

Cover Story



Public Health for Resilience

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Cover photo: The logo denotes the theme “Resilience in Public Health towards post COVID era” of the College of Community Physicians of Sri Lanka 2021/2022. Each square in the logo represents an important area for resilience under the motto 'Public Health for Resilience'.

- Forest and environment (forest green)
- Family (mustard yellow)
- Healthcare workers (magenta)
- Living (brown)
- Recreational activities (peach)
- Water (blue)

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The cover photo highlights the efforts that should be taken on each of the above areas to achieve a resilient system with the contribution of all relevant sectors. Resilience refers to the ability of individuals, places and populations to withstand stress and challenge (1). Resilient people are essential in our society. The most resilient people are those who go through difficulties in life yet come out steadily and stronger than before. In other words, being resilient is defined as the ability to bounce back quickly from a difficult or tough situation.

The importance of resilience can be seen in all aspects of life. Whether it is from a one-year-old learning how to walk, a college student leaving home for the first time to learn a specialty interacting with peer groups, an adult taking up a career and facing new challenges in a competitive world or



a patient diagnosed with a life-threatening disease struggling to survive, the resilience becomes important to handle any situation. Beyond the individual, resilience can be approached at the level of communities, cities, regions or nations. Resilience at this scale concerns not only the population affected, but also the environment in which their resilience is tested and is referred to as 'place resilience' (2). Resilient individuals and communities cannot be created through the action of one professional group or area of concern. Actions must be aligned at the level of individuals with community development, economic planning, service provision and infrastructure planning (3). Referring to the impact of the pandemic on public health systems and their consequent impact on health, strengthening the health systems together with capacity of human resources for health are important to make the health system resilient (4).

A system is resilient, if it continues to carry out its mission in the face of adversity or in other words, if it provides required capabilities despite excessive stresses that can cause disruptions.

Also, the concept of water resilience has emerged recently in response to growing recognition of a more variable and uncertain future (5). The world is facing a global water crisis marked by growing competition for freshwater resources, rapidly deteriorating water quality, poor and declining ecosystem health, unprecedented biodiversity loss and a failure to meet basic water and sanitation needs. This crisis is exacerbated by population growth, unsustainable consumption patterns, and increasingly climate change. Climate change demands that any city that wants to survive must learn to manage and live with water. To be resilient and thriving requires a comprehensive, forward-looking approach to water management that builds on the people, making them a part of the plan and solution. Water is a significant focus for Resilient Cities whose efforts are to mitigate the causes and effects of climate change.

This example emphasizes the vital role of public health in collaboration with other sectors on emergency preparedness and response in reducing human vulnerability to adversity coming from time to time, whether natural or manmade. The College of Community Physicians of Sri Lanka selected this important theme to promote and highlight the importance of developing resilience of all sectors without confined to the health sector alone but in view of enhancing the nations' resilience.

References

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