

2025 CLIMATE AND HEALTH POLICY PRIORITIES FOR TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

This document summarises key priority areas of focus for Trinidad and Tobago, supported by evidence from the 2025 Global Report of the Lancet Countdown.

ENSURE RELIABLE, CLEAN ENERGY FOR HEALTH CARE

1 With climate change increasingly affecting population health and healthcare infrastructure, hospitals and primary care centres need to be made climate-resilient through reliable clean backup power, flood protection, and strengthened health surveillance systems. This approach will safeguard continuity of care during climate extremes and improve health.

In 2024, people in Trinidad and Tobago were exposed to 77.7 heatwave days each, on average. Of these, 74.1 (95%) would not have been expected to occur without climate change. (**Indicator 1.1.1**). Moreover, dengue transmission risk, measured by the climate-defined basic reproduction number ($R_0 = 3.9$) for *Aedes albopictus* mosquitoes, has increased by 44.7% between 1951–1980 and 2015–2024 (**Indicator 1.3.1**). Together, these heat-related and infectious-disease pressures are placing growing strain on health systems and frontline workers.

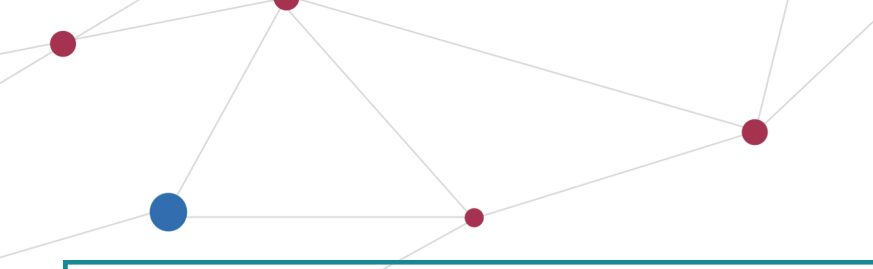
Additionally, healthcare services and infrastructure are increasingly facing disruption and damage from climate change-related extreme weather events¹. The dependence on expensive diesel backup generators to fuel healthcare facilities makes energy access unreliable, and vulnerable to power cuts when extreme events occur. Additionally, the use of dirty fossil fuel-based energy contributes to local air pollution, as well as adding to planet-heating greenhouse gas emissions.

Implementing a national health-sector climate change preparedness roadmap, including a detailed plan to increase healthcare sector decarbonisation and resilience to climate change, alongside a modernised healthcare energy access roadmap focused on reducing fossil fuel dependence and transitioning to affordable and clean renewable energy, is an essential first step to address these pressures. Its implementation would enhance healthcare facility resilience and support uninterrupted service delivery under one coordinated framework. By integrating clean-energy systems, resilient infrastructure standards, and early-warning-linked operations, including expansion of the Smart Hospitals approach², Trinidad and Tobago can protect essential services, lower long-term costs, and deliver climate-ready healthcare that safeguards health, the environment, and the economy.

ADDRESS AIR POLLUTION AND PROTECT HEALTH

2 Air pollution is a major threat to health in Trinidad and Tobago, increasing the risk of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases³. The widespread use of fossil fuels is a primary contributor to this pollution. Establishing air quality control standards that prioritise reductions in fossil fuel combustion, alongside a health-centred roadmap for phasing out fossil fuels, is essential to protect the health and lives of local residents.

Air pollution already imposes a heavy health burden in Trinidad and Tobago. In 2019, an estimated 622 deaths among adults over 30 were attributable to ambient air pollution, primarily $PM_{2.5}$ ⁴. Trinidad and Tobago bears one of the highest air pollution burdens in the Americas, with about 44 deaths per 100,000 people, far above regional averages⁵. Local studies identify traffic emissions, petrochemical industries, and transboundary dust as key contributors, with the highest exposures found along urban traffic corridors⁶.



Over 99% of Trinidad and Tobago's electricity generation in 2023 was derived from natural gas, reflecting the country's continued dependence on fossil fuels⁷. At the same time, fossil fuel subsidies exceeded carbon pricing revenues, leaving Trinidad and Tobago with a net-negative carbon revenue of US\$41.9 billion in 2023 (**Indicator 4.3.2**). This sustains high-emission energy systems, locks in harmful air pollution, and diverts public resources away from health and social priorities. Reducing fossil fuel dependence in favour of cleaner, more affordable renewable energy and efficiency investments would yield dual dividends-improving health while strengthening fiscal resilience.

To protect health and economic stability, Trinidad and Tobago must phase down fossil-fuel subsidies, commit to binding clean electricity targets, and accelerate transport electrification. Expanding renewable power and clean mobility will cut PM_{2.5} exposure, prevent avoidable deaths, and reduce long-term healthcare costs.

STRENGTHEN NUTRITION AND CLIMATE ACTION TO REDUCE DIET-RELATED DEATHS

3

Integrating nutrition within national climate and health strategies, expanding community nutrition programmes, and building climate-resilient food systems are critical to protect health and food security in Trinidad and Tobago. Linking nutrition surveillance with climate forecasts and promoting diversified, plant-rich diets will help ensure households can access affordable, nutritious food even during climate shocks.

Trinidad and Tobago faces a dual nutrition crisis: high rates of diet-related disease and growing climate threats to food security. The country's heavy dependence on food imports and fossil fuel revenues, accounting for 40% of GDP and 80% of exports⁸, makes it highly vulnerable to global market shocks and extreme weather.

Diet-related disease already imposes a substantial health burden. Non-communicable diseases accounted for over 62% of annual deaths in 2021⁹, while in 2022, 939 deaths were associated with insufficient consumption of plant-based foods (**Indicator 3.3.2**). In 2024, 93% of people ate fewer than five servings of fruits and vegetables daily, and 61% of adults were overweight or obese¹⁰. At the same time, 11.2% of the population was undernourished, and 9.2% of children under five were stunted^{11,12}, revealing persistent inequities in access to affordable, nutritious diets.

Climate change is amplifying these vulnerabilities. Floods, droughts, and heatwaves disrupt crop yields, supply chains, and water quality, driving food price spikes and increasing reliance on ultra-processed foods^{13,14}. Without coordinated climate-nutrition policies, both health and economic costs will continue to rise.

Developing Nutrition and Climate Action Plans that link nutrition surveillance with climate forecasts, scaling up maternal and child nutrition services, and promoting diversified, plant-rich diets can reduce preventable deaths and improve dietary quality. Strengthening school feeding schemes, supporting climate-resilient local food production, and securing sustainable supply chains will build a climate-ready food system that protects health, equity, and national resilience.

Accelerating Action

Strengthening health services and facilities to withstand and respond to the escalating impacts of climate change is critical for Trinidad and Tobago's health and resilience. Building climate-ready health systems, accelerating the transition to renewable energy, and developing sustainable local food systems will curb air pollution, lower chronic disease risks, and ensure access to safe, nutritious food. Together, these actions will safeguard health, enhance resilience, and support a cleaner, healthier future for all.

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