

# THE GLOBAL EPIDEMIC OF CHRONIC DISEASE

A **practical guide** to successful advocacy



World Health  
Organization

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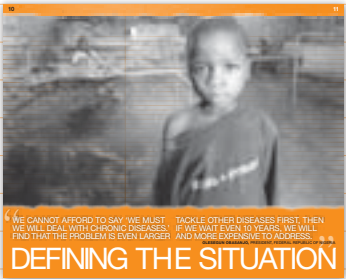
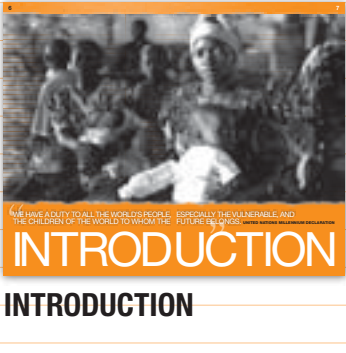
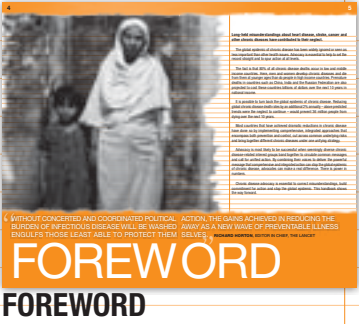
ABOUT WHO,  
ADVOCACY AND  
CHRONIC DISEASE

WHO raises awareness of public health problems and their solutions. It proposes conventions, agreements and regulations; assists in developing public opinion; and promotes international standards. These are all advocacy actions.

WHO's Department of Chronic Diseases and Health Promotion leads the global effort to prevent and control chronic diseases and promote health. Its vision is a world free of preventable chronic diseases.  
[www.who.int/chp/en/](http://www.who.int/chp/en/)

Your comments and  
feedback

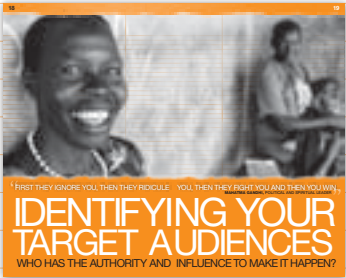
Please send information about your advocacy work, comments on this handbook and queries to [chronicdiseases@who.int](mailto:chronicdiseases@who.int)



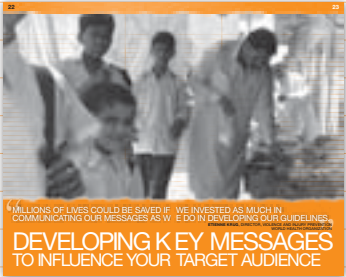
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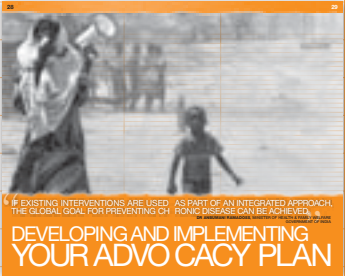
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**Long-held misunderstandings about heart disease, stroke, cancer and other chronic diseases have contributed to their neglect.**

The global epidemic of chronic disease has been widely ignored or seen as less important than other health issues. Advocacy is essential to help to set the record straight and to spur action at all levels.

The fact is that 80% of all chronic disease deaths occur in low and middle income countries. Here, men and women develop chronic diseases and die from them at younger ages than do people in high income countries. Premature deaths in countries such as China, India and the Russian Federation are also projected to cost these countries billions of dollars over the next 10 years in national income.

It is possible to turn back the global epidemic of chronic disease. Reducing global chronic disease death rates by an additional 2% annually – above predicted trends were the neglect to continue – would prevent 36 million people from dying over the next 10 years.

Most countries that have achieved dramatic reductions in chronic disease have done so by implementing comprehensive, integrated approaches that encompass both prevention and control, cut across common underlying risks and bring together different chronic diseases under one unifying strategy.

Advocacy is most likely to be successful when seemingly diverse chronic disease-related interest groups band together to circulate common messages and call for unified action. By combining their voices to deliver the powerful message that comprehensive and integrated action can stop the global epidemic of chronic disease, advocates can make a real difference. There is power in numbers.

Chronic disease advocacy is essential to correct misunderstandings, build commitment for action and stop the global epidemic. This handbook shows the way forward.

“WITHOUT CONCERTED AND COORDINATED POLITICAL ACTION, THE GAINS ACHIEVED IN REDUCING THE BURDEN OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE WILL BE WASHED AWAY AS A NEW WAVE OF PREVENTABLE ILLNESS ENGULFS THOSE LEAST ABLE TO PROTECT THEMSELVES.”

**RICHARD HORTON**, EDITOR IN CHIEF, THE LANCET

# FOREWORD





“WE HAVE A DUTY TO ALL THE WORLD’S PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE VULNERABLE, AND THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD TO WHOM THE FUTURE BELONGS. UNITED NATIONS MILLENNIUM DECLARATION”

# INTRODUCTION



WHY THIS HANDBOOK?

Chronic disease is a global epidemic.

The term *chronic disease* includes heart disease and stroke (cardiovascular disease), cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes, and visual and hearing impairment – which claim 35 million lives every year, and together are the leading cause of death worldwide. Chronic disease causes people to fall into poverty and create a downward spiral of worsening poverty and illness. They also undermine economic development in many countries.

Around 80% of chronic disease deaths occur in low and middle income countries, where most of the world’s population lives. Men and women are affected almost equally and a quarter of all chronic disease deaths occur in people under 60 years of age.

Without action, deaths from chronic disease will increase by 17% between now and 2015.

Despite this terrible toll, the scientific knowledge to prevent and control chronic diseases already exists – and the solutions are cost-effective and inexpensive to implement.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has shown that 36 million lives can be saved through an additional 2% reduction in chronic disease death rates annually, over the next 10 years to 2015. WHO’s report, *Preventing chronic diseases: a vital investment*, launched in October 2005, revealed the scale of the problem and proposed a positive course of action.

With comprehensive and integrated action, great progress can be made in the battle against chronic disease (see sidebar).

36 MILLION LIVES  
CAN BE SAVED BY 2015.

EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY IS NEEDED TO CONVINCE DECISION-MAKERS THAT:

- » Chronic diseases and health promotion merit increased investment at the national and local level.
- » Decisive action carries substantial, cost-effective benefits. 36 million lives can be saved over the next 10 years, which in turn will lead to substantial economic benefits to countries.

This handbook is a guide and practical tool for all advocates, regardless of experience. You may work in a government ministry, in a professional or nongovernmental organization, be a health care professional, a journalist, a member of a consumer or patient group, or simply be a concerned individual.

Although this handbook focuses on chronic disease prevention and control, the underlying principles for effective advocacy that are described can be successfully applied to other health topics, such as health promotion.



The report is available on the CD/DVD multimedia pack in this toolkit. It can also be downloaded at [www.who.int/chp/chronic\\_disease\\_report/en/](http://www.who.int/chp/chronic_disease_report/en/)

COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED ACTION DEFINED

**Comprehensive:** combining measures that reduce risks throughout entire populations with strategies targeted at individuals who are at high risk or who are already ill. For example, combining increased taxes on tobacco products with support services to help individuals stop smoking.

**Integrated:** measures that focus on common risk factors that cut across specific diseases (tobacco use, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity), and that combine treatment across different diseases. For example, providing self-management support training – helping patients to reduce their risk behaviour and/or cope productively with their illness – for a wide range of patients.

HOW TO USE THE HANDBOOK

You will be guided through the steps needed to develop your own strategies, tailored to your own circumstances. These steps are:

1. Defining the situation.
2. Establishing your goal and objectives.
3. Identifying your target audiences.
4. Developing key messages to influence your target audience.
5. Developing and implementing your advocacy plan.
6. Engaging media interest.
7. Monitoring, evaluation and useful tools.

This handbook is part of the *WHO Advocacy Toolkit* on preventing chronic disease. Additional elements such as tools, imagery and comprehensive information are also provided (see full contents listed in Part 7).

THROUGHOUT YOU WILL FIND ICONS THAT WILL HELP YOU MAKE BETTER USE OF THE TOOLKIT.



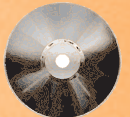
TIP  
INFORMATION TO HELP YOU GET STARTED



ADVOCACY IN ACTION  
A REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE OF HOW OTHERS HAVE CARRIED OUT CHRONIC DISEASE ADVOCACY



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