SSBs in the Pacific Islands: Problems and Solutions

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Problems of SSBs in the Pacific Islands

High Intake

- High availability and variety
- Low prices
- Heavy marketing

**High intake:**
- Doubling of consumption in Fiji from 1997 to 2007 (FIBOS 2008)
- Intake high, especially in adolescents eg in American Samoa boys consuming more than 12 serves a week (Keighley et al 2007)
- Study in Fiji identified that cost, heavy marketing, high availability in schools and elsewhere & limited access to safe water were main drivers of SSB intake (Snowdon et al 2008)

**Availability and price**

- Survey of processed foods and drinks in 5 PICTs found 392 different SSBs available (Snowdon et al 2013):
  - 20 countries of origin
  - Around half manufactured in Fiji/New Caledonia

- Low cost:
  - prior to implementation of SSB tax in Samoa, bottled water more expensive than soft drink (Thow et al 2010).
  - Fiji (unpub) assessment in 2012: soft drink 11.5-18.9c/100ml, water 12.6c to 28.8c/100ml
Heavy marketing:

- Study in Fiji found extensive sponsorship of school and sports events by beverage companies (Hope et al. 2013)
  - 88-98% of sampled schoolchildren could identify a sports event sponsored by food/drink industry
  - Around half of the children incorrectly named a SSB when asked to indicate a healthy drink they had seen advertised

- A study in 5 other PICTs, found lower levels of advertising but SSBs were still significant sources of advertising (unpub)
Efforts to control SSBs

High Intake

- High availability and variety
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Targeting availability:

- Focus on school access primarily through school food policies: Am Samoa, CNMI, Guam, Palau, Samoa, Tonga, Cooks, Fiji
- Compliance:
  - 2007/8 no SSB in Palau and Guam schools, 40% in Am Samoa still had (Wilson et al 2011).
  - 16% of schools in Fiji (Varman et al 2013)
  - Variable implementation in other evaluations.
Efforts to control SSBs:

Targeting availability (cont)

- 2011 Guam: ‘An act to mandate healthy foods to be sold in vending machines in all government of Guam buildings”
  - 50% of products to meet healthy guidelines
  - Energy/calories and other nutrient information displayed

- Health services agreed internal policy that all beverages on their sites would meet healthy criteria (pure juice/water only)

Targeting prices

Efforts have focused on taxes for SSBs primarily

- To reduce intake for health or to raise funds (in some cases for health promotion)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Type of taxation</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Year implemented</th>
<th>Evidence on potential effectiveness of implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French Polynesia</td>
<td>Excise and import tax on sugar-sweetened drinks, confectionaries, and ice cream</td>
<td>40 CFP*/litre local tax; 60 CFP*/litre imported tax</td>
<td>2002–</td>
<td>Aim was to provide funds for health promotion work and impact is not expected.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nauru</td>
<td>Sugar levy on all high-sugar foods and drinks and removal of a levy on bottled water</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>2007–</td>
<td>Informal reports suggest an increased range of lower-sugar beverages available.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cook Islands</td>
<td>Import duty on sugar-sweetened drinks</td>
<td>15% with a subsequent 2% rise per year</td>
<td>2013–</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonga</td>
<td>All sugar-sweetened beverages</td>
<td>Excise of 1 Pa’anga/litre</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Snowdon & Thow 2013
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Type of taxation</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Year implemented</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>Import excise</td>
<td>5c/litre</td>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>Revenue raiser and for health. Cost passed onto consumers</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excise duty on locally manufactured products</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Import duty on raw material</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Excise removed</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Import duty</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excise</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Import Duty</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Change in tax bands used</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excise</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>Excise on imports</td>
<td>0.3T/l changed to 0.4T/l</td>
<td>1984, 2008</td>
<td>SSB became cheaper than water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excise on local production</td>
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Thow et al 2010
Efforts to control SSBs:

Controlling marketing

- School food policies in some of the American Pacific have included restrictions on advertising of SSBs in their school food policies (in schools, at school events and on school transport) (Wilson et al 2011)
  - 20-29% adhered to restrictions in Palau and CNMI, around half in Guam and Am Samoa

- In Fiji, efforts to regulate advertising and promotion of less healthy foods and drinks to children have been underway since 2011. A draft regulation has undergone consultation with industry and other organisations.
  - SSB manufacturers have signed an internal MOU to increase range of diet beverages, lower sugar beverages to “not to specifically target children under age of 12 yrs” (will prevent advertising in primary schools, but only at events with more than 50% audience under 12 yrs)
Efforts to control SSBs:

**Educational and other initiatives**

- Extensive efforts for some time to educate re SSBs/healthy eating – limited evaluation. Trends seem to suggest ongoing problems.

- OPIC study in Fiji and Tonga failed to impact on SSB consumption in adolescents (Fotu et al 2011, Kremer et al 2011)

- Study in Marshall Islands was able to impact on SSB self-reported purchasing (Gittelsohn et al 2006). Shelf-labels, taste tests, mass media campaigns
Conclusion

- High availability, accessibility and marketing of SSBs in region

- Array of interventions have been adopted in region to tackle high consumption of SSBs

- Evaluation to date has been insufficient – however some positive impacts noted

- More effort is needed to implement existing policies, especially in schools

- More effort is also needed to evaluate impacts of policies and other interventions

- Influence of industry can be a significant barrier to action in this area