



Cook Islands moves swiftly to strengthen health security through launch of national action plan

Joint TMO-WHO news release

Rarotonga, Cook Islands | 10 December 2025 – In a decisive step towards safeguarding public health and strengthening national resilience, the Cook Islands today launched its National Action Plan for Health Security 2026–2030 (NAPHS), just seven months after completing their first Joint External Evaluation (JEE) in May. The NAPHS, developed by Te Marae Ora – Cook Islands Ministry of Health (TMO), in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Polynesian Health Corridors Programme, represents a significant step forward in the country’s commitment to health emergency preparedness and response.

NAPHS is a costed, nationally owned, multisectoral roadmap that aims to strengthen the Cook Islands’ ability to prevent, detect, and respond to public health threats. It was created through broad engagement and collaboration involving national ministries, island governments, including the *Pa Enua* (outer islands), law enforcement, border and transport authorities, environmental agencies, civil society organizations, and development partners.

“We are moving swiftly and decisively because health security is not just a health issue for us, it’s a national priority that involves all parts of our government,” explained Honourable Vainetutai Rose Toki Brown. “Our people, our economy, and our way of life in the Cook Islands depend on our ability to respond to public health threats before they escalate. This plan ensures we are ready.”

The NAPHS was developed based on over 80 recommended priority actions from the [JEE](#) conducted in the Cook Islands and aligns with global and regional commitments under the [International Health Regulations](#) (IHR 2005) and the [Asia Pacific Health Security Action Framework \(APHSAF\)](#). It details strategic actions across 19 core capacities in four strategic pillars of prevention, detection, response, and IHR-related hazards and points of entry. The plan also embraces a One Health approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health, and includes robust governance and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. With an estimated cost of NZD 6.1 million, the Cook Islands’ NAPHS will leverage existing resources while mobilizing support from development partners.

“We are honoured to work closely with Te Marae Ora in the development of the NAPHS and commend their leadership in advancing health security for the Cook Islands,” said Dr Wendy Snowdon, WHO Representative to Samoa, American Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau. “This plan reflects a strong multisectoral commitment to protecting people and communities across Rarotonga and the *Pa Enua*, and to building resilient health systems capable of withstanding future health emergencies.”

The NAPHS launch follows an initial multisectoral workshop last September and a national validation workshop held in November. It is part of a broader series of health security initiatives undertaken in the Cook Islands, which included training on the public health emergency operations centre, an Intra-Action review for the current dengue outbreak, and a workshop to review and revise the current national list of notifiable diseases.



Te Marae Ora are already taking action in completing recommended strategic actions and activities, leading the way with our partners and stakeholders.

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