

St Lucia



KEY FACTS:

- ◆ Joined Commonwealth: 1979
- ◆ Capital: Castries
- ◆ Population: 165,000 (2007)
- ◆ GDP p c growth: 0.9% p.a. 1990–2005
- ◆ Official language: English
- ◆ Time: GMT minus 4hr
- ◆ Currency: Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$)

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?

- ◆ Increased in vector-borne diseases (dengue). The prolonged rainy season provides the ideal setting for breeding of the *aedes aegypti* mosquito.
- ◆ Extended rainy or dry seasons can cause food shortages.
- ◆ Increased severity of hurricanes, extreme heat and tsunamis can have a negative effect on small islands.

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 entire population will be affected.
- ◆ The very young are most affected by vector-borne diseases.
- ◆ The very old (heat related illnesses).
- ◆ Vulnerable groups (food security).

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.

The main strategy employed by the Ministry of Health is strengthening primary healthcare and public health aimed at raising environmental consciousness, educating and promoting behavioural change especially in the area of vector eradication and social assistance for the vulnerable.

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

N/A.

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

N/A.

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

There is a great need for integration and co-operation between the various Government Ministries and Non-Governmental Organisations in combating climate change issues. There is need for greater collaboration also at the regional level.

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

- ◆ Physical infrastructure – enforcing of building codes to overcome the increased severity of weather conditions.
- ◆ Human resources – although training can be made available, lack of personnel e.g. nurses will hinder the ability of the health system to respond to the effects of climate change.

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?

- ◆ Fortification of Health facilities to withstand water and wind forces.
- ◆ Staff training.
- ◆ Strengthening of surveillance systems.
- ◆ Awareness and education – behavioural change campaigns.

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

- ◆ Lack of political will. There is urgent need to convince politicians and policy-makers to make this issue a national priority.
- ◆ Lack of trained personnel.
- ◆ Financial constraints – availability of finances for climate change mitigation activities and its effects.

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?

Limited to environment and public health services.

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, but informally. No policy is in place to encourage co-operation among ministries.

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

Yes but limited involvement. Saint Lucia's work to manage climate change has been limited mainly at a regional level.

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

Limited, based on the response to question 13 above.

Any other comments or information you would like to provide

There is need for a more co-ordinated effort at country and regional level in dealing with climate change and health. Tourism is the mainstay of many Caribbean Islands, the effects of climate change on the industry would be devastating to small island states.

Further research is also required to determine other effects and new emerging disasters to the Caribbean such as tsunamis which can occur as a result of climate change