



Non Communicable Diseases: A Global Perspective

In September 2011 Dr James Reilly, the minister for Health attended the High Level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) with particular emphasis on the threat they pose to the stability of low income countries. He subsequently signed the resolution of the meeting on behalf of the Irish Government i.e.

"We, Heads of State ... address (this topic).. with a particular focus on ...challenges..., **particularly for developing countries.**" (nearly 80% of these deaths are in **developing countries**)

NCDs, particularly cancers, heart disease diabetes and respiratory disease are the leading causes of preventable morbidity and of related disability worldwide. It is suggested that the commitment to developing countries throughout the agreement requires an appropriate response from the Irish Government within the programme for Irish Aid, similar to the action that has been taken for the Irish people by the Department of Health.

The WHO have drawn up a five year plan to address this situation which includes strengthening health systems in low income countries to cope with the burden of NCDs c.f. [Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs](http://www.who.int/nmh/events/ncd_action_plan/)
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It is suggested that a National Advocacy group on Non Communicable Diseases in Developing Countries be established. The composition of the group could include those who have experience with the NCD programme in Ireland and those with experience in healthcare in the partner countries of Irish Aid, drawn from the academic, NGO sector, diplomatic representatives etc..

The initial aims of the group might include:

- Developing a database of those with relevant experience in NCD healthcare, health policy and management.
- Creating public awareness of the UN programme on NCDs
- Monitoring the state of NCD in our partner countries and investigating ways in which Ireland could support at least some of these countries to meet the goals of the UN programme.

The following publications mention aspects which could be relevant for further action

Beaglehole, Robert, et al. "Priority actions for the non-communicable disease crisis." *The Lancet* 377.9775 (2011): 1438-1447.

Beaglehole, Robert, et al. "Improving the prevention and management of chronic disease in low-income and middle-income countries: a priority for primary health care." *The Lancet* 372.9642 (2008): 940-949.

Glantz, Stanton, and Mariaelena Gonzalez. "Effective tobacco control is key to rapid progress in reduction of non-communicable diseases." *The Lancet* 379.9822 (2012): 1269-1271.

Tobacco control is a very cost effective intervention to address many of the risk factors linked to NCD's, particularly cardiac disease, respiratory disease and cancer. It is also an area in which Ireland has earned a global reputation as the first country to introduce a national workplace smoking ban. As such we are in a position to help our partner countries in Africa and elsewhere to take similar action to protect their populations.

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