

Topic: Encouraging healthy behaviour change to alleviate chronic illness in lower- and middle- income countries

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Abstract: Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) pose a growing challenge for lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs), which already suffer a disproportionate number of global cases of NCDs. Globally, NCDs cause 71% of all deaths, of which 77% (31.4 million) occur in LMICs. Simultaneously, LMICs are facing a disease burden transition. The shifts caused by growing economic prosperity such as urbanization, demographic transitions, and globalization are catalysts of NCD growth. Likewise, the growing NCD burden is likely to impede progress in poverty reduction in LMICs, where individuals face underprepared health systems and low financial protection from medical costs. In addition, the financial impact and disease burden of NCDs are both regressive, with the poor disproportionately affected.

While determinants of the rates of NCDs are complex, the major risk factors and immediate determinants are behavioural: tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol and unhealthy diets. Evidence suggests behaviour change interventions could offer scalable, low-cost solutions in low-capacity settings. However, there is insufficient evidence on the determinants of unhealthy habits in these settings and on the effectiveness of different interventions seeking to encourage healthy behaviours.

In this PhD project, we seek a candidate to contribute to this evidence base, using quantitative analysis methods to evaluate the determinants of healthy behaviours with relevance to chronic disease and analysing the effectiveness of possible interventions.