



# FCA PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

*Framework Convention Alliance*

Volume 6, Issue 3

October, 2015

## In this Issue:

*Sustainable Development Goals*

*Tracking tobacco affordability*

*New resources for cessation and Article 14*

*Tobacco triumph in Pacific trade deal*

*News from the region*

*PNG optimistic about SDGs*

*Palau's BCBP disposes of cigarettes and other tobacco products*

*Can we reduce tobacco use by 30% in next 10 years?*

*FCA election results*

*Dates to remember*



## Sustainable Development Goals Adopted by the UN General Assembly

New global goals for sustainable development were adopted by world leaders at the United Nations General Assembly on September 25. Commitments on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and tobacco control are included in these goals.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets will form the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These goals and targets will drive the world's efforts to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, improve health and well-being and protect our planet over the next 15 years.

Tobacco use is the main risk factor for the four major groups of NCDs, and the Agenda 2030 endorses the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) as a key tool to fight the NCDs epidemic and achieve health for all at all ages.

### Clear recognition

“With the inclusion of the WHO FCTC as one of four means of implementation targets for the SDGs goal on health, tobacco control is now clearly recognized by the UN

as a strategy to address sustainable development and improve health,” said FCA Director Laurent Huber.



### SDGs IN A NUTSHELL

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent a global consensus on how to achieve a sustainable future for everyone. All countries should be guided by the goals when preparing their plans and policies for the next 15 years. The international community, including United Nations agencies, the World Bank and regional development banks, as well as public and private donors, are expected to assist governments to reach the SDGs.

The SDGs will succeed the Millennium Development Goals, which expire at the end of 2015. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs apply to all countries, not just developing ones. Tobacco control was not included in the MDGs, which made it difficult to mobilise development assistance for implementation of the WHO FCTC.

## Tracking tobacco affordability to measure SDGs' progress

As the United Nations (UN) tracks progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) over the next 15 years, it will monitor countries' efforts to implement the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

While there is no easy way to measure how each country complies with the FCTC's provisions, it is possible to assess if they are taking tobacco control seriously.

Governments' efforts to keep the price of tobacco products high, so that they continually become less affordable, will demonstrate their commitment to ending the tobacco epidemic. Framework Convention Alliance (FCA) has officially proposed to the UN that affordability data be used to assess governments' policy on strengthening implementation of the FCTC. (see proposal [here](#)).

### Tax increases effective

Increasing the prices of cigarettes and other tobacco products through taxation is the most effective way to reduce tobacco use. Unfortunately, many countries are yet to tax tobacco at sufficiently high levels, as highlighted in [a recent WHO report](#). The reasons why tobacco taxes stay low in many countries range from tobacco industry lobbying, inefficient administration or lack of coordination between ministries of health and finance.

Also, increasing tobacco taxes once is not enough: inflation or growing incomes can make tobacco affordable over time, as happens in many developing countries. Regular price increases, in other words a continuous commitment to fighting the devastation caused by the tobacco epidemic, are required.

There is another reason why tobacco affordability should be part of monitoring the SDGs. Tobacco taxes are explicitly highlighted in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, recently adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, as an effective and important tool to reduce tobacco consumption and health-care costs, as well as a potential revenue stream to finance development at country level.

Increasing tobacco taxes is a 'win-win' for any government that wants to meet the global goals and is seeking extra funds to invest in its sustainable future. Monitoring affordability of tobacco will provide the necessary measurement of how governments are keeping their SDGs promise to implement the FCTC.

**TOBACCO CONTROL IN THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

- Tobacco Control Target in the SDGs
- Tobacco Tax as Financing Tool
- Tobacco Control Indicators
  - One agreed, one more on tobacco affordability needed: <http://ow.ly/SILBK>
- Country Level
  - Each country must take steps to:**
    - Include FCTC implementation in its sustainable development plans
    - Mobilise sufficient resources for tobacco control, including via tobacco tax revenues

 **FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ALLIANCE**  
BUILDING SUPPORT FOR TOBACCO CONTROL

[www.fctc.org](http://www.fctc.org)

## New resources for cessation and Article 14

The **International Centre for Tobacco Cessation (ICTC)** has uploaded to [www.treatobacco.net](http://www.treatobacco.net) the tools developed through Centre's Bloomberg funded work to help countries implement FCTC Article 14 and its guidelines.



They include a National Situation Analysis, Guidance on writing national guidelines, a review of the evidence on efficacy, effectiveness and affordability, and an excel affordability spreadsheet, which can be used at national level to estimate the affordability of an intervention.

The treatobacco library includes a number of links to national cessation strategies and about 40 national cessation guidelines, and many other cessation resources.

The tools were piloted with Uruguay and Jordan, and the work is ongoing in Bolivia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Lebanon and South Africa. The tools are free to download and the ICTC is happy to assist any country in how to use them. The affordability spreadsheet is currently being tested in Uruguay, Costa Rica and Lebanon. For further information, please contact Martin Raw at [martin@martinraw.com](mailto:martin@martinraw.com).



## Tobacco triumph in new Pacific trade deal

In a major victory for public health, negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement concluded recently with built-in protections to prevent private corporations from suing governments over anti-tobacco regulations.

The victory comes after years of pressure from a vast coalition of health groups and pro-health legislators, including Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), to protect the right of governments to regulate tobacco without fear of expensive lawsuits.

"We would have preferred a blanket exemption for tobacco in the Agreement, denying increased rights for the tobacco industry across the board," said Laurent Huber, Executive Director of Action on Smoking and Health, and Director of FCA.

"However, investor-state dispute settlements provisions were the most worrisome aspect of the TPP, and now the tobacco industry cannot use them to block or delay life-saving measures".



## News from the region

### Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) in the Marshall Islands

Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) is a program administered by the RMI Ministry of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) aimed at reducing racial and ethnic disparities in health and was described in further detail in the April issue of this newsletter.



In the Marshall Islands, the REACH program is raising awareness on national no-smoking legislation in order to improve compliance with it. The program has been doing this successfully through social media, community meetings and

the radio. Posters and fliers are under development for community wide distribution.

The program has also made special efforts to reach out to government offices where training has been provided regarding the ill effects of tobacco use and the details of national legislation. As a result of this focus, compliance with smoke free places has increased in government buildings to 22 of 24 targeted offices.

The REACH staff was also honored recently to meet with the RMI President Loek and his cabinet members to describe the pro-

ject. The President showed great support for these efforts. Look for more information on the Marshall Islands REACH project Facebook page.

### Pacific Chronic Disease Council meets in Australia

The Pacific Chronic Disease Council (PCDC) comprising of representatives from the U.S. Associated/Affiliated Islands (USAPI), recently met in Sydney, Australia. The Council provides an avenue to act collectively with international, professional, governmental, community organiza-



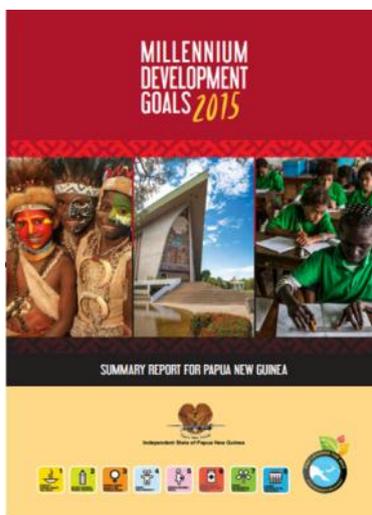
Members of the PCDC pose for group shot in Sydney

tions, faith based organizations, and NGO agencies on issues that affect the successful development, management, implementation, and evaluation of chronic disease programs. In attendance to share progress toward addressing the issue of NCDs, was Mrs. Shra Alik representing the Pacific Partners for Tobacco Free Islands (PPTFI). Mrs. Alik also participated as a member of the team from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). See more about the PCDC [here](#).

## PNG optimistic about SDGs

The Government of Papua New Guinea (PNG) is optimistic about the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In its final Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Report presented to the 70<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly in New York on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2015, the Government stated that it will build on the progress made and lessons learnt from the MDGs.

PNG's major achievements were in the health and education sectors; the government has invested heavily in universal access to primary health care and primary education over the last four years. The report also states that although PNG has sustained economic growth for the past 14 years this growth has not been fully translated to improved social outcomes.



The government will build on the gains made over the past years and is committed to strengthen its weak areas, especially data and information systems. It acknowledged the high penetration rate of mobile phones and social media transforming communication, particularly reaching rural areas, and its need to explore and leverage private sector participation and technology to improve its data.

The report also highlights the concerns for rapid increase in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and effects of climate change, and embraces the SDG goals and targets to address these concerns. The report acknowledged that NCDs were among the leading cause of morbidity and mortality. Daily use of tobacco was among the leading risk factors for increase in NCDs with a prevalence of 43.7% (59.9% male; 26.6% female).

## Civil society participates in Palau's NCD and FCTC coordinating mechanism

Members of several civil society organizations such as the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Palau (CTFP), NCD coalitions (UAK and OMUB), Red Cross, traditional leaders, youth interest groups, farmer's association, sports commissions and others are working with the Ministry of Health and other government organizations as members of the newly formed coordinating mechanism (CM) for NCDs and the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The CTFP recently made presentations on the FCTC and on Article 5.3, industry interference, at the first official meeting of the CM.

The Coalition will be making a brief presenta-



*Members of the CTFP at first official meeting of the CM*

tion on the CM at the Oceania Tobacco Control Conference in Perth, Australia in October.

CTFP is also working with the CM secretariat to draft a code of conduct for members as required in the duties and functions of the members.



## Palau's Bureau of Customs & Border Protection disposes of cigarettes and other tobacco products

In accordance with RPPL 9-15, the Bureau of Customs & Border Protection (BCBP) recently disposed of cigarettes and other tobacco products that were seized by Customs earlier this year for non payment of taxes.

Based on the increasing amount of tobacco products held in inventory and the health and safety risks of maintaining the confiscated products currently being held in the Customs Warehouse, Acting Director, BCBP John Tarkong Jr. issued the order for the disposal of all cigarettes and other tobacco products in accordance with the law.

On Thursday October 08 and Friday October 09, 2015, Officers from the BCBP manually disposed of 5,256 packs of cigarettes or about 525 cartons plus 9 loose tobacco products. If collected, the duty on the cigarettes and loose tobacco would have totaled approximately \$26,282.94 (USD). Most of the tobacco products were seized from airline passengers unable to pay for their dutiable items. The last time BCBP disposed of tobacco was on September 26, 2014.

In FY 2015, a total of \$6,644,535.61 was collected from cigarette taxes, an in-

crease from \$4,602,483.21 collected in FY 2014. This increase is likely due to the tax rate increases first in 2014 and again in 2015. For other tobacco products such as loose tobacco, \$31,665.92 was collected in FY 2015, down from \$218,166.55 collected in FY 2014. This may be attributable to a change in the taxation system whereby all tobacco is taxed by weight. This significantly increased the price of loose tobacco and sales plummeted.

Due to strong enforcement efforts by Customs, intelligence and joint collaboration with other enforcement agencies, the BCBP has been able to keep the contraband cigarette supply in check. The quantity of contraband cigarettes has decreased since 2011 when the last case involved over 16,000 cartons that were smuggled into Palau over a 3 year period. Eventually, the defendants were found guilty.



## Oceania Tobacco Control Conference Update

The OTCC 2015 will feature a Pacific island countries pre-conference workshop. Participants will focus on ways to accelerate implementation of the WHO FCTC through work on two key provisions; multisectoral coordination

and protection from tobacco industry interference. Enforcement issues will also be discussed. Experiences and examples from the Pacific island countries will be used as a basis for the discussions. Participants will also work on their own country's tobacco industry interference index. Watch for updates and photos from the workshop in the 4th quarter news!

## Can we reduce tobacco use by 30% in next 10 years?

The recently released WHO [report](#) on trends in prevalence of tobacco smoking 2000-2025 provides projections – not predictions – for each country whether it is on track to reduce tobacco use prevalence by 30% by 2025.—the goal agreed at COP6. The report shows that most countries are not on track to meet this important target.

While data was not available in time to make such projections for several Pacific island countries, the report did show that some countries are not on track while a couple are projected to meet the target. Several countries have recently completed STEPS surveys which should contribute to the projections.

To get countries on track to meet the target, it will be important that governments discuss and

agree what specific actions need to take place between now and 2025 and coordinate their efforts. It is not too soon to start having these discussions at the seventh session of the COP.

WHO and the FCTC Secretariat were asked at COP6 (Decision 16) to prepare a technical paper on the contribution and impact of implementing the WHO FCTC on achieving the reduction in the prevalence of current tobacco use.

This technical paper will provide a good start to have focused discussions on how to meet the 30% target. Other materials will be needed as well and in particular, it will be important to develop simulations, showing what and where implementation of the FCTC needs to be strengthened and how to achieve this.

### Outcomes of FCA elections

The 10th FCA General Assembly Elections 2015 ended on August 7, 2015. Three seats were contested in this election: 2 of the 6 regional seats and 1 of the 3 At-large positions. As such, the ballots featured respectively the AMRO and SEARO regions, along with one AT-LARGE seat.

The FCA membership has again elected a diverse Board with different talents, all of whom have substantial experience as advocates and a high level of commitment to tobacco control.

Welcome to newly elected Board members :

- Alejandro Ramos was elected to the AMRO regional seat,
- Amit Yadav was elected to the SEARO regional seat and
- Maria Carmona was elected to the At-Large seat.

**Starting January 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 the composition of the Board of Directors of the Framework Convention Alliance will be as follows:**

1. AFRO: Issah Ali
2. AMRO: Alejandro Ramos
3. EMRO: Fouad Fouad
4. EURO: Maxime Compaoré
5. SEARO: Amit Yadav
6. WPRO: Ulysses Dorotheo
7. AT-LARGE: Maria Carmona
8. AT-LARGE: Mônica Andreis
9. AT-LARGE: Judith Watt

**Thanks to all of our current Board members** for serving on the FCA Board with dedication and commitment. Special recognition to **the three Board members whose terms end in Dec 31<sup>st</sup> 2015**, Iqbal Masud (SEARO), Johanna “Jo” Birckmayer (AMRO) and Lutgard Kokulinda Kagaruki (At-Large).

# 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](mailto: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](#)



**20-22 October, 2015:** Oceania Tobacco Control Conference, Perth, Australia. See <http://www.otcc2015.org.au/>

**26-28 October, 2015:** Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), Bangkok, Thailand. See <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/meetings/iaeg-sdgs-meeting-02>

**13-15 November, 2015:** First Global NCD Alliance Forum: Strengthening the civil society movement. Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

**17-19 November, 2015:** Pacific workshop on implementation of the WHO FCTC, Nadi, Fiji.

**19-24 November, 2015:** FCTC Needs assessment mission, Nuku'alofa, Tonga.

**2-6 December, 2015:** 46th Union World Conference on Lung Health, Cape Town, South Africa. See <http://capetown.worldlunghealth.org/>

*Please send submissions for 4th quarter FCA PIC newsletter by January 5, 2016 to*

*[lymana@fctc.org](mailto:lymana@fctc.org)*

*Recent news, stories of success or challenge, photos, workshops, conferences, etc. are all welcome.*

*Thank you to everyone who contributed this quarter*

## FCA Members in Pacific Island Countries

- Coalition for a Tobacco Free Palau
- Global Youth Leadership Nexus (Solomon Islands)
- Kunit Bobrae Coalition Inc. (RMI)
- Marshall Islands Epidemiology and Prevention Initiatives, Inc. (MIEPI)
- National Heart Foundation of PNG
- 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)
- Ulkerreuil a Klengar– UAK (Palau)

