



Pacific Islands Action Plan on Climate Change and Health

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This Action Plan is a product of the Meeting to Develop the Pacific Action Plan for the WHO Initiative on Climate Change and Health in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), organized as part of the Third Global Conference on Climate Change and Health, held in Nadi, Fiji, 15–16 March 2018.

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ISBN 978 92 9061 864 5

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Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data . 1. Climate change. 2. Pacific islands. 3. Strategic planning. I. World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific. (NLM Classification: WA30.2)

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Foreword

Climate change threatens health everywhere. Populations around the world are more frequently and intensely affected by extreme weather events, threats to food and water security, outbreaks of waterborne and vector-borne diseases, and the increased pressure on scarce resources triggering climate-related migration and conflicts.

Nowhere can these threats lead to more serious consequences than in the Pacific island countries and areas (PICs). The combination of extreme exposure to climate-related disasters (e.g. cyclones, floods, droughts) and long-term sea level rise, coupled with geographically dispersed populations in remote small islands with fragile health systems, means that climate change is an existential threat to the Pacific islanders.

For this reason, WHO started working with PICs from the year 2000, to develop national climate change and health action plans based on the vulnerability and capacity assessments of most Pacific nations. With WHO support, the most vulnerable countries in the Pacific are currently developing large-scale five-year projects to build climate-resilient health systems.

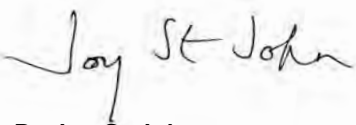
In recent years, the voice of the Pacific leaders has become even more ardent with increasing force and urgency. The right to health in the face of climate change, and the particular vulnerabilities of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) were recognized in the Paris Agreement in 2015. The World Health Assembly and the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific have prioritized the health impacts of climate change, including through *Western Pacific Regional Framework for Action on Health and Environment on a Changing Planet* (2016). In January 2018, the 142nd session of the WHO Executive Board endorsed “health impacts of climate and environmental change in SIDS and Vulnerable States” as one of the top priorities of WHO work for the period 2019–2023.

Under the leadership of Director-General Dr Tedros, the Special Initiative on Climate Change and Health in SIDS was launched in November 2017 by WHO in partnership with the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Government of Fiji, as President of the 23rd Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC. To develop this SIDS Initiative, WHO convened the Meeting to Develop the Pacific Action Plan for the WHO Initiative on Climate Change and Health in Small Island Developing States (PICs Consultation Meeting) in Nadi, Fiji in March 2018.

This Pacific Islands Action Plan is the outcome of the PICs Consultation Meeting. It will be part of the global action plan that is being prepared by WHO through a series of regional consultations throughout 2018. This Action Plan presents the short-term (by 2021) and long-term (2023) action items and indicators of the four areas of work of the SIDS Initiative. Through the implementation of this Action Plan, PICs will benefit from the highest-quality and greatest possible political, technical and financial support in protecting Pacific islanders from climate-sensitive diseases and building climate-resilient health systems.

The PICs’ contribution to the emission of greenhouse gas is negligible. Nevertheless, they are the first ones affected by the impacts of climate change. For that reason, while implementing this Action Plan with PICs, WHO will strongly promote the low-carbon global development path to stop climate change and guarantee the future of the Pacific islands.

On behalf of WHO, we are proud to work with the PICs to implement this plan of action in the coming years to protect the health of Pacific islanders from the impacts of climate change.



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Foreword

The Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Initiative on Climate Change and Health has a vision that by 2030 all health systems in SIDS will be resilient to climate variability and change. The Initiative envisions that building resilience must happen in parallel with countries around the world reducing carbon emissions in order to protect the most vulnerable from climate risks and to gain the health co-benefits of mitigation policies.

The notion that “the future will assess us not just on what we did, but also on what we failed to do” inspires us to take action to protect the health of our most vulnerable populations. The emphasis on SIDS is opportune, considering the continuing exposure of their fragile ecosystems to increasing intensity and frequency of natural disasters and the impacts these extreme events have on their health systems.

For more than two decades, WHO has been proactive in creating awareness and implementing actions to manage the health risks of climate change within Member States. Ministers of health and high-level representatives have acknowledged the adverse impacts of climate change on the health of vulnerable populations. In November 2017, the SIDS Initiative on Climate Change and Health was launched by WHO at the 23rd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bonn, Germany.

The Pacific island countries and areas discussed how to work together for implementation of the above SIDS Initiative at the Meeting to Develop the Pacific Action Plan for the WHO Initiative on Climate Change and Health in SIDS, organized by WHO as part of the Third Global Conference on Climate Change and Health in Nadi, Fiji, on 15–16 March 2018. At the Meeting, country representatives from health, environment and climate change reviewed a background document, *Climate Change and Health in Small Island Developing States: Pacific Island Countries*, prepared by the WHO Secretariat, taking into account: existing Pacific initiatives such as the Healthy Islands vision of the Yanuca Island Declaration; the report of the 12th Pacific Health Ministers Meeting, held in Rarotonga, Cook Islands on 28–30 August 2017; the *Western Pacific Regional Framework for Action on Health and Environment on a Changing Planet*; the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway; and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Climate change is the greatest threat to health and health systems of Pacific island countries and areas in the 21st century. However, we believe that it can be the greatest opportunity for us to build climate-resilient health systems through our determined actions. The Pacific Islands Action Plan will bring communities and stakeholders together to ensure that by 2030 all health systems in the Pacific will be resilient to climate variability and change.

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