

## **PLENARY SESSION 1**

**THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE DETERMINANTS OF NCDS: ACCELERATING  
ACTIONS FOR PREVENTION**



## | BACKGROUND

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes and mental illnesses are the leading causes of morbidity and mortality, claiming 41 million out of 56 million annual deaths globally in 2016. The global premature deaths from NCDs, that is, the deaths between the ages of 30 and 69, are of particular concern: In 2016, 15 million people died prematurely, and nearly 85% of these deaths took place in low- and middle-income countries.

NCDs have been recognized as a significant development challenge and human rights issue, as they impede social and economic development and are driven by underlying social, economic, political, environmental, and cultural factors. Therefore, responding to NCDs and their shared risk factors, such as tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol, along with environmental risk factors (e.g. air pollution), is not simply a matter of changing individual health behaviours in isolation. The international community has increasingly come to recognise that technical solutions to development problems will not work if they are not aligned with political economy concerns.<sup>1</sup>

Leadership and action from the health sector is critical to respond to NCDs. However, there is a need for robust and coherent national policies and strategies in all sectors with an increased focus on the social, environmental and commercial causes of NCDs, requiring a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach to address the underlying determinants. Intersectoral collaboration encompassing both health and relevant non-health sectors is necessary in combating NCDs at global, regional, national and local levels. The approach has been endorsed at the highest political level and is reflected in political documents, such as the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases, the WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013-2020 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>2</sup>

Although progress on chronic NCD prevention and control has been slow, there is now strengthened global support for action. The three High-level Meetings on NCDs have contributed to rising political attention to preventing chronic diseases globally. However, for countries to make progress in the implementation of high-level commitments, domestic solutions need to reflect local historical, political, cultural and institutional legacies.<sup>3</sup>

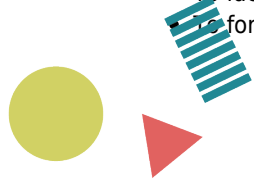
1 Global Health Estimates 2016: Deaths by Cause, Age, Sex, by Country and Region, 2000-2016. Geneva, World Health Organization; 2018

2 Fox AM, Reich MR (2015) The politics of universal health coverage in low- and middle-income countries: a framework for evaluation and action, *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 40(5) 1023-60.

3 Bump JB (2010) *The long road to universal health coverage: a century of lessons for development strategy*. Seattle, WA:PATH

## | OBJECTIVES

- To review the multi-level determinants of NCDs – biological, social, economic, behavioural, environmental, commercial, fiscal and political – using a political economy framework
- To discuss strategies in tackling the major risk factors (unhealthy diets, tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, physical inactivity and environmental pollution) and the underlying determinants, focusing on the implementation of cost-effective interventions to achieve SDG3.4 and other NCD-related targets
- To share and learn from national, regional and global experiences in addressing the main risk factors of NCDs and their social, economic, commercial, fiscal and political determinants
- To provide examples of strategies on how to scale up best NCD prevention practices in different contexts
- To identify knowledge gaps and approaches to address them
- To formulate key policy recommendations and actions to implement the proposed solutions





Moderator / Panelist

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Tim Evans is the Senior Director of Health, Nutrition and Population at the World Bank Group. From 2010 to 2013, Tim was Dean of the James P. Grant School of Public Health at BRAC University in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Senior Advisor to the BRAC Health Program. From 2003 to 2010, he was Assistant Director General at the World Health Organization (WHO). Prior to this, he served as Director of the Health Equity Theme at the Rockefeller Foundation. Earlier in his career he was an attending physician of internal medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and was Assistant Professor in International Health Economics at the Harvard School of Public Health. He is a board member of a number of international health alliances. Tim has been at the forefront of advancing global health equity and strengthening health systems delivery for more than 20 years. At WHO, he led the Commission on Social Determinants of Health and oversaw the production of the annual World Health Report. He has been a co-founder of many partnerships including the Global Alliance on Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) as well as efforts to increase access to HIV treatment for mothers and innovative approaches to training community-based midwives in Bangladesh. Tim received his Medical Degree from McMaster University in Canada and was a Research and internal Medicine Resident at Brigham and Women's Hospital. He earned a D.Phil. in Agricultural Economics from University of Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar.