Innovative Financing for NCDs
United Nations Non-Communicable Diseases and Mental Health Catalytic Trust Fund

A significant new initiative under the UN Interagency Task Force for the Prevention and Control of NCDs is being developed to catalyze more effective responses to NCDs and mental health at country level. The Trust Fund is one of the bold ideas being considered by the WHO Independent Global High-level Commission on NCDs.¹

- Amid a swirl of competing and complex global health concerns, we confront a serious issue: the lack of progress in reducing 7 million premature deaths per year from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in low- and lower-middle income countries and close to 800,000 people die due to suicide every year.

- We have the tools to beat NCDs. In 2017, the World Health Assembly endorsed an updated set of cost effective, evidence-based solutions, based on knowledge of how to prevent up to two-thirds of premature NCD deaths.²

- 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 of the non-health 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 are able to take on alone. A whole-of-government and whole-of-society response is required. United Nations agencies, working collectively, can leverage their comparative advantages to help governments tackle NCDs through these coordinated, multi-sectoral approaches, including human rights principles.

The idea
WHO, the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA are proposing, based on the interest of and commitment from development partners, to establish a new Multi-Donor Trust Fund or Multi-Partner Trust Fund (‘Trust Fund’) to provide catalytic support to accelerate national responses to NCDs.

This initiative, would build on the strengths of the individual agencies, and would support governments to better coordinate and integrate NCD responses into existing health and development strategies. Specifically, the initiative would seek 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-

¹ [http://www.who.int/ncds/governance/high-level-commission/en/]
mature mortality from NCDs through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and wellbeing).³

In order to ensure longer-term sustainability and leverage existing financing mechanisms for health systems strengthening, the initiative could be hosted at the World Bank Group. The Bank, through its multibillion lending portfolio on health systems strengthening, is increasingly supporting interventions related to NCDs—through the broader framework of Universal Health Coverage. This creates opportunities for leveraging additional resources to support national investments in NCDs, as part of sector-wide reforms and interventions and supporting domestic resource mobilization as part of broader health financing reforms. Alternatively the Trust Fund could be hosted by one of the other UN agencies.

Ultimately the final decision on a host will be determined by the availability of existing/appropriate institutional mechanisms, organizational capacity, ability to quickly transfer resources to countries. A detailed review on lessons learnt from World Bank and other Trust Funds is being undertaken in order to guide a decision on the optimal mechanism.

Regardless of where the initiative is hosted, it is expected that the catalytic funds will support activities in five main thematic areas, identified as key gaps/challenges and technical support needs within national responses to NCDs (Box).⁴

**Areas for potential support:**

1. National investment frameworks for NCDs and mental health – involving an investment case, a prioritized and costed national plan, and government-led funding allocation, coordination and implementation, with the ultimate objective of sustained domestic financing and response.⁵

2. Pro-health partnerships with the private sector, community and other stakeholders, combined with improved policy coherence across government and better risk management of conflicts of interest 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 effective procurement of NCD medicines, equipment and commodities in order to scale up treatment access and reduce system inefficiencies, along with related capacity building of health systems, health services and personnel.⁶

5. Community-based and population-wide responses to NCDs, including risk communication strategies.

³ However it is expected that the Trust Fund will support implementation of 12 SDG goals and 30 SDG targets (reference to follow).
⁵ 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.
⁶ The Trust 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.
As countries engage and prioritize action against NCDs, the Trust Fund will respond to country demand for international assistance in order 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.

Specific UN agency mandates and areas of expertise will be harnessed to support different aspects of country NCD responses.

Why now?
Funds are beginning to flow for NCD responses. Countries are scaling up domestic financing for NCDs — including over USD 2 billion provided to countries through World Bank health systems strengthening projects. Many countries are now requesting support to strengthen national governance around NCDs and scale up NCD responses, in order to capitalise on the impact and improve the effective use of existing funds.

Other countries are requesting support in the five areas in preparation for scaling up domestic investment, again including World Bank projects and other bilateral support. The Trust Fund will act as a catalyst to enhance the impact and effectiveness of existing financing for NCDs and/or catalyse an increase in new funding for NCDs, including through new project funding from the multilateral development banks.

Harmonizing with broader development priorities
The Trust Fund will:

- Make a major contribution to universal health coverage and the SDGs as set out in WHO’s Thirteenth Global 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.
- Enable leveraging of current multi-lateral support to countries on NCDs, through enhanced application of these funds for technical and other operational 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;
- Be in line with the new World Bank-UN partnership for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Respond to the 2017 ECOSOC Task Force resolution that called for a significant increase in financing for the UN system’s response to NCD-related SDGs.

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7 In line with an analysis of recommendations from UN Task Force joint programming missions
8 http://www.who.int/ncds/un-task-force/en/
The impact of the Trust Fund: expected outcomes
The underlying premise for the Trust Fund is that catalytic funding is necessary to help countries implement quick, impactful, and cost-effective interventions that can demonstrate the value and importance of investment in NCDs.

Based on this rationale, the Trust Fund aims to mobilize $200 million over five years, to support up to 25 countries accelerate country-level actions towards national and global NCD targets.

Preliminary projections indicate that this USD 200 million ‘seed capital’ could mobilize an additional USD 1.5–2 billion in domestic investments for NCDs. 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.11

How will the Trust Fund work?
This initial proposal is for the Trust 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.

Applications for accessing the Trust Fund would be made by national/federal (or regional/state) governments with proposals jointly developed by the government, the UN Country Team including the World Bank and local development partners. A strong element of capacity building for domestic resource mobilization with governments will be factored in to the Trust Fund model, to ensure sustainability. Applications that strengthen civil society’s support for government-led NCD responses would be encouraged.

Selection criteria will include: (i) clear political commitment to strengthening NCD responses, including the mobilisation of domestic resources; (ii) demonstrable examples of commitment to strengthen governance of NCD responses, 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 (iv) commitment from the UN Country Team to respond to requests for high quality technical support.

The maximum award per country under the Trust Fund will be US$ 10 million per country over a maximum 5-year period.

Join forces with the Trust Fund
We are now looking the partners to help further design and establish the Trust Fund. Please contact the UN Task Force Secretariat (unncdtaskforce@who.int) for further information.

11 These figures are based on a series of assumptions which are currently being refined. 1. For each dollar invested by the Trust 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 on 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 same NCD policy interventions provides the proportion of number of lives saved in the population (0.16%) with 25 countries covered by the Trust Fund (3 billion x 0.0016). 4. 63 million healthy life years gained – again based on 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 CVD only and do not include other NCDs.