

Fourth meeting of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control on COVID-19 and the NCD-related SDGs

Date of meeting: 1 May 2020

Participants: Around 15 UN system agencies joined. Interventions were provided by FAO, IAEA, IDLO, ILO, UNEP, UNHCR, UNRWA, WHO and the World Bank.

Summary:

1. A presentation, *digital solutions for NCDs during COVID-19 and beyond*, was provided by WHO and ITU (PowerPoint presentation attached). Main reflections were: (i) the role that digital is taking right across UN system on developing policy, analytics, surveillance and programming during their COVID-19 responses, including NCD responses (e.g. environment, agriculture, nutrition and NCD treatment) and the opportunities for efficiency gains; (ii) the use that agencies are making of digital during COVID-19 for professional development (e.g. webinars, learning and videos); (iii) the need for stronger regulatory frameworks for social media in many countries; and (iv) difficulty for governments to navigate the myriad of digital solutions – the need for joint guidance in this area.
2. A short presentation was provided by WHO to remind participants on the country level architecture of the COVID-19 response (health [WHO], humanitarian [OCHA]; social and economic and recovery [UNDP]), challenges and what needs to be done (see attached PowerPoint).
3. Current challenges for NCDs:
 - COVID-19 response may
 - compromise access to and quality of essential health services for NCDs (already leading cause of death)
 - be associated with cardiac and renal complications, strokes and clotting disorders
 - disrupt whole-of-society approaches for NCDs, disrupt medicine supplies, divert services, complicate health messaging
 - People living with NCDs (and risk factors) may experience more severe disease and poorer outcomes
 - Increased prevalence of mental health conditions is being reported
 - Health workers, food service personnel, and people living in prisons, refugee camps or closed setting are at increased risk of infection

- Changing donor commitment may have implications for the continuity of national NCDs responses and WHO's work on NCDs

4. Discussion around what needs to be done: (i) UN agencies need to ensure our work is fully coordinated when it comes to NCDs to maximize clarity of messages, impact and efficiencies; (ii) advocate for NCDs to be included in health, humanitarian, social and economic and recovery responses; (iii) ensure there are strong bridges between these three pillars; (iv) encourage NCDs to be included in current and post emergency funding allocations; (v) encourage whole-of-government responses to NCDs as part of COVID-19 responses. WHO COVID-19/NCD Working Group is currently developing a set of products.

5. UNICEF, WHO and IFRC have issued the following guidance, [Community-based health care, including outreach and campaigns, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#). The guidance includes an overview and specific considerations for mental health and NCDs.

6. IAEA highlighted the importance of sharing surveillance data and willingness to share with WHO. ILO highlighted their support to countries on the new normal with regards working and leisure arrangements. The Task Force Secretariat provided an update on the Tobacco Cessation Facility. UNHCR described challenges of NCDs around continuity of services and data – and how UNHCR is exploring digital solutions.

Actions

1. Agencies to continue to share new publications/other outputs as they emerge with Task Force Secretariat.
2. Task Force Secretariat to continue its work WHO COVID-19/NCD Working Group
3. Task Force Secretariat to develop a set of possible products based on discussions to date.

Next meeting: Friday 8 May 2020. Focus will be on mental health

7 May 2020