

TALKING POINTS AND ADVOCACY MESSAGING

Provisional WHO/AFRO resolution (AFR/RC72/4): PEN-Plus – A Regional Strategy to Address Severe Noncommunicable Diseases at First-level Referral Health Facilities

What is under consideration at this year's Regional Committee meeting in August 2022?

- Member states will be reviewing a [draft resolution \(AFR/RC72/4\)](#) to adopt [a regional strategy for PEN-Plus for the African region](#), which is designed to address severe noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) at first-level referral health facilities.

What is PEN-Plus?

- The [Package of Essential NCD Interventions – Plus \(PEN-Plus\)](#) is a proven, cost-effective strategy for delivering integrated chronic care of severe NCDs at first-level referral health facilities such as district hospitals, linked closely with health centers and community care.
- PEN-Plus decentralizes care for severe chronic NCDs like type 1 diabetes, sickle cell disease, and rheumatic and congenital heart disease to district hospitals in rural and peri-urban areas, *making these services more accessible and affordable to those most in need of care.*
- *PEN-Plus is a nurse-led model of care* and provides nurses and other mid-level providers with the specialized training, equipment, medicines, and mentorship needed to diagnose and treat severe NCDs that lead to death and suffering among children and young adults if untreated.
- Please see **the 2-pager on PEN-Plus** for more information!

Why is the need for PEN-Plus so high?

- *Severe NCDs cause 800,000 deaths every year among the world's poorest children and young adults, more than 90% of whom live in rural and periurban areas of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia and 70% of these deaths are avoidable, which is more than the total number of avoidable deaths by HIV, tuberculosis, and maternal causes combined in this population.*
- *Despite these inequities, children and young adults living with severe NCDs have been largely left out of global targets and frameworks for NCDs that have centered on policy solutions for people living with NCDs from ages 30-70 or have focused on interventions for more common, less severe NCDs that can be addressed at health center level*

How will PEN-Plus contribute to more equitable care for the poorest?

- Providing access to integrated PEN-Plus services would:
 - Greatly reduce the burden of avoidable death and suffering among children and young adults with conditions like sickle cell disease, type 1 diabetes, rheumatic and congenital heart disease, and other severe chronic diseases
 - Increase ten-fold by 2030 the number of patients living in extreme poverty who are receiving lifesaving treatment for severe NCDs

- Ensure that the poorest children and young adults suffering from severe NCDs are no longer left behind by delivering integrated NCD care closer to where PLWNCDs live
- Strengthen primary care systems and provide critical assistance to one of the most neglected populations prior to COVID-19, who have become even more vulnerable due to the pandemic
- Help countries and communities address the largest gap in financing for universal health coverage (UHC) for the poorest billion

How will WHO PEN and PEN-Plus strategies work together?

- PEN-Plus complements and builds on the WHO PEN package which addresses less severe NCDs such as type 2 diabetes and uncomplicated hypertension at the health center, by bridging the access gap in treatment and care of patients with more severe chronic NCDs
- Expansion of PEN-Plus service delivery at district hospital level will also provide platforms for mentorship for staff providing PEN services at health center level, as well as strengthened capacity for referrals to specialized care

What are governments committing to with the PEN-Plus regional strategy?

- If adopted, the PEN-Plus regional strategy would:
 - **Commit member states to** developing and implementing comprehensive national integrated and standardized protocol-based programs for management of chronic and severe NCDs, including ensuring availability of essential medicines, technologies, and diagnostics, establishing mentorship and training programs, developing management tools and protocols, and integrating and strengthening surveillance and research.
 - **Commit WHO/AFRO and partners to** mobilizing the international community to support effective management of severe NCDs and advocate for increased resource allocation.
- By 2030, the PEN-Plus regional strategy calls on governments to have developed:
 - Standardized protocol-based management approaches for severe NCDs integrated into health policies and strategies in **75%** of member states
 - Efforts to begin roll out of PEN-Plus – including national operational plans, established national training programs, availability of essential medicines and basic technologies, and systems for collecting mortality data – in **70%** of members states

What is next if the PEN-Plus regional strategy is adopted in August 2022?

- Advocacy, technical support, and resources will be needed to ensure that PEN-Plus is not just a written policy and to drive necessary action at national, regional, and global levels
- WHO/AFRO will be convening member states and an exciting coalition of partners, including UNICEF and the World Health Organization, in technical sessions and collaborations to further review and progress operational next steps across the region
- The [PEN-Plus Partnership](#), an initiative of the [NCDI Poverty Network](#), will be scaling up financing and partnership efforts to support the success of this strategy:
 - *Stay tuned to cross-site learning opportunities via the NCDI Poverty Network in coming months, where the PEN-Plus strategy is being initiated for the first time in 8 countries in*

the African region in 2023-2024 (in addition to longer-term efforts where PEN-Plus has already been successfully implemented in Rwanda, Liberia, and Malawi)

- *Stay tuned on opportunities for organizations and advocates to mobilize around advocacy and financing for PEN-Plus, led by the Advocacy & Financing Working Group of the PEN-Plus Partnership and Voices of NCDI Poverty fellows representing communities with lived experiences of severe NCDs throughout the African region*