Noncommunicable diseases — Time for Action

What are noncommunicable diseases?

- Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are slow progressing, long-duration, largely preventable illnesses that result from numerous common modifiable risk factors.

- Rapid and unplanned urbanization reduces options for physical activity and increases exposure to environmental pollution.

- Social determinants, such as low levels of education and poverty, are associated with risk factors of NCDs (namely smoking, alcohol consumption and poor diet).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shared risk factors</th>
<th>Tobacco use</th>
<th>Unhealthy diet</th>
<th>Physical inactivity</th>
<th>Harmful use of alcohol</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cardiovascular diseases</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diabetes (Type II)</td>
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<td>Cancers</td>
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<td>Chronic respiratory diseases</td>
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Four modifiable shared risk factors cause 4 major NCDs which account for 80% of all NCD deaths.

What is driving the NCD epidemic?

- In addition to population ageing, NCDs are driven by the negative effects of globalization such as unfair trade and irresponsible marketing of unhealthy products.

- Four major NCDs — cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes — account for 80% of NCD deaths.

- Four modifiable risk behaviours — tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol — cause majority of NCD deaths.

- About 80% of heart diseases and stroke, 80% of Type 2 diabetes and over 30% of cancers can be prevented by eliminating common risk factors.

How do NCDs affect development?

- Each year, NCDs cause 9 million deaths globally below the age of 60 years with a concomitant negative impact on productivity and development.

- NCDs cause poverty. People in developing countries are being driven below the poverty line as they are spending their limited resources on expensive NCD treatment or buying products, such as tobacco and unhealthy food and beverages, that make them prone to NCDs.

- Workforces are losing millions of their most productive members in the prime of their lives.

- The rising burden of NCDs is predicted to impede poverty reduction initiatives in low- and middle-income countries.

- NCDs are already threatening to compromise development gains, particularly in the achievement of Millennium Development Goals 4, 5, 6 and 8.