LANCET COUNTDOWN: HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

KIRIBATI

LANCET COUNTDOWN ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE
DATA SHEET 2024

Health and climate change in Kiribati

The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change annually takes stock of the evolving links between health and climate change through 50+ peer-reviewed indicators. Since 2016, these indicators have provided regular, reliable global and regional stocktakes on climate change and health. Data in this year's report reveal that people all around the world are facing record-breaking threats to their wellbeing, health and survival from the rapidly changing climate. This document summarises key findings from the 2024 Small Island Developing States report for the Lancet Countdown for Kiribati, which reveal that:

21% of the population faces **displacement** due to **sea level** rise.

Climatic extremes have contributed to Kiribati's **inherent vulnerability** to the externally driven global warming crisis.

Kiribati is one of only 12 SIDS that have **migration policies** in place for the threat of sea level rise.

These findings underline the urgency of strengthening local health systems, adapting to climate change, and pursuing efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through interventions that simultaneously deliver health co-benefits. These actions will help build healthier, more resilient populations, and forge the way to a thriving future for Kiribati.

Heat and health

Exposure to high temperatures threatens people's lives, health, and wellbeing, leading to death and heat-related disease, and increasing healthcare demand during heatwave episodes. Older people, socio-economically deprived communities, very young children, pregnant women, and those with underlying health problems are particularly at risk.

0.3°C

Summer temperature increased by 0.3°C in 2022 compared with temperatures during 1986–2005 (indicator 1.1.1).

On average between 2019–2023, there was a 9-day and 10-day increase in exposure to health-threatening heat for each infant under 1 and person over 65, respectively, compared to average exposure in 2000–2004 (indicator 1.1.2).

Diet and health

Promoting shifts to healthier, more plant-based diets can substantially reduce agricultural GHG emissions, while also delivering major co-benefits for public health through improvements to dietary risk factors and reduced deaths due to unbalanced diets. Antigua and Barbuda faces the lifestyle risk factors for overweight and obesity, which places the population at risk for non-communicable diseases.

Close to 1,000 deaths were associated with the overconsumption of red and processed meat and the underconsumption of fresh vegetables, nuts, and legumes (indicator 3.3.2).

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Sea level rise

Sea level rise can affect human health through episodic flooding, permanent inundation, erosion, soil and drinking water contamination, vector- and water-borne disease, and mental health impacts, with populations living less than 1 metre above sea level particularly vulnerable.

21% In 2022, almost 25,000 persons (21% of the population) were living within 1 metre above sea level (indicator 2.3.3).

Along with inundation, coastal zones in Kiribati are already facing coastal erosion, soil salinisation, and saline intrusion which threaten livelihood, agricultural production, and water security.

The Republic of Kiribati has published a National Labour Migration Policy with New Zealand along with a National Framework for Climate Change and Climate Change Adaptation (indicator 2.3.3).

Low access to water is a concern in Kiribati and climate change exacerbates the risk of waterborne diseases.

$29M US$29 million was approved through the Green Climate Fund for the improvement of water security for vulnerable communities in 2018 (indicator 2.2.4).

Adaptation and scientific engagement

Climate adaptation policies play a pivotal role in building resilience against the multiple climate hazards. However, there remain several key gaps hindering the growth of adaptation capacity in the country.

Through collaboration with the World Meteorological Organization, the Kiribatian health sector has reported having climate and data services, and predictions (indicator 2.2.1)

WMO's climate monitoring, climate change projections, climate analysis, and diagnostics service have not been integrated into health surveillance (indicator 2.2.1)

The Kiribatian Government urged international action for climate change, health issues, and climate-related health concerns 14 times in the 2023 Policy Statement at the UNGA (indicator 5.4.1).

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Research provides evidence for climate action, however, scientific publications remain low overall for SIDS. Only four scientific papers were published between 1990 and 2023 on climate change impacts on health from Kiribati. No scientific publications were found that covered climate-related health adaptation or climate change mitigation (indicator 5.3).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, VISIT:
WWW.LANCETCOUNTDOWN.ORG

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