

High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Monday, 10 July – Wednesday, 19 July 2017, Conference Room 4, United Nations Headquarter, New York

Session 9, panel discussion on “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world: Taking forward the SAMOA Pathway” to be held on 12 July 2017 from 3 – 4:30pm

Lead Discussant – Intervention to focus on the Pacific regional response to question:

How can we best strengthen health systems to address NCDs focusing in particular on primary health care and universal health coverage and how can SIDS best improve coverage, access and quality of care for NCD management?

Outline

Salutations

Background

Responding to the NCD Crisis through regional initiatives

- Need for Guidance on Implementation : Pacific NCD Roadmap
- Need for closer collaboration between development partners, implementing agencies and countries : Pacific NCD Partnership
- Need for an accountability framework : Healthy Islands Monitoring Framework; Pacific NCD Monitoring Alliance for NCD Action (MANA) and both aligned to the Pacific SDG Headline Indicators

Overarching principle of collective accountability

Positive change is possible

Conclusion

Mr Chairman, panellists, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen

I will be focusing my intervention on regional initiatives to address Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in the Pacific region.

The 22 Pacific Island Countries and Territories that make up the Pacific region face significant challenges including among others climate change, food security and poverty. NCD is the most significant Health issue and because of its magnitude has also become a development challenge.

The sad reality is that many PICTs are not able to provide services to cater for the complications of NCDs including coronary artery bypass surgery, dialysis or treatment for most cancers so a diagnosis of NCD can have significant implications on the individual, their families, communities and country.

Despite the significant burden NCDs bring to the region, Pacific leaders have not shied away from acknowledging the need to address NCDs and the associated challenges.

In 2011, the Pacific Health Ministers Meeting declared that the Pacific is in crisis due to NCDs – a call that was echoed by the Pacific Forum Leaders.

Over the past few years, there has been a focus on what can be done better at regional level to assist countries address the NCD crisis.

The efforts have focused on the recognition by the leaders of the need for practical applications around three areas:

The first area was the need for guidance on implementation that was relevant to the region. As mentioned by the minister from Samoa, the Pacific NCD Roadmap was developed at the direction of the ministers and launched at the inaugural Joint Forum Economic and Pacific Health Ministers Meeting in 2014.

The Roadmap recognised the need for multi-sectoral engagement and since it was launched, a number of countries and territories have gone on to implement significant measures particularly in the areas of taxing tobacco and unhealthy foods and drinks.

The second area was the need for closer collaboration between development partners, implementing agencies and countries. The Pacific NCD Partnership was subsequently developed and launched at the SIDS Conference in Samoa

Since 2014, there has been better coordination and integration among partners and an example is the UN Thematic Group on NCDs where membership is not limited to UN partners but also to others working on NCDs. It is now possible to talk to pretty much any of the key partners working in the region and they would be aware of what most of the other partners are doing.

The last area was the need for a monitoring and evaluation or accountability framework – At the review of the Healthy Islands Vision in 2015, it was clear that the lack of a monitoring framework needed to be addressed and the ministers directed that the Healthy Islands Monitoring Framework be developed. More specifically to NCDs, the Pacific NCD Monitoring

Alliance for NCD Action (MANA) was also developed and the result was a dashboard of NCD related indicators. Both the Healthy Islands Monitoring Framework and the Pacific MANA are aligned to the Pacific SDG Headline Indicators.

The overarching principle across these initiatives is collective accountability. Ministers have committed to be accountable to each other and this was echoed at the inaugural Pacific NCD Summit last year when it was pledged to establish and commit to timelines at the national level to implement the key recommendations of the NCD Roadmap. The Pacific Health Ministers Meeting will also get update reporting at their biennial meetings.

The next step in our efforts now will be aimed at ensuring that there is consistent progress among all Pacific Island Countries and Territories and that no one country or territory is left behind.

I would like to finish by asking the question as to whether it is possible to make positive changes for NCDs and NCD risk factors in mostly resource poor settings such as is the case for most Pacific Island Countries and Territories?

Fortunately, the answer is yes. Evidence from all the Pacific countries that have carried out repeat STEPS surveys indicate there is a lot to be hopeful for. Samoa for instance – showed significant positive changes in a number of areas including tobacco and alcohol use, physical activity and high blood pressure.

The burden from NCDs is clear, there is enough evidence of interventions that work, leadership and multi-sectoral collaboration are critical and necessary and most importantly getting positive results is possible!