NCDs and Sustainable Development

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Language English

NCDs are one of the major health and development challenges of the 21st century.

The global epidemic of NCDs is widely acknowledged as a major development challenge in the 21st century, and a significant threat to achieving internationally agreed development goals. In addition to being the leading causes of death, NCDs impose years of disability on those affected and their families.

NCDs and the three pillars of sustainable development

> Sustainable development: "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs *[1].*"

Improving the health of populations, including preventing and controlling NCDs, is integral to ensuring progress across the three pillars of economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection—with the ultimate goal of achieving sustainable development.

Numerous UN declarations, resolutions, and international agreements demonstrate that governments recognise the interconnections between health, NCDs, and sustainable development.

The 2002 Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development indicates early recognition of this relationship, and more recently, the 2012 UN Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of NCDs acknowledges that the global burden of NCDs "undermines social and economic development throughout the world." Despite political recognition, however, the global response to the NCD epidemic has been slow, and the epidemic continues to grow, hindering

progress on sustainable development.

The impact of the NCD epidemic on economic growth indicates that health is an important factor in economic development and affirms a more holistic approach to development. National, regional, and global wellbeing increasingly depends on a development process that values healthy social and environmental systems along with economic growth in the drive to achieve sustainable development.

Addressing NCDs is critical for economic growth and to alleviate poverty

NCDs hamper economic growth at the global and national level by adversely affecting workers productivity and diverting resources from productive purposes to treating disease. NCDs are estimated to cause cumulative global economic losses of $47 trillion USD by 2030, or about 75% of the 2010 global GDP.

Reducing NCDs is a prerequisite to addressing social and economic inequity and accelerating sustainable development

NCDs and sustainable development depend on addressing inequities that hold people and societies in poverty and hinder economic improvements.

Social determinants, such as education and income, influence vulnerability to NCDs and exposure to their modifiable risk factors.

People of lower education and economic status are increasingly exposed to NCD risks and are disproportionately affected by NCDs.

Addressing the social determinants of NCDs and health more broadly will augment progress towards poverty eradication and foster a more equitable society that supports sustainable development.

Unsustainable environmental systems increase NCD risks

Unsustainable environmental systems exacerbate NCD risks and directly contribute to the growing NCD burden.
The natural environment has a significant impact on human health. Approximately onequarter of all global death and disability is due to environmental factors. NCD risks often stem from unsustainable environmental systems and practices, such as those related to agriculture, commercialisation of the food system and urbanisation. Changes in these agricultural systems can directly influence greenhouse gas emissions, diet quality, land degradation, pollution and biodiversity. Tobacco farming, which contributes to deforestation and soil degradation, has also been responsible for displacing food crops, such as vegetables and pulses in Bangladesh and cassava, millet, and sweet potatoes in Kenya.

Unplanned and uncontrolled urbanisation also contributes to environmental risks. Poor air quality from greenhouse gas emissions increases the risk of developing NCDs. Cities and transport account for the majority of global carbon dioxide emissions. Urban development and transport systems that are not built at a communal scale can be a factor in lower levels of physical activity, increasing the risk of NCDs. Household indoor air pollution and indoor smoke from inefficient biomass and coal stoves can lead to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, especially among women and children who spend more time at home.

People in LMICs are increasingly exposed to these NCD risks as their environments around them change faster than their resources and capacities can protect them.

A healthy global population is essential to supporting progress across the three pillars of sustainable development economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection. The linkages highlighted above demonstrate that securing and promoting good health for all hinges upon the integration of NCD prevention and control into sustainable development policies and programs. By doing so, governments will mitigate the negative impacts of unsustainable development practices and reverse the trajectory of the NCD epidemic, and affirm the first principle of the 1992 Rio Declaration, which promotes "a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature."

Related Resource: Community Conversation Guide - ENGLISH [2]
NCDs Across SDGs: A call for an integrated approach [3]

Related Content: Governments commit to reduce suffering and deaths from NCDs [4]
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