PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES
WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

A Brief Summary of Activities in Words and Pictures

2014
INTRODUCTION

Every year, on 31 May, WHO and partners everywhere mark World No Tobacco Day (WNTD), highlighting the health risks associated with tobacco use and advocating for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption. The ultimate goal of WNTD is to contribute to protecting present and future generations not only from the devastating health consequences due to tobacco, but also from the social, environmental and economic scourges of tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke.

The WHO WNTD theme in 2014 was “Raising Tobacco Taxes”. Raising taxes on tobacco is the most effective policy to reduce tobacco use. An increase in taxes decreases affordability and results in decreased tobacco use—thus saving lives. Several Pacific Island countries opted to observe this theme while others focused on other aspects of tobacco control, including “smoke free places” and “tobacco control and development”.

In most instances, government programs and civil society partnered together to observe WNTD with a variety of unique and creative activities. This booklet is an effort to capture some of the flavor of WNTD in the Pacific Islands.

Many thanks to all contributed.
In Raratonga, there were radio talk back shows on two radio stations as well as television and radio ads aired to promote the theme. Promotion was done in Maori local and English language. “Smoking Cessation” was the theme and linked to the cost of tobacco products which has increased over the past 2 years due to tax increases which will increase again on July 1st. A large WNTD banner was prominent in town for 2 weeks.

In the outer islands, there was a school drama, float parade, and community health presentations.

Community Health worker speaking with school children in outer islands.
During the week of the World No Tobacco Day the FSM Tobacco Control Program, with technical assistance from the World Health Organization (WHO), held Tobacco Taxation and Tobacco Law Enforcement Workshops.

Additionally, each of the 4 States undertook activities and each had a banner showing the tax theme printed in their language. There was also a banner hanging on the main road at the National government.

In the State of Kosrae, the Coalition team met with the members of the Kosrae State Legislature during lunch to talk about tobacco taxation, held a Q&A session on the radio with the tax theme and gave out prizes to listeners who called in with correct answers.
Fiji engaged the support of the faith community and held a day long faith-based consultation on tobacco use. Fourteen major religious groups/faith based organization leaders were invited to participate in this event. The Chief guest for the WNTD celebration was Dr Isimeli Tukana; National Advisor NCDs & Head of Wellness Centre (Ministry of Health) whilst the keynote speech was presented by Dr. Temo Waqanivalu (WHO).

In the discussion session of the program after the presentations, the faith based organizations leaders/representatives were given two questions to respond to; 1. What is the common cause of the high prevalence rate of tobacco use plus NCD deaths? and 2. What are some ways or possible solutions from their religious beliefs or prophetic incite or views as instructed or mentioned in their various religious books?

Several positive resolutions resulted from the consultation and participants agreed a follow up consultation was needed.
The Ministry of Health and Medical Services carried out a 1 week awareness campaign to the community on South Tarawa & Betio, through radio, drama and an outreach program from 26 – 31 May 2014.

“Maneaba” or meeting halls, were visited by a team comprised of the NCD Coordinator, Tobacco Control Focal Person, Tobacco Champion and Legal Advisor from the Attorney General’s Office. The team was also accompanied by a Youth drama group who were performing a play on the importance of tax increase and health risks associated with tobacco use.

The highlight of the day was a Wrestling Competition at the Reuben Stadium in Bairiki on Saturday 31 May. The NCD team was also there conducting a Mini STEPS Screening and distributing “Tobacco Free Pacific by 2025” bags.

“Te Mauri, Te Raoi, ao Te Tabomoa”
The RMI Ministry of Health and local governments declared World No Tobacco Day 2014 on May 31st. Two weeks prior to the event, the MOH and partners set up consultative meetings with stakeholders regarding the implementation of the FCTC and the recently conducted needs assessment. First steps were taken to draft resolutions to address the proposed 100% tax increase.

The RMI observed a No-Tobacco-Sales Day whereby stores pledged not to sell tobacco products for 24 hours. Vendors were asked to participate through mass media campaigns and with special endorsement letters from the President and Majuro Mayor. Local Police Forces and community groups took part to monitor the retailers. It was observed that Majuro observed a 100% pledge compliance.

NGOs and Faith-based community groups set up over seven community booths across the island of Majuro. Two community groups went out and made house to house visits in the most densely populated areas of Rita. RMI ended WNTD with a closing community event at the Laura basketball field.
NAURU

World No Tobacco Day activity in Nauru-

- 30 minutes Radio Talk on the adverse health effects on tobacco use; its risk-factors to NCD's; Annual WHO statistics Mortality Data (preventable Data); effects of second hand smoke, Cessation options and general information.

- The following text message was sent via 'Digicel' local phone Company to 9,000 mobile phones, tablets and other gadgets (Nauru population 10,000): "Today is "WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY" Promote your health - live a longer productive life - Say NO to tobacco today and beyond".

- All Registered Businesses (200+) were served letters seeking their cooperation to observe the day by withdrawing from display/shelves and to temporary cease sales of all tobacco products for the WNTD.

- Bingo games and other outdoor activities were asked (p.a system) to observe WNTD by refraining from smoking for the day.

- Health Promotion Unit staff did a local TV live-talk on the adverse health effects of tobacco use and the meaning of WNTD.
In Niue, there was a lunch debate hosted by the Niue Department of Health where the topic was on the theme of Raising Tobacco Taxes. The Department also organized a brunch with stakeholders, and games for kids.
Palau’s WNTD theme was “sustainable development needs tobacco control” and there were several activities including the following:

- Palau’s President proclaimed WNTD on May 31
- 17th annual WNTD 5k/10k fun walk/run with 285 participants and distribution of t-shirts to participants
- Live radio talk show to discuss the theme about tobacco control and development
- Government paycheck stub message announcing WNTD activity
- Newspaper editorials and articles published during WNTD week.
Health Awareness Day and Samoa Independence Inaugural Rugby Sevens (SII 7’s) Tournament were observed together which provided an opportunity to increase awareness of the risk factors of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). This year, the MOH was involved to support and promote Healthy Lifestyles throughout the event.

Sports in general have a long standing affiliation with smoking and alcohol sponsorship. However, the Tobacco Act 2008 and the newly endorsed Tobacco regulations prohibit such promotion. Neither alcohol or tobacco were promoted during the tournament and there was strong enforcement of smoke free regulation by the MOH enforcement team. Health Promotional materials were presented to public through health questions and answers. The partnership was very successful and plans are to continue next year.
Solomon Islands observed a weeklong WNTD. A mini-fair was held and booths were set up by a wide community sector including government ministries, city youth network, women in business association, children sectors, churches, etc.

Training was conducted for all booth owners before the program took off and each booth or tent within site during the week was given a set of information to be issued to their customer/clients and resupplied on a daily basis. Data was collected daily as to the number of contacts made, information issued, and referrals. At the referral centre, participants were given quit smoking counselling, and dietary advice and also had BP, blood sugar and weight checks.
A march through Nuku’alofa, an information event at the City Park and the official launch at Sia'atoutai Theological College, the only theological school in Tonga, highlighted WNTD.

It was a Thanksgiving program together with presenting of the WHO global awards to Tonga’s Minister of Health and Minister of Revenue and Customs both recognized for their joint accomplishment in the consecutive increases in tobacco taxation over the years to help reduce tobacco affordability and consumption in Tonga.

The college was selected to host the WNTD 2014 because the students that are trained in the school will become church leaders in near future and they are recognized for their significant roles and special power that could influence their congregation and followers to make positive behaviour changes. The Principal and the school management team had agreed to work closely with the Ministry of Health’s Health Promotion Unit together with the WHO CLO Office in Tonga in getting the College to become a "Smoke Free School". 

Students and School Choir conducting program of the day wearing T-shirt with the WNTD 2014 theme and messages.
For two days ahead of May 31st, the Tuvalu No Tobacco Coalition shared information over the radio regarding World No Tobacco Day (WNTD). With one radio station in Tuvalu, this was an effective means of communication, reaching Funafuti and all of the eight outer islands.

Represented at the talk show on the first day were TANGO, the Tuvalu Women Christian Temperance Union (TWCTU) and the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Mission to Tuvalu. An introduction to WNTD was provided followed by information on the negative effects of tobacco use.

On the 2nd day, the TANGO representative focused on the global “raise tobacco tax” theme and also shared information about how the tobacco industry uses cunning methods to hook smokers in order to increase their own profits at the cost of millions of innocent lives.

On WNTD, the Ministry of Health also conducted a live radio talk show. On the air from the MOH was the tobacco focal point joined by representation from the Attorney's Office, Customs Office, TWCTU, Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church and TANGO.
VANUATU

- The Minister of Health issued a press statement aired on Radio Vanuatu and carried by local newspapers.

- Flyers were prepared in baslami and distributed in Port Vila and Epi Island and printed in the local newspapers.

- Two talk back radio shows with one focusing on the tobacco tax theme and the other focusing on the tobacco regulations and challenges to enforcement.

- Parade and rally at Epi Island including remarks from the Headmistress of Epi Secondary School and official address by Ministry of Health
WHO WNTD AWARDS GO TO
TONGA and PALAU

Lord/Mr Tu’iʻafitu, Hon. Minister of Health, Kingdom of Tonga (Right) received the Certificate and the Medal of 2014 WNTD Award from Dr. Li Dan, Country Liaison Officer/Head of WHO Office (CLO/HWO) for Tonga at Siaʻatoutai Theological College, Tonga.

Mr. Siosifa Tuitupou Tuʻutafaiva, Hon. Minister of Revenue and Customs, Kingdom of Tonga (Right) received the Certificate and the Medal of 2014 WNTD Award from Dr. Li Dan, Country Liaison Officer/Head of WHO Office (CLO/HWO) for Tonga at Siaʻatoutai Theological College, Tonga.
Every year, WHO recognizes individuals or organizations in each of the six WHO Regions for their accomplishments in the area of tobacco control. This recognition takes the form of among others, World No Tobacco Day Awards. Among the 6 awardees in the WPRO region this year were from the Kingdom of Tonga, Mr Siosifa Tuitupou Tu’utafaiva, Honorable Minister of Revenue and Customs and Lord/Mr. Tu’i’afitu, Honorable Minister of Health and the government of the Republic of Palau. Efforts of these awardees resulted in tobacco tax increases in their respective countries. Congratulations!

In Palau, participants including legislators, members of the Executive branch and civil society attended WHO supported Tax workshop in 2013 that lead to tax increase, restriction on duty free allowance to inbound travelers and eliminating duty free tobacco sales to outbound travelers.
Recognizing that specific action is needed to address the non-communicable disease crisis in the Pacific, and that tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of NCDs, Pacific Island Health Ministers took a decisive step to scale up action on tobacco control. In 2013, they adopted the Tobacco Free Pacific 2025 goal, which aims to reduce adult tobacco use to less than 5%. (see http://www.wpro.who.int/southpacific/tfp2025).

Only by working together, government and civil society across all sectors will we achieve this goal. WNTD provides an opportunity for us all to focus all our efforts highlighting the health risks associated with tobacco use and advocating for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption.