

The pandemic continues...the Solidarity Fund too

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Vijayalakshmy Silvathorai, lived experience advocate. Image taken from the documentary 'NCD care in a global crisis' produced by BBC StoryWorks for NCD Alliance

In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world as we know it. With much of the world in lock-down and health systems buckling under the pressure of COVID-19, the NCD Alliance recognised early on that NCD civil society would be facing severe challenges.

In response, we started the Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19 to support national and regional NCD alliances in addressing the intersections of NCDs and COVID-19 in their coalition building, advocacy and communications efforts. Now in its second year, the Solidarity Fund in 2021 will award grants to 19 NCD alliances to support them in continuing their crucial work in these critical times.

Uniting to support NCD civil society

NCDs have always been underfunded, and many people living with NCDs have – in the best of times – had difficulties in obtaining the treatment and care that they need. In the context of a global pandemic, this went from bad to much worse. **Even today, a year and a half later, a majority of people in the world who are living with NCDs are still dealing with disrupted health services, and civil society organisations continue to make do with reduced budgets.**

In response to these challenging times, the NCD Alliance, with support of its partners, launched in July 2020 the first-of-its-kind Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19. The 2020 Solidarity Fund awarded competitive grants to 20 national and regional NCD alliances from all regions of the world, with half of them being from low-income and lower-middle-income countries. This helped them to step up their advocacy and communications efforts to promote the needs of people living with NCDs in national pandemic response plans.

With this support, eight alliances ensured the integration of NCDs into governments' COVID-19 responses, such as

the Healthy Philippines Alliance advocating for the inclusion of NCDs in its government's Inter-Agency Task Force on COVID-19 planning efforts, and the East Africa NCD Alliance supporting the Ministry of Health in Uganda to develop guidelines and standard operating procedures for NCD management during the pandemic. You can learn more about the key achievements of these 20 alliances [here](#) [1].

2021: a new focus for the Solidarity Fund

Now in 2021, and due to the continuation of COVID-19, we are launching a second phase of the Solidarity Fund, awarding 19 NCD alliances, two thirds of which are from **low-income and lower-middle-income countries**, for work focusing on making the case for **prioritising and investing in NCDs, recovery and resilience, and putting people living with NCDs first in governments' promises and efforts to build back better and fairer**.

We were pleased to announce on 13 July 2021, that 19 NCD alliances were awarded with this year's Solidarity Fund totalling US\$335,000. Now we look forward to seeing the work of the alliances take shape between now and the end of the year.

Grants were awarded in **three** categories. The first was for work to strengthen NCD alliance infrastructure, governance and sustainability, the second awarded NCD advocacy and communications strategies towards resilience and recovery; and the third was for work supporting people living with NCDs and promoting community engagement and resilience.

Activities to be supported by this year's Solidarity Fund range from promoting NCDs as a national policy priority within the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development in South Africa; to involving people living with NCDs in government decision making related to prevention, screening, treatment and care in Nigeria and Togo; to increasing awareness on the impact of COVID-19 on people living with NCDs in Cambodia and the Eastern Mediterranean region (including those in humanitarian settings and refugees); to the development of a Latin American roadmap to greater health system resilience, with a clear vision of a people-centred, healthier, more equitable future.

Looking forward: still much left to do

The Solidarity Fund successfully supported alliances to involve and advocate for people living with NCDs during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, as the world rebuilds, it is essential to create new (and strengthen existing) partnerships to continue supporting the growth, resilience, and sustainability of the global NCD civil society movement. **In order to avoid people being left behind**, including the most vulnerable, we need a strong and united NCD civil society that can continue their work advocating for the needs of people living with NCDs and promoting health systems strengthening, recovery and resilience. This is our aim with the Solidarity Fund in 2021.

Thanks to the generous financial contributions of Access Accelerated, AstraZeneca, ECOBANK Foundation, The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust and Viatrix, the NCD Alliance has been able to respond once again to this need of ensuring a sustainable future for NCD civil society advocacy through the second phase of the Solidarity Fund. Stay tuned for more news and updates on how the awarded alliances are using Solidarity Fund grants in 2021!

About the author:

Luis Manuel Encarnación is Capacity Development Manager at the NCD Alliance. Based out of Mexico City, he's a renown NCD advocate both in Mexico and Latin America, leading NCDA's flagship programmes, the Advocacy Institute and the Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19, supporting the global network of NCD alliances to strengthen their work as coalitions and pursue strategic advocacy for NCD policy change. [@luismencruz](#) [2]

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