Key mission findings

1. The Tonga Strategic Development Framework II (2015-2025) includes integrated approaches to address NCDs. The Government of Tonga has localized and mainstreamed the SDGs into its SDF II. In 2015, the UN Country Team, in collaboration with UNDP Tonga, supported the Government of Tonga to pull together SDF II and establish a roadmap for localizing the SDGs in Tonga.

2. Two STEPS reports have been published in the last three years.

3. NCD risk factors have stabilized between 2004 and 2012.

4. The government plans to continue increasing taxes on unhealthy products and reducing taxes on healthy ones.

5. Additional investments are planned to create facilities promoting physical activity.

6. The government has been proactive in introducing tobacco control initiatives, such as taxation.

7. More than 50% of Tongan household expenditures are on imported food, and a large proportion of these products contain high levels of sugar, salt or fatty contents.

8. Some Pacific Island states have succeeded in overturning import bans for some of these products as part of ongoing efforts to join the World Trade Organization.

9. Socio-cultural factors around food and feasting mean that calorie intake is high.

10. Government ministries and the churches are two important institutions with major influence on Knowledge-Attitude-Practice-Behaviour change to prevent and control NCDs among Tongan people.

11. A small and efficient UN Country Team has prioritized NCDs and put mechanisms in place to facilitate joint efforts with the support from colleagues at subregional, regional and global levels.

“The Government of Tonga welcomes the efforts by UN agencies and organizations in working together to prevent and control NCDs, the major disease in the Kingdom of Tonga, as well as the technical and financial support they have provided to our country.”

Mr. Viliami Va’inga Tone
CEO for Foreign Affairs and Trade,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Tonga

“Many UN agencies in Tonga have a role to play in working through their counterpart ministries to strengthen multi-sectoral actions on NCDs. This would be a concrete achievement in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations.”

Dr. Saia Piukal
Minister of Health, Kingdom of Tonga

“Some of the challenges on NCDs are still ahead of us, including obesity, diabetes, hypertension and insufficient health coverage in remote outer island.”

Dr. Saia Piukala
Minister of Health, Kingdom of Tonga

Key adult mortality and risk factors*: diet-related chronic diseases constitute the greatest cause of death in Tonga

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probability of premature mortality from NCDs: 24% (2015)</th>
<th>22% of adults are insufficiently physically active (2010)</th>
<th>22% of adults have raised fasting blood glucose (2014)</th>
<th>23% of adult men and 21% of adult women have raised blood pressure (2015)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47% of men (aged &gt;=15 years) smoke tobacco (2015)</td>
<td>41% of adult men and 54% of adult women are obese (2014)</td>
<td>Pure alcohol per capita consumption: 2.1 litres per year (population 15+, 2015)</td>
<td>73% of adults eat insufficient amounts of fruit and vegetables (STEPS, 2012)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Key recommendations

1. All UN agencies in Tonga should meet every 2 months to plan NCD-related activities.

2. The Parliamentary Health Committee needs to: (a) give a high priority to NCD prevention and control; (b) hold ministries accountable for the national NCD strategy; and (c) ensure that all policies and legislation which come before Parliament are assessed for their impacts on NCDs.

3. The UN Country Team should provide regular written and oral briefings for parliamentarians to encourage them to provide leadership on NCDs within their constituencies.

4. The Church needs to become a strategic partner in championing action on NCDs.

5. The Ministry of Health and WHO should organize meetings and/or workshops with other stakeholders to ensure that the actions of these partners are aligned with the global NCD Action Plan.

6. A costed National Multi-Sectoral NCD Strategy, prioritizing the most cost-effective actions and targets, should be formulated.

7. The government should continue to raise taxes on tobacco, alcohol, unhealthy foods and beverages.

8. An effective national NCD communication strategy should be developed and implemented.

Adding value: actions taken following the mission

1. The National Strategy for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases 2015-2020 was published and launched in March 2016.

2. The National Food Authority in Tonga was approved by the Cabinet, and launched in January 2016.

3. The National Food Council was established in January 2016.

4. In December 2015, a UN-MoH training workshop on the Tonga Food Act of 2014 was held. Issues addressed included: (i) the implementation of the Tonga Food Act 2014, including the operation of the National Food Authority; (ii) cross-sectoral collaboration; and (iii) the capacity of Government to implement Food Act.

5. World Food Day 2015 celebrations were funded by the Ministry for Agriculture, Food, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFFF) and WHO in October 2015.

6. The 70th UN Day Celebration in 2015 involved all UN agencies in Tonga. UN joint work on NCDs was highlighted.

Next steps

1. Local UN agencies and organizations will continue to meet every two months to drive joint action forward.

2. Look to extend experience of Tonga to neighbouring Pacific Island countries with the support of the global and subregional NCD Task Forces.

3. Explore opportunity for a follow-up Joint UN Task Force Mission to Tonga and neighbouring Pacific Island countries to maintain and extend momentum.

“In the past 3 years, Tonga’s STEPS reports show that most NCD indicators in Tonga are improving. Physical activity has achieved the global target by 4.6 times and 13 years earlier. Tobacco tax has increased by a further 19%.”

Dr. Dan Li WHO Country Liaison Officer/Head of WHO Office, Tonga