

## Ninth 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:** 5 June 2020

**Participants:** Around 30 Members of the Task Force joined.

### Summary:

1. This meeting discussed the Results of the WHO rapid assessment of service delivery for NCDs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Presentation (attached) was given by Leanne Riley from WHO NCD Department and interventions were made by IAEA, the Global Fund, IDLO, ILO, UNDP, OHCHR, UNICEF and UNODC.
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the historic underinvestment in NCDs. Already before the pandemic, health systems in the majority of countries were unable to fully respond to the health care needs of people living with NCDs<sup>1</sup>. People with NCDs are now more vulnerable to becoming severely ill or die from COVID-19.
3. Of 155 countries that participated in WHO's rapid assessment of service delivery for NCDs during COVID-19 pandemic, 120 reported that NCD services were disrupted due to pandemic, with rehabilitation services being the most affected. The main causes of disruption reported were: (i) decrease in inpatient volume due to cancellation of elective care; (ii) closure of population-level screening programmes; and (iii) public transport lockdowns and deployment of hospital staff to provide COVID-19 relief. Fear of being infected with the virus was one of the reasons why people with NCDs avoided health care settings. 66% countries have included continuity of NCDs services in their COVID-19 plans (mostly higher-income countries). Most common strategies to overcome disruptions were telemedicine and task shifting.
4. Countries are now asking for urgent guidance on how to provide continuity for NCD programmes, how to include NCDs into their national COVID-19 plans, how to navigate in the myriad of digital health solutions and how to educate the public about the harms of NCD risk factors. Forward-looking strategy inclusive of NCDs is required to build back better. As an immediate follow up to the assessment, a webinar with all countries will be organized to discuss the results. Learning materials will be provided to Country Offices. A guidance on maintenance of essential health services will soon be published.
5. Members of the Task Force discussed: (i) how mental health services are affected; (ii) impact of the crisis on people with disabilities; and (iii) the important of scaling up action on health taxes during and beyond COVID-19.
6. In the second part of the meeting, UNDP and WHO presented initial thinking and emerging structure around a UN position paper on COVID-19 and NCDs. The paper will synthesize several

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<sup>1</sup> Assessing national capacity for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases: report of the 2019 global survey. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020. Available at <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/ncd-ccs-2019>

existing evidence around COVID-19, NCDs and development and provide recommendations on how to build back better.

7. There was a brief discussion regarding the focus of the second 2020 Task Force meeting and the important of reflecting on lessons that we had learnt from COVID-19 and the implications of the pandemic for the future work of the Task Force.

**Actions:**

1. Task Force Secretariat to continue arranging the weekly calls on different themes. Examples included: human rights, emergencies, health taxes, legal issues and disabilities. There could also be a session on the NCD and mental health MPTF.
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. **Please note that the call is extended until 3 July.**

**Next meeting:**

- Friday 5 June 2020 at 4 pm CET. Theme: Positioning human rights within the COVID-19 response: what UNIATF members need to consider. OHCHR has kindly agreed to lead this session.

*8 June 2020*