



South-East Asia Regional NCD Alliance



The World Heart Federation, supported by the NCD Alliance, South-East Asia Regional NCD Alliance, and the Healthy India Alliance (India NCD Alliance), would like to take this opportunity to applaud the WHO's relentless commitment to science, solutions, and solidarity in fighting this viral storm. Heads of States, policy makers, and non-state actors must remain united in their support for the crucial leading role played by the WHO and its Regional Committees.

The coronavirus pandemic has left no country unscathed and health systems face challenges on multiple fronts. Doctors and healthcare workers, our Members, are at the frontlines of an enormous struggle. This is why we, together with our Members in Southeast Asia and around the world, are united in our efforts to mitigate the consequences of this infection to save lives. We recognize the serious impact that COVID-19 is having on our patients with circulatory diseases, such as myocardial infarctions, and leading to thrombotic events such as pulmonary embolus and strokes. Patients with predisposing factors like hypertension and diabetes are at higher risk of dying from this virus.

Despite our best efforts, we will not be able to respond to the needs of each patient equally. Through the coronavirus pandemic, deep inequalities in access to healthcare have been revealed in practically every country and region.

In response to agenda item 9.5 in on this year's SEARO Regional Committee meeting agenda, we call on Member States to fund research and focused responses to the relationship between COVID-19 and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), especially circulatory conditions, in public, private, and civil society contexts. In particular, we urge you to consider the following specific recommendations:

1. Include explicit references to CVD and circulatory health conditions in COVID-19 national plans.
2. Provide coordinated disease and injury surveillance, research, training, monitoring and evaluation of services and interventions directed towards the people living with CVD
3. Conduct research and support interventions aimed at reducing the burden of CVD as well as other communicable and non-communicable diseases and injuries in support of better COVID-19 control and outcomes
4. Focus on strengthening public health systems, institutions and access to medicines, under the umbrella of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), as adopted in the 2019 UN Political Declaration on UHC.
5. Support civil society engagement to ensure that government action is shielded from interference by the tobacco, alcohol and food and beverage industries.

We need leadership in global health now more than ever. Only together can we overcome this pandemic.