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Nearly 75% of Global Deaths are Caused by Non-Communicable Diseases—How the G20 Can Help

AN EVENT REPORT FROM AN OFFICIAL
T20 SIDE EVENT

JULY 6, 2023



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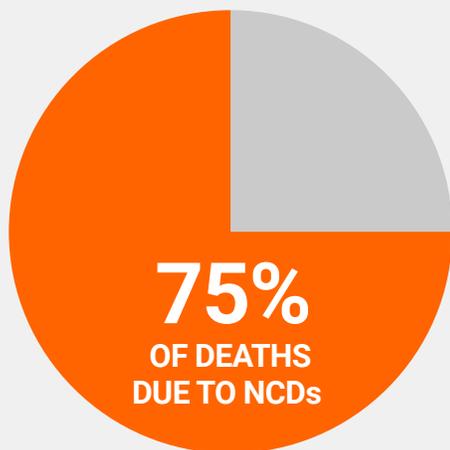


Executive Summary

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) are a leading cause of death in most G20 countries,¹ with the top five NCDs alone inflicting nearly US\$2 trillion in economic losses every year.² NCDs are projected to be responsible for 3 in every 4 deaths by 2030,³ and the ongoing crises of population ageing and climate change could further compound the challenges G20 governments are poised to face in the years ahead. Moreover, with over three quarters of NCD deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), the burden of NCDs is not shared equally.⁴ NCDs undermine the quality of life and overall longevity for patients, while also causing significant collateral harm to caregivers. It is crucial that governments take action on this issue.

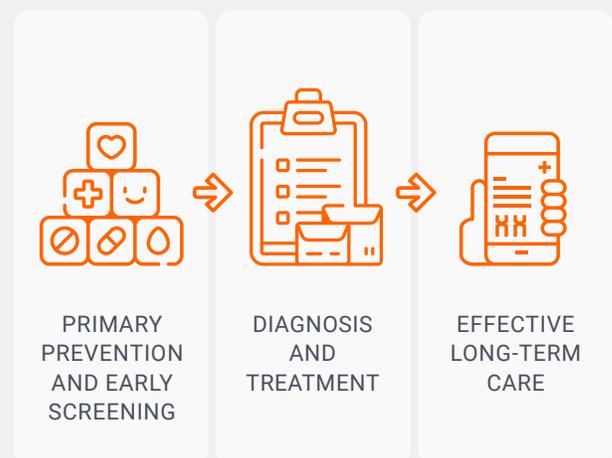
For these reasons, the United Nations (UN) has been promoting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.4, which calls for the reduction of premature mortality from NCDs by one-third by 2030 from 2015 levels.⁵ While some governments have begun to make progress in recent years,

NCDs are projected to be responsible for 3 in every 4 deaths by 2030.



NCDs—A LEADING CAUSE OF DEATHS BY 2030

Addressing NCDs needs a Continuum of Care approach.



the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the annual rate of reduction so far is just under 1% per year.⁶

To help countries make greater progress on SDG targets, in 2013, the World Health Assembly (WHA) released their NCD Global Action Plan, which outlined 16 specific policy interventions for significantly lowering the global NCD burden. Building on these recommendations, the NCD Countdown 2030 report, released in 2018, identified 21 cost-effective interventions that, if implemented across LMICs, could help prevent an estimated 39 million deaths and yield economic returns of US\$2.7 trillion from 2023 to 2030.⁷ Among other solutions, the report encourages Governments to consider health taxes on cigarettes and alcohol, raise awareness around NCDs, and help their populations understand the responsibility that they have for their own health.

As NCDs have a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable communities, continued global leadership and greater action on NCDs will be essential to ensuring that all countries appropriately prioritize and invest in NCD prevention and care in the coming decades. To help sustain ongoing dialogue on the need for sustainable financing for NCDs, on July 6, 2023, the NCD Alliance and MSD jointly hosted an official T20 side event moderated by High Lantern Group, “Nearly 75% of Global Deaths are Caused by Non-Communicable Diseases—How the G20 Can Help.”

Centered on the role of the G20 in addressing NCDs, this closed roundtable discussion featured insights and perspectives from leading experts in the field of NCDs, including G20 affiliate and working group members, patient representatives, policymakers, health officials, and NGO and private sector leaders. During the event, experts discussed the current state of NCD policies in G20 countries, the need for prioritizing investment, and how the G20’s role as the preeminent global body for economic and financial cooperation can help to identify and promote sustainable and diversified sources of funding and financing.

Key Takeaways:

A. With the growing understanding of the challenges NCDs pose, G20 must enhance dedicated funding to these diseases

B. Three global policy shifts could make a serious impact on NCDs:



1. Establish national NCD plans which include clear targets and timelines to guide resource allocation and ensure follow through on commitments



2. Secure sufficient and sustainable funding and deploy adequate workforce to effectively implement NCD initiatives and programs



3. Prioritize primary and secondary prevention measures and accelerate integration of NCDs into primary healthcare services

C. Five clear actions the G20 can take:



1. Prioritize coordination for NCD action on the agenda of the G20 Health Working Group



2. Track progress on NCDs across G20 countries, specifically focusing on program financing, expenditures, and returns on investment



3. Facilitate greater collaboration between the finance and health sectors



4. Enable the sharing of best practices and successful approaches across member governments, particularly in the areas of NCD financing and health system reforms



5. Promote innovative financing approaches to tackling NCDs

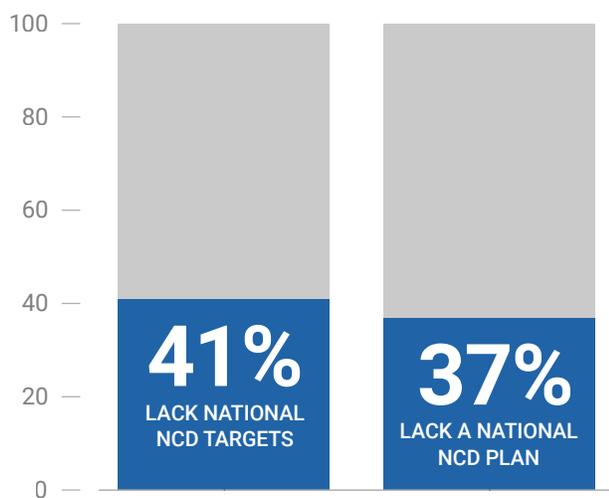
A. With the growing understanding of the challenges NCDs pose, G20 governments must enhance dedicated funding to these diseases

There is growing awareness of the benefits of action on NCDs and the consequences of inaction—or inadequate action—by G20 governments. Moreover, the financial case for responding to the silent crisis of NCDs has also been made, with returns on investment clearly demonstrated.⁸

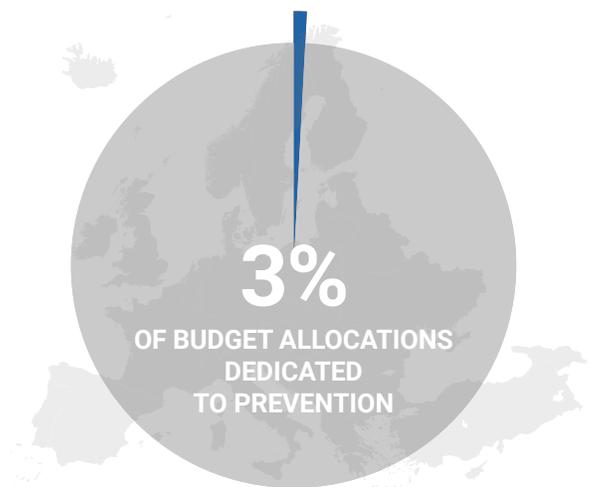
Taking cognizance of this shared understanding, G20 member countries must fully align their NCD intentions and commitments with needed actions. Across the G20, NCDs continue to remain significantly underfunded relative to the negative impact they have on individuals, communities, and economies. Only 59% of G20

countries have national NCD targets, while only 63% have a national NCD plan.⁹ Not enough of these countries have implemented *NCD Countdown 2030's* high-priority interventions, and in many countries, there is insufficient domestic resource mobilization for NCD programs. Critically, there is insufficient funding going towards prevention programs; for example, only 3% of health budgets across Europe are allocated to prevention.¹⁰ Additionally, G20 governments are not prioritizing within their development assistance for health (DAH) budgets, with most committing less than 2% of their DAH funds to NCDs annually.¹¹

41% of G20 countries have no national NCD targets, and 37% have no national NCD plan in place.



Only 3% of health budgets in European countries are dedicated to prevention.



B. Three policy shifts throughout the world could make a serious impact on NCDs over the long term

G20 governments should reconsider their approach to NCD budgeting by taking a few key actions.



1. Establish national NCD plans which include clear targets and timelines to guide resource allocation and ensure follow through on commitments

Member governments must formulate clear, actionable national plans, drawing on the policy actions specified in the *NCD Global Action Plan* adopted by WHA and the 21 high priority interventions outlined in the *NCD Countdown 2030* report. Doing so will also be critical to ensuring that programs are well supported and optimized, and put us in a stronger position to hit the SDG 3.4 target.



2. Secure sufficient and sustainable funding and deploy adequate workforce to effectively implement NCD initiatives and programs

Governments must also embrace utilizing a variety of financing methods to support the operationalization and implementation of key NCD programs, including innovative financing mechanisms, domestic resource mobilization and private sector sources of funding. Governments should strongly consider replicating approaches that have already proven to be successful in other countries, including health taxes, healthcare expenditure earmarks, performance-based investing, and blended finance mechanisms.



3. Prioritize primary and secondary prevention measures and accelerate integration of NCDs into primary healthcare services

Member governments must prioritize expenditures on primary and secondary prevention efforts within health budgets. This includes policies that address the key risk factors for the leading NCDs (tobacco use, nutrition and dietary concerns, pollution), like sin taxes, education and awareness programs and patient empowerment initiatives. Efforts to bolster primary healthcare services, such as the screening and early diagnosis of cancer and cardiovascular disease, are also crucial. Today, only a small share of healthcare expenditures are allocated for prevention and primary healthcare. As these programs are better supported, NCD outcomes will also improve.

C. An influential platform for shaping global policymaking, the G20 can take five clear actions to make progress on NCDs

As the world's premier forum for the promotion of multilateral economic cooperation, and one whose members have diverse healthcare systems and financing approaches, the G20 is uniquely positioned to accelerate investment for NCDs, for several reasons.

First, the G20 is well-situated to lead a coordinated initiative across multilateral institutions, geographies, and sectors on NCDs. From working to stabilize the global economy following the 2008 financial crisis, to helping galvanize resources to help combat the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, to promoting centralized hubs in important areas like infrastructure, antimicrobial resistance, and value-based healthcare, the G20 has already demonstrated their ability to coalesce stakeholders around shared objectives and ensure member countries follow through on commitments. Moreover, actions taken by the G20 could help shape the decision-making of

non-G20 governments, providing policymakers with important cues and guidance on how to best formulate their respective national NCD policies.

Second, the G20 is one of a handful of global organizations which can provide a sufficient platform to bring together and discuss all ongoing work on NCDs—across the care continuum (prevention, treatment, and care). Just as sectoral and geographical perspectives are important, so too are the views of those engaging with patients at various points in their disease journey. The expertise of a wide range of stakeholders—physicians, caregivers, pharmacists, allied health professionals, government officials, patients, caregivers, etc.—must be considered in any policymaking efforts for NCDs. The G20 remains the best forum for ensuring the perspectives of these stakeholders are elevated and integrated into the policymaking process.

Recognizing its importance as a platform for advancing health initiatives, event participants discussed **five priority solutions** the G20 could implement to make real progress on NCDs:

ELEVATING NCD INITIATIVES THROUGH ENHANCED COLLABORATION:



Prioritize coordination for NCD action on the agenda of the Health Working Group

The G20's Health Working Group is an influential entity that can meaningfully influence policymaking at the global and domestic levels. Including NCDs on the Working Group agenda would send a clear signal that the G20 is prioritizing action on NCDs.



Facilitate greater collaboration between the finance and health sectors

Neither the health sector nor the finance sector alone can tackle this monumental challenge; cross-sectoral collaboration is therefore crucial. The G20 can act as the bridge between experts in these sectors, facilitating important conversations and ensuring the most realistic and scalable solutions are ultimately promoted and adopted. Specifically, the G20 can create opportunities for the working groups to collaborate on a pilot program centered around NCD financing, which would help elevate the issue of NCDs. The G20 can play a role in engaging private sector voices from both sectors, further sustaining support for NCD issues.

ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ACTION:



Track progress on NCDs across G20 countries, specifically focusing on financing, expenditures, and returns on investment

The G20 should conduct benchmarking research to evaluate G20 countries' progress against commitments, and to identify opportunities for member governments to strengthen and bolster their respective NCD initiatives. In addition to leveraging existing data points, the G20 should formulate additional indicators to better monitor NCD progress, including specific points on NCD financing sources, annual budgetary allocations, returns on investments for NCD programs, efficiency of financial resources spent on NCD interventions, and implementation status of key NCD initiatives. Data gathered should be standardized, so that it can be compared year-over-year and across G20 countries.

After compiling a new set of NCD data at the country level, the G20 should publish results in digestible formats that can most easily be utilized by stakeholders and persuade and encourage them to bolster their respective domestic programs.

As part of this effort, the G20 could create a comprehensive global NCD metrics dashboard, drawing inspiration from digital platforms like the *WHO Europe Dashboard* and the *NCD Global Burden of Disease Dashboards*. The G20 could also consider producing an annual report to help encourage countries to follow through on commitments.

SUPPORTING PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION:



Enable the sharing of best practices and successful approaches across member governments, particularly in the areas of NCD financing and health system reforms

The G20 has an opportunity to leverage its platform to become a hub or repository for the sharing of best practices on NCD financing and health system reforms. Doing so would ensure that countries facing discrete challenges learn from successful approaches being adopted by other G20 members. Approaches shared in the repository could also help inform future G20 policymaking, briefs, or research.



Promote fit-for-purpose, innovative financing approaches to tackling NCDs

In addition to allowing members to share their ideas with one another, the G20 can also take the lead in promoting specific types of financing mechanisms that have been demonstrated to be effective. For example, some of the financing recommendations the Sustainable Finance Working Group has already put forth for the ongoing climate transition—including strengthening sustainable finance capacity and infrastructure, utilizing and scaling blended financing mechanisms, and introducing policy incentive mechanisms—could be applied towards healthcare initiatives. The G20 can also encourage governments to expedite NCD initiatives by taking a staggered approach, implementing initiatives first in areas with relatively lower barriers to action, and then expanding and scaling programs to other regions. By leading in these areas, the G20 can help create an ecosystem of peer learning and ensure accountability for member countries to act in ways that are sustainable and effective.

Conclusion

Despite the headwinds and ongoing challenges faced by the G20, meaningful progress on NCDs is possible in the coming years. If member governments were to implement the WHO's NCD best buy recommendations, they could avert an estimated 39 million deaths and generate US \$2.7 trillion in economic benefits. Moreover, many of the recommendations outlined in this report are beneficial for all parties, saving policymakers precious time and resources, while also improving outcomes for NCD patients. Most importantly, proper investment and scaling up of NCD prevention initiatives could help turn the tide against this looming threat.

Looking ahead, the G20 has several opportunities to ensure NCDs continue to be discussed at the global level. Beyond the inclusion of NCDs in working group agendas, the G20 can provide leadership at key forthcoming global NCD milestones, including the WHO Second NCD Financing Dialogue in 2024 and the UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs in 2025. Furthermore, G20 leaders can build on the leadership the Indian government has shown in this area during its G20 Presidency by ensuring the focus on NCD financing is sustained heading into Brazil's 2024 G20 Presidency.

Event Agenda

Introducing the Roundtable	Mario Ottiglio	Managing Director, High Lantern Group (Moderator)
Welcome	Monika Arora	President, NCD Alliance
Opening Remarks	G. A. Tadas	Visiting Fellow, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS); and Chair, T20 Task Force 06
	Lav Agarwal	Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, India and G20 Health Sherpa
	Leticia de Oliveira Cardoso	General-Coordinator of Surveillance of Non-Communicable Diseases and Conditions, Ministry of Health, Brazil
NCD Responses Across the G20 –Opportunities for Improvement	Katie Dain	Chief Executive Officer, NCD Alliance
Investing in NCD Prevention & Care –Return on Investment and the Continuum of Financing Solutions	Rifat Atun	Professor of Global Health Systems and Director of Health Systems Innovation Lab, Harvard University
Interactive Discussion: Steps toward Better Investment in Healthcare Infrastructure and Systems to Address NCDs in the G20	Leticia de Oliveira Cardoso	General-Coordinator of Surveillance of Non-Communicable Diseases and Conditions, Ministry of Health, Brazil
	Simón Barquera	Director, Center for Research in Nutrition and Health of the National Institute of Public Health, Mexico; and President- Elect of the World Obesity Federation
	Jyotsna Govil	Chairperson, Indian Cancer Society, Delhi Branch, India
	Alan Donnelly	Chair and Founder, G20 & G7 Health and Development Partnership
	John Schoonbee	Global Chief Medical Officer, Swiss Re
	Julia Spencer	Associate Vice President, Global Multilateral Engagement, Strategic Alliances & Government Affairs, MSD
Moderated Q&A	All	

Select Quotes from Participants

“Before it becomes an insurmountable health and economic crisis, global leadership and action are needed to ensure that all countries prioritize and invest in NCD prevention and care.”

Monika Arora
NCD Alliance

“Unlike the pandemic, NCDs do not attract much global attention. That is the biggest problem.”

G.A.Tadas
Research and Information System
for Developing Countries (RIS)
& G20 T20 Task Force 06

“Financing has always been the Achilles heel of the NCD response...the evidence is clear that closing this funding gap is among the world’s biggest opportunities to save lives and reduce poverty by 2030.”

Katie Dain
NCD Alliance

“Without a sustainable allocation of funding, NCD plans get put on a shelf. The G20 can provide a platform for best practice sharing and discussions on funding and operationalizing NCD plans.”

Julia Spencer
MSD

“We must access multiple potential sources of financing, all of which can be used to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, equity and responsiveness of NCD interventions.”

Rifat Atun
Health Systems Innovation Lab,
Harvard

“We need a dual approach—helping countries create the fiscal headroom to boost domestic spend coupled with the promotion of city or regional initiatives to tackle NCDs. We urgently need definitive evidence-based case studies that demonstrate what actually works.”

Alan Donnelly
G20 & G7 Health and Development
Partnership

“The main point is to have equity as a principle to guide the organization of health systems.”

Leticia de Oliveira Cardoso
Ministry of Health, Brazil

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