

## Wiping Out Chronic Diseases May Add 10% to South Asia GDP, World Bank Says

Eliminating heart disease, diabetes and other non-communicable illnesses may add between 4 percent and 10 percent to the gross domestic product of South Asia including India, the World Bank said. Heart disease is the biggest killer of people between the ages of 15 and 69 years in South Asia, the Washington-based bank said in a report published today. Non-communicable diseases now account for more than half of all disease in the region traditionally plagued by infectious maladies, the bank said. Economic growth has helped increase average life expectancy to 64 years in South Asia, which includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the report showed. Still, people in the region are aging without the better living conditions, improved nutrition, rising incomes and access to health care that benefit older people in developed nations, it said. "This unfair burden is especially harsh on poor people, who, after heart attacks, face life-long major illnesses, have to pay for most of their care out of their savings or by selling their possessions, and then find themselves caught in a poverty trap where they can't get better and they can't work," Michael Engelgau, a senior public health specialist, said in a statement accompanying the report that he co-wrote. Cutting tobacco use, alcohol abuse, consumption of unhealthy fats and excessive salt intake would reduce the burden of non-communicable disease in the nations, helping boost GDP, the report showed. Reducing salt consumption by 15 percent in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan would prevent as many as 70 deaths per 100,000 of those at risk of dying from non-communicable disease over 10 years, according to the report. "While elimination is not feasible nor a current, realistic goal, these findings give a sense of the impact that interventions might have," the World Bank said. Source: Bloomberg Link: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-02-09/wiping-out-chronic-diseases-may...>

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**Post Date:** Tuesday, 15 February, 2011

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