

The NCD response: Bringing in women and girls

As a global coalition and campaign that promotes the implementation of comprehensive, gender and rights-based approaches to the intersection of violence against women and girls and HIV/AIDS, Women Won't Wait urges governments and donors to commit to bringing women and girls into an integrated response to non-communicable diseases -NCDs-. We urge governments attending the High Level Meeting on NCDs to adopt the following actions:

Fully incorporate women's health needs and rights into an integrated response to NCDs and communicable diseases, including the integration of NCD prevention and treatment with primary care and sexual and reproductive health care services, including HIV/AIDS services, to guarantee quality, comprehensive care throughout the course of a woman's life.

Strengthen public health efforts to ensure effective prevention and treatment of NCDs, especially among women living with HIV who are most likely to develop life-threatening NCDs, such as invasive cervical cancer, cardiovascular diseases, lypodystrophy and other metabolic disorders, among others.

Strengthen and expand prevention efforts for cervical cancer and HIV co-infection. This includes: providing low-technology and low-cost screening methods with immediate results in public health services, as well as access to vaccinations including for HPV, training HIV care providers to screen for cervical cancer in all women, and training primary care providers and gynecologists about cervical cancer screening in women living with HIV.

Take concrete actions to comprehensively address intersecting social and environmental determinants that can lead women to develop NCDs, including poverty, gender inequality, gender-based violence, lack of access to affordable, quality health care and treatment and other basic services, tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol, lack of access to education and housing, poor employment conditions, and pollution, among others.

Scale up screening, treatment and care for violence against women to reaffirm women's and girls' right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, recognizing that situations of violence increase women's chances of suffering mental health disorders and also increase their vulnerability to HIV infection, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of developing other infections and diseases: HPV infection, cervical cancer and other types of cancer, and cardiovascular diseases, among others.

Ensure domestic, bilateral and multilateral donors increase resources dedicated to women's health, particularly sexual and reproductive health within primary health care, and that NCDs and communicable diseases are properly addressed through primary prevention programs and that referral systems are firmly put in place.

Ensure access to **affordable essential medicines for all to protect the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health for all populations around the world, especially in developing countries where treatments costs are too expensive for the majority.** Upper income countries must provide financial support to pay for treatment, and must review their policies to allow for the full use of TRIPS flexibilities and provisions, including allowing for limits on the payment of patents for public health reasons in order to reduce the price of essential medicines.

Guarantee universal access to low-cost diagnostic methods and treatment for non-communicable diseases, including cancers and cardiovascular diseases, as has been achieved with HIV/AIDS treatment in many countries. Despite evidence that the emerging NCD crisis disproportionately affects the poor, NCD treatment is often inaccessible and unaffordable for those who need it most, including for people living with HIV who have access to antiretroviral treatment but lack life-saving treatment for NCDs.

Take urgent action to implement all relevant international strategies to address NCDs, especially the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the Action Plan for the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases, the Global strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, and the Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol, among others.

Promote the participation of civil society, especially women's groups and women living with HIV, in the periodic evaluation process of the achievements and goals established in the 2011 Political Declaration of the High Level Meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

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