

Kenya Red Cross Society and Novartis join forces to combat Non Communicable Diseases

Friday, 19 August 2016, Nairobi: Today, the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) announces a partnership with Novartis, a global healthcare company, to improve access to prevention, treatment, and care of Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in Kenya.

NCDs, mainly cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes, represent a leading threat to human health and development. In Kenya, 27 per cent of deaths are due to NCDs.

According to the WHO's latest global status report on NCDs, NCDs are the world's biggest killers, causing an estimated 38 million deaths in 2012, with nearly three quarters of these deaths occurring in low and middle-income countries. In Kenya, NCDs account for close to 50 per cent of inpatient admissions and 40 per cent of hospital deaths, dominating healthcare budgets. By 2030, NCDs are expected to contribute to approximately 60 per cent of the total national mortality.

"Challenges facing NCD prevention and control at both the national and county government levels include investment in the health system over the years, which focused mainly on infectious diseases, resulting in great capacity to address infectious diseases as compared to the poor NCD infrastructure," said Dr. Abbas Gullet, Secretary General, Kenya Red Cross Society.

As part of the new partnership with Novartis, KRCS will train health workers, community volunteers and scale up screening at community and facility level for NCDs over the next three years. KRCS will also purchase the Novartis Access portfolio to improve access to NCD prevention, treatment, care and support.

KRCS will also focus on thousands of refugees living in the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps, as they are facing significant cases of diabetes, hypertension, cancer and asthma. In 2013, there were about 27,000 medical consultations for NCDs in Dadaab, representing 3 per cent of consultations, with 43 per cent being for cardiovascular disease.

The support will ensure affordable medicine to the Level Five hospital in the IFO2 camp managed by KRCS. Currently, KRCS supports and follows up 151 patients living with NCDs.

In line with the national NCD strategic plan launched by the Kenyan government in 2015 to prevent and control NCDs, the KRCS is stepping up efforts to fight NCDs. With support from its partners, KRCS is also implementing an NCD prevention and management programme in Nyeri and Nairobi counties focusing on awareness creation on risk factors, screening for early detection and linkage to treatment, care and support.

“Through this programme, we shall contribute to the reduction of preventable and avoidable burden of morbidity, mortality and disability due to NCDs, and strengthen health systems for prevention and control across all levels of the health sector,” said Ms. Sylvia Khamati, Head of Health and Social services at KRCS.

KRCS is partnering with Novartis, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health at both the national and county levels, to promote access to safe, effective and affordable medicine and other health care services, while developing the capacity of communities to address NCDs.

“We are delighted to be partnering with KRCS to implement capacity building activities to help improve the management of NCDs in Kenya,” said Anthony Gitau, Head, Novartis Access Kenya.

“This collaboration follows the Memorandum of Understanding we signed with the Kenyan government in October last year, and complements the work currently undertaken by the ministry of health to develop treatment guidelines against cardiovascular diseases and centralize training for healthcare professionals in the country.”

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