

# ■ St Vincent and the Grenadines



## KEY FACTS:

- ◆ Joined Commonwealth: 1979
- ◆ Capital: Kingstown
- ◆ Population: 118,000 (2004)
- ◆ GDP growth: 1.9% p.a. 1990–2004
- ◆ Official language: English
- ◆ Time: GMT minus 4hr
- ◆ Currency: Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$)

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

They include:

- ◆ increases in skin cancers and cataracts, a weakening of the immune system as a result of increased ultra violet radiation, loss of life and personal injury;
- ◆ damage to water and sewerage infrastructure;
- ◆ increase in communicable diseases which will result from a increase in hurricane frequency and intensity and other natural disasters;
- ◆ the proliferation of mosquitoes and other vectors which may carry diseases, due to increase in temperature and precipitation;
- ◆ increased incidence of heat stress and related injuries, which particularly affect the young and the elderly in the population;
- ◆ pollution of water supplies, proliferation of vector-/water-borne disease, and increased incidence of gastrointestinal diseases caused by increased flooding;
- ◆ decrease in water quality; and
- ◆ impact on personal hygiene and sanitation standards, food security which can lead to malnutrition as a result of less rain or drought.

### 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 and the old will/can be most susceptible to heat stress and suffer dehydration which can lead to death. The poor will be affected by extreme weather events (e.g. hurricanes) and all can be affected by escalation in the presence of vectors and, as a consequence, vector-borne diseases.

### 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.

There is no policy which directly address health and climate change. However, a draft National Climate Change Adaptation Policy was developed which contains a Health component. Also the draft National Economic and Social Development Plan addresses climate change

issues. The Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessments will include the health sector.

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

Yes, particularly the draft National Economic and Social Development Plan.

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

The steps include:

- a) the establishment of a Vector Control Unit within the Ministry of Health and Environment whose responsibility is to monitor and control vector numbers thereby reducing the incidence of vector-borne diseases;
- b) the National Emergency Management Organisation is responsible for disaster preparedness, management and recovery;
- c) the hospital is adequately equipped and staffed to address normal levels of vector-borne diseases, however, increased incidences would create a challenge as a result of limited human and financial resources;
- d) the Health Education/Promotion Unit within the Ministry of Health and Environment is responsible for increase public awareness of not only health issues but issues related to the environment as well; and
- e) the Environmental Management Department within the Ministry is the focal point which coordinates the implementation of the UFCCC at a national level.

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

The lack of direct policy to address climate change and health.

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

The hospital is adequately equipped and staffed to address normal levels of vector-borne diseases, however, increased incidences would create a challenge as a result of limited human and financial resources.

### 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?

No assessment has yet been made, however, the Vulnerability

Assessment of the health sector may provide more accurate information.

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

Financial and technical resources. They can be addressed through local and regional projects being implemented to address/remove these barriers. These projects should be funded by developed countries.

**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?**

Not directly.

**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?**

Our capacity is limited.