

What government ministries need to know about NCDs

Lingue Anglais



This set of briefs produced by WHO and UNDP provide policy and decision makers across governments with information on how NCDs impact their sector, and the proactive steps they can take to respond to the challenges while advancing their own objectives and accountabilities.

NCDs – principally cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory disease – are the world's biggest killers. Urgent and whole-of government action is needed to prevent the annual toll of 16 million people who die prematurely, before the age of 70, from NCDs.

Often misconstrued as a problem of high-income countries, NCDs place an equal – if not greater – burden on low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Over 80 percent of premature NCD deaths occur in LMICs.

Most premature NCD deaths are preventable by taking cost-effective action to tackle four main behavioural risk factors – tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, physical inactivity and unhealthy diet.

Tackling NCDs and their risk factors requires a response from government sectors beyond health. Multi-sectoral action for NCDs, endorsed in the 2011 Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of NCDs and in numerous other high-level political decisions, is not a zero sum game.

It is possible to identify strategies and approaches that deliver shared gains and co-benefits for all sectors involved.

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