health. Besides that, it is often stressed that climate change has a strong impact on ethnic minority communities in Vietnam, especially those who depend on agriculture, forests and natural resources for their livelihoods. Indeed, ethnic minority communities live in vulnerable areas such as mountainous regions, river basins, and coastal zones, which are more exposed to natural disasters, floods, droughts, landslides, and storms. Climate risks reduce crop yields, damage farmland, forests, and water sources, and threaten food security. As a result, ethnic minority households face higher poverty risks and income instability. Environmental degradation also affects traditional livelihoods and cultural practices that are closely linked to nature. In addition, limited access to infrastructure, information, and disaster response services makes ethnic minority communities less able to adapt to climate change, increasing their vulnerability.

Overall, climate change is not just an environmental issue in Vietnam, it is also a growing public health problem. As the weather gets hotter and more unpredictable, more people are getting sick from heat, mosquito bites, dirty water, and polluted air. At the same time, droughts, floods, and salty water damage crops and reduce clean water supplies, making life harder for many families. These problems do not affect everyone in the same way. Poor families, ethnic minority groups, children, the elderly, and people living in risky areas often suffer the most and have a harder time recovering. Because of this, Vietnam's health system needs to prepare better for future climate risks. Some programs include: Climate-resilient hospitals (WHO, 2025), National Action Plan for Health & Climate Change 2019-2030 (UNDP, 2023), ADB's Greater Mekong Subregion Project (Hai Yen, 2021). This means improving hospitals, watching disease outbreaks more closely, planning for natural disasters, and giving extra support to the people and communities who need it most.

It is now acknowledge that Vietnam is widely recognized as one of the countries most affected by climate change (World Bank Group & Asian Development Bank, 2021), but the difficulties it faces today are also shaped by geography, history, and long-term development patterns. These background factors explain why strengthening the health system and climate response remains a major challenge, particular attention should be paid, inter alia, as the following:

Firstly, Vietnam's geography makes it naturally vulnerable (Linh Tran et al., 2023). The country has a long coastline and many low-lying areas, especially the Mekong Delta and Red River Delta. These regions are easily flooded by storms, rising sea levels, and heavy rainfall. Central Vietnam, with its mountains and narrow shape, also experiences severe storms and flash floods almost every year. Because of these natural conditions, even small changes in climate create big impacts.

Secondly, Vietnam is a developing country, and its health system grew rapidly but unevenly after decades of war and poverty (Revilla Diez, 2016). For many years after the war ended in 1975, public health facilities lacked equipment, technology, and trained workers. Although Vietnam has made major progress—especially in expanding insurance and basic care, there is still a gap between big cities and rural or mountainous areas. This historical background helps explain why there are not enough doctors, why hospitals get overcrowded, and why many facilities are not ready for natural disasters.

Another challenge comes from limited financial resources. Vietnam's economy has grown fast (OECD, 2025), but it still has to balance many priorities: education, transportation, poverty reduction, agriculture, and national defense. Climate change demands large investments in early warning systems, resilient hospitals, safe water infrastructure, and disease surveillance. These systems are expensive, and Vietnam often cannot upgrade them as quickly as needed.

A further issue is that climate–health coordination is still new (Chu & Pham, 2025). For many years, climate change was seen mainly as an environmental or agricultural problem, not a health problem. This means early warning systems for diseases like dengue have not been fully developed. Hospitals were not originally designed to withstand strong storms, heat waves, or long power cuts. Only recently have climate and health agencies started working together more closely, including with the WHO.

Finally, Vietnam has a large population living in risky areas. Millions of people depend on farming or fishing (Department of Climate Change, 2021), especially in the Mekong Delta and coastal regions. When droughts, storms, or salinity occur, these families lose income and face health risks. Because many of them are poor or belong to ethnic minority groups, they have fewer resources to adapt or relocate. This social background makes climate impacts more serious and harder to manage.

Together, these historical, geographic, and economic factors explain why Vietnam's climate-health challenges remain difficult. Although the government has created strategies like the National Climate Change Strategy 2021-2050 (The Prime Minister of Vietna, 2022) which focuses on two main goals: protecting people and communities from climate risks and cutting emissions to reach net-zero by 2050. Key actions include providing clean and safe water for everyone, improving early-warning systems for storms,

floods, heat waves, and disease outbreaks, strengthening health services in disaster-prone areas, and protecting ecosystems, land, and water. These actions align well with WHO's expectations, which call for safe hospitals with clean water and strong infrastructure, better tracking of climate-related diseases, protection of vulnerable groups during disasters, and the inclusion of health in all climate policies (WHO, 2025) as well as aims to strengthen resilience, protect vulnerable regions, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Vietnam is also cooperating with the WHO on programs that connect climate change with public health, such as training health workers, improving disease surveillance, and supporting climate-resilient health facilities.

These challenges show that Vietnam needs long-term investment in climate-resilient health care. Without stronger systems, climate change will continue to increase health risks and strain the country's capacity to respond. Also, Vietnam faces rising health risks from climate change, and these pressures often go beyond the country's ability to respond. To reduce these risks, several practical solutions can be strengthened and expanded as the following:

Firstly, Vietnam can build stronger and more climate-resilient hospitals. This means upgrading buildings so they can withstand storms, floods, and heat waves. Hospitals need backup power systems, better drainage, safe water storage, and stronger communication tools. In flood-prone areas, facilities may need to be relocated to higher ground. Climate-resilient hospitals can continue operating during disasters, rather than being damaged or forced to close. In addition, health facilities should prepare emergency response plans and regularly train medical staff to deal with climate-related emergencies. Early warning systems should be connected to hospitals so that they can prepare in advance for extreme weather events. Investment in climate-resilient hospitals should focus especially on rural, remote, and high-risk areas, where access to healthcare is already limited. Strengthening hospitals in this way helps protect patients, health workers, and medical services, and ensures that the right to health can still be realized during and after climate-related disasters.

Secondly, Vietnam should work closely with international partners such as the World Health Organization and the World Bank. These organizations provide technical expertise, funding, and training. For example, the World Health Organization can help Vietnam design stronger disease surveillance and early warning systems, improve public health planning, and respond more effectively to climate-related health risks. At the same time, the World Bank can support large-scale projects such as hospital upgrades, climate-resilient health infrastructure, and emergency response plans. International cooperation also helps Vietnam access financial resources and modern technology that may not be available domestically. By learning from global best practices and successful experiences in other countries, Vietnam can improve its health system more quickly and effectively. Such cooperation strengthens national capacity and supports the long-term protection of the right to health in the context of climate change.

Thirdly, raising community awareness about climate change and health risks is essential. Local people need clear and easy-to-understand information about how heat waves, floods, storms, and changing weather patterns affect human health. Communities can be trained on practical measures such as mosquito control, safe water and sanitation

practices, disaster preparedness, and ways to protect vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. Local health workers, schools, and community organizations can play an important role in sharing information and organizing training activities. Early warning messages and public communication through radio, mobile phones, and local networks can help people respond more quickly to climate-related risks. When citizens understand these risks and know how to act, they can take preventive measures, reduce illness, and better protect their health before and during climate-related events.

Fourthly, promoting health equity is essential, especially for vulnerable populations. This requires directing more financial, human, and technical resources to poor households, ethnic minority groups, and people living in remote, mountainous, or coastal areas that are highly exposed to climate risks. Mobile clinics and outreach health teams can bring basic medical services to communities with limited access to hospitals. Telemedicine can also help connect patients in remote areas with doctors and specialists in urban centers. In addition, targeted vaccination programs and preventive healthcare services can reduce the risk of climate-sensitive diseases. By improving access to affordable and quality healthcare in high-risk regions, Vietnam can reduce health inequalities and better protect those who face the greatest impacts of climate change, thereby strengthening the realization of the right to health for all.

Lastly, Vietnam can use modern tools such as artificial intelligence (AI) and big data to better predict and manage climate-related health risks. AI systems can analyze large amounts of data, including weather patterns, mosquito populations, hospital records, and satellite images, to forecast when and where disease outbreaks, such as dengue fever, are likely to occur. Early warning systems based on these technologies can help local health authorities prepare medicines, organize response teams, and provide timely information to communities. Big data can also support real-time monitoring of heat waves, air pollution, and water quality, allowing the government to respond more quickly to emerging health threats. By using digital technologies in this way, Vietnam can improve prevention, strengthen public health planning, and reduce the health impacts of climate change, especially for high-risk areas and vulnerable populations.

In doing so, these solutions provide Vietnam with a clear and practical path to strengthening its response to the health impacts of climate change. By investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, building strong international partnerships, raising community awareness, promoting fair access to healthcare, and using modern technology, Vietnam can better protect public health and ensure the effective realization of the right to health in the face of growing climate risks. Beyond immediate health benefits, these measures also support long-term sustainable development and social stability. A rights-based and inclusive approach to climate and health policy helps reduce inequality, protect vulnerable groups, and strengthen public trust in state institutions. In the long run, integrating climate action with health protection is essential not only for responding to current challenges but also for safeguarding the well-being of future generations in Vietnam.

5. Conclusion

Vietnam has recognized the right to health and has achieved many important improvements over the years. These improvements include longer life expectancy - rising to about 73.7 years in 2023 (Thanh Ha & Duong Lieu, 2024), high health-insurance coverage with 93.35% of the population insured in 2024 (Nhan Dan News, 2024), strong vaccination programs where childhood immunization reached 99% coverage for the first dose of the DTP vaccine in 2024 (UNICEF, 2025), and better control of infectious diseases. The country also expanded local health centers, reduced child mortality with under-five mortality falling from 22.1 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2015 to 18.9 in 2022 (The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 2023), and successfully responded to several public-health threats, including COVID-19, where Vietnam gained international praise during the early stages for fast contact tracing, community testing, and strong local-level response. However, climate change is now a major threat to these achievements. Rising temperatures, stronger storms, sea-level rise, and salinity in the Mekong Delta place heavy pressure on Vietnam's hospitals, food supply, water systems, and disease control programs. Climate change increases the risk of dengue, heat-related illness, and waterborne diseases. At the same time, COVID-19 showed how quickly health systems can be overwhelmed when large shocks occur. These realities highlight the urgent need to strengthen Vietnam's climate-health response.

In the years ahead, therefore, emphasis must be placed on protecting the right to health, Vietnam will need stronger policies and actions, inter alia, increasing investment in the health system. More funding is needed for hospital upgrades, emergency equipment, disease-monitoring systems, and training for health workers, especially in rural and high-risk regions. On the other hands, creating new legislation focused on climate-resilient health care. Vietnam could pass laws that require hospitals to follow climate-safety standards, mandate emergency plans, and ensure safe water and energy backup systems. Stronger regulations on heat protection, sanitation, and pollution control can also reduce climate-related health risks. Furthermore, developing national initiatives and programs. Vietnam can launch long-term programs to support climate-resilient health infrastructure, improve early warning systems for infectious diseases, expand telemedicine, and strengthen public-health research. A national "Climate and Health Action Program" could coordinate ministries, hospitals, and local authorities. At the same time, working with the global community, cooperation with WHO, the World Bank, and international climate funds can bring financial support, technical expertise, and new technologies. These partnerships also help Vietnam apply global best practices in climate-health adaptation. Lastly, strengthening community education and local resilience. Informing communities about climate risks, safe water use, vector control, heat protection, and disaster preparedness helps reduce illness. Special attention should be given to the poor, ethnic minorities, children, the elderly, and coastal populations. Without these actions, many of Vietnam's past gains in healthcare, such as better disease control, improved life expectancy, and broader health-insurance access, could be weakened or reversed. To this end, protecting health in the age of climate change will require a combination of investment, stronger systems, clear laws, and international cooperation.

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