

New Zealand



KEY FACTS:

- ◆ Joined Commonwealth: 1931 (Statute of Westminster)
- ◆ Capital: Wellington
- ◆ Population: 4,179,000 (2007)
- ◆ GDP p c growth: 2.1% p.a. 1990–2005
- ◆ Official language: English, Maori, New Zealand Sign Language
- ◆ Time: GMT plus 12–13hr
- ◆ Currency: New Zealand dollar (NZ\$)

Current vulnerabilities and threats

1. What are the health risks from current or future climate change impacts that are of most concern to your country?

Within New Zealand: an increase in food- and water-borne disease; health implications of significant weather events such as storms, droughts and flooding; establishment of exotic mosquitoes capable of being disease vectors; and the indirect health implications of impacts on agriculture and rural/regional communities.

We are also very concerned about the health implications for our Pacific Island Country neighbours.

2. What population groups in your country are most vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change and what are the impacts likely to be?

Rural/regional communities, Maori, older people, groups/areas of high socio-economic deprivation. Impacts as outlined above.

Strategy and policy

3. How much of a priority is addressing the impacts of climate change on health for your country?

Mid-level priority.

4. Please describe the strategies your country has developed (for example, health and climate change adaptation strategies) that address the health impacts of climate change.

Updated water quality legislative frameworks; updating public health legislative frameworks; participation in all government initiatives; advocating WHO plays more active role on climate change in the Western Pacific Region.

The New Zealand Ministry of Health is also developing a health sector strategy for climate change adaptation. It will provide a framework to coordinate and encourage climate change adaptation in the health sector and contribute to cross-sector collaboration. It is anticipated that the Ministry's Climate Change Adaptation and Health Strategy will be finalised by April 2009.

In addition the Ministry of Health's Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Support Unit set up in August 2007 recognises that the HIA process provides an appropriate means by which the potential impacts of climate change can be initially assessed. In 2007 the Ministry of Health's Maori Health Directorate, Te Kete Hauora, released the Whānau

Ora Health Impact Assessment tool. The *Whānau Ora* HIA tool is a formal approach used to predict the potential health effects of a policy on Maori and their *Whānau* (family). It pays particular attention to Maori involvement in the policy development process and articulates the role of the wider health determinants in influencing health and wellbeing outcomes. As noted above climate change is going to have significant impacts for Maori, including for Maori-owned businesses/corporations for example farms.

5. Has health been integrated into national climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies?

No.

6. What steps have been made towards implementation of these strategies?

See Question 4 above.

7. What are the current policy gaps in addressing climate change and health?

There would be value in further exploration of health co-benefits of mitigation. Work to update public health legislative frameworks not yet completed.

8. How well equipped is your health system to cope with the impacts of climate change?

Well equipped.

9. Have you made any changes to your health system in response to increased risks resulting from climate change and if so, what changes have you made?

Legislative frameworks as above.

10. What are the main constraints to addressing the health impacts of climate change in your country and how will these be addressed?

Competing priorities for completing the public health legislative update.

11. Have national resources been allocated to address climate change and health in your country? If so, approximately how much has been allocated and for what issues?

Very limited resources: no new staff and within the Ministry of Health and broader health sector work is progressed by adding the issue to existing work programmes of interested staff. Fortunately a key participant in IPCC work on health and climate change is New Zealand-based.

12. Is the Ministry of Health working together with other ministries (such as Ministries of Agriculture, Environment, Fisheries or Finance) to address health and climate change issues?

No.

13. Has your country been involved in work to manage climate change and health at the international level?

Advocacy of WHO in playing a more active role. Some technical advice to Pacific Island Countries in the context of broader regional engagement.

14. How would you describe the capacity of your country to participate at the global level on climate change and health?

Very willing, especially in the Pacific, although the extent of involvement will be limited by staff availability.