

# MYTH 1: CANCER IS JUST A HEALTH ISSUE

## TRUTH: CANCER IS NOT JUST A HEALTH ISSUE

It has wide-reaching social, economic, development, and human rights implications.



## CANCER AND DEVELOPMENT

Cancer constitutes a major challenge to development, undermining social and economic advances throughout the world.

### ? EVIDENCE

- Approximately 47% of cancer cases and 55% of cancer deaths occur in less developed regions of the world.
- The situation is predicted to get worse: by 2030, if current trends continue, cancer cases will increase by 81% in developing countries.
- Today, the impact of cancer on individuals, communities and populations threatens to prevent the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.
- Cancer is both a cause and an outcome of poverty. Cancer negatively impacts families' ability to earn an income, with high treatment costs pushing them further into poverty. At the same time, poverty, lack of access to education and healthcare increases a person's risk of getting cancer and dying from the disease.
- Cancer is threatening further improvements in women's health and gender equality. Just two cancers, cervical and breast, together account for over 750,000 deaths each year with the large majority of deaths occurring in developing countries.



### GLOBAL ADVOCACY MESSAGE

**Cancer prevention and control interventions must be included** in the new set of global development goals for the post-2015 agenda.

**Broadening the future global development goals to include proven, economically sound interventions that span the entire cancer control and care continuum can strengthen health systems, and increase capacity to respond to all health challenges** faced by individuals, families and communities.

## MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are eight international development goals that were officially established after the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000, following the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The 189 United Nations member states (nations) made a promise to free people from extreme poverty and multiple deprivations. This pledge turned into the eight Millennium Development Goals, which relate to extreme poverty and hunger, maternal health, child mortality, gender equality, environmental sustainability, universal primary education, HIV/AIDS, and a global partnership for development.

Visit: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview.html> for more information.

## CANCER AND HEALTH POLICY

An approach including all areas of government (not just health ministries) is necessary for the effective prevention and control of cancer.

### ? EVIDENCE

- Most premature deaths from cancer are preventable by making policy changes in sectors in and beyond health such as education, finance, development, transport, agriculture, etc.
- A 'whole-of-society' approach that includes civil society (e.g. NGOs), academia, private sector, people living with and affected by cancer, and others, is just as important to support cancer prevention and control.

## INVESTING IN CANCER

Investing in prevention and early detection of cancer is cheaper than dealing with the consequences.

### ? EVIDENCE

- The cost of cancer is estimated to reach USD 458 billion per year in 2030, yet cost effective strategies to address the common cancer risk factors (such as tobacco use, alcohol abuse, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity) would cost only USD 2 billion per year.
- Whilst non-communicable diseases (NCDs) account for 65% of annual deaths globally, less than 3% (USD 503 million out of USD 22 billion) of overall development assistance for health was allocated to the issue in 2007, compared to approximately 40% allocated to HIV/AIDS.



### GLOBAL ADVOCACY MESSAGE

**A whole-of-government approach that promotes multisectoral action and partnerships is essential to develop and implement policies and programmes that reduce exposure to risks, promote healthy behaviours, and implement effective and affordable interventions for early detection, treatment and care of cancer.**



### GLOBAL ADVOCACY MESSAGE

**Investment in proven, cost-effective cancer solutions is an imperative. Resource allocation should be according to country-specific situations and needs determined as part of a national cancer control plan.**

[worldcancerday.org](http://worldcancerday.org)

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