

# Human Health

PACE - SD FACTSHEETS SERIES: NO 7



(Source: PACE SD EU GCCA Project)

## Introduction

Pacific Island countries are vulnerable to various impacts of climate change- human health is no exception.

Changing climate conditions like hotter days and nights, wetter wet seasons, prolonged dry seasons or droughts, increasing strength of cyclones and increased floods create conditions for inactive lifestyles, spread of vector- and water-borne diseases, poor nutrition and stress and trauma translating into a rise in a number of climate related health impacts.

## Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the Pacific

Climate sensitive diseases in Pacific Island countries include:

- Communicable diseases (CDs) like dengue fever, diarrhoeal illnesses, malaria, typhoid fever leptospirosis. Changes in the climate create conditions for increasing number and spread of bacteria that cause these diseases. Water-borne diseases become bigger problems with increased flooding.
- Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like obesity, diabetes, hypertension, kidney failure, heat strokes and malnutrition can increase with

a decline in physical activities, fishing, farming, playing due to increasing heat and damage to crops and healthy local food sources.

- Injuries and deaths from natural disasters like floods and cyclones. These disasters hamper access to health facilities e.g. due to damaged bridges and roads and damage critical infrastructure like water supply systems.
- Psycho-social or mental health impacts like stress, trauma and depression can be caused by the situations of hopelessness, helplessness, loss of loved ones, loss of land and the inability to recover from disasters.

As with all climate impacts, the elderly, sick, women, children, poor and people living and working in vulnerable conditions e.g. outdoor workers will be more affected.



Young locals carrying water and food in Timor Leste  
 (Source: Marcus Bleasdale)

What you can do at Home and in School	Role of Ministry of Health	Role of other Government Departments and Other Agencies
<p>A. Eat fresh, local fruits and vegetables. Plant your own food.</p> <p>B. Exercise regularly.</p> <p>C. Destroy mosquito breeding places.</p> <p>D. Wash your hands with soap and water.</p> <p>E. Prepare well for natural disasters- store water and food safely.</p> <p>F. Protect your water sources- keep them clean.</p> <p>G. Look after the environment, a source of water and food.</p> <p>H. Wear gumboots in muddy areas.</p> <p>I. If feeling sick, see a doctor as soon as possible.</p>	<p>J. Strengthen public health surveillance systems, monitoring trends of CSDs.</p> <p>K. Integrate climate and weather information in health policy for early warning of health impacts.</p> <p>L. Enhance environmental monitoring and early interventions (water quality monitoring, remove mosquito breeding sites).</p> <p>M. Training medical staff to respond effectively to CSDs.</p> <p>N. Strengthen disaster preparedness and response programmes.</p> <p>O. Protect consumers from potential health hazards in buildings and from domestic and imported products (e.g. asbestos, toxic chemicals)</p>	<p>P. Readjust energy policies to take into accounts impacts on health and climate change.</p> <p>Q. Undertaking health-promoting urban planning e.g. walking/cycling and discouraging fossil-fuel powered transport.</p> <p>R. Protect ecosystems as they are sources of food, water and air.</p> <p>S. Ensure water safety planning and implementation and appropriate waste management in urban and rural areas.</p> <p>T. Protect critical infrastructure e.g. roads, water, electricity, communication from climate impacts (climate-proofing).</p>

## Solutions- Health Adaptation and Mitigation:

There are many opportunities for climate change adaptation and mitigation to minimise harmful effects on human health.

A healthy population is a climate-resilient, mentally happy, socially active and economically productive population. Reducing the negative impacts of climate change on human health will have benefits across all aspects of society.

### References:

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 WHO Climate change programme: [www.who.int/topics/climate](http://www.who.int/topics/climate), WHO European Region Climate change programme: [www.euro.who.int/globalchange](http://www.euro.who.int/globalchange)  
 WHO Western Pacific Region Climate change programme: [www.wpro.who.int/topics/climate\\_change](http://www.wpro.who.int/topics/climate_change)

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