Health Challenges Posed by Climate Change in the Pacific

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Integrating Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management to Protect Health and Build Resilience in Pacific Islands

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Outline

• General characteristics of Pacific Island Countries
• Health challenges posed by climate change
• Other challenges
Surrounded by the vast Pacific Ocean

3 Sub-regions
Malenesia
Micronesia
Polynesia

Small but many islands

Distant and far

Volcanic, raised coral, atolls
Livelihood depend on resources of the sea and land:

- Fish and seafood
- Root crops
- Fruits and vegetables
- Fresh water
- Imported processed food
Climate Change and Health

- First Meeting on Climate Variability and Change (2000)
- Health Ministers Meeting in Madang, PNG (2009)

Recognized that PICs were vulnerable to climate change and identified several high priority, climate sensitive health-risks common throughout the region:

- Vector-borne diseases
- Water-borne diseases/water security
- Food-borne diseases/food security
- Injuries and deaths from extreme weather events
- Compromised food security and malnutrition
- Mental health impacts of loss of livelihoods and climate change-induced population displacements
Climate Change and Health

- Health Ministers Committed to Action on CC & Health and Recommended each PIC to:
  - Plan and implement studies on HVA due to CC
  - Develop national strategies and action plans
  - Increase awareness among policy and decision makers about the impacts of CC on health
  - Mobilize communities to better adapt to the health consequences of CC
  - Strengthen national capacity to develop and implement effective interventions to minimize climate-related health risks
  - Etc

- HVA were carried out in 12 PICs in 2010-2012 resulting in development of NCCHAP
Climate Change and Health

- The highest priority climate-sensitive health risks in Pacific island countries include:
  - trauma from extreme weather events;
  - heat-related illnesses;
  - compromised safety and security of water and food (food and water-borne diseases);
  - vector-borne diseases;
  - zoonoses;
  - respiratory illnesses;
  - psychosocial ill health;
  - non-communicable diseases;
  - population pressures; and,
  - health system deficiencies
Climate Change and Health

- Likely effects of climate change on key health issues

- Respiratory infections
- Skin diseases
- Poverty, socio-economic disadvantages
- Traumatic injuries and deaths
- Typhoid
- Ciguatera (fish poisoning, harmful algal blooms), turtle poisoning, scombroid (histamine) poisoning
- Eye disease
- Filariasis
- Malaria
Main climate-sensitive health issues in PICs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country*</th>
<th>Main climate-sensitive health issues**</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cook Islands</td>
<td>Dengue fever, diarrhoeal disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federated States of Micronesia</td>
<td>Water- and mosquito-borne diseases, malnutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>Dengue fever, typhoid fever, leptospirosis, diarrhoeal disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiribati</td>
<td>Food (safety, security, food-borne diseases), water (safety, security, water-borne diseases) and vector-borne diseases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nauru</td>
<td>Air quality, food security, non-communicable diseases (NCDs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Niue</td>
<td>Vector-borne diseases, ciguatera, diarrhoeal disease, respiratory disease, heat-related illness, NCDs, trauma from extreme weather events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palau</td>
<td>Vector-borne diseases, zoonotic infections, gastroenteritis, respiratory disease, NCDs, trauma from extreme weather events, mental health issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of the Marshall Islands</td>
<td>Food-, water- and vector-borne (dengue) diseases, respiratory diseases, malnutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solomon Islands</td>
<td>Vector-borne diseases (malaria), respiratory diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonga</td>
<td>Diarrhoeal diseases, vector-borne diseases (dengue), food security/nutrition, non-communicable diseases, injuries and deaths from extreme weather events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuvalu</td>
<td>Diarrhoeal disease, respiratory disease, compromised food security and impacts on NCD’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>Food- and water-borne diseases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Epidemic and emerging disease alerts in the Pacific region as at 29 February 2016

Legend:
- Cases reported are increasing or peaking.
- Cases reported are decreasing or circulation is ongoing.
- Awaiting confirmation of aetiology.
- No update provided for at least two weeks.

DEN: Dengue
ZIKV: Zika virus
CHIK: Chikungunya
IL: Influenza-like illness
Other health challenges

- Shortage of human resources for health
- Incomplete/limited health data/information systems
- Small population spread over vast area
- Burden of ill health (NCDs)
- Finance and resources
- Territories
Other health challenges

• Vulnerability of low lying outer islands/ coastal areas to
  • Cyclones
  • Floods
  • Storm surges
  • Sea level rise, and
  • Disturbances in water supply caused by drought or salination of aquifers

• Vulnerability of health facilities
• Limited awareness of the health risks of climate variability and change
• Insufficient data and monitoring of climate-sensitive health impacts and risk
• Insufficient integration of climate and disaster risks into health sector policy
• Poor coordination across ministries and departments on the health risks of climate change
• Limited transportation services to outer islands populations and other remote parts of the region
Thank you