

Advancing health equity: Insights from the Kenya NCD Equity Report

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In an era where health disparities remain a critical challenge globally, the latest NCD Equity Report from Kenya emerges as a beacon of hope and action. The report dissects the barriers faced by marginalized communities in accessing healthcare for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. The journey of developing this comprehensive document was as insightful as the findings themselves.

Reflections on developing the report

Crafting the NCD Equity Report was a collaborative endeavor involving diverse stakeholders. Researchers, healthcare providers, policymakers, and community representatives came together with a shared goal: to unearth and address the inequities plaguing our health systems. The process was a profound learning experience, revealing the stark realities faced by marginalised groups in accessing NCD services.

Through the collection of primary data (focus group discussions, key informant Interviews and in-depth interviews) and secondary data (desk review of existing national policies and reports), the team gathered information from those with lived experience of challenges in accessing NCD services.

Experiences of marginalized groups

The report shines a spotlight on the lived experiences of inequity of several marginalized groups:

1. **LGBTQI individuals:** Often facing stigma and discrimination, LGBTQI individuals struggle with barriers to accessing healthcare. The report documents cases where fear of prejudice deterred timely medical intervention, exacerbating health conditions. One interviewee shared, "I avoided going to the clinic because I was afraid of being judged for who I am. By the time I sought help, my condition had worsened."

2. Persons with disabilities: Accessibility remains a significant hurdle for people with disabilities. The report highlights stories of individuals who, despite living with NCDs, find healthcare facilities physically inaccessible. One participant noted, “Navigating the hospital with my wheelchair is a nightmare. There are no ramps, and the doors are too narrow. It feels like the system is not designed for us.”
3. Caregivers for children with sickle cell disease, type 1 diabetes and rare diseases: Caregivers of children with chronic conditions like sickle cell disease and type 1 diabetes often face immense emotional, physical, and financial burdens. The report includes testimonies from caregivers who expressed feelings of isolation and helplessness. One mother recounted, “Caring for my child with diabetes is a 24/7 job. The costs are overwhelming, and there’s little support. It’s like we’re fighting this battle alone.”

Call to Action

The NCD Equity Report is more than just an analysis; it is a clear call to action. It urges policymakers to implement targeted strategies that ensure equitable access to healthcare. Recommendations include strengthening community-based interventions, improving healthcare infrastructure, and fostering inclusive environments that respect and address the unique needs of all individuals.

The NCD Equity Report is a testament to the power of collective action and the importance of giving voice to the marginalized. As we move towards a future where health equity is a reality, it is crucial to remember that the journey requires continuous commitment, compassion, and collaboration. The insights from this report serve as a guiding light for building resilient health systems that truly leave no one behind. Together, we can make universal health coverage more than just a goal—it can be our shared reality.

The Kenya NCD Equity Report was supported by NCD Alliance with thanks to its partnership with Bristol Myers Squibb.

About Non-communicable Diseases Alliance Kenya:

National umbrella body of organisations (patients’ groups, NGOs, and professional associations) involved in advocacy for, prevention and control of as well as care and rehabilitation of persons living with or at risk of developing NCDs. With a vision of NCD-free Kenya, and a focus on advocacy, meaningful involvement of persons with experience of NCDs, research and knowledge management, the Alliance strives to be the lead organisation on NCDs across the continuum of care.

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