



**WHAT GOVERNMENT  
MINISTRIES NEED  
TO KNOW ABOUT  
NONCOMMUNICABLE  
DISEASES**



Sectoral  
briefs

This set of briefs has been produced to provide policy and decision makers across government with information about how noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) affect their sector, and the steps they can take to respond to the challenge of NCDs while advancing their own objectives.

- NCDs – principally cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory disease – are now the world's biggest killers.
- Urgent and whole-of-government action is needed to prevent the annual toll of 38 million people dying from NCDs, including 16 million dying prematurely before the age of 70.
- Often misconstrued as a problem of high-income countries only, NCDs place an equal – if not greater – burden on low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Just 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. Strategies and approaches exist that can deliver shared gains for all sectors involved.

**These briefs will enable ministries to:**

- Implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including strengthened implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control;
- Recognize that NCDs present a major challenge to their sector and the national development agenda;
- Identify concrete steps that can be taken in their sector to tackle NCDs;
- Implement commitments agreed in the 2011 UN Political Declaration and 2014 UN Outcome Document on NCDs;
- Enact the WHO Global NCD Action Plan 2013-2020, in particular the set of very cost-effective and affordable interventions for all countries, and policy options to promote a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response to reducing risk factors and enabling health systems to respond.

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015, Member States recognize NCDs as a leading sustainable development issue. Agenda 2030 provides an enabling framework for identifying and implementing win-win approaches for NCDs and development.

Sustainable Development Goal 3 on health and wellbeing includes targets on the prevention and control of NCDs. Achieving the NCD targets will advance the 2030 Agenda, given the strong links among NCDs and poverty, social inequities and lack of access to affordable basic services.

**In 2011 Heads of State and Government assembled at the United Nations to address the prevention and control of NCDs.<sup>1</sup> They agreed that:**

- The global burden and threat of NCDs constitutes one of the major challenges for development in the twenty-first century, which undermines social and economic development throughout the world;
- NCDs are a threat to economies;
- Governments have the primary role and responsibility of responding to the challenge of NCDs and this requires all sectors to work together.

**The Political Declaration<sup>2</sup> that came out of the 2011 meeting highlighted the need for a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society response because Heads of State and Government:**

- Recognized that prevention must be the cornerstone of the global response to NCDs;
- Recognized that the incidence and impacts of NCDs can be largely prevented or reduced with an approach that incorporates evidence-based, affordable, cost-effective, population-wide and multisectoral interventions;
- Acknowledged the need for a multisectoral approach for health at all government levels, to address NCD risk factors and underlying determinants of health comprehensively and decisively.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations high-level meeting on noncommunicable disease prevention and control: NCD summit to shape the international agenda [http://www.who.int/nmh/events/un\\_ncd\\_summit2011/en/](http://www.who.int/nmh/events/un_ncd_summit2011/en/)

<sup>2</sup> UNGA A/RES/66/2. Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases. [http://www.who.int/nmh/events/un\\_ncd\\_summit2011/political\\_declaration\\_en.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/nmh/events/un_ncd_summit2011/political_declaration_en.pdf?ua=1)

The Political Declaration highlighted the need to develop and implement multisectoral public policies that create equitable health-promoting environments that empower individuals, families and communities to make healthy choices and lead healthy lives.

WHO will submit, by the end of 2017, a report on the progress achieved in the implementation of these commitments to the United Nations General Assembly, in preparation for a comprehensive review of the General Assembly in 2018.

Below are the indicators WHO is using to report on each Member State's progress in the prevention and control of NCDs.<sup>3</sup>

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <b>1.</b> Time-bound national targets and indicators based on WHO guidance.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>2.</b> A functioning system for generating reliable cause-specific mortality data.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>3.</b> An operational multisectoral national strategy/action plan in place that integrates the major NCDs and their shared risk factors.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>4.</b> A STEPS survey or comprehensive health examination survey every five years.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>5.</b> Four demand-reduction measures of the WHO FCTC implemented:<br>A. Reduce affordability of tobacco products by increasing tobacco excise taxes;<br>B. Create by law completely smoke-free environments in all indoor workplaces, public places and public transport;<br>C. Warn people of the dangers of tobacco and tobacco smoke through effective health warnings and mass media campaigns;<br>D. Ban all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.                                            |
| <b>6.</b> Three measures to reduce the harmful use of alcohol implemented:<br>A. Regulations over commercial and public availability of alcohol;<br>B. Comprehensive restrictions or bans on alcohol advertising and promotions;<br>C. Pricing policies such as excise tax increases on alcoholic beverages.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>7.</b> Four measures to reduce unhealthy diets implemented:<br>A. Adopted national policies to reduce population salt/sodium consumption;<br>B. Adopted national policies that limit saturated fatty acids and virtually eliminate industrially produced <i>trans</i> fatty acids in the food supply;<br>C. WHO set of recommendations on marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children;<br>D. Legislation/regulations fully implementing the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. |
| <b>8.</b> At least one recent national public awareness programme on diet and/or physical activity.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>9.</b> Evidence-based national guidelines/protocols/standards for the management of major NCDs through a primary care approach.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>10.</b> Provision of drug therapy, including glycaemic control, and counselling for eligible persons at high risk to prevent heart attacks and strokes, with emphasis on the primary care level.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

Making progress in just about all areas in the table above requires multisectoral action with government ministries and agencies working together alongside partners outside government: i.e. a whole-of-government and a whole-of-society response.



<sup>3</sup> The full list of indicators can be found at "How WHO will report in 2017 to the United Nations General Assembly on the progress achieved in the implementation of commitments included in the 2011 UN Political Declaration and 2014 UN Outcome Document on NCDs"  
<http://www.who.int/nmh/events/2015/technical-note-en.pdf?ua=1>

“Effective NCD prevention and control requires leadership and multisectoral approaches for health at the government level, including, as appropriate, health in all policies and whole-of-government approaches across such sectors as health, education, energy, agriculture, sports, transport, communication, urban planning, environment, labour, employment, industry and trade, finance, and social and economic development.”

Paragraph 36. Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of NCDs

“We... commit to... enhancing the capacity, mechanisms and mandates...of relevant authorities in facilitating and ensuring action across governmental sectors.”

Ministers and representatives of States and Governments and heads of delegations, Moving forward: national commitments Paragraph 30 (a), (vii) Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the comprehensive review and assessment of the progress achieved in the prevention and control of NCDs. United Nations, 10-11 July 2014

“Addressing NCDs is critical for global public health, but it will also be good for the economy; for the environment; for the global public good in the broadest sense. If we come together to tackle NCDs, we can do more than heal individuals – we can safeguard our very future.”

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General, United Nations



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (UNIATF) was established in 2013 by the Secretary General and placed under the leadership of WHO to coordinate the activities of the UN System to support the realization of the commitments made by Heads of State and Government in the 2011 Political Declaration on NCDs. Joint activities included in the work plan of the Task Force are additive to various, more comprehensive efforts conducted by the UN agencies to prevent and control NCDs. These joint activities offer important opportunities to address cross-cutting issues and to advance capacity and learning in countries.

