

Assessing Policies for Climate-Resilient Health Systems in Guyana: A Comprehensive Mixed-Methods Study

Authors: Paulette Bynoe, Quincy Jones, Sharlene Goberdhan, Olly Perreira, Reeta Gobin, Cecil Boston*
 Institution: University of Guyana, College of Medical Sciences
 *Corresponding author: Email: cecil.boston@uog.edu.gy



INTRODUCTION

Like other Small Island Developing States, Guyana is characterized by fragile health systems that are susceptible to the deleterious effects of climate change.

OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the degree to which existing national policies, plans, and programmes in Guyana incorporate and address the health impacts of climate change
- To evaluate the current implementation status of such health-related climate change interventions at the national and sub-national levels.

METHODOLOGY

The study sought to critically evaluate Guyana's policies, over a 20-year period, for a climate-resilient health sector using a mixed-methods case study. Data were gathered through stakeholder engagement, literature review, quantitative surveys, semi-structured interviews, and situational analyses. The analysis utilised the WHO Operational Framework and provided a situational analysis of health system policy responses to climate change.

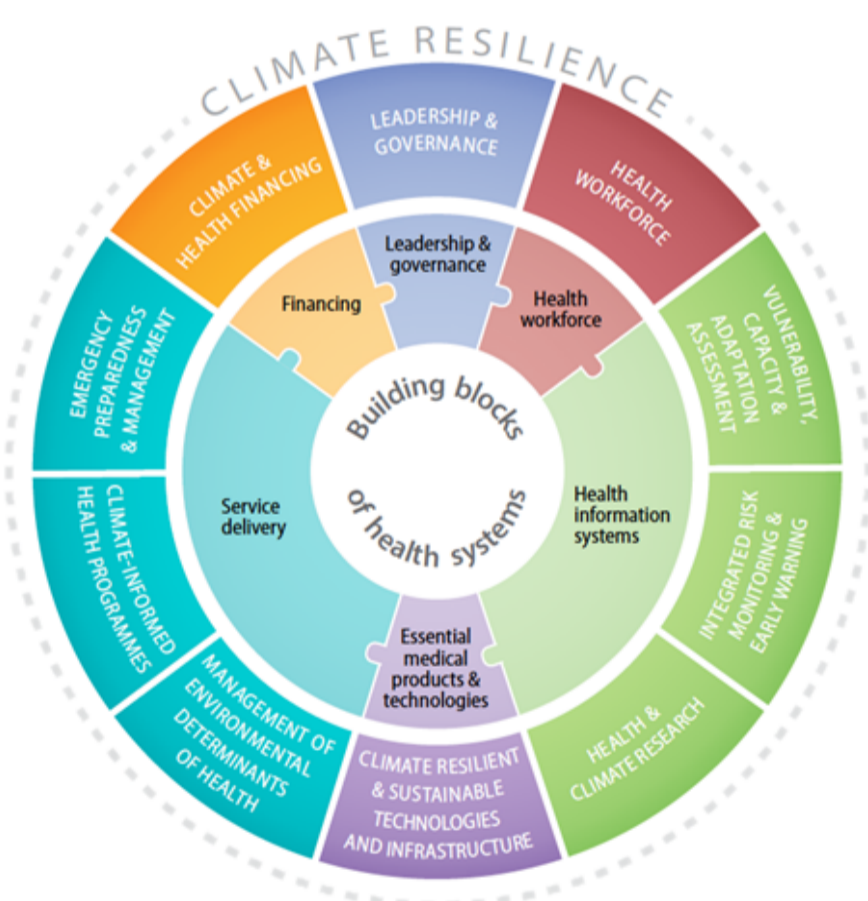


Figure 1. Ten components comprising the WHO operational framework for building climate-resilient health systems, and the main connections to the building blocks of health systems

RESULTS

The results showed multiple policies addressed climate change impacts on health, including the National Health Plan, Country Cooperation Strategy, and Climate Change Resilience Strategy and Action Plan. These proposed interventions sought to improve occupational safety, disaster preparedness, and vector control. However, implementation was hindered by limited resources, coordination issues, and the evolving nature of climate change policies, rendering progress incomplete to embryonic.

RESULTS

Table 1. Policy-related initiatives and their implementation status, identified by literature review.

Policy-related document	Status of intervention
Ministry of Health, Guyana National Health Plan 2003-2007	Yellow
The Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Health, March 2003	Yellow
National Health Sector Strategy 2008 – 12	Yellow
Guyana Country Cooperation Strategy 2009	Yellow
UN Sustainable Development Goals 2015	Yellow
Climate Resilience Strategy and Action Plan 2016	Yellow
Final National Adaptation Plan (2019)	Yellow
Guyana's Low Carbon Development Strategy 2030.	Yellow
Government of Guyana, 2021	Yellow
Budget 2023 Presentation of Estimates	Yellow

Key: Colour scale for assessing the status of interventions

Green	Intervention fully implemented
Yellow	Intervention in progress; some actions are pending
Red	Intervention in the embryonic stage or non-existent

CONCLUSION

Despite these challenges, Guyana's 2023 budget shows its commitment to health impact mitigation with significant investments. The study also identified a knowledge-action gap, with respondents unaware of the specific health impacts of climate change or response initiatives, highlighting the need for better awareness. The findings, mapped to the WHO Operational Framework, noted leadership, governance, financing, and workforce issues. In conclusion, despite proactive strategies, implementation is hindered by resource, poor coordination, and knowledge-action gaps. Future studies should focus on financing mitigation efforts locally and effectively using potential oil industry revenue. The study calls for continuous critical assessments of climate change policies.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

As we continue to further understand the impacts of climate change on health it is necessary that governments assess their current policies to ensure their alignment with building climate resilience health systems. This is fundamentally important especially in the context of the Caribbean. Caribbean nations are considered the among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Therefore, understanding and identifying the gaps regarding climate resilient health systems is a proactive approach to limiting the effects of climate change on health.

CONTACT

Further information can be had by contacting Dr Cecil Boston at cecil.boston@uog.edu.gy