

Health trends in the Pacific: Are prosperity and progress possible?

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The future progress of Pacific Island peoples is inextricably linked to their health. A healthy population is not only a major goal of social and economic development but is also its major measure and determinant. Life expectancy, infant mortality, maternal mortality are commonly used indicators of national poverty, progress and prosperity. Over the last 30 years the health of Pacific Island peoples has undergone dramatic change. At the same time the structure of health services, peoples' lifestyles, the physical and cultural environments and national economies have also changed. This paper investigates the extent and implications of these changes and the possibilities for poverty, prosperity and progress in the future.