

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

Date of meeting: 22 May 2020

Participants: Over 20 Members of the Task Force joined.

Summary:

1. The theme for this meeting was Extreme poverty, NCDIs and COVID-19 and a presentation was given by Gene Bukhman, Co-Chair of the Lancet NCDI Poverty Commission (PowerPoint attached). Discussion was facilitated by the World Bank and interventions were made by UNDP, UNICEF, UNODC, WFP and WHO.
2. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission has focused on understanding the distribution of COVID-19 in the poorest countries, the impact of disruption of certain health services and on continuation of the plan to expand services (taking into account the need to re-design care in order to create safe spaces with minimized risk of disease transmission). The preliminary findings suggest that COVID-19 pandemic may push an additional 0.5 billion people into poverty. The current objective of the Commission is to minimize death and suffering from; (i) COVID-19 due to infections and gaps in treatment; (ii) interruption of other existing health services; (iii) increases in material poverty; (iv) lack of progress toward universal health coverage/care. Further details on the Lancet NCDI and National NCDI Poverty Commissions and Groups are in Annex 1.
3. Members discussed: (i) the future of external financing for the health sector in LICs given the poor outlook for domestic financing, including the potential of health taxes; (ii) the importance of the bottom-up approach; and (iii) how mental health and substance use are included in data collection.
4. Members of the Task Force also discussed their contribution to tackle NCDIs in LICs in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF is very concerned about maintaining essential services for mothers and children and focuses on supplying running water and adequate sanitation (under WASH), oxygen and ventilators. Putting emphasis on primary prevention, as for example by regulating marketing that targets children is seen as crucial, as well as engaging with private sector and making digital part of the transformation. WFP is very concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on food security as nutrition is crucial for health, immunity and recovery. The WHO Global Coordination Mechanism expressed its interest in exploring synergies with the work of the NCDI Commission, including ongoing work across WHO to develop guidance on national NCD multi-stakeholder mechanisms.
5. The Task Force Secretariat updated members on the latest planned products: A UN system briefing note on NCDs and COVID-19 and supplements to the sectoral briefs on the implications of COVID-19.

Actions:

1. UNIATF to explore synergies with NCDI Commission's country work.
2. Agencies to continue to share new publications/other outputs as they emerge with Task Force Secretariat (to be linked on the website).
3. Task Force members to promote the 2020 Task Force awards and disseminate the [call for proposals](#) on their webpages and social media.

Next meeting:

- Friday 29 May 2020 at 4 pm CET: UNDP to lead a discussion around how UNCTs are responding to NCDs as part of their COVID-19 response.

25 May 2020

Annex 1

1. The Lancet Commission on Reframing NCDs and Injuries for the Poorest Billion (Lancet NCDI Poverty Commission) was launched in January 2016 to address the burden of non-communicable diseases and injuries (NCDI) on the world's poorest populations. The Commission was formed with the hypothesis that the NCDI burden experienced by those living in extreme poverty was different than the NCDI burden in other populations. Indeed, these populations suffer a heavy and avertable burden of NCDs that are not linked to preventable behaviors, including type 1 and malnutrition-associated diabetes, rheumatic heart disease, childhood cancers, asthma, chronic kidney disease, epilepsy, mental health conditions, trauma, and other severe and avertable conditions that disproportionately impact the poor. The objectives of the Commission are to assess the nature of the NCDI Burden among the poorest billion people in the world, to develop actionable pro-poor pathways for expansion of NCDI interventions, to ensure that sustainable financing is not a bottleneck to just NCDI treatment and prevention among the world's poorest, and to rethink global policies to include and address the realities lived by the poor.
2. The Commission also helped establish National NCDI Poverty Commissions and Groups in 16 low- and lower-middle income countries. These National Commissions have conducted analyses to assess their national NCDI burden among the poorest and to identify and later implement policies, interventions, and integrated delivery platforms that would effectively address and reduce that burden. In AFRO, the Commission is closely working with WHO Regional Office on the implementation of the PEN package.