

Samoa



KEY FACTS:

- ◆ Joined Commonwealth: 1970
- ◆ Capital: Apia
- ◆ Population: 187,000 (2007)
- ◆ GDP p c growth: 2.5% p.a. 1990–2005
- ◆ Official language: Samoan
- ◆ Time: GMT minus 11hr
- ◆ Currency: tala or Samoan dollar (T)

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?

- ◆ Waterborne and food-borne diseases: diarrhoea and gastroenteritis, typhoid and fish poisoning.
- ◆ Vector-borne diseases: dengue, filariasis, leptospirosis.
- ◆ Respiratory diseases: pneumonia, influenza.
- ◆ Malnutrition.
- ◆ Direct injuries from extreme events.
- ◆ Mental health diseases.
- ◆ Cardiac diseases.

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?

- ◆ People with poor health status (chronic diseases).
- ◆ People with disabilities (special needs).
- ◆ Those living in remote locations.
- ◆ People not fully involved in village affairs and the existing traditional social structures.
- ◆ People residing in coastal areas.
- ◆ People living in substandard living conditions in the urban area.

Strategy and Policy

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

High 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.

- ◆ Health Sector Plan 2008–2018¹.
- ◆ Samoa National Adaptation Programme of Action 2005 (NAPA).
- ◆ Health Sector Climate Change Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment Report 2008.
- ◆ 'Integrating Climate Change Risks in the Agriculture and Health Sectors in Samoa Project: 2008–2012' (ICCRA&HSS) – in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

and the Agriculture Sector.

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

Yes.

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

- ◆ NAPA – Specific components identified under the Samoa NAPA earmarked for funding under the ICCRA and HSS Project funded by the Global Environment Fund, will commence implementation in March 2009.
- ◆ Health Sector Plan – One of the key objectives/strategies of the Samoa Health Sector Plan is to strengthen health promotion and primordial prevention in order to prevent and/or control emerging and reemerging infectious diseases. The following have been implemented to realise this objective.
 - Develop the Communicable Disease Control Module on the Ministry of Health Patient Information System (PatIS) which monitors the trends of communicable diseases inclusive of climate sensitive diseases such as dengue, typhoid and diarrhoea.
 - Ongoing media campaigns on disease prevention.
 - Food Hygiene Standards and Water Standards have been developed.
 - 6th round of Mass Drug Administration campaign to eliminate filariasis was completed in late 2008.
 - Ongoing monitoring of water quality through testing.

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

- ◆ Need to strengthen the collaborative approach amongst the necessary partners to address climate change and health issues.
- ◆ The need for more integration amongst sector partners may call for the development of a policy that specifically addresses climate change and health needs and the nature of collaboration amongst the sectors.
- ◆ Communicable Disease Surveillance and Control Guidelines including treatment guidelines have been prepared but need finalisation and widespread promotion and adoption by stakeholders.

¹ http://www.health.gov.ws/UserFiles/File/Health_Sector_Plan_english.pdf

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

Despite reorganisation and reorientation of focus towards Health Promotion and Preventive Services, matching allocation of resources (financing and personnel) does not always follow the rhetoric. As such areas like promotional and preventive work towards meeting the challenges posed by climate change are not as well equipped or resourced as required.

On the clinical side, there is still much room for improvement as there are shortages in medical and nursing personnel. Samoa's health sector continues to work on improving its systems and programmes to meet current needs of the sector, utilising all means available including previously mentioned projects such as the ICCRA and HSS Project under the GEF mechanism, and the Sector Wide Approach Programme for Health which is funded by a loan from the World Bank and aid by the New Zealand and Australian Governments.

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?

Yes. The recent reorganisation of the public health sector through the health reforms in 2006 has allowed clearer demarcations of responsibility and prioritisation with a newly created entity the National Health Service, focusing on the provision of services, whilst the Ministry focuses on sector planning, regulation and monitoring.

This reform recognises the shift from the medical model and illness focus of previous years, which in the context of preparations for effects of climate change on health, allows for more focused planning and orientation of resources.

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

- ♦ Strengthening surveillance systems in order to monitor disease trends.
- ♦ Developing sustainable national public health programmes.
- ♦ Strengthening public health responses to disease outbreaks and emergency events.
- ♦ Improving capacity of National Health Services Lab to conduct rapid testing.
- ♦ Lack of funds for awareness campaigns specifically on climate health.
- ♦ Linking with other government ministries to develop national programmes that incur co-incidental health benefits.

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?

Yes – indirectly through allocations to specific programmes for environmental health and strengthening communicable disease control. The 'Integrating Climate Change Risks in the Agriculture and Health Sectors in Samoa' (ICCRA and HSS) Project 2008 – 2012 has just recently been approved by the Global Environment Fund. The GEF is funding US\$2m with likewise co-financing by the two sectors involved.

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? Yes.

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

Samoa is a party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol. As a Least Developed Country under the UNFCCC, Samoa's corresponding National Adaptation Programme of Action² was submitted in 2005 (and it remains committed to the realisation of this Plan of Action).

At the regional level as well, Samoa remains a strong advocate with results of such advocacy leading to the 'Pacific Forum Statement on Climate Change – Post Forum Dialogue', Oct 2007³; the Pacific Islands Framework for Action on Climate Change (2006-2015) adopted by Forum Leaders in 2005⁴; and the subsequent Niue Declaration on Climate Change by the Forum Leaders in October 2008⁵.

Most recently the UNFCCC Conference of Parties (COP) in Poznan, Poland was attended by a multi-sector representation from Samoa that included Health sector. The Ministry of Health was represented by the Chief Executive Officer as a member of a specialist panel in a WHO organised side event to the COP, with the theme 'Health matters – A key impact of climate change'. Samoa participated actively in the development of the WHO Technical Paper on Climate Health for the deliberation of the Executive Board and the World Health Assembly in May 2009.

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

As evident from Question 13 above, Samoa is a strong political advocate for addressing climate change and health issues. Samoa's advocacy efforts for the effects of climate change on health and small island developing states, is not constrained to specific environmental and climate change forums but in others such as the recent Financing for Development Conference in Dohar, Qatar (29 November – 2 December 2008), whereby it has specifically spoken out on the realistic nature of the assistance needed by small island developing states due to their vulnerability to climate change⁶.

The capacity for participation at the global level on climate change and health is not just in the health sector but in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture. All these sectors are working collaboratively and individually in their representations of Samoa and small island nations in general, at regional and global forums.

² <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/napa/sam01.pdf>

³ <http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/newsroom/speeches/speeches-2007/pacific-forum-statement-on-climate-change-pfd-plenary.html>

⁴ http://www.sprep.org/publication/pub_detail.asp?id=438

⁵ <http://www.forumsec.org.fj/pages.cfm/newsroom/press-statements/2008/forum-leaders-endorse-niue-declaration-on-climate-change.html>

⁶ http://www.un.org/webcast/ffd/2008/statements/081130_samoa_en.pdf