

Important milestones in NCD prevention and control – but no room for complacency

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© Loganathan / Photoshare: Physicians conduct regular health check up at Chettinad Hospital Research Institute in Chennai, India.

José Luis Castro, Executive Director, The Union and Chair of NCD Alliance Steering Group highlights key elements of the new Strategic Plan leading NCD Alliance forward for 2016-2020.

The imperative for action in the NCD response has never been stronger, with a surge of commitments and advocacy in recent years pushing us towards a future where lives are saved and people are empowered.

Just a few weeks ago, the World Health Organization convened the 'First Global Meeting of National NCD Programme Directors and Managers' in Geneva. Attended by some 160 delegates from governments across Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America and Europe, this was a concerted effort to implement time-bound commitments on NCDs.

The gathering included a side event for organisations to directly engage with these government contacts and debate issues around NCD prevention and control. Those of us present exchanged views on a range of critical issues, including governance, health systems capacity, NCD prevention, programme coordination and integration, access to medicine and financing.

If we seize the moment now, we can empower people to live healthy and dignified lives, and at the same time reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Against this backdrop, and the historic adoption by the United Nations' of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, we welcome the new **NCD Alliance Strategic Plan 2016-2020**. The updated plan sets out a vision and ambitious targets that are in line with the *2030 Agenda* and focus on advocacy, accountability, capacity development and the sharing of knowledge – four strategic, and impactful, pillars of action to aid people at risk from or living with NCDs worldwide.

Despite these, and other milestones in recent years, there is no room for complacency. The NCD epidemic affects all countries – wherever they sit in the global economy – and is responsible for the death of 38 million people annually. *That shameful figure galvanises us to continually up the stakes and take action.*

The next five years are an important opportunity to increase our activity on NCD prevention and control. *If we seize the moment now, we can empower people to live healthy and dignified lives, and at the same time reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth and environmental sustainability.* In short, *we must progress to a situation where we can talk about quality - as well as quantity - of life.*

In Geneva, I was heartened to see so many diverse stakeholders sharing their expertise on how to strengthen the response to NCDs. The active participation of governments, public and private sector and civil society representatives, thought leaders and activists, showed the strategic thinking of our community and that we mean business in finding solutions to the NCD crisis.

The NCD Alliance is uniquely placed to progress the response, namely through *advocacy, accountability, capacity development and knowledge exchange*. Our network's unwavering dedication, reinforced now by the launch of the updated NCD Alliance Strategic Plan, reinforces our commitment to making these solutions a reality.

"No room for complacency." NCD Alliance Strategic Plan 2016-2020 reinforces commitment to respond to the burden of NCDs

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