

International Women's Day: Stories to inspire us, stories to unite us

Submitted by jbjandan@ncdalli... on 8 March, 2022 - 12:39

Language English

Canva stock

Noncommunicable diseases affect us all – but we don't all experience them in the same way. This year for International Women's Day, we are putting the spotlight on the women who have shared their stories through the [NCD Diaries](#) [1], a digital storytelling project under NCD Alliance's Our Views, Our Voices initiative. It provides a platform for those living with NCDs to illustrate their day-to-day personal experience and their collective calls to drive NCD action and inspire others to speak up.

Since the project's launch in 2021, we have learnt of women's experiences with a range of NCDs in countries around the globe. From Malaysia to Bangladesh, Nigeria to United States, their perspectives are unique but they share many challenges.

Intersections of poverty, gender and NCDs

Approximately two out of every three women die from an NCD such as [cardiovascular disease](#) [2], [cancer](#) [3], [diabetes](#) [4], [chronic respiratory disease](#) [5], and [mental and neurological disorders](#) [6] among many others, which alarmingly impact most heavily on women in developing countries. From late diagnosis, low awareness about treatment and care, stigma and discrimination, and severe out-of-pocket expenditures, living with NCDs presents many challenges for women. These challenges are greatly exacerbated by poverty, with NCDs having radically different consequences for women and their families in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) than for those living in higher resource settings.

For instance, women in LMICs often face a triple burden of poor health resulting from reproductive and maternal health conditions, communicable diseases, and NCDs. Kenya's [Salome Agallo](#) [7] unveils the extraordinary realities of living with HIV, attempting suicide and being diagnosed with cancer. From Nigeria, [Lion Osarenkhoe Ethel Chima-Nwogwugwu](#) [8], mother to five daughters, sheds light on women's exposure to NCD risk factors and shares her experience of pregnancy induced gestational diabetes and subsequently type 2 diabetes.

Health of women to gain health for all

Without specific attention to the needs of women and girls, the impact of NCDs threatens to unravel the fragile health gains made over the past decades and undermine future efforts. Integration of NCD prevention and control efforts within existing health services is increasingly necessary to bolster progress in women's health and socioeconomic well-being. Malaysian NCD Diarist [Vijayalakshmy Silvathorai](#) [9] underscores the key importance of realising universal health coverage, including NCD care and the role of a trained and supportive health workforce. [Mazeda Begum](#) [10] shares her experience of living with diabetes and cardiovascular disease in Bangladesh, and helping others to navigate the challenges of accessing care, highlighting that women are often impacted by NCDs during their most productive years. In many cases and often with age, women are faced with the challenge of living with an NCD while also caring for family members with NCDs. Kenyan [Liz Owino](#) [11] describes how this becomes a psychological, social, and financial strain, through her experience of living with sickle cell disorder, while caring for her grandmother living with diabetes and Alzheimer's disease, and for her late mother who had diabetes and cancer.

[Gloria Haro](#) [12] in her NCD Diary from Mexico talks about the severe out-of-pocket expenditures for mental health services for her son and herself, both living with attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Circumstances are not very different for [Linh Nguyen Ha](#) [13] from Vietnam who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis 14 years ago and is at an advanced stage now. For over a decade, Indian [Seema Bali](#) [14] has been caring for her husband with renal disorder while [Betsy Rodriguez](#) [15] from the United States is care partner to her daughter living with type 1 diabetes and husband living with cancer. They urge the importance of quality and affordable healthcare as a human right.

Stories break biases. Stories create movements.

Sharing one's story has the power to motivate others to share their own stories, resulting in a strong sense of community and shared purpose. The impact of rallying communities is encapsulated by NCD Diarists [Jazz Sethi](#) [16] and [Nupur Lalvani](#) [17] living with type 1 diabetes in India, and [Mirriam Wakanyi](#) [18] with lived experience of cancer from Ghana.

[Ama Quainoo](#) [19] from Ghana, [Diana Gittens](#) [20] from Guyana and [Amber Huett-Garcia](#) [21] from the United States all emphasise the need to speak up in the face of severe stigma, which they have all experienced in being diagnosed with sickle cell disease, cervical cancer and obesity respectively. Breast cancer survivor [Vivian Gyasi](#) [22] from Ghana sheds light on how the socio-cultural reality in many countries perpetuates stigma and misconceptions about NCDs.

A common message from all NCD Diarists: to accelerate progress on NCDs and achieve health for all, first-hand experiences of people living with NCDs must be at the heart of the response. Through their NCD Diaries, these women convey the intertwined notions of health, gender, equity, and social justice and call for an NCD movement that puts people first. We invite you to read their powerful stories and others.

About the author

Manjusha Chatterjee is NCDA's Senior Manager for Capacity Development. She is responsible for NCDA's efforts to promote meaningful involvement of people living with NCDs and manages the Our Views, Our Voices initiative. Raised in India and now based in the UK, Manjusha has been living with endometriosis for over 10 years. She is a journalist and political scientist by training. Prior to joining NCDA she held advocacy and communications roles with organisations in India. She holds a Masters in Global Politics with a specialisation in Global Civil Society from the London School of Economics.

Featured:

Search Keywords: ncd diaries, women's day

Tags: [NCD Diaries](#) [23]

[world health day](#) [24]

Tag feed: [NCD Diaries](#) [23]

Source URL: <https://old.ncdalliance.org/news-events/blog/international-womens-day-stories-to-inspire-us-stories-to-unite-us>

Links

- [1] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries>
- [2] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/ncds/cardiovascular-diseases>
- [3] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/ncds/cancer>
- [4] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/ncds/diabetes>
- [5] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/ncds/chronic-respiratory-diseases>
- [6] <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/ncds/mental-health-and-neurological-disorders>
- [7] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/the-experience-of-living-with-multiple-chronic-conditions/salome-agallo>
- [8] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/the-experience-of-living-with-multiple-chronic-conditions/lion-chimannwogwugwu>
- [9] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/the-experience-of-living-with-multiple-chronic-conditions/vijayalakshmy-silvathorai>
- [10] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/universal-health-coverage/begum-mazeda>
- [11] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/universal-health-coverage/liz-achieng-owino>
- [12] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/universal-health-coverage/gloria-haro>
- [13] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/universal-health-coverage/linh-nguyen-ha>
- [14] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/the-experience-of-living-with-multiple-chronic-conditions/seema-bali>
- [15] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/the-experience-of-living-with-multiple-chronic-conditions/betsy-rodriguez>
- [16] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/the-experience-of-living-with-multiple-chronic-conditions/jazz-sethi>
- [17] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/sample-diaries/i-choose-make-little-difference>
- [18] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/universal-health-coverage/miriam-wakanyi>
- [19] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/the-experience-of-living-with-multiple-chronic-conditions/ama-quainoo>
- [20] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/sample-diaries/sting-stigma>
- [21] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/affordability-of-care-and-uhc/amber-huett-garcia>

Square Image:

[22] <https://www.ourviewsourvoices.org/ncd-diaries/the-experience-of-living-with-multiple-chronic-conditions/vivian-gyasi-sarfo>

[23] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/1247>

[24] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/115>