

CALL TO ACTION

Advancing Implementation of PEN-Plus for Severe NCDs in Africa: Technical Innovations, Operational Insights, and Scalable Solutions

Abuja, Nigeria, 8-10 July 2025



We, the participants of the Second International Conference on PEN-Plus in Africa:

Recognize with profound concern:

the immense burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) across Africa, particularly severe and chronic NCDs affecting children and chronic conditions among individuals under 40 in poor socioeconomic conditions, with grave implications for health systems, human capital, and economic development.

Acknowledge

that despite improvements in life expectancy, child survival, access to health services, medicines and life conditions, inequities persist—especially in managing severe and chronic NCDs—resulting in preventable suffering and premature deaths, particularly among children, young adults and poor populations.

Reaffirm

that strengthened primary health care systems—integrated with NCD, maternal and child health, as well as infectious disease programmes—are foundational to achieving universal health coverage and delivering equitable, life-saving care for severe and chronic NCDs.

Reiterate

Africa's steadfast commitment to achieving the strategic objectives of the PEN Plus framework which aims to address the burden of severe and chronic NCDs among rural and unreached populations through decentralized, integrated outpatient services in first-level referral health facilities; thus bridging the gap in access to care for severe NCDs.

Recall and reaffirm

Commitments made through:

- ➔ The WHO Regional PEN-Plus Strategy (2022)
- ➔ The Global NCD Compact (2020–2030)
- ➔ The Global Diabetes Compact (2020–2030)
- ➔ Political Declaration of the High-Level Meetings of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases
- ➔ UNGA Political Declaration on NCDs - WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs 2013–2020
- ➔ The Brazzaville Declaration on NCD Prevention and Control in the WHO African region - 2011
- ➔ Disease-specific regional strategies adopted by the Regional Committee.

- ➔ 2015 AU Addis Ababa Communiqué on Eradication of Rheumatic Heart Disease in Africa
- ➔ 2010 Framework for the implementation of the Ouagadougou Declaration on Primary Health Care and Health Systems in Africa
- ➔ 2010 Sickle Cell Disease Strategy for Africa

We, therefore, commit to:

- ➔ Elevate severe and chronic NCDs as an urgent health and development priority.
- ➔ Advance integrated early detection, diagnosis, treatment, and long-term care at all levels for severe and chronic NCDs, with emphasis on primary and first-referral care.
- ➔ Promote people-centred care and multisectoral collaboration to reduce premature mortality from severe and chronic NCDs; leaving no one behind.

We call on Governments to:

- ➔ Fully implement PEN and PEN-Plus interventions to expand equitable access to essential services for severe and chronic NCDs in collaboration with WHO and Partners
- ➔ Uphold and finance the PEN and PEN-Plus regional strategies, ensuring access to care for individuals with severe and chronic NCDs—regardless of geography or socioeconomic status.
- ➔ Strengthen national health systems, improve surveillance and data capturing for severe and chronic NCDs and ensure availability of affordable essential medicines and diagnostics, and institutionalize prevention and care.
- ➔ Demonstrate strong leadership in public health by increasing domestic investment, and fostering inclusive partnerships with civil society, development partners, and the private sector.
- ➔ Integrate WHOPEN and PEN Plus conditions into UHC package to alleviate the burden of NCDs on the most vulnerable populations

We urge WHO to:

- ➔ Intensify its leadership, advocacy, and convening role with Partners, Governments and the Private Sector to keep severe and chronic NCDs and Universal Health Coverage at the centre of political and development agendas.
- ➔ Leverage their strength in normative functions to develop standards, tools and guidance documents to support the implementation of the PEN Plus Framework in Africa
- ➔ Support resource mobilization, promote innovations and facilitate cross-country learning and coordination.
- ➔ Leverage existing collaboration with UN Agencies to address severe and chronic NCDs in children

We call on Development Partners, Donors and the Private Sector to:

- ➔ Significantly increase investments in children and poor populations suffering severe and chronic NCDs, promote research, innovations, and local production of affordable essential medicines and diagnostics.

We respectfully request:

- ➔ The WHO Regional Director for Africa to present this Call-to-Action to the 75th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa and the 2025 High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly in September.
- ➔ African governments to champion this Call-to-Action at the 2025 UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting to galvanize global commitment and secure greater investments for severe and chronic NCDs.

We express our sincere appreciation to the Federal Republic of Nigeria for hosting the conference and to all our Partners and Donors for their continued support.

Abuja 10 July 2025