

# TONGAHEALTH PRESS



January-March 2024



Prime Minister, Hon. Hu'akavameiliku and the two best in Midget and Junior



TongaHealth Meeting with Stakeholders



'Ofeina Filimoechala (CEO, TongaHealth) and Dr. 'Uhila Moe Langi Fasi (Chairperson of the Dare to Dream Inc)

- **TongaHealth was the main sponsor for this year's Junior and Secondary Schools' sports**
- **TongaHealth support the Ministry of Police in enforcing laws on tobacco, alcohol & illicit drugs**
- **TongaHealth provides a safe place for the local fisheries in Navutoka, Kolonga and Manuka.**
- **And More .....**



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TongaHealth Staff 2024



## TONGAHEALTH STEPS UP TO CHAMPION STUDENT WELLNESS: ANNOUNCED AS MAIN SPONSOR FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS SPORTS COMPETITIONS.



In a move that promises to energize both physical activity and healthy competition, Tonga Health Promotion (TongaHealth) is proud to announce its role as the main corporate sponsor for the annual Tonga Secondary Schools Sports Competitions! The partnership was formalized on Wednesday 13th March 2024 with the signing of the agreement between TongaHealth and the Tonga Secondary School Principal Association, the organiser of the annual competition.

This marks the first time TongaHealth has taken the lead in supporting this major event on the school calendar, and it signifies a strong commitment to fostering a culture of health and well-being among Tonga's youth.

This sponsorship builds on the existing partnerships between TongaHealth, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health, all of whom are dedicated to supporting the Health Promoting Schools Program (HPS). The HPS aims to create healthy school environments that promote physical activity, healthy eating habits, and mental well-being.

The annual Secondary Schools Sports Competitions perfectly complement the HPS's goals. As a champion for healthy lifestyles, TongaHealth recognizes the vital role that sports play in promoting physical activity, teamwork, and overall well-being. The competitions provide a fantastic platform for students to showcase their athletic talents, develop discipline, and build lasting friendships.



By supporting this event, TongaHealth aims to:

- Encourage participation in sports: Increased physical activity is a cornerstone of a healthy lifestyle, and TongaHealth hopes to inspire students to embrace sports as a fun and rewarding way to stay active.
- Promote a culture of health: The sponsorship aligns perfectly with TongaHealth's mission of preventing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in Tonga. By fostering a love for sports at a young age, TongaHealth is laying the groundwork for healthier choices throughout students' lives.
- Celebrate the achievements of Tongan youth: The competitions are a highlight of the school year, and TongaHealth is excited to be part of recognizing and celebrating the dedication and hard work of student athletes.

TongaHealth is confident that this partnership will be a win-win for everyone involved. Students will benefit from the opportunity to compete in a well-supported event, while TongaHealth will contribute to a healthier and more active future for Tongan youth.

Stay tuned for further updates on the exciting Tonga Secondary Schools Sports Competitions, and let's get ready to cheer on our future sporting stars!

TongaHealth also acknowledges the funding support from the Governments of Tonga and Australia for the support to TongaHealth to enable these kinds of partnerships.

## GOVERNMENT JUNIOR ATHLETICS SPORTS COMPETITION 2024—A RESOUNDING SUCCESS! A CELEBRATION OF HEALTH AND SPORTSMANSHIP



Hon Hu'akavameiliku and the two winners of the juniors

We are thrilled to share the highlights of the Government Junior Athletics Sports Competition 2024, held on March 15th. This exciting event, sponsored by the Tonga Health Promotion Foundation (TongaHealth), brought together young athletes from Government junior schools across Tongatapu.

### ***Strong Partnerships, Healthy Outcomes***

The TongaHealth sponsorship reflects the ongoing collaboration between TongaHealth, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health in the impactful Health Promoting Schools Program. This program prioritizes the well-being of our youth, and the Athletics Competition served as a fantastic showcase of this commitment.

### ***A Day of Fun and Friendly Competition***

While originally planned for two days, the event was condensed to one due to unfavorable weather. However, the shortened schedule did not dampen the spirits of the participants! Filled with excitement and a healthy dose of competition, the day saw athletes competing in various track and field events.

### ***Welcoming a Distinguished Guest***

The event was graced by the presence of the Honorable Hu'akau-mailiku, Minister of Education and Prime Minister of Tonga. His presence underscored the importance of promoting physical activity and sportsmanship among our youth.

### ***A District Affair***

Government junior schools across Tongatapu held district-level competitions to select teams for the main event. This selection process ensured all schools had the chance to participate and showcase their talented athletes.

### ***Vahe Loto Emerges Victorious!***

After a day of spirited competition, Vahe Loto emerged victorious, securing the most medals – an impressive eleven gold, thirteen silver, and eight bronze. Vahe Kolo 2 secured a strong second place, followed by Vahe Hahake 1 in third. Congratulations to all the participating teams and athletes for displaying their dedication and skills!

### ***Building a Healthier Tomorrow***

The Government Junior Athletics Sports Competition was a resounding success. It fostered a spirit of healthy competition, encouraged physical activity, and showcased the importance of teamwork. These values, aligned with the Health Promoting Schools Program, contribute to building a healthier future for our young generation.



Side School student won their 100m relay



Hon Hu'akavameiliku & the best junior female overall



Photos from the Junior Sports Competition in Teufaiva. Different districts were wearing different colors.

## TONGAHEALTH INVESTS IN YOUR COMMUNITY'S HEALTH: STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP DISCUSSES NEW GRANT PROGRAM!



TongaHealth CEO & Staff and all stakeholders after the meeting

TongaHealth recently hosted a successful stakeholder engagement workshop, bringing together a diverse group of organizations dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Tongan communities.

Representatives from the Ton-

ga Leitis Association Inc, NRL and Tonga Netball, Ministry of Education and Training, CSO Forum, Ministry of Internal Affairs Sports and Youth Divisions, Ministry of Health NCD Unit, Ministry of Agriculture Women's Extension Unit, and Tonga Fire and Emergency all participated in the event.

The workshop focused on TongaHealth's exciting new grant program, designed to support initiatives that promote healthy living and reduce the risk of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) – particularly amongst marginalized groups. NCDs, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, are a growing concern in Tonga. By encouraging collaboration and multisectoral partnerships, TongaHealth aims to empower communities to take an active role in fostering a healthier Tonga.



Joleen Mataele from the TLA and CEO of TongaHealth



Group Discussion during the stakeholders meeting

### Empowering Communities through Grants:

The workshop provided valuable information about the grant application process and eligibility criteria. TongaHealth is seeking innovative proposals that:

- Promote healthy behaviors like physical activity and healthy eating
- Raise awareness about NCDs and their risk factors

Target interventions towards marginalized communities

**Watch this space!**

Applications for the grant program close at the end of March. Successful applicants will be announced in the next newsletter edition.

Together, we can build a healthier future for Tonga!



## TONGAHEALTH PARTNERS WITH COMMUNITIES TO BOOST LOCAL SEAFOOD MARKETS.



CEO TongaHealth & Vai  
Finau Mafi from the SMA  
Committee Manuka

TongaHealth is proud to announce a new partnership with the Special Management Area (SMA) committees of Kolonga, Navutoka, and Manuka, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries. This collaborative effort aims to strengthen local food systems and provide a safe and secure space for fishers to sell their catch.



CEO TongaHealth & Sione  
Kafoa Chairperson of SMA  
Navutoka

Through a grant agreement, TongaHealth will provide financial support for the construction of covered roadside fish market stalls in each community. The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources has generously approved the use of land for these stalls, ensuring a designated and convenient location for both vendors and customers.



CEO TongaHealth & Malia  
Noa from SMA Committee  
Kolonga

This initiative goes beyond just infrastructure. The Ministry of Fisheries will offer ongoing support to the communities, promoting sustainable management practices to protect marine resources for future generations.

This partnership promises a win-win situation. Local fishers will have a dedicated space to sell their fresh seafood, while residents gain easier access to healthy and delicious local options. We look forward to seeing this project flourish and contribute to the economic well-being of these communities.

## TONGAHEALTH SPROUTS UP COMMUNITY GARDENS ACROSS TONGA

TongaHealth, in partnership with local nurseries, is helping Tongans grow their own healthy vegetables! This initiative provides free vegetable seedlings to communities and households throughout the country.

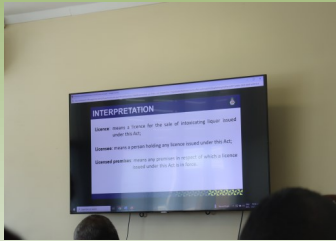
Recently, TongaHealth collaborated with Halamehi Nursery to distribute seedlings in Tongatapu. This program empowers residents to cultivate their own gardens, promoting healthy eating habits and greater food security.

The good news doesn't stop there! TongaHealth is extending its support to nurseries in Vava'u, Ha'apai, and 'Eua. This ensures that communities and households in the outer islands also have access to free vegetable seedlings.

By working with local nurseries, TongaHealth fosters a sustainable approach. This not only benefits families but also strengthens the local agricultural sector.

Stay tuned for updates on future seedling distributions! Let's grow a healthier Tonga together!

# MINISTRY OF POLICE TACKLES PUBLIC HEALTH WITH TONGAHEALTH GRANT.



The fight for a healthier Tonga receives a boost thanks to a new collaboration between the Ministry of Police and TongaHealth. Funded by a recent TongaHealth grant, the Ministry's Crime Prevention Group will embark on a crucial project to enforce existing laws and regulations on alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs.

This initiative goes beyond enforcement. The project emphasizes education and awareness, aiming to empower both stakeholders and the public with a clear understanding of the relevant laws and our collective responsibility in upholding them.

## Safer Communities through Education:

TongaHealth's grant will allow the Crime Prevention Group to:

- **Visit schools and communities:** Officers will engage with young people and community leaders in open discussions about the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption and drug use.

**Educate retailers:** The project will ensure retailers are well-versed in the regulations surrounding the sale of alcohol and tobacco products, including the increasingly popular vapes.

This multi-pronged approach fosters a culture of informed decision-making, empowering individuals and communities to make healthy choices. By working together, the Ministry of Police and TongaHealth aim to create a safer and healthier environment for all Tongans.

## Stay Informed, Stay Healthy!

The Ministry of Police encourages everyone to familiarize themselves with the laws and regulations regarding alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs. This information is readily available through official government channels. By working together, we can create a healthier and safer Tonga for future generations.

TongaHealth also acknowledges the funding support from the Government of Australia in Tonga and the Government of Tonga for the support to TongaHealth to enable these kinds of partnerships.



# TONGAHEALTH PARTNERS WITH ULUAKI FAIAKO TO EMPOWER VULNERABLE FAMILIES



CEO of TongaHealth Ofeina Filimoehala signed the agreement with the Uluaki Faiako.

TongaHealth is proud to announce a new partnership with Uluaki Faiako Inc., a local non-profit organization dedicated to supporting the well-being of vulnerable Tongan families. This collaborative effort focuses on improving the health and overall well-being of vulnerable families with young children under 5 years old.

## Investing in Our Future

Young children are the cornerstone of our future generations. By providing them with a strong foundation in their early years, we equip them to thrive and contribute positively to society. This partnership between TongaHealth and Uluaki Faiako aims to do just that.

## Building Strong Families

Through this initiative, TongaHealth's funding support will empower Uluaki Faiako's programs that foster loving and nurturing family environments. These programs will prioritize children's education and ensure they have opportunities for healthy fun and development.

## Utulau and Ha'alalo: A Starting Point

The program will commence in the communities of Utulau and Ha'alalo, with the long-term goal of expanding to encompass additional Tongan communities. This phased approach allows for focused support and ensures the program's effectiveness before wider implementation.

## Working Together for a Brighter Tonga

TongaHealth and Uluaki Faiako believe that by working together, we can create a brighter future for Tongan families and children. This partnership signifies a commitment to investing in our youngest citizens and empowering them to reach their full potential.

# NEW PLAYGROUNDS SPROUTING AT GMS NUKU'ALOFA AND TONGA SIDE SCHOOL.



CEO of TongaHealth Ofeina Filimoehala & Hepeti Takeifanga from MET

Exciting news for students at GMS Nuku'alofa and Tonga Side School! TongaHealth is proud to support the construction of brand-new playgrounds at both schools. These playgrounds are more than just fun and games – they're an investment in the health and well-being of our children.

This initiative aligns perfectly with the Health Promoting Schools Program, a joint effort by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education. Safe and engaging playgrounds provide a vital space for children to:

- **Be physically active:** Playtime allows students to burn energy, improve coordination, and develop healthy habits early on.
- **Socialize and learn:** Playgrounds foster teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills – all essential for a well-rounded education.

**Relax and de-stress:** A dedicated space for play allows children to unwind, recharge, and return to class feeling refreshed.

We at TongaHealth are deeply grateful for the support of the Government of Australia in Tonga and the Government of Tonga. Their contributions enable us to partner with schools like GMS Nuku'alofa and Tonga Side School, creating healthier environments for our future generation.



CEO of TongaHealth signed the agreement with the MET

Stay tuned for updates on the progress of these exciting projects!

## TONGAHEALTH SEEDLINGS DISTRIBUTION IN TONGATAPU

In order to enable residents of Tongatapu to cultivate their own fruit trees and vegetables, TongaHealth has partnered with Meleane Filiai Nursery and Dassah Nursery to provide vegetables and fruits trees seedlings to local communities and homes.

In addition, TongaHealth contributed to the country's attempts to recover from the volcanic eruptions through this project. In order for the nurseries to continue offering seedlings to people once the initiative is over, assistance was given to them in repairing the damage caused by the eruption. TongaHealth expressed gratitude to DFAT for providing money for this project.



## TONGA FIGHTS BACK AGAINST DRUGS: NEW PARTNERSHIP AIMS FOR REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION



CEO of TongaHealth and Dr. 'Uhila moe Langi Fasi the chairperson of the Dare to Dream Inc

Tonga is taking a strong stance against illicit drugs with a new collaborative effort between TongaHealth and the Dare to Dream Foundation Inc. The "Build-back Stronger Project" focuses on providing support for returnees – Tongan citizens who have been deported and are at high risk of falling back into drug use due to a lack of support systems.

This innovative partnership recognizes the unique challenges faced by returnees. Many struggle to reintegrate into society, lacking access to rehabilitation facilities and facing the pressures that may have led to drug use in the first place.

The Build-back Stronger Project aims to break this cycle by offering:

- **Safe Rehabilitation Facilities:** The project will provide dedicated spaces for returnees to recover from addiction in a secure and supportive environment.
- **Rehabilitation Programs:** Tailored programs will address the underlying causes of addiction and equip returnees with the tools they need to stay clean.

**Reintegration Support:** The project will offer ongoing support to help returnees find employment, housing, and rebuild their lives.

### Turning Stories into Strength

A key aspect of the project is the focus on sharing success stories. By showcasing the positive transformations of program participants, the Build-back Stronger Project aims to:

- **Motivate Young People:** Ex-addicts turned productive members of society can serve as powerful role models, deterring young people from drug use.

**Raise Awareness:** Sharing the realities of addiction and recovery can spark crucial conversations about the dangers of drugs within the community.

### Building a Brighter Future

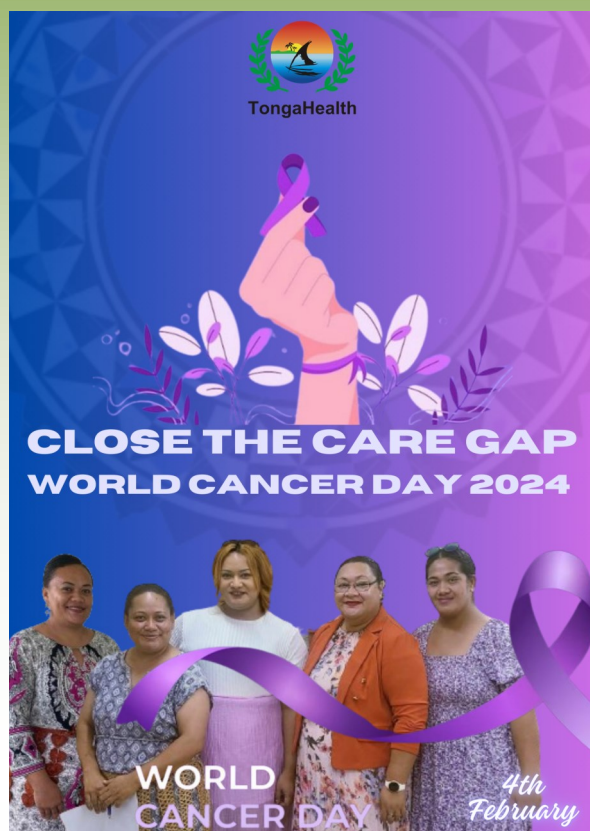
The learnings from this project will be used to:

- **Develop Effective Strategies:** By analyzing the program's successes and challenges, Tonga can refine its approach to combating drug abuse.

**Inform National Policy:** Insights gained will be used to shape future drug prevention and rehabilitation initiatives.

TongaHealth and the Dare to Dream Foundation Inc. believe that by working together, they can create a future where Tongans, especially returning citizens, are empowered to rebuild their lives free from addiction.

## TONGAHEALTH CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL HEALTH DAYS



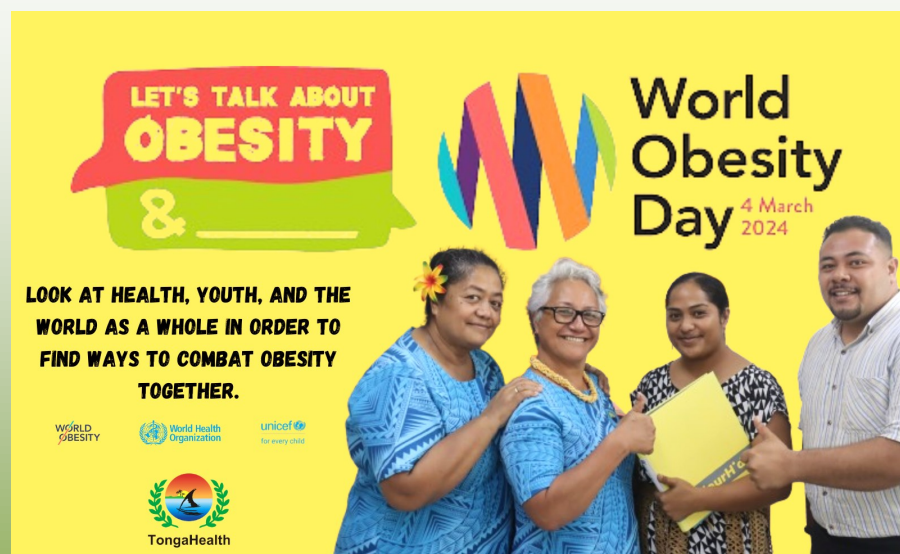
TongaHealth joins the world in celebrating and observing various international health days throughout the year. These important occasions serve as a platform to raise awareness about critical health issues and promote healthy lifestyles for all Tongans.

### Australia Day (January 26th)

This day provides an opportunity for TongaHealth to acknowledge the unwavering support of the Australian Government in the fight against Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in Tonga. This collaboration is instrumental in improving the health and wellbeing of Tongan citizens.

### World Cancer Day (February 4th)

The theme for World Cancer Day 2024 is "Close the care gap." This was an opportunity for TongaHealth to continue to raise awareness about the various types of cancer, the importance of early detection, and the treatment options available in Tonga.



### World Obesity Day (March 4th)

With NCDs being a major health concern in Tonga, World Obesity Day serves as a timely reminder for all Tongans to adopt healthy habits. TongaHealth will continue to promote healthy eating, regular physical activity, and preventative measures to combat obesity.

## International Women's Day (March 8th)

This day celebrates the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. TongaHealth recognizes the importance of women's health and will continue to support initiatives that promote women's well-being and access to healthcare services.



## World Water Day (March 22nd)

Clean and accessible water is fundamental to good health. On World Water Day, TongaHealth highlighted the importance of having access to safe drinking water as well as water sanitation and hygiene practices to prevent waterborne diseases and promote healthy living.

TongaHealth remains committed to utilizing these international health days as springboards to advocate for a healthier Tonga. Stay tuned for upcoming events and initiatives designed to empower Tongans to make informed choices about their health!





## TONGAHEALTH INVESTS IN YOUR COMMUNITY'S HEALTH: SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM UPDATE

TongaHealth is proud to support community-driven health initiatives across the beautiful islands of Tonga! Through our Sponsorship Program, we offer small grants of TOP2,000 to community groups for innovative health promotion projects.

This financial year has seen a fantastic response, with TongaHealth awarding a total of 65 grants so far. These grants are spread across all our island groups:

- Tongatapu: 15 projects
- Vava'u: 28 projects
- 'Eua: 6 projects
- Ha'apai: 13 projects
- Niuatoputapu: 3 projects

The funded projects showcase the amazing creativity and dedication of Tongan communities towards improving their health. We've seen applications for initiatives like:

- **Zumba in the Park:** Free, weekly Zumba classes led by trained instructors, encouraging physical activity and social connection.
- **Sprouting for Wellbeing:** Setting up community gardens to promote healthy eating habits and access to fresh produce.

These are just a few examples, and we're excited to see the positive impact these projects have on communities across Tonga.

### Is your group interested in applying?

Stay tuned for the next funding round announcement! In the meantime, you can visit the TongaHealth website (<https://www.health.gov.to/>) or contact your local TongaHealth office for more information about the Sponsorship Program and its eligibility criteria. Together, through collaboration and community spirit, we can build a healthier Tonga!

## WORLD INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY - 'OFEINA FILIMOEHALA



CEO of Tonga Health Promotion Foundation—'Ofeina Filimoehalo

The significance of honouring women's accomplishments in all spheres of life is what makes International Women's Day so important. Compared to earlier times, women today have accomplished a great deal and hold significant roles in both society and the community. In today's world, women are inclusive and widely acknowledged, and we do anticipate more of them in the political sphere, the government, society, and even the family.

A valuable lesson I've learned in life is that, even though I don't smoke or drink alcohol, as CEO of the Tonga Health Promotion Foundation, I have a responsibility to lead by example by promoting health and combating Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) through healthy eating, exercise, and abstaining from tobacco and alcohol. This is especially important for women. It is our responsibility as leaders in the workplaces to motivate employees to exercise and eat well.

According to a newly released global assessment on obesity, Tongan women lead the globe in obesity rates. This is important to me and my role as a Tongan woman because, in my opinion, mothers have many responsibilities, one of which is to cook for the family. However, we sometimes neglect to prepare healthful meals and have even influenced our children's eating habits by giving them unhealthy food. Given the rise in childhood obesity, it is our responsibility as parents to be mindful of what we feed our children with.

Rugby was recently introduced to secondary schools for girls; this is a significant step in getting young ladies moving and exercising. As the CEO of TongaHealth, I believe it is my responsibility to support and encourage women to eat healthily, stay active, and take care of their bodily as well as emotional and spiritual well-being.

For this reason, it's critical that we commemorate International Women's Day as it gives women the opportunity to take the lead, express our opinions, and raise awareness of issues pertaining to our health.

I would like to inspire all women not to give up easily, but to embrace your identity as a Tongan woman, aim high, and set goals for yourself. We should also support one another by being encouraging to one another, as women tend to look down on ourselves and have low self-esteem. As women, we will celebrate our accomplishments and have an impact on the next generation of women when we band together.



## TONGAHEALTH CONVENES M&E TASKFORCE MEETING TO MONITOR NATIONAL NCD STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

TongaHealth convened a meeting of the Multi-sectoral Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Taskforce on February 29th, 2024. The taskforce, established to monitor the implementation progress of Tonga's National Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) Strategy, plays a crucial role in ensuring the strategy's success.

The meeting was chaired by Mr. Walter Hurrel, Deputy Director of the Health Information Department at the Ministry of Health. TongaHealth provided secretariat support for the taskforce.

The M&E Taskforce is a multi-sectoral body, meaning it includes representatives from various government ministries, NGOs, and other stakeholders involved in tackling NCDs in Tonga. This collaborative approach ensures a comprehensive overview of the National NCD Strategy's implementation progress. The taskforce reports to both the National NCD Committee and the TongaHealth Board. By providing regular updates on the strategy's implementation, the M&E Taskforce helps to ensure that the National NCD Committee has the information it needs to make informed decisions and that the TongaHealth Board can effectively oversee the strategy's progress.

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