Enough! End delays in investing in NCD prevention and control now

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Two events in the next two weeks will turn the spotlight from the need for heightened political will in the NCDs response to the paucity of financing for NCDs ahead of the UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs [1] in New York on 27 September.

Boost NCD Investment is one of the priorities of NCDA's ENOUGH campaign for the HLM [2].

We are at a crossroads: NCDs constitute 70% of health related deaths, but receive less than 1.3 per cent of development assistance of global health budgets. NCDs are killing more people earlier in developing counties than in the developed world – over 80 per cent of the 15 million NCD deaths that take place between ages 30-69 are in low- and middle-income countries.

Globally a lack of action on the prevention and control of NCDs will cause a loss of roughly USD47 trillion from 2011-2030, or the equivalent of 5 per cent of global GDP.

Today, the Lancet Taskforce on NCDs and economics [3] will release the most comprehensive analysis to date of evidence on expenditure, behaviour and socio-economic status. It will make a strong case for taxing unhealthy products, a move that would produce major health gains for the poorest in society, especially if tax revenues were used to fund pro-poor programmes.

One of the key gaps in the NCDs response has been financing. There is now recognition of the need to go beyond the traditional narrative of the donor and recipient and look at innovative mechanisms and models of financing, including social investment bonds, divestment, and public-private partnerships, giving due regard to real or perceived conflicts of interest.

New financing streams to develop and implement national NCD responses for SDG 3.4, including blended finance, public-private partnerships, pooled funding structures and innovative financing mechanisms can also be explored. Concrete examples of mechanisms to mobilise resources and increase financing for national NCD responses will need to be showcased.

Next week the WHO Global Dialogue on Partnerships for Sustainable Financing of NCD Prevention and Control [4] will be held in Copenhagen. It is a key opportunity to demonstrate that committing to NCDs and health is an investment – something that potential partners such as development banks, investment groups, and philanthropic foundations must understand so that they become involved in the NCD response.

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