Africa NCDs Network call on WHO AFRO to address the needs of people living with NCDs

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African NCDs Network called on WHO AFRO (Regional Office for Africa) to address the needs of people living with NCDs in the COVID-19 context at WHO's Regional Committee Meeting.

As every year, WHO regional offices schedule their Regional Committee Meetings (RCM) between the months of August and October, to discuss and monitor progress on regional commitments. The first RCM was the **70th Session of the Regional Committee for Africa**, which took place on August 25th and was held virtually for the first time.

As part of our post-World Health Assembly regional advocacy efforts, the NCD Alliance supported a virtual delegation comprised of Vicki Pinkney-Atkinson from South Africa and chair of the African NCDs Network (ANN) Secretariat and person living with NCDs, and George Msengi from Tanzania and member of the Secretariat of the ANN to participate in the meeting.

Due to the shortened, 1-day virtual format, the AFRO RCM considered only a few agenda items including the Work of WHO in the African Region 2019–2020; **a special event on the COVID-19 response in the region, and 'Celebrating the certification of wild poliovirus eradication in the African Region'.**

NCD Alliance and ANN submitted a joint statement on the 'Special event on the COVID-19 response in the WHO African Region' calling Member States in the AFRO region to elevate the voices of people living with NCDs, young people and marginalised populations, by assessing the pandemic's impact on their needs, challenges and priorities; and to include them in COVID-19 decision-making processes and responses.

The joint statement was supported by Alliance des Organisations de lutte contre les MNT - Côte d'Ivoire, Africa Diabetes Alliance, Africa Stroke Organization, Burkina Faso NCD Alliance, Burundi NCD Alliance, Cameroon Civil Society NCD Alliance, Coalition des ONG et Associations - Contre les MNT au Togo, Community Development Awareness and Health Empowerment Foundation, Fondation de Lutte contre le Diabète et les MNT, Foundation for the fight against Diabetes and NCDs, Ghana NCD Alliance, Malawi NCD Alliance, NCD Alliance Nigeria, NCD Alliance of Kenya, Rwanda NCD Alliance, South African NCDs Alliance, Tanzania NCD Alliance, and West African Alcohol Policy Alliance.

The statement highlighted the link between **NCDs, COVID-19 and achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** by encouraging WHO AFRO and Member States to:

- Prioritise NCD prevention and control as an essential component of UHC and incorporate NCD prevention within essential primary health care services as a foundation for UHC.
- Save lives by increasing equitable, universal access to quality, and affordable essential medicines and products.
- Address the NCD financing gap by increasing sustainable financing for health and improving efficiency in investments.
- Include UHC for NCDs in COVID-19 national response and preparedness plans; addressing any disruptions in the care and treatment of people living with NCDs, and aiming to promote a people centered approach in promoting healthy lives among populations.

You can access NCDA's Advocacy Briefing for the AFRO RCM here [1]; and the statement submitted here [2].

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