

Everything You Need to know about NCD FINANCING



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KEY MESSAGES:

- **Noncommunicable diseases result in 40 million deaths per year.**
- **Noncommunicable diseases receive less than 2% of development assistance for health (DAH) funding globally.**
- **Cumulative lost output due to noncommunicable diseases is 7 trillion USD.**
- **The 3rd United Nations High Level Meeting will be key in ensuring renewed commitment for investing in NCDs.**
- **Youth hold a unique position as individuals and collectively in the advocacy for noncommunicable disease funding.**
- **Advocacy for increased noncommunicable disease funding should be evidence-based.**

Abbreviations:

NCDs	Noncommunicable diseases
WHO	World Health Organization
DAH	Development Assistance for Health
UN HLM	United Nations High Level Meeting
LMICs	Low and Middle-Income Countries
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CHAI	Clinton Health Access Initiative

Q. What are noncommunicable diseases?

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are non-infectious, non-transmittable medical conditions. These diseases of long duration and generally slow progression include cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes, and mental disorders. NCDs are the leading global cause of death. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), they result in 40 million deaths per year. More than 80% of these deaths happen in low- and middle-income countries, of which 48% of them occur before the ages of 70.

Q. Why is financing needed for NCDs?

Globally, NCDs pose a great challenge to the individual, families, communities, and countries because of rapid unplanned urbanization, globalization of unhealthy lifestyles and population ageing. The majority of the developing world is affected by major economic imbalances where poverty is closely linked to the prevalence of NCDs. Governments are underspending on health and particularly so on NCDs. Health forecasting has revealed that there will be a rapid rise in NCDs in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) during the coming decades, which will lead to increasing healthcare costs for low-income households as well as hinder poverty reduction initiatives in these countries.

Furthermore, vulnerable and socially disadvantaged populations are more prone to illness and premature death due a greater risk of exposure to environmental hazards, tobacco and poor nutrition. In addition, the burden of NCDs is increased due to under-resourced communities having limited access to quality health services and governments having no or very limited budgets to serve their needs. From a global health perspective, it is clear that we need financing for NCDs if we wish to obtain upward progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Q. What is the current status of NCD financing?

There is a high burden of NCDs around the world, but NCDs receive very small amounts (less than 2%) of development assistance for health (DAH) funding globally. In fact, global health financing dedicated to combating NCDs has remained constant over the past 15 years. In addition to the disease burden, NCDs attribute to a great economic burden as well. This economic burden can be understood better in terms of direct and indirect costs.

Direct costs of NCDs:

- Governments - Government expenditure on prevention, screening, and treatment
- Individuals - Human lives lost and increased personal medical expenditures
- Private sector - Private sector expenditure on health

Indirect costs of NCDs:

- Economy - Output lost due to absenteeism, output lost due to presenteeism, and cost to replace workers who drop out of workforce due to chronic disease
- Individuals - Decreased human capital, lost income, and lost time due to caretaking responsibilities

An investment of US\$11.4 billion per year is required to reduce the burden of NCDs globally that outweighs the projected cumulative lost output due to NCDs, which is 7 trillion USD.

Q. Why is the 2018 United Nations high level meeting important with respect to health financing?

The United Nations high level meeting (UN HLM) on NCDs will be the third high level meeting on NCDs. The first two meetings were held in 2011 and 2014. Since 2014, the momentum has been building in a positive direction for NCDs. With the

increasing burden of NCDs globally, there is urgent need for the resources to be increased and the HLM is a key place for such commitments. Thus, the meeting is very important for NCD financing and will happen in September during the UN General Assembly.

With WHO's renewed focus on Universal Health Coverage, the UN HLM will be a key in ensuring renewed commitment for investing in NCDs. In addition, in line with the focus to achievement of the sustainable development goals, this meeting is key in making decisions on re-allocation and re-distribution of resources.

The pace has been slow in pooling resources for NCDs, therefore, the HLM this year would be an opportune moment in ensuring that the suffering endured by patients is enough.

Q. What opportunities exist to advocate for increased financing for NCDs?

Advocacy to increase financing of NCDs should be evidence-based, and various opportunities exist that can be utilized at the country level.

- Financing prevention and control campaigns: Education is an important aspect because it is directly related to prevention and control strategies for NCDs. Campaigns aiming at prevention and control of NCDs can play an important role in educating the public on reducing the common modifiable risk factors linked to NCDs.
- Financing monitoring and evaluation programmes for NCDs: Monitoring and evaluation programmes where NCD trends and their risks are documented can form the basis for guiding policies and healthcare priorities for LMICs. Advocacy for the funding of NCDs should be a driving factor to save LMICs from further spiraling into poverty.

- Whole of sector approach: To decrease the impact of NCDs on both individuals and society, inter- and multidisciplinary consultation is required. This comprehensive approach should include all sectors (health, finance, transport, education, agriculture, etc.) to collaborate on innovative prevention and control activities.
- Integration: An opportunity for advocacy for funding further exists in essential high impact NCD interventions which can be delivered through existing primary healthcare approach. This approach aims to strengthen early detection and enable timely treatment by integrating NCD services and packages within the existing programmes. These types of interventions are excellent economic investments and evidence has proved that timely detection decreases the need for more expensive treatment.
- Bang for the buck: Advocacy efforts for the funding of NCDs should be aimed at obtaining more value per dollar spent. This can be achieved through fund matching agreements, and governments contracting out services to ensure optimization in service delivery

Q. How can I engage my government to increase the budgetary allocation for NCDs?

Engaging with the governments is crucial for NCD financing advocacy. There are a number of moving parts and technical skills required to change the budgetary allocation. It is important to understand is that all governments are different. It is relatively easy to engage with some governments i.e. either at a local level than perhaps a national level, or even from country to country. Also, it is useful to be informed on what budget advocacy is before engaging with the government. Budget advocacy is a strategic approach to influence governments' budget choices, aimed at achieving clear and specific outcomes e.g., healthier people, less poverty, improved governance,

reduced NCD burden. These are clearly examples of long-term objectives. Effective advocacy will build toward attaining them with smaller concrete steps, such as increased budget allocations and more solid oversight of how funds are spent. It is clear that policy and budget advocacy seek to intervene in decision-making process in three fundamental ways:

- **Changing Policy:** Based on analysis of the problems involved, advocates champion the creation of new laws, new public programs or activities, or modifications to existing laws and programs, etc.
- **Changing the Decision-making System:** Advocates also turn their attention to the decision-making system itself, by demanding transparency and access to information, secure opportunities for public involvement, and clearer oversight over how public funds and public programs are managed.
- **Empowering People to Make Change:** Equally if not more important, effective advocacy also involves empowering the people whose lives are impacted by public decisions or people living with NCDs to understand the issues involved and to be able to take action on their own behalf.

Q. How can the young people leverage on their individual and collective power to advocate for increased NCD financing?

The youth hold a unique position as individuals and collectively in the advocacy for NCD funding. Young people have a voice that is worth hearing. This voice speaks of innovation and is the promise for the future. Young people also have unique leadership abilities and insights to their generation that should be explored. They can use these 'powers' to advocate for NCD funding.

- **Evidence generation:** The youth has the ability to be engaged in NCD management from a community

perspective. The drive for funding must be evidence-based, and the youth who are engaged in community-based initiatives have the power to gather data on advocating for the financing of NCDs at the local level. These initiatives, although they begin on a small-scale, can have great impact because they form the basis for other settings to implement similar processes to evoke change.

- **Advocacy to the government using informed dialogue:** Advocacy to the government using particularly through media via native communication can be very effective. Once the information is in vernacular, the public and the government can utilize it effectively. For example, writing an open letter through one of the national dailies in your community to inform the government to advocate for action can be a useful way to build momentum for the cause.
- **Education for prevention and control:** Children, adults and the elderly are all vulnerable to the risk factors contributing to NCDs mainly from unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, exposure to tobacco smoke and the harmful use of alcohol. Young people can be involved in prevention and control educational activities within their communities. These educational activities are vital as a motivation for NCD funding. Successful prevention activities begin with great public awareness campaigns which directly influences control and treatment pathways. However, for prevention, there needs to be an adequate support with fiscal policies such as taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages, tobacco and alcohol.
- **Public campaigns and petitions:** Public campaigns may take the form of social media, where young people can widely express their views and gain global air time. With the current technological advances, the youth can use these to advocate for NCD funding. Petitions to the global community may be created, polls for donations may be established and most importantly, education on NCDs can

be greatly enhanced through educational online campaigns.

- Leveraging Digital Technology: NCD patients can significantly benefit from digital innovations and youth must be engaged in creating awareness about these to the public for effective utilization as well as to the government to portray the advantages of such facilities. This can be a highly effective method to attract funding toward these innovations from government and donor agencies for application in NCDs diagnosis, treatment, monitoring and prevention.

Q. With respect to NCD financing, how can the NCD community deal with industry interference and other commercial determinants of health?

The role of private sector in shaping the financing and resource redistribution to tackle NCDs cannot be overlooked. Therefore, it is important for the broader NCD community to systemize their efforts in ensuring the public and future generations are protected.

- Ensuring that governments not only formulate but also implement protective policies for the general and unsuspecting public.
- Ensuring that corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies used by private sector and industry are regulated and the resources are channeled through regulated bodies or systems.
- Large scale uniform dissemination of information to the public.
- Lobbying to ensure that governments must take a leading role or provide an active support in providing for platforms to educate and share material to the general public who can make a much more informed choice.
- Unmasking the marketing strategies of the various industry players to the unsuspecting public.

Q. What role can the non-governmental organizations/non-profits play to improve financing for NCDs especially in low and middle-income countries?

Non-governmental organizations especially those directly dealing with health-related issues have an important role to play in advocating for improved financing for NCDs. They can make an impact in improving financing for NCDs and other related diseases by advocating for the following implantation strategies:

- Improved Public Health Care services across the country, including rural clinics to support pregnant mothers and provide immunization to children
- Emphasis on preventive rather than curative health care
- More training of staff and new incentive packages to retain doctors and nurses in the poorest areas
- Faster and better managed flow of drugs across all states at the right place, at the right time and in the right quantity
- Financing public awareness campaigns across communities about preventive measures on some NCDs

Q. Where can I get more information about NCD financing?

Following are the vital information sources on previous and current funding status on NCDs regionally and globally;

1. The WHO Global Coordination Mechanism on the Prevention and Control of NCDs Working Group on how to realize government's' commitment to provide financing for NCDs (Working Group 5.1)

This group's role and responsibility is to look for ways to realize government's' commitment to provide financing for NCDs. The group has members from both developed and developing countries.

2. Published papers and reports

- [Financing national non-communicable disease responses, 2017](#)
- [Cancer: A Neglected Disease in Africa: report from Clinton Health Access Initiatives \(CHAI\)](#)
- [Lancet Task Force on NCDs and Economics, 2018](#)
- [Bloomberg Task Force on NCDs and Fiscal Policies](#)
- [Saving Lives, Spending Less, World Health Organization, 2018](#)

List of organizations generating evidence on and advocating for increased NCD financing

ORGANISATION/GROUP	TWITTER handle
RTI International	@RTI_Intl
World Health Organization	@WHO
Lancet task force on NCD and Economics	@TheLancet
NCD Alliance	@ncdalliance
High Level Commission on NCDs.	@beatNCDs
UN Task Force on NCDs	@un_ncd
UN Development	@UNDP
Union For International Cancer Control	@uicc
Young Professionals Chronic Disease Network	@ncdaction
NCD Child	@NCDChild
Healthy Caribbean Coalition	@HealthCaribbean
United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth	@unmgcy
World Diabetes Foundation	@WorldDiabetesF
Commonwealth Youth Health Network	@CWYouthHealth
The Defeat-NCD Partnership	@DefeatNCD
International Federation of Medical Students' Associations	@ifmsa