

Accelerating and sustaining public health gains of non-communicable disease interventions in health facilities, through engagement of religious leaders under the Protestant Churches of Uganda

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Introduction

Uganda faces a significant and rising NCD burden, with over 40% of all deaths and a 22% probability of premature death for adults between 30-70 years. NCDs are driven by risk factors such as alcohol use, unhealthy diets, tobacco use, and physical inactivity. The burden is growing, with hypertension affecting 24-27% of adults and requiring attention to ensure access to care and manage risk factors. Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau (UPMB) utilises religious leaders under the Protestant churches of Uganda as one of the essential structures to increase education and awareness of NCDs, associated risk factors and lifestyle modification, to improve rates of screening, diagnosis, treatment and control. Efforts aim at contributing to the MOH goal of reducing premature deaths due to NCDs by 25% by 2030.

Methods

Diocesan health team and performance review meetings, fact sheets, project launches, health worker trainings, and key stakeholder meetings

Results

Project 1: > 1.59 million screened for hypertension=129% Vs target; > 28.4% identified with elevated BP of 58% diagnosed with

hypertension; More screening among females Vs Males; HTN prevalence= 28% male Vs 30% Female; Urinalysis= 110,824 screened & 18,070 had proteinuria 2+ =16% prevalence; Creatinine= 37,935 screened & 3,882 had eGFR < 60= 10% prevalence; >136,469 patients actively retained in care (96,645 HTN, 29592 DM & 10,232 for CKD); Project 2: 377,910 reached with information through 6,895 sessions. Retained in care: HTN= 16,576; DM= 9,913. Prevalence: HTN= 28%; DM= 14%; Breast= 20%

Conclusion

To accelerate and sustain the gains of NCD interventions, tapping into the trusted influence of religious leaders enables them to educate congregations in places of worship and at community events, enhances referrals for health care, provides spiritual and emotional support, and advocates & influences policy. These endeavours empower communities with more vigilance towards adopting healthier lifestyles, seeking routine screenings for early detection and timely management of NCDs, thus averting complications.