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## NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES PROJECT: 1991 ACTIVITIES

### INTRODUCTION

The Non-Communicable Diseases Project was started in 1983 to prevent, monitor and control diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart diseases, stroke, gout and cancers. It focuses on reducing non-communicable disease risk factors such as smoking, lack of physical exercise, poor nutrition, alcohol abuse and overweight. In 1991, the project was expanded to include more training activities, the development of reference materials, and the creation of a small grant programme to support community NCD projects.

The Australian Government, through the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB), provided support which covered most of these activities and the three staff positions of NCD Epidemiologist, Data Processing Officer and Administrative Assistant. Additional funding to support technical assistance, training courses, surveys and small grants was received from the Canada Fund, Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Youth Programme, WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer and the Territory of New Caledonia. Other activities were funded by Unicef (videos) and the United States Agency for International Development (food leaflets).

The activities of this multi-sector project have wide-ranging staff support within Community Health Services and from other SPC programmes. Staff from Community Health Services involved in project activities in 1991 included the Health Co-ordinator, Epidemiologist, Health Education Specialist, Nutritionist, Nutrition Education and Training Officer, Food Composition Co-ordinator and Health Documentalist.

Other SPC programmes and staff assisting in project activities included the Regional Media Centre, Community Education and Training Centre, Pacific Women's Resource Bureau, Youth Programme, Demography and Population, Statistics, the Library, the Economist and the Tropical Agriculturist.

### TRAINING ACTIVITIES

Two sub-regional workshops were organised to prepare country action plans on NCD prevention and control. The focus was on interdisciplinary team work as participants attended from health departments, women's and youth organisations.

The workshop for Polynesia (including Fiji) was held in Lautoka, Fiji, from 23 to 27 September 1991, with 40 participants. Twenty-four small grant proposals were drafted to be submitted to SPC for funding. A francophone workshop was held in Noumea from 21 to 25 October 1991, attended by 62 participants. National action plans and timetables for NCD activities were developed.

An in-country workshop was held in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, from 27 to 29 November 1991. Five participants from each state developed NCD action plans to be supported with national funding. Planning meetings were held in Vanuatu to prepare a national workshop, which was later postponed until 1992.

### EPIDEMIOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES

Solomon Islands requested assistance for the development of a national nutrition surveillance system. The system included tracking of adult overweight and food production and consumption. The Nutritionist and the Epidemiologist completed their consultancies with the preparation of reports and guidelines, training workshops and group planning. Reports of the consultancies are available.

The Pacific Islands Cancer Registry continued to support national cancer registries, particularly in Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Vanuatu. This registry is administered by Ms Elise Kamisan, NCD Data Processing Officer. Three consultant cancer registrars from New Zealand and Australia (Tasmania and Sydney) visited the Pacific Island countries to record and certify local cancer cases.

On-going support was provided for software development and analysis in collaboration with the University of California Comprehensive Cancer Center. A two-year agreement was signed with the WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). This agreement provided technical support for training of Island statisticians in the use of Canreg software for national cancer registration and funding to support regional data collection.

The regional survey on lifestyle risk factors for cancer was continued, with field work being done in August in New Caledonia. These surveys are performed in collaboration with the University of Hawaii Cancer Research Center and the Southern California Comprehensive Cancer Center. Surveys have already been finalised in the Cook Islands, Fiji and French Polynesia.

Training in cancer registration methods was conducted during a two-week applied epidemiology course held in Papeete, French Polynesia, from 1 to 11 July. Technical support was given by the WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer.

During the Noumea francophone NCD workshop in October, a meeting was held to discuss NCD research prospects in the region and possible collaboration with overseas research institutions. Regional guidelines for overweight were identified as one of the key areas for medical and anthropological research. Technical support was provided for the Fiji National Nutrition Survey, the Tonga NCD Survey, the Marshall Islands National Nutrition Survey and the New Caledonia Diabetes Survey.

## **EDUCATION AND INFORMATION**

A consultant nutritionist, Paula van den Boogaart from the Northern Mariana Islands, prepared a series of diet advisory leaflets and booklets for distribution in 1992 after pre-testing in the region. A health education consultant produced a reference guide for national NCD training with special emphasis on community mobilisation. In addition, a review of NCD school curricula in the islands was performed. The results of the review show the responding countries' interest in the development of a set of school health learning materials that include NCD prevention.

Several NCD-related materials were produced and widely distributed to health workers, including two food leaflets; the NCD and other nutrition modules of the USP/SPC nutrition project; information circulars and fact sheets; an atoll food poster in Tuvaluan, English and French versions; and four SPC/Unicef motivation videos on nutrition. Some existing materials were translated into local languages (Palau, Tuvalu, Tokelau); technical reports were printed. Several publications have been sent out for evaluation and testing in the countries. Upon request, the SPC library produced a number of computerised medical searches and indexed many Pacific-related health documents in the SPC library computers.

NCDs and risk factors were discussed at several meetings where SPC represented the interests of the region: alcohol-related problems and urbanisation in the Pacific Islands were the focus at the XVII Pacific Science Congress in Hawaii and at the Commonwealth Secretariat Expert Meeting on the Epidemiology of Alcohol and Drug Abuse for the Caribbean and the Pacific in the Bahamas.

## **SMALL GRANTS FOR COMMUNITY NCD PROJECTS**

The incidence of non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer and diabetes continues to increase. NCDs have reached epidemic proportions and are the leading causes of death in 21 of 22 Pacific Island countries. To combat the toll of NCDs on the lives, productivity, and finances of the Pacific Island community, the Community Health Services have established the NCD Small Grants Programme.

The goal of the NCD Small Grants Programme is to reduce the incidence of NCDs and their risk factors in the Pacific Islands. This will be done through small grant support of community-level projects on the promotion of healthy lifestyles, community information on NCDs and risk factors, education and screening, and development of community health systems.

This programme is managed by Ms Odile Rolland, NCD Administrative Assistant, with technical input from various SPC officers. The

programme was announced in mid-1991 and has generated a great deal of interest from both government and non-governmental organisations from around the Pacific.

Over twenty requests had been received by the end of the year, with many more coming. Five grants have been committed (Cook Islands, Niue, Palau, Tokelau, Tuvalu) while more will be funded from the 1992 budget. The Canada Fund also supported some small grant proposals.

Proposals covered the following types of activities:

- Obesity/exercise programmes (Cook Islands, Tokelau, Tuvalu)
- NCD awareness raising workshops (Tokelau, Tonga, Vanuatu)
- NCD nutrition training workshops (Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Palau)
- Anti-smoking campaigns (Fiji, New Caledonia)
- Mass media campaigns for NCD prevention (Tonga)
- Translation of NCD materials into local languages (Vanuatu)
- Training of community health workers and non-governmental organisations in NCD prevention and control (Kiribati, Niue)
- Screening and early clinical management of patients (Fiji)
- Technical assistance with NCD prevention and control (Western Samoa).

Listed below are guidelines to assist interested governmental and non-governmental organisations in drafting proposals.

### **Proposal guidelines**

#### *Objectives:*

- The aim of the project should be to prevent and control NCDs.

- It should be focused on changing behaviour to reduce risk factors.
- The proposed results of the project should be able to be measured and evaluated.
- The proposal itself should be clearly written and the objectives well defined.

#### *Target group:*

- The target group should be defined by age group(s), sex, occupation and area (urban and/or rural) involved.

#### *Background and justification:*

- The NCD problem in target group should be described using available information.
- Past activities in NCD prevention and control within target group should be listed.
- The objectives of the project should be explained.
- The method of integrating the project into the long-term planning of the organisation should be described.

#### *Activities planned:*

- Any activities planned should have a direct relationship to the objectives of the proposal.
- The purpose of activities (e.g. producing materials, running workshops) must be clearly defined.
- Activities must be realistic given proposed budget and available resources.
- Schedule of activities should be definite and practical.
- Project evaluation is to be included as an activity.
- Project duration must be described.

*Interactions with other programmes and groups:*

- Are community organisations actively involved (churches, women's groups, etc.)? If so, what is their role?
- Are the appropriate governmental offices actively involved? If so, what is their role?

*Project budget:*

- Itemised budget breakdown must be provided.
- Proportion of budget contributed by government, NGO and/or community groups (if applicable) should be stated.
- Purchase (rather than rental) of equipment must be justified.
- All costings should be reasonable.

All proposals to the Small Grants Programme must be submitted through the official SPC government contact (in most countries, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs). A copy should be sent directly to the South Pacific Commission for technical review and comments. This copy should be faxed or posted to:

The Secretary-General  
South Pacific Commission  
B.P. D5  
Noumea Cedex  
New Caledonia  
Fax no. (687) 26.38.18.

**REVIEW OF THE NCD PROJECT**

A review team from AIDAB visited Noumea and Fiji in September and November 1991 to evaluate current activities and management of the project. While its final report is still pending, there are strong indications that AIDAB will continue its support to the SPC Regional NCD and Nutrition activities.

Produced by Community Health Services

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