
Saunthari Somasundaram

Language Undefined

Candidate for the NCDA President-Elect



Saunthari Somasundaram

President and Medical Director, National Cancer Society Malaysia and Co-Chairperson, NCD (Malaysia (NCDM)

Malaysia

Why would you like to be on the NCDA Board of Directors?

Serving two terms on the NCDA Board has deepened my understanding of the complexities of our global mission. I firmly believe in the important role that the Board – and more broadly, the NCDA – plays in shaping appropriate

policies and plans in the management of NCDs from a global perspective. My belief in its charter is the reason I would like to continue with my Board participation as President-Elect.

My 20-year career in the control of NCDs – as a clinician, advocate, and policy advisor – has consistently focused on translating lived experiences into effective interventions and policy change. Through implementing solutions and serving on the boards of local and global cancer and NCD organisations, I've seen the power of unity in achieving health equity. If we are to achieve health for all, all of us must be for health – regardless of disease, background, or role.

As President-Elect, I will bring these experiences to support NCDA's vision. My approach is simple: global issues must meet local needs. This means every step toward strengthening global governance and policy must be grounded in real-life community experiences and shaped by the voices of people living with NCDs.

The NCDA Board has immense potential to ensure that global priorities match local realities – balancing equity, strategy, and common goals across the NCD spectrum. I am committed to contributing my governance experience, regional perspective, and grassroots-driven approach to help steer the Alliance through its next phase – ensuring it remains inclusive, impactful, and bold in advancing health for everyone.

What makes you a good candidate for the NCDA President-Elect?

My time served on the NCDA Board has made me understand and appreciate its core values, mission, and strategic outlook. As a candidate for President-Elect, I bring leadership forged from extensive global experience, as well as internal NCDA expertise gained through chairing the governance, and serving on the finance and membership subcommittees.

My leadership style is rooted in collaboration and inclusivity, fostering environments where innovative ideas can thrive while prioritising accountability and transparency. I am dedicated to evidence-based practices, ensuring that we develop sustainable solutions tailored to both local and global contexts.

One example is the Lung Health Resolution, proposed by the Malaysian government and driven in partnership with NCSM and NCD Malaysia. Aimed at minimising the global burden of lung-related diseases, the resolution has secured support from WHO and nearly 20 countries across both high- and low-to-middle-income settings, to be tabled in 2025.

I bring a deep understanding of the implementation challenges and opportunities that exist across countries of varying income levels. My leadership roles in national and global organisations including the UICC, NCDA and C/Can have equipped me with the perspective and commitment to serve and unite.

My experience in strengthening people-centred national and global capacity, including building civil society organisations, lived experience networks, and advocacy platforms, has shaped my belief that equity must drive everything we do.

As President-Elect, I am ready to support the NCDA's next phase with engaged, inclusive leadership – bridging global vision with local action to advance health for all.

Biography

Dato' Dr Saunthari Somasundaram brings over two decades of experience in cancer and non-communicable disease (NCD) control, with a deep understanding of both global and developing health systems. Her leadership focuses on aligning efforts across universal health coverage, with expertise in governance, financing, and accountability.

She holds key roles in national and international organisations, building partnerships across government, private, and civil society sectors. As an advisor to the Malaysian Ministry of Health, she has supported the integration of NCDs into UHC policy and strengthen civil society mobilisation.

She currently serves as President and Medical Director of the National Cancer Society of Malaysia (NCSM), and as Co-Chairperson of NCD Malaysia. She is a board member of the NCD Alliance (NCDA), City Cancer Challenge Foundation (C/Can), and formerly of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC).

For her services, she was conferred the title Dato' by HRH, The Sultan of Perak, Malaysia.

[View all candidates](#) [1]



Source URL: <https://old.ncdalliance.org/who-we-are/ncd-alliance-structure/board-of-directors/candidates-2025-2027/saunthari-somasundaram>

Links

[1] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/who-we-are/ncd-alliance-structure/board-of-directors/candidates-2023-2025>