Tobacco control is a smart move for sustainable development

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, diabetes, cancers and lung disease are leading causes of death in the Pacific region. The inclusion of NCDs in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3.4) that world leaders adopted in 2015 at the UN General Assembly, acknowledges the vast and growing burden of these conditions. Their inclusion in the SDGs also acknowledges the opportunity to prevent and manage them, benefiting human dignity and creating more resilient communities.

Tobacco use is a common risk factor to these four major NCDs and implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is specifically recognized as one of the “means of implementation” (target 3.a) to reach the overall health goal and target on non-communicable diseases.

Tobacco undermines development at individual, family, community and national levels. The link between tobacco use and the SDG health goal is clear but it also affects many other dimensions of development. It exacerbates poverty, contributes to food insecurity, and threatens children’s access to education.

For example, low-income families that spend money on tobacco have fewer resources for food, health and education, which are all essential to development. No country can afford the health, social, economic or environmental consequences of tobacco.

Tobacco can be linked to each of the 17 sustainable development goals (see fact sheet here) and the WHO FCTC is the evidenced-based roadmap that exists to effective tobacco control. It has rightly been referred to as a tool for sustainable development.

The theme for this year’s World No Tobacco Day is “tobacco—a threat to development”. See more information and resources here. Reach out to engage in-country development partners in this year’s observance of WNTD.
The Oceania Customs Organization (OCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have recently signed a MOU to “work together in sharing information and ideas relevant to preventing and eliminating illicit tobacco trade”. The MOU was signed by Mr. Seve Paeniu, Head of OCO Secretariat and Dr. Corinne Capuano, WHO Representative/Director, Pacific Technical Support, WHO Representative in the South Pacific.

The MOU identifies the following areas of coordination: a) Information and data sharing relevant to trade in tobacco and tobacco products (such as manufacture, import, export, distribution, and sale) as appropriate; b) Aligning model customs legislation to account for provisions recommended in the WHO FCTC and the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products; c) Raising awareness about:

i. **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products,** 

ii. **the importance of eliminating illicit trade in tobacco products,** and

iii. **the importance of preventing tobacco industry interference in developing and implementing public health policy and programs;**

and d) Exploring options for tracking and tracing of tobacco products in the Pacific; and e) Joint missions to Pacific islands related to eliminating illicit trade in tobacco products as appropriate.

OCO supports Pacific island customs authorities to protect borders from illicit products, including tobacco. It is often the health sector which detects and shares information with customs so that they may strengthen their procedures to prevent such products from penetrating Pacific borders. WHO has been supporting Pacific island Ministries of Health (MOH) to engage with their customs counterparts to inform them of tobacco control laws, WHO FCTC and the illicit trade protocol (ITP).

Through sharing of information, WHO and OCO may alert each other about incidents of illicit tobacco trade as well as tobacco industry interference (TII). It is helpful to support MOHs to engage cross-sectorally with customs agencies at country-level to prevent TII as well as illicit trade. For more information, see: http://www.ocosec.org/oco-signs-mou-with-world-health-organisation/, or http://www.ocosec.org/mou-with-world-health-organisation/
**News from the region**

**Congratulations to Samoa—selected as a FCTC 2030 Partner country**

The Convention Secretariat recently announced the 15 Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) that were selected to participate in the FCTC 2030 project. Samoa was one of those selected from an applicant list of 55.

The **FCTC 2030** project aims to support Parties to the WHO FCTC that are eligible to receive official development assistance (ODA) to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by advancing implementation of the Convention. One of the core elements of the project is the provision of direct support to a selected number of low and middle income countries (LMICs) that have demonstrated considerable motivation to advance tobacco control. The FCTC 2030 project will strengthen tobacco control in LMICs through promoting and supporting governments to accelerate the implementation of the WHO FCTC.

This project is funded by the UK Department for International Development and will run from April 2017 until March 2021. For further information see [here](#).

**Oceania Tobacco Control Conference (OTCC)**

OTCC 2017 takes place in Hobart, Australia later this year. Conference registration is now open. The early bird rate for full registration is $650 AUD until 17 July. The standard rate is $850. Full Registration includes attendance at all sessions, lunch, morning and afternoon refreshments during days of 17-19 October 2017, satchel, handbook, name badge, an invitation to the Welcome Drinks and the Conference Dinner. Student registration is $450. To register, go to [http://www.otcc2017.org.au/registration/](http://www.otcc2017.org.au/registration/).

The OTCC 2017 program will be released 15 May. Abstract submissions are now closed.

Check the website for upcoming scholarship information coming soon.

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**In other news from Samoa...**

**Samoa Cancer Society’s Shelley Burich and WHO’s Dr. Ada Moadsiri recently providing technical input into Samoa’s proposed tobacco control amendments.**
Tackling Tobacco Addiction: Smoking Cessation Initiative in Wallis and Futuna

The burden of non-communicable diseases due to tobacco addiction is increasing in Wallis and Futuna (W&F). 42.6% of adults aged 18 and over in W&F are daily smokers. This trend is worrying, and puts W&F at risk of productivity loss due to tobacco-related illness and premature death.

With technical assistance from French Polynesia, W&F established a smoking cessation clinic in October 2016. This initiative was supported by the Pacific Community (SPC) as part of the effort to strengthen South-South collaboration in addressing tobacco control in the Pacific.

Through this initiative, clinicians, health and community workers were trained for counselling, education and treatment services; comprehensive management guidelines based on scientific and best practices were developed; and a clinic was established and equipped with required facilities and medications for diagnosing, counselling, preventing and treating tobacco addiction. Public education, promotion and awareness campaigns on tobacco cessation were conducted throughout the communities of W&F and are ongoing. Increased access to the tobacco cessation services by smokers is reported since the initiative began.

The government of W&F increased investment and escalated actions in preventing and treating tobacco dependence to meet regional and global commitments to tobacco control. SPC continues to support W&F to expand and sustain the tobacco control initiatives. For further information, contact Dr. Si Thu Win Tin at sithuw@spc.int or Ms. Solene Bertrand at soleneb@spc.int.

Busy quarter for Coalition for a Tobacco Free Palau

The Coalition for a Tobacco Free Palau (CTFP) has been active on many fronts this past quarter. The Coalition is partnering with different agencies including the Ministry of Health, and the Palau Visitor’s Authority (PVA) on several projects.

Among the projects is the development of social marketing campaigns on second hand smoke, tobacco industry interference and the connection between tobacco and development. In addition, a new partnership has been formed with the PVA to contribute to an innovative project—the “Palau Pledge project”. The goal of the project is to appeal to tourists to respect Palau’s pristine environment and help protect it for Palau’s youth. To complement activities targeted for tourists, the project will ensure that the community is empowered to take part in combating the harmful impacts of tobacco through local events and outreach. This project will address both clean air and cigarette litter.

CTFP is also making plans for World No Tobacco Day and will hold it’s annual 5K/10K walk run on May 21st.

CTFP is an all volunteer organization. For more information please contact: tobaccofreepalau@gmail.com.
Tobacco—purchasing age raised to 21 years on Guam

After long and concerted efforts by health professionals, community advocates and Guam’s youth, Bill 9-34 passed into law on March 23 that raises the minimum age of legal access to tobacco products and electronic cigarettes to 21 years. The law comes into effect in January, 2018. Vendors may be fined up to $1,000 (USD) for their first offense within a 5 year period and $2,000 for a second violation. Fines for third and fourth violations are $5,000 and $10,000.

It is also a violation of the law for any person under 21 years of age to use or be in possession of tobacco products. Any person violating this section of the law is required to attend an education program on tobacco products to include smoking cessation information. Congratulations to Guam for this great achievement!

For resources on raising the age of sale to 21, see Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids.

NCD hybrid survey piloted in the CNMI

Becky Robles, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) NCD Bureau Administrator and Dr. Haley Cash, the Pacific Island Health Officers Association (PIHOA) NCD Regional Epidemiologist presented at the World Congress on Public Health in Melbourne Australia from April 3-7. Their presentation was titled: “Development of a hybrid non-communicable disease surveillance survey within the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands”. They were able to highlight the work that they did to develop a novel adult NCD surveillance system within the CNMI by using a collaborative approach. By working together with local partners, as well as regional and global support partners, they were able to develop a new NCD survey that combined indicators needed from various programs within the CNMI and multiple support agencies into one comprehensive survey. This allowed the Commonwealth to effectively use limited financial and human resources to meet their data needs. Following the success of the CNMI and taking into account lessons learned, Palau has also successfully administered a hybrid NCD survey. To learn more about this approach, contact Becky Robles at broblesncd@gmail.com or Haley Cash at Haleyc@pihoa.org. To learn more about PIHOA, please visit www.pihoa.org.

“Raising the legal minimum age for cigarette purchase to 21 could gut our key young adult market (17-20) where we sell about 25 billion cigarettes and enjoy a 70 percent market share.”

Philip Morris report, January 21, 1986
Tonga Health Promotion Foundation welcomes new staff and new offices

Tonga Health Promotion Foundation recently opened a new office and extension and also welcomed Ms. Jeanie McKenzie as the NCD Development Manager. Ms. McKenzie is familiar to many in the region as the former NCD Advisor at the Pacific Community (SPC).

Resources

The Healthy Caribbean Coalition has released a new publication ‘Getting National NCD Commissions Up and Running: A Framework for the Establishment and Strengthening of National NCD Commissions in the Caribbean Towards a More Effective Multisectoral Response to NCDs PART II’.

This publication, developed in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat, is the second of a two-part series on National NCD Commissions (NNCDCs). Part I: ‘A Civil Society Report on National NCD Commissions in the Caribbean’, provides a detailed assessment of the status of National NCD Commissions in CARI-COM Member States (MS). Part II provides practical guidance for the establishment and strengthening of NNCDCs (or their equivalents) based on the experiences of past and existing Commissions in the region, as presented in Part I. The two part series of reports has been prepared by, and viewed through the lens of, civil society. It has been produced for the Caribbean – Small Island Developing States ranging from low- to high-income but has wider applicability. For more information, see http://www.healthycaribbean.org/ and sign up to receive HCC News RoundUP.


The WHO FCTC 2016 Global Progress Report is now available. Find it here together with a presentation about the main findings.
The report of the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC was released recently and provides details of COP discussions and important decisions. See here to view the report.

The Framework Convention Alliance (FCA) represents the voice of civil society in support of the world’s first global public health treaty – the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The FCA is made up of nearly 500 organizations from more than 100 low, middle and high income countries.

For membership information: write to membership@fctc.org.

FCA has representatives in all WHO regions. The Western Pacific—Pacific Island Countries Regional Office (WPRO–Oceania) of FCA is located in Palau. The Coordinator is Annabel Lyman.

The Office’s main activities are:
- Mobilise and support civil society capacity in support of the FCTC
- Collaborate with other technical assistance providers serving the Pacific Islands
- Provide technical assistance to members & Parties

For more information contact the Coordinator

Calendar of Events

25-27 April, 2017 5th Heads of Health meeting, Suva, Fiji http://www.spc.int/events/5th-heads-of-health/


2-6 October, 2017 WHO WPRO 68th Regional Committee Meeting, Brisbane Australia http://www.wpro.who.int/about/regional_committee/en/

17-19 October, 2017 Oceania Tobacco Control Conference (OTCC), Hobart, Tasmania Australia www.otcc2017.org.au

FCA Members in Pacific Island Countries

- Coalition for a Tobacco Free Palau
- Global Youth Leadership Nexus (Solomon Islands)
- Kumit Bobrae Coalition Inc. (Marshall Islands)
- Marshall Islands Epidemiology and Prevention Initiatives, Inc. (MIEPI)
- Kia-Henry Nema (Papua New Guinea)
- Nauru National Women’s Council
- Samoa Cancer Society
- The Child of the South Pacific Incorporated Society (Niue)
- Tobacco Free Coalition Kosrae (Federated States of Micronesia)
- Tonga Family Health Association
- Tuvalu Association of NGOs (TANGO)
- Ulkerreui a Klengar–UAK (Palau)

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