4. Response to emergencies, including outbreaks and disasters

Infectious disease outbreaks continue to cause morbidity and mortality in PICs. From July 2017 to February 2018, the Division of Pacific Technical Support supported the response to 15 of the 23 outbreaks reported in the Pacific, of which about a third were dengue fever.

The re-emergence of dengue serotype 2 in Solomon Islands in 2016 after 20 years resulted in a large outbreak of more than 12 000 clinical cases. The same disease subsequently re-emerged in Vanuatu and Samoa. All four serotypes of dengue co-circulate in the Pacific.

WHO contributed technical expertise in information management and epidemiology, laboratory testing, infection prevention and control, risk communications, clinical case management, vaccine use and procurement, and integrated vector management. In five outbreaks (including outbreaks of *Acinetobacter baumannii* bacteria, of Hepatitis A, and invasive meningococcal disease), countries requested deployment of WHO staff, Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) partners and consultants, and procurement of supplies for laboratory and vector control.

The Pacific experiences natural disasters every year. Extreme weather events are expected to increase in frequency and severity as a result of climate variability and climate change. Since 2015, PICs have sustained devastating social and economic losses from tropical floods, cyclones, landslides and volcanoes.

Implementation of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme in the Pacific has been strengthened by the recruitment of a Health Cluster Coordinator in 2017. Support was provided for a maritime disaster in Kiribati, Tropical Cyclone Gita in Tonga, and an earthquake in Papua New Guinea, all in 2018.