
A successful 1st National NCDs Conference in Bangladesh

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The first National NCDs Conference in Bangladesh, organised by the Bangladesh Non-Communicable Diseases Forum (26 to 28 January 2022), becomes a landmark event for noncommunicable diseases in the country.

The event convened nearly 800 representatives from the government, members of parliament, international organisations, civil society and people living with NCDs. It provided a space to present an array of scientific papers on [NCDs](#) [1] and resulted in the proclamation of the *Dhaka Declaration* – a list of 32 actions to address NCDs in Bangladesh.

This three-day event offered opportunities to participants to deliberate on the causes and effect of NCDs at both national and global levels, and particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. This high-level gathering provided a space to discuss progress against the national NCD multi-sectoral action plan. It convened 22 international speakers who offered recommendations to scale up and accelerate the NCD response, and formed strong multisectoral partnerships between government, private sector, and civil society for NCDs.

The sessions focused on four thematic areas: (i) epidemiology of NCDs, (ii) health systems and NCDs, (iii) current best practices and innovation for NCD prevention and control, and (iv) multisectoral engagement for NCDs. As a result, the conference was covered or mentioned in more than 100 news stories.



Surpassing expectations, the conference was supported by 41 national and international partners and relevant NCD stakeholders, involving government, development partners, civil society organisations, bilateral organisations, public and private academic institutions, and relevant private sector, namely the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, UNICEF Bangladesh, UNFPA Bangladesh, and Orbis International.

Among the high-level speakers delivering thought-provoking talks, the Bangladesh NCD-Forum presented a recorded keynote message from the WHO Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. He emphasised the impact of COVID-19 on people living with NCDs:

“The pandemic badly disrupted essential health services of NCD related cases everywhere, especially in low- and middle-income countries like Bangladesh.”

He stressed that government and health sector entities should work hand in hand to ensure sound advances towards equitable health services for all and to fulfill NCD-related global targets. Dr. Tedros concluded with the assurance of WHO support to Bangladesh.

The alliance also invited representatives from various international organisations such as the UK Embassy, PAHO, WHO regional office for South East Asia and WHO country office, UNICEF, South East Asia Regional NCD Alliance, and the NCD Alliance, who inspired participants to act on NCDs, accelerate progress on control and prevention, and embed NCDs into strategies addressing broader health issues (e.g., COVID-19) in Bangladesh.

One key result of the conference was the drafting and launch of the *Dhaka Declaration*, which endorses 32 actions to address challenges and gaps highlighted in the scientific sessions and ceremonial programs of the conference; for instance, that people living with NCDs should be included in all stages of planning and implementation, especially for awareness raising campaigns, and actions related to accessibility and availability of quality services and treatment. The Declaration aims to act as a guiding tool for governments, civil society, professional organisations, academia, and other relevant health and development stakeholders to accelerate progress towards NCD management, control, and prevention.

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