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## **East African NCDA initiates continent-wide NCD research group**



The East African NCD Alliance spear-headed the establishment of a continent-wide NCD Research Group recently. The initiative was a response to the gaps existing in the NCD research activities needed to inform NCD policy, prevention and control care programmes in the region.

The EANCDA identified low capacity and limited organisation and collaboration in NCD research in Africa as some of the challenges limiting an effective response to the NCD scourge in the region. In addition, the few experts in different areas of NCD specialties in East Africa mainly focus on clinical work; they are thus not always well-coordinated to attract funds to conduct research.

The aim of the Research Group was, therefore, to facilitate NCD research in a comprehensive, multi-sectoral and coordinated approach by tapping into a region-wide pool of multi-disciplinary teams.

In January 2017, a conference in Nairobi brought together representatives from 12 African countries and other overseas participants including NCD practitioners, WHO AFRO staff, academia, governments, NCD civil society, and other stakeholders to map key NCD data gaps and available research capacity in East Africa and to determine areas of synergy between different stakeholders and a regional mechanism for collaboration.

With support from the global NCD Alliance, AstraZeneca, and Agha Khan University, the conference was conducted in collaboration with African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) and the International Development Research Center (IDRC) from Canada which presented findings from their research on NCD prevention policies in Sub Saharan Africa.

The outcomes of the research conference included:

**1- Creation of an Africa wide NCD Research Group** modelled along the African NCD Civil Society Network developed in Oct 2016 in Mauritius with coordination mechanisms at continental, regional and national levels. It is headed by a team of five including:

Prof. Yonga Gerald (Agha Khan University, Kenya),

Prof. Naomi D. Levitt (University of Cape Town, South Africa),

Prof. Jean-Claude Mbanya (University of Yaounde, Cameroon),

Dr. Kaushik Ramaiya (International Diabetes Federation, Tanzania),

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Prof. Elijah Ogola (University of Nairobi, Kenya).

**2- Development of a priority research agenda for Africa.** Key new and urgent areas of research highlighted include nutrition and physical activity.

**3- Development of collaborative frameworks** to implement the research agenda. These included:

A research communication network which will include a website, quarterly newsletter, NCD Africa research journal, and social media platform. All of these will be used for sharing research and best practices in the region

Research collaboration framework which will involve joint proposals, capacity building/exchange programmes, multi-country comparison projects, sharing researches, expertise for implementation and conferences, workshops, and consultations.

A comprehensive report and action plan for the Research Group is being finalised and will be published soon.

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