

# TIME TO LEAD

GLOBAL WEEK FOR ACTION ON NCDs



## EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

# Leading and Linking Bold actions on NCDs for Sustainable Development

Co-hosted by the NCD Alliance and the  
Healthy Caribbean Coalition on the sidelines of the  
79<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly

24 September 2024 | 12:30-14:00 EST

Church Center for the United Nations, New York, USA

Co-hosted by



## CONTEXT

The Fourth UN High-Level Meeting on Prevention and Control of NCDs in 2025 (HLM4) is a **critical moment for governments to commit to action** that will keep alive the ambition of achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 3.4 of reducing premature mortality from NCDs by 30% and promoting mental health and well-being. The 2025 meeting will also offer an opportunity to take stock, address the evolving global landscape, recommit to NCDs as a priority at the highest political level, and outline critical steps to build and pursue a collective vision and course of action for the next decades on NCD prevention and care.

NCDs – such as diabetes, cancers, heart and lung diseases, and mental health and neurological conditions – remain the main drivers of death and disability worldwide, causing nearly three-quarters of global mortality. Many NCDs are preventable or can be delayed, detected earlier, and managed better through health-promoting policies and stronger health systems, underpinned by a comprehensive universal health coverage (UHC) strategy. Of the 14 million annual deaths from NCDs before the age of 70, nearly 85% occur in low- and lower-middle-income countries, affecting these countries and those living with a lower socioeconomic status disproportionately. This shows that **NCDs remain a barrier to eradicating poverty and gender inequality, accessing education and decent work, and economic prosperity more broadly, hindering countries in achieving the SDGs.**

Despite some progress following the adoption of the 2018 Political Declaration of the UN HLM on NCDs, action on NCDs is still lagging, and many countries are off track to meet the SDG target 3.4. However, we know what works, such as Appendix 3 of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global NCD Action Plan 2013-2030 (also known as the NCD 'best buys') – but implementation must be supported by leadership at the highest political level.

Achieving **health for all** requires **strengthening health systems while also aiming for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response to address the wider determinants of health**, which lie outside health systems, and have a serious impact on people's exposure to NCD risk factors, their ability to seek care, and their health outcomes.

In this context, the organizers of 'Leading and Linking: Bold actions on NCDs for Sustainable Development' held the event to:

- Launch the **NCD Alliance's policy priorities** for the HLM4 in 2025.
- Explore the role of global progress on NCD prevention and care for sustainable development in the context of the 2024 Summit of the Future, at UNGA79 and ahead of the HLM4.
- Highlight examples of countries leading on the NCD response and discuss how this contributes to their broader national efforts to strengthen health security and sustainable development.
- Spotlight the role of diverse sectors and stakeholders in advancing NCD prevention and care, while ensuring integrated action for other global health and development priorities.





# KEY POINTS

## 1. Engaging communities is key

Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> High-Level Meeting on NCDs in 2018, many speakers noted the important progress in engaging communities in policymaking processes, implementation, and education. As the Assistant Minister of Fiji, Mr. Sakiusa Tubuna, noted, it's difficult to prevent and control NCDs if people are uninformed about their risk factors and health-promoting behaviors. Our Views, Our Voices Advisory Committee Member, Bruno Helman, also encouraged governments to continue utilizing the existing tools and frameworks for engaging people with lived experience, as it not only supports creation of policies and programs that are more responsive to people's needs, but it also serves as an **additional accountability tool** ensuring that governments are taking meaningful action to address the growing NCD burden.



**"More needs to be done to get the right information into the hands of the people, particularly young people."**

Sakiusa Tubuna,  
Assistant Minister - Office of the Prime Minister, Fiji.

## 2. The nexus of healthy diets, agrifood systems, and climate change

This discussion in particular was a key area of focus in the "provocation discussion" that demonstrated the **interconnected nature of NCDs** across the Sustainable Development Agenda. In SIDS (Small Island Developing States), this challenge is felt particularly keenly – with unhealthy food products flooding the markets at low prices, many people are turning away from their traditional diets to ultra-processed foods and other unhealthy options. This then impacts demand on the agrifood system, which is heavily focused on economic growth, investment, and GDP metrics. This reduces production of local and cultural food products and increases consumption of more profitable ones. Addressing these challenges is made even more complex when traditional crops struggle to grow in a changing environment driven by factors like urbanization and the climate crisis.



**"The NCD community should dig deeply to understand the incentives at hand to find tactical entry points for engagement with the agricultural sector."**

Corinna Hawkes, Director, Agrifood Systems and Food Safety,  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)





### 3. Equitable access to quality and affordable care

“Leave no one behind” has been a key tenet of the SDG-era, emphasizing the equity-focused decision-making lens that should be applied within development policy creation and implementation. In Egypt, a highly populated lower-middle-income country, this challenge has been felt acutely as it works to roll out Universal Health Coverage. Towards this aim, Egypt has **integrated telemedicine into its primary healthcare services to make it easier for people living in rural and hard-to-reach areas to access routine health services.** Progress can be made through investments in health system strengthening, Bruno Rivalan, Partnerships Lead in the World Bank’s Health, Nutrition and Population Global Practice, noted.



“The World Bank’s goal to reach 1.5 billion people by 2030 will focus on expanding **national health packages which will not only encourage more people to seek care but also reduce out-of-pocket expenditures** for those with NCDs and chronic conditions encouraging healthier lives and economies.”

Bruno Rivalan, Partnerships Lead, Health, Nutrition & Population, World Bank.

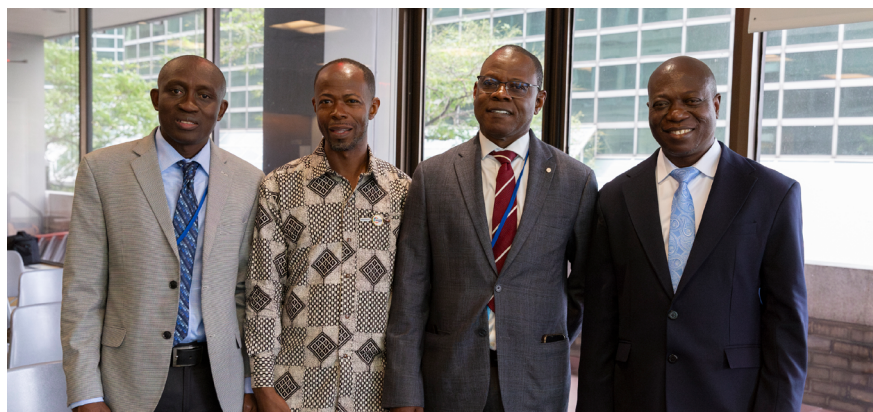
### 4. Time to Lead

For Ghana, the decision to act on NCDs was easy – **unhealthy populations have a lower quality of life** and do not work as much, which carries economic and political implications, not to mention the increasing public cost of care. Leadership, however, can show up in different ways: governments can take on global leadership roles to drive the NCD agenda forward in the international space, civil society leaders can call for greater action and accountability, and multilaterals and development agencies can continue to work with recipient countries to integrate and respond to NCD-specific demands to better meet local needs.



“In Ghana, **leadership on NCDs is demonstrated across all sectors**; sports, education, agriculture, and gender and social protection.”

Dr. Kuma-Aboagye, Director-General Ghana Health Service, Ghana.







## EVENT AGENDA AND SPEAKERS

### MODERATED BY

Werner Obermeyer

#### Welcoming remarks

- **Leslie Rae-Ferat**, CEO, Global Alliance for Tobacco Control and President-elect, NCD Alliance

#### Provocation discussion

- **Dr. Patrick Kuma-Aboagye**, Director-General Ghana Health Service, Republic of Ghana
- **Sakiusa Tubuna**, Assistant Minister - Office of the Prime Minister, Republic of Fiji
- **Dr. Corinna Hawkes**, PhD, Director, Agrifood Systems and Food Safety, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)

#### Panel discussion

- **Dr. Bente Mikkelsen**, Director, NCD Department, World Health Organization (WHO)
- **Dr. Hatem Amer**, Associate Minister for Health and Population for International Relations, Egypt
- **James Anderson**, Executive Director, International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA)
- **Bruno Rivalan**, Partnerships Lead, Health, Nutrition & Population, World Bank
- **Bruno Helman**, Our Views Our Voices Advisory Committee Member, advocate

#### Q&A

*Q&A with panelists and audience members*

#### Closing remarks

- **Prof. Alafia Samuels**, Technical Advisor, Healthy Caribbean Coalition
- Summary of key recommendations and takeaways resulting from the discussions*