Health & non-communicable diseases
THE OUTLOOK

NCDs directly affect the quantity of the labor force through premature death of workers, or through disability as the result of a stroke, diabetic-related blindness or amputation. NCDs also affect the quality of the labor force through absenteeism, additional diseases co-occurring including mental health issues and disability.

The biggest driver of lost output is the potential loss of labor due to early death from NCDs.

Four results stand out in terms of projected economic costs of NCD mortality/morbidity analyses in the Pacific:

1. The economic burden of NCDs in the Pacific is greater than expected for middle-income countries;
2. Although cardiovascular disease is the biggest contributor to the mortality burden in the region, diabetes plays a far greater role in the Pacific countries compared to the global average;
3. The economic burden of NCDs is increasing with time, especially as incomes rise;
4. Estimates show that in the absence of the four biggest NCDs, the labor force could be at least nine percent, and up to 30 percent larger.

With this in mind, targeted interventions to reduce disease prevalence are vital to reducing the long-term costs associated with NCD mortality/morbidity.
How can this be realized?

NCDs are preventable and manageable. The modeling demonstrates that the NCDs cost curve can be bent at a national level with substantial economic, as well as obvious health benefits. Intervention methods to reduce incidence will vary for individual countries, but there are a set of interventions which are considered cost-effective and best-buys based on international evidence.

**However, the overall national cost curve associated with NCD morbidity can be modified or bent through interventions targeted to reduce disease prevalence.**

A NCD Roadmap was undertaken to provide analysis and recommendations based on the best available international evidence for effective, feasible, and “best buy” strategies to mitigate the impacts of NCDs in the Pacific. The NCD Roadmap has a suite of evidence-based, feasible, affordable, cost-effective and in some cases cost-saving interventions specifically designed for the Pacific Islands. The Roadmap highlights four key strategies that, with effective implementation, can begin to bend the NCD cost curve.

**Strengthen tobacco controls through incremental increases in excise duties.**

**Reduce consumption of local and imported food and drink products that are high in sugar, salt, and fat content through policies such as targeted preventative measures, taxes, and better regulation.**

**Improve the efficiency and impact of the health budget by reallocating scarce health resources to targeted primary and secondary prevention measures for cardiovascular disease and diabetes, including through the Package of Essential NCD interventions of “best buys.”**

**Strengthen the evidence base to enable better investment planning and program effectiveness, thereby ensuring that interventions work as intended and provide value for money.**

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“**EVIDENCE-BASED, FEASIBLE, AFFORDABLE, COST-EFFECTIVE AND IN SOME CASES COST-SAVING INTERVENTIONS CAN REDUCE THE IMPACT OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES IN THE PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES**”
Pacific Island countries face unique development challenges. They are far away from major markets, often with small populations spread across many islands and vast distances, and are at the forefront of climate change and its impacts. Because of this, much research has focused on the challenges and constraints faced by Pacific Island countries, and finding ways to respond to these.

This paper is one part of the Pacific Possible series, which takes a positive focus, looking at genuinely transformative opportunities that exist for Pacific Island countries over the next 25 years and identifies the region’s biggest challenges that require urgent action.

Realizing these opportunities will often require collaboration not only between Pacific Island governments, but also with neighbouring countries on the Pacific Rim. The findings presented in Pacific Possible will provide governments and policy-makers with specific insights into what each area could mean for the economy, for employment, for government income and spending.

To learn more, visit [www.worldbank.org/PacificPossible](http://www.worldbank.org/PacificPossible), or join the conversation online with the hashtag #PacificPossible.