

Sri Lanka



KEY FACTS:

- ◆ Joined Commonwealth: 1948
- ◆ Capital: Colombo
- ◆ Population: 19,299,000 (2007)
- ◆ GDP growth: 3.7% p.a. 1990–2005
- ◆ Official language: Sinhala, Tamil
- ◆ Time: GMT plus 5:30hr
- ◆ Currency: Sri Lanka rupee (SLRs)

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?

- ◆ Increase of vector-borne diseases such as dengue, chikungunya.
- ◆ Ill effects caused by natural disasters such as floods.
- ◆ Effects on food availability and food safety changing nutritional patterns.
- ◆ Food and water-borne 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?

- ◆ Displaced persons.
- ◆ People from lower socio-economic groups (especially children, the elderly and pregnant women).

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.

- ◆ Promoting energy efficient appliances and use of solar power wherever possible.
- ◆ Health education and promotion to create behavioural change.
- ◆ Proper maintenance of vehicles and equipment to reduce emissions.
- ◆ Improvement of healthcare services to address health impacts.
- ◆ Conduct research on climate change and health.

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?

- ◆ Awareness raising and training on climate change for healthcare staff.
- ◆ Intersectoral co-ordination.
- ◆ Contributions to formulate policies and strategies on climate change.

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

Gaps have been identified and a climate change policy, where health issues are addressed, is being drafted to minimise those gaps with the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

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

We have a very well organised public healthcare delivery system and services are provided down to grass roots level in a planned manner. We also have very good intersectoral co-ordination with other sectors at all levels, e.g. Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Disaster Management, provincial and local government, etc. Therefore, services can be provided in an organised manner.

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 roles and responsibilities of public health and healthcare staff have been identified. Measures have been taken to strengthen their capacity. Central level organisation has been strengthened.

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

Financial constraints for the development of infrastructure and the training of staff.

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. Annual health budget includes climate change activities (The amount is SLRs. 43,990,660,000). In addition, funds are provided by different funding agencies.

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?

Yes.

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

The country has the capacity to participate at the global level, which has already happened in the past, but these capacities have to be further developed.

Any other comments or information you would like to provide

Updated knowledge should come to the Environmental & Occupational Health Unit of the Ministry of Healthcare & Nutrition.

The main contact person for climate change and health

Director, Environmental & Occupational Health Unit.

Dr N C Pallewalte, Consultant Community Physician.

Ms Sujeiwa Fernando, Environmental Management Officer.