Key mission findings

1. Strong political commitment exists in support of NCDs actions.

2. NCDs are included in the National Health Development Plan (2012-2017) and the Health Master Plan (2007-2016).

3. A draft Multi-Sectoral NCD Action Plan was prepared, but actions have not yet been prioritized and costed.

4. Different ministries are implementing NCD prevention actions (e.g. The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs is working to promote healthy diets among teachers, parents and children in the primary education sector).

5. There have been a number of successes in tobacco control since Sri Lanka ratified the WHO FCTC in September 2003.

6. A national policy on controlling the harmful use of alcohol is being finalized.

7. Progress has been made in scaling up response to NCDs in primary care across the country.

8. NCDs are included in the 2013-2017 UNDAF.

9. A 5-year US $200 million World Bank loan focuses on enabling the health system to better respond to the challenges of NCDs.

“My Government, as well as the cabinet of ministers, is fully committed to taking this agenda forward. WHO in addition to Ministry of Health should work with other ministries and other UN agencies to support the Government.”

Maithripala Sirisena, President of Sri Lanka

“The United Nations is committed to supporting the Government of Sri Lanka to scale up action to tackle NCDs. The levels of NCDs are now a grave concern and we recognise that the government is taking this issue seriously at the very highest level.”

Subinay Nandy, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative

Key adult NCD mortality and risk factors:

- NCDs cause 80% of deaths in Sri Lanka (ref WHO GHE 2015, WHO 2016)

- Probability of premature mortality from NCDs: 18% (2015)

- 30% of adults are not sufficiently physically active (STEPS, 2015)

- 8% of adults have raised fasting blood glucose (2014)

- 24% of adults have raised blood pressure (2015)

- 28% of men (aged >=15 years) smoke tobacco (2015)

- 3% of adult men and 9% of adult women are obese (2014)

- Pure alcohol per capita consumption: 4.5 litres per year (population 15+, 2015)

- 73% of adults don’t eat sufficient amount of fruits and vegetables (STEPS, 2015)
Key recommendations

1. A high-level coordination mechanism between the government, the UN System and development partners needs to be put into place to ensure that the Multi-Sectoral NCD Action Plan is delivered.

2. A Sri Lankan NCD Alliance should be established to promote NCD activities among non-state actors.

3. Urgent analysis needs to be carried out on the 2014 STEPS survey.

4. A greater focus on costing, implementing and monitoring progress is needed by the government, UN System and development partners, particularly on a small number of internationally accepted cost-effective and feasible interventions (best-buys).

5. A 2-year costed plan needs to be developed and implemented to raise public awareness on NCDs.

6. A capacity building programme on the Multi-Sectoral NCDs Action Plan needs to be developed.

7. An investment case for NCDs needs to be made.

Adding value: actions taken following the mission

1. The National Multisectoral Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs, 2016–2020 was approved by Government, and costing of the Plan was undertaken with support from WHO.

2. A National NCD Steering Committee for NCDs meets regularly to coordinate actions across the health ministry and partners. Presidential task forces are in place for tobacco/drugs, nutrition/food production, and chronic kidney diseases of unknown etiology.

3. A Presidential task force is preparing a new multi-sectoral plan on nutrition.

4. In 2016, the President announced plans to ban tobacco cultivation by 2020.

5. Tobacco taxation was further increased in 2016.

6. The National Alcohol Control Policy was launched in 2015, and work is now underway to develop a national alcohol strategy and action plan.

7. A traffic light labelling system was introduced in 2016 for products high in sugar, the first of its kind in the region.

8. HPV vaccine is being introduced nationwide in 2017, to all Grade 7 girls, free of charge, through a school-based programme.

9. A maximum price policy was introduced in 2016 to reduce the out of pocket cost for 48 essential medicines, including all essential medicines for NCDs.

10. The results of the 2014/2015 STEPS survey have been analyzed and published.

11. The ‘NCD Alliance of Sri Lanka’ was established in 2016, the first in the South East Asian Region.

12. Actions by the WHO Representative and UN Resident Coordinator have facilitated the commitment of the UN Country Team to work in a collaborative manner.

Adding value: actions taken following the mission

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Next steps

1. Cabinet is now considering a proposal to introduce plain packaging for tobacco and ban the sale of single cigarettes and smokeless tobacco.

2. Follow up on interest to introduce taxation to reduce the consumption of foods and beverages high in sugar, salt and fat.

3. Conduct a national salt consumption survey in 2017, to enable Government to determine effective salt reduction strategies.

4. Repeat national STEPS survey, planned in 2018.

5. Complete the assessment of the marketing of unhealthy food and beverages to children in Sri Lanka.

Additional information on the status of NCDs in Sri Lanka can be found on the WHO NCD DataFinder app.

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