



# NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASE

Towards safe and healthy living

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Saving lives, changing minds.



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

# Noncommunicable diseases

Addressing health inequities and strengthening resilience

## ISSUE



Proportion of premature NCD deaths among people under 70 years in low- and middle-income countries.



NCD deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries.



of all deaths in 2008 – 36 million people – were caused by NCDs.

Source: WHO, Global status report on noncommunicable diseases, 2010

**4** **Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)**

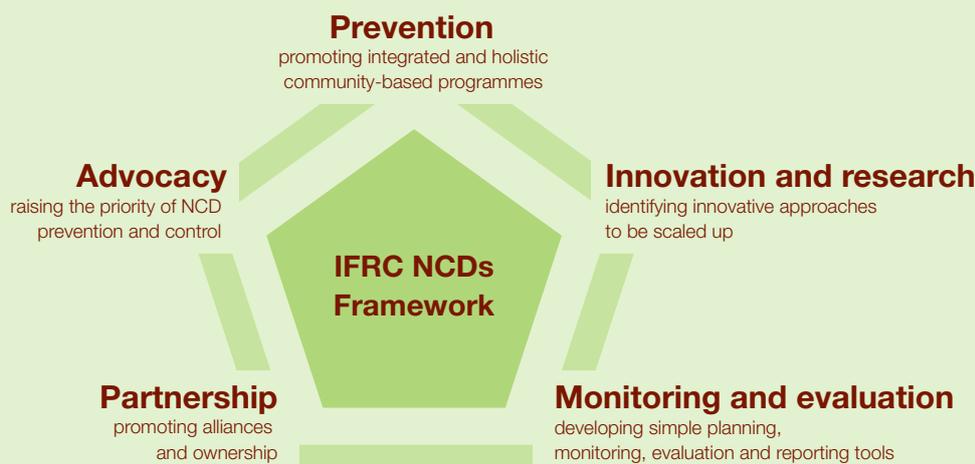
(cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases)

**4** **Risk factors**

(unhealthy diets, tobacco use, physically inactivity, harmful use of alcohol)

By eliminating shared risk factors almost **80 per cent** of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes and over one-third of all cancers could be prevented.

## HOW WE HELP



## IMPACT

**Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers, going from door to door in their communities, play an essential role in contributing to this global NCD effort.**

**The Red Cross Red Crescent's advocacy work, programmes and services promote services better and more accessible screening programmes, combined with wider public awareness initiatives, to reduce the number of NCD-related deaths.**



## ISSUE

A noncommunicable disease (NCD) is defined as a disease which is not infectious. Such diseases may result from genetic or lifestyle factors and they exact a heavy toll on people around the world. Four types of NCDs – cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases – account for almost two-thirds of all deaths globally, with 80 per cent of these deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries.

NCDs are a leading threat to health and development. Yet, these diseases are preventable. By eliminating shared risk factors, almost 80 per cent of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes and more than one-third of all cancers could be prevented. In addition, improved disease management can reduce morbidity, disability and death, and contribute to better health outcomes. But proven, cost-effective strategies do exist to prevent and control this growing burden.

## HOW WE HELP

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) calls for a radical shift in approach. We want to revolutionize NCD prevention, early detection and timely treatment through cross-sector cooperation that makes best use of available information and technology targeting local communities. Our strength lies in our community volunteers' work in tackling the underlying social, behavioural and environmental factors that determine good health, and bringing about the required changes in behaviour and attitudes that reduce the risk of NCDs.

### At the global level

Inspired by our *Strategy 2020*, the IFRC developed a Global Framework on NCDs to guide the work of National Societies. The framework focuses on five interrelated interventions:

- *prevention* through integrated and holistic community-based programmes rather than vertical NCD interventions
- *innovation and research* through the identification of innovative approaches to be scaled up, the use of new technologies and continued operational research
- *monitoring and evaluation* through the development of simple planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting tools for volunteers, based on the World Health Organization's Global Monitoring Framework
- *partnership* through the promotion of alliances and ownership at the global, regional and national levels, with organizations, academics, donors, pharmaceutical manufacturers and ministries, and
- *advocacy* through raising the priority of NCD prevention and control at national and global levels.



**“NCDs are a leading threat to health and development. Yet, these diseases are preventable. Changing behaviours by eliminating shared risk factors can save lives.”**

Bekele Geleta,  
Secretary General, IFRC

### At the national and community levels

National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies have a long history of disease prevention and health promotion programmes. Their role complements that of their government and they are thus in a unique position to pioneer the implementation of NCD integrated prevention programmes and the promotion of highly cost-effective programmes, such as encouraging physical activities, alcohol and tobacco control and a healthy diet.

The country-level approach recommended by the Red Cross Red Crescent is built around the following interventions:

- focusing on prevention, especially for adolescents
- integrating NCD prevention into other community-based programmes, based on the specific country and community burden
- promoting health by scaling up evidence-based programming to tackle NCD issues at the community level
- identifying and testing various innovative approaches in addressing NCDs (e.g., through new technologies, virtual working groups, social media and youth networks)
- building the capacity of volunteers and staff to tackle NCD-related burdens during emergencies
- ensuring quality through implementing monitoring and evaluation systems, and
- advocating at the national level to raise priority of NCDs and mobilizing government and partners.

## IMPACT

Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers, going from door to door in their communities, play an essential role in contributing to this global NCD effort. In their auxiliary role to governments, National Societies work together with national authorities and other actors to provide high-quality NCD programmes and services.

The Red Cross Red Crescent's advocacy work remains vital to promote better and more accessible screening programmes, combined with wider public awareness initiatives, to reduce the number of NCD-related deaths. The Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, for example, developed a long-term strategy to address NCDs in their country. The National Society works in schools through the Junior Red Cross and organizes events for World Diabetes Day and national campaigns against drugs, alcohol and tobacco use. Volunteers take part in surveillance activities, visit households, invite high-risk individuals to attend a screening programme at the nearest government health centre to test for health risk, and conduct community-awareness interventions, such as health talks and the possibility of establishing a gym to encourage beneficiaries to be more physically active.

# Red Cross Red Crescent in numbers

**13 million**

Active volunteers worldwide

**6 billion**

Economic value (in US dollars) of  
volunteer services to the global  
economy

**150 million**

People reached through National  
Society programmes annually

**187**

Member National Societies  
worldwide

**23,500**

Volunteers implementing  
Community Based Health and First  
Aid in 2011

**2.3 million**

Beneficiaries reached with  
Community Based Health and First  
Aid in 2011

**2,737**

Communities involved in  
Community Based Health and First  
Aid in 2011



## Case study

### NCD programmes around the world

In Australia the most vulnerable people carry double the burden of NCDs. Most indigenous Australians continue to suffer a greater burden of ill health than the rest of the Australian population. They also have lower access to health services, are more likely to experience disability, emotional distress and reduced quality of life, and die at younger age, than the general population.

The Australian Red Cross response is threefold:

- the Save-a-Mate programme for young people helps them to prevent, recognize and respond to alcohol and other drug emergencies, based on proven harm reduction programmes
- Good Start Breakfast clubs aim to influence positively the eating habits of children most in need and to deliver nutritional education, and
- FOODGents is a programme that describes simple strategies to support healthy eating habits and learn how to save money on food bills.

To date several National Societies are considering integrating NCDs in their health programming or are already working on them. The Kenya Red Cross Society is targeting diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, while Caribbean National Societies are implementing an integrated NCD risk-factor screening test as part of their HIV programming. In Qatar, the National Society is promoting regular physical exercise by engaging people in a weekly walking group, holding sporting events for youth and organizing home gardening.

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# THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

**Humanity** The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

**Impartiality** It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

**Neutrality** In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

**Independence** The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

**Voluntary service** It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

**Unity** There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

**Universality** The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.