

Joint Independent Evaluation of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases

Evaluation brief

Established in 2013 and reporting to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the [UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases](#) (Task Force) consists of 46 UN agencies, funds, programmes, intergovernmental organizations, and development banks, and is coordinated by a secretariat at WHO. The evaluation aims to assess the Task Force's strategy, interventions, operations and performance since its creation to inform its next strategic phase beginning in 2026. Using a mixed-methods approach, the evaluation team analyzed over 100 documents, interviewed 76 key informants, conducted case studies in Kyrgyzstan and Nigeria, and surveyed Task Force focal points.

Findings

Relevance

There is a high demand from both Member States and UN agencies for the Task Force's coordination role. However, some members consider that its work is less relevant to them. Member agencies and external stakeholders expect the Task Force to adjust its priorities in response to the evolving global health landscape. From the outset, the Task Force has focused efforts at the country level, ensuring that it has direct relevance to country needs.

Effectiveness and efficiency

The Secretariat is highly effective in convening Task Force members and coordinating its activities. However, tracking the impact of the Task Force's work is challenging because members do not report on shared, measurable and time-bound targets. Despite this, the Secretariat has been able to document progress towards its strategic objectives, and there is evidence of Task Force joint missions, investment cases and other activities contributing to improved multisectoral responses in various countries. Although more UN country frameworks now include noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), the Task Force has only been able to contribute to a limited extent to UN Country Teams' capacity to support NCD responses. The Task Force Secretariat is efficient in using its resources and the Health4Life Fund, which it

established to catalyze country action and represents an efficient allocation of resources.

"I have been involved in many interagency coordinating bodies in my time with the UN, and the Task Force is among the very best and most effective."
UN agency focal point

Coherence

At the global level, the Task Force contributes to building synergies among UN agencies on NCDs through working groups, joint programmes and the Health4Life Fund. It does not always have sufficient influence, however, to ensure a unified UN response to NCDs. While the Task Force has successfully raised the profile of NCDs within some member agencies, there needs to be greater transparency around the resources individual agencies are making available for NCDs and mental health. Within WHO, there have been instances of competition across different parts of the agency for resources on NCDs and mental health instead of collaboration. Additionally, the Task Force has not fully taken advantage of WHO's resources to support its technical and coordination work in countries.

Gender, equity and human rights

There are good examples of the Task Force Human Rights Team supporting the capacity of Task Force members on rights-based interventions, but there is less attention to gender and equity in relation to NCDs. While the Task Force and the Global Coordination Mechanism on the Prevention and Control of NCDs (WHO GCM/NCD) collaborate regularly, there is untapped potential to build on the GCM's work with people with lived experiences of NCDs.

Sustainability

Efforts to raise funds for country-level NCD and mental health responses—especially through the Health4Life Fund—are helping to ensure the long-term impact of the Task Force's work. However, many member agencies have not built financial commitments into their budgets to support the Secretariat or sustain Task Force activities. The sustainability of the Task Force's country-level work has varied in different contexts.

Conclusions

1. The Task Force is an effective coordination mechanism and is an exemplar of the UN working as one.
2. The Task Force needs to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation and operational planning of its multisectoral coordination work.
3. The Task Force Secretariat is efficient and highly effective but requires better political support within WHO and stable resourcing.
4. The Task Force has provided strong contributions to NCD responses in countries, which can be further enhanced by strengthening engagement with UN country teams.
5. The Health4Life Fund is a promising mechanism to catalyze countries' action on NCDs and mental health and needs stronger coordination and support within WHO.
6. Human rights are reflected in the work of the Task Force, but there is little work around embedding gender and equity.

Lessons learnt

Key success factors for the Task Force coordination function have been:

- working at country level to translate UN agencies' global commitments on alignment and coordination;
"The NCD mission was absolutely useful because for the first time the ministries and the agencies were streamlining their efforts. We tried to learn what was the vision and opinions of other ministries and agencies about NCDs, and actually we found out that some of them didn't even understand their role in the NCD response. So it was a great advocacy exercise."
Ministry of Health Official
- having an active Secretariat providing support and relationship building with member agencies;
- maintaining a degree of independence from WHO to promote the collective leadership of the UN on NCDs, with the Task Force reporting to ECOSOC of the UN; and
- going beyond WHO and the health response to NCDs, providing a platform where each agency can lead and mobilize others in their area of comparative advantage.

To maximize impact at country level, the following elements have been key:

- Investment cases help raise the profile of NCDs in countries but need to be accompanied by longer-term efforts to support the development, implementation and monitoring of investment plans and budgets.
"The NCD investment case was very important for us. In 2019, we did not have evidence-based data on NCD burden—it was very difficult to convince the deputy minister of finance to invest in this. After the first NCD investment case the ministry of finances changed their view on prioritizing the burden of NCDs." Government official
- In addition to investment cases and joint missions, other modalities to work in countries are promising such as the Health4Life Fund and the WHO-UNDP Global Joint Programme on Catalyzing Multisectoral Action for NCDs.
- Continuous engagement with UN Country Teams and the Resident Coordinator Offices are key to secure sustained UN coordination on NCDs at the country level, requiring close collaboration with WHO NCD departments.

Recommendations

1. **Build on the unique value added of the Task Force**, maintaining focus on alignment and coordination of the UN multisectoral response to NCDs at the country level and promoting its contribution to the global health coordination agenda, through the development of a new strategy with a monitoring and evaluation framework and operational plan.
2. **Enhance joint accountability and resourcing** by Task Force member agencies and strengthen their contribution to the implementation and resourcing of the Task Force's strategy.
3. **Enhance Task Force Secretariat governance and resourcing** to ensure that it has the necessary political leadership across the UN system to deliver its mandate. In this respect, the Task Force should identify and mobilize Member States champions to support the development and implementation of its 2025–2030 strategy.
4. **Enhance the effectiveness of the Task Force at the country level** by reviewing the country prioritization process, employing a programme cycle approach to strengthen the capacity of UN Country Teams and accelerating progress on the Health4Life Fund.
5. **Increase the capacity and focus of the Task Force's work on gender equality, equity and disability inclusion**, expanding the scope of work of the Task Force Human Rights Team and increasing engagement with communities and networks of people living with NCDs, affected by mental health conditions, as well as other relevant vulnerable groups.