

# Trinidad & Tobago



## KEY FACTS:

- ◆ Joined Commonwealth: 1962
- ◆ Capital: Port of Spain
- ◆ Population: 1,333,000 (2007)
- ◆ GDP growth: 4.3% p.a. 1990–2005
- ◆ Official language: English
- ◆ Time: GMT minus 4hr
- ◆ Currency: Trinidad and Tobago dollar (TT\$)

## 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?

- ◆ Vector-borne diseases such as dengue fever, yellow fever, malaria and leptospirosis associated with increased rainfall and higher temperatures.
- ◆ Respiratory diseases such as asthma associated with increased pollen and Sahara dust in the atmosphere.
- ◆ Gastrointestinal diseases such as gastroenteritis associated with the consumption of contaminated food and/or water after incidence of flooding.

### 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?

- ◆ Children under the age of five.
- ◆ Pregnant and lactating women.
- ◆ Older adults.
- ◆ Homeless persons.
- ◆ Squatters.
- ◆ The disabled.

## Strategy and Policy

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

Addressing the impact of climate change on health is a Mid-level priority for Trinidad and Tobago.

### 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 following strategies were developed to address the health impact of climate change:

- ◆ Integrated Vector Management Strategy: This strategy entails the use of a combination of private/public sector interventions with local communities and other stakeholders, rational use of chemical and pharmaceuticals, and enforcement of public health regulations and good management practices to address the issue of dengue in the control of the vector *aedes aegypti* mosquito.
- ◆ Increased public education strategy: Increased public health

education to members of the public through the media to increase the public's knowledge of the measures they can take to control the vector *aedes aegypti* Mosquito as well as to sensitise the public on the need to pay greater emphasis on sanitation.

- ◆ Disaster mitigation strategies: These have been developed to minimise the health risks to the population in the event of a natural disaster.

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

Yes, health has been integrated into the national climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies; one example is in the area of disaster mitigation.

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

- ◆ The Ministry of Health has strengthened its capacity to deal with disasters through the establishment of an Emergency Services and Disaster Preparedness Coordinating Unit. This unit promotes, supports and provides guidance for the development and maintenance of disaster preparedness and response plans within the public, Non-Government Organisations and private health sectors, and work in close collaboration with other intersectoral partners. It also reviews and develops policies and coordinates training programmes. Additionally, It disseminates information on disaster preparedness, disaster response and disaster mitigation to the wider national community.
- ◆ The capacity of the Insect Vector Control Unit has been increased in the following areas:
  - the transportation fleet;
  - the space spraying equipment; and
  - training in residual spraying and employment of additional staff for the unit.
- ◆ Officers from the Research Sub Unit of the Directorate of Health Policy, Research and Planning and the Insect Vector Control Unit were trained in the use of Geographic Information System Application software.
- ◆ A 'hotline' was also implemented to receive complaints from the public regarding suspected dengue cases or any increase in mosquitoes.

- ◆ Homes were inspected and treated on a regular basis in areas where *aedes aegypti* mosquitoes and larvae were present and where there were increased activity such as dengue.
- ◆ Integrated biological and chemical control measures for the management of all vector species of mosquitoes (particularly, *Aedes Aegypti*) were implemented in certain localities for example the Mt Hope Medical Sciences Complex.
- ◆ Within the framework of the Emergency Services and Disaster Preparedness Coordinating Unit there is the establishment of an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in each Regional Health Authority. The common functions of all EOCs are to collect, gather and analyse data; make decisions that protect life and property, maintain continuity of the organisation, within the scope of applicable laws; and disseminate those decisions to all concerned agencies and individuals.

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

There is the need for an overarching policy to deal with climate change and health.

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

- ◆ We have established mechanisms for the early warning systems for the diseases which are likely to proliferate due to the climatic change such as malaria, cholera and Rift Valley fever.
- ◆ Rapid response teams have been trained and equipped ready for any sign of the outbreak of such diseases.

### 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?

The Ministry of Health has made changes to the health system in response to increased risks resulting from climate change in the following areas:

- ◆ The establishment of a focal point, the International Cooperation Desk, to monitor the implementation of plans and programmes that are required to fulfil Trinidad and Tobago's obligations under International Agreements and Conventions, for example, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- ◆ The establishment of an Emergency Services and Disaster Preparedness Coordinating Unit to deal with natural disasters.
- ◆ The decentralisation of services to the Regional Health Authorities.
- ◆ Improvement in the primary healthcare network.
- ◆ Implementation of the safe hospital initiative to mitigate against the loss of healthcare services in the event of a natural disaster.

Further changes will be made as the Ministry of Health continues the implementation of its transformation plan.

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

The main constraints that can be identified to addressing the health impacts of climate change are a lack of scientific evidence to guide policy, and also a lack of resources, both human and materials.

To address these areas the Ministry of Health, as stated before, is currently engaged in a transformation process which is geared to

strengthen its capacity for evidence-based decision-making.

The Ministry is also in the process of strengthening its National Health Research and its Health Information Management System in order to improve its health programmes and service delivery systems.

In addition, the Ministry of Health is in the process of planning and implementing an Evidence Based Policy Network (EVIPNet). The establishment of such a network in Trinidad and Tobago will facilitate the availability of timely and credible evidence for use in decision-making and policy development.

### 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?

The national resources that have been allocated to address climate change and health are incorporated in the overall health budget. This makes it difficult to quantify the funding that was specifically allocated to the issue of climate change.

### 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?

The Ministry of Health currently works with the Ministry of Local Government to address the issue of dengue and control of the vector *aedes aegypti* mosquito.

Under the National Disaster Management System a National Task Force was established. This is made up of 15 Task groups, with the specific responsibility of planning for, mitigating against and responding to disasters. The Ministry of Health chairs the Health Task Group.

The Ministry of Health also works with the Ministry of Agriculture in the surveillance of yellow fever.

The Ministry of Health works indirectly with the Ministry of Works and Transport in the areas of clean up campaign and the prevention of flooding.

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

Yes. Trinidad and Tobago is a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). A working group has been established that has oversight of the implementation of obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

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

There is moderate capacity. However, the Ministry of Health is continuing to work towards increasing its capacity.