

Invest to Protect: The urgent call for this year's Global Week for Action on NCDs

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Once again, it's time to begin preparations for [the Global Week for Action on NCDs](#) [1], taking place this year from 5 to 11 September. I am pleased to announce this year's campaign theme, **Invest to Protect, all about the urgent need for increased NCD financing to build equitable and resilient health systems.**

Delivering on commitments

Over the past decade, NCDs have risen up national and global health and development agendas. Yet deaths from NCDs are projected to escalate from 41 million per year today to 52 million by 2030 – the same year that our time is up to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG target 3.4 to reduce premature deaths from NCDs by one third.

As civil society organisations, we are all too familiar with the real and devastating consequences of this political inertia and unethically woeful level of investment in NCDs today.

Here are just a few facts and figures:

- The lack of investment in NCD prevention and care over the years has amplified the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic: The vast majority of the millions of people who have died were living with one or more NCDs, most often hypertension, [cardiovascular disease](#) [2], [diabetes](#) [3], kidney disease or obesity. Investment in NCDs is an investment in epidemic preparedness and health security.
- Financing for NCDs has stagnated at a pitiful 1-2% of development assistance for health for two decades. That's simply inconsequential when compared to handouts for fossil fuels and agriculture, which climb to 1.8 trillion dollars annually.
- Economies are being depleted by the direct and indirect costs of NCDs. Annual GDP losses range from 3.5% – 5.9%, and the amount it will have cost developing countries alone between 2011 and 2025 will be \$7 trillion

dollars, equivalent to the combined GDP of France, Spain and Germany last year.

- The return on investment in NCDs significantly outweighs the costs. NCDs for too long have been branded as an expenditure, when many of the WHO Best Buy initiatives for [NCD prevention](#) [4] and treatment are in fact low-cost, affordable for every country, and represent a smart and strategic investment. For every dollar invested in NCDs in lower income countries, there will be an average return to society of at least \$7 in increased employment, productivity and longer, healthier lives. The bottom line for governments is clear: invest now, save lives and money later.

The cost of inaction

As a result of the shameful failure of governments and funding mechanisms to invest in NCD prevention and care, millions of people and communities have lost loved ones to avoidable death. Millions more will have witnessed the carnage of amputations and disability through lack of diagnosis and treatment. Millions more struggle with entrenched poverty caused by having to pay for NCD care out of their own pockets.

But as always, as civil society, we are here armed with concrete solutions and recommendations, based upon sound evidence and experience.

The NCD Alliance wants to drive real commitments from governments, international financial institutions, philanthropies, and private sector to increase NCD financing. The Global Week for Action on NCDs campaign will call on our members and partners to get involved by focusing on solutions that are key to mobilising effective investments in NCDs. Our emphasis will be on tried and tested financing solutions, for example:

- Developing and promoting tailored investment cases for NCD action and specific policy interventions.
- Increasing domestic resources and implementing fiscal policies for NCDs, including removing subsidies and raising taxes on health-harming products.
- Mobilising more development assistance for NCD programmes, and the integration of NCDs into existing global health programmes/funding.
- Showcasing appropriate and impactful public-private partnerships, including the UN Catalytic Trust Fund for NCDs and [Mental Health](#) [5] and divestment campaigns to redirect investment away from health-harming commodities and industries.

We'll be making tools and resources available to help illustrate these solutions, and we call on all of NCD civil society to join this year's Global Week for Action, #ActOnNCDs. It's time for governments and the global health community to deliver on their promises to deliver a fairer and healthier world.

Katie Dain, CEO of the NCD Alliance

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