

Seychelles



KEY FACTS:

- ◆ Joined Commonwealth: 1976
- ◆ Capital: Victoria
- ◆ Population: 87,000 (2007)
- ◆ GDP growth: 1.5% p.a. 1990–2005
- ◆ Official language: Creole, English and French
- ◆ Time: GMT plus 4hr
- ◆ Currency: Seychelles rupee (SRs)

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?

- ◆ Insect and rodent-borne diseases.
- ◆ Diseases linked with breakdown in sanitation and water contamination/sea water intrusion.
- ◆ Cardiovascular disease/respiratory diseases and allergies (as a result of worsening of air quality).
- ◆ Heat stress, heat exhaustion, sunstroke, sunburn, anxiety and stress, allergic disorders and skin diseases.
- ◆ Food-borne diseases, diarrhoea including fish poisoning – toxic algae bloom, ciguatera poisoning as a result of warming up of oceans.
- ◆ Loss of lives, direct injuries and traumas.

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?

- ◆ The very young, the elderly and sick people are most vulnerable on account of their resistance and resilience capacities to the impacts of ill health and worsening environmental conditions.
- ◆ Group of people with the least resources have the least capacity to adapt and are most vulnerable.
- ◆ Coastal communities.

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.

The Ministry of Health has broad strategies which in many ways address the health impacts of climate change. The Ministry will develop climate change adaptation strategies as follows: Assessing potential health effects of climate change; surveillance of diseases; sanitation improvement programmes; preparedness planning and response; improved water and pollution control; public education, disaster relief capacity; capacity building for public health professionals; training of researchers and introduction of protective technologies.

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?

Health is represented in the National Committee on Climate Change and other national committees dealing with these issues such as disaster response and disaster management. Significant steps have been taken towards the implementation of these strategies.

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

Prioritising the issues of climate change and health impacts at a national level.

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

The health system is equipped to cope with emergencies of low magnitude and small disasters. However, we are not adequately prepared for moderate to major disasters that would involve mass casualties.

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: Reviewing the Preparedness planning and response. Reviewing the location of new health facilities; moving away from high risk areas (flood, tsunami, landslide, etc). More thorough EIA.

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

- ◆ Improving the overall capacities of the country to adapt and respond: Preparedness planning and response.
- ◆ Capacity building of public health professionals.
- ◆ Assessing potential health effects of climate change.
- ◆ High cost of relocating essential facilities to less risky locations; e.g. hospitals and health centres.

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, but not specifically to health.

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?

Not to an extensive level; however Seychelles is willing to participate actively in the programmes or research and any activities that will bring benefits to our country and the world in general.

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

Seychelles is a small island developing state and is very vulnerable to climate variability and long-term climate change and shares these characteristics that increase our vulnerability with other island countries around the world. Seychelles could become a model country or a communication hub by actively participating in research activities and contribute in terms of our local expertise, established infrastructures, scientific databases and achievements in the areas of sustainable development, environmental protection and high levels of public health and sanitation in the country.

Any other comments or information you would like to provide

The Environmental Public Health section of the Ministry of Health is the focal agency advocating the formulation and adoption of policies and strategies relating to health impacts of climate change and the mitigation and adaptation measures.

To implement the above, it is important to embark on a comprehensive exercise project that will eventually lead to the promotion and awareness of the many health impacts of climate change at all levels in the country; including the government and policy-makers, stakeholders and the general population in the community.

It is thus important that public health professionals are equipped with the necessary tools, know how and experience through capacity building and training which presently is somewhat lacking. Networking, information sharing and education are also vital issues that will further enhance the creation of more awareness with the eventual aim of fostering partnership, community mobilisation and concerted action by all.