Scaling-up food policy interventions to reduce non-communicable diseases in the Pacific Islands – May 2019

Facts:
• NCDs account for 80% of all deaths and 50% of all premature mortality in the Pacific.
• The prevalence of hypertension and diabetes is more than 20% and 25%, respectively, in some Pacific Island countries.
• Without urgent policy action to address unhealthy diets, the NCD burden will get worse.

Background:
• The burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is unacceptably high in the Pacific Island region.
• Increasing rates of NCDs are linked with the transition from traditional diets, based on locally-grown foods, to diets high in salt, fat and sugar from processed packaged foods.
• There is a need to ensure food policies are implemented successfully in order to improve the food environment and decrease the NCD burden in Pacific Island countries.

Aims:
• The overall goal of this five-year project is to take a comprehensive, empirical approach to understanding and strengthening the policy making process, with an emphasis on implementing, at scale, best possible policy to improve the food environment in the Pacific.
• The project will identify which interventions are the most feasible in the Pacific, and what factors lead to effective implementation.

Methods:
• The Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation and Maintenance (RE-AIM) framework, together with a quasi-experimental design, will be used to evaluate the process, context, and effectiveness of different interventions via an iterative adaptive process.
• This will include a cross-sectional assessment of dietary intake, stakeholder engagement, adaptation and strengthening of current food policy interventions, and a process and cost evaluation.
• The project will be conducted in Fiji and potentially one other Pacific Island country.

Impact:
• This research will help address the burden of diet-related NCDs in the Pacific by identifying factors to achieve effective food policy implementation.
• Lessons learnt from this research will be relevant to other Pacific Island countries, and informative globally.

Contact:
To find out more about this study, its principal investigators Assoc Professor Jacqui Webster or The George Institute for Global Health, please contact Julia Timms +61 410 411 983 or jtimms@georgeinstitute.org.au

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