16 May, 2018 – Geneva: A new WHO report launched today shows that the world's poorest countries can gain US$350 billion by 2030 by scaling up investments in preventing and treating chronic diseases, like heart disease and cancer, that cost an additional US$1.27 per person annually. Such actions would save more than 8 million lives over the same period.

The report, titled *Saving lives, spending less: a strategic response to NCDs*, reveals, for the first time, the financing needs and returns on investment of WHO's cost-effective and feasible "best buy" policies to protect people from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), the world's leading causes of ill health and death.

It shows that for every US$1 invested in scaling up actions to address NCDs in low- and lower-middle-income countries (LLMICs), there will be a return to society of at least US$7 in increased employment, productivity and longer life.

"The overarching message of this powerful new WHO report is optimistic," says WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "Tackling NCDs is an opportunity to improve health and economies."

If all countries use these interventions, the world would move significantly closer to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3.4 to reduce premature death from NCDs by one-third by 2030. Among the most cost-effective "best buy" interventions are increasing taxes on tobacco and alcohol, reducing salt intake through the reformulation of food products, administering drug therapy and counselling for people who have had a heart attack or stroke, vaccinating girls aged 9–13 years against human papillomavirus and screening women aged 30–49 years for cervical cancer.

"NCDs impose huge economic costs that fall heaviest on the low- and middle-income countries that can least afford them. This report makes the case for bold action against NCDs from a business perspective, and it outlines some of the most effective ways to reduce their toll, which can help to direct more resources to where they are needed most," says WHO Global Ambassador for Noncommunicable Diseases Michael R. Bloomberg.

LLMICs currently bear the brunt of premature deaths from NCDs: almost half (7.2 million) of the 15 million people who die globally every year between the age of 30 and 70 are from the world's poorest countries. Yet global financing for NCDs is severely limited, receiving less than 2% of all health funding.

But the report indicates that taking effective measures to prevent and control NCDs costs just an additional US$ 1.27 per person per year in LLMICs.

The health gains from this investment will, in turn, generate US$350 billion through averted health costs and increased productivity by 2030, and save 8.2 million lives during the same

period.

For every US$1 invested in each policy area, the following returns have been documented:

- US$12.82 from promoting healthy diets
- US$9.13 from reducing the harmful use of alcohol
- US$7.43 from lower tobacco use
- US$3.29 from providing drug therapy for cardiovascular disease
- US$2.80 from increasing physical activity
- US$2.74 from managing cancer

NCDs kill 41 million people each year, comprising 72% of all deaths globally. The number of deaths from NCDs is increasing across the world, including in LLMICs. As typically long-term conditions, NCDs are especially detrimental to families in low-resource settings, as lengthy and expensive treatment drains household resources, forces families into poverty and stifles development. *Saving lives, spending less: a strategic response to NCDs* issues a clear call for donors to support governments by offering funding as a catalyst for ambitiously scaling up the "best buy" policies which would save millions of lives.

Related links

To read the full document, go to: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/272534/WHO-NMH-NVI-18.8-eng.pdf

http://www.who.int/news-room/detail/16-05-2018-investing-in-noncommunicable-disease-control-generates-major-financial-and-health-gains-who