

NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCD)

What You Should Know

The global noncommunicable disease burden is growing, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), non-infectious health conditions such as cardiovascular diseases (heart disease and stroke), cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory disease are currently the leading cause of disability worldwide, killing 41 million people annually. In low- and middle-income countries, approximately 17 million deaths of individuals under the age of 70 are caused by NCDs, which account for 86% of premature deaths.

Access to prevention and treatment strategies must be addressed. Limited access to proven and effective

prevention and treatment strategies contribute to the global NCD and mental health burden, plunging families into poverty and further straining health budgets, health systems, and economic growth.

NCDs are moving higher on the global agenda, but funding lags. There have been increasing efforts since 2011 to elevate NCDs and mental health in global development agendas, including Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.4, which calls for a one-third reduction of premature mortality from NCDs by 2030. Yet countries are far from achieving this target, and currently less than 4% of Development Assistance for Health goes to NCDs.

Congressional Calls to Action

Integrate NCD interventions across U.S. global health programs and provide dedicated funding.

Congress must hold the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) accountable for integrating NCD interventions across global health programs and increasing access to sustainable and cost-effective interventions. The United States must provide dedicated NCD funding as part of the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs report language to address NCDs that affect children and disproportionately impact underserved communities.

Mandate USAID to improve NCD data collection and analysis.

Congress should mandate USAID to establish a monitoring mechanism to better track U.S. commitments to health systems strengthening, child health, global health security, HIV/AIDS, and other programs that benefit NCD populations. The U.S. should also encourage its partners to strengthen data collection and research related to the global NCD and mental health burden, particularly among vulnerable populations.

Congress should invest in complementary NCD initiatives.

Such initiatives include the Multipartner Trust Fund, which catalyzes country action for NCDs and mental health, as well as PEN-Plus, which is an integrated care delivery strategy focused on alleviating the NCD burden among the poorest children and young adults.

Why is this investment important?

A modest investment by the U.S. government in reducing the burden of avoidable death and suffering due to NCDs and mental health would solidify U.S. leadership in addressing the full continuum of global health needs for the world's most vulnerable populations—and ensure that USAID's 2030 Vision for Health Systems Strengthening is met.

Dedicated NCD support and leadership would:

- Provide catalytic support to scale up NCD prevention and treatment strategies for reducing morbidity and mortality and to increase access to quality services among the most vulnerable.
- Reduce the substantial economic impact NCDs have on society and governments, which place a high burden on families, threaten economic

growth and damage productivity.

- Solidify U.S. leadership in supporting countries to strengthen one of the largest gaps in primary health care and reinforce ongoing U.S. investments in addressing infectious diseases and maternal and child health.
- Improve pandemic preparedness and provide critical assistance to one of the most neglected populations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Better inform treatment, management, and evidence-based practices for U.S.-based populations that are underrepresented in clinical trials through contributions to global data networks and research in NCDs.

U.S. investment in reducing the burden of avoidable death and suffering due to NCDs would solidify U.S. leadership in addressing global health needs for the world's most vulnerable populations.

Resources

Impacts of COVID-19 on people living with NCDs (NCD Alliance): https://ncdalliance.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/COVID-19_%26_NCDs_BriefingNote_27April_FinalVersion_0.pdf

Invest to Protect: NCD financing as the foundation for healthy societies and economies (NCD Alliance): <https://ncdalliance.org/resources/invest-to-protect-ncd-financing-as-the-foundation-for-healthy-societies-and-economies>

Invisible numbers: the true extent of noncommunicable diseases and what to do about them. (WHO): <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/362800>

United Nations multi-partner trust fund to catalyze country action for non-communicable diseases and mental health (WHO): <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/341905>

PEN-Plus – Integrated chronic care for severe NCDs in poor, rural areas (NCDI Poverty Network): <http://www.ncdipoverty.org/penplus-1>

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Citations

1. World Health Organization (WHO). “Invisible numbers: the true extent of noncommunicable diseases and what to do about them.” 2022. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/362800>
2. WHO. “United Nations multi-partner trust fund to catalyze country action for non-communicable diseases and mental health.” 2021.” <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/341905>
3. NCDI Poverty Network. “PEN-Plus – Integrated chronic care for severe NCDs in poor.” rural areas <http://www.ncdipoverty.org/penplus-1>