

CASE STUDY 4

Mobilising civil society support for NCDs across Africa

Background

The Africa NCDs Network (ANN) is a coalition of 14 national NCD alliances working on regional advocacy efforts to advance on NCD prevention and control on the African continent. Conceived in 2015 at the East Africa NCD Alliance Conference, the ANN was formally established in 2020.

The ANN has worked to identify relevant civil society groups and alliances on the continent and mobilise them toward common advocacy goals on NCD prevention and control, and Universal Health Coverage. The alliance has identified members representing the four WHO AFRO sub-regions (Center, West, East and Southern), and has decided to involve members from Francophone Africa so both English and French speaking civil society are engaged, thereby ensuring a more united voice and platform of support.

Challenges

Given its vast geographical reach and the consequent need to coordinate members who speak different languages and live in different time zones, the ANN faced initial challenges in engaging its membership.

Solutions

To address obstacles, the ANN has focused on building trust among members and bridging differences through emphasising the shared goal of strengthening NCD prevention and control in Africa through advocacy. They mobilised support for advocacy priorities by working closely with the national alliances and fostering links with the Ministries of Health, United Nations country missions, and other health sector stakeholders.

Recently, the ANN successfully mobilised its diverse membership to participate at the 2021 WHO71 Regional Committee Meeting (RCM) for Africa by organising a virtual multi-stakeholder side event on NCDs and UHC ([more information here](#)). The side event attracted 130 participants, including organisations working on NCDs throughout Africa and a representative from the Ministry of Health in Ghana. As a result of this side event, the ANN developed a civil society advocacy statement co-signed by NCD Alliance, ANN and its 40 CSO members, highlighting the support of the signatories to Member States in the fight against cervical cancer and other NCDs, particularly through the implementation of the Global Strategy in the African region, laying the groundwork for advocacy throughout the African region. This work was supported by NCD Alliance's Advocacy Institute Seed Programme, thanks to its partnership with the Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust.

Recommendations

To mobilise stakeholders across sub-regions, the ANN recommends:

- Develop a robust and flexible organisational structure allowing for meaningful participation of members and allies, and even people living with NCDs.
- Secure strong leadership that defines and supports the alliance's vision of partnership.
- Rely on the established structures of members and allies to identify and mobilise additional allies and engage in meaningful advocacy work.