



TONGA–WHO

Country Cooperation Strategy 2018–2022

OVERVIEW

The Kingdom of Tonga comprises 36 inhabited islands across 740 square kilometres in the South Pacific Ocean. The population was about 103 000 in 2010. Tonga is governed by a constitutional monarchy. The head of government is the prime minister, elected by Parliament and appointed by the monarch.

Tonga is classified as a lower–middle-income country. Economic activities include tourism, agricultural products and fisheries. Remittances from Tongans living abroad are a significant source of income.

HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Tonga has one national referral hospital, three community hospitals, 14 health centres and 34 reproductive and child health clinics. About 90% of health services are provided at hospitals. There are few specialists at the national referral hospital. Medical graduates are trained overseas, especially in China, Cuba and Fiji. The Queen Salote School of Nursing also has health workforce training capacity. Overseas referral schemes and visits of specialized medical teams from abroad cater to the growing needs for specialized care as a result of the increasing noncommunicable diseases burden. Health-care costs associated with these services are a concern.

Tonga has recently been successful in tuberculosis disease control, lymphatic filariasis elimination and high coverage of routine immunization. Control of NCDs has been advanced through training primary health care nurses as NCD nurses, and through multisectoral action and legislative review. Health reform since the 1990s has strengthened Ministry of Health governance, and health workforce and infrastructure development and management. Tonga declared fulfilment of International Health Regulations (2005) core capacities in 2016.

NCDs are the main cause of premature illness and death. Access to medicines, screening, referral and monitoring for NCD management are a challenge. There is high prevalence of NCD risk factors such as tobacco, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity. Stigma and discrimination towards people living with mental health issues is also a concern that probably inhibits access to services and their provision.

Tonga remains vulnerable to epidemic-prone disease outbreaks, environmental and food-related emergencies, and the health consequences of natural disasters. Tonga also faces disaster risk from extreme weather, coastal erosion and inundation, earthquakes and tsunamis.

NATIONAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES WHO AND THE GOVERNMENT 2018–2022

The World Health Organization (WHO), working with partners, will support the Government in pursuing its national strategic priorities. Each strategic activity is linked to at least one of the subregional focus areas (SFAs) that are detailed in the *Pacific Island Countries and Areas–WHO Cooperation Strategy 2018–2022*:

1. To strengthen capacity in planning, implementing and reviewing its National Health Strategic Plan

- 1.1 Develop long-term health strategic plan.
- 1.2 Conduct annual health review and report.
- 1.3 Develop annual health sector operational plan.
- 1.4 Develop health workforce profile and projection .
- 1.5 Produce national health account.

2. To strengthen the health system, including the health workforce, essential services delivery and health information systems to progress towards universal health coverage and the vision of Healthy Islands

- 2.1 Strengthen health service delivery through reinforcing performance assessment by developing a regulatory framework and auditing processes for both human resources and health-care facilities.
- 2.2 Strengthen health service delivery at rural areas and outlying islands and effective referral and transfer systems to link with tertiary health care at hospitals.
- 2.3 Strengthen the health workforce by adaptation of foreign trained medical graduates into Tonga’s health systems, and promotion of online-based continuing professional development, including POLHN operation.
- 2.4 Review and develop a plan for the use of traditional and complementary medical practice in Tonga.
- 2.5 Conduct a regular health progress update through the Healthy Islands Monitoring Framework and SDGs indicators.
- 2.6 Strengthen civil registration and vital statistics including causes of death.

3. To strengthen, sustain and achieve high immunization coverage and to make improvements in the immunization programme

- 3.1 Strengthen strategies that engage communities and other stakeholders and encourage their participation to overcome vaccine hesitancy.
- 3.2 Ensure vaccine security through effective vaccine management and financial sustainability.
- 3.3 Improve vaccine/immunization safety surveillance systems.

4. To achieve national targets for NCDs in line with the global and regional targets

- 4.1 Align Tonga's tobacco legislation to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control by measures including, but not limited to: implementing graphic health warnings, bans on tobacco advertisement, promotion and sponsorship, and licensing requirements.
- 4.2 Utilize evidence-based policies to reduce harmful use of alcohol, including regulation of advertising, promotion and sponsorship, and managing alcohol availability through appropriate awareness programmes.
- 4.3 Improve diets and physical activity.
- 4.4 Promote mental health by preventing and managing mental disorders, alcohol harm and suicide, reducing stigmatization and discrimination, and promoting human rights across the lifespan.
- 4.5 Monitor the NCD situation in Tonga through targeted surveys and use of routinely collected data.

5. To strengthen capacities for preparing and responding to public health events related to common epidemic-prone diseases, environmental hazards and natural disasters

- 5.1 Enhance the core public health functions needed for early warning, incident management and risk communication.
- 5.2 Develop national plans and critical core capacities for all-hazards health emergency preparedness and disaster risk management.
- 5.3 Ensure monitoring of antimicrobial resistance and implement containment measures.
- 5.4 Test the country's outbreak alert and emergency response systems through after-action reviews, exercises and joint external evaluation.
- 5.5 Establish and evaluate post-disaster early warning, alert and response systems.
- 5.6 Adapt and implement the *Western Pacific Regional Framework for Action for Disaster Risk Management for Health*.
- 5.7 Provide supplies, logistics and operational support for all graded and protracted health emergencies, and build capacity in humanitarian supply chain management within national health authorities.

NATIONAL HEALTH POLICY

The vision of the *National Health Strategic Plan 2015–2020* is “to be the highest health care provider in the Pacific as judged by international standards in 2020”. The mission is “to improve the health of the nation by providing quality care through promotion of good health, reducing morbidity, disability and premature (death) mortality”.

The six strategic key result areas and goals are:

1. service delivery: to provide the best attainable quality health-care services through the promotion of good health, reducing morbidity, disability and premature (death) mortality;
2. health workforce: to provide the best attainable human resource services and workforce systems that can serve the best attainable quality health-care services;
3. infrastructure, medical products and technology: to provide the best attainable infrastructure, medical products and technology that is needed to deliver the entire minimum required health-care services in Tonga;
4. leadership and governance: to provide efficient and effective leadership and governance systems that would produce and deliver the best attainable health-care services to the people of Tonga; information, research, policy and planning to provide the best attainable policy and planning services that are guided by credible information and research to ensure the cost-effectiveness of health-care services in relation to health needs and problems of Tonga; and
5. health-care finance: to continue to improve the standard of existing facilities and information technology, and construct new facilities and introduce new health information and research initiatives where needed.

PARTNERS

In implementing this strategy, WHO and the Ministry of Health will work with other government

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