

# Next Generation Living

## Exploring integrated solutions to NCD prevention and sustainable development

### Summary: Framework and intervention settings from the Rio+20 side event

The Next Generation Living event took place on 21 June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro as a side-event to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The event demonstrated the links between NCDs and economic, social and environmental development and explored options for solutions in cities, workplaces and schools. Urban design and transportation planning, workplace wellness and health literacy were among the topics on the programme.

Among event speakers were Associate Professor Ruth Colagiuri, NCD Alliance and vice-president of the International Diabetes Federation; Sir George Alleyne, Director Emeritus of the Pan American Health Organisation; Enrique Peñalosa, former Mayor of Bogota; Dr Nicholas Alipui, head of UNICEF programmes; and Lise Kingo, Executive Vice President, Novo Nordisk.

#### NCD prevention and sustainable development

NCDs are closely linked to the three pillars of sustainable development: economic growth, social equity and environmental protection.<sup>i</sup> Without immediate attention and political action, NCDs threaten to compromise the health and quality of life of both the current and next generation.

Individually and collectively, NCDs contribute to increased poverty, lost productivity, rising health care costs, and pose a significant barrier to economic and social development in high- as well as middle- and low-income economies. "Childhood obesity and NCDs have a serious potential to shorten the life expectancy of future generations but paradoxically, this combined with the cost of dependency resulting from rapidly ageing populations, poses an unprecedented threat to global economic sustainability" said Ruth Colagiuri.

The modifiable risk factors for NCDs, particularly sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy diets, go hand in hand with social inequality. Additionally, these risk factors influence and are influenced by the root causes of climate change and environmental degradation, such as over-urbanisation, poor urban design, sedentary automated work and play, and unhealthy food grown or manufactured through carbon intense production methods.<sup>ii</sup>

Prioritising the prevention of NCDs can therefore address key sustainability issues.

#### Intervention settings

The environment we live in directly impacts how we live our lives. These settings shape our activity patterns, diet, knowledge and ability to make healthy and sustainable choices for ourselves and our families.

Targeted interventions in cities, workplaces and schools can address the serious issues that cause and contribute to the global NCD epidemic.

#### Cities

Encouraging healthy cities through urban design and infrastructure that embeds opportunities for healthy and sustainable living, such as active travel opportunities, bicycle lanes, outdoor exercise areas and urban gardening.<sup>iii</sup>

"Equity is the main issue in building and organising cities. In seeking equity, we also achieve a sustainable and healthy city" said Enrique Peñalosa.

Citing Bogota as an example, Peñalosa said that the focus in planning equitable cities has to be on green spaces, public transportation, and increased room for bicycles and pedestrians. A city can, through policy and planning, promote healthy sustainable behaviour like walking, public transport use, bicycling and sports.

- Green spaces: parks, sidewalks, sports facilities and pedestrian promenades provide access to a space for physical activity to all citizens
- Public transportation: the creation of bus lanes, making it more difficult and costly to use cars and making public transport better and cheaper will reduce congestion and provide more space for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Room for pedestrians and bicyclists: Protected bicycle ways and pavements for pedestrians should be every citizen's right

#### Workplaces

Using the workplace environment as an opportunity to promote healthy and sustainable behaviour and ensure that employee health is

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embedded in the employer's policies and practices, such as access to physical activity, healthy food choices and smokefree workplaces.<sup>iii</sup>

Lise Kingo, Executive Vice President, Novo Nordisk used the example of their workplace health programme, Novo Health, to highlight 4 steps to promote healthy living in the workplace:

- Smoke cessation: a smoke free workplace and smoke cessation courses
- Health checks: health checks and personal health advice every second year
- Exercise opportunities: support in staying physically active through access to exercise facilities
- Healthy food: food and beverages served at the workplace support a healthy lifestyle

"It would be very powerful if all work places, private and public, had an employee wellness programme, because most people work, and it is a platform for putting health on the agenda" said Lise Kingo.

#### Schools

Using schools as platforms for promoting healthy and sustainable living by improving health literacy, facilitating access to healthy foods and encouraging physical activity are important measures.<sup>iii</sup>

"NCDs are largely preventable. Tobacco use, inactivity, unhealthy diet and the harmful use of alcohol are behaviours learned in childhood and adolescence and can therefore be unlearned" said Dr Nicholas Alipui, Director of Programmes, UNICEF.

Dr Alipui stated that schools comprise of a captive audience - an efficient and effective channel to reach children and adolescents - and provide a key environment for engendering positive attitudes and behaviours.

#### Visualising Next Generation Living

In addition to interventions in cities, workplaces and schools, Laura Storm, Executive Director, SUSTAINIA, stressed the need for a fresh approach to communicating that "a sustainable life is a healthy life and a healthy life is a sustainable life".

"If you want to take people somewhere, you have to make it fun, attractive and easy to get there" she said.

Laura Storm encouraged the audience to help update the next version of the Guide to SUSTAINIA by sharing examples of what next generation living looks like in practice.

#### Concluding remarks

In his concluding remarks Sir George Alleyne, Director Emeritus, PAHO summed up the issue by stating that "the essence of our quest is to explore both how to prevent and control NCDs and how to ensure that human development is sustainable. We know how to do them individually, but what we need to bend our minds to is how to integrate these two sets of agendas."

He also stated that the responsibility for tackling this issue lies with governments, but not governments alone.

The role of cities, schools and businesses are key to tackling the issue of NCDs and thereby addressing key sustainability issues. The examples from Bogota, UNICEF's health literacy approach - 'Facts for Life' and the Novo Health programme show us the path towards next generation living.

Authorship of this document lies with the organising partners of Next Generation Living.

Based on the links between the prevention of NCDs and advancing sustainable development, we encourage further action in the intervention settings outlined in this document.

<sup>i</sup> The NCD Alliance, Tackling Non-communicable Diseases to Enhance Sustainable Development

[http://ncdalliance.org/sites/default/files/NCD%20Alliance%20-%20NCDs%20and%20Sustainable%20Development%20Brief\\_0.pdf](http://ncdalliance.org/sites/default/files/NCD%20Alliance%20-%20NCDs%20and%20Sustainable%20Development%20Brief_0.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Communiqué on Combining Climate Change and NCD Prevention from the 2nd World Wide Universities Network, UN Global Health Justice Network Workshop held, Sydney, Australia 5-7 May 2011, WUN, IDF and University of Sydney

<sup>iii</sup> Copenhagen Roadmap, Outcomes of the European Diabetes Leadership Forum, June 2012

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