Improving women’s access for the prevention, treatment, and care of NCDs across the life-course is vital to the success of the Sustainable Development Goals. Women’s full participation will ensure that the goals are fulfilled and no one is left behind.

In much of the world, particularly resource poor settings, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are among the top killers. Seven out of 10 deaths globally are due to NCDs, and they are a particular burden for women. Cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease and mental and neurological disorders are the leading causes of death and disability among women in developing and developed countries alike.

And yet, NCDs are often not prioritized. Similarly, the health of women is often ignored because of traditional and cultural reasons.

When an unprioritized health challenge like NCDs is combined with the healthcare of half of the world’s population’s being frequently ignored, a perfect storm develops. Globally, NCDs are now the leading cause of death and disability among women, responsible for two of every three women’s deaths. At the same time, poor women are the least likely to have access to adequate and affordable prevention, diagnosis, management, treatment or care services. Women and girls can only fulfil their full potential if we recognize gender equity as a critical determinant of health outcomes and a country’s overall development.

If progress is to be made on the SDGs, if lives are to be improved and saved, we must prioritize women’s health, including NCDs. Countries must ensure that women and girls are counted during monitoring and evaluation, with age and gender-disaggregated data; that health programs are appropriate and accessible to women of all income levels; and that women are included in policymaking, planning and implementation.

The WHO Global Conference on NCDs meeting in Uruguay 18-20 October 2017 is an important milestone on the path to a coordinated and effective global effort to meet the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is specifically focused on enhancing policy coherence to prevent and control non-communicable diseases.

In Uruguay meeting, the Task Force on Women and NCDs calls upon officials to:

www.womenandncds.org
• recognize that one of the most effective and efficient ways to reach SDG target 3.4 is to enhance policy coherence by prioritizing women’s health, including NCDs;
• accelerate progress to reduce premature mortality from NCDs and fast track efforts with specific global initiatives and strategies to target women and NCDs at the national level;
• align national strategies and resources behind more gender inclusive approaches to healthcare; and
• recognize health as a human right.

We appreciate the engagement and leadership of participants in Uruguay and stand ready to work with all stakeholders to make progress on improving NCD healthcare for women.

Signed,

American Academy of Pediatrics
American Cancer Society
American Heart Association
Arogya World
The George Institute for Global Health
Partners in Health
Women Deliver