United Arab Emirates

NCD Joint programming mission, 26-29 November 2017

Key mission findings

1. There is very high and exemplary political commitment to NCDs from the top political leadership of the country, but also across all the sectors and different governance levels and structures.

2. NCDs goals, targets and indicators are well reflected in the top national development agenda of the country through the UAE Vision 2021 Goal 4.1: “long and healthy lives” with good alignment and integration with health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) targets and indicators.

3. The National Strategy for the Prevention and Control of NCDs, 2017-2021 is aligned with the WHO EMRO regional action plan.

4. A National, multisectoral NCDs committee, was established in 2017, and contains representatives from across government, along with representatives from the private sector, civil society and academia and municipalities.

5. Noted progress being made concerning fiscal policies for NCD prevention and control, especially the recent tobacco taxation (100%) and recent excise taxes implemented on soft drinks (50%) and power drinks (100%).

6. There are many initiatives to increase physical activity by the Sport Authority, including the campaigns such as “30X30 challenge” and other similar initiatives to mainstream physical activity.

Key adult NCD mortality and risk factors*

- Probability of premature mortality from NCDs: 17% (2016)
- 38% of men and 3% of women (aged >=15 years) smoke tobacco (2016)
- 36% of adult men and 47% of adult women are insufficiently physically active (2016)
- 65% of adult men and 68% of adult women are overweight (2016)
- 8% of adult men and 9% of adult women have raised fasting blood glucose (2014)
- Pure alcohol per capita consumption: 3.8 litres per year (population 15+, 2016)
- 15% of adult men and 9% of adult women have raised blood pressure (2015)
- No data available for amounts of fruit and vegetables consumed
Adding value: actions taken following the mission

1. Ministry of health and prevention (MOHAP) has begun to implement many of the activities as listed in the national NCD action plan (2017-2021) and UAE national agenda for 2021.

2. NCD annual progress report 2017 is being developed, reflecting key achievements and the engagement and contributions of national stakeholders in implementation of NCD prevention and control programs.

3. To scale up national coordination and achieving national NCD targets, MOHAP continued to work with other local Health authorities (Dubai health authority, Abu Dhabi health directorate) to establish technical committees for each national key performance indicators (KPIs). The committees have been instrumental in developing ways and means of scaling up action across various sectors.

4. In order to scale up NCD integration into PHC, MOHAP has expanded the services provided through NCD clinics. During 2017 & 2018 42 NCD clinics were launched. The project proceeded with capacity building for PHC staff to improve their skills in early detection and management of non-communicable diseases.

5. Sustaining and expanding the wellness program - in collaboration with government and private sector, MOHAP has expanded the early screening and wellness program to foster healthy work environment.

Next steps

1. Facilitate the information on NCD progress and action: The first phase of the World Health Survey & STEPS survey has begun early 2017. Data analysis and reporting will be finalized by the 2nd quarter of 2018.

2. MOHAP and national health authorities will continue supporting smoking cessation services established in 2016 and expand the services in PHC across UAE.

3. Promote physical activity targeting obesity among children: The national physical activity action plan will be launched in 2018 in collaboration with national stakeholders.

Key recommendations

1. The Ministry of health should engage all local actors in the national NCDs response; providing guidance and support to them in order to integrate NCDs in their municipal plans, build capacity to prevent and control NCDs.

2. To understand better the economic impact of the NCDs on the national economy, the joint mission recommends an NCDs Investment Case to be developed for UAE.

3. The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control should be fully implemented, including the set of evidence-based, feasible and cost-effective interventions for tobacco control.

4. The Ministry of Health and Prevention should identify opportunities for greater participation of nongovernmental organizations, private sector entities, and philanthropic foundations in order to implement the national NCD action plan.

5. Scale up NCD related research identifying key research questions that might support national NCD agenda.

Success story:

Investment in NCD prevention and early detection in UAE

Recognizing the huge public health impact of NCDs and common risk factors (unhealthy diet, obesity and physical inactivity), UAE government has shown remarkable commitment and leadership by investing in preventive measures. Adopting prolonged multifaceted and multisectoral approach for addressing NCD risk factors during 2017, UAE has imposed taxes on tobacco, soft and energy drinks, and implemented many health awareness and obesity related campaigns, such as consumer education about the dangers of excess sugar consumption, or “Dubai 30x30 fitness challenge”, to make Dubai one of the world’s healthiest cities. Other initiatives include 2021 Healthy Children initiative, Junior Chef Program, and Implementation and development of policies to improve access to nutritious and healthy food.