REPORT OF
THE SOUTHEAST ASIA
REGIONAL
MEETING ON
STRENGTHENING
NCD CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

New Delhi, India, 9–10 July 2015
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CSO civil society organization
FCTC (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
FCA Framework Convention Alliance
GHE Global Health Estimates
HLM high-level meeting
NCD noncommunicable disease
NGO nongovernmental organization
SAARC South Asia Association for Regional Collaboration
SARA Service Availability and Readiness Assessment
SDG Sustainable Development Goal
SEAR South-East Asia Region
SEARO WHO South-East Asia Regional Office
SEATCA Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance
STEPS WHO STEPwise approach to Surveillance
SWOT strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
UN United Nations
WHO World Health Organization
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v

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**Inaugural session**  

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- Session 2  Consensus on current capacity of CSOs working on NCDs and their contribution to the South-East Asia Regional NCD Action Plan  
- Session 3  Collaboration between WHO and civil society

### DAY 2: 10 JULY 2015

- Session 1  The role of civil society in monitoring the NCD response at national and regional levels  
- Session 2  Identifying priorities for CSOs in the South-East Asia Region  
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The South-East Asia Region of the World Health Organization (WHO) is home to 1.86 billion people, accounting for 26% of the world’s population. The Global Health Estimates, 2014 reckon that NCDs are the major cause of mortality in the Region, with cardiovascular diseases (27%), cancers (11%), chronic respiratory diseases (9%) and diabetes (3%) accounting for the most deaths. In addition to tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity, household air pollution from solid fuel use is also a key risk factor for NCDs in the Region.

The Political Declaration of the United Nations High-Level Meeting (UN HLM) on the prevention and control of NCDs in 2011 recognized the important role that civil society and other relevant stakeholders play in supporting national efforts at prevention and control. It called for strengthening coordination among these stakeholders in order to improve the effectiveness of their efforts. WHO’s NCD Global Action Plan urges Member States to involve civil society organizations (CSOs) in the national and subnational NCD response. The Regional Consultation on Multisectoral Policies for Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the WHO South-East Asia Region in August 2014 called for the participation of all relevant stakeholders (CSOs included) in developing and implementing multisectoral national policies and action plans, and monitoring and accountability frameworks to address progress towards achieving NCD targets.
In response to these mandates, the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia, in collaboration with the NCD Alliance, organized a two-day regional meeting on Strengthening NCD Civil Society Organizations in the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia in New Delhi, India on 9–10 July 2015. The meeting was attended by 94 participants from 10 countries, and aimed to stimulate a stronger civil society movement for the prevention and control of NCDs in the Region. It was also one among a series of regional preparatory meetings being held ahead of the first-ever Global NCD Alliance Forum in Sharjah in November 2015. The specific objectives of the meeting were as follows:

1. To review the current status of civil society action and facilitate sharing of experiences among regional CSOs working on NCDs;
2. To strengthen the capacity of CSOs working on NCDs in forming alliances to drive advocacy, policy and accountability; and
3. To foster effective collaboration between CSOs within and across countries, and with the government and WHO, to better support implementation of regional NCD priorities.
Dr Thaksaphon Thamarangsi, Director of Noncommunicable Diseases and Environmental Health (NDE) at the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia, welcomed the delegates to the first meeting of CSOs working in the field of NCDs in the South-East Asia Region. He emphasized the need for a multisectoral response, in particular, civil society initiatives, to address the growing burden of NCDs in the Region. He oriented the delegates to the meeting’s programme and objectives. The inaugural session provided an overview of the burden of NCDs in the Region, as well as the work of the WHO Regional Office and NCD Alliance in NCD prevention and control.

Dr Tawhid Nawaz (Director, Programme Management) brought the greetings and message of Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia, to the delegates. The Regional Director’s speech drew attention to the health and socioeconomic implications of the 8.5 million deaths from NCDs each year in the Region, which houses one third of the world’s poor. She emphasized that the call for a multisectoral response of the UN HLM on NCDs requires partnership between governments, civil society and development agencies.

Dr Singh described how the high-level advocacy by the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia at Ministerial Meetings and Regional Committees has led to Ministerial Declarations
“Civil society needs to stimulate public and political opinion through advocacy, ensure accountability through monitoring, and support programme delivery through complementary services.”

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh

Figure 1. Mortality from NCDs in the South-East Asia Region

Source: WHO Global Health Estimates (GHE) 2014

and regional resolutions on NCDs. The Regional Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs 2013–2020, developed in consultation with Member States, guides the way for action in countries and the Region. The Regional Office supports Member States in building their capacity to address the risk factors for NCD, strengthening national NCD surveillance systems and integrating NCD-related services into primary health care.

The Regional Director applauded the significant role played by CSOs in the response to HIV/AIDS and polio eradication. CSOs have been instrumental in advancing tobacco control in the Region by mobilizing public opinion, advocating critical policies and supporting their implementation.

As the first meeting of CSOs working on NCDs in the Region, Dr Singh urged the delegates to deliberate and come up with recommendations that identify priority areas for collaboration, capacity building and coordination mechanisms to strengthen the civil society movement on NCDs in the South-East Asia Region. The full speech of the Regional Director is given in Annex 1.

Dr Renu Garg, Regional Adviser, Noncommunicable Diseases at the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia, set the scene for the meeting. She pointed out that NCDs are the most frequent cause of death in Member States, accounting for 62% deaths in 2012. The Region has the highest probability of premature deaths from NCDs across all WHO regions. It also has a high prevalence of behavioural risk factors for NCDs, such as tobacco and alcohol use, and clinical risk factors such as overweight, high blood pressure, high blood glucose levels and high salt intake.

Dr Garg presented the WHO Regional Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs in the South-East Asia Region. Its 10 targets and four strategic areas of action provide a
framework to tackle the Region's NCD burden. The strategic focus areas include advocacy, health promotion and risk reduction, health systems strengthening, and surveillance and monitoring.

Ms Johanna Ralston, Chief Executive Officer of World Heart Federation and Steering Group member of the NCD Alliance, oriented the delegates to the work of the Alliance. Comprising over 2000 member organizations in 170 countries, its global efforts are focused on advocacy and brokering knowledge, whereas national efforts are geared towards building health systems, holding governments accountable, and building civil society capacities and strategic alliances. The NCD Alliance supports the development and work of national and regional civil society alliances, including through twinning initiatives.

Ms Ralston announced that the Global NCD Alliance Forum would be held in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates from 13 to 15 November 2015, which would bring together these alliances for
sharing experiences, building capacities and partnerships. She expressed hope that the South-East Asia Regional Meeting will inform the discussions at the Global Forum. She elaborated that the South-East Asia Regional Meeting would take stock of the current response to NCDs by civil society and capacity needs in the Region, stimulate multisectoral collaboration with other key NCD stakeholders and identify the advocacy priorities for collaborative action in the Region.

Sir George Alleyne, Director (Emeritus), WHO Regional Office for the Americas, unpacked the different layers of the multisectoral response to NCDs that the Political Declaration of the UN HLM called for from Member States and other relevant stakeholders. This response consists of a whole-of-government approach by multiple sectors within the government, and a whole-of-society approach by the public sector, civil society and private sector.

He opined that civil society has a critical role in advocating with the government and holding them accountable for their commitments. This can be achieved by gathering and analysing data, conducting political mapping, developing communication strategies and persuasion. He emphasized the need to interpret the issue so that it fits into the agenda of different sectors within the government.


*Sir George Alleyne*
This session was moderated by Dr Srinath Reddy, President, Public Health Foundation of India.

Ms Shoba John, Programme Director of HealthBridge, provided an overview of the meeting’s background paper. The paper was based on a mapping of CSOs working on NCDs in the Region, commissioned by the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia and the NCD Alliance.

The paper calls for the increased engagement of CSOs in advocacy and partnerships with governments, monitoring progress, holding governments accountable, and integrating NCDs into national health and development plans and programmes. It urges governments to provide enabling policy frameworks, and resources and mechanisms for active civil society contribution to the development and implementation of national NCD plans. WHO country and regional offices can play a critical role in involving civil society expertise in the...
Inaugural Session

Development of technical resources, building the capacity of CSOs in advocacy and monitoring, promoting civil society involvement in government planning and monitoring bodies, and facilitating opportunities for civil society advocacy in regional fora. The paper identifies the role of development partners in helping to make a business case for NCDs, sensitizing non-health ministries with direct influence, integrating NCDs into in-country programming and involving NGOs in NCD-related country projects.

The background paper set the scene for a vibrant discussion on the need for civil society action across primary, secondary and tertiary interventions. Several delegates expressed the need to recruit youth, women, the elderly and survivors of NCDs along with faith-based organizations for advocacy and interventions across the life course. A mechanism for engagement with governments was identified as critical for providing effective support to national NCD plans. The role of business associations and their potential conflicts of interest with the NCD sphere were also discussed.

In response to questions about the evolution of national NCD civil society coalitions and their relationship with the Global NCD Alliance, Katie Dain, Executive Director of the NCD Alliance, elaborated on the organic emergence of national and regional NCD alliances across the world. The NCD Alliance supports local efforts primarily by identifying local organizations working on NCDs, and providing toolkits for coalition building and advocacy. It is important that civil society groups in countries determine the kind of collaboration that best fits their context and needs. Civil society mapping in the South-East Asia Region, for instance, suggests that CSOs are interested in forming national coalitions and setting up information-sharing platforms at the regional level. While the national/regional alliances currently have no formal

PROFILE OF CSOs WORKING ON NCDs IN THE WHO SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION

| Largely health NGOs, followed by non-health groups |
| Work mostly with the public, and next with governments |
| Prioritize risk factor reduction and early diagnosis in their work |
| Focus most on tobacco and cancer control; least on indoor air pollution and chronic respiratory diseases |
| Undertake mostly public education, and advocacy with governments |
| Partner with governments sporadically |
| Face capacity challenges and resource constraints |
| Need capacity building in advocacy/strategy planning and resource mobilization |
| Desire to work in coalitions at the national level, and exchange experiences regionally |
| Prefer to work on cross-border issues at the regional level, followed by monitoring NCD commitments of governments, and |
| Anticipate multilateral support in creating enabling environments, offer to prepare governments and communities for NCD interventions. |
relationship with the NCD Alliance, scope for an affiliation scheme is currently being explored.

The session further explored the experiences of national and regional alliances working on NCDs in the Region with a view to learning from their organizational and programme strategies.

NEPAL: Nepal civil society’s efforts at coordinated action on NCDs began in 2005 with the setting up of the Nepal Heart Net. It brought together 18 organizations who work to improve heart health. The establishment of the Nepal NCD Alliance in 2014 has helped to address NCDs more broadly. This Alliance decided to start small and currently comprises five organizations – one each working on heart health, diabetes, cancer treatment, rehabilitation and public health, along with a journalist each from two leading national newspapers. It has an informal structure and a rotating coordinator’s position, two factors that were cited to be contributing to its effectiveness.

Dr Prakash Regmi, the present coordinator of the Nepal NCD Alliance, presented the benefits of working as a coalition. Collective action has expanded the reach of the advocacy campaign, training and awareness initiatives of member organizations, and enabled pooling of resources. The lack of dedicated volunteers, office space and limited financial resources were some of the challenges facing this Alliance. The impact of the rotation of leadership also needs to be closely monitored. The Alliance recommends twinning initiatives between national coalitions for exchange of experiences and learning. Even as the Alliance intends to expand its membership, Dr Regmi raised the need to be cautious about nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) with commercial interests. Mr Shantalal Mulmi, a member of the Nepal NCD Alliance, added that the political will expressed by Nepal’s political parties in response to its devastating
earthquake showcases the scope to mobilize similar political synergy for NCD prevention and control. The role and impact of journalists in Nepal’s NCD Alliance in creating public awareness was also highlighted.

SRI LANKA: Dr Pududu Sumanasekara, Executive Director of Alcohol and Drug Information Center, described the efforts of Sri Lankan civil society, which has led to political prioritization of tobacco and alcohol control in Sri Lanka. He attributed the NCD policy advancements in the country to the existence of strong civil society networks, strategies that demystified the contributing industries, close partnership with the government and its efficient health service delivery mechanisms.
Harnessing religious organizations and the social media are among the opportunities for mobilizing NCD action in the country. However, the continuing influence of the tobacco and alcohol industry, compulsions of trade agreements, and lack of policies to address cross-border factors that aggravate the NCD burden, such as promotion of tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods that increase NCD risk, are among the challenges to action on NCDs in Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan experience calls for community and grass-roots involvement, the need for a broad range of interventions that address high-risk groups, macro-level interventions for social and environmental changes, close partnership with government and multilateral agencies, countering conflicting propaganda by industries and integrating NCDs in the development agenda for an effective response.

In response to the presentation, delegates stressed the need for regional coordination among CSOs to address NCD issues with cross-border implications, such as promotion of tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods in the media. They also drew attention to the need to consider creative ways to get the media to promote healthy lifestyles, such as by roping in television producers to weave in early diagnosis of breast cancer into their serial shows.

REGIONAL ALLIANCE: The Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA) works with governments and nongovernmental partners to accelerate implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in eight of the 10 countries that are part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Ms Bungon Rithiphakdee, Executive Director of SEATCA, explained its focus on generating policy-driven evidence, capacity building of partners, knowledge sharing and tobacco industry monitoring.

“DEGLAMOURIZING THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY AND EXPOSING THEIR INFLUENCE ON GOVERNMENTS IS CRITICAL TO ADVANCING TOBACCO CONTROL POLICIES IN COUNTRIES.”

Bungon Rithiphakdee
SEATCA runs a Tobacco Industry Surveillance Network that regularly exposes and counters industry tactics and publishes a Tobacco Industry Interference Index. The latter evaluates governmental actions in implementing FCTC obligations pertaining to interference by tobacco industry. Nurturing in-country champions and linking national efforts with regional and global developments, such as negotiation of international treaties and trade agreements, has been central to SEATCA’s programming.

A discussion followed about the need to improve enforcement of policies pertaining to NCD prevention and control in countries of the South-East Asia Region, and share good practices across countries. Ms Rithiphakdee pointed out Thailand’s initiative to channel tobacco and alcohol taxes to reinforce tobacco control efforts.

**BANGLADESH**: Ms Shusmita Khan elaborated on the early efforts of EMINENCE Associates to integrate NCDs in Bangladesh’s national surveys. This has since has led to the inclusion of NCDs in the national demographic and health surveys. The organization also runs health camps, primary health clinics and liaises with the Government of Bangladesh for the inclusion of NCDs in the next cycle of sectorwide area programmes, five-year plans and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Ms Khan said that the Noncommunicable Diseases Forum in Bangladesh is an attempt to bring together organizations with diverse focus and reach to work on NCDs. The Forum has undertaken some joint activities, such as the observation of international days focusing on NCDs. Lack of prioritization of NCDs among policy-makers, lack of clarity about the role of the non-health sectors of the government, and lack of coordination within civil society, are among the challenges facing the forum.
Table 1. CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONSE TO NCD PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN SOME COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/ Regional Alliance</th>
<th>Major challenge</th>
<th>Primary objective</th>
<th>Key strategies</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nepal NCD Alliance</td>
<td>Changing political environment</td>
<td>Education and NCD services to communities</td>
<td>– Train health workers</td>
<td>– Extended NCD services in remote areas</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Using media</td>
<td>– Increased media coverage of NCDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol and Drug Information Center, Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Industry opposition</td>
<td>Secure polices to address risk factors</td>
<td>– Demystify industry tactics</td>
<td>– Industry lost in and outside courts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Partnership with government</td>
<td>– Strong tobacco and alcohol policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance</td>
<td>Tobacco industry tactics</td>
<td>Advance tobacco control policies in ASEAN</td>
<td>– Monitor tobacco industry activities</td>
<td>– Tobacco industry exposed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Present evidence to governments</td>
<td>– Progress in pictorial warnings and tax policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh NCD Forum</td>
<td>Competing priorities of the government</td>
<td>Make the case for NCD prevention and control</td>
<td>– Integrate NCDs in health and demographic surveys</td>
<td>– Evidence on NCD burden generated</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>– Observe international NCD-related days</td>
<td>– Increased media coverage on NCDs</td>
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</table>

Source: WHO Global Health Estimates (GHE) 2014
There was a discussion about the lack of attention from civil society to chronic respiratory diseases and palliative care, and the role of EMINENCE in the Bangladesh NCD Forum. The need to leverage subnational opportunities such as the Mayor’s Alliance for tobacco control in Indonesia was also highlighted.

The moderator summarized the key messages from the discussion. While individual organizations focus on their chosen mandate, there is a need for collaboration across multiple domains and partners. The NCD community needs to forge links with those working on environmental concerns, urban health and Mayor’s alliances, where legitimate opportunities for collaboration exist. There is also a need to move horizontally along the continuum of care, from primordial to primary, secondary, tertiary and palliative care. The response to NCDs also needs to follow a life-course approach, covering the young to the elderly. It is important that local alliances emerge through local efforts and leadership; the NCD Alliance is willing to provide guidance to such initiatives.
CONSENSUS ON CURRENT CAPACITY OF CSOs WORKING ON NCDs AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGIONAL NCD ACTION PLAN

Dr Thaksaphon Thamarangsi, Director of Noncommunicable Diseases and Environmental Health (NDE), WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia moderated this session.

The delegates initially worked in four groups, each addressing (a) advocacy and multisectoral partnerships, (b) reduction of risk factors, (c) health systems strengthening and delivery of NCD services, and (d) surveillance and research. Each group analysed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) that CSOs working in the area of NCDs have to take into consideration in the above focus areas.

Dr Thamarangsi facilitated discussion of the group analysis in the plenary. The summary SWOT analyses is given in Annex 2.
Drawing on the SWOT analyses, the groups proceeded to identify the roles they could play in supporting implementation of the South-East Asia Regional NCD Action Plan and their capacity needs in this regard.

Among their major past and present contributions, the groups identified policy-oriented research, running cancer registries, research on industrial behaviour, cost–benefit studies, advocacy for tobacco and alcohol control measures, technical expertise on NCD matters, health systems strengthening, training of health-care professionals, and monitoring implementation of laws.

Their major needs for capacity building pertain to areas such as leadership, advocacy, planning communication, building coalitions, research, legal literacy, fund raising, writing grant proposals, publication, and developing toolkits and accountability systems. The group that examined surveillance and research expressed specific capacity-building needs, including training on measuring the impact of interventions, health economics and translating evidence for policy advocacy.
Dr Francisco Katayama, Technical Officer for Partnerships, Interagency Coordination and Resource Mobilization at the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia, facilitated a plenary discussion exploring the areas and principles of engagement between civil society and WHO.

Participant collaboration with WHO ranged from joint research and publications, such as on dementia, participation in WHO events, co-organizing/cosponsoring meetings and training programmes, advocacy for international standards and treaties such as the WHO FCTC, providing technical support to WHO programmes, to holding official observer status with WHO and serving as collaborating centres for research.

CSOs from Sri Lanka mentioned working with WHO on the national nutrition policy and regional healthy diet guidelines. Some organizations have worked with WHO on a range of issues, including communicable and noncommunicable diseases, and primary health care.

The delegates also discussed the conditionalities for the use of the organizational logo. Some common parameters that
emerged include shared values, goals and adherence to formal policies. Some organizations have a written branding policy, others have ethical guidelines or policies to avoid conflicts of interest, still others require a memorandum of understanding between collaborating partners. In the case of research, the choice of collaborators is guided by their expertise, the rationale for research and robustness of protocols, with care taken to avoid vested interests and interference with results. WHO has a policy for sharing its logo with collaborators, which requires high-level approval.

Dr Katayama clarified that WHO engages with civil society when there is a clear public health benefit, and the collaboration is conducted on the basis of mutual respect, openness, inclusiveness, transparency and accountability.

Before the day ended, Ms Katie Dain oriented the delegates to the Prioritization Matrix for helping to build an advocacy agenda for addressing NCDs in the Region. Delegates continued to network and share experiences over a reception hosted by the WHO Regional Director.
Ms Aishath Shiruhana, Chief Executive Officer, Diabetes Society of the Maldives and Dr Prakash Gupta, Director, Healis Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health, were the moderators for the session. They reiterated the session’s goal of identifying civil society’s role – beyond generating awareness and policy advocacy – in undertaking active monitoring of commitments made by governments for NCD prevention and control. The three presentations in the session provided a broad framework to comprehend the monitoring role and opportunities for CSOs.

Dr Renu Garg introduced the NCD Global Accountability Framework, which consists of (a) nine voluntary targets of the NCD Global Action Plan adopted by the World Health Assembly and its outcome indicators, which are monitored every five years, (b) the process indicators of the Global Action Plan, which will be monitored by the World Health Assembly every 2 years, and (c) 10 process Indicators to determine progress on the commitments in the Political Declaration of the UN, on
which the WHO Director General reports annually to the UN General Assembly in preparation for the UN High-Level Meeting in 2017.

Given the high prevalence of NCDs in the Region, the Regional Director of the WHO South-East Asia Region has included NCDs among her seven flagship priorities. An NCD score card has been developed regionally to track and stimulate progress in countries on four expected results and 20 deliverables. The score card indicates the varying levels of progress by Member States across the key results areas. The key results areas are: (a) NCDs prioritized and positioned in the national development agenda; (b) reduction in population exposure to NCD risk factors; (c) NCDs detected early and managed; and (d) improved evidence base for policy-making, planning and monitoring.

Dr Garg pointed out that civil society can play a key role in holding governments accountable to the globally agreed targets and offered WHO’s support in building civil society capacity in monitoring and reporting, in addition to providing tools and convening meetings for exchanging ideas and monitoring progress.

Sir George Alleyne brought to the meeting the experience of the Healthy Caribbean Coalition in persuading governments in the region to establish national NCD monitoring mechanisms such as national NCD commissions. Such a commission needs to be mandated by law, have autonomy and facilitate multisectoral involvement. It also requires an effective governance structure, transparent processes, resources, clear focus and continuity.

He elaborated that the commission can have broad-ranging roles, including advising the government on policy and programme development, brokering involvement of diverse sectors, supporting resource mobilization and research, and facilitating the evaluation of NCD programmes.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MONITORING TOOLS FOR NCD TARGETS</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. WHO STEPwise approach to Surveillance (STEPS survey)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. WHO Service Availability and Readiness Assessment (SARA) health facility surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Civil registration systems</td>
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<td>4. NCD score card</td>
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<td>5. Online country capacity survey</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Sir George explained that a national accountability framework calls for civil society and the private sector to be accountable to the government, whereas the government is accountable to the people as facilitated by civil society. He reiterated that civil society needs to therefore monitor (a) leadership as evidenced by national NCD commissions, policy development and resources, (b) process indicators in terms of measures to address risk factors and the globally agreed NCD targets, and (c) mortality and morbidity outcomes, and report its own work and outcomes for public information.

Ms Dain called on the CSOs working on NCDs in the Region to monitor trends in policy and outcomes, review progress against national/regional commitments, and use the information to leverage greater implementation. She stressed that it is important for civil society in each country/region to define the “why”, “who”, “what”, “how” and “when” before embarking on the monitoring exercise. The NCD Alliance Benchmarking Tool, Diabetes Score Card, Framework Convention Alliance’s (FCA) Shadow Reports and International Breast Feeding Action Network (IBFAN) Monitoring Code of Infant Milk Substitutes are examples of a broad range of monitoring tools pertaining to NCD issues.

The experiences of national and regional NCD alliances in undertaking the benchmarking exercise and producing civil society status reports offer valuable lessons for civil society in other countries. These include the need to adapt monitoring tools to the local context, develop an effective dissemination strategy and time the exercise to match advocacy opportunities.

In the lively discussion that followed, delegates enquired about the use of NCD monitoring mechanisms for mid-course corrections by governments. Dr Garg explained the purpose of the process indicators of the global monitoring framework as a means both for mid-course correction as...
## Table 2. CIVIL SOCIETY STATUS REPORTS – COUNTRY/REGIONAL PRACTICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY/ REGIONAL ALLIANCE</th>
<th>BASE FOR BENCHMARKING</th>
<th>OUTPUT</th>
<th>KEY FINDING</th>
<th>USE OF REPORT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACT+, Brazil</strong></td>
<td>Brazil National NCD Plan</td>
<td>Brazil civil society status report</td>
<td>Safeguard NCD public policies from commercial interests</td>
<td>Presented at Brazilian NCD Plan Monitoring Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Africa NCD Alliance</strong></td>
<td>South Africa National NCD Plan</td>
<td>South Africa NCD Alliance civil society status report</td>
<td>Limited multisectoral engagement and funding for National NCD plan</td>
<td>Sharing benchmarking results online for public consultation and validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>East Africa NCD Alliance</strong></td>
<td>NCD Alliance benchmarking tool</td>
<td>Civil society status report and charter on NCDs</td>
<td>Integrate NCDs in national development plans</td>
<td>Timed it to inform UN High-Level Review on NCDs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healthy Caribbean Coalition</strong></td>
<td>2007 Port of Spain Declaration</td>
<td>Regional civil society status report</td>
<td>Establish and/or strengthen national NCD commissions</td>
<td>Effective communication and dissemination strategy</td>
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well as to inform WHO’s planning and resource allocation to support governments in areas where implementation could be strengthened.

A delegate enquired about process indicators for non-health sectors of the government and monitoring conflicts of interest. Dr Garg opined that the process indicators for non-health sectors are best developed as part of national multisectoral action plans. WHO is currently developing guidance for Member States on establishing NCD multisectoral coordination mechanisms, which includes suggested process indicators. Discussions on process indicators for addressing conflicts of interest are ongoing. Ms Dain pointed out that monitoring progress by non-health sectors requires the involvement of international organizations working in the respective fields. For instance, the Food and Agriculture Organization can help mobilize nutrition agencies and the nutrition community to broaden the scope of their work and accountability frameworks to include overnutrition and NCDs, alongside their current focus on undernutrition.

Some delegates suggested considering civil society shadow reports along with reports of Member States while assessing progress in achieving the global NCD targets, and involving the public in the monitoring process. Dr Garg mentioned that the goal should be to generate complementary reports and avoid duplication. Civil society benchmarking/shadow reports at country level are best integrated into the work of national multisectoral coordination bodies and monitoring mechanisms that have the mandate to engage with diverse sectors. Sir George emphasized the need for civil society to appear to be complementary and not adversarial while seeking a response from governments.

Ms Dain stressed the need for the global benchmarking tool to be applied to local frameworks. This could include national NCD plans, health sector plans and development plans.
She added that those SDGs that include social, economic and environmental concerns now address NCDs. Countries will be monitoring progress against these goals in the coming years and this presents additional opportunities for civil society to monitor the progress towards NCD commitments through these frameworks as well. She added that engaging the public in civil society monitoring efforts is key to mobilizing their support eventually for policy advocacy. The Brazilian Alliance did this through a public opinion poll that indicated the readiness of the community to accept regulations on unhealthy food and alcohol.

A delegate expressed concerns about the challenges of civil society in accessing data generated by WHO. Dr Garg clarified that WHO gathers data from Member States for the STEPS survey, and its extensive reports are available online. The raw data belongs to governments and the best way to access it would be through national governments. Sir George challenged the popular notion that availability of data by itself would spur governmental action. He stressed that civil society needs to translate the data into messages that speak to the head, heart and pocket for meaningful advocacy outcomes.

A question was raised on the means to tackle the unhealthy competition among CSOs for limited resources. Sir George considered it important to set up national coalitions and strategies in an inclusive and consultative manner to help reduce tensions within civil society.

There was a welcome suggestion for CSOs in the Region to extend the existing monitoring of the tobacco industry to include the activities of other industries that aggravate the NCD epidemic. Another suggestion was to create platforms for CSOs in the South-East Asia Region to learn from each others’ experience in monitoring NCD commitments by governments.
Dr Htay Lwin, People’s Health Association, Myanmar and Ms Shoba John, Programme Director, HealthBridge, moderated the session.

Ms Cristina Parson Perez from NCD Alliance presented a prioritization matrix, based on which five breakout groups of delegates first discussed and identified three top priorities for concerted regional action based on the South-East Asia Regional NCD Action Plan. Further, they developed implementation strategies and mechanisms for regional collaboration.

The moderators then facilitated discussions in the plenary, which agreed on seven priorities for civil society action in the WHO South-East Asia Region. The delegates further developed collaboration strategies towards the agreed priorities. The consolidated priorities for action by civil society and opportunities for collaboration in the WHO South-East Asia Region are given in Annex 3.
RECOMMENDATIONS
AND FOLLOW UP

Dr Thaksaphon Thamarangsi and Ms Katie Dain facilitated discussions on the recommendations of the meeting. The participants agreed that civil society has a pivotal role to play in supporting governments and other stakeholders to combat the NCD epidemic, and that the capacities of civil society should be strengthened to enhance their contribution towards the prevention and control of NCDs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following overarching recommendations were agreed upon:

A. Recommendations for CSOs working on NCDs in the South-East Asia Region

1. Take forward the civil society priorities for joint follow up and action.¹

2. Increase collaboration among CSOs working in the area of NCDs through development of national and subregional alliances and coalitions, including non-health actors such as rights-based and poverty reduction groups.

3. Leverage regional platforms such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), ASEAN, WHO South-East Asia Region and UN regional agencies for conducting advocacy for NCDs.

See Annex 3
4. Establish or strengthen relationships and partnerships with governments and other stakeholders with similar goals.
5. Build capacity in advocacy, communications, formative research, governance and monitoring.

B. Recommendations for governments
1. Develop guidelines for greater civil society involvement, including CSOs working with women, in policy planning and monitoring of implementation of national and regional NCD plans.
2. Create mechanisms and processes for whole-of-society inclusion (groups with like-minded goals) in national high-level NCD commissions or task forces, taking into account conflict of interest issues.

C. Recommendations for the NCD Alliance
1. Continue to provide information on relevant global processes and opportunities for advocacy to national and regional CSOs working in the field of NCDs.
2. Build capacity to address gaps in evidence synthesis for advocacy, governance, resource mobilization and accountability.
3. Convene civil society workshops, including on the role of CSOs in the Region, on monitoring the response to NCD policies.
4. Develop tools and resources for mapping, communication, advocacy, monitoring and fund-raising for civil society.
5. Nurture emerging and existing national and regional NCD alliances and coalitions, and encourage twinning initiatives.
6. Encourage international NCD federations to mobilize their members in the South-East Asia Region to actively engage in advocacy for and monitoring of NCDs.

D. Recommendations for WHO
1. Support mapping of CSOs (including women’s organizations) involved in NCD prevention and control at the national level.
2. Promote inclusion of civil society in government-led policy development processes, and implementation and monitoring of regional and national NCD priorities and plans.

3. Continue to build the capacity of CSOs working on NCDs in the areas of advocacy, research and monitoring.

4. Periodically convene consultations of CSOs working on NCDs, and include them in regional and national multisectoral meetings.

5. Ensure dissemination of NCD-related national and regional data, guidelines and tools.

6. Develop cross-border strategies to address NCD risk factors.

FOLLOW UP

Dr Renu Garg outlined the follow-up actions. The Regional Office will circulate the conclusions and recommendations and draft report of the meeting. Once finalized, the meeting recommendations will be shared with WHO Representatives and country offices. WHO will also support civil society mapping in countries. She encouraged the delegates to contact the respective government delegations with inputs to strengthen the resolution on cancer prevention and control proposed by India for the WHO South-East Asia Regional Committee, and the anticipated Ministerial Declaration on tobacco control, on the tenth anniversary of FCTC’s entry into force. Dr Garg offered to set up an email group of the meeting delegates to continue the dialogue and share tools, and involve civil society delegates in WHO meetings and training programmes in countries and the Region.

In her concluding remarks, Ms Katie Dain expressed hope that the two days of deliberations on regional needs, priorities and opportunities for collaboration would lead to the development of a South-East Asia Region Civil Society Action Plan on NCDs.
and inform the Global NCD Alliance Forum in November 2015, as well as future civil society meetings with the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia. She offered all support from the NCD Alliance for the work of CSOs on NCDs in the Region.

Dr Thamarangsi encouraged civil society to align their work with the priorities of the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia to build multisectoral coordination mechanisms for NCDs, boost action on risk factors, advocate NCD-oriented health systems and improve health information systems. He brought the two-day deliberations to a close.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to all those who helped to organize an effective meeting and enriched the discussions through their contributions.
ADDRESS BY DR POONAM KHETRAPAL SINGH
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, WHO REGION FOR SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Distinguished participants, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this regional meeting on strengthening civil society for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases in the South-East Asia Region co-organized by the Regional Office and the NCD Alliance.

NCDs, such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases and mental and neurological conditions, have emerged as the biggest health crisis—claiming 38 million lives each year globally. In the WHO South-East Asia Region, home to one fourth of the world’s population and one third of its poor, NCDs cause an estimated 8.5 million deaths each year. What is worrying is that half of all deaths from NCDs in this Region are considered premature as they occur before the age of 70 years. The NCD problem is likely to worsen because of the ongoing epidemiological and demographic transition that is leading to an increased lifespan and ageing populations. In addition to the health burden, the social and economic burden of premature deaths from NCDs is also alarming.

In September 2011, at the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on NCDs, Heads of State and government representatives acknowledged that NCDs are a major threat to economies and societies, and should be considered not only a health but development priority. The UN meeting called for a multisectoral response to NCDs and agreed on concrete time-bound commitments to be implemented by governments, civil society and development agencies. To translate these commitments into action, in May 2013, the World Health Assembly adopted the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs and endorsed nine concrete global NCD targets to be achieved by 2025.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The role and contribution of civil society is paramount in achieving these global commitments and targets. We have learnt from global health and development
issues, including the HIV/AIDS response and polio eradication, that a strong civil society movement is critical for public health success.

Within the NCD response, civil society has at least three major functions. First, advocacy and galvanizing action at all levels to stimulate public and political awareness and interest in NCDs; second, ensuring accountability by tracking commitments by governments and other stakeholders—including those of the private sector; and third, in the area of service delivery, civil society organizations can provide NCD services to supplement those provided by governments, be it for diabetes, palliative care, tobacco control or others. Whatever the function, it is important that government, civil society and other stakeholders work in partnership with governments and other stakeholders to synergize these for maximum efficiency.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In response to global commitments on NCDs and the significant burden of NCDs in the South-East Asia Region, we have laid the groundwork to strengthen the regional response to NCD prevention and control in close collaboration with Member States. Sustained high-level advocacy has been carried out for NCDs at high-level forums such as Ministerial Meetings and Regional Committees. These high-level meetings resulted in the adoption of ministerial declarations and Regional Committee resolutions on NCDs, which reflect the high commitment by Member States to address NCDs. To facilitate exchange of best practices, regional consultative meetings have been organized on tobacco control, salt reduction, reducing the harmful use of alcohol as well as on increasing access to NCD services. With support from WHO and partners, national capacity for surveillance in Member States has been consistently enhanced. As a result, notable progress has been made in the Region. Ten out of 11 countries have comprehensive legislation against tobacco. Increased coverage of pictorial warnings on tobacco products has been achieved—ranging from 50% to 90% in Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand. Civil society organizations working in these areas have contributed immensely to these successes. Interventions for NCDs are now being integrated within the primary health-care systems of several countries, including Bhutan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. This is helping to increase access to early detection and management of NCDs, improve health outcomes and reduce overall costs.
A WHO South-East Asia Regional Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs 2013–2020 is guiding the way, based around four strategic areas: advocacy; health promotion and risk reduction; health systems strengthening; and surveillance and monitoring. The Action Plan is aimed at achieving 10 NCD targets for the Region, adapted from the WHO Global Monitoring Framework. The key to success across the four strategic areas and the 10 targets will be intersectoral cooperation and the active engagement of civil society, both of which are highlighted as overarching principles in the plan.

The Region has a number of civil society organizations contributing to the health agenda, but a cohesive civil society movement on NCDs is yet to emerge. The capacity of civil society needs to be enhanced and coordination improved for all relevant organizations to contribute with greater impact to achieve regional and global NCD targets.

Recognizing the important role of civil society, we have always invited representatives of civil society organizations to many of the regional consultations. This is, however, the first time that we have a meeting exclusively to deliberate with civil society on how to address NCDs in the Region.

This consultation is an excellent opportunity to concretely strategize how civil society organizations in the South-East Asia Region can be further strengthened to provide constructive contribution to the multisectoral response to address NCDs. I look forward to the recommendations of the meeting, particularly those related to priority areas for collaboration, capacity building and coordination mechanisms to strengthen the civil society movement in the South-East Asia Region. Beyond their impact in the Region, these recommendations will help inform the First Global Forum of national and regional NCD Alliances that will be convened in November in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

I welcome you once again to this regional consultation and wish you fruitful deliberations. I hope you have a pleasant stay in Delhi.

Thank you.
SWOT ANALYSIS — GROUP WORK SUMMARY

STRENGTHS
- Diversity of expertise and skills among CSOs
- Proximity with the public, patients and survivors
- Well-connected tobacco control groups
- Emerging NCD civil society coalitions
- Ability to gather grassroots data

OPPORTUNITIES
- Existing laws and programmes, e.g. tobacco control
- Young population in the Region
- Social media
- Global momentum on NCDs
- Potential to mainstream NCDs in existing development programmes
- Universal health coverage discussions in countries

WEAKNESSES
- Lack of evidence base and barriers to accessing data
- Limited civil society involvement in monitoring and research
- Diverse country contexts
- Inability to raise resources
- Difficulty in scaling up interventions
- Lack of capacity in advocacy and policy development
- Lack of coordination within the civil society
- Sporadic coordination between NGOs and government

THREATS
- Adverse political scenario
- Narrowing space for civil society action in some countries
- Overemphasis on curative over preventive approaches
- Inadequate health systems
- Poor law enforcement mechanisms
- Restrictive policies such as free trade agreements
- Conflicting priorities of governments
- Competing business interests of media
- Influence of conflicting commercial interests on NCD policies
- Low resource allocation by governments, including for research Industry-funded research
REGIONAL NCD PRIORITIES OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION

Civil society participants at the Regional Meeting on Strengthening NCD Civil Society Organizations identified the following priorities for future advocacy and action:

1. Mobilize public opinion and participation in NCD advocacy and health promotion across the South-East Asia Region.
2. Increase engagement of CSOs working on NCDs in the development and monitoring of national NCD-related policies and plans, and enhance meaningful participation of civil society in multisectoral mechanisms for NCD prevention and control.
3. Develop and strengthen national policies and strategies on the major risk factors (including ambient and indoor air pollution).
4. Support the prioritization of NCDs in national development plans and strategies.
5. Scale up cost-effective NCD interventions and promote their integration into a basic primary health-care package with a referral system to all levels of care in order to advance the universal health coverage agenda.
6. Promote the integration of palliative care into all levels of health care.
7. Support operational NCD surveillance and monitoring systems.
DAY 1 – THURSDAY, 9 JULY 2015

0900–1030  Inaugural session

- Welcome Address
  Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director for the WHO South-East Asia Region

- Objectives of the meeting
  Dr Thaksaphon Thamarangsi, Director, Noncommunicable Diseases and Environmental Health (NDE), WHO/SEARO

- Presentations (20 minutes each):
  1) Regional NCD burden and action plan
     Dr Renu Garg, Regional Advisor (NCD), WHO/SEARO
  2) The global NCD response and the role of civil society
     Ms Johanna Ralston, CEO, World Heart Federation / Steering Group member of NCD Alliance
  3) The opportunity and challenge of sectoral cooperation for NCD prevention and control
     Sir George Alleyne, Director (Emeritus), Regional Office for the Americas, WHO

1030–1100
Group photo, TEA / COFFEE and networking

1100 – 1300
SESSION 1: Profiling SEAR NCD Civil Society

This plenary session will aim to provide an overview of NCD civil society in the SEA Region, highlighting strengths, challenges, opportunities and good practices.

Moderator: Dr Srinath Reddy, President, Public Health Foundation of India

- Presentation of draft background paper: Mapping SEAR NCD CSOs – Areas of work, experiences, challenges, lessons learnt and good practices
  Ms Shoba John, Programme Director, Health Bridge (20 minutes)
Discussion

- Presentations from selected CSOs on organizational experiences, challenges, lessons learnt (8–10 minutes each):
  1) The NCD Alliance, Nepal – Dr Prakash Regmi, President, Nepal Heart Foundation
  2) Eminence Associates, Bangladesh – Ms Shusmita Khan, Coordinator
  3) Alcohol and Drug Information Centre, Sri Lanka – Mr Pubudu Sumanasekara, Executive Director
  4) Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance, Thailand – Ms Bungon Rithiphakade, Executive Director

Discussion

1300–1400
LUNCH and networking

1400–1600

SESSION 2: Consensus on current capacity of SEAR NCD CSOs and their contribution to the South-East Asia Regional NCD Action Plan

Moderator: Dr Thaksaphon Thamarangsi, Director (NDE), WHO/SEARO

– Group Work

Participants will be divided into four groups. Each group will be asked to undertake a SWOT analysis of the current status and capacity of regional CSOs. Drawing upon the SWOT analyses, each group will focus on the role CSOs can play in supporting implementation of the SEAR NCD Action Plan. Groups will also identify and prioritize common capacity-building needs of CSOs in order to participate in efforts for the prevention and control of NCDs.

• Group 1: Advocacy and multisectoral partnerships
• Group 2: Reduction of risk factors
• Group 3: Health systems strengthening and delivery of NCD services
• Group 4: Surveillance and research

– Report/presentation of group work
1600–1615
TEA / COFFEE

1615–1715
SESSION 3: Collaboration between WHO and civil society

The plenary session will facilitate exchange of ideas on principles of engagement between WHO and NGOs

Moderator: Dr Francisco Katayama, Technical Officer, Partnerships, Interagency Coordination and Resource Mobilization, WHO/SEARO

Discussion

1900
RECEPTION at The Oberoi Hotel

DAY 2 – FRIDAY, 10 JULY 2015

0900–1030
Recap of DAY 1

SESSION 1: The Role of SEAR civil society in monitoring the NCD response at national and regional levels

This plenary session will discuss the WHO monitoring framework for NCD prevention and control and the role of civil society in national- and regional-level monitoring

Moderator: Ms Aishath Shiruhana, Chief Executive Officer, Diabetes Society of the Maldives and Dr Prakash Gupta, Director, Healis, Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health

- WHO NCD monitoring framework
  Dr Renu Garg, Regional Advisor (NCD), WHO/SEARO

- National NCD monitoring mechanisms
  Sir George Alleyne, Director (Emeritus), Regional Office for the Americas, WHO
NCD civil society reports/Benchmarking (country case studies)

*Ms Katie Dain, The NCD Alliance, UK*

Discussion

1030–1100

TEA / COFFEE and networking

1100–1300

**SESSION 2: Identifying priorities for SEAR CSOs**

This breakout session will define and agree on NCD priorities for concerted regional advocacy action as well as identify opportunities for CSO collaboration, including the potential for new NCD Alliances. An action plan for regional advocacy efforts will be defined for mobilization and follow up.

*Presentation of prioritization exercise and matrix by Katie Dain with discussion and validation of proposed methodology (20 minutes)*

Group work:

Individual groups will conduct the prioritization exercise to identify the top three policy/interventions for regional action.

1300–1400 LUNCH and networking

1400–1530

**SESSION 2 (contd): Identifying priorities for SEAR CSOs**

**Moderators:** Dr Htay Lwin, People’s Health Association, Myanmar and Ms Shoba John, Programme Director, Health Bridge

- Group work presentations (Individual groups report back to the larger group and all policy options reported back are listed for consideration and discussion by the larger group)
- Discussion and consensus building around regional priorities (use of the prioritization matrix selection criteria to guide discussions)
- Development of joint follow-up plan and collaboration strategies to deliver on agreed priorities
1530–1600
TEA / COFFEE and networking

1600–1700
SESSION 3: Conclusions and follow up

This session will summarize the 2-day proceedings and will agree on a list of follow-up actions for increased engagement and action of SEAR NCD civil society as part of a broader multisectoral response to NCDs.

**Moderators:** Dr Thaksaphon Thamarangsi and Ms Katie Dain

Conclusions
Follow-up actions
Closing

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**PROVISIONAL AGENDA**

1. Opening
2. Regional NCD Action Plan and priorities
3. Contributions of NGOs to the NCD agenda:
   a. Current status
   b. Lessons
   c. Challenges
4. How NGOs/civil society can further contribute to Regional NCD priorities in:
   a. Advocacy
   b. Reduction of risk factors
   c. Health systems and delivery of NCD services
   d. Surveillance, monitoring and accountability
5. Capacity building of CSOs
6. Engaging with and measuring the contributions of non-State actors
7. The Global and Regional NCD Alliance forum
8. Conclusions and recommendations
9. Closing
I. NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

BANGLADESH

1. Dr Md Shamim Hayder Talukder
   Chief Executive Officer
   Bangladesh NCD Alliance
   Eminence Associates for Social Development
   Dhaka
   Email: ceo@eminence-bd.org

2. Ms Shusmita Khan
   Coordinator
   Eminence Associates for Social Development
   Dhaka
   Email: shusmita@eminence-bd.org

3. Dr Sohel Reza Choudhury
   Associate Professor
   Department of Epidemiology and Research
   National Heart Foundation Hospital & Research Institute
   Dhaka
   Email: sohel_r_choudhury@hotmail.com

4. Dr SM Shamimul Moula
   Deputy Director, Planning & Development
   Dhaka Ahsania Mission
   Dhaka
   Email: shamimul.moula@gmail.com

5. Mr Saifuddin Ahmed
   Executive Director
   Work for Better Bangladesh Trust
   Dhaka
   Email: saifuddin1209@yahoo.com

INDIA

6. Professor K Srinath Reddy
   President
   Public Health Foundation of India
   New Delhi
   Email: ksrinath.reddy@phfi.org

7. Mrs Sunita Gupta
   Joint Secretary, Training & Tobacco Control
   Indian Cancer Society
   New Delhi
   Email: s4.guptas@gmail.com

8. Dr Priya Parmar
   Director (Operations)
   Indian Cancer Society
   New Delhi
   Email: icsparmar@gmail.com

9. Ms Sutapa Biswas
   Executive Director
   Cancer Foundation of India
   Kolkata
   Email: sutapabiswas1@gmail.com

10. Dr Pramesh Chandra Bhatnagar
    Director Communicable Diseases
    Voluntary Health Association of India
    New Delhi
    Email: pcbhatnagar@vhai.org

11. Dr Rana J Singh
    Senior Technical Advisor
    The Union South-East Asia
    International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease
    New Delhi
    Email: RJSingh@theunion.org
12. Dr Nandita Murukutla  
   Director – Global, Research and Evaluation  
   Country Director, India  
   World Lung Foundation  
   Gurgaon  
   Email: NMurukutla@worldlungfoundation.org

13. Dr GR Khatri  
   President  
   World Lung Foundation-South Asia  
   New Delhi  
   Email: GRKhatri@worldlungfoundation.org

14. Dr Akshay Kumar Vashisht  
   Member  
   World Lung Foundation-South Asia  
   New Delhi  
   Email: drakvasisht@gmail.com

15. Ms Pallavi Puri  
   Communications Assistant  
   World Lung Foundation  
   Gurgaon  
   Email: ppuri@worldlungfoundation.org

16. Dr HK Chopra  
   President  
   Cardiological Society of India  
   New Delhi  
   Email: drhkchopra@gmail.com

17. Ms Shoba John  
   Programme Director  
   HealthBridge  
   Mumbai  
   Email: shobajohn@yahoo.com

18. Dr Jacob Roy  
   Chief Executive Officer  
   Alzheimer’s Related Disorders Society of India  
   Email: kjacobrooy@gmail.com

19. Mr R Narendhar  
   Executive Director  
   Alzheimer’s Related Disorders Society of India  
   New Delhi  
   Email: narendhar@ardsi.org

20. Ms Radhika Shrivastav  
   Deputy Director  
   HRIDAY  
   New Delhi  
   Email: radhika@hriday-shan.org

21. Dr Swati Bhave  
   Executive Director  
   Association of Adolescent and Child Care in India  
   New Delhi  
   Email: sybhave@gmail.com

22. Ms Komal Khanna  
   Country Director  
   Abt Associates  
   New Delhi  
   Email: Komal_Khanna@abtindia.net

23. Mr Conjeevaram Hari  
   Abt Associates  
   New Delhi  
   Email: CHaricharan@abtindia.net

24. Dr Prakash C. Gupta  
   Director  
   Healis – Sekhsaria Institute of Public Health  
   Navi Mumbai  
   Email: pcgupta@healis.org

25. Mr Sanjay Seth  
   Chief of Operations  
   Healis – Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health  
   Gurgaon  
   Email: seths@healis.org

26. Dr Mira B Aghi  
   Behavioural Scientist  
   Healis Sekhsaria Institute of Public Health  
   New Delhi  
   Email: aghim@healis.org

27. Mr Partha Bosu  
   Director  
   Clean Air Asia  
   New Delhi  
   Email: partha.bosu@cleanairasia.org
28. Dr MR Rajagopal
   Chairman
   Pallium India
   Thiruvananthapuram
   Email: chairman@palliumindia.org

29. Dr Sujeet Ranjan
   Chief Operating Officer
   Magic Bus India
   Noida
   Email: sujeet@magicbusindia.org

30. Mr Amit Khurana
    Head, Food Safety and Toxins Division
    Centre for Science and Environment
    New Delhi
    Email: k_amit@cseindia.org

31. Mr Prabodh Bhambal
    Deputy Executive Director
    The Union
    India
    Email: pbhambal@theunion.org

32. Dr Jamhoih Tonsing
    Regional Director
    The Union South-East Asia Office
    New Delhi
    Email: JTonsing@theunion.org

33. Dr Ratna Devi
    MD and CEO
    Dakshama Health and Education
    New Delhi
    Email: ratna.devi@dakshamahealth.org

34. Dr Tara
    Uday Foundation
    Sri Aurobindo Marg
    New Delhi
    Email: info@udayfoundationindia.org

35. Mr Binit Gandhi
    IDF Young Leaders in Diabetes
    Rajkot
    Email: binit21989@gmail.com

36. Mr Piyush Gupta
    Principal Executive Officer
    Cancer Aid Society
    Lucknow
    Email: piyushgupta@canceraidsoocietyindia.org

37. Mr VS Shizu
    Coordinator Delhi
    Cancer Aid Society
    Delhi
    Email: vsshizu@cancersocietyindia.org

THE MALDIVES

42. Ms Aishath Shiruhana
    Chief Executive Officer
    Diabetes Society of Maldives
    Male’
    Email: shiruhana@hotmail.com

43. Ms Naila Abdul Majeed
    Medical Director
    Diabetes Society of Maldives
    Male’
    Email: nailamajeed@hotmail.com

MYANMAR

44. Dr Yin Yin Htun
    President
    Shwe Yaung Hnin Si Cancer Foundation
    Yangon
    Email: htun.rose@gmail.com

45. Ms Catherine Normile
    Consultant, NCDs
    Population Services International (PSI)
    Yangon
    Email: catherine.normile@gmail.com

46. Dr Htay Lwin
    Joint Secretary
    People Health Foundation
    Yangon
    Email: dr.htaylwin.2012@gmail.com
47. Dr Thein Myint  
Assistant Secretary General  
Myanmar Diabetes Association  
Myanmar  
Email: drthanemyint@gmail.com

48. Dr Win Myat Aye  
Academic Secretary  
Myanmar Medical Association  
Yangon  
Email: wmaye10@gmail.com

49. Mr Stephen Himley  
Health Project Manager  
Helpage International  
Yangon  
Email: stephen.himley@helpagemyanmar.org

NEPAL

50. Dr Prakash Raj Regmi  
Coordinator  
Nepal NCD Alliance  
Kathmandu  
Email: pregmi68@yahoo.com

51. Mr Shanta Lall Mulmi  
Executive Director  
Resource Centre for Primary Health Care  
Kathmandu  
Email: s_mulmi@yahoo.com

52. Mr Achyut Luitel  
Regional Director  
Practical Action South Asia  
Kathmandu  
Email: Achyut.Luitel@practicalaction.org.np

53. Dr Sharad Onta  
General Secretary  
Nepal Public Health Foundation  
Kathmandu  
Email: sharadonta@gmail.com

54. Mr Lokendra Kumar Shrestha  
President  
Nepal Cancer Relief Society  
Kathmandu  
Email: Ishwor650@hotmail.com

55. Mr Mahesh Shrestha  
Vice President  
Nepal Cancer Relief Society  
Kathmandu  
Email: mahesh_ncrs@yahoo.com

56. Mr Vimal Kumar Hoda  
Secretary General  
Nepal Cancer Relief Society  
Kathmandu  
Email: vimalhoda@yahoo.com

SRI LANKA

57. Dr Pubudu Sumanasekara  
Executive Director  
Alcohol and Drug Information Centre  
Colombo  
Email: pubudusumanasekara@hotmail.com

58. Ms Visakha Tillekeratne  
President  
Nutrition Society of Sri Lanka  
Colombo  
Email: visakhatillekeratne@yahoo.com

59. Dr Jayanthi Jayawardena  
Chairperson  
NCD Sub-Committee of Sri Lanka Medical Association  
Colombo 07  
Email: jayj4262000@yahoo.co.uk

60. Professor Warnakula Kusum de Abrew  
Honorary Vice President  
Diabetes Association of Sri Lanka  
Sri Lanka  
Email: kusumdeabrew@yahoo.com

THAILAND

61. Ms Bungon Rithiphakdee  
Executive Director  
South-East Asia Tobacco Control Alliance  
Bangkok  
Email: bungon@seatca.org
62. Mr Theera Watcharapranee  
   Executive Director  
   Stop Drink Network  
   Bangkok  
   Email: tom_teera@hotmail.com

63. Dr Vijj Kasemsup  
   Noncommunicable Diseases Network  
   Thailand  
   Bangkok  
   Email: vijj9@hotmail.com

64. Mrs Wannee Nitiyanant  
   President  
   Diabetes Association of Thailand  
   Bangkok  
   Email: dm.thai@diabassocthai.org

65. Mr Thomas Lopes  
   Health Promotion Officer  
   Many Hands International  
   Timor-Leste  
   Email: health@manyhands.org.au

66. Ms Euklidis Torrezão  
   Youth Unity for Community Progress  
   Timor-Leste  
   Email: euklidis_torreza@yahoo.com

67. Mr Sancho Belito Fernandes  
   National Youth Council of Timor-Leste  
   Dili  
   Email: sancho.pereira@yahoo.com

69. Dr Tara Singh Bam  
   Regional Advisor – Tobacco Control  
   The Union Asia Pacific  
   International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease  
   Singapore  
   Email: tsbam@theunion.org

II. NCD ALLIANCE

70. Ms Navami Naik  
   Program Manager  
   American Cancer Society Inc.  
   Atlanta  
   Email: navami.naik@cancer.org

71. Ms Katie Dain  
   Executive Director  
   NCD Alliance  
   United Kingdom  
   Email: kdain@ncdalliance.org

72. Ms Alena Matzke  
   Advocacy Specialist  
   NCD Alliance  
   Switzerland  
   Email: amatzke@ncdalliance.org

73. Ms Johanna Ralston  
   CEO  
   World Heart Federation  
   Geneva  
   Switzerland  
   Email: Johanna.Ralston@worldheart.org

74. Dr Cristina Parsons Perez  
   Senior Director  
   Catalyst Consulting Group  
   London  
   United Kingdom  
   Email: cparsonsperez@ccgintl.org
III. UN AGENCIES

75. Ms Alka Narang  
   Assistant Country Director  
   United Nations Development Programme  
   New Delhi  
   India  
   Email: alka.narang@undp.org

IV. WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

76. Sir George Alleyne  
   Director Emeritus  
   C/o Regional Office for the Americas  
   of the World Health Organization  
   Washington, D.C.  
   USA  
   Email: alleyned@paho.org

WHO Country Offices

77. Mr Moniruzzaman  
   National Consultant, IDP  
   World Health Organization  
   Bangladesh  
   Email: moniruzzaman@who.int

78. Dr Fikru Tullu  
   Team Leader (NCD)  
   World Health Organization  
   India  
   Email: tesfayet@who.int

79. Dr Sadhna Bhagwat  
   National Professional Officer (NCD)  
   World Health Organization  
   India  
   Email: bhagwats@who.int

80. Ms Vineet Munish Gill  
   National Professional Officer (TFI)  
   World Health Organization  
   India  
   Email: munishvg@who.int

81. Dr Lonim Dixit  
   National Professional Officer (NCD)  
   World Health Organization  
   Nepal  
   Email: dixitl@who.int

82. Dr Priska Apsari Primastuti  
   National Consultant, NCD Focal Point  
   World Health Organization  
   Indonesia  
   Email: primastutip@who.int

83. Mr T Suveendran  
   National Professional Officer (TNP)  
   World Health Organization  
   Sri Lanka  
   Email: suveendrant@who.int

84. Dr Nima Asgari  
   Public Health Administrator  
   World Health Organization  
   Thailand  
   Email: asgarin@who.int

Regional Office for South-East Asia

85. Dr Tawhid Nawaz  
   Director  
   Department of Programme Management  
   Email: nawazt@who.int

86. Dr Thaksaphon Thamarangsi  
   Director  
   Department of Noncommunicable Diseases  
   and Environmental Health  
   Email: thamarangsit@who.int

87. Dr Renu Garg  
   Regional Adviser  
   Noncommunicable Diseases  
   Email: gargr@who.int

88. Dr Francisco Katayama  
   Technical Officer  
   Partnerships, Interagency Coordination  
   and Resource Mobilization  
   Email: katayamaf@who.int
89. Dr Nyo Nyo Kyaing
   Regional Adviser
   Tobacco Free Initiative
   Email: kyaingn@who.int

90. Dr Dhirendra N Sinha
   Regional Adviser
   Surveillance, (Tobacco Control)
   Tobacco Free Initiative
   Email: sinhad@who.int

91. Dr Padmini Angela De Silva
   Regional Adviser
   Nutrition and Food Safety
   Email: desilvap@who.int

92. Dr Suvajee Good
   Programme Coordinator
   Health Promotion
   Email: goods@who.int

93. Ms Lesley Onyon
   Regional Adviser
   Occupational Health and Chemical Safety
   Email: onyonl@who.int

94. Dr Nazneen Anwar
   Regional Adviser
   Mental Health and Substance Abuse
   Email: anwarna@who.int
NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES are the major cause of morbidity mortality in the WHO South-East Asia Region. The Political Declaration of the United Nations High-Level Meeting on the prevention and control of NCDs in 2011 recognized the important role that civil society and other relevant stakeholders play in supporting national efforts at prevention and control. The WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia, in collaboration with the NCD Alliance, organized a two-day regional meeting on Strengthening NCD Civil Society Organizations in the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia in New Delhi, India on 9–10 July 2015. The meeting was attended by 94 participants, and aimed to stimulate a stronger civil society movement for the prevention and control of NCDs in the Region. This report presents the deliberations and recommendations of the participants of the regional meeting.