

Climate Change and Pregnancy Complications Study

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance| General issues on Environmental ecology

Why in news?

A recent report from the US-based research group Climate Central reveals that climate change increases the heat exposure for pregnant women worldwide and leads to health risks.

- The report examined data from 247 countries and territories that focused on measuring increased heat exposure for pregnant women since 2020.

Key Findings of the Study

- A report reveals that climate change has significantly increased exposure to dangerous heat levels during pregnancy.
- **Pregnancy heat-risk days** - In 222 out of 247 countries climate change has **at least doubled the average annual number** of "pregnancy heat-risk days" over the past five years.
- **Impact on developing countries** - Developing countries with limited healthcare access showed the largest increases in heat exposure.
- Most affected regions include the Caribbean, Central and South America, Pacific islands, Southeast Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa.

Implications

- **Public health risk** - Pregnant women are increasingly vulnerable to heat-induced complications, posing a growing maternal and fetal health crisis, especially in under-resourced regions.
- Heat-related pregnancy complications are,
 - Premature birth
 - Stillbirth
 - Birth defects
 - Gestational diabetes
- **Policy urgency** - Beyond tackling climate change at a global level, there is a need for local adaptation strategies, such as:
 - Urban greening
 - Pollution control
 - Creation of cooling zones
 - Public advisories specifically targeting pregnant women
- **Research gaps** - There is a limited understanding of the physiological mechanisms behind heat-related pregnancy risks, underscoring the need for further scientific

studies.

- **Health communication** – Heatwave warnings and health advisories must include pregnant women as a high-risk group, which is currently rarely done.

Reference

[The Hindu| Climate change increasing risk of pregnancy problems](#)

