

ROUND TABLE IV – Advancing public–private partnerships on non-communicable diseases

Facts and figures

Africa's increasing fight against non-communicable diseases (NCDs)

- Today, NCDs — mainly cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes — represent the leading causes of death and disability worldwide, resulting in an estimated **40 million deaths per year** (representing 70 per cent of all deaths globally) and an economic burden estimated to reach **\$47 trillion** by 2030. The prevalence of NCDs and risk factors vary considerably among countries, urban and rural locations, and other subpopulations.
- **80 per cent of those deaths occur in lower-middle-income countries (LMICs)** and the largest relative increase in deaths from NCDs globally in the next decade is expected to occur in Africa (27 per cent increase for the African region compared to a 17 per cent increase globally). There is a rising epidemic of NCDs in Africa (not including North Africa) that includes cardiovascular disease, cancer and metabolic diseases such as diabetes and obesity.
- Many cases of NCDs are **preventable** and tackling four risk factors – **tobacco use, physical inactivity, harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy diets** – can lower the risk of these diseases.
- The NCD epidemic is complicated and the products of multiple health determinants — poverty, globalization of marketing and trade in health-harming products, urbanization and population growth — are occurring more rapidly in LMICs.

Early global response, focused on State actors, encountered several shortcomings

- NCDs were not addressed in the Millennium Development Goals set by the Heads of State and Government in 2000. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, however, commits world leaders **to reduce premature NCD deaths by one-third by 2030 and promote mental health and well-being (Sustainable Development Goal Target 3.4).**
- In May 2013, in response to global assignments for the World Health Organization (WHO), a **Global NCD Action Plan 2013-2020** was developed. Based on this plan, WHO supports member States in developing and implementing comprehensive and integrated policies and strategies for the management of NCDs. WHO also provided a menu of “best buy” policies and nine global NCD targets to monitor.
- Although these interventions resulted in selected successes – for example, South Africa passed a law on maximum levels of salts in specific foods and a tax bill on

sugary drinks in 2017 – progress, as reported by the WHO *Noncommunicable Diseases Progress Monitor 2017*, **has been insufficient and highly uneven and was not enough to meet the SDG target.**

- Several challenges and barriers were reported, notably:
 - **Governance and lack of prioritization in national NCD plans**
 - **Financing**
 - **Medicines and technologies**
 - **Service delivery: weak infrastructure and fragmented care**
 - **Workforce and lack of expertise**
 - **Information or limited evidence and weak health information system**

Advancing public–private partnerships as a modality to scale up: benefits and risks

- Although the role of the private sector has been recognized as vital (specifically mentioned in the WHO Global Action Plan as well as the United Nations SDGs), engagement has been slow. For example, although the working environment has been identified by WHO as a critical enabler, **just 5 per cent of employees in Latin America and Asia and 1 per cent in Africa are estimated to have access to a workplace health programme.**
- More recently, several countries have emphasized private sector engagement and public–private partnerships as part of their national plans, and private sector representatives are increasingly engaging with the United Nations system, either via meetings or through “NCDnet” collaboration hosted by WHO.
- Literature and high-level discussions have identified various **potential opportunities and risks of public–private partnerships**, as summarized below:

Potential opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy and awareness • Innovation and technology • Expertise/capacity-building • Financing • Infrastructure
Potential risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict of interest • Lack of accountability • Misalignment with national strategies • Power imbalances in governance and operation • Weak monitoring and impact evaluation

Critical questions for discussion

1. What are some key design principles and partnership frameworks to establish and support the relevant mechanisms that foster public–private collaboration in the NCD fight and are able to operate at multiple scales (local, national, regional and global)?
 2. What are the features of such partnerships and the lessons that we can draw from in terms of experience?
 3. How can private actors engage in sustainable financing towards the fight against NCD and advance more integrated, efficient and effective approaches to financing?
 4. What specific actions would the private sector like to see on the part of Governments and how can the private sector work with Governments to enhance health services capacity and training and support NCD-related research?
 5. How can the use of innovative technologies (i.e. mobile phones) for research, interventions and programme implementation, simplify and facilitate NCD research in Africa?
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