

a result, they often can only afford to eat rice or roti, with no pulses or vegetables. Also, particularly in the case of urban poor, long working hours do not leave them enough time to cook healthy meals, such as the use of leafy green vegetables or healthy grains that take longer to cook. The poor also live in places where there are higher risks of air pollution, such as near factories which release harmful chemicals. So, you can see that the risks of NCDs can be higher among the poor, when compared to the rich, who may have more time and money to invest in healthier lifestyles.

Non-Communicable Diseases are also associated with higher health care costs due to long and expensive treatment. With NCDs, you cannot stop taking medicines once you feel better – you have to keep taking them to keep illness away, often for a lifetime. But many people stop taking medicines once they feel better or when they run out of money. These illnesses also require close monitoring and regular follow up by a health service provider. The poor may not be able to visit a health centre regularly as that would mean loss of wages. High transportation costs to and from the health facility, lower energy to do work, lack of money to make healthy food choices and stress, are added factors leading to higher levels of Non-Communicable Diseases among the poor.

Treatment for Non-Communicable diseases is generally spread over a long period of time. In case of complications, people may need hospitalisation. This can lead to financial hardship. Such illnesses of even one family member could affect the family's income. This may result in the children dropping out of school, or even affect the consumption of nutritious food for the rest of the family.

Women are particularly disadvantaged as they are often more vulnerable because of their status within the family and society. Poverty is a factor that increases this vulnerability. In comparison to men, they lack access to healthcare, have little control over the household income and are unable to make decisions for themselves regarding care and treatment. Also, as a tradition in many households, women eat leftovers which may not constitute a healthy dietary choice. Therefore, it is important to increase women's awareness about Non-Communicable Diseases and ensure that they participate in screening and treatment programmes.