WHO Global Dialogue on Partnerships for Sustainable Financing of Noncommunicable Disease (NCD) Prevention and Control

Copenhagen, Denmark, 9-11 April 2018

High-level summary

The WHO Global Dialogue on Partnerships for Sustainable Financing of Noncommunicable Disease Prevention and Control, hosted by the Government of Denmark, brought together WHO Member States, the UN system organizations, and non-State Actors to explore new ways to address the critical gap in financing of national NCD responses.

During the course of the Dialogue, participants reviewed the progress made since 2011 in the provision of funding for national NCD responses through domestic, bilateral and multilateral channels. They emphasized the importance of strong and continuous national leadership by Heads of State and Governments to significantly raise investments in NCD prevention and control to support the realization of target 3.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals and, thus, reduce by one third premature mortality from NCDs by 2030 through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and wellbeing.

Noncommunicable diseases (cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic obstructive lung disease, diabetes and mental health) and their shared risk factors (tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity, as well as air pollution) represent a hurdle to sustainable development due to their negative impact on macroeconomic productivity, national growth, health-care costs and household incomes. Over 40 million deaths globally are due to NCDs annually. The high level of premature mortality from NCDs, that is deaths between the ages of 30 and 70, is particularly alarming, killing women and men when they are most productive. According to WHO, 15 million people died prematurely from NCDs, in 2016, and 85%, or 13 million, of these deaths took place in low- and middle-income countries.

The United Nations General Assembly Third High-level Meeting on NCDs taking place in September 2018, is a crucial moment for global leaders to reflect on the financial investments necessary to accelerate progress of national NCD responses by 2030. As an input into deliberations around these investments, the Global Dialogue highlighted the urgent need for governments, global leaders, development partners, UN system organizations and all relevant stakeholders to prioritise NCDs as an essential pillar of sustainable development and an integral part of countries’ efforts toward universal health coverage (UHC).

Some of the key messages heard at the Global Dialogue were the following:

- Reaching SDG 3.4 in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) will require bold changes in the way countries finance the development and implementation of national NCD responses.
- Two High-level Meetings on NCDs raised political awareness of the problem, but did not trigger sufficient resource mobilization to translate the high-level political commitments into accelerated country-level action.
- Unless political action is accelerated in 2018, current rates of investments are not sufficient to meet SDG 3.4 by 2030.
Premature mortality from NCDs is avoidable through a combination of population-based and individual health measures ensured through universal health coverage of primary and secondary prevention, treatment and rehabilitation.

Most countries have the capacity to mobilise sufficient domestic resources for comprehensive NCD prevention and control through improved tax systems and innovative financing mechanisms. When allocated efficiently and equitably, greater investments in health will result in lower healthcare costs in the long term.

Domestic financing alone will not be sufficient in countries with limited resources to finance national NCD responses and strengthen health systems. Therefore, catalytic development assistance for health will be required to complement other sources of funding.

While governments have the primary role and responsibility for responding to the challenge of NCDs, incentives will be needed for the private sector to support financing of national NCD responses. However, Governments should pay due diligence in order to avoid any potential or perceived conflicts of interest and maximize the public health benefits.

The interlinked 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development cannot be implemented without policy coherence across sectors and multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder partnerships, as well as the actions, resources, knowledge, and expertise of non-State and international actors to complement the efforts of Governments. Reaching SDG 3.4 in LMIC will require bold changes in the way countries finance the development and implementation of national NCD responses.

Therefore, in the lead-up to the Third UNGA High-level Meeting on NCD Prevention and Control, the Dialogue elevated the need for action by governments, health and development agencies and relevant non-State Actors to act boldly, taking into account national realities, capacities, priorities, needs and levels of development, to ensure that no one is left behind.

In particular, the Dialogue stressed the need:

- For Governments to exercise bold political leadership to increase domestic resources for comprehensive NCD prevention and control and embrace UHC as an integrated approach for measuring progress towards SDG 3.4.
- To expand the fiscal space for health through the increase in general tax revenues, improved efficiency and equity, and a better prioritization of health in public sector budgets.
- To create an enabling legal and regulatory environment conducive to the implementation of the evidence-based, cost-effective NCD interventions, such as the WHO Global NCD Action Plan ‘Best Buys’ and other recommended interventions.
- To complement domestic resources with international cooperation, including official development assistance (ODA) with a focus on LDCs and other resources, to increase health expenditure on prevention and control of NCDs, consistent with country needs and priorities.
- To promote and incentivize innovative and bold partnerships comprising financing and engagement of relevant non-State actors, including the private sector in public-private partnerships and philanthropies, to mobilize additional funds to address NCDs, while respecting country policies and priorities, and considering adequate management of conflict of interests for the protection of public health.