The Global Epidemic

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the world’s #1 killer, bringing hardship to rich and poor nations alike.

NCDs make the largest contribution to mortality both globally and in the majority of low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Worldwide, NCDs account for 60% (35 million) of global deaths. The largest burden - 80% (28 million) - occurs in LMICs, making NCDs a major cause of poverty and an urgent development issue. They will be the leading global cause of disability by 2030.

NCDs in LMICs also put G20 nations at risk since we all benefit from healthy individuals and stable populations around the globe. 8 million people below the age of 60 die each year in LMICs from preventable causes, which include tobacco use, unhealthy diets, alcohol consumption, and physical inactivity. Lack of access to affordable medicines and health care services are also major causes of these preventable deaths.

Globally, the NCD burden will increase by 17% in the next ten years, and in the African region by 27%. The highest absolute number of deaths will be in the Western Pacific and South-East Asia regions.

This rapidly changing health and disease profile has serious implications for poverty reduction and economic development. NCDs strangle macro-economic development and keep the bottom billion locked up in chronic poverty. NCDs have a severe impact on individuals, communities and countries. The magnitude and rapid spread of NCDs means we are all headed for a sick future unless we take action now. Low-income countries still grappling with heavy burdens of infectious disease risk being overwhelmed by this wave of largely preventable NCDs.

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