

WHA71: PREPARATION FOR THE THIRD HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES, TO BE HELD IN 2018.

ITEM 11.7.

IntraHealth applauds the response of WHO, the Director-General, and dedicated partners to the non-communicable disease crisis. The global epidemic of NCDs is driven by poverty, urbanization, aging populations, unhealthy diets, tobacco use, and lack of physical activity. As the Lancet recently declared: “2018 is a pivotal year for progress towards the defeat of non-communicable diseases.” In SDG target 3.4, countries are committing to reducing premature mortality from NCDs by one-third. The WHO and The Lancet Taskforce on NCDs and economics have linked SDG 3.4 with eight other SDGs—and shown the intrinsic ties between control of NCDs and economic growth.

The DG’s NCDs report says, “prevention is crucial, but investing in better management of the four main NCDs is an essential component of any national response.” The report also notes “health systems in low-income and lower-middle-income countries do not have the required capacity to integrate the best buys and other recommended interventions for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases into primary health care, referral services, human resources and monitoring systems.” Better prevention and management of NCDs hinges on stronger health systems with a health workforce that is specifically trained to treat NCDs and co-morbidities.

Private sector investments and leveraging vertical funding and health systems investments are essential to NCD outcomes. Member States must invest in an integrated approach to NCD prevention, control, and management. Special focus is needed on harnessing the potential of task-shifting to address barriers to services and implementing evidence-based policies that build on the expertise of organizations like IntraHealth. Data suggest the world will be short 18 million health workers by 2030, with the sharpest deficits in low- and middle-income countries. Investing in the global health workforce is a “best buy” to address the growing prevalence of NCDs—and to spur economic growth.