

Forum: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Issue: The Question of Preventing Early Deaths from
Non-communicable Diseases

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Introduction

The issue at hand, is the question of preventing early deaths from non-communicable diseases and it can be said to be more serious than is thought. The massive death toll caused by NCDs (Non-communicable diseases) annually and the costs attributed to treating them have brought forward concerns about the role of NCDs in causing premature deaths and stalling development in poverty stricken countries.

The severity of the issue can be better explained in numbers, since NCDs are attributed to be the cause of death for over 41 million deaths every year. That number represents nearly 71% of all deaths occurring around the world each year, and for nearly 85% of all the premature deaths in the world.¹ It also should be noted that the death toll of NCDs is high in both developing and developed countries, meaning it's effects can be perceived no matter which country is inspected, but the main parties affected remain as the low- to middle-income nations. As nearly 80% of the NCD related deaths occur in these nations and are most serious in areas where health systems are not capable or are too fragile to deal with the NCDs². And the reasoning for why NCDs are so common will differ, depending whether a developed or a developing country is in question. The problem also has other implications than just the high number of deaths, since it has been estimated that the NCDs will cause a cumulative damage of an estimated amount of 7 Trillion USD, by the year 2025.³

The main question still remains as what can be done to relieve the problem of premature deaths being caused by NCDs. The question has also raised concern over

¹ <http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/noncommunicable-diseases>*(The numbers may vary according to the source that's used, but numbers given by WHO have been deemed very trustworthy globally)

² <https://www.psi.org/health-area/non-communicable-diseases/#about>

³ http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/best_buys_summary.pdf

multiple reasons, one being the increasing average age of the population, a major concern especially for developed countries. The main demographic to be affected by NCDs and suffer a premature death are the elderly, but NCDs are also a serious issue for the younger parts of the population⁴. There is a severe need for the prevention of the main 4 habits of the general population, from which NCDs most commonly originate. The four habits, which are found in the living conditions of the general population, are the use of alcohol, lack of exercise, poor diet and the use of tobacco.⁵ Measures and programs to prevent these endangering habits and others which increase the risk of NCDs have already been taken, and the issue has been noted by many nations and organizations around the world, but there still remains much work to be done.

Definition of Key Terms

NCD (short for non-communicable disease)

Non-communicable disease, is by definition a disease that is not infectious and is non-transmissible among people, the main types of non-communicable diseases include cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic lung disease, diabetes, mental health issues and a number of others.⁶

Developed country

Developed country, by definition is a country that has fulfilled a list of many factors. Main factors include having a highly developed economy, having technologically advanced infrastructure, and having been rated highly on the industrialisation and human development indexes, when compared to other countries.⁷

Developing country

⁴ http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/popfacts/popfacts_2012-1.1.pdf

⁵ <https://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/health/diseases/noncommunicable-diseases/>

⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23946874>

⁷ <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-a-developed-country.html>

A developing country, by definition means a country not highly industrialized, and placed within the low- to middle-income spectrum, often suffers from lack education and the level living standards being lower than in developed countries.⁸

WHO

Short for World Health Organization, which is a UN (United Nations) organization aimed at combating diseases and seeking to advance international health standards, mainly works within the United Nations system⁹

Explanation of the Question

The question of preventing early deaths from non-communicable diseases.

Opening the question for better understandability, the council gathers to seek preventive ways to reduce the number of early deaths from NCDs. The main issue is finding different solutions, as for what can be done to prevent the deaths from occurring. The main job for the gathering is to figure ways to prevent the occurring of these diseases, as the largest contributors to the forming of NCDs are habit based risk factors.

Finding solutions

As the main point stands as finding solutions, to prevent early deaths from NCDs, a solution should be aimed at finding or coming up with possible programs or reforms to prevent habits or reasons leading to NCDs, and ways to implement these solutions. The possible solutions may very well range from, as example: the complete banning of cigarettes, or be a reform or a national program to discourage people from buying cigarettes, by applying a multitude of possible policies. Or there remains the possibility of taking a different approach and looking for other ways to reduce the death toll, by for example advocating for better healthcare systems in areas where NCDs are an especially dominant cause of death.

But while finding solutions, and advocating for one, it must be kept in mind that no perfect solution exists, and there will always be possible side effects for applied policies, which should always be aimed to take into account. As a last reminder there are more than a single issue attributed to preventing early deaths from NCDs, such include for example: physical activity issues, dietary issues, alcohol control, tobacco control, and a multitude of

⁸ <https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/developing-countries/7401>

⁹ <http://www.who.int/about-us>

others but these remain as the main contributors to NCDs, so they are noted as the most important issues.

Key Member States and NGOs Involved and Their Views

World health organization (WHO)

WHO, is an organization created (in 1948) with the aim to better the international health standards, but mainly works within the United Nations system, and the nations associated with the United Nations. Concerned with the task of upholding and bettering the international health¹⁰ the WHO has been one of the main contributors in advancing the prevention of NCDs, by advocating for policies in both the UN assemblies and in separate assemblies held to advance the international health issues. The WHO has addressed the issues very actively and passed on policies advocating for tobacco, salt and sugar control, while it has also passed acts to better the diets and increase physical activity, and has also done work in order to control and prevent cancer. The WHO, can be said to be main driving force behind many, if not most international measures to combat disease, both NCDs, and other types.

The United States of America (USA, US)

The US although not the main contributor in the prevention of the issue, still remains as a large influencer due to the political and economical prowess of the nation. And the US is more affected by NCDs, especially the types caused by obesity related diseases¹¹, so the issue remains prevalent for the nation itself. As the US is also a major influencer in the political scene of the world, it's support of providing international assistance, mainly sharing research and resources to combat NCDs, especially for the sake of low- to middle- income nations. Although their support of the cause is and has not been the most prevalent of all nations and organizations¹².

India

As India is a relatively large nation, both in landmass and population, it is especially volatile to issues regarding health, and NCDs are no exception. As India is a nation with near 21% living below poverty wages¹³, and healthcare infrastructure not as developed in many areas. They are a nation which has rapidly become the target for concern over rising levels

¹⁰ <http://www.who.int/about-us>

¹¹ <https://stateofobesity.org/data/>

¹² <https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/fact-sheet/the-u-s-government-and-global-non-communicable-diseases/>

¹³ <https://www.adb.org/countries/india/poverty>

of risks attributed to NCDs¹⁴, so the Indian government has taken a very stern attitude in facing the issue. As India has been aiming to reduce the number of deaths induced by NCDs, for example with ways such as launching programs for the control and prevention of cancer, diabetes, strokes and a program for the health care of the elderly.¹⁵ India in itself is not the most active contributor to the advancement of NCD control or prevention, but it is one example of a member state badly affected by NCDs.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
May 20, 2000	WHO calls for collaboration in the prevention of non-communicable diseases.
May 18, 2002	WHO begins the framework for a global strategy on diet and physical activity.
April 23, 2003	WHO calls for the reduction of salt and sugar intake.
May 1, 2004	WHO begins the implementation of the global strategy previously mentioned.
April 18, 2005	WHO begins work on cancer prevention and control.
September 15, 2007	CARICOM holds a summit on NCDs, supports the call for a UN meeting on NCDs set to be in 2011.
May 28, 2008	The NCD action plan is released by WHO.
May 19, 2009	The NCD alliance is announced.
September 19-20, 2011	The high level meeting on NCDs by the UN held in New York.
July 10-11, 2014	The second high level meeting on NCDs by the UN held in New York.
September 27, 2018	The UN held a third high level meeting on NCDs.
October 11, 2018	The WHO passes a treaty to fight illicit tobacco markets.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- United Nations to work closely in cooperation with their internal organization, the WHO, in order to strengthen the role of the WHO in advancing the global health standards, by increasing the collaboration between WHO and member states.

¹⁴ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/health-fitness/health-news/non-communicable-diseases-cause-61-of-deaths-in-india-who-report/articleshow/60761288.cms>

¹⁵ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(18\)30448-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(18)30448-0/fulltext)

- A/RES/64/265 Resolution calling for a meeting on NCDs to be held in 2011, and at the same addressing the urgent need to battle NCDs.¹⁶
- A/RES/66/2 Resolution calling for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, passed in the 2011 meeting on NCDs. Advocating for measures to be taken against harmful habits causing NCDs and at the same taking note and recognising the need for collaboration on the issue.¹⁷
- A/RES/68/300 Resolution acknowledging the results of the 2014 meeting about NCDs, on how the set goals of the previous meeting were achieved. Recognizing the progress made and at the same noting the rise in some issues related to the risk factors of NCDs, and calling for more reforms to take against NCDs. Remembering the importance of national and international cooperation.¹⁸
- A/RES/73/2 Resolution passed in the third UN meeting on NCDs, calls for an accelerated response to the issue of non communicable diseases, and advocating for improved health systems with the aim to respond to the aging population and children in need of medical aid, not just from NCDs. While at the same addressing the possible issues many nations might face in trying to prevent NCDs.¹⁹

Possible Solutions

The issue of NCDs is very complex, the problems given have more than one or a few ways to solve them. But the possible solutions for all the given issues, may very well be categorized in to a few very broad departments.

As you look at the issues given, you may very well think one possible solutions could be the complete banning of said harmful substances, such as alcohol and tobacco, and there is no reason why that couldn't be presented as one way to rid of the issue, even if it

¹⁶ <https://undocs.org/A/RES/64/265>

¹⁷ <https://undocs.org/A/RES/66/2>

¹⁸ <https://undocs.org/A/RES/68/300>

¹⁹ <https://undocs.org/A/RES/73/2>

has many major issues. So category one, holds in itself the removal of the risk factor, by a ban on it.

Category two, in this case could be assigned to hold in itself the attempts and programs to combat habits leading to NCDs, by trying to affect the attitude of the population. Such measures include, but are not limited to, advocating against tobacco and alcohol, or creating a program to discourage the usage of such substances. By perhaps teaching about the dangers of them, or by showcasing the harm they have done from a young age. As NCDs also cover issues caused by poor habits, such a eating unhealthy and exercising too little, by perhaps attempting to create more opportunities for the population to exercise, and do sports. Or by trying to encourage the population to eat more healthy.

Category three, could in this case be assigned to hold in itself the attempts, to control the risk factors leading to NCDs by taxation. For example by advocating for a high tax on alcohol and tobacco, and by possibly expanding that high tax to items counted as “junk food”. Or by possibly advocating for a tax on products containing high amounts of salt or sugar. One possible way may as well be attempting to make healthy food more affordable, by for example government aid for farms and producers.

These are only a few examples of the possible solutions, there exist many more. And possibly many more even better solutions, as each and every solution shown here has a fair share of problems that would need to be tackled. So be creative when coming up for possible solutions.

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