

National High-level Multi-Sectoral Advocacy Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases

Thimphu, Bhutan, 20 July 2011

A National High-Level Multi-sectoral Advocacy Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) was organized on 20th July, 2011. The advocacy meeting was attended by the Minister of Health, Minister for Education, the Hon'ble Speaker, National Assembly of Bhutan the Attorney-General, the Leader of the Opposition, Secretaries and high level officials from all the Ministries of the Royal Government of Bhutan, as well as a number of Members of Parliament, District level staff and medical personnel from the national referral hospital as well as regional and some district level hospitals in Bhutan. Representatives from all UN and other development agencies represented in the country, NGOs and media also attended.

The main objective of the meeting was to create awareness and to discuss specific cross-sectoral NCD prevention activities in the country in order to scale up the multi-sectoral response towards the prevention and control of NCDs.

The formal presentations on the global, regional and national situation and response to NCDs, were followed by a very interactive panel discussion led by the Director, Public Health, the National Technical Advisor for NCDs in Bhutan, and Dr S. Shastri from the TATA Memorial Hospital, (also a WHO Collaborating Centre), whom SDE supported to attend this meeting in Bhutan.

Several topics were discussed, with very active discussions particularly on (1) the very stringent Tobacco Control Act of Bhutan, (2) the recently introduced taxation on alcohol, (3) the effect of rapid urbanization, and (4) changes in lifestyle that were leading to rising trends in morbidity and mortality due to NCDs in the country.

The need to emphasize the five simple interventions that would prevent more than 80% of NCDs through health promotion messages, school health programmes and community involvement to ensure healthy lifestyles, including through womens' empowerment, was highlighted by many speakers in the audience.

The meeting ended with all participants signing a national commitment document on implementing the National Policy and Strategic Framework on Control and Prevention of NCDs, as an expression of commitment to control and prevent NCDs,