

PACIFIC COUNTRIES SUPPORTED TO OVERCOME CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING WHO FCTC

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Reducing the negative impact of tobacco is a major priority for Pacific Island Countries, as the region works to address a crisis of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

And while all Pacific countries have ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) and made strides to reduce tobacco consumption, they still face significant challenges to implementing tobacco control policies.

So on 24-25 March 2021, the Knowledge Hub on Legal Challenges (McCabe Centre for Law & Cancer) hosted the Pacific Tobacco Control Workshop to support countries to meet their WHO FCTC obligations and reduce the burden of NCDs.

More than a dozen representatives from six Pacific countries attended the workshop, including government officials and members of civil society groups.

Workshop sessions were led by Daiana Buresova and Evita Ricafort – the McCabe Centre’s Regional Managers for the Pacific and Asia – as well as representatives from the Australian Government Department of Health, the WHO Pacific regional office, the WHO FCTC Secretariat and the

Framework Convention Alliance (FCA).

As she welcomed participants to the workshop, Head of the WHO FCTC Secretariat Dr Adriana Blanco Marquizo emphasised the devastating impact of NCDs – the leading cause of death in the Pacific region.

“We know that strengthening implementation of the WHO FCTC is a fundamental step in confronting that rising burden of cancer and other NCDs in the Pacific region,” Dr Marquizo said.

Day 1 sessions focused on the WHO FCTC and its various articles, providing guidance on developing policies to implement them. Throughout the workshop, Pacific country representatives shared their experiences with tobacco control, including their successes and the challenges they faced.

Several countries noted that tobacco industry interference was a challenge, and Day 2 sessions focused largely on strategies to implement WHO FCTC Article 5.3 on industry interference.

Participants also described how COVID-19 has caused delays in tobacco control efforts, acknowledging that implementing the WHO FCTC is an essential part of recovering from the pandemic.

“Setbacks in FCTC implementation could have a detrimental impact on health equity and sustainable development in the long term,” said Ryan Forrest, Associate Director of Policy and Advocacy for the FCA.

Wrapping up the two-day workshop, Daiana Buresova thanked Pacific representatives for participating and for sharing their experiences.

“We’ve learned a great deal from you,” Daiana said, offering the McCabe Centre’s support and encouraging Pacific countries to reach out for technical assistance.

The Pacific Tobacco Control Workshop was conducted as part of the McCabe Centre’s work as [the WHO FCTC Knowledge Hub on Legal Challenges](#). Primary funding for the workshop was provided by the Australian Government Department of Health, while additional funding for the McCabe Centre’s work is provided by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

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