



Pacific Heads of Health

Réunion des directeurs de la santé du Pacifique

Pacific Ending Childhood Obesity (ECHO): Opportunities to enhance national actions

By

Pacific Island Countries and Territories

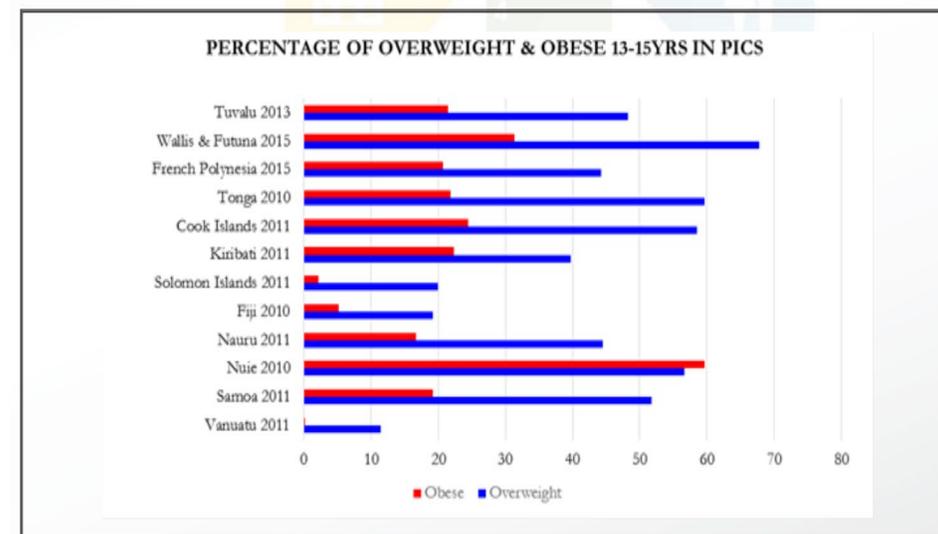
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Pacific Ending Childhood Obesity (ECHO) Coordination Team



Background

- Childhood obesity **is increasing** in many Pacific island countries and poses an **urgent and serious challenge**.
- **High rates** of overweight and obesity are **evident in adolescents (13-15 years)** in the region.
- Pacific Health leaders **endorsed the establishment** of the Member State-driven Pacific ECHO Network in 2018.
- In February 2019, the **inaugural meeting** with country representatives, technical partners, academia and CSOS/NGOs.
- **Drafted plans of action** in the **three priority areas** including physical activity, fiscal measures and restriction of marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children.
- **Priority activities were finalised** including clear timelines for implementation and identifying roles of different members.
- Since 2017, **20 countries** have been nominated Pacific ECHO focal points.



Pacific ECHO Inaugural Meeting, February 2019

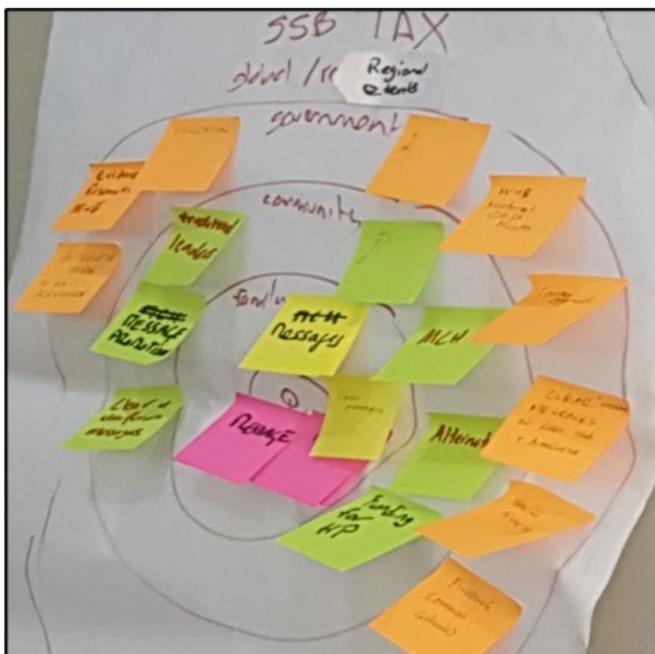
Priority Area 1: Physical Activity



- Develop and implement a Pacific **region-wide physical activity campaign**.
- 15 countries completed a **situational analysis** of school based physical activity. Most countries have school-based and community-based physical activity programs; but only a few countries have media campaigns and action plans.
- 10 countries expressed interest in progressing the **second component of the regional campaign** development i.e., the formative research component.
- 3 countries (French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis & Futuna) **have commenced** with the formative research component.
- Onset of the **COVID-19 pandemic** has hindered progress on the development of the Pacific region-wide physical activity campaign.

Priority Area 2: Fiscal Measures

- Member countries have collectively agreed to develop a **sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) toolkit** to support country-level action, building on existing materials and information.
- Work in this area is progressing.
- A **taxation workshop** is organised for November 2022 to address key issues around taxation on foods and sugary drinks, that continue to be a challenge for countries.



SSB and selected food taxation in PICTs

Priority Area 3: Restriction of marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children

- To develop a **collective regulatory approach** tailored to individual country needs.
- Endorsed **Pacific Legislative Framework for NCD** to guide the development of regional toolkit.
- Utilise the WHO recommendations on the **marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages** to children to guide efforts in addressing the issue.
- A **consultative meeting and workshop** is being organised for October (virtual) and November (face-to-face) with countries that had requested for assistance.



- Discussions have commenced on developing a **standardized tool for surveillance** that could be used for children aged 5-10 years of age.
- Importance of data in helping countries to target interventions and monitor impact of activities.



Monitoring overweight and obesity in primary school children

1

Measure a nationally-representative sample of primary school children, generating national prevalence data

2

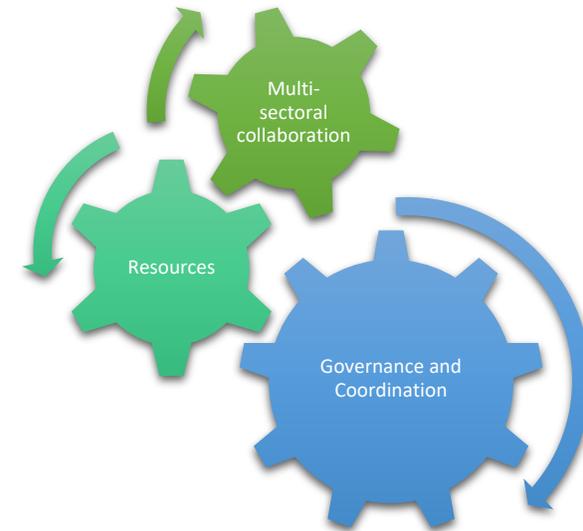
Measure a locally-representative sample of primary school children, generating local prevalence data for use by local authorities

3

Measure all eligible children, for the purpose of screening, integrated into system-initiated screening/health examination

Challenges

- Establishing the network as a country-driven platform **has not translated effectively** in practice.
- Insufficient **investment** in resources to accelerate the progress of prioritized actions.
- Competing **work priorities** and **scarcity of time** continue to hinder progress in identified priority areas.
- Challenges in **governance** and **inter-ministerial collaboration** and engaging **non-health sectors** to address childhood obesity and overweight in a sustained 'whole of government and 'whole of society' approach.
- Limited **engagement** of **CSOs** to advocate on issues concerning childhood obesity and to call for action.
- Insufficient **attention** given to driving plans of action through a 'whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approach
- Need greater collaboration and interlinkages between **Early Childhood Development** and **ECHO** for a more **coordinated and holistic approach** to delivering for Pacific children.



Pacific Heads of Health are invited to:

1. **Commit** in **strengthening and sustaining** the Network and drive the implementation of childhood obesity priorities at both regional and national level;
2. **Review** the proposed **governing and coordinating mechanism** added in the terms of reference (see Annex), with a view for endorsement for further action;
3. **Commit** to allocating appropriate **budgetary resources** in their own country to support and drive plans of action in the identified priority areas; and
4. **Strengthen collaboration** with all relevant sectors including education, sports, trade, and finance to implement and enforce the identified priority areas that promote healthy eating and physical activity.

Development partners are invited to:

1. **Support** PICTs in the implementation and monitoring of childhood obesity priorities and plans of action;
2. **Strengthen** efforts to improve regional coordination for the Pacific ECHO Network and the PRCC4ECD, and enhance international collaboration and networking opportunities for PICTs; and
3. **Foster** effective collaboration with civil society organizations, governments, Network partners and stakeholders to better support implementation of childhood obesity priorities and sustain the Network.