

Fostering partnerships to prevent & control NCDs in India: Birth of the Healthy India Alliance

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Photo 1: HIA members at the National Civil Society Consultation on NCDs © Healthy India Alliance

In India, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) account for a staggering 60% of all deaths. The country stands to lose \$4.58 trillion before 2030 due to NCDs and mental health conditions. Cardiovascular diseases, accounting for \$2.17 trillion and mental health conditions (\$1.03 trillion) will contribute to major economic losses. The mounting social and economic costs of NCDs warrant immediate action to mitigate its long term effects.

NCDs in India – The problem & the mandate to act

In wake of growing evidence on the impact of NCDs on India's economy and social fabric, Health Ministers in India have time and again echoed views of health experts on the need for a comprehensive model for NCDs and mass awareness campaigns. Following the World Health Organization's Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs, 2013-2020, India became the first country to adopt a set of [10 National targets as part of India's National Action Plan](#) [1] to reduce premature NCD mortality by 25% by 2025. In addition to the set of 9 global targets under WHO Global Monitoring Framework for NCDs, India stepped up to adopt [a tenth target of reducing household air pollution](#) [2] by 50% by 2025.

A diverse but unified civil society will strengthen the response to NCDs

In 2015, a consultation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from the South-East Asian Region was organized by NCD Alliance and the WHO South-East Asia Regional Office to advance NCD prevention and control in the Region. The meeting of CSOs from diverse sectors led to the formation of the Healthy India Alliance, with the aim to facilitate active participation of health and non-health CSOs in the prevention and control of NCDs through effective policies, partnerships and programmes. The Alliance, set up by a group of reputed, pan-India organisations committed to NCD prevention and control, now includes 16 CSO members working on a range of aspects related to NCDs and their risk factors, including advocacy, multi-pronged research, policy reviews and health promotion programmes and campaigns. The involvement of well-established and reputed organisations on a common platform like the Healthy India Alliance will make the civil society voice stronger and add credibility to NCD related campaigns in India.

Building momentum: Early Days, Strong Commitment, watch this space

The First National Civil Society Consultation on NCDs in India was organised by the Healthy India Alliance with support from the WHO Country Office for India, NCD Alliance and American Cancer Society from 25th to 27th April 2016. Over 80 CSOs from all over the country participated in the two and a half day Consultation and committed to join efforts to achieve India's NCD targets.

Speaking at the inaugural of the consultation, Prof. K.S. Reddy, President, Public Health Foundation of India and Governing Board member of the new Alliance said,

"The role of the Healthy India Alliance is to catalyse NCD prevention in the country by providing a platform for health and non-health organisations to partner for collaborative civil society action on NCDs under the Sustainable Development Goals."

He added that:

"It is an historic moment for the country that the Healthy India Alliance is instrumental at an early stage of the SDGs."



Image: Speakers at the Inaugural Plenary of the Consultation

Multi-Stakeholder engagement: key to making progress on national and global NCD targets

Given the rich opportunity to adopt a multi-sectoral, yet integrated approach to NCD prevention and control, the Alliance's priorities are to foster a government-CSO partnership, enhance accountability of partner CSOs, build capacities and empower grassroots-level organisations and collectively work towards strengthening the health system and policy response to NCDs.

Speaking at the consultation on the importance of a 'whole of society' approach, Dr Henk Bekedam, WHO Country Representative to India drew a parallel to the HIV prevention and control movement and lessons that can be translated to the NCD sphere. He stressed on the relevance of 4As: Advocacy, Accountability, Awareness, Access and 1C: Capacity Building –as critical to move ahead. Dr Bekedam also pointed out the significance of social inclusion, given that the expenses incurred due to chronic diseases are huge and at times unaffordable for the most vulnerable populations.

A major mandate of the Alliance is involving stakeholders from outside the health space in order to build understanding and consensus that NCDs are not just a health issue but a macro issue with inter-linkages to development, economics, environment and many more important sectors. It is only through consensus among multiple government and non-government stakeholders that a comprehensive response to NCDs can be formulated.

About the Authors

Manjusha Chatterjee, Radhika Shrivastava, Monika Arora and Prachi Kathuria are members of the Secretariat of the Healthy India Alliance ([@HIA_NCD](#) [3]). Delhi-based health CSO HRIDAY is the current Secretariat of the Alliance.

More information about the Healthy India Alliance can be found [here](#) [4].

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