
Management Letter to the Review of Norwegian Strategy on Non-Communicable Diseases

Norad Global Health Section contracted Hera to carry out a mid-term review of the NCD program. The **primary objective** of the review was to assess whether the overall composition of the portfolio and selection of implementing partners are relevant, coherent and targeted in line with the NCD development program. It would serve as guidance on how best to move the NCD development program forward in a changing environment with regards to political commitment and funds available and to assess the current composition and approach. It was also important to understand how the global program has been perceived, designed, and implemented at country level and whether the selection of partners and program approach could facilitate synergies to optimize the impact further down the road.

- The report covers most but not all of the questions addressed in the Terms of Reference (ToR), and identifies key areas for improvement as well as recommendations. Norad will follow these up as part of further program development.
- Norad appreciates that the NCD development program is assessed to have made sound choices and priorities within the resources available, with regards to partners and using a health system approach rather than a vertical disease approach.
- Norad agrees with the findings concerning the missed opportunity and limited involvements of and support to Norwegian civil society organizations. This is mainly a result of reduced overall budget allocations. However, information addressing the involvement of civil society, particularly related to the introduction of the Special Initiative and the Pathway of Care program has not been addressed in the Report.
- The consultants identify the lack of one comprehensive program document as a limitation to fully understand and assess the relevance of the composition of the program. Norad sees the value of such a document, but is of the opinion that since all program documents have been available including an overview of allocation of funds, input from all program managers as well as many of the key actors, this should have provided sufficient background for such an assessment. Norad notes that the consultant did not capture the reference to other NCD supported areas like tobacco control, SAFER program on alcohol, and health promotion, also reflected in the NCD portfolio budget allocations.
- The report does only to a limited extent cover lessons learnt and progress on areas under the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (assessment of investments and approach to NCD in emergencies, research through GLOBVAC, climate is limited).
- Norad will follow up the recommendation and assess how best to improve focus and adjust the program to the areas such as air pollution, food security, etc.
- -It would have been useful to have more advice on which new partners should be considered and their expected added value.
- Norad agrees with the recommendations for a revised Theory of Change (ToC) and reporting requirements. However, the recommended increased reporting requirement from global programs must be considered against the principles of “good donorship” and commonly agreed reporting formats amongst donors.
- Norad finds the Report to be weak on analyzing key questions related to lessons learnt from country level processes, concretizing the way ahead, as well as identifying key interventions that could be

replicated or scaled up. Norad's understanding is that this weakness is at least partly due to very few informants from governments and partners in countries.

- The reflections around WHO internal challenges, the fragmentation of NCD program and the limited visible leadership that WHO seems to offer on NCDs is noted. However, in our opinion the Report fails to acknowledge the significant effort and work of WHO including at the department directors' level to move the NCD and mental health agenda forward. This includes coordination at Director level with regional and national coordination/project management groups. This has in our experience contributed to coordinate technical assistance from the 3 levels of WHO as well as monitor progress and put in place mitigation measures. Norad has also valued the opportunity of quarterly "Deep Dives" organized by WHO to coordinate and share information on NCD progress at global, regional, and national level.
- Norad has taken note of the need to further strengthen the coordination among Norwegian partners and understands that the previous partners' meeting held has been welcomed and can be replicated to all priority countries.

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