In response to the Astana Declaration, two different civil society groups came up with civil society statements with what they felt the declaration should encompass. These were from the UHC civil society engagement mechanism - UHC2030 CSEM and the People’s Health Movement - PHM Alternative Declaration. The UHC2030 CSEM declaration calls for systematic attention to the needs of the most marginalised and vulnerable populations, while the PHM alternative declaration calls for achieving equity in health outcomes.

Although noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) where mentioned by many of the participants as an essential component of the PHC response, NCDs and its risk factors were only specifically addressed in a few events. Some of the most mentioned topics related to NCDs were the effective integration of NCDs as part of PHC, and the addressing of the 5x5 and life-course approach by PHC and UHC. Some of the events that addressed NCDs include:

- Café Session 3.4-L-2 (25 October) - Integrating mental health health care: The paradigm of Greek Social Cooperatives of people with mental health disorders and psychosocial disabilities.
- Ministerial Parallel Session 1.4 (25 October) - Empowering People at the Centre of Primary Health Care
- Café Session 3.10-a1 (26 October) - Putting people at the centre of health care: Promoting meaningful involvement of people living with non-communicable disease to shape their own health.

Convened by the NCD Alliance (partner of NCD Child)

This event had the participation of two youth delegates supported by NCD Child: Dr. Ishu Kataria (Senior Public Health Researcher, RTI International, and Global Coordinator, Young-Professional Chronic Disease Network, YP-CDN) and Luis Manuel Encarnacion (Member of the Governing Council, NCD Child).
REPORT ON THE GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON PRIMARY HEALTH CARE:
FROM ALMA-ATA TOWARDS UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

ASTANA, KAZAKHSTAN
25-26 OCTOBER 2018

Regarding civil society participation, although present, it has largely outnumbered by representatives from government and UN agencies. Many of the civil society organisations present were either focused on international development aid and development, or other health care and health delivery areas, including maternal, newborn, child adolescent health, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights, and community health workers and health workforce. Civil society whose main focus was NCDs had little presence, with only NCD Child and NCD Alliance being notoriously present in the event.

There is an available link where you can find a summary of the main statements given by participants throughout the conference.

4) YOUTH INVOLVEMENT AND CONNECTIONS:

The 24th October 2018 stood as an important date to all young people who were part of the global conference on PHC. A youth pre-conference was hosted on this specific date, gathering together more than 120 youth from more than 50 represented countries at the Nursultan Narzarbayev University in Astana.

Co-hosted by WHO, UNICEF and the Government of Kazakhstan, the pre-conference brought prominent figures in the arena of global health such as Yelzhan Birtanov, Minister of Health of Kazakhstan, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General and Ted Chaiban, Director Program Division- UNICEF, at the discussion table with the ambitious youth representatives. The opening panel discussion left many questions among the target audience as the youth pre-conference had no youth speaker among the panelists. The key focus being the all time concern of the youths; “meaningful youth engagement”, the puzzle of the day stood as the then-to be adopted new Astana declaration lacked key words that would imply the significance of youth as part of this new declaration. There was completely no mention of the words youths nor young people or their likes, in the whole document. As part of the day’s agenda for the pre-conference, the youths took time to discuss key challenges facing users and health care providers in respective-ly, accessing and availing PHC as a means of reaching UHC. The outcomes and solutions that resulted from this pre-conference were to be showcased as youth generated models during the actual conference. The clear cut picture of their implementa-tion was never mentioned. as part of mobilizing youth engagement in the sphere of PHC, a youth leaders network on PHC was created with 21 young people as part of this global network. Leave alone financial support to attending the global conference, these 21 young leaders are entitled to Mentorship and internship opportunities with PHC leaders in global health and Opportunity to engage and support WHO’s PHC agenda, with follow up events in 2019.

During the actual Global conference on PHC, youths were given a pivotal role as speakers and spearheaders of the newly adopted Astana declaration. There were 7 Panelist who were youth speakers and the adoption of the declaration was, at the main stage during the opening ceremony, handed over to youths representatives as an emblem that signified having youths as a crucial component in the implementation of the Astana Declaration on Primary Health Care. with all these efforts to create and support meaningful youth engagement, one could imagine a perfect response from the youths. There were still a number of items that pushed a number of the youths to still feel the gap existing between actual youth engagement and engagement by the paper, such as the lack of any descriptive terms signifying youth involvement in the Astana declaration, cutting short some of the youth speakers from their time to speak during the panel discussions and the extent of even taking some of the pre-planned youth speakers of the panel lists at the last minutes. These acts among the few, aggravated the youths representatives to write a youth commentary to the Lancet for the purpose of having it published. This initiative was not put forth as it was very unspecific and unclear on the documents purpose use.
NCD Child supported three youth delegates to attend both the youth workshop and the conference, and to ensure meaningful representation of young people working on NCDs at the event.

“In my case, the event allowed for successfully attending both the workshop and the conference, as well as to participate as a speaker in a side event organised by the NCD Alliance, one of NCD Child’s allies, on the meaningful involvement of people living with NCDs and youth in advocacy efforts led by civil society organisations, specifically looking at the Mexican experience,” Luis Manuel Encarnacion.

“Attending the conference allowed me to look at primary healthcare through an NCD lens whilst interacting with individuals from multidisciplinary backgrounds. It also gave me an opportunity to talk about the role of research for policy-making and involving patients’ perspective in NCD research in a side event organized by the NCD Alliance on putting people at the centre of health care by promoting meaningful involvement of people living with NCDs to shape their own health,” Ishu Kataria

“Having the opportunity to being part of NCD Child gives a young person the true meaning of meaningful youth engagement, and leaves at open sight anything less off that,” George Msengi.

Although representation of young delegates was assured throughout the conference, this needs further advocacy and support to ensure that young people are not only mentioned in the country and delegates’ statements, but that are also meaningfully involved in the preparation of the conference, outcome documents, follow-ups, etc.

5) NEXT STEPS AFTER ASTANA:

The Declaration presents with new commitments on PHC that will inform the preparatory process and that will serve as a basis for the outcome document of the 2019 UN High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC). In this process, it will be relevant to evaluate the impact of the Conference and the Declaration around the 72nd World Health Assembly to be held in May 2019, in terms of new resolutions and events on PHC and UHC.

Alongside the UNHLM on UHC, the WHO will launch its Global Action Plan on Healthy Lives and Well-Being for All, which is currently being designed, and that will set the basis for addressing SDG 3 on Health, where PHC and UHC are pursued as key elements for the fulfillment of SDGs and the 2030 Agenda.

It is highly valuable that NCD Child continues supporting young people to attend these types of events in the future, as these not only represent opportunities for disseminating the work and presence of NCD Child, but they are also opportunities for networking and advocacy for issues that are relevant for the organisation as well as with other youth allies. Further involvement in this conference include the support of a possible youth statement coming out after the event, as well as future work to ensure that young people are effectively included in the preparatory process of the 2019 UNHLM on UHC, and that there is specific language mentioning young people as key population groups to target as part of UHC and key stakeholders to involve and collaborate with on PHC and UHC policies.

Needed follow-up: Dr. Sania Nishtar and Dr. Shekhar Saxena, with whom we had the opportunity to interact. Others include Lucy Fagan from the UN Major Group on Children and Youth, as well as UNICEF and WHO (organisers of the event).