



**TongaHealth**

# **TONGA HEALTH PROMOTION FOUNDATION**

**NEWSLETTER : August — December 2024**



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# Tonga-Health Week 2024

**THEME:** TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHIER TONGA – TONGA MO'UI LELEI, MO'UI FIEFIA

**GOAL:** CELEBRATING TONGAHEALTH MILESTONES AND EMPOWERING FUTURE HEALTH IN TONGA

In August 2024, TongaHealth hosted its annual TongaHealth Week, uniting communities across the nation under the theme "Together for a Healthier Tonga – Tonga Mo'ui Lelei, Mo'ui Fiefia." The week-long event was packed with impactful activities, inspiring stories, and collective efforts to promote healthier lifestyles.



Zumba Competition Teams

## Event Highlights

**Fun Run/Walk:** Communities gathered to start the week on an active note, reinforcing the importance of physical activity in preventing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

**Sunday Services & Luncheon:** Church services emphasized health and gratitude, followed by luncheons featuring nutritious, local dishes.

**TV and Radio Programs:** Experts and grantees led informative sessions, shedding light on TongaHealth's initiatives and the fight against NCDs.

**Social Media Challenges:** Creative Tik-Tok videos and rap competitions captivated the youth, encouraging them to embrace healthy behaviors.



TongaHealth staff with Hon. Veivosa Taka, Hon. Dr Siale 'Akau'ola & Alison

**Zumba Competition:** Energy and enthusiasm filled the air as participants danced their way to better health.

**Appreciation Dinner:** The week concluded with a memorable dinner, celebrating milestones and honoring the dedication of everyone involved.

## Looking Ahead

As TongaHealth Week continues to be an annual tradition, we are excited to build on this year's successes and further inspire communities to prioritize health and well-being. Together, we are shaping a healthier, happier Tonga.

Mark your calendars for TongaHealth Week 2025 and join us as we continue this vital journey of health promotion and unity.

**Tonga Mo'ui Lelei – Mo'ui Fiefia!**



CEO Ofeina, Pauline and some of the staff at the FunRun



## **FIEFIA SPORTS** **2024**

Fiefia Tonga Sports 2024 energized Tonga's workforce with 10 weeks of activities every Friday from October to December. A collaboration between the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) and TongaHealth, the program encouraged workers across Tongatapu, Vava'u, Ha'apai, and 'Eua to meet the WHO's physical activity recommendation of 30 minutes daily.

Featuring eight sports, the initiative aligned with the Tuiaki National NCD Strategy 2021–2025, promoting workplace health and tackling non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Weekly competitions, media promotions, and community engagement fostered participation and inclusivity. With strong guidance from a Steering Committee, Fiefia Tonga Sports continues to inspire healthier lifestyles and will see further enhancements in 2024.



Photos feature enthusiastic participants from Fiefia Sports



## **VEGETABLE SEEDLING DISTRIBUTION**

On August 9, 2024, TongaHealth partnered with Mate 'Ofa Au Ki Ha'apai Nursery to distribute vegetable seedlings to residents of Ha'apai. The seedlings were distributed by Ms. Silvia Tukutau, the TongaHealth Officer, to individuals who registered to participate in this free giveaway.

This marks the second vegetable seedling distribution in Ha'apai, furthering Tonga Health's commitment to promoting healthy diets and combating NCDs.

Similarly, a distribution was held in Vava'u in partnership with Lolopaongo Nursery on October 11, 2024, where

Silvia distributing vegetables to Haapai residents

residents received seedlings to encourage the planting of fruit trees and vegetables.

These initiatives are part of TongaHealth's mission to create health-promoting islands by empowering communities to adopt healthier lifestyles through sustainable gardening practices.



Lolopaongo Nursery Vava'u Island



## TongaHealth Hosts Fun Walk for World Diabetes Day



On November 13, 2024, TongaHealth proudly hosted a **Fun Walk** on behalf of the Tonga Diabetes Association to commemorate **World Diabetes Day**. The event highlighted the importance of physical activity in preventing and managing diabetes, bringing together participants of all ages to walk for health and awareness.

Starting at **5:00 AM**, the walk began at TCC Village and continued to the roundabout on Hala Taufa'ahau, the event was led by the vibrant **Police Band**, creating a lively atmosphere of unity and purpose. The early morning event not only promoted the benefits of exercise but also underscored the significance of adopting healthy habits to combat diabetes, a growing concern in Tonga.



TongaHealth is grateful to all the participants and supporters who joined the event and helped spread the message of health and wellness. Together, we are taking steps—both literal and figurative—toward a healthier Tonga.



### **A Generous Gift from 'Take My Hands'**

TongaHealth is thrilled to announce the arrival of a container full of essential medical equipment, generously donated by Take My Hands, a social enterprise dedicated to supporting Pacific health providers. This marks the first time TongaHealth has received such a significant contribution from Take My Hands, and the impact is already being felt across the country.

The equipment has been distributed to various healthcare facilities, including ICU surgical wards, Vahenga Ha'apai 13, Ma'a Fafine moe Famili, Lata Vaasi Koula, and the Rehabilitation Center. It is enhancing patient care and bringing hope to communities in need.

We are incredibly grateful for this partnership and look forward to more collaborations in the future to continue improving healthcare in Tonga. Mālō 'aupito e 'ofa!



CEO Ofeina & MET's CEO Isikeli Oko



CEO Ofeina & CEO Sione Akauola



Acting CEO: Mrs Sioana Lavemai with Moana Ali



CEO Ofeina with TFES's CEO



CEO Ofeina with Deputy CEO MIA: 'Onetoto Anisi



Ofeina with Tourism Deputy CEO



Acting CEO: Mrs Sioana Lavemai & Hon. Veivosa Taka



Lisa, 'Ofeina, FWC Tufuenga Reverend & Luseane

## **Grant & Sponsor Signing Agreements**

From September 2024, TongaHealth proudly signed several grant and sponsorship agreements with key stakeholders and workplaces to further promote healthy lifestyles across Tonga.

These partnerships are designed to foster well-being both in the workplace and within the broader community.

Among the signatories were the Ministry of Education and Training (MET), Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), Ministry of Environment, Energy, and Climate Change (MEIDECC), Tonga Fire Services, and the Tufuenga Women's Group. We also joined hands with Gardenia Handicrafts, Nursery, Catering, and Recycling, along with Vahenga Ha'apai 13, to support health initiatives across different sectors.

Each partnership focuses on promoting physical activity, healthy eating, and mental well-being, with a shared commitment to building healthier, more resilient communities. These agreements represent a collective effort to integrate health into everyday life and workplaces, empowering individuals and organizations to take proactive steps toward improving their health.

TongaHealth is deeply grateful to our main supporters, the Government of Australia through DFAT & the Ministry of Health, whose generous contributions have made these collaborations possible. Together, we are working towards a healthier Tonga.



# **October Pinktober Breast Cancer Events 2024**

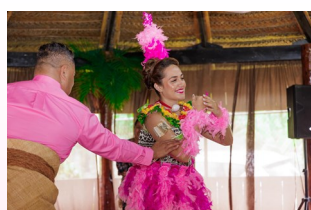
## **Theme: Early Detection Saves Lives**

October 2024 was a month of vibrant awareness and active participation in Tonga's efforts to combat breast cancer under the theme "Early Detection Saves Lives." The month was filled with significant events aimed at raising awareness, providing support, and promoting early detection through a series of impactful activities.

The Pinktober Breast Cancer Awareness Month officially launched on October 1st with an inspiring opening ceremony in Likualofa. This event set the tone for the month, highlighting the importance of early detection and inviting the community to join the fight against breast cancer.

On October 8th, Tonga took a major step forward in breast cancer detection with the launch of the Mammogram Machine at Vaiola Hospital. The machine was introduced to offer free screening for breast cancer, making it more accessible for the community and underscoring the significance of early detection in saving lives.

The Pinktober Sunday Service on October 13th at Haasini Catholic Church was another key event, bringing the community together for a reflective and supportive service, honoring those affected by breast cancer.



Photos from various Pinktober events showcasing the community's support and participation throughout the month.

On October 14th, the Pinktober Fundraising Lunch at Ancient Tonga was a delightful gathering that raised funds for breast cancer awareness and support. This event allowed attendees to enjoy a meal while contributing to a noble cause.

The Pinktober Fun Run for Breast Cancer on October 26th, TongaHealth hosted in partnership with ANZ Bank on behalf of the Tonga Breast Cancer Society, saw community members come together to run for a good cause. The fun run not only encouraged fitness and participation but also raised awareness of the importance of early screening. The month concluded with a lighthearted yet educational Pinktober Quiz at Billfish on October 28th. This event allowed participants to test their knowledge of breast cancer and its prevention, all while supporting the ongoing fight against the disease.

Each event throughout October contributed to building a stronger, more informed community, united in the mission to promote early detection and save lives. TongaHealth is proud to have been part of such an impactful month and is grateful to all the sponsors, partners, and participants who made these events a success.

## Highlights from Tonga's First-Ever National NCD Forum 2024

### Theme: Re-energizing Tonga's Fight Against Non-Communicable Diseases

#### A Transformative Gathering

The Tonga National NCD Forum 2024, held from 13th to 15th November, was a landmark event that brought together over 150 stakeholders, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and community leaders from across the nation. This first-of-its-kind forum focused on addressing Tonga's most urgent health challenge—Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).



The forum opened with a keynote speech from the Guest of Honor, Hon. Siale 'Akau'ola, who emphasized the critical need for a united front to combat the rising burden of NCDs in Tonga. Attendees engaged in a series of presentations, discussions, and breakout sessions designed to foster collaboration and identify actionable solutions.

### Key Discussions and Insights

*The Current NCD Landscape:* Experts presented updated data on the prevalence of NCDs in Tonga, revealing alarming trends in conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. These discussions highlighted the role of lifestyle factors—such as unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, alcohol & tobacco consumption—in driving the crisis.

*Renewed Commitment:* The forum reinvigorated the Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach, with various sectors pledging their support to fight NCDs. Ministries, NGOs, and private sector representatives all echoed the need for a unified national actions.

*Collaboration and Coordination:* The forum provided a platform for stakeholders to align their efforts and strengthen partnerships. A standout moment was the agreement to establish a centralized task force to oversee NCD prevention and control efforts.

### Achievements and Outcomes

The forum concluded with a clear roadmap for Tonga's NCD strategy, including:

- A comprehensive report summarizing the discussions, data, and recommendations from the event.
- A stronger network of partnerships among government, NGOs, and community groups.
- Heightened awareness across sectors, with participants committing to address NCD risk factors.
- Shared best practices to shape future policies and programs.



Photos include Deputy PM Hon. Samiu Vaipulu, Dr. Viliami Puloka, Lord Tangi, and Dr. Anup Singh Gurung.

### Acknowledgments

This landmark event would not have been possible without the generous support of the Government of Australia, our main sponsor. Their unwavering commitment to improving health outcomes in Tonga played a pivotal role in the success of the first National NCD Forum. We extend our deepest gratitude for their partnership in this critical initiative.

### A Collaborative Future

The success of this forum has paved the way for a renewed, collective effort to fight NCDs in Tonga. Going forward, 13th to 15th November will be commemorated as Tonga's official NCD Week, reinforcing national commitment to this vital cause every year.

TongaHealth remains steadfast in leading this fight and working alongside all sectors to build a healthier, more resilient Tonga. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this historic event. Together, we are setting the foundation for a brighter, healthier future!





# Tonga Health Farewell

## Farewell to Karen Fukofuka

It's never easy to say goodbye to a valued member of the TongaHealth family, and after four amazing years with us, Karen has moved on to the next chapter of her journey. As an Advisor, she wasn't just a colleague—she was a mentor, a friend, and a constant source of support to everyone she worked with.



Karen played a big part in shaping who we are as an organization. Her dedication, kindness, and passion for making a difference will be remembered by all of us. We'll miss her energy, her laughter, and the way she always went out of her way to help.

While we're sad to see her go, we're excited to see where her path leads next. Thank you, Karen, for everything—you'll always have a special place in the TongaHealth story.



## TongaHealth Christmas Celebration

HO HO HO!! The festive season brought the TongaHealth family together on **December 17** at the beautiful **Builder's Burger** for a night filled with laughter, joy, and holiday cheer. Staff together with board members and their plus ones came together to celebrate not only the season but also the incredible accomplishments of 2024.

One of the highlights of the evening was our Secret Santa gift exchange, where everyone shared thoughtful surprises and plenty of smiles. The room was filled with excitement and festive spirit as gifts were opened and laughter filled the air.

It was a night of reflection, appreciation, and togetherness—a perfect way to wrap up the year. Merry Christmas & Happy New Year to all!







# TongaHealth

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