Paraguay
NCD Joint programming mission,
22-26 February 2016

Key mission findings

1. A National NCD Action Plan is in place, but cancer prevention and control need to be incorporated into the national NCD agenda.

2. Paraguay is initiating a comprehensive approach to tackle NCD risk factors and there is some progress with respect to tobacco control via the new anti-tobacco law. Challenges remain with regards to harmful use of alcohol, which is linked to road traffic incidents and violence in Paraguay. Bolder measures are needed to meet the NCD-relevant SDG targets and to ensure that public health policies are protected from undue influence by any form of commercial interests.

3. The UN Country Team has started mapping current NCD activities and is keen to provide coordinated technical assistance to support the Government.

4. The health system is fragmented with challenges in the availability of diagnostic, treatment and rehabilitation services. However, the Ministry of Health is investing in strengthening primary health care for NCD management, with a focus on improving diabetes care.

“I am committed to seeing an effective response to NCDs across the government and I am pleased that we have the National Action Plan. We now need to turn this into action so that we can reduce the scourge of heart disease, diabetes and cancer in Paraguay. The findings of the Mission will help focus our response. The commitment of the UN to support us in the months ahead is very welcome.”

Dr Antonio C. Barrios,
Minister of Health of Paraguay

We are committed to supporting the government in implementing its NCD action plan in order to reduce the number of people dying prematurely from NCDs. Strengthening the health care system to ensure people with NCDs receive effective care is crucial and WHO is committed to providing support to the Government in this area.”

Dr Carlos Castillo Solorzano,
WHO Representative in Paraguay

Key adult NCD mortality and risk factors*

| Probability of premature mortality from NCDs: 18% (2016) |
| 37% of adult men and 36% of adult women are insufficiently physically active (2016) |
| 7% of adult men and 7% of adult women have raised fasting blood glucose (2014) |
| 25% of adult men and 18% of adult women have raised blood pressure (2015) |
| 84% of adult men and 86% of adult women eat insufficient amounts of fruits and vegetables (2011) |

21% of men and 5% of women (aged >=15 years) smoke tobacco (2016)
51% of adult men and 51% of adult women are overweight (2016)
Pure alcohol per capita consumption: 7.2 litres per year (population 15+, 2016)
Key recommendations

1. An Inter-ministerial Group should be formed by a Presidential decree to drive forward the implementation of the NCD Action Plan.

2. A high level national coordination mechanism needs to be established to harness the collective efforts of government at all levels, of international partners and non-State actors based in Paraguay in the prevention and control of NCDs.

3. The costing of the NCD plan is needed, and a business case needs to be established for the Government of Paraguay to invest more in NCDs.


5. Ensure that tobacco law is implemented and that taxes go to NCD programmes in accordance with the new tobacco law.

6. A year on year increase in excise tax on alcoholic beverages is recommended. The laws and rules that regulate availability of alcohol and its advertising need to be enforced.

7. Approve the nutrition bill and expand healthy food options in schools, workplaces and communities.


Adding value: actions taken following the mission

1. Tobacco law passed and regulation is in process.

2. Costing of the NCD action plan is in process led by the World Bank.

3. Alcohol reduction sensitization workshop was held with health policy makers.

4. Childhood obesity prevention project was developed for implementation in first trimester 2017.

5. Diabetes quality of care project is being implemented in primary care centres throughout the country.

6. Road safety education campaign has been developed and its launching is in process.

7. Publications on road safety developed: “Drinking and Driving”, “Motorcycles and the Use of Helmets” and “Speed and Road Accidents”.

8. Socialization of the alcohol policies of the Ministry of Health, training to health professionals, educational talks to the general population - Inter-institutional articulation.

9. The “Less salt more health” initiative was launched and includes reformulation regulations, an education campaign and research on salt consumption in order to develop a salt policy or strategy.

10. Multiple initiatives have been undertaken to encourage healthy eating in schools and workplaces, including “Guide to feed the mind to grow and live healthy”; “Active recreation”; “Healthy Cantina”; “Work Environment with Healthy Lifestyle”; and “Communities Promoting Quality of Life and Health”.

11. Operational Plan to reduce critic nutrients consumption, where the tax on sugary drinks was included as a priority axis. With the support of a foreign consultant, the preparation of the price elasticity study for the tax for sugary drinks was carried out in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance.

12. Front of pack labelling regulations are in progress through an operational plan that will support advocacy and education in order to encourage healthy consumption.

13. Commemoration of World Days (cancer, salt week, HTA, physical activity, tobacco, obesity) through education campaigns and dissemination of information in different scenarios target the entire population.

14. Advocacy addressing municipalities has been undertaken to encourage promotion of physical activity.

15. Promotion of breastfeeding has been done within the framework of the “Work Environment with Healthy Lifestyle” Initiative.

16. Work has been done in conjunction with the Ministry of Education to promote healthy eating and physical activity in schoolchildren and adolescents.

Next steps

1. The UNCT should continue discussions on NCDs with the Ministry of Health to agree on further support from UN agencies.

2. Recruitment of an NCD focal point in the PAHO/WHO Country Office to provide technical assistance on NCDs and catalyse multisectoral action.

3. Continue to implement the diabetes project, road safety campaign, and childhood obesity project.

4. Finalize costing of the NCD Plan of Action.

5. Mobilize funding to carry out the STEPS survey.

6. Creation of a national Interagency Group on NCDs, that will support Paraguay to prevent and control noncommunicable diseases and mitigate their repercussions in the country through systematic and timely exchange of information and existing resources to support activities.

*All data are rounded WHO crude country comparable estimates taken from the WHO Global Health Observatory, who.int/gho/nchd/en, accessed 18/6/2018, with the exception of rounded data for consumption of fruit and vegetables, which comes from Paraguay STEPS survey, 2011, accessed 18/6/2018.

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

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