



CLAS

Coalition for Americas' Health
Coalición América Saludable

REGIONAL AGENDA 2030

TOWARDS RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE
POST-PANDEMIC IN LATIN AMERICA
TO PREVENT AND CONTROL
NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDs)

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Chronic non-communicable diseases or NCDs, such as cardiovascular, cerebrovascular, cancer, diabetes, respiratory diseases, and mental illnesses are the leading cause of death in the world. According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), each year 41 million people die from these diseases, which is equivalent to 71% of total global deaths¹. In the Americas, these deaths reach 5.5 million annually, of which 2.2 million occur prematurely before the age of 70².

Among the risk factors for NCDs, preventable conditions such as smoking, sedentary lifestyle, alcohol consumption, unhealthy eating, and air pollution are the most important. Conditions such as hypertension and diabetes contribute to NCDs greatly and, as they requi-

re access to healthcare and medicines, they are particularly critical among the most vulnerable in the population. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as indicated by the WHO and PAHO, the impact of these factors have been even more dramatic, by increasing the risk of hospitalization and death of people who contract this infection.

Given this situation, there is a need to address the problem of NCDs, not in silos by illness or risk factor, but from a cross-cutting approach that incorporates norms and regulation, communication, and capacity building. It is necessary to undertake urgent and coordinated actions to prevent and reverse the effects of the syndemic³ of NCDs and infectious diseases such as COVID-19.

“

It seems very good to me that we fight against COVID, that COVID is an absolute priority, it has to be... But the paradox is that the obesity pandemic is much more lethal than COVID; that is, more people die on the planet due to the consequences of these misnamed chronic non-communicable diseases than COVID. NCDs are the most transmissible of diseases.

Guido Girardi, Fundación Encuentros del Futuro, Chile

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During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, most countries ignored policies for preventing and contro-

lling NCDs. They were not a priority even for Ministries of Health and other Executive offices.

“

NCDs were not on the public agenda. The contingency plan for Covid 19 did not contemplate an NCD prevention perspective. The area most affected by the pandemic was precisely access to health for the treatment of NCDs.”

Marita Pizarro, FIC Argentina

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Why a Regional Agenda?

The Coalition for Americas' Health (CLAS) is a coalition founded in 2011 that brings together more than 200 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Latin America with the aim of strengthening the action of civil society through the development of advocacy strategies, education, awareness, and research, at the national and regional levels, and promote the implementation of effective policies to prevent and control noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

The Coalition for Americas' Health, its members and allies agreed to develop a Regional Agenda to reduce NCDs, their risk factors, and determinants, looking ahead to 2030. The purpose of this document is to identify strategic lines of work to achieve the United

Nations Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs, particularly Goal #3 to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all. This Goal is also in line with PAHO's Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas 2018-2030, specifically Goal #9, which states



“Reduce morbidity, disabilities and mortality from noncommunicable diseases, injuries, violence and mental health disorders.”
Providing a cross-cutting perspective on these issues, CLAS and its members, which include medical socie-

ties, patient organizations, human rights, health and consumer NGOs, and academic institutions, collaborated to address its mission and advance the accomplishment of these goals.

The Strategy: “Healthy America 2030” Initiative

In line with the main objectives and goals to prevent and control NCDs set by the UN and WHO-PAHO, in 2020 CLAS launched the “Healthy America”; Initiative in order to exchange experiences, strengthen commitment to policy change, and guarantee that NCDs be included in the government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. CLAS convened main political allies of the region to promote their commitment to NCD prevention policies and their inclusion in the response to the COVID-19 emergency.

The first component of this initiative included the development of a Regional Agenda of priorities for the prevention and control of NCDs. This Agenda was developed with the participation of CLAS members and leaders of this region from different sectors of our society, including political leaders working on NCD-related issues, youth groups, and people living with NCDs.

This Regional Agenda seeks to consolidate the research results from surveys, interviews and focus groups, and identify the main priorities, opportunities and challenges that arise from these contributions. In a virtual meeting of CLAS members, preliminary priorities were discussed to reach consensus. This Regional Agenda is a call to action to engage political allies, people living with NCDs, youth groups, advocates, academics, and other key actors to promote positive change.

The priorities established from this work will guide the second component of the Initiative “Healthy America 2030,” which consists in the design of an advocacy strategy and communications plan that will guide the CLAS community towards the regional NCD goals for 2030.

Methodology for the development of this Agenda

In order to meet the above objectives, at the end of 2021, an exploratory, participatory and multicomponent study was carried out in countries of Latin American and the Caribbean. Government leaders, civil society organizations, and CLAS members were identified and invited to participate voluntarily in the research.

The following instruments were used: civil society survey, in-depth interviews, short email-survey, mapping of emergency plans and recovery from COVID-19, focus groups with young people, and focus groups with people living with NCDs.

Results⁴

NCDs are the leading cause of death and disability in the world. As recognized by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to health, the global burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including chronic cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, cancer and diabetes, constitutes one of the main challenges of the 21st century which has detrimental effects on society,

the economy and health (2020)⁵.

To respond to this problem, it is important for States to have an NCD prevention and control plan, which includes epidemiological monitoring, comprehensive policies around risk factors, as well as a response plan to address NCDs.



PRIORITIES IN THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF NCDs IN THE REGION OF THE AMERICAS BY 2030

The future: In an exercise to visualize the future of our region, the participants focused on “A healthier Latin America”.



As a result of this exploratory study, challenges and opportunities were identified that allow the formulation of effective policies and strategies for implementation, supporting a common direction for the region, yet allowing for tailoring to local contexts. Within this framework, the following objectives and actions emerged, intended to involve government, academia, and

civil society in their implementation, and allowing evaluation of results in the coming years. They are presented in three parts: cross-cutting regional priorities related to various risk factors and conditions; priorities for each risk factor; and priorities to strengthen civil society and CLAS to increase regional, national and local capacity to address the NCD problem.



FIVE CROSS-CUTTING REGIONAL PRIORITIES

1

Promote transparency in the public policy development process

Almost all respondents and interviewees indicated the need to sustainably protect public health policies from commercial interests that pursue the profit motive above the right to health, in particular, and human rights, in general. Industries that interfere with public policy include tobacco, ultra-processed food and beverage industries, and the alcohol industry, among others. These industries also interfere with the generation of tools that allow for the creation of effective policies to maximize transparency and shield the different governmental entities, including executive, legislative, judicial and others, from this interference. This priority is one of the pillars to advance NCDs prevention.

The various tactics and strategies of these industries tend to privilege profit over public health. They include influencing elections and candidates, corporate lobbying, production of junk science or pseudo science, charitable contributions to whitewash the negative effects of corporate actions, revolving doors to position corporate influencers within government, participation as an interested party in international policy formulating

bodies, among others.

This Regional Agenda 2022-2030 focuses on the need to address the asymmetric power relations that “[in many cases,...can reinforce existing inequalities in societies, which, by not considering respect for human rights as a basic obligation, sacrifices the the health and wellbeing of society’s weakest and most vulnerable sectors”⁶. Likewise, it identifies as a priority the phenomenon of corporate capture: “the action of individuals, groups or firms, in the public and private sectors, that influence in the formation of laws, regulations, decrees and other government policies, for their own benefit as a result of illicit and non-transparent provisions of private benefits granted to public officials”⁷.

For the above reasons, the following lines of action are proposed to advance and consolidate the objective of promoting transparency in the process of developing public policies related to NCDs. These aim to address the asymmetric power relationship and contribute to putting a stop to corporate capture.

Awareness and communication

- Raise awareness among politicians and public officials about the harmful effects of allowing conflicts of interest in the development of public policies.
- Raise awareness among health professionals, pediatricians, nutritionists and others, so that they commit to public health and reduce their relationship with industries related to unhealthy products.

Gobernanza y regulación

- Promote binding commitments, considering existing precedents such as the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control Article 5.3, that respect human rights standards to maximize transparency and protect the development of public policies by developing:
 - i) **Codes of conduct** that: a) reject conflicts of interest and protect public officials and authorities from the interference of actors with irreconcilable commercial interests for the purposes of public health; b) reject alliances or agreements with actors with irreconcilable commercial interests for the purposes of public health; c) limit interactions with actors with irreconcilable commercial interests for public health purposes, to scenarios that are strictly necessary for effective regulation;
 - ii) **Clear policies on the information that is required** from the different industries that are related to the determining factors of NCDs: form and frequency in which it is presented, body that reviews it, sanctions established for non-compliance;
 - iii) **Mechanisms for follow-up and monitoring** of the different activities and different industries that are related to the determining factors of NCDs, in close collaboration with civil society free of conflicts of interest.



Cooperation at international, regional and national level:

- Collaborate those working with related agendas such as fighting corruption, supporting transparency, human rights, sustainable development, academics, among others.

“

A regional collaboration strategy would strengthen us. It would help to have a database with models of effective policies, have links with political actors and other key actors that support this agenda, participate in related alliances and explore financing sources.

Daniel Dorado, Corporate Accountability

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2

Promote fiscal policies that increase the cost of unhealthy products including tobacco, ultra-processed foods, sugary drinks and alcohol

- Focus messages on the reduction of health expenses and the strengthening of the health system.
- Conduct local studies to provide data for fiscal policy proposals regarding unhealthy products (tobacco, alcohol, unhealthy foods) in countries where they are needed.
- Establish relations between the financial sector, economists and public health.
- Ensure that fiscal policies are on the political agenda of our countries.
- Build capacity on the issue in all sectors.

3

Promote the prohibition of all forms of advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products, unhealthy foods and beverages, and alcoholic beverages

- Support effective policies that regulate the advertising, promotion and sponsorship of unhealthy products, according to the priorities of each country, based on best practices.
- Monitor and verify marketing strategies, particularly those in social media, and alert the population, political decision-makers, and the media about the need for regulation.
- Promote oversight and compliance with existing regulations.
- Create awareness in the population, media and authorities of the damage caused by advertising, promotion and sponsorship of unhealthy products, particularly in children and adolescents.
- Identify legal frameworks, such as international treaties, that favor the adoption of measures to restrict the advertising, promotion and sponsorship of unhealthy products.

4

Promote the transformation of the primary health system to allow for the effective care of people with hypertension and diabetes, in the context of universal health coverage

- Support the meaningful participation of people living with NCDs in improving primary health care and advances in universal health coverage.
- Promote access to quality health services with particular focus on the most vulnerable.
- Promote the availability and affordability of quality medicines to appropriately treat diseases with particular focus on the most vulnerable.
- Promote the strengthening of quality primary health care.
- Promote the availability and affordability of quality mental health services to appropriately treat these diseases and conditions.
- Promote the availability and affordability of quality rehabilitation services.
- Support addiction treatment (smoking, vaping and alcoholism).



“

It is necessary to guarantee a basic package of benefits and access to medicines for people with arterial hypertension and diabetes based on standardized protocols, as priorities for Universal Health Coverage and access to health for the treatment of NCDs in the region from now to 2030.

Sebastián Laspiur, PAHO Argentina

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5

Develop an advocacy program to influence international decisions that impact the action of national and regional decision makers

- Promote the interests of health in regional and international intergovernmental organizations and forums, such as the Codex Alimentarius, the G7, G20, the Organization of American States (OAS), United Nations, among others.
- Promote inclusion of NCDs in the response to pandemics and emergencies.
- Strengthen the participation of the CLAS community in the international debate.

“

It is important to use human rights mechanisms (Human Rights Council, OAS, human rights treaty bodies, etc...) to highlight NCDs on the international agenda.

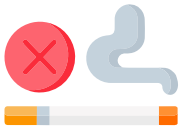
Lorenzo Huber, Action on Smoking and Health (ASH)

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PRIORITIES FOR EACH MAJOR RISK FACTOR

There are strategic lines for NCD risk factors that were mentioned by the civil society community. In some cases, such as tobacco control, this community is large and there are important networks that deal with different aspects of this issue. On the other hand, the com-

munity that seeks to reduce alcohol consumption is more recent and in formation. The following priorities are noted that respond to the Best Buys of the WHO⁸, applied to the Latin American region:



TOBACCO CONTROL

Reduce the consumption of tobacco and nicotine products, including traditional and emerging ones.

- Accelerate the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.
- Promote the ratification of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.
- Support the Conference of the Parties COP10 and the Meeting of the Parties MOP 3 (2023).
- Advance in all five regional, cross-cutting priorities, which are: transparency; fiscal policies; prohibition of advertising, promotion and sponsorship; primary health system that promotes smoking cessation; and advocacy in international spaces



SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS

Promote sustainable and healthy food systems, in collaboration with COLANSA and allies

- Expand the coalition to include communities involved in different aspects of food systems, including in particular those interested in the health of the planet and climate change.
- Promote Front of Package Nutrition Labeling in the region.
- Build capacity in civil society groups to advocate for healthy, sustainable, equitable and inclusive food systems.
- Develop and implement a communications program towards the media and the public to increase awareness of the problem and its solutions.
- Promote national Food Guidelines, based on the consumption of plants, reducing the consumption of unsustainable products.
- Promote the regulation of industrialized trans fats in most countries of the region.



“

It is essential to strengthen public policies that favor healthier choices, access to adequate food, clear and truthful information about products, particularly ultra-processed ones that are rich in harmful ingredients, among other actions.

Lorenza Longhi, IDEC

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On the other hand, it becomes critical to harmonize health and environmental objectives. This aspect is relevant both when reviewing and transforming current production and consumption systems, and when designing and implementing NCDs prevention and control policies. From this perspective, the promotion of family agriculture, fair trade for food producers and public purchases that prioritize local producers of healthy food, are priority policies that protect health and

environments, while promoting paths of sustainable production, distribution and consumption.

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We imagine a scenario in which the world advances in the transformation of food systems to make them sensitive to nutrition and healthy eating, while also being sustainable and respectful of the environment.

Ana María Cáceres, FAGRAN

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CONTROL OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Reduce the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

- Implement an annual campaign (November and December of each year) to raise awareness about the harm of alcohol and strategies that promote a better life with less consumption of alcoholic beverages.
- Encourage shadow reports to better understand the situation in some countries and promote political advocacy in line with the PAHO/WHO SAFER strategies.
- Support the regulation of advertising, promotion and sponsorship of alcoholic beverages, fiscal policies that reduce consumption, and policies that reduce access to these products.

“

An important priority is to apply restrictions on alcohol marketing. This needs to occur for both analogue and digital marketing and go beyond a focus on children. Digital marketing allows a level of targeting which identifies and targets vulnerable adults such as young adults in transition to becoming heavy drinkers and then dependent on alcohol and those wishing to reduce or stop their use of alcohol.

Sally Casswell, Global Alcohol Policy Alliance (GAPA)

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PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND FRESH AIR

Promote physical activity, active transportation, healthy school environments and reduce air pollution.

- Encourage school environments that promote healthy eating and physical activity following the standards established by PAHO/WHO.
- Promote healthy public spaces, improve urban planning and create bike lanes, adequate sidewalks and lighted pedestrian paths to encourage movement on foot and by bicycle, with safety, proper regulation, monitoring and maintenance, as well as promoting physical activity in transportation, recreation and work.
- Develop greater awareness among health leaders, environmentalists, urban planners, and others about the relationship between air pollution and NCDs.
- Support regional efforts such as Healthy Cities that favor healthy school environments.



“Without abandoning the actions currently being carried out in our continent to prevent obesity for the population in general, we could focus our efforts on the design and application of a comprehensive package of actions aimed at new generations, from gestation to adolescence. For this, the actions and programs that should be part of the package must be identified, with the best available evidence. For each country and for Latin America, we must agree to a social pact to commit all the central actors to protect and promote healthy eating and physical activity during this period of life. The cause of children’s health and nutrition is very powerful and possibly greater consensus can be achieved than in policies aimed at the general population.

Juan Rivera, National Institute of Public Health Mexico (INSP)

“En muchas políticas, salud se puede alinear con la salud del medio ambiente y trabajar en conjunto. El agua que consumimos, la limpieza de ríos, cultivos sostenibles, planificación urbana, transporte sustentable y amigable con el ambiente.

Grupo focal de jóvenes

“Tiene que haber políticas de salud en todas las políticas... todo lo que se modifique a favor del planeta va a impactar de forma positiva en nuestra salud.

Grupo focal de jóvenes



CONTROL OF HEALTH CONDITIONS SUCH AS HYPERTENSION AND DIABETES, WHICH CONTRIBUTE STRONGLY TO INCREASE NCDs

Promote an advocacy approach to reduce the prevalence of these conditions.

- Promote the prioritization of hypertension and diabetes on the political agenda, ensuring sustainable financing, and promoting access to effective and affordable medicines, especially for vulnerable populations.
- Expand community action through alliances and coalitions to increase the demand for access to treatment and medicines.

PRIORITIES TO STRENGTHEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE COALITION FOR AMERICAS’ HEALTH CLAS

- 1** Strengthen the community of people living with NCDs (PLWNCDs) in number of participants and in their capacity for advocacy and communication. Promote active participation.

“We have to raise our voices because we know our needs... as patients we need to be given a voice because our voice is powerful”. “Patient participation is important, but patients must be empowered, understand the issues, and contribute concrete proposals so that decision makers have to accept them”.

Focus group of people living with NCDs

- 2** Strengthen the new generation of young people, through the Youth Alliance (Alianza Juvenil), to expand their numbers and create awareness about health issues. Promote youth leadership.

“We are the voices of young people who demand that the rhetoric stop and the actions begin. This is what youth, who know they have rights and use them to guarantee for themselves a better future, looks like”. “This work must continue so that young people and children know they have rights and that they have the possibility of being heard and incorporated into decision-making. That they are not mere passive consumers and that their voice counts”.

Youth Focus Group



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...prevention (policies) should target the young population. They should generate higher levels of awareness and adherence. And generate the bases for changes in consumption... They are also agents of change. If we have young people who are agents of change, I think the results may be more important.

Roberto Bazzani, IDRC Canada, Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

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- 3 Continue building the alliance with politicians and authorities committed to health based on the Healthy America 2030 initiative, connecting with different agencies, and promoting their positive action towards effective policies.
- 4 Build greater capacity in civil society involved in NCDs, following best practices and scientific evidence, and attentive to civil society's needs. Motivate to action. Exchange successes. Solidarity in the face of challenges.

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The interinstitutional and intersectoral collaboration that exists in our region is key. It has contributed to success, and each actor has an important role to play: academia in our region is central; it gives credibility to the debate, it brings evidence that [as] we have seen, legislators and political decision makers both in the executive and in the legislature pay much attention to it. The media also pays much attention to it. In Latin America, scientific evidence has political weight.

Patricia Sosa, CTFK

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- 5 Create a regional communication space to strengthen communication for advocacy. Gather communicators of the region. Create a communication channel for the Americas to disseminate information of interest and relevance on health, healthy eating, on tobacco, and related topics. The objective of this space is to generate greater demand from the population towards the political decision makers of their countries, so that they carry out actions that improve public health, based on the content published in the communication channel.

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This space does not compete with the communication team of the organizations of each country, but instead seeks to generate a dynamic of mutual empowerment, giving greater dissemination to the content generated in the space, but also to the content generated by each country.

Jaime Delgado, Consumer Institute, Univ. de San Martín de Porres, Peru

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- 6 Consolidate CLAS as a principal entity positioned to support the prevention and control of NCDs in Latin America. Strengthen the process of membership, communications and regional advocacy.



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3. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines syndemics as “synergistically interacting epidemics” meaning they are what happens when two epidemics—higher-than-normal levels of an illness in a community—occur at the same time.
4. The details of the results are in the long version of the Regional Agenda.
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8. As of the publication of this document, Annex 3 of the WHO Global Action Plan for the prevention and control of NCDs 2013-2030, which describes and summarizes the cost-effective interventions called “best buys”, is under review.

