Promoting ecological balance for health

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Yanuca Island, Fiji
Poignant examples of impacts

Vanuatu March 2015

FSM April 2015

Tuvalu March 2015
Promoting ecological balance for health

HI Vision: “Healthy Islands are places where ecological balance is a source of pride.”

Key public health issues:

- Climate change adaptation in health sector
- Disaster risk management for health
- Water, Sanitation & Hygiene
- Other environmental health risks
Health impacts of climate change, disasters, and environmental risks

- PICs are very vulnerable to climate change, disasters, and environmental health risks
- Health service delivery is interrupted by damages to health facilities
- The third burden due to impacts of climate change, disaster and environmental risks
  - Climate-sensitive diseases; drowning; injuries; food-/water-/vector-related diseases; mental impacts; aggravation of CDs and NCDs
Relationship between water and sanitation and under-five mortality in PICs, 2012
Progress and achievements (1)

• Anticipating and preparing for the health impacts of climate change
  – All PICs developed national action plan or program for climate change and health sector resilience

• Better responses to natural disasters and emergencies
  – Regional framework for disaster risk management for health was introduced
Progress and achievements (2)

• Environmental health risk assessment to address environmental health risks
  – Health impact assessment of mine dusts in Nauru

• Access to safe drinking-water and sanitation
  – Most PICs have increased population access to clean water and sanitation over the past 20 years
Issues

• Geographic, economic and ecological vulnerability to climate change and disasters
  – Most PIC health systems are fragile and vulnerable

• Environmental health risk assessment is not widely adopted

• Sustained efforts are needed to achieve universal access to safe water and sanitation
  – Particularly in rural areas, outer islands or growing informal urban settlements
Projected 2015 PIC access to improved **sanitation** compared to MDG target
Projected 2015 PIC access to improved **drinking water** compared to MDG target

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Access (%)</th>
<th>Target Met (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>PNG</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Region</td>
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<td>73</td>
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Circled figures indicate percentage coverage required to meet MDG target of halving percentage of population without access to improved facilities.

Indicative data from UNICEF/WHO JMP.
Future directions for Governments

1. Scaling-up capacity to address environmental health risks to enhance ecological balance

2. Strengthening capacity for disaster risk management for health

3. Taking action to ensure universal access to safe water and sanitation
Scaling-up capacity to address environmental health risks

- Scale-up use of environmental health risk assessments to build evidence for policy development
- Develop multisectoral actions to address the national climate change health adaptation plans
- Create innovative approaches to tourism that do not disturb ecological balance (e.g. eco-tourism)
- “Build back better” including interventions to address the psychosocial needs of communities
- Ensure that health facilities are resilient to climate change impacts through retrofitting and relocation as needed
- Prevent exposure to toxic and hazardous materials, including asbestos and pesticides
Strengthening capacity for disaster risk management for health

- Develop, update and implement national action plans on DRM-H that include prevention, preparedness, response and recovery
- Build comprehensive health surveillance and early warning systems for early response and recovery to reduce disaster-related health impacts
- Make health-care facilities (including health records) safe to ensure uninterrupted service delivery during disasters
Strengthening capacity for disaster risk management for health

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Taking action to ensure universal access to safe water and sanitation

- Engage stakeholders in different settings: households, schools and health facilities to implement programmes for water and sanitation, including elimination of open defecation
- Promote integrated community management of water, land, forest and coastal resources
- Implement drinking-water security and safety plans in rural communities and outer islands
Future directions for Partners

1. Supporting alignment of health, environment and development plans
   – in anticipation of the negative consequences of climate change and disasters

2. Putting health and environment on the agenda for all health sector interventions
   – to enable health facilities in PICs to be models and advocates for ecological balance in the context of Healthy Islands
Proposed questions for working group

1. What are the priorities in strengthening the capacity of environmental health department of the Ministry of Health in the area of EH risk assessment?

2. How can we strengthen the capacity for disaster risk management for health within the Ministry of Health?

3. How can we ensure the full access of populations in rural areas and outer islands to safe water and basic sanitation?

4. How can we prepare ourselves to better coordinate across sectors to address climate, disaster and other environmental determinants of health?
Expected outcomes of working group

1. **Recommended priority action items to strengthening the capacity of EH department in the area of EH risk assessment**

2. **Recommended actions on building capacity for disaster risk management for health within the Ministry of Health**

3. **Recommended actions to improve the access of populations in rural areas and outer islands to safe water and basic sanitation**

4. **Recommended actions to better prepare health leadership to coordinate across sectors to reduce health impacts of climate change, disaster and EH risks**
Thank you!