

Committee: World Health Organization

Topic: Non-Communicable Diseases

Country: The Bahamas

## **I. Background Information**

The term non-communicable diseases (NCD), also referred to as chronic diseases, is used to describe diseases that are not passed person to person. These diseases are long lasting and slow to progress, yet they are the cause of death for 38 million people yearly. Though these diseases can not be transferred person to person, there are many factors which heighten an individual's chances of developing such a disease. These factors include, but are not limited to, bad cholesterol, a lack of physical activity, high levels of alcohol consumption, and tobacco usage. Of the 38 million deaths that occur annually, the majority occur in low to moderate income countries. About 16 million of the deaths occur before the age of seventy, deeming these deaths as "premature" according to the United Nations World Health Organization. There are four main categories of non-communicable diseases. These categories are: cardiovascular, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes.

Cardiovascular non-communicable diseases include strokes, cardiac arrest, et al. These are the diseases which make up the greater proportion of the deaths that occur annually from non-communicable diseases. In fact, according to the United Nations World Health Organization, approximately 46% of the 38 million deaths can be attributed to cardiovascular disease.

The next most common non-communicable disease is cancer. Cancer affects millions of people yearly, killing 8 million of the 38 million annual NCD deaths. Cancer appears in a multitude of forms and affects individuals of all ages. Though causes of cancer are often unknown, there are a few preventative measures that are able to be taken.

Following cancer and cardiovascular diseases, the next largest cause of death in the non-communicable disease category is chronic respiratory diseases. Some of these cardiovascular diseases include asthma, occupational lung disease, and pulmonary hypertension. These diseases account for four million deaths annually.

The final group of non-communicable is diabetes. Diabetes is categorized as either type 1 or type 2, both of which are chronic, yet type 2 is somewhat more preventable. Diabetes is the cause of death for 1.5 million individuals yearly.

## **II. United Nations Involvement**

The United Nations recognizes that, though non-communicable diseases are not transferred through human to human contact, there are many risk factors involved. Because of this, the entire United Nations, especially the United Nations World Health Organization, has worked desperately to alleviate the catastrophic results of non-communicable diseases. The World Health Organization led 109 countries to agreement on global measures to reduce the risks of non-communicable diseases. The goal of the plan includes nine individual plans which aim to reduce the deaths caused by non-communicable diseases by twenty five percent by the year 2025. The nine goals are mostly aimed at preventing the risk factors, such as eliminating or at least reducing smoking tobacco, excessive alcohol consumption, and lack of physical activity. The plan also aims for the creation of cost efficient means of medical intervention for the treatment and prevention of such a disease.

The United Nations General Assembly has planned to join together in 2018 to review progress of the nine goals and discuss further actions that must be taken. In 2011 there was another one of these High Level meetings of the United Nations General Assembly.

## **III. Country Policy**

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas has not taken many efforts towards the prevention of the development of non-communicable diseases. The United Nations World Health Organization records hold that the Bahamas do have a monitoring system to report progress of the aforementioned nine plans, yet this is the only true measure being taken against non-communicable diseases in the Bahamas. The Bahamas however are deeply concerned with the effects and widespread death toll of non communicable diseases, and wants to improve the lives and longevity of those affected within the entire global community. The Bahamas believes it is only lacking the means, funds, and necessary knowledge required for establishing any effective combat against non communicable diseases. Non communicable diseases are a huge problem for the Bahamas; seventy four percent of all deaths that occurred within the Bahamas' borders in 2008

can be attributed to the effects of non communicable diseases. Cardiovascular disease accounts for the highest percentage of non communicable disease related deaths in the Bahamas.

Working with the PAHO and World Health Organization are examples of the Bahamas desire to alleviate the mortal effects of non communicable diseases. Despite these efforts, however, rates of deaths related to non communicable diseases in the Bahamas continues to experience a drastic increase. In fact, some have even referred to non communicable diseases in the Bahamas as an epidemic. According to statistics, one half of all hospital beds in the Bahamas are held by individuals suffering from a non-communicable disease. Over eighty percent of prescription drugs sold in the Bahamas are for the treatment of diabetes or hypertension. The Bahamas' government has spent astronomical funds on the treatment of those with non communicable diseases.

#### **IV. Possible Solutions**

The Bahamas first plan in the reduction of non communicable diseases is educating the masses on the preventative measures that can be taken to prevent the development of non communicable diseases. The Bahamas aims to implement education that explores the detrimental effects of the non communicable diseases, so that individuals are more inclined to take those preventative means. A deeper understanding of the mortality rates and what it is like to live with these diseases.

The Bahamas also stresses the importance of healthy eating. Because of this, the Bahamas implores the United Nations World Health Organization to develop universal nutritional guidelines, and health standard policies. These policies and guidelines can be developed in accordance with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO), United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC), and other relevant committees. The help of NGO's will also be employed for the development of these guidelines.

Other solutions proposed by the Commonwealth of the Bahamas include increasing international as well as smaller regional monetary allocations. The treatment and prevention of these diseases are extremely costly. The Bahamas wants to increase the funds to allow for a larger research basis on non communicable diseases, to try to further effective treatments.

Committee: World Health Organization

Topic: Global Pharmaceutical Development and Universal Access to Medication

Country: The Commonwealth of the Bahamas

## **I. Background Information**

The United Nations World Health Organization has propounded the importance of global access to medication and treatment as a human right. In fact, the establishment of universal rights to health care are written in the founding documentations of the United Nations World Health Organization. Further, it is recognized in many other international organizations as an inalienable human right. It is an issue of both ethical and legal importance, with the former being the more troubling of the two to deliberate on. Despite the widespread agreement on global access to healthcare and medication, many countries do not have the access to medical treatment and medication which they are entitled to through their humanity. The most problematic areas for accessing health care are low income countries, whose counterparts spend over one hundred times that of the low income countries on their medications and hospitals, per capita. Pharmaceuticals are atypical of other products.

The global access to medication index estimates that approximately two billion people lack access to any medicinal or pharmaceutical treatment and goods. Although this is a problem of many different groups, the most responsibility lies on the pharmaceutical companies, as even when medical treatment lacks, or even in some cases is not necessary, medicine should be accessible by the entire global community. Medicine is often needed even when medical treatment is not, and it is the responsibility of the pharmaceutical companies, as well as individual countries, to allow their citizens to access to the pharmaceuticals.

Another large reason for the limited access to pharmaceuticals is the astronomical expense. Many times individuals in low income countries due to the fact that the prices are so astronomically expensive.

## **II. United Nations Involvement**

The United Nations has held a High Level Panel to discuss the issues surrounding the lack of global access to medication. At this panel, discussion ensued about the possible solutions and

ways to improve the issues caused by these diseases. The United Nations has called for reductions in prices for medications that are life sustaining. Due to the accessibility to medical treatment and pharmaceutical being a human right, the United Nations believes that no individual should be prevented from obtaining those medications which are necessary to sustain or improve their lives. This was one of the issues discussed at the High Level Panel.

Although patents have shown their importance in the past, the United Nations World Health Organization stresses the importance of going beyond patents and first assuring universal health care. With estimations at only 38% for access to medication as predicted by the United Nations World Health Organization, the United Nations is determined to raise this percentage, and therefore improve the lives of global citizens.

One of the most pertinent issues is access to medications for HIV and AIDS. This is why the United Nations World Health Organization has collaborated with the United Nations branch on AIDS, called UNAIDS, to find means to give universal health care and access to drugs that are essential to sustain the lives of those affected by Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Disorder.

This is also an issue which the United Nations Human Rights Council is concerned with, as they have established universal access to health care a human right. In fact, the United Nations Human Rights Council has deemed universal access to medication “necessary for living a life with dignity.” Regardless of economy, race, politics, and religion, the member states of the United Nations Human Rights Council propounds the importance of never preventing any citizen from having equal and fair access to prescription and nonprescription medications which they need to survive and live a life in dignity.

### **III. Country Policy:**

In the year 2010, the Bahamas launched their National Prescription Drug Plan, NPDP, with two main goals. The first goal pertains to the prevention of non communicable diseases by establishing strategic and cost efficient measures. The next goal which pertains to this issue is to improve access to prescription medication. With an increase in access to these medications, the Bahamas also hopes to devise ways which will allow for a decrease in the costs. The plan currently covers one hundred sixty prescription medications, with plans for expansion. Also, only citizens

who are sixty five or older are currently able to have access to the National Prescription Drug Plan in the Bahamas. The Bahamas is interested in looking into expanding the age groups covered by this plan, yet first needs to evaluate the costs and effectiveness of doing so.

A great amount of the medication access spread initiatives has pertained to the drugs which treat Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), and later Acquired Immunodeficiency Disorder (AIDS) within the borders of the Bahamas. Many of these initiatives have been lead by the United States of America. The Bahamas are still benefitting from the improvements made by the United States of America which has allowed for greater and better treatment of the large HIV and AIDS community in the Bahamas. The Bahamas is one of ninety five countries which have benefited by the United States of America's plan on HIV and AIDS.

#### **IV. Possible Solutions**

In achieving global pharmaceutical development, the first and foremost important job of the members of the United Nations World Health Organization, in the opinion of the Bahamas, is research. The Bahamas encourages voluntary contributions as well as NGO's to contribute to funding research. The research will pertain to developing drugs that are both easy to access for individuals who need them, as well as eliminate the astronomical expenses of such a drug. The Bahamas recognizes the vast needs of each individual country, and therefore recognizes that each country must evaluate the desires of their citizens and act accordingly.

The Bahamas congratulates countries on their key improvements in making access to medication universal. Because of this, the Bahamas implores countries to continue their current efforts. Nonetheless, the Bahamas suggests a few improvements that can be made. This was a goal of the Millennium Development Goals, but was not achieved by most developing countries. The Bahamas implores developed countries to share their knowledge and aid to the less developed countries struggling with this issue. Therefore, the Bahamas would like to hold a summit every two years with the intention for collaboration and progress checking.

Committee: United Nations World Health Organization

Topic: Gender Based Inequities in Global Health

Country Name: The Commonwealth of the Bahamas

## **I. Background Information**

In most developed countries, gender based inequalities are most easily seen through the difference in insurance pay rates. Women typically have to pay more for their insurance than men do for a similar plan. Also, insurance plans often cover different medicines for a woman than they would for a man. However, gender inequities in global health extend beyond just insurance for medical care and treatment, but also reaches a social aspect of such. Research has suggested that in areas where women are prevented from attending school and pursuing an education, yet men are encouraged to do so, the women tend to lack necessary knowledge on the signs of detrimental health that men be more inclined to recognize. In fact, studies have been conducted which indicate a positive correlation between the education level of a mother and the nutrition of her kids. The higher level of education a mother has, the healthier nutrition she tends to feed her children. Also, doctor visits tend to be more frequent with those who are more educated. Despite women enjoying a longer average life span than men, they live notably more sick through their years.

Another interesting fact to bear in mind is that which has suggested that when women experience less social discrimination, they tend to experience an increase in their average longevity. With so many countries still experiencing discrimination towards women, this is definitely a fact that must be addressed.

Men, on the other hand, experience more instances of fatal illnesses. This is largely due in fact to their more toxic work areas. Women typically are not hired to these toxic occupations, which in turn reduces their risk of developing these fatal illnesses on the job. Men also smoke more than women typically, which is considered a social norm.

Women are more affected by stigmas and fears of most diseases than men do. This prevents women from seeking the treatment they did. Men also experience this stigma from HIV and AIDS, which has become a large problem for sustaining the lives of the men affected.

## **II. United Nations Involvement**

United Nations branches that deal with the effects of gender inequality on health are widespread. United Nations Women, UNIFEM, United Nations Human Rights Council, United Nations World Health Organization, and United Nations Economic and Social Councils are all involved in alleviating this issue that is prominent in all countries.

With all the evidence pointing towards the benefits on health for both men and women when women are given more rights and social equality, the United Nations has committed itself to encouraging countries to adopt such rights and educating individuals on the inherent equality that exists between men and women. One plan that has been implemented deals with closing the gender gap when it comes to HIV and AIDS between men and women. This plan was devised by United Nations Women and is called the Stepping Stones. It resulted in a 33% decrease in the presence of many sexual transmitted diseases between men and women, due to providing both with safe sex measures and aftercare treatment if infected.

### **III. Country Policy**

The Bahamas have experienced, and continue to experience, issues of gender inequality. Although the Bahamas' government recently held a referendum which suggested changes to the constitution of the Bahamas which were aimed at establish greater gender equality, voters did not approve of it, and the referendum failed to pass. The government is definitely trying to establish gender equality and the prime minister was disappointed with the results of the referendum votes.

A relevant issue pertaining to gender inequality for healthcare in the Bahamas is how children are not able to gain citizenship from their mother. Because of this, they are prevented from accessing health care. Since women are experiencing persisting gender inequality, they do experience this in all aspects of their lives, including health care.

The Bahamas is determined to continue to press for gender equality in the Bahamas' borders. The Bahamas wants to establish equality in the constitution, as the first step. The next hurdle would be changing the opinions on social equality by the people. This has in the past proven to be difficult, so the Bahamas seeks the aid of all United Nations member states.

### **IV. Possible Solutions**

The Bahamas wants to educate the masses on the inequality that exists between genders when it comes to health care, and how this is detrimental to both men and women. This can be



done through the help of NGO's. Also, the Bahamas wants to help spread education on nutrition and signs of diseases, so that the women who receive less education than men are able to better care for their children and selves.

The Bahamas also implore insurance companies to research means to make insurance equally affordable for both men and women.

## Works Cited

- "The 2016 Access to Medicine Index. Methodology 2015." *Essential Medicines and Health Products Information Portal*. World Health Organization, n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.
- "AIDS Drug Company Expanding." - *Bahamas News Archive Business*. BahamasB2B, n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.
- "Bahamas/Bahamas." (n.d.): n. pag. *UN World Health Organization*. World Health Organization. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.
- BahamasLocal.com. "Non-Communicable Diseases Are a Bahamas Epidemic | The Bahamas, Bahamas | Bahamas Local News - The Bahamas, Bahamas." *Bahamas Local*. Bahamas Local, n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.
- Dávila, Agustín Lage. "Global Pharmaceutical Development and Access: Critical Issues of Ethics and Equity." *MEDICC Review* 13.3 (2011): 16-22. Web.
- "Gender Differentials in Tuberculosis: The Role of Socio-economic and Cultural Factors." *Science Direct*. Science Direct, n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.
- "Gender Inequality in Health Care - Boundless Open Textbook." *Boundless*. Boundless, n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.
- [Http://www.facebook.com/Caribbean360](http://www.facebook.com/Caribbean360). "Voters in Bahamas Say "no" to Gender Equality Changes in Constitution | Caribbean360." *Caribbean360*. Caribbean360, 08 June 2016. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.
- "Lakshmi Puri:." *UN Women "Gender Inequalities Affect Health Outcomes and Must Be Addressed Accordingly"*. UN Women, 30 May 2013. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.
- "Non Communicable Diseases." *World Health Organization*. World Health Organization, n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.
- "Non-communicable Diseases in The Bahamas." *Commonwealth Health Online*. Nexus Strategic Partnership, n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.
- "The Panel." *High-Level Panel on Access to Medicines*. United Nations, n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.
- Scavella, Nico. "Women Face Barriers in the Bahamas, Report Says." *The Tribune*. The Tribune, n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.

"2016 Access to Medicine Index to Place High Emphasis on How Pharmaceutical Companies Perform." *Access to Medicine Index*. Access to Medicine, 29 Oct. 2015. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.

Vlassoff, Carol. "Gender Differences in Determinants and Consequences of Health and Illness." *Journal of Health, Population, and Nutrition*. International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh, Mar. 2007. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.

"WHO | Risk Factors." *WHO*. World Health Organization, n.d. Web. 04 Nov. 2016.