

## Non-communicable diseases a substantial challenge for Bangladesh

A newly developed scorecard by an international group including icddr,b shows Bangladesh performs poorly in reducing non-communicable disease.

**Dhaka, September 18, 2015**—The [Lancet](#) today published findings of a new scorecard, measuring the performance of 23 countries in reducing their burden of non-communicable diseases. The scorecard results show that many countries including Bangladesh are yet to establish needed actions to reduce deaths and disability from non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

Grand South—a global network of 11 research centres including [icddr,b](#)—developed the scorecard as a tool to monitor and help improve the performance of countries with high non-communicable disease burden. The scorecard was developed as a result of a United Nations political [declaration](#) after a high level meeting in 2011 that committed countries to actions that would help prevent and control non-communicable diseases.

Sir George Alleyne—United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean and the chair of the International Policy Advisory Group that advised GRAND South—says, “Many actions are needed to reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases, and the scorecard will help countries identify the gaps to be filled.”

Non-communicable diseases are responsible for half of Bangladesh’s annual mortality and account for 61% of the country’s disease burden. The scorecard identifies Bangladesh's low performance in reducing risk factors, conducting research and surveillance, and strengthening health systems in relation to non-communicable diseases.

The challenges the country now faces is establishing a sentinel surveillance systems for tracking burden and risks of each of the major NCD conditions in the target populations, ensure availability of key essential drugs for NCD in primary care health centres, and reducing NCD risks by strengthening food policies on reduced salt intake, reduced consumption of high content sugar beverages, trans-fats and marketing of unhealthy foods addressed to children.

"Bangladesh has made progress with the development of a multi-sectoral plan for 2016-2021 to prevent and control non-communicable diseases," says Dr Aliya Naheed, Associate Scientist and Interim Head of the Chronic Noncommunicable Diseases Unit, icddr,b. "Strengthening the primary care strategy for early screening, diagnosis and treatment, along with financing and mobilizing communities to lead a healthy lifestyle are crucial steps to halt the emergence of non-communicable diseases in Bangladesh."

The summary of the scorecard results show that three South-Asian countries—Bangladesh, India and Pakistan—scored relatively low compared to other participating countries. Both Bangladesh and India performed moderately in the area of planning and leadership, whereas Pakistan scored very low. India scored better than Bangladesh and Pakistan in reducing risk factors of non-communicable diseases. However, all three countries performed poorly in the area of researching and surveillance of non-communicable diseases.

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**Notes to editors**

1. Full results and reports from all 23 countries are available at [www.ncdglobalscorecard.org](http://www.ncdglobalscorecard.org)

2. NCD comprises cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and some cancers. NCD accounts for 63% of global deaths (37 million annually) with 80% occurring in low- and middle- income countries. Deaths caused by NCD are expected to increase by 15% between 2010 and 2020 with the biggest increases in Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean and South-East Asia. In low- and middle- income countries, 29% of deaths caused by NCD occur in people under 60. Half of premature deaths from NCD are preventable.

3. The World Health Organization has set a voluntary target for countries to reduce deaths of people under age 70 from NCD by 25% by 2025.

**4. About icddr,b**

*icddr,b (International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh) is a not-for-profit international health research institution located in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Dedicated to saving lives through research and treatment, icddr,b addresses some of the most critical health concerns facing the world today, ranging from improving neonatal survival to HIV/AIDS. In collaboration with academic and research institutions throughout the world, icddr,b conducts research, training and extension activities, as well as programme-based activities, to develop and share knowledge for global lifesaving solutions.*