



FCA PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

Framework Convention Alliance

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Limiting tobacco consumption is key to controlling non-communicable diseases

While the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic dominates headlines and officials race to slow the spread of the virus, the issue on tobacco use is sadly relegated to the sidelines even as it remains a public health challenge.

The number of annual deaths from tobacco-related diseases now stands at eight million, according to WHO. Moreover, the burden of tobacco use extends beyond health and undermines the social and economic development of nations. Consider how the global economic cost of smoking was estimated to have been US\$1.4 trillion in 2012 and how low and middle-income countries shouldered 40 per cent of the cost.

Progress on the global epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) will not depend on waiting for new breakthroughs, but on insights gained from tried and tested solutions such as WHO’s [Framework Convention on Tobacco Control \(FCTC\)](#), the world’s first public health treaty and which came to effect in 2005. A high proportion of premature deaths from NCDs is caused by one single preventable

risk factor — tobacco use. If governments are to make progress on non-communicable diseases prevention, they will need to reduce tobacco use.

The number of tobacco smokers is projected to remain at around 1.1 billion until at least 2025, with 80 per cent of the world’s smokers living in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

The tobacco industry is known to systematically undermine controls while aggressively marketing cigarettes. A recent industry watchdog [report](#) indicates that a large tobacco firm “continues to contest and challenge evidence-based tobacco control measures, heavily market cigarettes, introduce new cigarette brands and acquire new cigarette companies”.

The facts speak for themselves and the world must focus on reducing tobacco use if it is to make any headway against premature deaths from NCDs such as cancer, cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases.

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Public investment in tobacco control is lagging behind other health issues and the world may miss a narrow window of opportunity for significant progress in public health.

One bright spot is that many lower- and middle-income countries, with support from civil society organisations, philanthropic organisations, international and funding agencies are taking action on price and tax measures aimed at decreasing tobacco use.

More could be done by the international community to increase the percentage of Development Assistance for Health allocated to tobacco control in low and middle-income countries. The way forward is to quicken the pace and broaden the scale at which governments implement the FCTC.

As they convene in the Netherlands this November, parties to the FCTC are in a unique position to take leadership in moving towards a world without non-communicable diseases and advancing sustainable development. They should have a frank conversation about the specific areas where urgent action and investment will yield the greatest impact.

Tobacco control is at a crossroads: governments can continue to merely work through obstacles at their own pace, or they can focus on accelerating action through the [Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control](#).

At the end of January, Vera Luiza da Costa e Silva, the outgoing head of the Secretariat, WHO FCTC and the Protocol, called for the tobacco control community to “keep working towards a better world” and for civil society to “continue to advance the treaty’s implementation agenda despite the efforts of the tobacco industry and other commercial interests that put profit before people’s health and human rights.

Echoing the sentiment behind the call, the tobacco control community should in turn recommit to supporting governments in their

efforts to adopt, implement and enforce proven tobacco control laws and policies, in line with their obligations under the FCTC.

To prevent non-communicable diseases and move towards a healthy, sustainable world, it would be wise to refocus efforts and attention on what works.

“Tobacco control is at a crossroads: governments can continue to merely work through obstacles at their own pace, or they can focus on accelerating action through the Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control”

**Mafoya Dossoumon,
Framework Convention Alliance**

See full and original article at [SciDevNet](#)
April 6, 2020

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the entry into force of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) .



Pacific Island Countries - COVID-19

As most of us face the challenges of COVID-19 with limited resources and often fragile health care systems, much of the health-care workforce in the region including tobacco control program staff and advocates are working with their national teams in preparation for, and in response to, this rampant virus.

Many PICs have implemented mass media campaigns to emphasize proven COVID-19 prevention methods such as hand washing/cleaning, not touching your face, not spitting, and physical distancing (including staying home).



Sign of the times

COVID-19: Tobacco and NCDs relevant resources

Resources on the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) Pandemic can be found on the World Health Organization (WHO) website - [click here](#). Updates specific to the Pacific island countries and rest of the countries of the Western Pacific Region can be found [here](#). For more info on [#coronavirus](#) cases in the region, see the dashboard here: bit.ly/2X2JJvg

Dr. Marita Hefler, **News Editor, BMJ Tobacco Control** has put together a resources page on the Tobacco Control website about COVID-19 and tobacco. It brings together a range of information (including research, WHO updates, quit support and information, media reports, tobacco industry responses and actions) specifically about COVID-19 and smoking/tobacco. See <https://blogs.bmj.com/tc/2020/03/26/covid-19-and-smoking-resources-research-and-news/>.

ASH (Action on Smoking and Health) has also

compiled resources on [coronavirus and tobacco](#) such as the following:

- [British Medical Journal compilation of research](#)
- [The Lancet journal article](#)
- [Tobacco Induced Diseases](#)

In various places, the tobacco industry is lobbying governments to ensure continuous delivery of its products during the lockdown; while in developing nations, it is offering donations to health ministries. The tobacco industry tactics during this time of COVID-19 are documented in a [brief produced by the Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control \(GGTC\)](#), a partner of Stopping Tobacco Organizations and Products (STOP).

The **NCD Alliance (NCDA)** has compiled [a collection of resources](#) to help you and your organization confront the COVID-19 pandemic. The collection of resources will help you stay up-to-date on relevant news, get key resources for your specific region, read the latest peer-reviewed articles, find information for people living with NCDs.

Does smoking have an effect on the new coronavirus, COVID-19?



Smoking does not protect against COVID-19. In fact, smoking is deadly. More than 8 million people die each year as a result of tobacco use. People with underlying health conditions such as heart disease, which can be exacerbated by smoking, are at higher risk of severe COVID-19.



#COVID19
25 Feb 2020

Does chewing areca/betel nut have an effect on COVID-19?



Chewing areca/betel nut does not protect against COVID-19.

In fact, chewing betel nut causes cancer and increases risk for cardiovascular diseases which both cause higher risk for severe COVID-19. Spitting spreads droplets which transmit diseases including COVID-19.



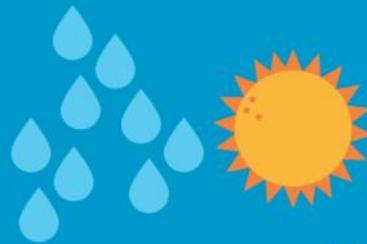
#COVID19

From the evidence so far, the new coronavirus can be transmitted in ALL AREAS, including areas with hot and humid weather.

Regardless of climate, adopt protective measures if you live in, or travel to an area reporting COVID-19.

The best way to protect yourself against COVID-19 is by frequently cleaning your hands. Eliminate viruses that may be on your hands and avoid infection that could occur by then touching your eyes, mouth, and nose.

FACT:
The new coronavirus can be transmitted in areas with hot and humid climates



#Coronavirus #COVID19

9 March 2020

Older people, and people with pre-existing conditions (such as heart diseases, diabetes, respiratory conditions) appear to be more susceptible to becoming severely ill with the virus.

Information note

COVID-19 and NCDs



COVID-19

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

NCDs and mental health

www.who.int/ncds
www.who.int/mental_health

COVID-19 and NCDs

Convention Secretariat announces nine new FCTC 2030 Parties including Fiji

Tobacco is a threat to health and an impediment to development. The **FCTC 2030** project supports achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through strengthening implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

The Government of the United Kingdom was the first to fund the five-year FCTC 2030 project in 2016. The Governments of Australia and Norway then joined the project providing additional funding, which enabled the expansion of the FCTC 2030 project to new countries.

Through the project, governments of countries eligible to receive overseas development assistance (ODA) will receive intensive individually tailored support to accelerate implementation of the WHO FCTC. Countries will be offered support to implement specific objectives listed in the WHO FCTC's *Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control*.

A needs assessment and an economic investment case to support the comprehensive implementation of the WHO FCTC will be provided.

Through an application process, a total of 9 FCTC Parties were selected to receive direct support under Phase II of the FCTC 2030 project. Congratulations to Fiji for being included along with Armenia, Costa Rica, Eswatini, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mozambique, Serbia, Suriname, and Tunisia. See [here](#) for more information.

World No Tobacco Day – 31 May 2020

This year's theme is *Protecting youth from industry manipulation and preventing them from tobacco and nicotine use*.

In response to the tobacco and related industries' systematic, aggressive and sustained tactics to attract a new generation of tobacco users, World No Tobacco Day 2020 will provide a counter-marketing campaign and empower young people to engage in the fight against Big Tobacco.

The World No Tobacco Day 2020 global campaign will serve to:

- Debunk myths and expose manipulation tactics employed by the tobacco and related

industries, particularly marketing tactics targeted at youth, including through the introduction of new and novel products, flavors and other attractive features;

- Equip young people with knowledge about the tobacco and related industries' intentions and tactics to hook current and future generations on tobacco and nicotine products; and
- Empower influencers (in pop culture, on social media, in the home, or in the classroom) to protect and defend youth and catalyze change by engaging them in the fight against Big Tobacco.

For more information, see [here](#).



Enforcement training in Tuvalu

On February 18, a tobacco control enforcement training was held with 7 police officers and 2 representatives from the Office of the Attorney General (OAG). The Ministry of Health, Social Welfare and Gender Affairs (MOH) presented the current tobacco control laws in Tuvalu and group discussion focused on Police role in strengthening enforcement. The Police suggested/requested MOH and OAG's support to amend their "Police Powers and Duties Regulations 2012" to include measures in the tobacco control act which will allow them to issue penalty notices for violations.

On February 21, the MOH hosted a workshop on tobacco control enforcement and food safety for retailers from across Funafuti. A total of 17 retailers participated in the training.



The workshop began with an overview of the dangers of tobacco and how it is addictive followed by a detailed presentation of the sections of the Tobacco Control Act relevant to retailers. Participating retailers expressed overwhelming support to help protect vulnerable populations such as young people from the dangers of tobacco.

Participants were also very interested in fully understanding the law to comply. There was lively discussion about: challenges with enforcing identification requirements for tobacco sales, whether retailers are included in the definition of 'tobacco industry' in terms of prohibiting sponsorship, and the role retailers play in raising awareness about the dangers of tobacco use. In a demonstration of willingness to support tobacco control, the participants requested MOH to provide the required signage so that they could be sure the signs were compliant with the law.



A review of Voluntary National Review reports

This report provides a review of the current status of multi-stakeholder engagement in the 2030 Agenda implementation based on an assessment of the 158 Voluntary National Review (VNR) reports submitted to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) between 2016-2019. PICs that have submitted reports include

Samoa, Kiribati, Fiji, Nauru, Palau, Tonga and Vanuatu. In 2020, FSM, PNG, Samoa, and the Solomon Islands will report and the Marshall Islands in 2021. For the full document, see [here](#).



Framework Convention Alliance in the Pacific Islands

Working together to free the world from the devastating health, social, economic and environmental consequences of tobacco and tobacco use

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 publishes the *Bulletin* and *Tobacco Watch*
<http://www.fctc.org/publications>

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](#)



31 May, 2020: World No Tobacco Day

2-4 September, 2020: 13th Asia Pacific Conference on Tobacco or Health APACT 2020, “*Professional Alliance Moving Together For Tobacco-Free Society*” Bangkok, Thailand. See <http://www.apact2020.com/home.php>

9-14 November, 2020: Ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP9), the Hague, Netherlands

16-18 November, 2020: Second session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP2), the Hague, Netherlands



Thanks to Cancer Council Australia (CCA) for generous support to tobacco control in the Pacific

FCA Members in Pacific Island Countries

- Coalition for a Tobacco Free Palau (CTFP)
- Fiji Cancer Society
- Global Youth Leadership Nexus (GYLN) (Solomon Islands)
- Kunit 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 (SCS)
- Tonga Family Health Association
- Tuvalu Association of NGOs (TANGO)
- Ulkerreuil a Klengar– UAK (Palau)

