



Enduring the Storm: A qualitative examination of primary healthcare providers' journeys through disasters — May 2026

FAST FACTS:

- Between 2022 and 2025, over 400 extreme weather events caused approximately 80,000 fatalities in India.
- The state of Odisha in India has experienced more than 10 cyclones and subsequent floods in the past decade, placing sustained pressure on local health systems and workers.
- Disasters have a significant impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of health care professionals.

PROJECT CYCLE:

2026 - 2027

SUPPORTERS:

Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, UK

National Institute for Health and Care Research, UK

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Sushree Nibedita Panda

BACKGROUND:

- Climate-related disasters increasingly strain primary healthcare systems, placing primary healthcare providers under prolonged physical, emotional, and psychological stress during response and recovery phases.
- India ranked among the 10 countries most affected by climate change according to the Climate Risk Index 2026. Odisha, an east-coastal state, has been repeatedly struck by cyclones and floods.
- There is limited evidence documenting healthcare providers' lived experiences and mental health needs during climate-related disasters, particularly in disaster-prone regions like Odisha.

AIMS:

- To explore the lived experiences and perceived mental health effects of climate-related disasters on primary healthcare providers.
- To examine the coping strategies adopted by the health workforce and existing support mechanisms embedded in the system.

METHOD:

- This qualitative study will use in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with purposively selected primary healthcare providers and key stakeholders.
- It will be conducted in flood- and/or cyclone-affected primary healthcare centres in Bhograi, Baliapal, and Basta blocks of Baleshwar district in Odisha.
- The information collected will be reviewed to understand primary healthcare providers' experiences of disasters and identify common themes at the individual, community, and health-system levels.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

- Findings of the study will highlight mental health stressors and unmet support needs of primary health workers, informing contextually relevant strategies to integrate into disaster management systems to protect their psychological wellbeing.
- The study will strengthen the limited evidence from low- and middle-income countries on climate-related disasters and mental health, contributing to the development of climate-resilient health systems.

CONTACT:

To learn about this project, its investigators or The George Institute please contact:

Tina Wall +61 410 411 983 OR
twall@georgeinstitute.org.au

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