Catalytic Fund for Non-Communicable Diseases and Mental Health

A significant new multi-partner initiative convened by the UN Interagency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of NCDs is being developed to catalyze more effective responses to NCDs and mental health at country level. The proposal was included in ECOSOC’s 2018 resolution on the Task Force. The Catalytic Fund was also one of the bold ideas recommended by the WHO Independent High-level Commission on NCDs.

- Amid a swirl of competing and complex global health concerns, we confront a serious issue: the lack of progress in reducing 12.75 million premature deaths per year from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in low- and middle-income countries, as well as almost 800,000 deaths by suicide every year.
- We have the tools to beat these NCDs. In 2017, the World Health Assembly endorsed an updated set of cost-effective, evidence-based solutions, using knowledge of how to prevent up to two-thirds of premature NCD deaths.
- With the right decisions and the right investments, countries will be able to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 3 on health and wellbeing, along with many other goals and targets that are inextricably linked to NCDs.
- Reducing risk factors, illness and premature deaths from these diseases requires actions well beyond what ministries of health can take on alone. A whole-of-government and whole-of-society response is required. Development partners, including the United Nations system, working together, can leverage their comparative advantages to help governments tackle NCDs through coordinated, multi-sectoral approaches, in line with established human rights principles.

The idea

WHO, the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, building on the recommended of the WHO Independent High-level Commission on NCDs are proposing, to establish a new Catalytic Fund to provide technical support to scale up support to low- and lower-middle-income countries in their efforts to meet SDG 3.4 (by 2030 reduce by one-third, pre-mature mortality from NCDs through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and wellbeing).

The Catalytic Fund will be country-driven, focus on overlooked and underfunded parts of the NCD response, and be aligned with WHO guidance. The Catalytic Fund will bring together a range of stakeholders for meaningful engagement and mobilise finances across a range of sources.

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2 Time to deliver: report of the WHO Independent High-Level Commission on NCDs http://www.who.int/ncds/management/time-to-deliver/en/ includes the recommendation, ‘The international community should consider the establishment of a multi-donor fund, to catalyze financing for the development of national NCDs and mental health responses and policy coherence at country level’.
3 http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/noncommunicable-diseases
4 http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en/
6 However, it is expected that the Catalytic Fund will support implementation of 12 SDG goals and 30 SDG targets (reference to follow).
The Catalytic Fund would support governments to better coordinate and integrate NCD responses into existing health and development strategies and would create space for civil society organisations to strengthen their role in service delivery and advocacy.

The Catalytic Fund will reinforce domestic resources as the primary source of financing for scaled-up NCD prevention and control. In addition the Fund will mobilize a range of complementary financing sources to kick-start national action and build the foundation for sustainable responses. The Fund is also expected to leverage and improve the efficiency of bilateral loans and grants from IFIs, including the World Bank, which through their multibillion dollar lending portfolio on health systems strengthening are increasingly supporting interventions related to NCDs and mental health – in support of Universal Health Coverage.

It is expected that the Catalytic Fund will support activities in five main thematic areas, identified as key gaps/challenges and technical support needs within national responses to NCDs (Box).8

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**Areas for potential support:**

1. National investment frameworks for NCDs and mental health – including development of an investment case, a prioritized and costed national plan, government-led fund allocation, coordination and implementation, with the ultimate objective of sustained domestic financing and response.9 Local, sub-national and municipal responses will also be supported.

2. Pro-health partnerships with the private sector, community and other stakeholders, combined with improved policy coherence across government and better management of conflicts of interest and industry interference in relation to prevention and control of NCDs.

3. Stronger legislative and regulatory environments in support of NCD prevention and control across various sectors.

4. Stronger systems in place for more services for NCDs, including mental health conditions, through effective procurement of NCD medicines, diagnostics and equipment in order to scale up treatment access and reduce system inefficiencies, along with related capacity building of health systems, health services and personnel.10

5. Community-based and population-wide responses to NCDs, including risk communication strategies and social contracting mechanisms for government–civil society partnerships.11

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As countries engage and prioritize action against NCDs, the Catalytic Fund will respond to country demand for international assistance to increase the available fiscal space, engage the private sector at national and international levels, mobilize multilateral funding, reinforce policy coherence, build technical capacity for a multisectoral response to NCDs and build consensus around politically difficult issues within the context of broader sustainable development efforts.

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8 See country missions and progress reports in [http](http://www.who.int/ncds/governance/high-level-commission/en/who.int/ncds/un-task-force/en/).

9 UNDP and WHO are already providing technical support for development of national NCD investment cases in 15 countries, with significant demand from additional countries, and limited financial capacity to effectively respond to this demand.

10 The Catalytic Fund would not support procurement of medicines, pharmaceuticals or diagnostic equipment, but may support NCD-related institution- and capacity-building at sub-national, national and possibly regional levels e.g. on the marketing of and trade in food, beverage, tobacco and alcohol products.

11 See UNDP guidance on social contracting: [https](https://www.slideshare.net/undpeuropeandcis/ngo-social-contracting-opportunities-and-challenges).
**Why is the UN leading on this?**

There is increasing demand from low- and middle-income countries for support from the UN system to tackle NCDs at the country level. This has been comprehensively documented in UN NCD Task Force joint programming mission reports, along with the reports of the Task Force to ECOSOC and ECOSOC resolutions.\(^{12}\)

It is expected that Member States will wish to use the Catalytic Fund to strengthen UN system support for catalysing country-level NCD and mental health responses.

Recognizing the leadership and coordination role of WHO on NCDs\(^{13}\) and in order to ensure the primacy of health interests and the highest level of evidence-informed technical guidance, the Catalytic Fund will be administered by WHO. The Catalytic Fund will be established in the WHO budget but will be outside the base programme.

**Why now?**

- In many low- and middle-income countries the NCD epidemic is getting worse.
- The World Health Assembly recently endorsed ‘Best Buys’, cost effective interventions and supporting.
- While countries are scaling up domestic financing for NCDs – including more than USD 2 billion provided to countries through World Bank health systems strengthening projects – international levels of technical and catalytic resources to support low- and middle-income countries to strengthen national governance and scale up action is insufficient.
- Current governance structures in LIMCs are poorly equipped to deal with the globalization of trade, health harming products and public health protection is failing at an increasing rate.
- UHC provides the opportunity to accelerate integrated responses to communicable and chronic diseases.
- In response to recent ECOSOC resolutions E/2018/L.16 and E/2017/54 on the UN NCD Task Force.\(^{14}\)

**What will the Catalytic Fund NOT be?**

- A new multi-billion dollar financing mechanism that acts as a ‘Global Fund for NCDs’;
- A traditional top-down, north-to-south official development assistance vehicle;
- A purchasing mechanism for large-scale procurement of medicines, diagnostics and supplies;

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\(^{12}\) See [http://www.who.int/ncds/un-task-force/en/?ua=1](http://www.who.int/ncds/un-task-force/en/?ua=1) for country mission and ECOSOC reports as well as ECOSOC resolutions.

\(^{13}\) In line with paragraph 13 of the 2011 Political Declaration, where Heads of State and Government ‘ Recognize the leading role of WHO as the primary specialized agency for health, including its roles and functions with regard to health policy in accordance with its mandate, and reaffirm its leadership and coordination role in promoting and monitoring global action against non-communicable diseases in relation to the work of other relevant UN agencies, development banks and other regional and international organizations in addressing NCDs in a coordinated manner.

\(^{14}\) E/2018/L.16 (i) urges national Governments, the private sector as appropriate, and bilateral and multilateral donors, including the World Bank and regional development banks, to explore financing for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and mobilizing the provision of adequate, predictable and sustained resources for the programmatic work of the Task Force; (ii) calls upon the Task Force and its members to continue to work together and with philanthropic foundations, civil society and the private sector, as appropriate, to identify additional resources to provide support to Member States; and (iii) notes ongoing relevant discussions on catalysing financing to fill the gap, including by identifying funding mechanisms, such as a multi-donor trust fund.
× A vehicle for vested industries to negatively influence national health systems.

Harmonizing with broader development priorities
The Catalytic Fund will:

✓ Make a major contribution to UHC and the SDGs as set out in WHO’s Thirteenth General Programme of Work, including WHO’s commitment to catalyse action on NCDs globally and in countries, in particular through the efforts of the Task Force;¹⁵

✓ Leverage current multi-lateral support to countries on NCDs through enhanced application of these funds for technical and implementation support;

✓ Demonstrate how UN agencies are responding to the UN Secretary-General’s recent report on repositioning the UN development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda;¹⁶

✓ Align with the new World Bank-UN partnership for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

✓ Bring Member States, the multilateral system, and non-State actors together to harmonise and align catalytic support on NCDs and mental health.

The impact of the Catalytic Fund: expected outcomes
The underlying premise of the Catalytic Fund is that it is necessary to help countries implement impactful and cost-effective interventions that can demonstrate the value and importance of investment in preventing NCDs.

Based on this rationale, the Catalytic Fund aims to mobilize at least USD 200 million for disbursement over five years, to support up to 25 countries in accelerating country-level actions towards achieving national and global NCD targets.

Preliminary projections indicate that USD 200 million ‘seed capital’ could leverage an additional USD 1.5–2 billion in domestic and private sector investments for NCD prevention. Further estimates indicate that between now and 2030, this seed capital could: (i) save 5 million lives; (ii) result in 63 million healthy life-years gained; and (iii) avert USD 30 billion in economic losses.¹⁷

How will the Catalytic Fund work?
This initial proposal is for the Catalytic Fund to respond to demands from up to 25 member states over a five-year period. Funds would be made available for technical and operational activities.

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¹⁷ These figures are based on a series of assumptions which are currently being refined. 1. For each dollar invested by the Catalytic Fund, we would to catalyze approximately 10 dollars in domestic resources. 2. Averting economic losses of USD 30 billion to 2030 was calculated using an average return on investments of 13.7 for a set of NCD policy interventions (based on NCD investment cases in Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia and Saudi Arabia). 3. The 5 million lives saved was based on the same investment cases, where implementation of the same NCD policy interventions provides the proportion of lives saved in the population (0.16%) with 25 countries covered by the Catalytic Fund (3 billion x 0.0016). 4. 63 million healthy life years gained – again based on the above examples – provides a proportion of 0.02 years saved per person (3 billion x 0.02). The above estimates are considered modest, as they are for cardiovascular disease only and do not include other NCDs.
Applications for accessing the Catalytic Fund would be made by national/federal (or regional/state/municipal) governments with proposals jointly developed by the government, the UN Country Team including the World Bank and local development partners and civil society. A strong element of capacity building for domestic resource mobilization would be factored into the Catalytic Fund model, to ensure sustainability of supported actions. Priority would be given to applications that strengthen civil society–government partnerships and social contracting for NCD responses.

Selection criteria will include: (i) clear political commitment to strengthening NCD and mental health responses, including by mobilisation of more domestic resources; (ii) demonstrable examples of commitment to strengthen governance of NCD responses (national NCD strategies, investment frameworks, coordination mechanisms and legislative environments) including structures and means for advancing comprehensive, multi-sectoral, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches; (iii) identified focus on increasing the capacity of the public sector, municipalities and communities to respond to NCD burden and develop sustainable/healthy cities and communities; and (iv) commitment from the UN Country Team to respond to requests for high quality technical support.

The maximum award per country under the Catalytic Fund will be USD 10 million over a maximum 5-year period.

**Join forces with the Catalytic Fund**

We are now looking the partners to help further design and establish the Catalytic Fund. Please contact the UN Task Force Secretariat ([unncdtaskforce@who.int](mailto:unncdtaskforce@who.int)) for further information.