



Organization of
American States



Government of the Republic
of Trinidad and Tobago

TACKLING THE LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH IN THE AMERICAS: LAUNCH OF THE INTER-AMERICAN TASK FORCE ON NCDs

17 June 2015, Washington DC

Mr. Luis Alberto Moreno Mejía
President, Inter-American Development Bank

Hello everybody, Ambassador Parsan, acknowledging Carissa Etienne from PAHO, Ambassador Ramdin, Ladies and Gentlemen and friends.

It is with great pleasure for me to be here at the Launch of the Inter-American Task Force on NCDs. At these types of meetings we typically talk a lot about statistics, but as we all know there are people behind those numbers. And on this occasion I would like to particularly talk about one of those numbers in the case of girl by the name of Juliana.

Juliana lives in Barranquilla, in my country of Colombia. She loves to play softball, ride her bike and of course, dance. Last year she was diagnosed with diabetes. She has to check her blood sugar three times a day and give herself insulin shots twice a day. Juliana, who is only 8, will probably have to do this for the rest of her life. We need to do our best to ensure that children like Juliana, as well as future generations, don't face those hurdles.

We at the IDB believe that by working together we can make more progress towards these shared goals. That's why we joined forces with PAHO, OAS, the World Bank, and ECLAC to support the countries of our region in addressing the very important development challenges of NCDs. Through this partnership we will leverage our expertise, resources and certainly our regional precedence to deliver more and better cooperation on NCDs. And most importantly, in the areas of prevention and control.

Today you heard about the tremendous toll that these diseases have on so many people, especially during the productive years. And if we don't act now, the burden of NCDs in our own countries will only get worse.

The potential pay-off is compelling. For every dollar invested in fighting NCDs, one can expect three dollars in return. Everything that needs to be done we know what it is. But NCDs are largely preventable through public policies that can tackle those risk factors such as tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, and harmful use of alcohol. Prevention offers an important opportunity, and through it efforts, parenting practices and the need to focus on the young to

prevent obesity and overweight. We also need to focus on the health system, and cost effective treatments for those living with NCDs.

The global commitments to tackle NCDS are well established. We have agreed on 9 involuntary global targets that, if they are to be achieved, will prevent premature mortality. And today we heard about progress to meet these targets.

We also heard about the many challenges these countries face. These are precisely the challenges that this Task Force and wants to address. We need to make a stronger case for investing in the fights against NCDs. As such, we need to conclusively demonstrate the economic cost that these diseases mean to our countries. We also need to show potential return on investment of prevention and treatment. This is the essential information that any Finance Minister would like to see.

As such, we need to reduce risk factors by working across sectors. Here there is much uncertainty about the optimal combination and interaction of diff interventions. We should take advantage of diverse range of activities that we support from making our cities more walkable to improving public transportation options to greening energy sources, in order to better understand how they influence health outcomes. We also have to work effectively with civil society and the private sector.

Here we have seen successfully examples such as the one in Argentina with the *Menos Sal Mais Vida* campaign, which show how governments and businesses can work together in implementing effective measures. And in this case, to reduce sodium in staple foods.

We also have to help countries strengthen their health services. A recent study showed that in between 30-50% of the population of Colombia, Brazil, El Salvador and Mexico is up to date in their preventive care coverage, such as screening for diabetes or hypertension. And in fact in OECD countries, this figure is 80%. That is why, in recent years, about 8% of total IDB lending has been directed at strengthening health sector systems with a particular emphasis not only on primary care, but also on the network of services for the prevention and control of NCDS.

Finally, we have to make NCDS a political priority for everybody not only for health authorities, but also for practitioners.

So we may not meet Juliana, but most of us know someone who has fought and lost the fight against NCDs in the primer of their lives. So let's all do our part to tackle this challenge and improve the lives of millions in the Americas.

So please join me in welcoming the creation of this new Inter-American Task Force on NCDs and in starting a very productive partnership across the Inter-American system and certainly across the participating agencies.

Thank you very much, and good luck.