

Vanuatu



KEY FACTS:

- ◆ Joined Commonwealth: 1980
- ◆ Capital: Port Vila
- ◆ Population: 226,000 (2007)
- ◆ GDP growth: 2.6% p.a. 2002–06
- ◆ Official language: Bislama, English, French
- ◆ Time: GMT plus 11hr
- ◆ Currency: vatu (Vt)

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 in diarrhoeal diseases.
- ◆ Outbreak of vector-borne diseases (malaria and dengue).
- ◆ Increase in intestinal parasite infestation.
- ◆ Increase in malnutrition in children.
- ◆ Respiratory infections.
- ◆ Food shortage.

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 from 2 > 15 years of age: worm infestation, diarrheal diseases.
- ◆ Children from 0 > 12 years of age: diarrhoeal diseases.
- ◆ All age groups: increase in malnutrition, anaemia and diarrhoeal diseases.
- ◆ Children 0 > 5 years: diarrhoeal diseases.
- ◆ Elderly people over 60: increase in malnutrition, anaemia, diarrhoeal diseases and respiratory infection.

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.

- ◆ MOH Mission: To protect and promote the health of all people living in Vanuatu.
- ◆ MOH Vision: An integrated and decentralised health system to promote effective, efficient and equitable development and services for the well being of all people across Vanuatu.
- ◆ MOH Policy:
 - Environmental Health:* Development of programmes to create, promote, protect a better environment and hygienic conditions to improve health and the well being of the people of Vanuatu. These programmes will be carried out in the following areas:

- a. water quality monitoring and surveillance;
- b. sanitation;
- c. waste management;
- d. food safety and hygiene;
- e. vector-borne disease control;
- f. health quarantine;
- g. Rodents control.

Communicable diseases: Policies and procedures to address communicable diseases which pose a threat to the public, including those infectious diseases which are notifiable under Public Health Act, and procedures for responding to outbreaks of communicable diseases.

Non-communicable diseases: A policy for tobacco control including a legislation with a Tobacco Control Act, standard guidelines for screening and treatment of diabetes, hypertension and asthma, and promotion of local food, regulation of imported foods in terms of the quality.

- ◆ MOH Public Health Strategy:
 - Formally assess the effectiveness of public health programmes and develop improvement initiatives: Public Health staff to continue to work with health services at healthcare group/provincial level to develop approaches to priority setting for public and initiatives to inform the Public Health Directorate's strategic and business plans, and to facilitate the evaluation of the effectiveness of public health programmes at provincial level;
 - Public Health Directorate to develop policy papers regarding public health responsibilities of provincial staff and coordination of public health initiatives at provincial level;
 - Continue development of strategic plans for public health programmes to achieve a longer term framework for the development and coordinated support of programmes and an effective basis for evaluation;
- a. Promote public health programmes to the community to improve health status: Promote public health messages through media campaigns on priority public health issues;
- b. Target public health information to young people: In collaboration with Ministry of Education continue implementation of a student information programme;

- c. Encourage community input to public health programmes and initiatives: Consult with Health Committees and Community Development Committees to pursue appropriate ways to achieve effective community input to the assessment and development of public health programmes and services;

The Ministry of Health further recognises that intersectoral collaboration is essential in the implementation of environmental health and other relevant public health programmes dealing with same issues such as:

- a. Malaria and other vector-borne diseases control.
- b. Nutrition and food security promotion.
- c. Water quality monitoring.
- d. Food Safety and Hygiene.
- e. Improvement of existing toilet facilities.
- f. Sanitation and Waste management:
 - i. healthcare waste;
 - ii. solid waste;
 - iii. hazardous waste;
 - iv. chemical waste;
 - v. human waste;
 - vi. waste water.

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?

Continues promotional activities on the following programmes:

- ◆ Water quality surveillance, monitoring, and hygiene promotion.
- ◆ Sanitation and waste management promotion.

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

Environmental Health Unit and other relevant units in Public Health Directorate with the Ministry of Health need clear policy guidelines and strategies for water, sanitation, waste management and food safety.

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

- ◆ Ministry of Health policy.
- ◆ Draft National Environmental Health Strategy/policy.
- ◆ Draft Nutrition policy.
- ◆ Public Health Act.
- ◆ Food Safety Act.
- ◆ Food regulation.
- ◆ Other relevant legislations/policies:
 - Draft solid waste management policy.
 - Draft solid waste strategy.
 - Environmental conservation Act.
 - Water resources management Act.
 - Climate change policy.

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?

- ◆ Establish a position to recruit a full time sanitation and waste

management officer.

- ◆ Employ a full time manager to be responsible over the National Environmental Health Unit sanitation and waste issues.

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 a full time sanitation and waste management officer to be responsible for looking into any issues/matters relating to this very important subject.
- ◆ The government funds available and accessible to the Unit are used for the Unit's administrative purposes only and was not enough to assist the Unit to run any of its programmes.
- ◆ Limited external funding assistance towards MOH: Environmental health sanitation, waste, water quality, and food safety management programme.

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?

In terms of Government funds allocated to run the programmes, no. Funds made available for sanitation and waste including other programme activities for the responsible officer's salary and entitlements or benefits.

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?

Some projects have been externally financially.

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 any global level on climate change and health in terms of human resources but needs external support financially.