

## Day 2 of NCDAF2020 focuses on transformation through policy and social movements

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Mr. Fale Andrew Lesa and Dr Esperanza Cerón, plenary speakers of the third Global NCD Alliance Forum, 10 February 2020, Sharjah (UAE). ©NCDA/Gilberto Lontro

This year's Global Forum is structured around three main themes, the first two of which were the subject of today's morning and afternoon plenaries:

- Saving lives and protecting communities through transformative NCD policies and solutions
- Building the demand for collective action on NCDs through transformative social movements and voices for change
- Enhancing accountability for all people with NCDs everywhere through transformative and inclusive governance (tomorrow's plenary).

Each plenary is followed by a series of six workshops, held simultaneously in the vast open space of the conference hall; headphones and connected microphones avoid competing speaker noise and create a 'silent conferencing' environment, in some cases adding the option for language translation.

### Transformative NCD policies and solutions

The morning plenary began with a keynote presentation from the World Health Organization's Dr Ren Minghui, launching the [NCD Progress Monitor 2020](#) [1]. This looks at countries' progress towards a set of NCD indicators – and the signs are not good: according to it only 40 of over 190 countries are on track to meet SDG target 3.4 to reduce premature mortality from NCDs by one third by 2030; 50 more countries might be able to reach the target, but only if they rapidly accelerate action by 2023. WHO is working with member states to bridge commitment and reality: *'We see the commitment at global level, but we need to translate it into real action on the ground.'*

The need both to protect **the rights of children and young people** and to ensure their involvement, came across very strongly. Chilean Senator Guido Girardi spoke about Chile's leadership in labelling of unhealthy foods, which is linked to restrictions on where they can be sold and served. UNICEF has recently moved from a 'survive' to a 'thrive'

strategy for children – as a result NCDs are now being integrated more comprehensively within its work. Urging greater meaningful involvement of young people, Dr Batool Al-Wahdani declared: *'We need regional and gender representation – now let's include age representation!'*

### Transformative social movements and voices for change

"We won't get to where we want by being polite... We need to be catalysts of change!" – Kwanele Asante

The afternoon plenary turned attention away from policy and instead focused on the active involvement of people: social movements and voices for change. As Fale Andrew Lesa challenged us: *'Who is not here, who should be here, and how do I make that happen?'* We can all learn much both from people with lived experience of NCDs and from social movements in other fields – notably (and successfully) **HIV/AIDS**.

Prof. Adeeba Kamarulzaman noted that *'Without a human rights approach, [the NCD community] won't address issues of ... access to treatment ... access to care, and investment and issues of social justice.'* However, as Dr Esperanza Ceron Villaquiran pointed out, even where the right to health has been enshrined in law, as has happened in Colombia, the reality is that this right is not always enforced.

Dr Shible Sahbani suggested that all delegates follow the example of Every Woman Every Child and ensure that humanitarian settings are considered across all [five NCD gaps](#) [2] that NCDA has identified.

Fale Andrew Lesa spoke – forcefully, eloquently and from his experience – about the need for a change of attitude towards **Indigenous communities**: shifting from a focus on deficit and 'vulnerability' to a *'strengths-based approach'* would have a significant impact on NCDs by recognising and respecting the strengths, wisdom and solutions that lie within them. Joshua Makubu reminded delegates that we need to involve people living with NCDs not because they have an NCD but because they have valuable skills or the capacity to become more than observers, or already have the ability to bring about change (such as industry leaders or parliamentarians.)

### Workshops: discussing challenges and solutions

The workshops are so packed with content and collaborative outcomes that they could almost have an entire recap of their own... each... captured below is a flavour of each

NCD policies:

- *"Law is a really powerful tool to address NCDs – particularly to make long-term, systemic change"* (Suzanne Zhou) – and this is best achieved through collaboration that combines the skills and knowledge of parliamentarians, lawyers, academics and civil society.
- There are significant win-wins in addressing **gender inequality and NCDs** – although barriers to progress will vary between different groups and must be understood and tackled in different ways. *'Tobacco is never seen from a gendered lens; however, women are easily addicted to nicotine than men and the rate of quitting or abstinence is also lower among women than men'* (Ambassador Sally Cowal)

Social movements and voices for change:

- **People-powered movements** highlighted the strength of communities. One of the examples was that of the What Women Want campaign in India, which asks women to write their *'most precious ask'* on a postcard: *'We learned that once the voices have spoken, you are beholden to ensure that action is taken'* (Dr Aparajita Gogoi).
- The best way to understand the complexities of **childhood obesity** is to involve the target population actively as equal partners in the design, implementation and evaluation of preventive measures.
- The increasing burden of **multi-morbidities** is best tackled through a holistic approach – and empowering community health workers with knowledge of NCDs (including mental health conditions such as dementia) can have myriad benefits.

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### Accountability:

- The staggering scale of the NCD epidemic necessitates a **whole-of-government approach** –and ensuring government accountability and policy continuity falls to all of us.
- **Data** has enormous potential power, which presents both great opportunities and great challenges – how can it be properly captured, presented (e.g. through scorecards) and used to direct policy?

Day 2 of the 2020 NCD Forum was filled with rich and diverse perspectives and buoyed by immense commitment and passion. While delegates are getting to work, they are having an invigorating time doing it, even learning new ways to be more active in meetings thanks to a clever [video from ThaiHealth](#) [3]! Each day is filled with opportunities to make new connections and friends, expand professional networks, share experiences and learn from others', and even see new sights (treated today to a visit to Sharjah Aquarium). Inspired and looking forward to the final day!

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These daily recaps are thanks to the dedicated efforts of NCD Forum rapporteurs including Katy Cooper, Pierre Cooke, Daniel Hunt, Louise Johanssen, Nimal Mohamed, Busiso Moyo, Edith Mukantwari, Omnia el Omrani, Gajarishyan Rasalingam, Bonita Sharma and Andrej Martin Vujkovic.

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### Links

[1] <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/ncd-progress-monitor-2020>

[2] <https://ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/five-gaps-delaying-the-ncd-agenda-and-ways-forward-for-civil-society-%E2%80%93-new-brief>

[3] [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E\\_QiQcgxmss&list=PLu5tAonfDa5IKR5gN6p6CwErxZqk5dDNy&index=2&t=0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_QiQcgxmss&list=PLu5tAonfDa5IKR5gN6p6CwErxZqk5dDNy&index=2&t=0s)

[4] <https://ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/565>

[5] <https://ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/643>