

Millions of children and adolescents live with or are affected by non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which are non-infectious diseases that cannot be spread person-to-person, such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, mental disorders, and chronic respiratory diseases, such as asthma.

## A Global Issue

- Diseases and conditions acquired during childhood can affect people throughout their lives. Half of adult NCDs begin in childhood and most of the behaviors that underlie NCDs start during adolescence.
- Children in low and middle-income countries who suffer from non-communicable diseases often die prematurely because of late diagnosis or lack of access to adequate treatment, or suffer long-term disabilities from chronic conditions that are not adequately managed. The challenges young people face in dealing with NCDs have a large impact on a young person's life and ability to become a healthy, productive member of society.
- For example, women and young children who lack access to electricity are the primary victims of smoke inhalation from indoor cook stoves, which causes four million premature deaths per year and can lead to several chronic illnesses.

## Meeting the Needs of Children

- Children face unique challenges and require tailored solutions for the prevention and treatment of NCDs. Countries should be supported in their efforts to strengthen primary, secondary and tertiary health care, promote healthy lifestyles and obesity prevention, foster effective asthma management, encourage smoking prevention and cessation and protect children from secondhand smoke. Health systems must also address mental health and respond to the special needs of children with disabilities.
- Nutrition is the foundation for human health and development, and a growing body of research and scientific evidence indicates that children who are well-nourished early in life have healthier brain development, stronger immune systems, fewer chronic diseases, higher IQs, and better educational performance.
- For adolescents aged 10 to 19, injuries are the leading cause of death. Education and awareness-raising are necessary to prevent the five major causes of death and unintentional injuries: traffic accidents, drowning, fires and burns, falls, and poisoning.

## Elevating NCDs on the International Agenda

- The United Nations in 2011 held a High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of NCDs, which led to the World Health Organization Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs, 2013–2020 (WHO Global Action Plan 15). This plan was endorsed by the World Health Assembly in 2013. The U.S. government does not have a specific plan to focus on NCDs in low- and middle-income countries, but NCDs are increasingly being addressed as part of other U.S. global health activities.
- The AAP encourages NCD interventions that promote the healthy development of children, families and communities, and currently serves as the Secretariat of NCD Child, a global alliance that champions the rights of children, adolescents and youth who are living with or are at risk of developing NCDs.

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