

# NCDs and mental health conditions

## United Nations Agency Activities beyond the World Health Organization in Small Island Developing States

January 2023



Members of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases beyond the World Health Organization were invited to submit current activities on noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health that they are currently undertaking in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to support discussions at the SIDS high-level technical meeting on NCDs and mental health, 17–18 January 2023 in Barbados. Responses received are provided below.

## **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development**

During 2021 and early 2022, EBRD conducted an assignment on mental health and wellbeing and psychosocial risks in the workplace, where the first phase included a rapid literature review and an assessment throughout projects and sectors, which concluded that, there is a need for more tailored, comprehensive, and culturally sensitive mental health and wellbeing education and awareness initiatives. From an organizational standpoint, the study identified weaknesses in capacity-building and lack of appropriate expertise, a poor understanding of work-related psychosocial risks, and a deficient integration of these issues at the business level. Hence, EBRD in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), engaged the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) in July 2022 for the phase two of this initiative to develop some practical and tailored awareness-raising resources, e-learning courses and other tools intending to fill part of the knowledge gap detected during phase one. These resources are being developed and currently at their very final stage, and will be made readily and publicly available for use in Q1 2023 in English. We hope to release additional translated versions of these tools and resources later in the year. We believe that these tools and resources, which will be free to all, will help businesses to get a better understanding, provide means to identify and prevent work-related psychosocial risks and to better manage mental health and wellbeing of worker in the workplace.

Note: While the work described above is not specific to SIDS although EBRD consider that it would be of interest to SIDS and their development partners:

## **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

A project was implemented from 2019 to 2021 in a number of SIDS in the Atlantic Ocean (Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Sao Tome and Principe) and Indian Ocean (Madagascar, Comoros, Mauritius, Seychelles) with the aim to reduce the import of highly processed foods high in fats, sugars and salt and improve the intra-SIDS trade in nutritious foods. A final project report is available [here](#).

The [FAO NCD brief](#) published in 2020 highlighted the following with regards Caribbean SIDS.<sup>1</sup>

*Supporting countries to form action networks to promote healthy diets, nutrition labelling and food reformulation as part of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition.*

- With the support of FAO, the CARICOM Secretariat has established the CARICOM Action Committee on Food and Nutrition Security (CACFNS) which brings together a network of focal points from the CARICOM Member states to monitor and share experiences and good practices on issues associated with the regional food and nutrition security policy and action plan.
- The Regional Food and nutrition security policy of the CARICOM was approved and endorsed in 2010. The policy intends to implement a set of actions that address the “shift in nutrition patterns being experienced by Caribbean countries, which in turn has contributed to an increase in nutrition-related chronic NCDs”.
- Similarly selected Caribbean countries have been supported in their efforts to establish and run many different inter-sectorial and inter-institutional coordination spaces relevant for addressing malnutrition in all its form. These include:
  - Parliamentary Front against Hunger and Malnutrition platforms in Belize, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Grenada and Haiti
  - National school feeding committees that integrates health, agriculture, education and other stakeholders
  - National food and nutrition security commission and/or councils (eg. Belize, Grenada)
- In addition, Caribbean countries have integrated important regional and global platforms that promote joint collaboration on nutrition and healthy diets. These include:
  - The Sustainable School Feeding Network (RAES) <https://redraes.org/en/>
  - The FAO School food Global hub: <https://www.fao.org/platforms/school-food/around-the-world/>

*Supporting countries to develop food-based dietary guidelines addressing overweight, obesity and undernutrition.*

- With the support of FAO, Caribbean countries have developed national Food Based Dietary Guidelines as a basis for public food and nutrition, health and agricultural policies and nutrition education programmes to foster healthy eating habits and lifestyles.
- In recent years, several of those countries have updated such guidelines to reflect the demand of new context and realities of countries. These include: Barbados (2017), Guyana (2018), Grenada (2020), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (2021) and Suriname (2022). Other countries like Bahamas and St. Kitts and Nevis have expressed interest

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<sup>1</sup> Activities are led by the FAO sub-regional office for the Caribbean which supports 13 countries: Belize, Bahamas, Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, St Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, Barbados, St Kitts and Nevis and Antigua and Barbuda.

to embark in a similar process of updating and disseminating their national food based dietary guidelines.

*Implementing school based food and nutrition education programmes, and supports governments to develop policies and programmes in schools to encourage healthy diets.*

- With the support of FAO, the Brazilian and the Mexican cooperation, the University of the West Indies and other Development partners, several countries in the Caribbean have initiated process of strengthening their national school feeding programs and convert them into transformational strategies for food and nutrition education, access to healthy diets made of local products and market opportunities for small and family farmers. Among those countries include Bahamas, Belize, Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia, Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.
- Countries have also embraced the need for inter-institutional coordination between health, agriculture and education, the improvement of menus and nutritional guidelines, more conducive and inclusive policy and legal frameworks, the establishment of school gardens as a pedagogical tool for food and nutrition education, food safety, etc.
- Similarly some countries have taken the steps to regulate and prohibit certain harmful diet-related products at schools. That has been the case for countries like Barbados, Bahamas, Jamaica, and Belize that have banned Sugar sweetened beverage at schools or have taken fiscal measures to discourage over consumption of such food products.
- The joint digital campaign *#ActOnFacts: The Food in Our Schools Matters* is a joint collaboration between FAO, the Healthy Caribbean Coalition, PAHO, the OECS, CARPHA, UNICEF and other regional and national partners that calls on governments to implement strong school nutrition policies that allow and encourage children and the school community to make healthier food choices. With that, the understanding is addressing unhealthy food environments – and by extension childhood obesity – requires bold legislative actions, to not only increase access to nutritious foods, healthier snacks and drinking water, but limit the sale and marketing of highly-processed energy-dense foods and drinks high in fats, sugars and/or salt in schools.  
<https://www.healthycaribbean.org/the-food-in-our-schools-matters/>

*Integrating nutrition objectives into food and agriculture policy, programme design and implementation to enhance nutrition-sensitive agriculture, ensure food security and enable healthy diets for the prevention of overweight, obesity and NCDs.*

- FAO, in collaboration with its partners (including the CARICOM Secretariat) has been assisting countries in the region in their efforts to put forward specific nutrition policies and others that integrate nutrition objectives. Of particular importance it can be referred to:
  - National food and nutrition security policies that contribute to the CARICOM regional food and nutrition security policy and action plan. Also those are a



- prelude to the current policy decision of CARICOM member states to reduce food importation by 25% by 2025.
- School nutrition policies in countries like Barbados, with PAHO support
  - Ongoing process for the development of specific National School feeding policies (Suriname, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Belize and Bahamas)
  - Ongoing effort to bridge the gap in terms of food and nutrition statistics relevant for the decision making on nutrition-related policy and legal frameworks. This include support for food consumption data and information in St. Kitts and Nevis, Nutritional assessment in selected schools for school feeding (Belize, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines), Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) for most of the CARICOM member states, and soon to come support on cost and affordability of healthy diets in selected Caribbean countries.

*Supporting countries in the development of easy-to-understand labels contributing to sustainable food systems.*

- Front of Package Warning Labeling is another issue that Caribbean stakeholders have been advocated for. With institutions like PAHO, UNICEF, CARPHA, and the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) in the forefront, FAO has joined and intends to keep join resources in making the front of packaged products a tools that allow consumers to ably identify products with excessive amount of critical nutrients (such as sugars, total fats, saturated fats, trans fats and sodium) which are linked to obesity and NCDs.

## **Framework Convention for Tobacco Control Secretariat**

The Convention Secretariat plans to release a publication in Q1 2023 titled: Integration of WHO FCTC implementation with the control and prevention of NCDs which is relevant for all SIDS. The Convention Secretariat is also currently working with Fiji and Suriname as part of the [FCTC 2030 project](#) (Fiji and Suriname are both Phase II countries).

## **The Global Fund**

Although not specific for SIDS, the Global Fund along with many partners in the NCD taskforce has initiative to get mental health into Global Fund proposals in this new wave of funding proposals.

This includes support for telemedicine for psychotherapy for improving patience adherence and to support service providers working with key populations. This telemedicine could then be used for other NCDs. Also, to incorporate mental health into primary care and primary health care platform can also be used for other NCDs. The new GF strategy encourages a people centered approach to PHC, so this funding round creates an opening for including NCDs

Also, GF exploring using health system financing to support WB health sector loan project through Global Fund grant financing to create greater concessionality. This would support climate related activities particularly Solarization of PHC and other facilities; support to make supply chain more climate friendly; reconfiguration of service delivery to adapt to climate change using geospatial mapping.

## **International Atomic Energy Agency**

IAEA has recognized that a tailored programmatic approach was required to effectively address the unique developmental challenges of SIDS. A Sub-Regional Approach to the Pacific Islands (SAPI) has been implemented since January 2022 and will run for the next four years in the areas of nutrition, agricultural productivity, NCDs (cancer), marine and coastal environment, water resource management, and radiation safety, which will serve as an important complementary mechanism for greater effectiveness of the Pacific Islands' national programmes in the framework of IAEA.

IAEA has embarked on several key initiatives which directly support efforts to reduce exposure to external shocks and improve resilience in its Member States, including SIDS. Among these is the NUClear TEChnology for Controlling Plastic Pollution (NUTEC Plastics) programme, which builds on IAEA's efforts to address plastic pollution through recycling using radiation technology and marine monitoring using isotopic tracing techniques. The Caribbean region is benefiting from assistance to strengthen its ocean acidification and microplastics analysis capabilities through the procurement of equipment for laboratories including for Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.

To improve Member States' capacity to prevent pandemics caused by bacteria, parasites, fungi, or viruses that originate in animals and can be transmitted to humans, in 2021 IAEA launched the Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action (ZODIAC). Using a systematic and integrated approach, ZODIAC will strengthen the preparedness and capabilities of Member States to rapidly detect and timely respond to outbreaks of such diseases. As part of the first phase of this initiative, laboratories from Guyana, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are being provided with equipment packages including serology, molecular diagnostic, and whole genome sequencing (WGS), along with training in the use of the equipment.

A nutrition-related project is underway in Caribbean SIDS to assess the body composition of children and investigate factors affecting body composition in children from English speaking Caribbean Member states. This information will provide a better understanding of childhood obesity in the countries and guide future childhood obesity intervention programs.

A nutrition-related project is also underway in Pacific SIDS to enhance the national capacity of Member States of the Pacific Islands to utilize stable isotope and complementary

techniques to improve national programmes on human nutrition studies and services with emphasis on childhood nutrition studies. A centralised lab is being established in Fiji to support the SIDS in analysing their nutrition related isotope samples.

In Fiji, IAEA is supporting the implementation of a programme for pesticide-free suppression and management of fruit flies for sustainable fruit production to boost the sustainability of fruit production. Also, supporting the implementation of proper measures for good agricultural practices to ensure safe food/sustainable environment and solutions to farmers. Neither the monitoring capacity of pesticides residues and emerging contaminants in food and water nor the assessment of contamination levels by pesticides and emerging contaminants can be ensured without access to sensitive and powerful laboratory equipment. This provides the country the tools to efficiently carry out contaminant/residue monitoring by obtaining baseline information on contamination and enable the preparation of risk assessment for decision makers.

In the Marshall Islands, the support provided focuses on improving the quality of clinical services in radiology for the two major hospitals in Majuro Island and Ebeye Island by remote training and equipment to enhance the diagnostic capabilities and safe use of the equipment. In addition, assistance is provided in developing national radioactivity monitoring capabilities with the cooperation of Australia.

In Palau, upscaling the capabilities for the delivery of diagnostic radiology services to establish a high quality and safe medical service has been a priority. It has also focused on improving the infrastructure at the Palau National Hospital for the implementation of a Picture Archiving and Communication System (PACS) and Teleradiology.

In Papua New Guinea, IAEA is supporting the health sector with capacity building actions to enhance the country's cancer control capabilities by supporting long term training opportunities abroad (2- and 4-year training) as well as specific equipment to support the Port Moresby General Hospital to provide accurate and safe services to its patients and implementing best practices in clinical radiology services.

IAEA has also supported Vanuatu strengthening the agro-food laboratory quality infrastructure of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Biosecurity and Livestock. An improved food safety and quality testing laboratory with better analytical (screening and confirmatory) and human resource capabilities following internationally acceptable standards contributes to boost the marketability of agricultural and livestock products.

In 2021, Samoa became the 173rd Member State of IAEA. After initial consultations with the country, counterparts were nominated to participate in the SAPI with the Scientific Research Organization of Samoa (SROS), the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment as the main counterparts. In addition, Samoa also received emergency

assistance provided to Member States to strengthen national capacities for the rapid detection of the COVID-19.

Twenty-four Small Island Developing States, which are also Member States of IAEA (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Mauritius, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Saint Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago) have received equipment for the detection of SARS-CoV-2.

IAEA has been supporting the development of strategic programme frameworks, together with its Member States, for the prioritization of activities for national and regional programmes during a period of 4-6 years. These strategic documents, the Country Programme Frameworks (CPFs), are aligned with national development plans and UN strategic documents and identify areas where nuclear science and technology has a comparative advantage to other techniques in addressing development needs and the SDGs.

At the sub-regional level, targeted support is being provided to SIDS Member States in the Caribbean, guided by the Regional Strategic Framework for Technical Cooperation with IAEA-CARICOM Member States for 2020–2026, which outlines the most pressing needs to be addressed through the application of nuclear technology in the areas of agriculture and food production, human health, environment, energy, radiation safety and radiation technologies. The region is being supported through 38 national projects and six regional projects across these thematic areas.

In the case of Pacific SIDS, the CPFs are aligned, to the extent possible, with the United Nations Pacific Strategy (UNPS) 2018-2022 and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2018-2022.

Cooperation and collaboration between IAEA and the United Nations Country Teams has been strengthened by collaborating in the UNPS Joint Country Action Plans (JCAP) – 2021. These JCAP reflect the collective UN response to the national priorities and at the regional level.

SAPI is a set of sub regional projects aim at improving and delivering a more tailored development support to SIDS and which will serve as an important complementary mechanism for greater effectiveness of the Pacific Islands' national programmes in different areas. With SAPI, support will broaden the spectrum of projects in which nuclear science and technology can contribute directly to achieve development priorities and goals. It promotes South-South cooperation between SIDS to collaborate and share knowledge, skills, and successful initiatives but also triangular cooperation with other relevant stakeholders.

SAPI seeks to establish a critical mass of scientific human resources and build institutional capacities to enable Pacific Islands to build back better after an external shock and improving



resilience in SIDS. The aim is to optimize the delivery and impact of its technical cooperation programme in the Pacific SIDS Member States of IAEA (Fiji, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Vanuatu).

The SAPI provides opportunities to develop and operationalize partnerships in the region such as with the Pacific Community (SPC), the University of Tasmania, the University of South Pacific, the United States, and Australia, through the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology (ANSTO) and the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA). SAPI will enhance coordination and build valuable networks between the islands, providing more efficiency and value for money while still addressing the development needs of all countries.

## **International Agency for Research on Cancer**

[The Cancer Surveillance Branch](#) (CSU) of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has been involved in collaborative studies in recent years including opinion pieces, reviews and original research reports to promote evidence-based policies on cancer control in SIDS. Topics have ranged from cancer control policies, experiences with treatment, surgery, radiation therapy and chemotherapy provision, transport issues, health economics, cancer registration and mortality statistics.

Within the framework of the [Global Initiative for Cancer Registry Development](#) (GICR), the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) has partnered with IARC, the US National Cancer Institute (NCI), the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries (NAACCR) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) to develop and implement IARC Regional Hub for the Caribbean based at CARPHA. The IARC Caribbean Cancer Registry Hub began operations in 2015 and was officially inaugurated in 2018. Seed funding provided by the Australian Government has enabled implementation of the IARC Regional Hub for the Pacific Islands, though planned meetings and training were deferred due to COVID. A site visit was conducted in Fiji in 2016 to assess the prospects of it serving as a Hub. A site visit to examine the state of cancer registration was conducted in Tonga in December 2019, followed by recommendations to improve quality control.

Given the Regional Hub activities involve planning and developing registries within many small states, a better understanding of shared issues in delivering surveillance and cancer control supports GICR developments; there have thus been studies dedicated to documenting progress and ways forward in supporting cancer surveillance in small island nations worldwide, including the specific challenges facing the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands.

Recent publications from IARC of relevance to SIDS are as follows:

Amosa-Lei Sam, F., Akinremi, A., Mery, L., Sarfati, D., Stanley, J., & Gurney, J. (2021). Cancer Incidence in Samoa: A 10-Year Retrospective Survey (2007-2016). *Asia Pac J Public Health*. 33(6-7): 700-706. PMID: 33233921 doi: 10.1177/1010539520975261

Quesnel-Crooks S, Martin DN, Hanisch R, Kohler B, Mery L, Edwards BK, Andall- Brereton G. Cancer Registration in the Caribbean. *J Registry Manag*. 2020 Fall;47(3):161-169. PMID: 34128922.

Sarfati D, Dyer R, Vivili P, Herman J, Spence D, Sullivan R, Weller D, Bray F, Hill S, Bates C, Foliaki S, Palafox N, Luciani S, Ekeroma A, Hospedales J. Cancer control in small island nations: from local challenges to global action. *Lancet Oncol*. 2019 Sep;20(9):e535-e548. doi: 10.1016/S1470-2045(19)30511-X. Epub 2019 Aug 5. PMID: 31395475; PMCID: PMC7746435.

Spence D, Dyer R, Andall-Brereton G, Barton M, Stanway S, Argentieri MA, Bray F, Cawich S, Edwards-Bennett S, Fosker C, Gabriel O, Greaves N, Hanchard B, Hospedales J, Luciani S, Martin D, Nimrod M, Ragin C, Simeon D, Tortolero-Luna G, Wharfe G, Sarfati D. Cancer control in the Caribbean island countries and territories: some progress but the journey continues. *Lancet Oncol*. 2019 Sep;20(9):e503-e521. doi: 10.1016/S1470-2045(19)30512-1. Epub 2019 Aug 5. Erratum in: *Lancet Oncol*. 2019 Sep;20(9):e468. PMID: 31395473.

Sarfati D, Dyer R, Sam FA, Barton M, Bray F, Buadromo E, Ekeroma A, Foliaki S, Fong J, Herman J, Huggins L, Maoate K, Meredith I, Mola G, Palafox N, Puloka V, Shin HR, Skeen J, Snowdon W, Tafuna'i M, Teng A, Watters D, Vivili P. Cancer control in the Pacific: big challenges facing small island states. *Lancet Oncol*. 2019 Sep;20(9):e475-e492. doi: 10.1016/S1470-2045(19)30400-0. Epub 2019 Aug 5. PMID: 31395476; PMCID: PMC7746436.

Spence D, Argentieri MA, Andall-Brereton G, Anderson BO, Duggan C, Bodkyn C, Bray F, Gibson T, Garcia WG, Greaves N, Gupta S, Hobday V, McLean F, Mery L, Nimrod M, Ocho O, Quee-Brown CS, Tortolero-Luna G, Shields AE. Advancing cancer care and prevention in the Caribbean: a survey of strategies for the region. *Lancet Oncol*. 2019 Sep;20(9):e522-e534. doi: 10.1016/S1470-2045(19)30516-9. Epub 2019 Aug 5. Erratum in: *Lancet Oncol*. 2019 Nov;20(11):e613. PMID: 31395471.

Tervonen H, Foliaki S, Bray F, Roder D. Cancer epidemiology in the small nations of Pacific Islands. *Cancer Epidemiol*. 2017 Oct;50(Pt B):184-192. doi: 10.1016/j.canep.2017.09.002. PMID: 29120824.

Tervonen HE, Bray F, Foliaki S, Roder D. Cancer registration challenges in low- and middle-income countries-the case of the Pacific Islands. *Eur J Cancer Care (Engl)*. 2017 Jan;26(1). doi: 10.1111/ecc.12650. Erratum in: *Eur J Cancer Care (Engl)*. 2017 Sep;26(5). PMID: 28111858.

Logeman CJ, Flanigan J, Foliaki S, Bray F, Barton M, Sitas F. Cancer in small states - No small matter. *Cancer Epidemiol*. 2017 Oct;50(Pt B):173-175. doi: 10.1016/j.canep.2017.09.005. PMID: 29120822.

David AM, Haddock RL, Bordallo R, Dirige JT, Mery L. The use of tobacco tax revenues to fund the Guam Cancer Registry: A double win for cancer control. *J Cancer Policy*. 2017 Jun;12:34-35. doi: 10.1016/j.jcpo.2017.03.006. Epub 2017 Mar 12. PMID: 29130031; PMCID: PMC5679000.

Razzaghi H, Quesnel-Crooks S, Sherman R, Joseph R, Kohler B, Andall-Brereton G, Ivey MA, Edwards BK, Mery L, Gawryszewski V, Saraiya M. Leading Causes of Cancer Mortality - Caribbean Region, 2003-2013. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. 2016 Dec 16;65(49):1395-1400. doi: 10.15585/mmwr.mm6549a3. PMID: 27977639.

In addition, IARC, in partnership with PAHO, is working in the Caribbean through the Latin America and the Caribbean Code Against Cancer project, the first regional adaptation of the European Code Against Cancer, under the umbrella framework of a World Code Against

Cancer. This Code, tailored to the needs of the Latin America and the Caribbean region, will provide authoritative, clear, and evidence-based recommendations to promote cancer prevention.

The 1st Latin America and the Caribbean Code Against Cancer will translate the latest science on risk factors and preventive interventions into straightforward recommendations for the general public to follow, along with recommendations for policymakers to guide establishing the infrastructure needed to enable the public to comply with the recommendations.

The 1st Latin America and the Caribbean Code Against Cancer will be launched in 2023 and has been supported by the Heathy Caribbean Coalition and Caribbean cancer prevention experts.

Cazap E, et al. Latin America and the Caribbean Code Against Cancer: Developing Evidence-Based Recommendations to Reduce the Risk of Cancer in Latin America and the Caribbean. J Glob Oncol. 2019 Jun;5:1-3. doi: 10.1200/JGO.19.00032. <https://cancer-code-world.iarc.who.int/>

Espina C, et al. Toward the World Code against Cancer. Journal of Global Oncology 2018 :4, 1-8 doi: 10.1200/JGO.17.00145. <https://cancer-code-europe.iarc.fr/index.php/en/>

Schuz J, et al. European Code against Cancer 4th Edition: 12 ways to reduce your cancer risk. Cancer Epidemiol. 2015;39 Suppl 1:S1-10.

## United Nations Children's Fund

Actions on NCDs in SIDS include is around supporting governments tackle overweight and obesity. Examples of activities include:

- Supporting partners in the Ministries of Health and Ministries of Education to build the capacity of children and adolescents – their caregivers and other persons responsible for the meal preparation of adolescents to produce healthy meals using locally grown foods.
- Developing and promoting [social and behavioural change communications](#) targeting parents on to choose healthy food options for their children and on the importance of water consumption (as opposed to sugar sweetened beverages).
- Advocating for relevant policies, including on front of pack warning labels and education policies on banning sugar sweetened beverages and unhealthy foods around schools and their promotion
- Supporting adolescent engagement in awareness raising and policy advocacy on NCD prevention (specifically Belize and Jamaica) – some of this also includes mental health.

Actions that support the improvement of mental health include:

- Engaging adolescents in mental health (design of support mechanisms like [U-Matter](#) in Jamaica, public advocacy on reducing the taboo on mental health, etc.).

- Building capacity of decision makers and service providers.
- Advocating for and providing technical support for multisectoral investments and services for mental health (health, education, etc.). Guyana is a good example of integrating mental health & psychosocial support into a comprehensive response to sexual violence.

Future plans in the area of mental health include:

- Strengthening and expanding this work, to ensure that all countries adopt relevant policies and allocate domestic funding, and have built capacity across all relevant sectors, including through adolescent engagement.
- Establishing an English speaking Youth Network on Mental Health (in follow up to the [Spanish network](#) we launched this year).

## United Nations Development Programme

In 2021-22, UNDP supported 9 SIDS - Cabo Verde, Fiji, Guyana, Palau, Samoa, Suriname, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, and Vanuatu - in strengthening whole-of-government responses to NCDs and mental ill-health. This support was provided in partnership with WHO, the Secretariat of the WHO FCTC, the broader UNIATF on NCDs, and others. It was delivered mainly through the UNDP-WHO Global Joint Programme on Catalyzing Multisectoral Action for NCDs, and the FCTC 2030 Project. Activities focused on multisectoral planning, coordination, financing, and preventing industry interference in policymaking. UNDP plans to continue support to SIDS in 2023.

To date, UNDP, WHO, the UNIATF on NCDs Secretariat, the Secretariat of the WHO FCTC and other partners have supported national investment cases on NCDs, tobacco control and/or mental health in ten SIDS: Barbados, Cabo Verde, Fiji, Guyana, Jamaica, Palau, Samoa, Suriname, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu. These cases support cross-sectoral action, such as increasing health taxes, implementing new legislation and improving access to services. Investment case reports are available [here](#) and [here](#), and the [Jamaica](#) and [Suriname](#) experiences have been documented in journals. Investment case support in selected SIDS will continue.

The UNDP-WHO Global Joint Programme on Catalyzing Multisectoral Action for NCDs, through the WHO and EU Health Systems Strengthening for UHC Partnership, is supporting Fiji, Guyana, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, among other countries, to scale up action on NCDs and mental ill-health. This project is ensuring effective fiscal, legislative and regulatory measures; enhancing policy coherence across government sectors and their partners; strengthening policy and capacities for equitable access to healthcare; and increasing awareness, ownership and engagement for population-wide responses. The project is expected to continue through 2024, with the potential to benefit additional countries.

Through the ongoing FCTC 2030 project, initiated in 2016, UNDP has been supporting SIDS, among other countries, to strengthen multisectoral tobacco control planning, coordination and prevention of industry interference in policymaking (WHO FCTC Article 5). This past year, UNDP supported Suriname to strengthen its national coordination mechanism for tobacco control. It also supported Fiji and Suriname to strengthen policy coherence through implementation of Article 5.3 guidelines.

UNDP is supporting countries to scale up and strengthen health taxes to fund health and the SDGs, with SIDS at the forefront. In 2022, UNDP supported Cabo Verde to pilot and refine a health tax revenue forecasting model that UNDP developed through inter-agency efforts. UNDP also supported Timor-Leste to integrate health taxes into its integrated national financing framework for the SDGs. These approaches can enhance sustainable financing for NCDs and mental health, with potential to be scaled globally.

To support SIDS and other countries, UNDP and partners are developing diverse tools on NCD and mental health governance. These include manuals to conduct legal environment assessments (on NCD prevention, NCD treatment, and pollution), methods to model the impact of ambient air quality interventions on social, economic and environmental outcomes, a toolkit for developing national multisectoral NCD strategies, and a web resource for parliamentarians to build their capacities on tobacco control. These are expected to be finalized in 2023.

UNDP has partnered to develop knowledge products that can support SIDS on NCDs and mental ill-health. This includes guidance to conduct national investment cases ([NCDs](#) and [mental health](#)), [address the social determinants of NCDs](#), [strengthen action across sectors on NCDs](#), [accelerate WHO FCTC implementation to achieve the SDGs](#), [integrate tobacco control into TB and HIV responses](#), and [respond to NCDs during COVID-19](#). Publications in 2023 will include sectoral briefs on tobacco control and a paper on strengthening tobacco control in the wake of COVID-19.

In 2021, UNDP, along with WHO and UNICEF established a UN multi-partner trust fund, Health4Life, to help low- and middle-income countries catalyze action on NCDs and mental health conditions. Examples of support include fiscal, legal, and regulatory measures; health systems strengthening as part of universal health coverage; domestic financing; and engagement with communities and affected populations. The Fund is aiming to raise \$250 million over five years.



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This publication does not represent an official position of The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of NCDs, WHO or any of the agencies or countries referred to in the publication. It is being issued as an informal tool to explore the views of those participating in the SIDS high-level technical meeting on NCDs and mental health, 17–18 January 2023. References to international partners do not constitute or imply any endorsement whatsoever.

