

# MINISTRY OF NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES, REGULATIONS & COORDINATION

## PAKISTAN HEALTH KNOWLEDGE HUB

### Success Stories

#### NCD: New developments in Pakistan

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), defined as diseases of long duration and generally slow progression, are now the leading global cause of death. Globally Low- and Middle- Income Countries have been witnessing a transition in burden of disease, from communicable to non-communicable, with increasing NCDs such as stroke, cancer, diabetes, chronic lung disease as well as injuries. Unhealthy lifestyles such as tobacco use, insufficient physical activity have all been implicated as significant behavioural risk factors for the increasing burden of NCDs globally as well as in Pakistan.

As can be readily grasped, these issues are present in Pakistan in abundance. Efforts in this area have been ongoing in the past, with Pakistan passing laws to prohibit public smoking and protection of non-smokers (2002), the adoption of the Framework Convention of Tobacco Control (FCTC, 2004). However, concerted action in this area had been sporadic and uncoordinated. The good news is that since renewed focus globally over the past decade, WHO's efforts to put NCDs on the national agenda of various governments has been bearing fruit. Pakistan endorsed the political declaration on NCDs at the World Health Assembly in 2011 and approved global action on NCD targets in 2013. With further inclusion of NCDs targets in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) NCDs are now firmly on Pakistan's agenda.

In response the Federal Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination (MoNHSRC) has made significant efforts to move forward the NCD agenda in the country. Key in this regard has been the formation of an NCD Taskforce with representation from all provinces and Federating Areas, as well as key stakeholders from other ministries and technical partners which will provide overall guidance on NCD strategies. Further to this, a Technical Working Group has also been notified for data collection, development of concept notes and facilitate NCD Action Plan development. This is further building on the work of the National Commission for Prevention of NCD which was established in 2009.

Approaching the development of an NCD Action Plan in the devolved setup has been a considerable achievement. Alignment and endorsement of all stakeholders bears witness to the consensus based approach adopted to ensure uniformity of purpose across the country. Essential in achieving this has been the conduction of the stepwise survey (STEPS) in different provinces which subsequently formed the basis for planning and implementation of various control and preventive measures needed to manage the growing NCD burden. The ongoing NAP development constitutes a landmark development in the country and will go a long way to meet the NCD specific targets under the SDGs.