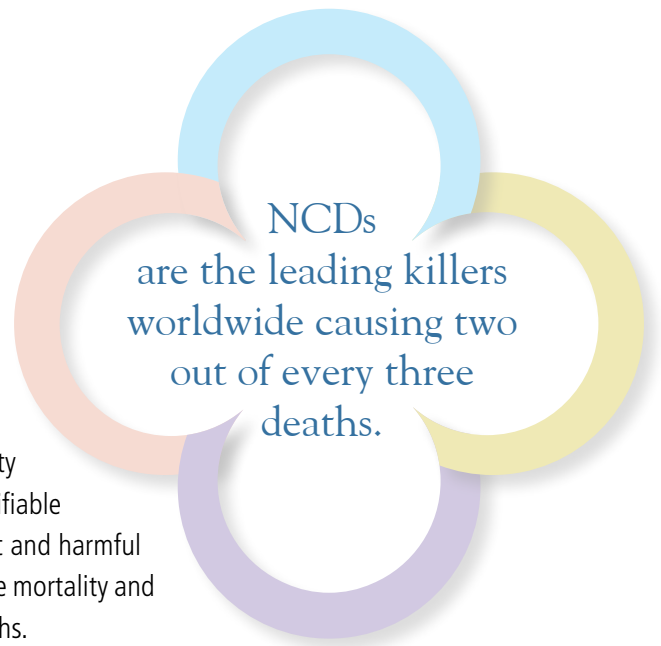




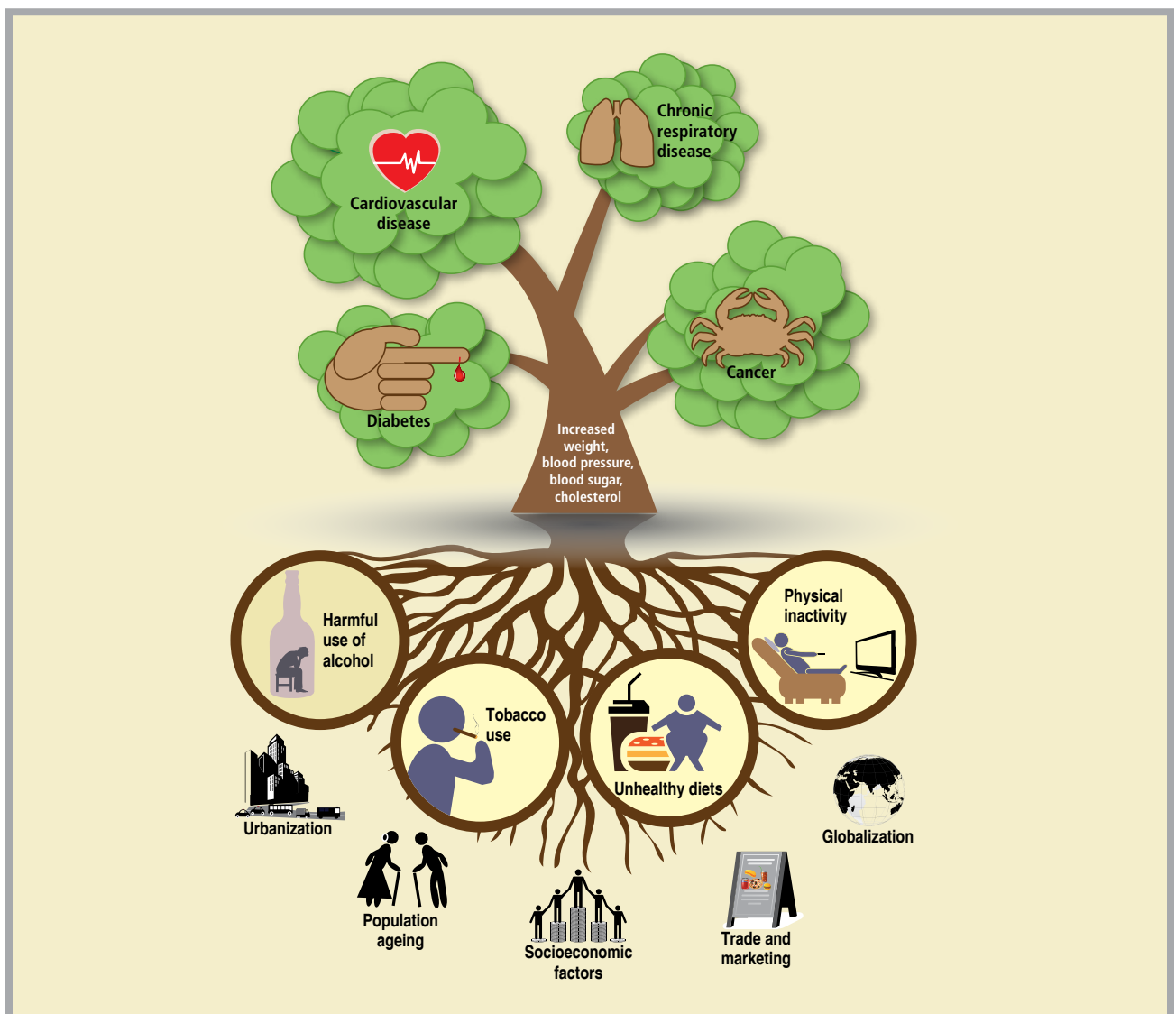
# Why we cannot ignore noncommunicable diseases

## What are noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)?

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are a group of gradually progressing, largely preventable diseases of long duration. Four main NCDs—cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory (lung) diseases and diabetes—account for the majority of the burden. These NCDs result from numerous common modifiable risk factors such as tobacco use, physical inactivity, unhealthy diet and harmful use of alcohol. NCDs are currently the leading cause of preventable mortality and disability in the world, accounting for two out of every three deaths.



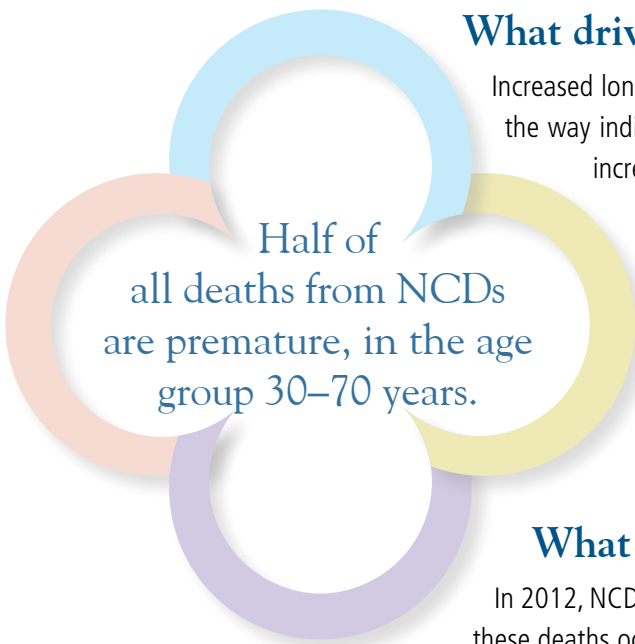
## Four major NCDs and their common risk factors





## What drives NCDs?

Increased longevity and profound changes in people's lifestyles are altering the way individuals live, work, eat, drink and move. These are driving the increase in NCDs. In addition, NCDs are driven by the negative effects of globalization, such as unfair trade and irresponsible marketing of unhealthy products and unplanned urbanization, which reduces options for physical activity and increases exposure to environmental pollution. Social determinants, such as low levels of education and poverty, are associated with an increase in the risk factors for NCDs; tobacco use, poor diet and alcohol consumption.



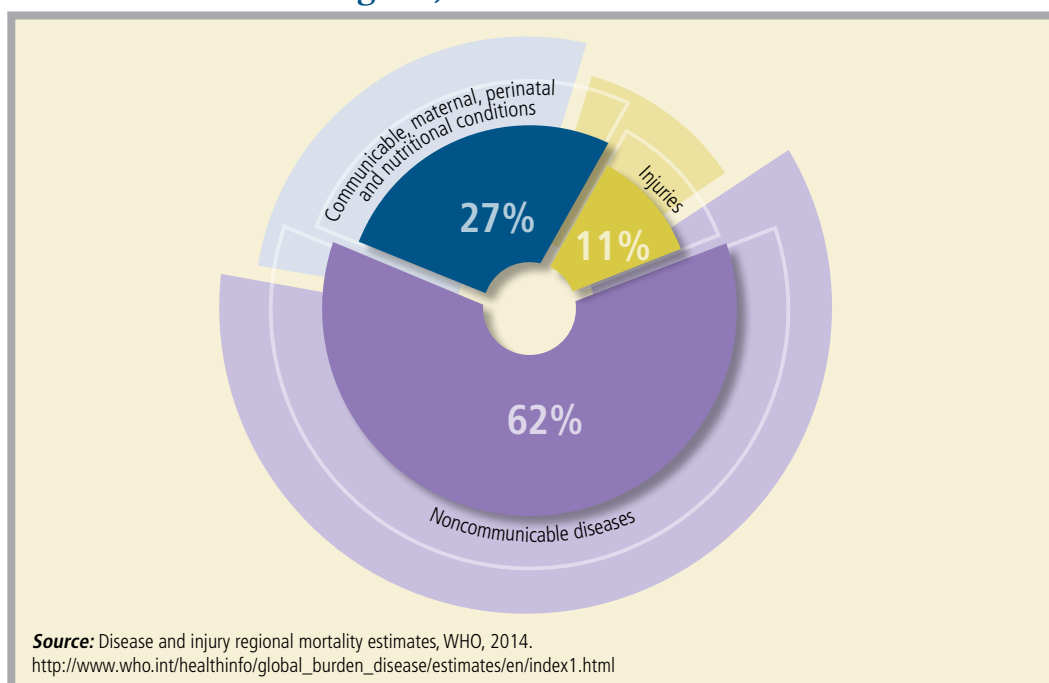
Half of all deaths from NCDs are premature, in the age group 30–70 years.

## What is the health impact of NCDs?

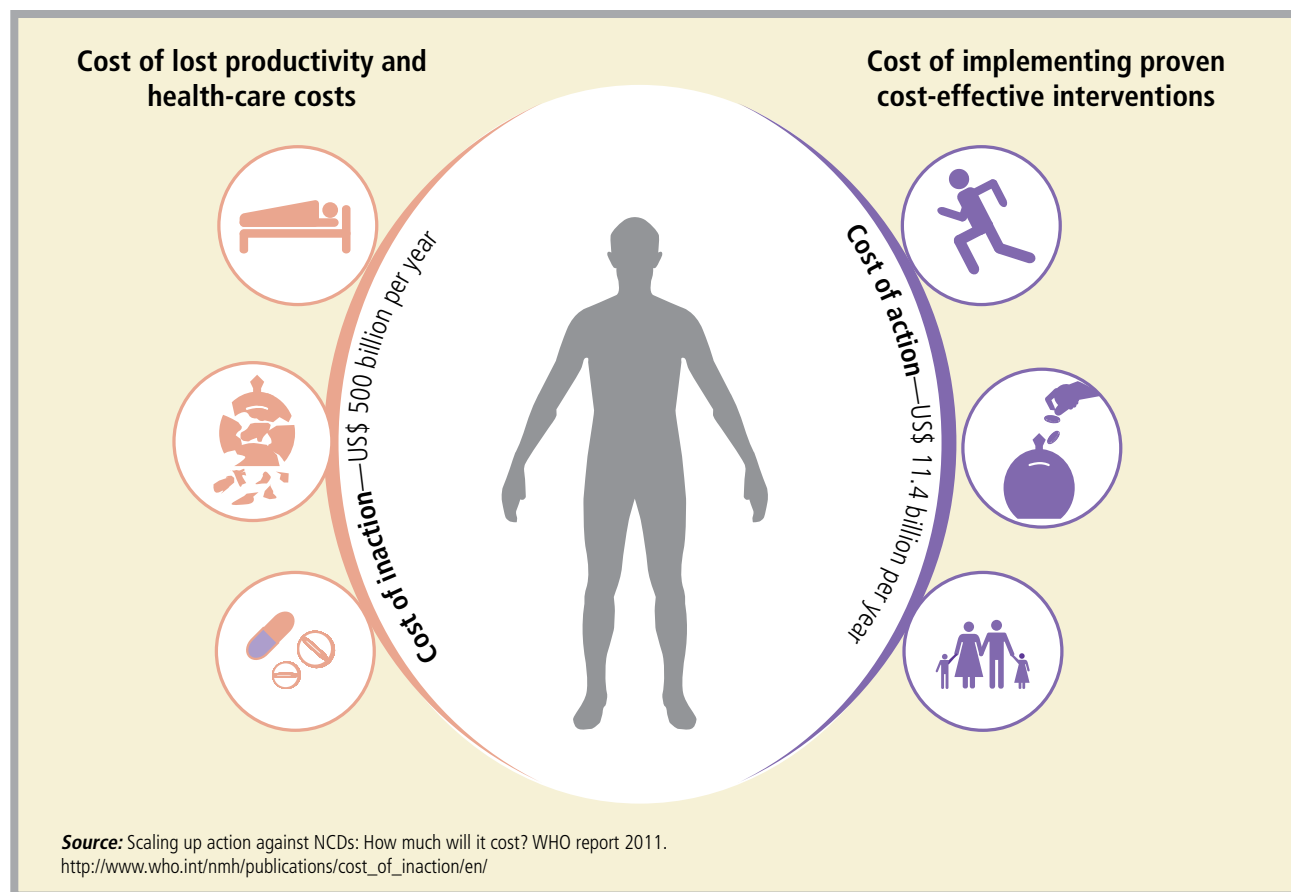
In 2012, NCDs accounted for 38 million (68%) of the global deaths; 75% of these deaths occurred in developing countries. In addition to mortality, NCDs are also a leading cause of disability. In 2012, NCDs accounted for 55% of disability-adjusted life years lost worldwide.

NCDs and their risk factors have been increasing rapidly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) including in the South-East Asia Region. In 2012, there were 8.5 million NCD-related deaths in the Region. There has been a 27% increase in deaths due to NCDs in the Region in the past decade. In 10 out of 11 Member States of the Region, NCDs account for over half of all deaths. Notably, unlike in developed countries, most of the deaths in the South-East Asia Region occur at younger ages with adverse health, economic and social implications. Nearly half of all deaths from NCDs are in the age group 30–70 years in the Region.

## Estimated percentage of deaths, by cause, South-East Asia Region, 2012



## Cost of inaction versus cost of action



## Why are NCDs a threat to development?

NCDs not only have health implications but also social, economic and developmental consequences for individuals, families, societies and nations. Most individuals suffering from NCDs, particularly in our Region, incur out-of-pocket expenses to meet health-care costs, often forcing them to resort to distress financing and catastrophic expenditures, which ultimately impoverish them. Furthermore, families suffering from NCDs incur income losses not only due to the illness, but also due to caregiving and premature death. Disability and/or premature death of the main income earner in families wrecks households, driving them into a life of penury.

NCDs are likely to impede poverty reduction initiatives and compromise developmental gains in LMICs. The cumulative losses due to NCDs in LMICs over 15 years (2011–25) are projected to be US\$ 7 trillion. Governments and economies in most LMICs are ill equipped to cope with the current as well as the future increase in NCDs and associated economic burden. The cost of action, on the other hand, is much less. Governments therefore need to take decisive actions today to avoid the impending NCD crisis in the future, protect the lives of their citizens as well as ensure their countries' development.

