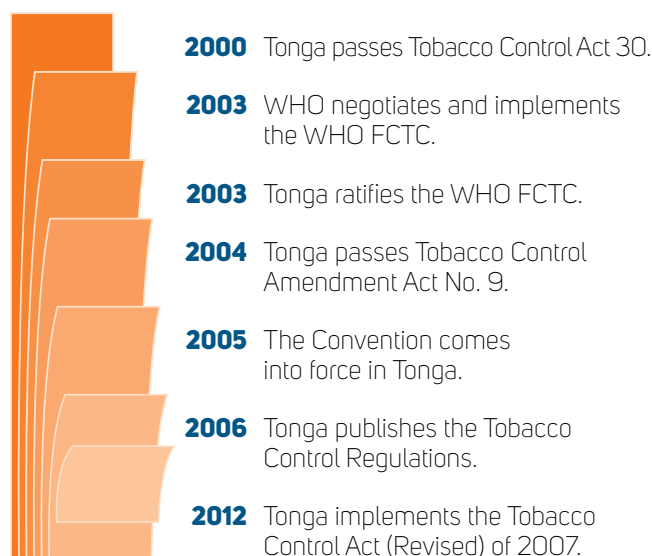




Introduction

The needs assessment mission for the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) was conducted November 19-24, 2015, by the Convention Secretariat jointly with the Ministry of Health of Tonga. The international team, which came at the government's invitation, included representatives of the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific (WPRO). The team met with the leaders of government agencies, NGOs and civil society who are involved in implementing the WHO FCTC at country level.

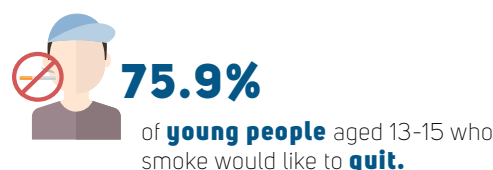
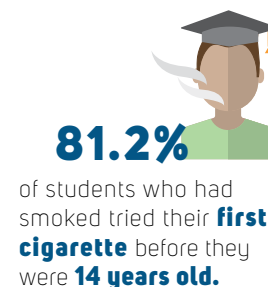
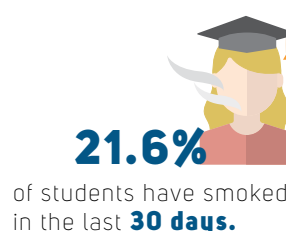
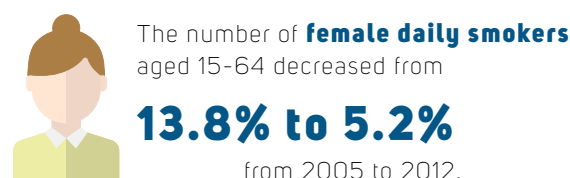
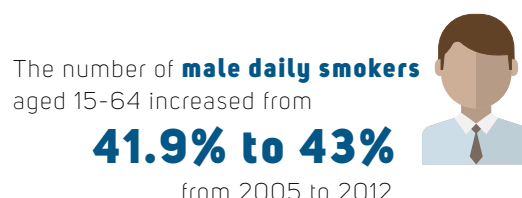
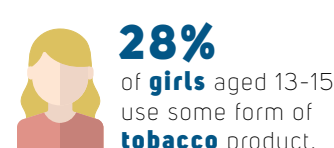
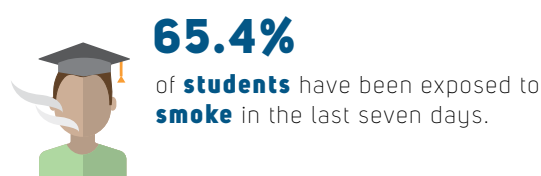
Tobacco control milestones in Tonga



National coordinating mechanism

Tonga was the first country in the Pacific to launch a National Strategy for the Control and Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases in 2004 and, in 2009, formalized this issue as one of six priority areas for the government. Tonga has established a Tobacco Control Subcommittee that provides national coordination under the NCD Strategy, as well as a focal point for tobacco control within the Ministry of Health. The health promotion foundation TongaHealth (THPF) was established as the agency responsible for disbursing available funds to reduce tobacco consumption.

Key facts



Main findings and recommendations

● Tonga's National Strategy to Prevent and Control Noncommunicable Diseases 2010-2015 aims to reduce the number of smokers in Tonga. Tonga is currently developing its next National Strategy 2015-2020.

Recommendation: Include WHO FCTC implementation in all relevant policy documents and use the needs assessment report as a reference in preparing them.

● Tonga has taken significant legislative steps to control tobacco. This includes efforts to increase taxes and fully implement a smoke-free policy.

Recommendation: Further strengthen legislation, including the Tobacco Control Act and Amendment Bill 2014, to bring Tonga into full compliance.

● Tonga has established Tonga Health to promote healthy lifestyles, including by reducing tobacco consumption. The Tonga government supports these activities through budget grants.

Recommendation: Consider a review of different models, including earmarked tobacco taxes, to fund Tonga Health in a way that is sustainable, accountable and effective.

● Tonga does not currently have measures that go beyond those provided for by the Convention.

Recommendation: Identify areas in which measures going beyond the minimum requirements of the Convention can be implemented.

● Tonga has implemented tax policies on tobacco products. These include a

The tobacco industry is influential at high levels in the government and has been successful in weakening anti-tobacco legislation, including smoking bans.

Recommendation: The Public Service Commission should include specific rules for interacting with the tobacco industry and they should be enforced.

specific excise and value-added tax. Tonga increased the excise tax by 19% in 2014. There is a 15% value-added tax on all tobacco products.

Recommendation: Continue increasing taxes so that tobacco products become less affordable.

● An increasing amount of tobacco is cultivated in Tonga, particularly on certain outer islands. There is little specific information about this tobacco production.

Recommendation: The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture should conduct research to determine the growth, distribution and use of local tobacco and consider helping those who currently grow tobacco diversify into other sustainable crops.

● The Tobacco Control Act of 2000 provided for smoke-free environments in public places. However, the Revised Act of 2007 allows for designated smoking areas and rooms in licensed premises and restaurants.

Recommendation: Pass Tobacco Control (Amendment) Bill 2014 to bring Tonga fully into compliance with the obligation to provide 100% smoke-free indoor environments.

● The Tobacco Control Act requires manufacturers, importers and distributors to comply with labeling and health warning standards. Amendment Act 2004 requires stating the amount of tar and nicotine on tobacco product packaging. Local tobacco and other nicotine delivery systems are not

currently included in the legislation and regulations.

Recommendation: Implement a requirement for a pictorial warning and increase the warning to more than 50% of the major pack surfaces. Revise the Tobacco Control Act and Regulations to comply with WHO FCTC guidelines. Include local tobacco and electronic nicotine delivery systems in the regulations.

● Tonga has a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, though the law appears to allow advertising in certain buildings.

Recommendation: Amend the Tobacco Control Act so it fully complies with the requirement for a comprehensive ban.

● The Tobacco Control Act is not currently fully enforced.

Recommendation: All relevant agencies should work together to fully enforce it.

● Tonga recognizes the importance of NGOs and civil society to fight tobacco use.

Recommendation: Continue working with NGOs and civil society, particularly with the Tonga National Forum of Church Leaders, whose influence is pivotal.

● The current United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) includes the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

Recommendation: Because tobacco control is central to reducing NCDs and their burden, it is important to include support for the implementation of the WHO FCTC in the next UNDAF.

Post needs assessment assistance available from the Convention Secretariat

● Support a study on the cultivation, sale and use of local tobacco.

● Support the implementation of a mass media campaign.

● Support enforcement training for the Ministry of Health and Police Department.

● Strengthen the Ministry of Health's legal capacity.

● Provide assistance and information through the McCabe Centre on Law and Cancer knowledge hub.

● Support the revision and adoption of new regulations for the Tobacco Act.

Outcomes



1) The needs assessment mission was very beneficial to Tonga, which already had a strong tobacco control legislative framework.

2) As a result of the exercise, the tobacco control team was strengthened. Awareness was increased about the harms of tobacco and the need to fully implement the WHO FCTC and enforce tobacco control measures.

3) Collaboration between Tonga and the Convention Secretariat Knowledge Hub in Australia was reinforced.