



CONCEPT NOTE

1st International Conference on the PEN-Plus Regional Strategy to Address Severe NCDs in Africa (ICPPA)

23-25 April 2024 Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania



Background & Rationale

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases, are becoming the leading cause of mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa, where these diseases were responsible for 37% of deaths in 2019, rising from 24% in 2000.¹ In addition, other NCDs, such as sickle cell disease (SCD), genetic disorders, mental disorders, violence and injuries, oral, hearing, and eye disorders, also significantly contribute to premature mortality and morbidity in the region.²

Among these NCDs, chronic and severe NCDs like type 1 diabetes (T1D), acute rheumatic fever (ARF), rheumatic heart disease (RHD), and SCD more frequently affect children and young adults. Early diagnosis, treatment, and care are critical to reducing the high mortality and morbidity that arises from these conditions. Factors that drive poor outcomes from these conditions include

low awareness of the conditions at individual and community levels; poor access to services; health system weakness across all six pillars of the WHO health systems building blocks³; and poor resource allocation, including prioritization of service delivery from bilateral and multilateral partners and donors⁴.

There are renewed regional and global opportunities to reduce the burden of chronic, severe, and other NCDs in the African region. For example, the regional framework for integrating essential NCD services in primary health care (PHC) was adopted during the 67th Regional Committee (RC) in the WHO African region, which aims at guiding Member States on the integration of essential NCD interventions in PHC in order to scale up early detection, diagnosis, and treatment.⁵ Moreover, as part of efforts to reduce the high burden of premature mortality from chronic and

1 World Health Organization. Global health estimates: Leading causes of death. <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/mortality-and-global-health-estimates/ghe-leading-causes-of-death>.

2 WHO Regional Office for Africa (2011). The Brazzaville Declaration on Noncommunicable Diseases Prevention and Control in the WHO African Region. <https://www.afro.who.int/publications/brazzaville-declaration-noncommunicable-diseases-prevention-and-control-who-african>

3 World Health Organization (WHO). Monitoring the building blocks of health systems: a handbook of indicators and their measurement strategies. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO;2010. https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/service-availability-and-readinessassessment%28sara%29/related-links-%28sara%29/who_mbhss_2010_cover_toc_web.pdf

4 Collins Téa E, Nugent Rachel, Webb Douglas, Placella Erika, Evans Tim, Akinnawo Ayodele et al. Time to align: development cooperation for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases BMJ 2019; 366 :l4499

5 WHO Regional Office for Africa (2017). the Regional Framework for integrating essential NCD services in primary health care. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/334349>

severe NCDs within the context of universal health coverage (UHC), "PEN-Plus – A regional strategy to address severe chronic noncommunicable diseases at first level health facilities" was adopted at the 72nd RC in 2022. This strategy aims to improve access to prevention, treatment, and care for chronic and severe NCDs to rural and peri-urban populations by providing this care at first-level referral facilities, using standardized protocol-based management. The strategy sets out clear activities which, if implemented, would strengthen the capacity for comprehensive care for chronic and severe NCDs, as well as strengthen the implementation of the WHO package of essential noncommunicable diseases interventions (PEN).

It is in this context, with the financial support from the Hemsley Charitable Trust (HCT), the WHO Regional Office for Africa (AFRO) has initiated a project to strengthen the implementation of the PEN-Plus Regional Strategy and thus ensure integrated prevention and control of chronic and severe NCDs in the WHO African region, using T1D, SCD, ARF, and RHD as entry points. This project contributes to the attainment of the Sustainable

development goal (SDG) target 3.4 on NCD premature mortality reduction by strengthening the implementation of an integrated care delivery strategy among Africa's poorest children and young adults by increasing access to quality diagnosis, treatment, and care among rural and peri-urban populations.

This project consists of four pillars, including: 1) engage for enhanced awareness of the PEN-Plus strategy; 2) assess and prioritize evidence-based action; 3) drive improved disease management and 4) monitor and evaluate performance through results.

To accelerate the implementation of this project and to ensure that the levers that impact on the barriers and determinants of improved outcome for patients with chronic and severe NCDs are highlighted and prioritized by local and global stakeholders, AFRO is organizing this first regional meeting on strengthening integrated prevention and control of chronic, severe, and other NCDs in the WHO African region.

Objectives

- ▲ Raise awareness of chronic, severe, and other NCDs among stakeholders, including among high-level decision-makers, regional and global experts, partners, and other bilateral and multilateral donors.
- ▲ Help mobilize resources to support country-level implementation.
- ▲ Share best practices as well as lessons learned in driving improved disease management in the region.
- ▲ Explore opportunities to synergize PEN-Plus with other public health programmes within the region.

Dates, Location

- ▲ 23rd to 25th April 2024, Tanzania Dar Es Salaam.

Conference Tracks

- ▲ Track 1: Ending the Neglect of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) Across the Life Course in Africa
- ▲ Track 2: Policy Frameworks and Strategies for Integrating NCD Interventions in Primary Health Care (PHC): from WHO PEN to PEN-Plus
- ▲ Track 3: PEN-Plus Unveiled: Pioneering Regional Strategies, Opportunities, and Frontiers
- ▲ Track 4: Engage, Empower, Excel: Community-Centric and Person-Centered NCD Care for All
- ▲ Track 5: Rising to the Challenge of NCDs Financing in Africa

Participants

- ▲ **High-Level Decision Makers:** Government officials, ministers of health, policymakers, and authorities responsible for health system planning and implementation.
- ▲ **Regional and Global Experts:** Professionals specializing in NCDs, healthcare practitioners, clinicians, researchers, and academics with expertise in NCD management and public health.
- ▲ **Partners and Donors:** Representatives from bilateral and multilateral organizations, NGOs, foundations, and agencies involved in funding, supporting, or implementing health-related projects.
- ▲ **Public Health Practitioners:** Health professionals, community health workers, and their health personnel engaged in disease prevention, management, and community care.
- ▲ **Stakeholders in NCD Management:** Advocacy groups, patient organizations, and community representatives dedicated to raising awareness and supporting initiatives for NCDs.
- ▲ **Educational and Academic Institutions:** Representatives from universities, training institutions, and research organizations that contribute to knowledge sharing and dissemination in NCDs.
- ▲ **Media and Communication Professionals:** Journalists, reporters, and media representatives interested in health-related issues and dissemination of conference outcomes to the broader public.

Contact

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