

Supporting NCD civil society resilience to build back better from COVID-19

NCD Alliance's second phase of the Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19

June 2022

Acknowledgements

The NCD Alliance's achievement report on the second phase of the Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19 showcases the activities and results of the 19 NCD alliances fund recipients in 2021. It was elaborated based on progress reports from the alliances and the results of an evaluation survey. We acknowledge alliances' achievements and appreciate them following national and regional protocols to safely carry out the projects in light of COVID-19.

We thank the 2021 Solidarity Fund Selection Committee members whose support allowed the final selection of the fund recipients: Leslie Rae Ferat, Executive Director at Framework Convention Alliance; Prachi Kathuria, Secretariat at the Healthy India Alliance; Alexey Kulikov, Secretariat of the UN Task Force on NCDs (UNIATF); Carina Alm, Special Adviser at the Norwegian Cancer Society; Lea Kilenga Masamo, Programme Manager at the NCD Alliance Kenya.

This report was conceptualised, managed and edited by NCD Alliance's Luis Manuel Encarnación, Cristina Parsons Perez and Katie Dain. María Fernanda Bustos and Jonathas Meireles de Azevedo, external consultants, supported the administration of the Solidarity Fund in 2021, analysed the survey data, developed the activity cases and wrote the report. Editorial coordination was done by Jimena Márquez and Jennifer Bajdan, and graphic design and production was done by Mar Nieto.

The second phase of the Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19 in 2021 has been made possible thanks to generous financial contributions of NCD Alliance's supporters: Access Accelerated, AstraZeneca, Ecobank Foundation, The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust and Viatrix.

@ 2022 NCD Alliance

Published by the NCD Alliance

Editorial coordination:
Jimena Márquez and Jennifer Bajdan

Design, layout and infographics: Rachel Dain

Cover photo: Image from the Facing Forward minifilm '[Care starts with a community](#)'. Produced by BBC Storyworks with support from the Solidarity Fund.

NCD Alliance
31-33 Avenue Giuseppe Motta
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

www.ncdalliance.org



Contents

Executive Summary	4
SECTION I	9
Second phase of NCD Alliance’s Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19	
Noncommunicable diseases and COVID-19	10
Continued challenges of NCD civil society in 2021 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic	12
NCD Alliance continued response: Implementation of a second phase of the Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19	13
Meet the 19 recipients of the Solidarity Fund in 2021	15
SECTION II	18
Second phase of the Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19: Achievements	
CATEGORY 1: Strengthening of NCD alliances’ infrastructure, governance and sustainability	19
CATEGORY 2: Comprehensive and cohesive NCD advocacy and communications strategies towards resilience and recovery	21
CATEGORY 3: Supporting people living with NCDs and promoting community engagement and resilience	28
Overall achievements of the Solidarity Fund in 2021	34
SECTION III	37
Conclusions and lessons learnt from the second phase of the Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19	
Key lessons learned	39



Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed deep rooted social and economic inequalities and has highlighted the urgent need for investment in resilient health systems. With people living with noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) uniquely impacted by COVID-19, NCD civil society networks have been essential in raising awareness, ensuring access, promoting accountability and advocating for prevention and control of NCDs within the pandemic context, at the national and regional levels. After two years of the pandemic, many low- and middle-income countries are still trying to address the impact of COVID-19 on the provision of essential NCD services and care while controlling the pandemic, and NCD civil society worldwide has been facing operational and financial challenges to their programmatic and advocacy work.

In response to these challenging times, NCD Alliance (NCDA) leveraged its programmes and partnerships to launch the second phase of the Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19 in July 2021, building on the first phase in 2020. While the first phase focused on supporting NCD civil society's organisational sustainability and advocacy efforts in adapting to a pandemic landscape and advocating for an NCD lens to the COVID-19 response, the second phase of the Solidarity Fund looked to support civil society efforts to promote resilience and recovery. The 2021 Solidarity Fund aimed to encourage organisational sustainability, ensure a coordinated and unified NCD civil society response to COVID-19, protect and involve people living with NCDs and engage communities, and support advocacy and communications efforts to prioritise NCD action as part of shaping the pandemic's legacy for building back better and fairer.

The second phase of the Solidarity Fund totalling US\$335,000 supported 19 competitively selected national and regional NCD alliances from all WHO regions, with over half of them being from low- and middle-income countries, and was possible thanks to the generous financial contributions of NCDA's supporters: Access Accelerated, AstraZeneca, Ecobank Foundation, The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust, and Viatrix.



The mini-documentary **The hidden pandemic: How COVID-19 impacts people with NCDs in Cambodia** was created by the Cambodian NCD Alliance with support from the Solidarity Fund.

Overall achievements of the Solidarity Fund in its second phase

With the support of the second phase of the Solidarity Fund, 19 national and regional NCD alliances from Africa, Asia, Europe, Eastern Mediterranean, Latin America, and the Caribbean were able to increase their advocacy and communications efforts to promote the needs of people living with NCDs within government plans and policy measures to respond to COVID-19, contributing to building back better as a legacy of the pandemic.



Physical activity during COVID-19. © Shutterstock

The Solidarity Fund illustrated the importance of strengthening civil society organisations and supporting coalition building to ensure sustainability and resilience. The NCD alliances in Mozambique and Trinidad and Tobago, for example, were able to sustain their coalition building initiatives and engage more actively with their members and other key stakeholders, such as the Trinidad and Tobago NCD Alliance's collaboration with the Ministry of Health to raise awareness on accessing NCD services during COVID-19.

The Solidarity Fund also promoted unified civil society action by supporting alliances to carry out advocacy and communications campaigns on NCDs and COVID-19, promoting the needs of people living with NCDs and positioning NCD prevention and control as a key step towards resilience and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Through advocacy work supporting national and regional COVID-19 recovery responses, NCD alliances were able to promote their vision of strong health systems and communities to build back better and fairer.



Image from the Facing Forward minifilm 'Care starts with a community'. Produced by BBC Storyworks with support from the Solidarity Fund.



Left photo taken from **Facing Forward** minifilm series. Produced by BBC Storyworks. Upper right photo from **Turning the Tide** minifilm series. Produced by BBC Storyworks. Lower right photo © Shutterstock

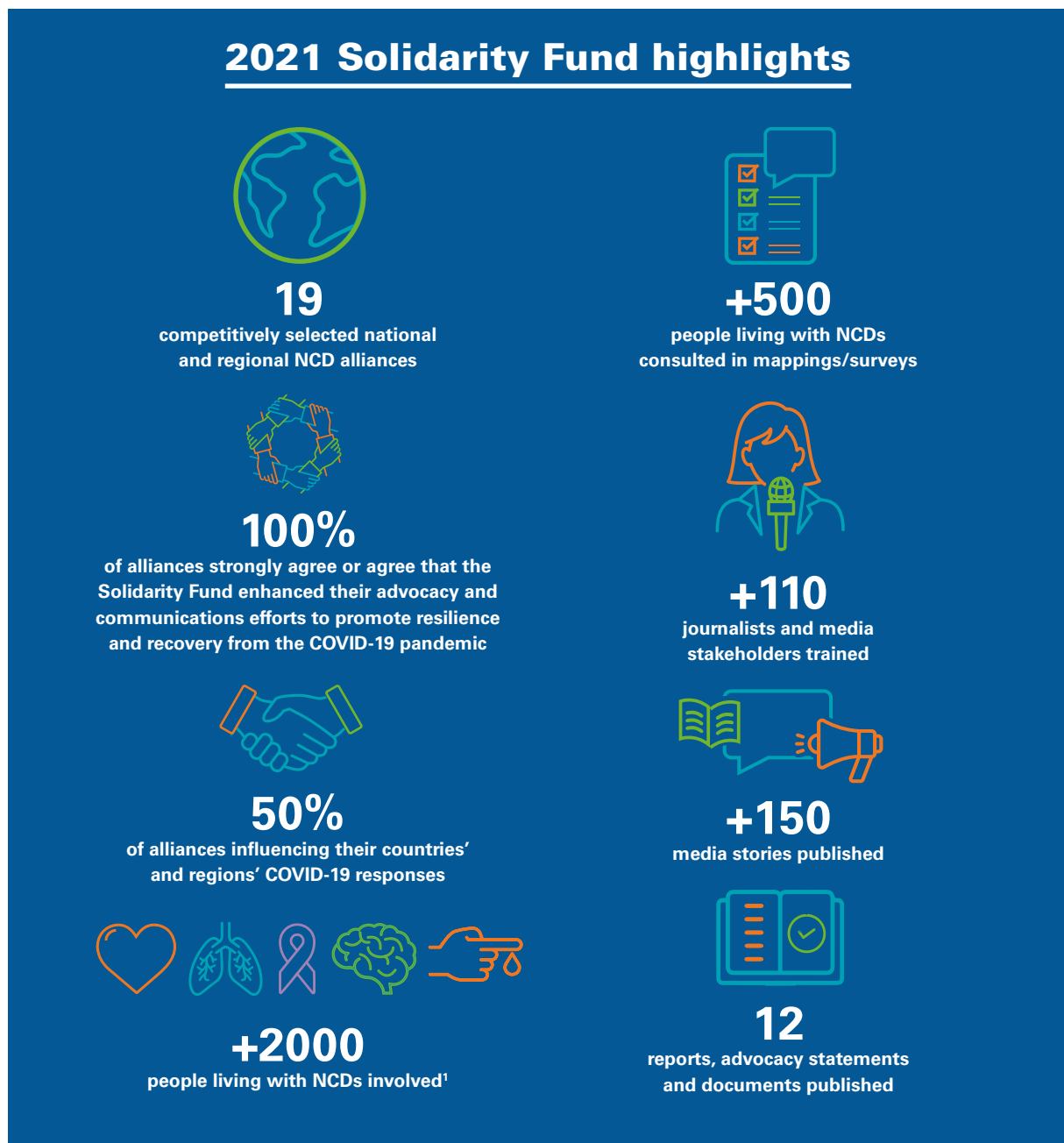
The Healthy Caribbean Coalition, for example, positioned NCDs at the centre of the region's COVID-19 response by furthering its Transformative NCD Agenda and advocating with decision makers on matters related to equity, rights-based approaches and meaningful engagement of communities. On its side, the South Africa NCD Alliance advocated to the country's Human Rights Commission to achieve a positive future resolution to their human rights case filed in 2020 to ensure the protection of people living with NCDs during and beyond the pandemic by guaranteeing access to NCD services and care. The Healthy Latin American Coalition developed its own Regional Agenda 2022-2030, assessing opportunities to prioritise NCDs during and beyond COVID-19, especially towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. While the UK Working Group advocated for prioritising investment in NCDs as part of aid funding by mapping the implications for NCD policies and programmes across the world of the UK government's decision to reduce funding for development, the NCD Alliance Nigeria focused on advocating at the subnational level for the integration of NCDs into policies to strengthen primary health care.

Capacity building was one of the strategies chosen by several alliances to promote NCDs as part of the COVID-19 responses at the country level. While ACT Health Promotion in Brazil rolled out a virtual course on NCD prevention for over 350 civil servants in São Paulo, the Burundi NCD Alliance trained 300 primary and community health workers on the intersections of NCDs and COVID-19, building networks to promote NCD prevention and control during and after the pandemic.

Engaging the media and strengthening the skills of journalists was a key strategy to ensure interest and regular reporting on NCDs during the pandemic. During the second phase of the Solidarity Fund, over 100 journalists and media partners were engaged, resulting in over 150 stories published. The East Africa NCD Alliance, for example, built a regional network of 35 journalists committed to support the NCD agenda in the East Africa region, mainly in the countries where its six member national alliances are located (Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zanzibar). The network published 51 news articles during the second half of 2021. With a vision of empowering local communities to engage with local radios stations, the Alliance MNT Benin supported 16 advocates with lived experience of NCDs to record over 50 radio programmes disseminating information on NCDs and COVID-19.

The Solidarity Fund promoted meaningful involvement of people living with NCDs as a cornerstone for tackling NCDs during and beyond COVID-19. The national alliances in Bangladesh, Benin, Cameroon, Egypt, Togo, Uganda, UK and Zambia mapped and amplified the needs and voices of people living with NCDs in advocacy and communications on COVID-19. The Uganda NCD Alliance formed a national network of over 400 people with lived experience of NCDs and with presence in 16 district health facilities. The Cameroon Civil Society NCD Alliance mapped the needs of people living with NCDs to provide input to the Ministry of Health in its UHC plan and pandemic response.

As we recover from COVID-19, there is an imperative to build stronger health systems that can respond to the needs of people and communities, and the need to implement prevention strategies that will promote healthier communities to better face future crises. NCD civil society will play a strategic role in helping generate resilient systems. NCDAs Solidarity Fund has successfully contributed to a coordinated and unified NCD civil society response promoting health systems strengthening, recovery and resilience, as a way of ensuring healthier societies for a better future.



¹This figure represents the total of people living with NCDs engaged in advocacy efforts, consulted in surveys/research and involved in project activities.



SECTION I

NCD Alliance's Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19 (Second phase)

Noncommunicable diseases and COVID-19

After two years of the COVID-19 pandemic expanding worldwide with millions contracting the virus, the link between NCDs, infectious diseases and health emergencies has become more evident than ever.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO)², people living with underlying health conditions such as NCDs have an increased risk of severe COVID-19 and are more likely to die from the virus. People with compromised immune systems, such as those undergoing cancer treatment, living with diabetes or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease are at higher risk of developing complications due to COVID-19. Furthermore, evidence has also shown that NCD risk factors, such as tobacco, alcohol consumption and unhealthy diets, make people more vulnerable to become ill with COVID-19, and increase the risk of serious illness from the virus.³



COVID-19 checkpoint © Shutterstock

People living with NCDs have been at the epicentre of this crisis, experiencing the collateral damage of the pandemic due to severe disruptions to essential health services and supply chain challenges that reduce access to medicines and treatment. High prevalence of NCDs has caused increased mortality and morbidity from COVID-19, has put large sections of the population at risk and has destabilised health systems.⁴ COVID-19 has disrupted the provision of essential public health functions and necessary health services, in countries all around the world.



Image taken from minifilm 'Country-led innovations for treating childhood diabetes'. Facing Forward series. Produced by BBC Storyworks.

² World Health Organization. Addressing noncommunicable diseases in the COVID-19 response. 2020. Available from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240010291>

³ NCD Alliance. A Global NCD Agenda for Resilience and Recovery from COVID-19. 2021. Available from: <https://ncdalliance.org/ncd-covid-19-recovery-agenda-report>

⁴ NCD Alliance. Briefing note: Impacts of long COVID on health systems and NCD care. 2020. Available from: <https://ncdalliance.org/why-ncds/ncds-and-covid-19>



The mini-documentary **The hidden pandemic: How COVID-19 impacts people with NCDs in Cambodia** was created by the **Cambodian NCD Alliance** with support from the **Solidarity Fund**.

With over 1.7 billion people living with one or more NCD around the world, two pandemics are interacting – the acute pandemic of COVID-19 and the ongoing one of NCDs. This has created a syndemic that underlines the need to systematically shape national response and recovery strategies. This requires system-wide, people-centred, and sustainable approaches to address NCDs and COVID-19⁵; guaranteeing essential NCD services and continuity of care; and ensuring access to COVID-19 vaccines for all countries, prioritising high-risk populations.

The key to building back better and fairer from the COVID-19 pandemic requires tackling structural factors such as poverty, inequalities, and barriers to accessing quality healthcare. It also requires addressing the preventable risk factors of tobacco, alcohol, ultra-processed food and drinks, and pollution, underlying both COVID-19 and NCDs in every country and across all age groups.

Governments and international institutions can no longer neglect the response and preparedness needed for this and future health threats. A key to building back better and stronger is the promotion of healthy environments and ensuring that NCDs are more effectively prevented, diagnosed, managed, and treated. Investment in NCD public policies can no longer be neglected within health services, but viewed as fundamental to resilience, security, equity, and economic stability.⁶



Image taken from minifilm: **The journey of a vial!** Facing Forward series. Produced by BBC Storyworks.

⁵ NCD Alliance. A Global NCD Agenda for Resilience and Recovery from COVID-19. Available from: <https://ncdalliance.org/ncd-covid-19-recovery-agenda-overview#:~:text=ABOUT%20THE%20AGENDA,embrace%20a%20safer%2C%20healthier%20future.>

⁶ Ibid 5

Continued challenges of NCD civil society in 2021 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic

The global NCD civil society movement has seen substantive growth over the last decade, with concerted efforts to bridge the gap on NCD action and meet the global NCD targets for 2025 and 2030 at national, regional, and global levels. NCDA has approached capacity development as a strategic priority since 2014, making it one of the strategic pathways of action in the [NCDA Strategy 2021-2026](#), supporting and nurturing the growth of national and regional NCD alliances. Indeed, the number of national and regional NCD alliances has grown from 43 in 2015 to 55 in 2017, and to 66 in 2021, leading to numerous successes and contributions towards the NCD response. Nevertheless, COVID-19 has posed a major risk to alliance's sustainability and to their advocacy efforts, especially those to protect and involve people living with NCDs.

A 2021 survey conducted by NCDA among national and regional NCD alliances and NCDA members, revealed that NCD civil society worldwide needed help to ensure their organisational sustainability in light of a prolonged pandemic. According to NCD members and alliances, their top three challenges in 2021 were: delaying operations (e.g., adapting work plan, activities, events, etc) (86%); cancelling activities because it was no longer possible to carry them out under the current circumstances (70%); and difficulties in positioning advocacy priorities/activities during the COVID-19 pandemic (65%).

Considering the continued impact of COVID-19 in 2021, the survey showed that the top challenge for NCDs at the country and regional level was the disruption of treatment and care for people living with NCDs (76%), followed by an increased impact on population mental health and wellbeing (70.5%), and reduced budgetary allocations to NCD programmes, services and policies (70.5%).

The pandemic has forced NCD organisations and alliances to adapt their advocacy strategies and tools. The three most frequently mentioned ways in which NCDA members faced the pandemic in 2021 were by adapting advocacy strategies and efforts to the COVID-19 context (84%); monitoring government response to NCDs in the COVID-19 context (78%); and highlighting the needs and recommendations of people living with NCDs in the COVID-19 context (72.5%). Given that the COVID-19 pandemic has been of considerable concern for the past two years, it is imperative to continue supporting NCD civil society to ensure its stability and resilience, but also to advocate for an NCD vision and agenda that promotes efforts to build back better and fairer from the pandemic, through health systems recovery and resilience.



Image from the minifilm 'NCD care in a global crisis'. Turning the Tide series. Produced by BBC StoryWorks.

NCD Alliance continued response: Implementation of a second phase of the Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19

Considering the intersection between COVID-19 and NCDs, and with the increase of NCDs around the world, the work of NCD advocates continues to be critical, and the involvement of national and regional NCD alliances in pandemic recovery plans and strategies is key to ensure that the needs of people living with NCDs are meaningfully addressed.

NCDAs 2020 strategy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic outlined three priority action areas:

- 1) Support members and alliances
- 2) Meaningfully involve the priorities and voices of people living with NCDs
- 3) Build a narrative and support advocacy

In line with these priority action areas, NCDAs launched a Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19 in 2020, through which it supported 20 competitively selected national and regional NCD alliances to strengthen their advocacy and communications strategies and overcome some of the challenge imposed by COVID-19.

By learning from the achievements and lessons learnt from the Solidarity Fund in 2020 ([access the report here](#)), and in light of persistent challenges to NCD civil society due to a prolonged pandemic, NCDAs launched a second phase of the Solidarity Fund in 2021. This second phase supported 19 competitively selected national and regional NCD alliances to make the case for prioritising and investing in NCDs within the context of an equitable COVID-19 response and recovery, advocating for the needs of people living with NCDs with the aim of advancing towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and NCD prevention and control as a way of ensuring healthier societies for a better future.



Blood pressure control in Cameroon. ©NCD Alliance

The second phase Solidarity Fund in 2021 aimed to:

- Encourage organisational sustainability and resilience of national and regional NCD alliances to navigate a prolonged COVID-19 pandemic.
- Ensure a coordinated and unified NCD civil society response to COVID-19 and in efforts to build back better and fairer from COVID-19.
- Protect, involve, and support people living with NCDs, including vulnerable groups like women, youth and the elderly; ensuring their views and voices are heard in advocacy and communications on NCDs and COVID-19, thereby promoting equity, community mobilisation and engagement.
- Support advocacy and communications efforts to promote the needs of people living with NCDs, prioritising NCD prevention and control as a key step towards equity, resilience, and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

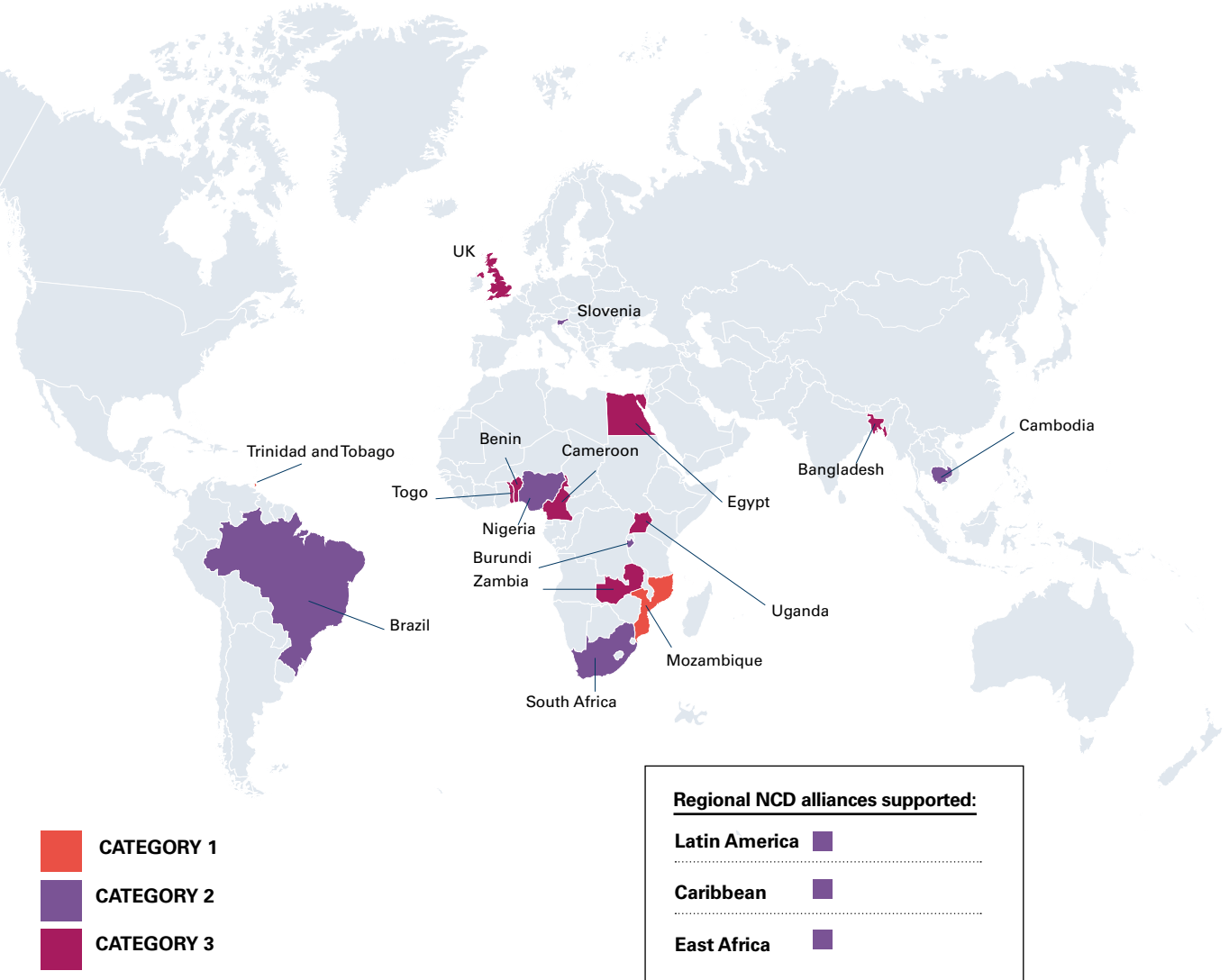
The second phase of the Solidarity Fund's Call for Proposals received 32 submissions from 27 national and regional NCD alliances across the six WHO regions and were competitively reviewed by a Selection Committee of NCD experts according to predefined selection criteria. Selection Committee members included: Leslie Rae Ferat, Executive Director at Framework Convention Alliance; Prachi Kathuria, Secretariat at the Healthy India Alliance Secretariat; Alexey Kulikov, Secretariat of the UN Task Force on NCDs (UNIATF); Carina Alm, Special Adviser at the Norwegian Cancer Society; and Lea Kilenga Masamo, Programme Manager at the NCD Alliance Kenya.



Image from the minifilm 'Country-led innovations treating childhood diabetes'. Facing Forward series. Produced by BBC Storyworks.

Meet the 19 Solidarity Fund recipients in 2021

The 19 national and regional NCD alliances supported by the Solidarity Fund in 2021 were:



CATEGORY 1

Strengthening of NCD alliances’ infrastructure, governance and sustainability (US\$5,000 awarded to each alliance)

Aliança Moçambicana de Luta contra Doenças Não Transmissíveis (Mozambican Alliance of the fight against NCDs)

GRANT FOCUS

Strengthen the infrastructure, governance, and sustainability of the alliance, designing a strategic plan for the next five years, and enabling the alliance to face current challenges by promoting more virtually active operations.

Trinidad and Tobago NCD Alliance

GRANT FOCUS

Increase the institutional performance and sustainability of the alliance to strengthen its voice in the context of the establishment of an NCD Directorate and planning for recovery and building back better in the post COVID-19 era.

CATEGORY 2

Developing comprehensive and cohesive NCD advocacy and communications strategies towards resilience and recovery (US\$15,000 awarded to each alliance)

ACT Promoção da Saúde (ACT Health Promotion)

GRANT FOCUS

Expand an existing online course for São Paulo civil servants to enable the adoption of regulatory measures that will contribute to a more sustainable and healthier environment in Brazil. The course also developed skills to overcome challenges and implement public policies that will help build back better and fairer from the pandemic.

Burundi NCD Alliance

GRANT FOCUS

Help support people living with NCDs during the pandemic by promoting information on NCDs and COVID-19 among primary health professionals; enhance media capacity on NCDs, COVID-19 and advocacy; and monitor all government initiatives relating to COVID-19 and NCDs.

Cambodian NCD Alliance

GRANT FOCUS

Expand existing evidence on the needs of people living with NCDs during the COVID-19 pandemic and increase awareness of policy makers and key stakeholders on ways to address these needs.

Healthy Caribbean Coalition

GRANT FOCUS

Strengthen civil society actions in support of multi stakeholder, innovative contributions, and interventions for NCD reduction in the Caribbean, focusing on the “5x5 approach” to NCDs as part of the alliance’s Transformative New NCD Agenda, learning from the pandemic.

East Africa NCD Alliance

GRANT FOCUS

Strengthen communication, media and advocacy frameworks that were built during the first phase of the Solidarity Fund project in 2020, as a way of building broader health systems reform and UHC advocacy coalitions by enhancing reporting skills for media partners and increasing content production on NCDs and COVID-19.

Coalición Latinoamérica Saludable (CLAS, Healthy Latin America Coalition)

GRANT FOCUS

Develop a three-year Regional Agenda to provide the region of Latin America with a clear vision of a people-centred, healthier, and more equitable future that addresses NCDs during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, and a process for civil society to contribute to making it a reality..

NCD Alliance Nigeria

GRANT FOCUS

Develop an implementation framework to link people living with NCDs with Secondary Health Care Centres charged with handling NCDs in two states of Nigeria, and promote collaboration of people living with NCDs with other stakeholders and decision makers to improve access to prevention, screening, treatment and care.

Slovenian NCD Alliance

GRANT FOCUS

Raise awareness amongst the general public on NCDs, NCD-related risk factors and COVID-19, and increase political action amongst decision-makers in Slovenia on NCDs and COVID-19 recovery through a social media campaign, targeting Slovenian parliament members and high officials.

South African NCDs Alliance

GRANT FOCUS

Prioritise NCD national policy within the SDGs framework with adequate resource planning and the meaningful inclusion of people living with NCDs for resilience and recovery from COVID-19, and implement an advocacy and communications strategy towards building back better and fairer to ensure a positive resolution of a human rights case aiming to protect people living with NCDs during the pandemic and progress towards UHC in South Africa.

CATEGORY 3

Supporting people living with NCDs and promoting community engagement and resilience (US\$15,000 awarded to each alliance)

Bangladesh Non-Communicable Diseases Forum

GRANT FOCUS

Amplify the voices and increase media coverage of people living with NCDs to ensure the right to quality healthcare services and their meaningful involvement in COVID-19 and NCDs responses, while promoting community engagement and resilience.

Alliance Maladies Non Transmissibles Bénin (NCD Alliance Benin)

GRANT FOCUS

Foster a partnership between community radios and people living with NCDs for the amplification of their voices in Benin, and increase understanding of their needs and challenges during and after COVID-19.

Cameroon Civil Society NCD Alliance

GRANT FOCUS

Ensure the meaningful involvement of people living with NCDs in the Cameroon NCD response during and after COVID-19, by conducting a mapping exercise to understand their needs and challenges, and amplify their voices in advocacy and communications, as well as build the capacity and engagement of media houses to report on NCDs and COVID-19.

Egyptian NCD Alliance

GRANT FOCUS

Advocate to increase awareness of innovative digital health interventions that can help address the needs of people living with NCDs and promote the NCD agenda during and after COVID-19, focused on interventions within the national health insurance system to achieve UHC.

Coalition des ONG et Associations Contre les Maladies Non Transmissibles au Togo (Coalition MNT-Togo; NCD Alliance Togo)

GRANT FOCUS

Promote the meaningful involvement of people living with NCDs in decision-making on NCDs during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, by building their capacity in leadership and advocacy, organising focus groups to build resilience, and promoting their voices in media and advocacy activities.

Uganda NCD Alliance

GRANT FOCUS

Sustainable and meaningful participation of people living with NCDs in NCDs and COVID-19 prevention and control programs in Uganda, by establishing groups of advocates with lived experience to engage in these programs and provide platforms to position their views and voices in policy making.

UK Working Group on NCDs

GRANT FOCUS

Raise the voices of people with lived experience of NCDs in communications with UK policy makers, addressing the impact of international development cuts on tackling NCDs globally by building a small, active group of people with lived experience, engaged with the alliance's work and with UK based policy makers.

Zambia Non-Communicable Diseases Alliance

GRANT FOCUS

Coordinate a unified civil society response to a prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, by promoting the right to health and meaningful involvement of people living with NCDs, promoting equity and community mobilisation, supporting advocacy and communications efforts, and documenting the impact of COVID-19 on people living with NCDs.



SECTION II

Second phase of the Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19: achievements

The second phase of NCDA's Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19 in 2021 supported 19 competitively selected NCD alliances, and was proven to be effective in strengthening their structures, advocacy and communications efforts during COVID-19, increasing the understanding and dissemination of the needs of people living with NCDs, and promoting strategic initiatives supporting resilience and recovery to build back better and fairer from the pandemic.

To help assess the achievements of the Solidarity Fund in 2021, NCDA documented the activities and initiatives of these 19 alliances and conducted a survey of progress towards attaining the fund's objectives in December 2021. A summary of the key results is presented in this section.

Solidarity Fund achievements by 2021 grant category

CATEGORY 1

Strengthening of NCD alliances' infrastructure, governance and sustainability

Category 1 aimed to support strategic projects to strengthen alliances' coalition building efforts considering the continued COVID-19 restrictions and impact, such as through adapting their current plans and operations to ensure sustainability and resilience. A survey on the achievements of the fund shows that the two alliances supported under this category (Mozambique and Trinidad and Tobago) strongly agree that the second phase of the Solidarity Fund enabled them to strengthen their organisational sustainability and resilience to effectively navigate a prolonged COVID-19 pandemic.

The alliances in Mozambique and in Trinidad and Tobago stated that through the support of the Solidarity Fund in 2021 they were able to enhance their advocacy and communications efforts to promote the needs of people living with NCDs, and accelerate NCD prevention and control as essential towards resilience and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. To do this, they improved virtual coordination and collaboration between their members, and even with other relevant stakeholders and decision makers. Additionally, both alliances noted that the grant received enabled them to be properly staffed and develop needed communication tools on the intersections between COVID-19 and NCDs.

“ **Communication within the alliance [members] and with the target audience was our main challenge during this pandemic. I believe that we are more prepared to face this challenge and to pursue sustainability by keeping all members and the community involved in our activities and promoting those activities to attract more collaborations.** ”

Mozambican NCD Alliance



Mozambican NCD Alliance process to develop a new strategic plan

To support the development of their new five-year strategic plan, the alliance conducted a series of meetings, including a high-level meeting with key decision makers (representatives of the NCD and pharmaceutical departments at the Ministry of Health) and academia (representatives of the main public university in the country and from the National Institute of Health). Additionally, and with the aim of expanding the reach of the alliance in the African region, the alliance became a member of the African NCD Network, a pan-African regional NCD alliance, and participated in a series of activities to expand its networking opportunities, such as the launch of the results of the *“Case Studies on Meaningful Involvement of People Living with NCDs in Decision Making Process in African Countries”*. This document includes a set of recommendations for different stakeholders in the region encouraging the meaningful involvement of people living with NCDs for improving NCD prevention and control policies as part of the COVID-19 response.

Enhanced collaboration between Trinidad and Tobago NCD Alliance and the Ministry of Health

The Solidarity Fund in 2021 supported the Trinidad and Tobago NCD Alliance in its aim to strengthen collaboration with the Ministry of Health, and to carry out efforts to position NCDs at the centre of the pandemic response. The alliance was invited by the Ministry to support its communication campaigns encouraging people living with NCDs to resume regular medical check-ups that had been disrupted by COVID-19, in which promotional information about the alliance and its work was disseminated. The alliance also engaged in a social media campaign highlighting the importance of NCD control as part of COVID-19 responses, aligning their messages to a social media campaign from the Pan American Health Organization on vaccine hesitancy, therefore supporting the Ministry’s aim to encourage the general public, including people living with NCDs, to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

During November 2021, the Trinidad and Tobago NCD Alliance collaborated with the Pan American Health Organization to disseminate a social media campaign on vaccine hesitancy, including information for people living with NCDs.



CATEGORY 2

Developing comprehensive and cohesive NCD advocacy and communications strategies towards resilience and recovery

Category 2 aimed to support strategic advocacy initiatives highlighting the intersections between NCDs and COVID-19, with the broader goals of health system strengthening and UHC, prioritising and investing in NCD prevention and control, and safeguarding the rights of people living with NCDs. Nine NCD alliances were supported under this category, including national alliances in Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, Nigeria, Slovenia and South Africa, and regional alliances in the Caribbean, East Africa and Latin America, to carry out advocacy and communications efforts focused on resilience and recovery. This was encouraged by promoting exchange and coordination between NCD civil society and relevant stakeholders, sharing expertise and knowledge to provide factual and accurate information on NCDs and COVID-19, and engaging on media/social media strategies.

Seven out of the nine alliances under this category strongly agree or agree that the fund enhanced their advocacy and communications efforts to promote the needs of people living with NCDs and helped position NCD prevention and control as a key step towards resilience and recovery from COVID-19. All nine alliances carried out successful advocacy and communications campaigns on NCDs and COVID-19, including a mix of virtual and in-person events, depending on social distancing measures in place. An example was the social media campaign run by the Slovenian NCD Alliance between October and December 2021 that reached nearly 136,000 people on Facebook and 21,000 Instagram users. The campaign helped raise awareness amongst the general public about the importance of promoting healthy environments and NCD prevention, as well as on the intricate connections between NCDs and COVID-19. The project has allowed the alliance to connect with different organisations and stakeholders, who have agreed to continue working together on leading future co-created campaigns.



On 23 December 2021, the Slovenian NCD Alliance organised a virtual conference with representatives of over 20 civil society organisations, decision makers and high officials. This included a consultation with civil society organisations on opportunities for future cooperation to advance resilience and recovery from COVID-19, prioritising the connection with NCDs.

“

The NCD Alliance’s Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19 [in 2021] helped us establish a strong base for effective communication and fruitful collaboration with other civil society organisations and people living with NCDs, a safe space for discussion on civil society’s COVID-19 resilience and recovery efforts in the country and harmonising the advocacy efforts to be more effective.

Slovenian NCD Alliance ”

Category 2 of the second phase of the Solidarity Fund also supported alliances to continue building digital advocacy strategies. ACT Health Promotion from Brazil produced new and updated content for an online advocacy course on NCD prevention aimed at municipal managers from the state of São Paulo, including new content on building back better and supporting recovery efforts from COVID-19. The course saw the attendance of 356 civil servants, who were supported in developing different advocacy plans to advance NCD prevention during the pandemic. From the 62 plans submitted, the best five were selected to receive a six-month mentorship in the fields of physical activity, food and nutrition, and NCDs in general.

The Burundi NCD Alliance also developed a comprehensive advocacy and communications project, which combined a series of trainings between September and November. It focused on NCDs and COVID-19 management for primary health care professionals, including community health workers, and people living with NCDs, and included trainings for journalists aimed at strengthening media capacity in Burundi for a better understanding of the intersections between NCDs and COVID-19. In summary, the alliance trained 150 primary health care workers, 150 community health workers and 30 journalists. As a result, they were able to reach out to three hard-to-reach communities, contribute to the resilience of people living with NCDs, and strengthen collaboration with health authorities and media partners. The alliance also collaborated with stakeholders to advocate for NCD management to be prioritised in the government's response to COVID-19, by organising a multistakeholder forum on 28 December 2021 that gathered representatives from civil society organisations, media, and the government, and resulted in a Ministry of Health statement to include the NCDs on the COVID-19 response agenda.



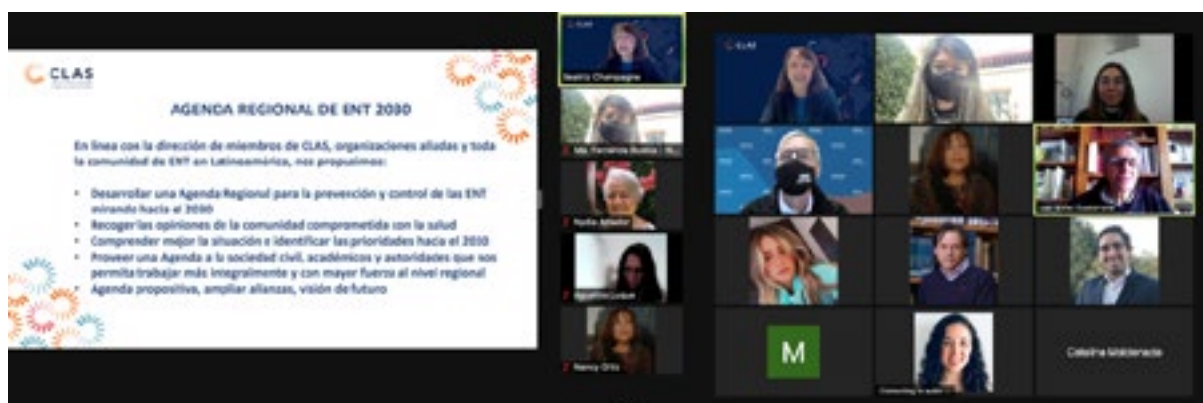
Photo of a workshop conducted by the Burundi NCD Alliance with community health workers and primary healthcare workers in Ntita Hospital, province of Gitega, in October 2021.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a toll on NCD services and programmes, the Solidarity Fund saw the need to support the involvement of national and regional NCD civil society leadership in decision making processes to contribute to building back better and fairer, leaving no one behind. All nine of the alliances supported by Category 2, either strongly agree or agree that the second phase of the Solidarity Fund allowed them to contribute to building back better. Seven alliances developed at least one advocacy statement, document or briefing on the intersections of NCDs and COVID-19, which were disseminated among key audiences including decision makers, journalists, and people living with NCDs.

The Solidarity Fund in 2021 competitively selected 15 alliances who were also grant recipients during its first phase in 2020, which allowed these alliances to build on and expand previous initiatives, and continue having an impact on their national or regional COVID-19 response through the prioritisation of NCDs and the needs of people living with NCDs. Three examples of such alliances are the Healthy Caribbean Coalition, the Healthy Latin American Coalition and the NCD Alliance Nigeria.

The Healthy Caribbean Coalition used the grant support of the Solidarity Fund in 2021 to build on the successes of its *“NCDs and COVID-19 in the Caribbean: A Call to Action – The Case for a Transformative New NCD Agenda”* published in 2020, to develop a series of advocacy documents to continue positioning NCDs at the centre of the region’s COVID-19 response. The regional alliance developed and disseminated a policy brief on equity and rights-based approaches to tackle NCDs in the Caribbean, as well as a guide on meaningful engagement of people living with NCDs, youth and communities at large named *“Transforming the Caribbean NCD response through People Power.”* The brief has provided guidance to decision makers on how to engage communities in the NCD and COVID-19 response in the region.

The Healthy Latin America Coalition (CLAS) also rolled out a strategic advocacy initiative to prioritise NCDs during and beyond COVID-19, particularly towards fulfilling the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. The alliance developed its new *“Regional Agenda 2022-2030: Towards post-pandemic recovery and resilience in Latin America to prevent and control NCDs,”* through an assessment of the state of progress towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region, as well as consultations with key informants, including 34 leading civil society organisations and members of CLAS, people living with NCDs, the CLAS Youth Group (*Alianza Juvenil*), NCD Alliance, the Pan American Health Organization and other high-level leaders and experts. The comprehensive consultative process advised on the opportunities for CLAS to connect NCDs and the SDGs, showing a way forward to post-pandemic recovery and greater resilience in the face of health, social and economic difficulties. This Regional Agenda will guide the alliance’s advocacy efforts from now and until 2030.



On 10 December 2021, CLAS launched its *“Regional Agenda 2022-2030: Towards post-pandemic recovery and resilience in Latin America to prevent and control NCDs”* in a virtual event with representatives of civil society organisations, people living with NCDs and young people.

For its part, the NCD Alliance Nigeria looked to expand on its work from 2020 focused on advocating to national and state governments to prioritise NCDs in their COVID-19 responses, and to continue being involved in the National COVID-19 Response Plan. In 2021, the alliance facilitated coordination between NCD civil society and relevant stakeholders, and shared expertise and knowledge to provide information on the intersections of NCDs and COVID-19. Thus, the alliance developed a questionnaire and visited 20 primary health facilities, to develop two reports on infrastructure, human resources, services provided, and financing needed to prevent and control NCDs in the states of Lagos State and Osun. On 18 November 2021, the alliance held a hybrid (virtual and in-person) meeting to promote their proposal for the integration of six major NCD groups (cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, sickle cell and mental health) into the Task Shifting Task-Sharing (TSTS) Policy and the Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF) Policy in these two states. Participants of this meeting included advocates living with NCDs that were working with the alliance and other stakeholders, such as Lagos' Ministry of Health and Health Management Agency, and Osun State's Health Insurance Agency and State Primary Healthcare Board.



Advocates living with NCDs working with the NCD Alliance Nigeria participated in a workshop to discuss opportunities to strengthen primary health care via the integration of NCDs.

Although there has been increased involvement of civil society in the COVID-19 response, less than half of the alliances under this category were able to engage in their national and/or regional COVID-19 response plans in 2021. This compares with 2020, when most alliances supported by the Solidarity Fund were able to engage with their national and/or regional pandemic response efforts. This highlights the need to continue supporting the meaningful and sustained involvement of civil society in decision making, not only in the first phases of a health emergency response but through its duration, supporting resilience and recovery efforts.

Although direct engagement in their national and/or regional COVID-19 response was limited, all nine alliances supported by Category 2 implemented effective communications and advocacy projects tailored to national and regional needs, highlighting the intersections between NCDs and COVID-19, prioritising and investing in NCD prevention and control, and safeguarding the rights of people living with NCDs. This ensured a strategic connection between Category 2 and Category 3, which focuses on initiatives to understand and address the needs of people living with NCDs, through direct efforts to advocate for policy change and increased awareness on the need to integrate NCDs into COVID-19 response plans.

As the pandemic continues worldwide, the work of NCD civil society is essential to increase the political will and commitment of decision and policy makers to ensure that NCD prevention and health promotion are effectively prioritised and integrated into broader health decisions, including on pandemic preparedness, health emergencies and UHC.

Influencing the Cambodian Ministry of Health's COVID-19 plans by sharing the experiences of people living with NCDs

The Cambodian NCD Alliance aimed to collect experiences of people living with NCDs during the pandemic and share them with the Ministry of Health to influence its COVID-19 plans. Through the Solidarity Fund support in 2021, the alliance captured the lived experiences of 48 people living with diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, chronic kidney disease, cardiovascular diseases, and mental health, and integrated them into an NGO Position Paper that was disseminated among key stakeholders and decision makers. The paper was developed through a consultative approach including field visits to Pursat, Battambang province and Sihanouk Ville, and a dissemination workshop in Pursat, Kompong Cham and Tboung Thnom province. As a result, the Ministry of Health and WHO country office convened the alliance to participate in a high-level meeting on 3 December 2021 for the development of the Health Strategic Plan for 2022 – 2030. At the meeting, civil society stakeholders proposed and agreed on different strategic priorities, such as health security strengthening, focusing on pandemic preparedness and response; improving the health system by addressing NCDs, mental health and ageing; and social health protection through sustainable financing for value-based care. This has given the alliance the opportunity to provide inputs for this plan and to disseminate key information on NCDs and COVID-19, based on the experiences of people living with NCDs, with the aim of supporting country efforts to build back better and strengthen the health system.



On 24 December 2021, the Cambodian NCD Alliance organised a high-level dialogue to discuss the situation of people living with NCDs during the COVID-19 pandemic, aiming to elevate their voices and those of their communities, and advocate to mobilise resources, encourage political action and health policy reform, and increase government accountability.

Building media networks to amplify the needs of people living with NCDs in East Africa

The East Africa NCD Alliance has built a regional network of 35 journalists committed to raising awareness of the NCD agenda in the East Africa region, supported by the alliance's six member national alliances in Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zanzibar. This media engagement effort has allowed the alliance to collaboratively amplify the voices of people living with NCDs in the region, launching calls to action targeting key policy makers to prioritise NCD prevention and control as part of their COVID-19 response plans and strategies to build back better. The communications strategy allowed communities to have more regular access to up-to-date and relevant information on the intersection of NCDs and COVID-19, and has allowed the East Africa NCD Alliance to strengthen relations with the governments of these six countries and other civil society organisations within the region. The training led to over 50 news articles and seven special features of testimonials of people living with NCDs being published, for a total of 161 media outputs published across the region (including op-eds, newspaper commentaries, and TV and radio content).

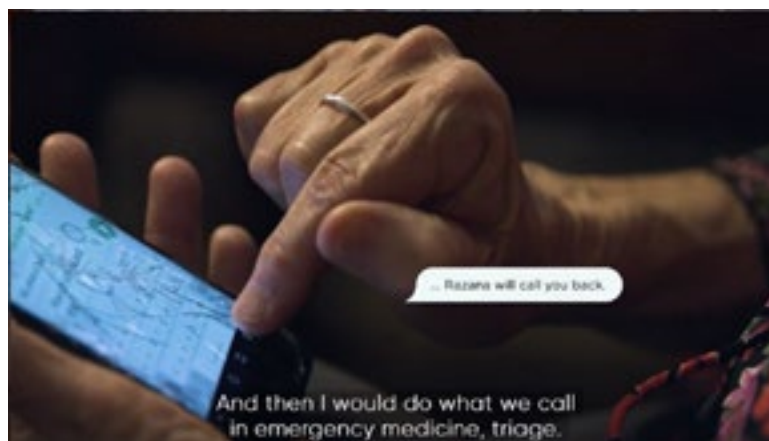
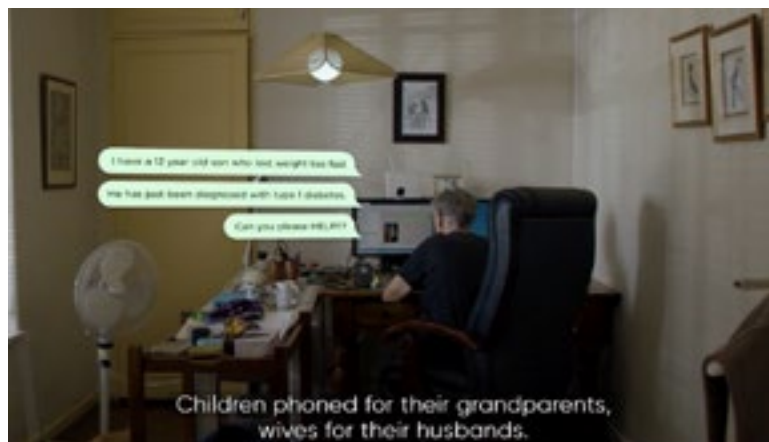


This photo shows one of the virtual trainings with journalists held by the East Africa NCD Alliance.

The South Africa NCD Alliance promoting a human rights-based approach to addressing the needs of people living with NCDs during the pandemic

Thanks to the support of the Solidarity Fund in 2020, the South Africa NCD Alliance advocated for the positive resolution of a human rights case presented at the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) to ensure the effective protection of people living with NCDs during the pandemic and to build back fairer from COVID-19. Via the support of the Solidarity Fund in 2021, the alliance was able to form an eight-member human rights working group to follow up on the case, including a human rights lawyer with lived experience of NCDs to coordinate the alliance's efforts and review the case status.

For this second phase of the Solidarity Fund, the alliance has continued to advocate to the SAHRC, government and other relevant entities by re-submitting the civil society case, including new asks for the Ministry of Health and Presidency to guarantee access to NCD services and care, and ensure policy coherence to prioritise and strategically invest in NCDs during and beyond COVID-19. The alliance has developed a series of documents and has documented the process to ensure greater dissemination of the case, which is still pending a final resolution.



Besides the human rights case, the South Africa NCD Alliance set up a helpline to assist people living with NCDs during COVID-19 pandemic. Images from the [BBC StoryWorks minifilm](#).

CATEGORY 3

Supporting people living with NCDs and promoting community engagement and resilience

Category 3 supported eight national alliances in Bangladesh, Benin, Cameroon, Egypt, Togo, Uganda, UK, and Zambia, to map, understand and address the needs and challenges of people living with NCDs and amplify their voices in advocacy and communications on COVID-19. These alliances carried out strategies to ensure close attention to addressing equity and reaching the vulnerable, calling for uninterrupted access to quality treatment, care, and services in light of a prolonged pandemic.

All eight alliances either strongly agree or agree that the second phase of the Solidarity Fund enabled them to strengthen organisational sustainability and resilience to effectively navigate a prolonged COVID-19 pandemic. The fund also allowed them to enhance efforts to protect, involve and support people living with NCDs including vulnerable groups (like women, youth, and the elderly), ensuring their views and voices were heard in advocacy and communications on NCDs and COVID-19, and promoting community mobilisation and engagement.



The Uganda NCD Alliance disseminated information on the intersection of NCDs and COVID-19 in 16 district health facilities, emphasising the importance of NCD screening, COVID-19 vaccination and standard operating procedures for prevention of COVID-19 at community level.

With the aim of protecting the right to health and participation, seven alliances advocated for the creation of new spaces for the engagement of people living with NCDs in decisionmaking processes. As an example, the Uganda NCD Alliance (UNCDA) formed a national network of people living with NCDs with presence at the district level, through 16 groups at 16 different district health facilities, resulting in the participation of over 400 people living with NCDs. The aim of these groups is to share experiences, needs, and challenges and make recommendations to improve NCDs services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the alliance organised a national level sensitization workshop to showcase the importance of this network, which was attended by 80 participants, including UNCDA district-based volunteers, health facility representatives, journalists, UNCDA member organisations and the Ministry of Health. Participants were introduced to mobilisation and community engagement methods with specific focus on NCDs and COVID-19. The alliance also promoted 12 community dialogues on NCDs prevention and control during COVID-19, with the results of the dialogues presented at a national stakeholder meeting held on 10 December 2021. It was attended by 49 people including representatives from government institutions, people living with NCDs, NGOs, members of the alliance, media, district health teams.

In order to inform advocacy efforts for the meaningful involvement of people living with NCDs, seven of the alliances supported under Category 3 consulted and reached out to people living with NCDs through mappings and surveys. As an example, building on the UK Working Group’s interest in analysing the impact of cuts in UK aid for NCD policies and programmes across the world, the alliance developed the report *“Non-communicable Diseases and UK aid in the era of COVID-19.”* working with two consultants with lived experience of NCDs from the UK and Kenya. The report was launched at a closed roundtable with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on 12 January 2022, co-hosted with Action for Global Health, where participants discussed the priority to be given to NCDs in future UK foreign policy, especially in the context of the government’s decision to reduce UK aid during the pandemic. The research was drafted using data collected from a survey of civil society in countries receiving UK foreign aid (33 responses from 18 countries), as well as from nine key informant interviews with a range of NCD alliances and individuals, including people living with NCDs. The UK Working Group expects this report to increase awareness among UK officials on the need to revert the reduction of funds and prioritise investing in NCDs as part of international development initiatives.



Dissemination campaign from the UK Working Group on NCDs of the report “Non-communicable Diseases and UK aid in the era of COVID-19”, with a message from Dr. Zipporah Ali, Chair of the NCD Alliance Kenya

Furthermore, the nine NCD alliances under Category 3 strongly agree or agree that the second phase of the Solidarity Fund enabled their alliances to enhance their advocacy and communications efforts to promote the needs of people living with NCDs, and accelerate NCD prevention and control as a key step towards resilience and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.



Seven out of these nine alliances produced reports and documents on the impact of COVID-19 on people living with NCDs and delivered key messages through stakeholders, journalists and social media on how to address these needs considering a prolonged pandemic.

For example, the Cameroon Civil Society NCD Alliance succeeded in conducting a mapping exercise to understand the needs and challenges of people living with NCDs to amplify their voices in advocacy and communications during and after COVID-19, including hard-to-reach populations. Leveraging this exercise, the alliance conducted a workshop for 20 people living with NCDs on 13 October 2021 to introduce advocacy concepts and strengthen public speaking skills to share their voices with media and different fora. To support the dissemination of their stories, the alliance also engaged with 18 media houses, which committed to reporting on NCDs and the needs of people living with NCDs during COVID-19. This led to 12 news stories being published, and a five-minute health talk on national and regional radio stations being aired three times a week for the year of 2022, which will help the alliance position key messages on NCDs and risk factors. To conclude activities supported by the Solidarity Fund in 2021, the

alliance organised the Yaoundé Healthcare Week, held from 8-10 December 2021, with the support of the Ministry of Public Health and over 150 participants from Cameroon and other countries including Ivory Coast, Senegal, and Benin. Two of the main outcomes of this event was the creation of a think tank on NCDs and UHC to input into Cameroon’s UHC plan, and the Ministry of Health commissioning the alliance to develop a guide on the pandemic response, considering the views of people living with NCDs.



The Cameroon Civil Society NCD Alliance hosted an advocacy training session for 20 people living with NCDs on 13 October 2021.

“ Through [the Solidarity Fund in 2021], the alliance was able to pressure the government to see the need to look into NCDs as a key missed opportunity for health care and health system response to the pandemic. For instance, after our presentations during the Yaounde Health Care Week, it was agreed that the alliance should work on a document that advises the government on preparedness for people with NCDs.

Cameroon Civil Society NCD Alliance ”

With the objective of promoting the meaningful involvement of people living with NCDs, and addressing equity by reaching the most marginalised, the Coalition MNT Togo sought to strengthen advocacy skills of 20 people living with NCDs via a workshop on leadership and advocacy. Furthermore, to ensure their involvement in decision making on NCDs during and after COVID-19, the alliance embarked on forming three clubs of people living with NCDs in Agou health district, to support communities’ efforts to protect NCD health services during and beyond COVID-19.

“ The Solidarity Fund was an opportunity to propel our national alliance and grow the number of members. Thanks to this fund, people living with NCDs [in Togo] have effective information on NCDs and COVID 19 and are becoming increasingly resilient.

Coalition MNT Togo ”

For its part, and as a way to engage and address the needs of people living with NCDs in its organisational plans, the Zambia Non-Communicable Alliance (ZANOCODA) organised an advocacy workshop to train 21 people living with NCDs to become champions and support the NCD agenda, and understand their needs during and beyond COVID-19. This workshop was part of a consultative process, involving the alliance’s member organisations, people living with NCDs, young advocates, and representatives from the Health Promotion and Determinants of Health Unit at the Ministry of Health of Zambia, for the development of the “Implementation plan of the ZANOCODA Strategic Plan 2021-2025,” which was launched on 2 December 2021. The Strategic Plan will guide the alliance’s organisational development and advocacy efforts, and was shared with national stakeholders from the Ministry of Health and the Vice-president of Zambia to position the alliance as the key NCD stakeholder in the country.



The launch of the “Zambia NCD Alliance Strategic and Implementation Plan 2021-2025”, presented in the framework of World Children’s Day on 2 December 2021, included participation of children’s advocates for NCD control.

With an innovative approach calling for uninterrupted access to quality treatment, care and services, the Egyptian NCD Alliance conducted a situational analysis on the needs of people living with NCDs during the pandemic and on the capacity of the health system to address such needs. The analysis has been used to identify innovative policy solutions, focusing on digital health interventions to advance the NCD agenda during and post COVID-19, aiming to move towards UHC within the national health insurance system. The alliance identified the benefits of digital solutions in the current context, as these can provide people living with NCDs with relevant information on how to manage their conditions, thus aiding the government in their strategies to strengthen NCD care and build back better from the pandemic, and also help health providers to provide comprehensive care during future pandemics based on the needs of people living with NCDs.



In December 2021, the Egyptian NCD Alliance held a national NCD summit, including a multi-stakeholder roundtable to discuss the challenges and opportunities on digital health and NCDs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.

Forming listening clubs in Benin to empower local communities to share messages on NCDs and COVID-19

With the support of the second phase of the Solidarity Fund, the Alliance MNT Benin trained 16 leaders with lived experience of NCDs, representing member organisations in rural areas, to form media and listening clubs. In parallel, 12 media partners were trained on NCD prevention and control strategies and community engagement, as a way of ensuring their commitment to amplify the voices of people living with NCDs and reaching remote communities. As a result, 19 local listening clubs were formed, and partnership agreements with six local radio stations were signed to disseminate information on NCDs and COVID-19. As of now, these clubs have helped the alliance to produce at least 54 radio programmes from October to December 2021, from which 48 of them have included people living with NCDs.



From 27-29 September 2021, Alliance MNT Benin organised a workshop for media professionals in the city of Bohicon as part of its support program for organisations of people living with NCDs.

“ By forming the first pool of media professionals committed to the fight against NCDs in Benin, the Alliance MNT Benin has once again positioned itself as a leader in civil society in the fight against these diseases.

Alliance MNT Benin ”

Reaching remote areas in Bangladesh to understand the needs of people living with NCDs

The Bangladesh NCDs Forum, through the support of the second phase of the Solidarity Fund, engaged with over 500 people living with NCDs, including from hard-to-reach areas such as the Bandarban Hill Tracts. The alliance developed a situation analysis of NCDs services, through an online consultation with 440 people living with NCDs, two consultation meetings and five in-depth interviews, with the aim of understanding their views and perspectives on the impact of the pandemic on access to NCD services. This report was disseminated among decision makers and media professionals, helping the alliance to strengthen its relationship with government, civil society, and relevant stakeholders, and promoting collaboration for building back better and with more resilience. To help amplify the voices of advocates with lived experience of NCDs, including young people, the alliance also carried out two photography and story writing competitions of NCDs in Bangladesh, and developed and designed a digital book with photographs and stories of people living with NCDs.

The Bangladesh Non-Communicable Diseases Forum carried out two competitions of photography and storytelling on the experience of living with NCDs during the pandemic in Bangladesh.

Overall achievements of the Solidarity Fund in 2021

The second phase of the Solidarity Fund has enabled a coordinated and unified NCD civil society response to COVID-19 in the context of a prolonged pandemic, helping to effectively build resilience.

Strategic coordination between NCD civil society is needed to promote and protect the needs of communities at greatest risk, especially those living with NCDs. 94% of the alliances supported through this fund indicated that the Solidarity Fund supported them in building a coordinated and unified NCD civil society response to COVID-19 in the emergency and aftermath of the pandemic in their country or region. Additionally, 18 of the 19 supported alliances strongly agree or agree that even after the end of the fund grant, they will be able to continue with the efforts supported, as this has helped them ensure their sustainability.

“**Communication within the alliance and with [people living with NCDs] was our main challenge during this pandemic. As such, I believe that we are more prepared to face this challenge and to pursue sustainability by keeping all members and the community involved in our activities and promoting those activities to attract more collaborations.**

Mozambican NCD Alliance



2021 Solidarity Fund recipients increased NCD civil society networks

The NCD alliances in Trinidad and Tobago, Mozambique and East Africa increased the number of members and allies of civil society working on NCDs, while the Togo and Latin America alliances began the process of mapping, identifying, and approaching potential allies. The alliances in Benin and Cameroon promoted greater engagement of people living with NCDs to increase capacities within communities. The growth and strengthening of civil society networks in NCDs contribute to amplifying the voices and needs of people with NCDs, and promote connections to improve national and regional advocacy capacities and resilience to support recovery from COVID-19.

Thanks to the second phase of the Solidarity Fund, NCD alliances have meaningfully involved people living with NCDs in the design and implementation of strategies to build back better and fairer from COVID-19.

All 19 NCD alliances indicated that the second phase of the Solidarity Fund enabled them to enhance their advocacy and communications efforts to promote NCDs and the needs of people living with NCDs during COVID-19 in their country or region. Alliances aimed to involve people living with NCDs in a meaningful way, by amplifying their voices and ensuring their needs were strategically accounted for in the planning and implementation of strategies and in engagement opportunities with stakeholders and decision makers, thus shaping a people-centred approach to building back better.



Coalition MNT-Togo held a workshop for 20 people living with NCDs from four towns in Togo in September 2021, providing advocacy and communications tools to involve them in decision making processes.

Meaningful involvement of people living with NCDs as a cornerstone for tackling NCDs during and beyond COVID-19

The Caribbean and Slovenian alliances disseminated information on the intersections of COVID-19 and NCDs through reports and traditional and social media, leveraging lived experience as a way of adding a human face and voice to the pandemic and its impact. The UK alliance produced a report on the impact of cuts to UK global health aid, which included the perspectives of people living with NCDs. The alliances in Uganda and Benin connected people living with NCDs with health professionals to advocate for improvements in NCD health services during the pandemic. The alliances in East Africa, Benin and Cameroon strengthened the skills of both people living with NCDs and journalists, to ensure people-centred coverage on the impact of the pandemic.

Multi-sectoral collaboration, including with governments, health care professionals and communities, will help shape a resilient post COVID-19 landscape.

A multi-sectoral approach is necessary to learn from the lessons that the pandemic has left, and advocate for strategic national and regional COVID-19 responses focused on recovery and resilience to shape a healthier future. 79% of the recipient alliances stated that the second phase of the Solidarity Fund allowed their alliance to contribute to “building back better” as a legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic in their country or region. Half mentioned being able to influence their country or region’s COVID-19 response. Although much has been achieved to position civil society and communities as key stakeholders to drive action on NCDs beyond the pandemic, much is still needed to translate for political prioritisation of NCDs.

“

[The first and second phases of the Solidarity Fund have helped our alliance in] reducing the negative impact of NCDs in people, society and the economy in Cambodia by calling for multisectoral action to build healthier environments to prevent NCDs, and equitable and affordable essential health services to treat NCDs.

Cambodia NCD Alliance

”



In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and WHO country office, the Cambodia NCD Alliance held a consultative meeting on 3 December 2021 with CSOs and community-based organisations to support the development of the country’s new “Health Strategic Plan 4, 2022-2030”.

An integrated and multi-sectoral response to NCDs and COVID-19 to build back better and fairer

NCD alliances from Trinidad and Tobago, Mozambique, Nigeria, Burundi, Cambodia, the Caribbean, Uganda, Slovenia, Cameroon and Zambia, organised different events and workshops to increase the commitment of key decision makers from the Ministries of Health and parliaments, as well as other stakeholders from international agencies and WHO country offices, in integrating NCDs into COVID-19 responses and efforts to build back better and fairer from the pandemic. Additionally, the alliances in Latin America, the United Kingdom, East Africa, Burundi, Brazil, Slovenia, the Caribbean, Cameroon and Bangladesh have developed policy briefs and reports that take up the experiences, voices and needs of people living with NCDs to generate recommendations for government authorities to promote NCD prevention and control within the framework of an effective recovery from COVID-19.



SECTION III

Conclusions and lessons learnt from the second phase of the Civil Society Solidarity Fund on NCDs and COVID-19 in 2021

A strong and active NCD civil society is a key driver of people-centred and multi-sectoral efforts to build back better and fairer from the COVID-19 pandemic. Mobilised and engaged communities, including people living with NCDs and youth, have the power to make governments and other relevant stakeholders aware of the human impact of the pandemic in access to NCD care and prevention services, and to advocate for the integration of NCDs into national and regional pandemic responses. Since its inception in 2020, the Solidarity Fund has promoted the above as an NCD Alliance response to the immediate challenges of COVID-19 on the organisational sustainability of the global network of national and regional NCD alliances, enabling alliances to shape a resilient and healthier future for all.

Given that the COVID-19 pandemic has been of considerable concern for the past two years, the need to support NCD civil society to ensure its stability and resilience has been clear for the NCDA. So has the need to advocate for an NCD vision and agenda that promotes efforts to build back better and fairer from the pandemic, through health systems recovery and resilience. The two phases of the Solidarity Fund in 2020 and 2021 recognise these needs, as alliances act as platforms for awareness raising, ensuring access, promoting accountability, and advocating for change at national and regional levels. Even after the end of the Solidarity Fund, NCDA reassures its commitment to support NCD civil society's sustainability, impactful advocacy efforts and multi-sectoral partnerships.



Children learn about NCD risk factors. [Facing Forward series](#). Produced by BBC Storyworks.

Key lessons learnt from the Solidarity Fund in 2021

Coalitions are essential to a timely crisis response by civil society

- The competitively selected NCD alliances during the first and second phases of the fund successfully strengthened their work as coalitions, mobilising members and engaging communities in the COVID-19 response. Supporting NCD civil society to ensure its stability and resilience is essential for its sustainability.
- Considering operational and organisational challenges posed by COVID-19, the global network of NCD alliances has learned to adapt to sudden changes. Alliances have adjusted to new ways of working and have coalesced to adapt their plans, strategies and advocacy agendas, and are now better prepared to respond to future scenarios.

Seize the moment to position civil society and advocate for building back better and fairer

- Through a period of crisis, NCD alliances have strengthened their community linkages to protect people living with NCDs, coalescing as civil society platforms for unified action and emphasising their roles in advocacy, awareness raising, accountability and enabling access. Alliances are growing their public profile and have positioned themselves as key stakeholders in building a recovery agenda.
- As the pandemic showcased the fragility of our health systems, civil society and governments have understood the need of building solid and resilient systems to address the needs of communities. Although faced with challenges, NCD alliances supported by the Solidarity Fund have seized the window of opportunity presented by COVID-19 to increase political commitment on the integration of NCD prevention and control in pandemic preparedness, as well as to mobilise multi-sectoral support to build healthier futures for all beyond the pandemic.
- From efforts to increase political and media awareness on the needs and views of people living with NCDs during COVID-19, to influencing national and regional pandemic responses, NCD alliances have worked tirelessly to advocate to governments and decision makers to develop people-centred recovery plans to address the continued challenges posed by COVID-19 and advance towards health system strengthening and UHC.

Meaningfully involve people with lived experience of NCDs to promote health systems resilience and recovery

- The Solidarity Fund recognised the need to protect people living with NCDs during the pandemic, and the NCD alliances supported by the fund in 2020 and 2021 were able to leverage lived experience in their efforts to achieve their organisational resilience as well as in their advocacy campaigns to promote NCD prevention and control strategies based on the needs of communities.
- Alliances supported by the Solidarity Fund built networks of people living with NCDs, both within alliances and in different locations such as health facilities and decision-making spaces, with the aim of promoting a recovery vision that leaves no one behind and prioritises NCD prevention and control.
- People living with NCDs have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19, and NCDA has made a commitment to ensure their experiences guide civil society and government efforts to rethink our health systems and the NCD response during and beyond COVID-19.



Image from the minifilm: '[Door-to-door diabetes support during COVID-19.](#)' Facing Forward series. Produced by BBC Storyworks.



PROMOTE HEALTH. PROTECT RIGHTS. SAVE LIVES.



#NCDS @NCDALLIANCE