Turkey
NCD Joint programming mission,
20-22 April 2016

Key mission findings from 2016

1. Turkey has a high burden of NCDs which has resulted in significant socioeconomic impacts. Tobacco trends, which were on the decline, have recently started to rise again. The levels of obesity are high.

2. There has been significant progress in scaling up action for NCDs in primary care. This has occurred despite the existence of financial incentives that reinforce a specialist or hospital led system for NCDs.

3. There has been a recent increase in the coverage of cervical cancer screening.


5. NCDs are included in the current UN Development Cooperation Strategy (2016-2020) and the UN Country Team is committed to scaling up coordinated support to the Government of Turkey.

“I want to ensure that we have a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response to NCDs. The epidemic of NCDs is now one of our biggest socioeconomic issues. We simply cannot afford the costs of people becoming ill from NCDs at such a young age.”

Dr Mehmet Müezzinoğlu,
Minister of Labour and Social Security of Turkey
(former Minister of Health of Turkey)

Probability of premature mortality from NCDs: 16% (2016)
42% of men and 14% of women (aged >=15 years) smoke tobacco (2016)
22% of adult men and 39% of adult women are insufficiently physically active (2016)
12% of adult men and 14% of adult women have raised fasting blood glucose (2014)
19% of adult men and 20% of adult women have raised blood pressure (2015)
Pure alcohol per capita consumption: 2.0 litres per year (population 15+, 2016)
88% of adult men and 88% of women eat insufficient amounts of fruits and vegetables (2017)
Key recommendations from 2016

1. The national multi-stakeholder action plan on NCDs should be finalized and adopted at the highest level of government as soon as possible. Once published, a supplement to the action plan should be rapidly developed to set out the roles and responsibilities of different government ministries.

2. A full review of tobacco control action is required in order to reverse the recent increase in tobacco use in Turkey. The total ban on tobacco smoking in public places must be fully enforced.

3. The Government should prioritize policies and scale up action nationally in order to encourage healthier diets and increased physical activity in the Turkish population. This should be a national, whole-of-society initiative.

4. The government should use a combination of regulatory and voluntary approaches to reduce the amount of salt and sugar in food and beverages. Focus should be paid to eliminating trans-fats.

5. Integrated primary health care should be implemented in order to effectively detect and manage NCDs.

6. Data collection will be crucial in order to plan services in the future.

Adding value: actions taken following the mission

1. Turkey’s National Multi-Stakeholder Action Plan on Non-communicable Diseases 2017–2025, with national indicators and targets in line with the WHO Global NCD Action Plan, was developed. The WHO’s nine voluntary global targets for preventing and controlling noncommunicable diseases were reviewed and adapted to the country context. There was multisectoral participation in the development of the action plan. Representatives from civil society organizations, academia and the WHO Country Office in Turkey all contributed.

2. Turkey has committed to establishing a high-level committee to lead multisectoral action with the main goal being to halt the rise in obesity including childhood obesity. The high-level multisectoral committee has taken efforts to raise awareness among high-level decision-makers.

3. The Radio and Television Higher Council of Turkey has banned advertisement of unhealthy foods to children on television.

4. Efforts have been made to strengthen NCD care in primary healthcare, including piloting a cardiovascular risk assessment program in preparation for a national roll out. Technical assistance was provided to support the National Household Health Survey – Prevalence of Noncommunicable Disease Risk Factors in Turkey, the Childhood Obesity Survey, Global Adult Tobacco Survey, and Technical assistance to evaluate the Turkish Healthy Nutrition and Active Life Programme.

5. Technical assistance was provided to evaluate the Turkish Healthy Nutrition and Active Life Programme.

6. A review of the National Road Safety Strategy and Action Plan was undertaken.

7. New Turkey Tobacco Control Programme and Plan of Action have been released. WHO provided technical assistance for drafting of the new action plan.

Next steps

1. Implement the Multisectoral action plan for noncommunicable diseases 2017–2025.

2. Work as part of the two new Global Initiatives including Hypertension Control (RESOLVE) and Elimination of Trans-fat and sodium reduction (REPLACE).

“We are committed to supporting the Government putting NCDs at the forefront of the national development agenda and to seeing the government working together to tackle some of the key causes of NCDs, such as smoking, where nearly one in three men smoke and levels of salt intake that are 3 times higher than WHO recommends.”

Dr Pavel Ursu, WHO Representative in Turkey

Additional information on the status of NCDs in Turkey can be found on the WHO NCD DataFinder app.

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