



NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION

and control in urban settings

ISSUES: The epidemic of chronic and noncommunicable diseases continues to grow globally and represents a major health challenge, particularly in developing countries with limited resources and poor health systems. 80% of the deaths due to chronic diseases occur in low-income and middle-income countries, where a double burden of communicable and noncommunicable diseases is increasingly evident.

In the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, noncommunicable diseases currently account for over half of all deaths (52%) – with cardiovascular diseases such as heart disease and stroke responsible for 26% of all deaths. They are expected to account for 60% of the disease burden by 2020. The countries of the Region face several challenges that limit their ability to mount a successful response against this epidemic. Among these challenges are the rapidly changing lifestyle pattern associated with globalization, inappropriate dietary habits and marked changes from physical activity towards a sedentary life.

Several countries of the Region have developed a comprehensive integrated community-based programme for noncommunicable disease prevention. The Isfahan Healthy Heart Programme and Nizwa Healthy Lifestyle Project are examples from the Region showing that the community-based approach is feasible and effective in obtaining long-term improvement in lifestyle-related behaviours.

SOLUTIONS: Evidence clearly shows that chronic noncommunicable diseases have their roots in unhealthy lifestyles or adverse physical and social environments. Risk factors such as unhealthy nutrition over a prolonged period, tobacco use, physical inactivity, excessive alcohol use and psychosocial stress are among the major lifestyle issues.

Community-based programmes are cost-effective and are considered a key tool for implementing a population strategy for prevention of noncommunicable diseases.

The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean has established the Eastern Mediterranean Approach to Noncommunicable Diseases Network (EMAN) to promote collaborative linking and capacity-building in relation to prevention and control of noncommunicable disease. EMAN promotes the community-based approach in prevention of chronic diseases, and supports relevant environmental, regulatory and institutional policies.

ACTIONS DURING 2010: Dealing with noncommunicable diseases is beyond the capacity of the health sector and much of the necessary interventions should come from other sectors, and nongovernmental organizations. Thus, effective coordination of a multisectoral response at the national level is necessary to address the root causes of noncommunicable diseases. It is expected that more countries will join EMAN during 2010 to enhance community participation and target the most common noncommunicable disease risk factors.

THE WAY FORWARD: World Health Day 2010 is an important opportunity to highlight the problem of noncommunicable diseases in the urban setting. Based on the success achieved in health and development at the community level, the Regional Office continues to support community-based initiatives in many countries of the Region. Advocacy and support will be provided for integration of community-based interventions within national health care plans and for the implementation of new interventions. Partnerships and alliances will be encouraged, particularly the revitalization of EMAN.



World Health Day 2010
Urbanization and Health



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