

STATEMENT TEXT

Neurological disorders are the leading cause of disability adjusted life years worldwide, and the second leading cause of death.

In 2018, the United Nations expanded the NCD agenda to include mental health and neurological disorders.

Then, in 2022, the 10-year Intersectoral Global Action Plan on Epilepsy and other Neurological Disorders [IGAP] was adopted.

Epilepsy is one of the commonest neurological disorders worldwide.

More than 50 million people have epilepsy. It ranks fifth among all neurological causes for disability-adjusted life years, disproportionately affecting low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) – including many in South East Asia.

An estimated 125,000 deaths annually are epilepsy-related, with more than 80% of these deaths in LMIC. The risk of premature death for people with epilepsy is estimated to be three times that of the general population, but this risk may be up to seven times higher in some low-resource settings.

However, up to 70% of people with epilepsy could become seizure-free with antiseizure medicines, which can cost as little as US\$5 per year. Despite this evidence, there is a treatment gap which means that more than 50% of people with epilepsy in most LMIC do not receive the treatment they need.

Consideration should also be given to the potentially preventable causes of certain types of epilepsy, which account for roughly one fourth of all epilepsy cases. They include perinatal risk factors, traumatic brain injuries, stroke and central nervous system infections. These causes disproportionately affect people in LMIC.

Therefore, member states must address neurological disorders, including epilepsy, in their work on NCDs. Unless these diseases are prioritized as public health imperatives, the NCD targets can never be met. The International Bureau for Epilepsy calls for more alignment in work on NCDs and neurological disorders, which will ultimately yield cost-effective results; benefitting all stakeholders.

Thank you.