



Marshall Islands

9-16 SEPTEMBER
2013

NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION



Introduction

The needs assessment mission for the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) was conducted September 9-16, 2013, by the Convention Secretariat jointly with the Ministry of Health of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The international team, which came at the government's invitation, met with the Country Development Manager of the United Nations Joint Presence in RMI. The team also met with the leaders of government agencies, NGOs and civil society who are involved in implementing the WHO FCTC at country level.

Tobacco control milestones in the Republic of the Marshall Islands

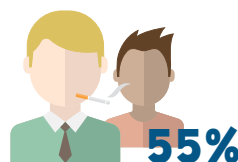


- 2004** The Republic of the Marshall Islands ratifies the WHO FCTC.
- 2005** The WHO FCTC enters into force in the Republic of the Marshall Islands.
- 2006** Tobacco Control Act is passed.

NCDs declared an epidemic in the Republic of the Marshall Islands

On 29 October 2012, the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands declared a state of health emergency due to the epidemic of NCDs in the RMI, following the political commitment made at the United Nations High Level Meeting on NCDs in September 2011, declarations made at the Pacific Island Forum in New Zealand in August 2011 and by the Pacific Island Health Officers Association (PIHOA) in May 2010.

Key Facts



of **boys** aged 13-15 have been exposed to tobacco **smoke** at **home**.



of **girls** aged 13-15 have been exposed to tobacco **smoke** at **home**.



of **students** aged 13-15 had been offered a **free cigarette** by a tobacco company representative and **17.6%**

had an object with a cigarette or tobacco **logo** on it.



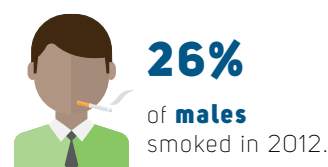
of **residents** of the Republic of the Marshall Islands **chew tobacco** currently or have done so in the past.

12.2% male
2.6% female

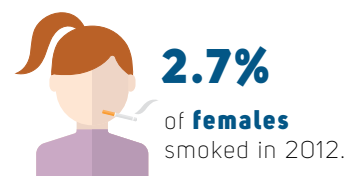


of **residents** of the Republic of the Marshall Islands chew **betel nut** currently or have done so in the past, including betel nut with tobacco.

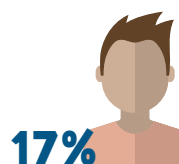
14.4% male
1.37% female



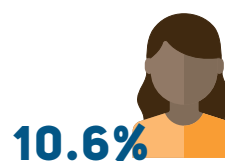
of **males** smoked in 2012.



of **females** smoked in 2012.



of **boys** aged 13-15 are current **smokers**.



of **girls** aged 13-15 are current **smokers**.

Main findings and recommendations

● The Republic of the Marshall Islands has a noncommunicable disease and nutrition strategy covering the years 2008-2012, which is known as the KUMIT plan. It includes tobacco and betel nut control as one of its six components. It also includes priorities and implementation of the WHO FCTC, such as reviewing and enforcing legislation, raising awareness through social marketing and promoting counseling, though it is mainly a health sector strategy. The Republic of the Marshall Islands is in the process of drafting a National Strategic Plan and a National NCD Crisis Response Plan 2013-2018.

Recommendation: Include implementation of the WHO FCTC in the National Strategic Plan as one of the priorities. Include multisectoral action to implement the WHO FCTC in the NCD Crisis Response Plan so that it can serve as the national multisectoral tobacco control action plan at the same time.

● The WHO FCTC requires Parties to establish or reinforce and finance a national coordinating mechanism or focal point for tobacco control. There is a focal point in place, though a multisectoral national coordinating mechanism has not yet been established. The Republic of the Marshall Islands is in the final stage of establishing a National NCD Advisory Committee.

Recommendation: Give the National NCD Advisory Committee the mandate of coordinating national implementation of the WHO FCTC. All relevant ministries

Tobacco importers and retailers appear to attempt to affect government policy. There is a code of conduct for civil servants to protect against this.

Recommendation: Raise awareness among civil servants about the need to protect public policy from tobacco industry interference.

and agencies should allocate staff time and resources to implementing the WHO FCTC.

● The Republic of the Marshall Islands passed the Tobacco Control Act 2006 the year it became party to the WHO FCTC. The Tobacco Control Act covers many key areas of the WHO FCTC, but some provisions are not in line with it. Particularly, large pictorial health warnings and a complete ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship are needed. Regulations also need to be developed to fully implement the Tobacco Control Act.

Recommendation: Amend the Tobacco Control Act so that it fully complies with the WHO FCTC and develop regulations to fully implement it.

● Article 14.1 requires each Party to “develop and disseminate appropriate, comprehensive and integrated guidelines [concerning tobacco dependence and cessation] based on scientific evidence and best practices... [and] take effective measures to promote cessation of tobacco use and adequate treatment for tobacco dependence.” Article 14.2 stipulates that to achieve the end outlined in article 14.1, each Party shall endeavor to implement effective tobacco cessation programs aimed at “promoting the cessation of tobacco use,” “including diagnosis and treatment of tobacco dependence and counseling services on cessation of tobacco use in national health and

education programs,” “establish in healthcare facilities and rehabilitation centers programs for diagnosing, counseling, preventing and treating tobacco dependence,” and ensure the accessibility and affordability of treatments for tobacco dependence. The Republic of the Marshall Islands does not yet have national guidelines for tobacco dependence cessation. Counseling has been provided as part of substance abuse prevention and NCD programs.

Recommendation: Develop or adapt tobacco dependence and cessation guidelines and integrate them into healthcare and community programs.

● The Republic of the Marshall Islands has not yet signed or ratified the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.

Recommendation: Sign and ratify the Protocol to Eliminate Trade in Tobacco Products.

● Tobacco taxes are very low in the Republic of the Marshall Islands and have not been increased for several years. Tobacco is easily affordable.

Recommendation: Significantly increased tobacco taxes on a regular basis.

Post needs assessment assistance available from the Convention Secretariat

● Supporting and facilitating a stakeholder workshop to consider the needs assessment report and the development of a national tobacco control action plan as part of the NCD Crisis Response Plan.

● Providing immediate support for priorities identified by the Ministry of Health.

● Supporting amendment of the Tobacco Control Act and the development of tobacco control regulations.

● Providing expert technical assistance in the development of a media strategy and audiovisual materials for national radio and television.

Outcomes



1) The needs assessment mission helped to raise awareness of the importance of tobacco control within the broader NCD prevention and control agenda in the Republic of Marshall Islands.

2) As a result of the exercise, a comprehensive multisectoral national tobacco control strategy was developed.

3) The government has committed to work on amendments to the Tobacco Control Act and on the development of tobacco control regulations in order to fully comply with the provisions of the WHO FCTC.