

Regional NCD civil society gathers in Kigali

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© Rwanda NCD Alliance. Dr Cristina Parsons Perez, Capacity Development Director, speaking at the conference

Over 300 delegates from 18 countries gathered in Kigali, Rwanda last week for a 2-day conference on noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) hosted by the Rwanda NCD Alliance under the patronage of Rwanda Ministry of Health. The NCD Alliance also hosted a workshop on campaign planning for next year's 2023 High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC), while the Rwanda NCD Alliance launched the policy report People-Centred Care and Integration of NCDs and HIV/AIDS.

Convened under the theme “Shaping an East Africa free of NCDs through people-centred interventions and transformative development”, the Regional NCD Conference was held on 24 and 25 of November and brought together regional stakeholders including civil society advocates, government stakeholders, academia and private sector.

The conference promoted knowledge sharing and nurtured debate to align, accelerate, account, engage and invest in NCD policy development and implementation to improve access to quality NCD prevention and control interventions in the region.

Over 300 delegates from countries including Malawi, Senegal, Cameroon, Zambia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, UK, Switzerland, Denmark, USA, DRC Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Burundi, Zanzibar and Rwanda and 400 online participants engaged in three thematic tracks: Policy interventions; Science and technology; and Community interventions.

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The opening ceremony included the participation of the Minister of State in Charge of Primary Health Care, Dr Tharcisse Mpunga. Dr Kaushik Ramaiya, Chair of Tanzania NCD Alliance and President Elect of the East Africa NCD Alliance, and Board member of the NCD Alliance, also presented on the new East Africa Community Regional Framework for Integration of NCDs policies, strategies and interventions.

HIV and NCD report launch

The conference also saw the launch of a policy report People-Centred Care and Integration of NCDs and HIV/AIDS which was developed by Rwanda NCD Alliance thanks to NCD Alliance's support.

The launch was officiated by the president of the East Africa NCD Alliance and Chairperson of the Rwanda NCD Alliance, Prof. Joseph Mucumbitsi, Vice-chairperson Rose Gahire, Director-General of the Rwanda Biomedical Centre, Prof. Dr. Claude M. Muvunyi, WHO Rwanda Representative, Non Communicable Diseases Division Manager at the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC).

This policy report makes recommendations for people-centred care and integration of NCDs and HIV/AIDS services as part of UHC, highlighting shared opportunities for improving health outcomes of mutual benefit. "Integration of HIV and NCDs is the way to go, we must and can act now, not tomorrow," commented prof. J. Mucumbitsi at the launch ceremony.

Pre-conference workshop focuses on Universal Health Coverage

Looking ahead to the 2023 UN High-Level Meeting (HLM) on UHC, this regional conference was an important moment to engage and mobilise the regional NCD civil society gathered in Kigali ahead of this upcoming global advocacy milestone.

The pre-conference workshop hosted by the NCD Alliance team on the 23rd of November used this unique opportunity to explore and discuss opportunities for coordinated advocacy across national, regional, and global levels, highlighting key processes, timelines and windows of opportunity for advocacy action in the lead up to 2023 UN HLM on UHC and beyond to the 2025 UN HLM on NCDs. The workshop was attended by 40 civil society advocates from 13 different Alliances from the region. Outcomes of this discussion will lay the foundation for a regional strategy for mobilisation towards the 2023 UN HLM on UHC, the development of which will be led by the Africa NCDs Network.

Both the pre-conference workshop led by the NCD Alliance and the integration brief produced by the Rwanda NCD Alliance were possible thanks to NCD Alliance's partnership with [The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust](#). [1]

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