

## Foreword

Within a few decades, chronic noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) will dominate health care needs in most low- and middle-income countries as a result of the epidemiological transition and aging. Increasingly, policy makers and program managers are being challenged to formulate effective strategies for preventing NCDs, to address cost pressures arising from new technologies, and to mitigate the effects of disabilities on those affected by NCDs.

But how can policy makers control health costs even as new technologies become available? How might program managers deliver services as efficiently and equitably as possible? What are some broad guidelines for determining the roles of public policy in relation to preventing and controlling NCDs? What are the implications of the NCD burden for public policy? This report addresses these questions with the aim of equipping policy makers with a framework to address these issues in their own countries. The report examines trends in NCDs and prospects for improving NCD control and outcomes through the lens of public policy. Finally, it presents an agenda for action by the World Bank.

Projections are not predictions, but the report suggests a plausible scenario that could arise from the doubling of historical rates of NCD mortality reduction worldwide during 2005–15. Because of the difficulty

of offsetting aging trends, the total number of NCD deaths would still increase, but by about 3 million instead of about 6 million. This would be important progress, but also shows that even extraordinary success with NCD interventions would slow down, but not reverse, the overall upward trend in NCD morbidity and mortality because of population aging.

Thus the report presents two key messages. One is the need for public policies to prevent NCDs to the greatest extent possible, and in doing so to promote healthy aging and avoid premature deaths. The other is a concurrent need to recognize that the burden of NCDs will increase because of population aging, and therefore public policy has a role to play in dealing with the pressures that this will impose on health services. These messages are complementary and present both a challenge to action and a look at reality in terms of expectations under plausible scenarios.

The report is a call to action by countries and partner institutions. For the World Bank, it charts a course to help countries improve their health systems and outcomes, with an emphasis on those aspects that fit the Bank's comparative advantage in health financing, development economics, and multisectoral actions. This report will serve as a useful addition to the knowledge base to guide the Bank's work at the country, regional, and global levels.

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# Abbreviations

CEA	cost-effectiveness analysis
CVD	cardiovascular disease
DALY	disability-adjusted life year
g/dl	grams per deciliter
GDP	gross domestic product
HNP	health, nutrition, and population
HPV	human papillomavirus
NCD	noncommunicable disease
WHO	World Health Organization