

## **Greater investment, strengthened partnerships, are focus of East African NCDs conference**

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**Generating greater investment to fight the biggest cause of death and disability in the East African Community (EAC) was the main aim of the Regional Noncommunicable Disease (NCD) Conference in Kigali, Rwanda, held on 24-25 November 2022.**

Hosted by Rwanda NCD Alliance and Rwanda Biomedical Centre, under the patronage of the Ministry of Health, the theme of the event is *Shaping an East Africa free of NCDs through people-centred interventions and transformative development*.

While the EAC is putting money into the fight against infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis and HIV, leaders have still not committed enough for NCDs. These diseases, mainly cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes and mental health issues, will account for 55% of deaths in the region by 2025 compared to 40% in 2010, according to Kaushik Ramaiya, Board Member of the global NCD Alliance.

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“Yes, the governments have realised the burden, albeit late. However, the challenge has been resource mobilisation, multi-stakeholder engagement and understanding the needs of people living with NCDs,” said Ramaiya, who is also General Secretary of the Tanzania NCD Alliance, in an interview with [The New Times of Rwanda](#) [1], published 23 November.

The regional conference was built upon a national event organized by the Rwanda NCD Alliance in 2021. Five hundred delegates, both in-person and virtual, are expected, from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, Zanzibar, DRC Congo, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Denmark, UK, Geneva and beyond. They will include policy makers, advocates, representatives of civil society, academia, physicians, nurses, allied health professionals, patients, caregivers, private sector, media, and educators.

The conference’s general objective is “to create a space for stakeholders to envision an EAC free from NCDs through sustainable innovative interventions.”

Specific objectives were:

- To share and discuss the best practices and explore new innovative approaches of moving forward the NCD agenda in the EAC region;
- To advocate for prioritization of NCDs in EAC through the enforcement of different policies and resource allocation;
- To advocate for recognition of meaningful involvement of people living with NCDs in EAC as essential partners in planning and implementation of NCDs programmes;
- To identify challenges, roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the fight against NCDs;
- To share new evidence in NCDs prevention and control.

The event focused on the following diseases areas: Cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes, asthma and metabolic diseases, injuries, and disabilities and mental health. It will be organised under three main tracks:

1. Policies interventions in the area of NCDs;
2. Science and technology;
3. Community interventions.

In the interview, Ramaiya highlighted the need for increased learning and knowledge among different stakeholders on the different innovative approaches in fighting NCDs. “We are also looking forward to strengthened support networks within the EAC through joining the efforts and actions for better impact on NCDs in the country and region.”

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