

## Call for Participation

### **Climate Change and Mental Health: Comparative Risk Pathways, Vulnerability, and Resilience**

Jointly hosted by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina.

**Location:** South Africa

**Workshop dates:** 8–10 September 2026

### **Call for Emerging Scientists**

The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, invite applications from emerging scientists based in South Africa and German-speaking countries to participate in the international workshop on:

“Climate Change and Mental Health: Comparative Risk Pathways, Vulnerability, and Resilience”

The workshop will take place in South Africa, from 8–10 September 2026 and forms part of the joint ASSAf–Leopoldina workshop series on Climate Change and Health. It provides a platform for discussing current research, strengthening international scientific cooperation, and advancing the translation of scientific evidence into policy-relevant action.

### **Background**

Human-induced climate change affects societies profoundly and in an incremental manner, yet its impacts on mental health remain insufficiently understood and are rarely integrated into climate, health, and development policies. Climate stressors influence mental health both directly (e.g. extreme heat, environmental degradation, disasters) and indirectly (e.g., displacement, food insecurity, livelihood loss, and socio-economic instability), often reinforcing existing inequalities.

Actual evidence from South Africa and German-speaking countries remains limited, particularly regarding protective factors and resilience mechanisms. As a result, mental health is still underrepresented in climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. This workshop seeks to address this gap through a structured, comparative, and policy-oriented dialogue.

### **Workshop Focus and Aims:**

The workshop adopts a comparative perspective between South Africa and German-speaking countries and invites applications from researchers in psychology, psychiatry, neuroscience, climate and environmental sciences, alongside other disciplines relevant to the focus of the workshop.

The key aims are to:

- Synthesise and structure evidence on direct and indirect pathways linking climate change and mental health in South Africa and German-speaking countries.
- Identify interindividual differences in the effects of climate change on mental health, including vulnerability and protective factors, and attention to inequality as well as context-specific risks.
- Compare national impacts, responses, and preparedness across participating countries.
- Derive policy-relevant recommendations and producing a short policy paper/brief integrating mental health into climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.
- Build capacity among emerging scholars through active involvement in analysis, dialogue, and outputs.

### **Format**

The workshop will consist of:

- Two days of scientific exchange, including keynote lectures, panel discussions, poster sessions, and interactive formats (e.g., world café).
- One day dedicated to drafting a joint policy paper, with structured mentoring and capacity-building for emerging scientists.
- Roundtable engagement with social and policy stakeholders, including a possible public-facing event and engagement at the German Embassy (TBC).

Active participation by emerging scientists (including poster presentations and contributions to discussions and outputs) is a core component of the workshop.

### **What we offer**

Selected participants will:

- Engage with leading scholars in climate change and mental health from South Africa and German-speaking countries (including senior experts).
- Network with fellow emerging scientists and established researchers.
- Participate in a high-level, interdisciplinary, and policy-oriented international forum.
- Receive full financial support, including travel, accommodation, and meals.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

Applicants must:

- Be resident in South Africa, Germany, Austria or Switzerland.
- Be a postdoctoral researcher within five years of PhD/MD completion.
- Demonstrate a strong publication record in a relevant field.
- Have research experience related to climate change, mental health, or closely related areas (empirical data experience is an advantage).
- Commit to active participation, including presenting their work and contributing to workshop outputs.

## How to apply

If you meet the above-mentioned criteria, you can apply by providing the following documents:

- Motivation letter (half a page),
- Abstract (max. 300 words) describing current research and proposed contribution
- Curriculum Vitae (CV) containing:
  - Personal Data, incl. current position
  - Qualifications and career
  - Engagement in the research system
  - Scientific Results (publication list)
  - Academic distinction
- Bio sketch (short biography in text format, incl. research interest, max. 250 words)

You are kindly requested to fill out the following application form:



<https://bit.ly/CCMH2026>

All documents need to be submitted in one coherent PDF document to **Dr Thomas Ploetze (thomas.ploetze@leopoldina.org), Germany, and Dr Khutso Phalane (khutso@assaf.org.za) South Africa by 3 April 2026.**

## Abstract Acceptance

Submissions will be reviewed by a scientific panel. The panel reserves the right to allocate presentation formats. All applicants will be notified of the outcome by **30 April 2026.**

## Workshop Participation

There is no registration fee to attend the workshop. ASSAf and Leopoldina will cover the travel and accommodation costs for the successful candidates for the workshop duration. The organisers will circulate further information about the workshop in due course