

Statement of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

WHO Executive Board 2023

Item #6 Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, and mental health

The IFRC congratulates WHO and its member states on the progress made so far after political declaration and commitments at the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly and welcomes the draft updated menu of policy options and cost-effective interventions on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases across several priority areas.

Non-communicable diseases are now recognized as a real and growing threat to population health and development. A threat that has been magnified by and during emergencies such as COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts and other crises. In low and middle-income countries, a shortage and uneven geographical distribution of qualified health workers are some of the key obstacles to comprehensive NCD prevention and control. Indeed, prevention and care start at the community level, with people being better informed and better equipped to take care of their health. The role that volunteers and community health workers play in supporting prevention, control and provision of care and support for those living with chronic illnesses is critical. This is particularly true in fragile settings and emergencies.

The IFRC has a long history of implementing community health programs and delivering services for NCDs and Mental Health and Psychosocial Services. With more than 118 Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies providing community-based NCD and MHPSS programmes in development, emergencies and humanitarian settings. IFRC has worked with more than 60 national Societies, IFRC offices and external stakeholders across the globe to develop a revised IFRC NCD vision and framework for 2030 to be released this year. This is inline with the priorities identified in IFRC strategy 2030, IFRC Health and Care Framework and implementation road map 2013–2030 for the global action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. IFRC aims at scaling up a range of NCD health services, comprising prevention, screening and early detection, community-based care and support, follow-ups, palliative care, and integrated MHPSS for people living with NCD in all contexts.

At any moment, The IFRC and hundreds of thousands of Red Cross Red Crescent Community health workforce (including trained volunteers) are on the ground working with communities to tackle NCDs and MHPSS:

- They work with communities to increase awareness of chronic diseases, leading to earlier recognition, screening, effective management and follow up.
- They bridge the gap between communities and health services, particularly in cases where there are health and social inequities.
- And crucially, they promote locally appropriate solutions to health issues with tools that have been adapted to their respective local contexts.

With millions of people living with NCDs now constituting one of the most vulnerable groups to COVID 19, conflicts, and other humanitarian crises, we call on WHO and its Member States to emphasize specific challenges they face and the role of multiple stakeholders to address NCDs in all settings especially disasters, emergencies and complex settings including among people on the move. And to recognize, better articulate and strengthen the role of the Community health workforce and health systems in the prevention, control and management of NCDs.

Thank you.