

NCD Alliance Briefing: 70th UN General Assembly September 2015

BACKGROUND

The adoption of the post-2015 development agenda this September marks a momentous achievement for the non-communicable disease (NCD) community. Following years of work to build political consensus, and as result of dedicated advocacy by civil society, NCDs are firmly featured in the new global development agenda as a universal priority that must be addressed in order to realize sustainable human development.

The high-level week of the 70th UN General Assembly will begin with the [UN Sustainable Development Summit](#), taking place on 25 - 27 September 2015. Heads of State and Government will meet at the Summit to formally adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda, or “2030 Agenda.” It is an opportunity for the NCD and health community to call attention to the focus on NCDs and health more broadly within the new framework, as well as demonstrate support for Member States as we move into the implementation phase of the agenda.

HEADLINES

- **NCDs are included in the global sustainable development agenda for the first time ever.** Three of the nine health targets under Sustainable Development Goal 3 on health and wellbeing are focused on NCD-related issues. The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is included as a means of implementation target. This is an important shift in setting global health and sustainable human development priorities;
- **Target 3.4 on reducing NCD mortality elevates the WHO “25x25” target to a commitment made by Heads of State and Governments at the United Nations.** It reinforces that NCDs are not just a health issue, but a sustainable development priority requiring whole-of government responses and leadership at the highest level;
- **Actions must go beyond the health sector and address NCDs through policies and programs in all dimensions of sustainable development** (economic, social, and environmental);
- **Governments must now incorporate NCDs into national and regional development plans and frameworks**, as well as into development assistance for low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). With less than 2% of Official Development Assistance for Health currently allocated to NCDs, this is an urgent priority. NCDs must be a fixture in implementation and accountability strategies for the SDGs;
- **Strengthening health systems and leveraging health and development platforms and multisectoral partnerships** will be essential for avoiding silos in the delivery of resources, services, and care.

HEALTH AND NCDS IN THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Member States in New York informally adopted the final Post-2015 Development Agenda on 2 August, ending a long negotiation process and thereby securing NCDs and health in the global agenda that will guide international development through 2030. The outcome document, entitled [Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), is composed of five parts:

- The Preamble
- Chapter 1: The Declaration
- Chapter 2: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Chapter 3: Means of Implementation and the Global Partnership

- Chapter 4: Follow Up and Review

Health is addressed throughout the Declaration, establishing access to quality health care, preventing global health threats, and assuring physical and mental wellbeing as central to sustainable development. The Declaration also contains a specific reference to the *prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, including behavioural, developmental and neurological disorders as a major challenge to sustainable development.*

Key Messages:

- **SDG 3, *Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all*, features a standalone target on NCDs.** Target 3.4 is the primary NCD target in the SDGs, calling on governments to “*By 2030 reduce by one third premature mortality from NCDs through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and wellbeing.*”
- **Achieving this target will require immediate and comprehensive efforts led by governments and engaging all stakeholders** to adapt this target to the national level, and develop and cost supportive action plans. Governments should utilize existing resources to inform their efforts, namely the agreed WHO Global NCD Action Plan 2013-2020.
- **Universal health coverage (UHC), tobacco control, access to essential medicines and other health targets matter for NCDs.** In addition to Target 3.4, several targets and goals are related to and will support the achievement of the target on NCDs and SDG 3. The inclusion of means of implementation targets on the FCTC and others demonstrates Member States’ commitment to reducing the global burden of disease and promoting healthy environments and populations.
- **Achieving all SDGs will require transformative multisectoral and multistakeholder approaches.** Interlinkages between NCDs and the 17 SDGs and 169 targets should be supported by cross-cutting policies and programmes, and implemented through multisectoral partnerships. The relationship between NCDs and food and nutrition security, climate change, and sustainable urbanization among other issues must be drawn out and acted upon to secure development gains with multiple, mutual benefits.
- **Implementation calls for strong accountability mechanisms.** Effective implementation and the achievement of the SDGs and targets rests on the ability to monitor and review commitments and hold governments accountable. Technically sound indicators that accurately measure progress will provide the baseline for holding Member States accountable to achieving the new goals and targets by 2030. Member States and Civil Society should continue to engage with the UN Statistical Commission’s [Inter-agency Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goals \(IAEG-SDGs\)](#) as they continue their work to develop and agree on a set of global indicators for the SDGs by March 2016. Global indicators should align with existing indicator frameworks, such as the [Global Monitoring Framework for NCDs](#) and the [global monitoring framework for universal health coverage \(UHC\)](#). The role of civil society as providers of technical expertise, capacity building, and needed resources must be preserved.

FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT AND NCDS

The 70th UN General Assembly will focus not only on the adoption of the post-2015 agenda, but also on the means of implementation needed in the post-2015 era. Fulfilling the ambitions of the agenda will require massively scaling up resources at all levels, and through multiple sources. The [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#) (AAAA), adopted at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD3) in July 2015, provides a new policy framework for financing sustainable development, to complement efforts on the SDGs.

Key Messages:

- **Governments must ensure adequate and sustained domestic resources for health systems and services.** The Addis Ababa Action Agenda includes clear, specific language on the need to address the burden of NCDs and improve health outcomes. The AAAA recognizes the need to increase domestic public financing for health and NCDs, mobilise adequate and sustained international public financing, and strengthen multisectoral and multistakeholder partnerships. Sustained financing is essential to strengthen health systems and improve health outcomes.
- **Official development assistance (ODA) plays a catalytic role in LMICs.** ODA remains an essential part of international public financing, particularly for LMICs. Countries are strongly encouraged to fulfil their ODA commitments and achieve the target of 0.7% of ODA/GNI, with 0.15-0.2% allocated to the least developed countries (LDCs). Better monitoring of the allocation of ODA for NCDs is needed going forward, including a OECD DAC purpose code for NCDs.
- **Tobacco taxes are a win-win for governments.** The AAAA encourages countries to implement price and tax measures on tobacco, alongside full implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). Doing so will both reduce consumption of tobacco and provide a domestic revenue stream for sustainable development. Resources raised from taxes can be used to strengthen health systems and infrastructure, including implementation of UHC. Taxes on other unhealthy products, including alcohol and sugar-sweetened beverages, could also be considered as an effective way to increase revenue while improving health outcomes.
- **Capitalize on existing partnerships and resources from the private sector for health gains.** Successful multistakeholder partnerships, including the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, Gavi, and the new Global Financing Facility offer opportunities to advance integrated health agendas using existing platforms and resources. In addition, resources provided by the private sector will be an important channel for financing sustainable development.

TRANSITIONING FROM GLOBAL TO NATIONAL ACTION

The post-2015 development agenda and the goals and targets it contains will come into effect on 1 January 2016. The agenda calls for governments to adapt all SDGs into their own national development plans in order to make progress towards achieving sustainable development. The interlinked nature of the SDGs ensures that sustainable development cannot be achieved unless all 17 goals 169 targets are reached for all, and calls on all governments to adapt the global goals to fit their country space.

Civil society has an instrumental role in assisting governments to adapt the global goals and targets to their own national and regional needs. Priority areas going forward include:

- Call upon LMIC governments to integrate NCDs into national development plans (NDPs), using national NCD plans and targets as the basis;
- Call upon multilateral and bilateral partners to respect principles of aid effectiveness and respond to the priorities of LMIC governments in their development assistance and UNDAFs.

A fundamental strategy to achieving the NCD target in the 2030 Agenda will be strengthening the NCD civil society movement, particularly in LMICs. To that end, the NCD Alliance and Friends of Cancer Patients are convening the **first Global NCD Alliance Forum this November in Sharjah, UAE**. The Forum aims to help strengthen capacity of national and regional NCD alliances as they work to adapt the global goals and targets for their countries. Civil society will come together to engage in knowledge sharing, capacity building, priority setting, and build partnerships between each other.