

SCALING UP CAPACITY FOR HEALTHY DIETS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Advocacy, Regulatory and Fiscal Measures, Data for Accountability and Action, and Social Mobilization



THE CHALLENGE AND THE OPPORTUNITY

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are one of the major development challenges of our time. In 2021 alone, NCDs claimed 43 million lives – 75% of all non-pandemic deaths worldwide. More than 18 million of these deaths were premature, affecting people aged 30-69, with [82% occurring in low- and middle-income countries](#). **Beyond the human toll, NCDs undermine economic productivity and impose enormous social costs.** Unhealthy diets and physical inactivity are two of the most significant – and preventable – risk factors for NCDs. [Healthy, safe, and sustainable diets](#)

are central to preventing all forms of malnutrition (i.e., undernutrition, overweight, and obesity), while simultaneously supporting wellbeing, resilient food systems, and environmental sustainability. According to the [World Bank](#) (2024), increased investments in reducing undernutrition and obesity are crucial to meeting nutrition financing needs and present **unparalleled potential to build human capital and drive economic growth and prosperity**. Strategically designed policy instruments are essential to influence consumer preferences by modifying social environments, food environments, and commercial determinants of health and dietary behaviors.

USING LAW, POLICY AND DATA TO PREVENT NCDs

Evidence-based cost-effective regulations and fiscal policies (see the [World Bank Investment Framework for Nutrition](#)) can be used by countries to promote healthy diets and physical activity at scale, reducing the prevalence and harm of NCDs across entire populations by **embedding initiatives in national legal frameworks to deliver sustained long-term reforms**. Data is a key element used in the regulatory and fiscal policy cycle - building the case for action, tailoring policy responses to country contexts, assessing compliance, and monitoring their real-world impact. World Health Organization (WHO) guidance calls for **urgent implementation of data-driven, multisectoral, population-wide measures** to address unhealthy diets and physical inactivity. These include the evidence-based and cost-effective [WHO 'Best Buys'](#) and other recommended measures for the prevention and control of NCDs', many of which are implemented through legal or fiscal policy measures.

These measures assist States to meet their goals to advance **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)**, **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)**, and **SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions)**. Regulations can also help **governments by supporting innovation and private sector growth**. The World Economic Forum highlights that: *‘effective regulation creates a shared language that allows companies and governments to elevate ambition into measurable advancements in health. As health and nutrition rise on policy and consumer*

agendas, the opportunity for industry lies in treating regulation not as a constraint, but as a catalyst for growth and innovation.’¹

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



GLOBAL RECAP: A TESTED PROGRAMME READY TO SCALE

WHO and the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), in coordination with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), are working to build countries' regulatory and fiscal capacity to promote healthy diets and physical activity. **On a global level, these lessons from country experience can be integrated into global technical guidance, and advance global advocacy.** By combining capacity building, data for accountability and action, advocacy and social mobilization, and research, the project addresses the health, economic and social costs of unhealthy diets and physical inactivity, advancing the prevention of NCDs and all forms of malnutrition. The project builds on, expands and scales-up the success of the **Global RECAP: Global Regulatory & Fiscal Capacity Building Programme**, started in 2019 and implemented by IDLO and WHO, in coordination with IDRC, with support from the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (2019-2025), the OPEC Fund for International Development (2019-2022), and the European Union (2024-2026). Over two programmatic cycles, Global RECAP has supported ten countries across Africa and Asia, including Bangladesh, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Mauritius, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, through capacity building, social mobilization, and research, to address unhealthy diets and physical inactivity using regulatory and fiscal approaches. Global RECAP implementing partners

coordinate their initiatives with each other, country stakeholders and other development partners to support countries, avoid policy fragmentation and optimize use of available resources.

GLOBAL RECAP COUNTRY PROGRESS TO DATE

- ✓ **Bangladesh:** FOPL symbols and draft implementing regulations developed
- ✓ **Ghana:** New policies on food labelling, marketing, and procurement finalized.
- ✓ **Indonesia:** FOPL regulations drafted/progressed and maximum thresholds for critical nutrients advanced.
- ✓ **Kenya:** Nutrient Profile Model (NPM) adopted, Front of package labelling (FOPL) symbols tested, Regulations to restrict marketing of unhealthy foods to children drafted.
- ✓ **Mauritius:** Sugar Sweetened Beverage Tax increased and expanded.
- ✓ **Nepal:** Regulations eliminating trans-fatty acids implemented.
- ✓ **Sri Lanka:** Food labelling regulations adopted.
- ✓ **Thailand:** Draft law restricting marketing of unhealthy foods to children close to final.
- ✓ **Uganda:** Food-based dietary guidelines finalized; draft NPM and marketing regulations developed.
- ✓ **United Republic of Tanzania:** National Physical Activity Action Plans adopted, NPM under development and FOPL roadmap established.



Findings from an independent programme review, which recommended consolidating gains through sustained investment:

*“Global RECAP has **advanced the reshaping of the landscape of NCD prevention** by showing that legal and fiscal measures, often perceived as politically and technically complex, can be effectively advanced through targeted support, national ownership and sustained multisectoral engagement. The Programme has proven effective in catalysing progress across participating countries, showing a clear trajectory from technical support to institutional ownership. Its model, combining legal expertise, targeted capacity building and multistakeholder mobilisation, has delivered relevant and responsive support aligned with national priorities.”*

¹ World Economic Forum, The Food Rules: How Regulation Is Transforming the Future of Food, Community Paper, December 2025

Noting these lessons, and building on the progress achieved under Global RECAP, the Programme will scale up the intervention to better integrate work on data collection, sharing and use, to offer support to a larger pool of countries, and to build a larger and better coordinated global coalition of actors.

GLOBAL RECAP SCALING UP CAPACITY FOR HEALTHY DIETS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Goal: To contribute to reducing the prevalence of diet-related diseases and premature mortality through improved individual, community, government and industry practices and behaviors relating to healthy diets and physical activity.



DURATION: JAN 2019 - OCT 2029

Implementing agencies: WHO, IDLO and IDRC



Funding: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), European Commission (EC)



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



European
Commission

GLOBAL RECAP



PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

Country-level support will be provided through two streams:

Pool
1

Integrated Support Across The Three Outcomes

Focus countries receive higher-level, dedicated support. Selection is based on results, capacities, needs, work underway, opportunities and government commitment to NCD prevention and promoting healthy diets. Up to 5 countries will also receive a deep-dive analysis of dietary patterns, policy environment and an impact monitoring framework to track progress.

Pool
2

On-Request Support

Countries are generally not pre-identified, but supported on request to build capacity, advance policy proposals and mobilize civil society through multi-country activities.

Regional Approaches

Global Approaches

Sustained support is intended to be offered to a selected group of countries already engaged in the programme. For more details, see the following [video](#), as well as [WHO's](#) and [IDLO's](#) websites.



SCALING UP THE INITIATIVE

Although progress is being made, more work is needed to create healthier food environments and enable more active living. Thanks to sustained contributions from SDC, approximately USD 7 million has been secured. Additional resources are sought to build on this foundation and further scale up the programme for the 2026-2029 programmatic cycle.