



4TH INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON
**Small Island
Developing States**
27-30 MAY, 2024
ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

SIDS4 Conference Side Event

**By the SIDS, for the SIDS:
Next decade of action on NCDs and mental health**

28 May 2024, 14:00 – 15:30, Room 2

Organized by: WHO/PAHO, Government of Antigua and Barbuda, Healthy Caribbean Coalition

Background on the event

People living in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face a disproportionate risk of dying prematurely from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and a high burden of mental health conditions. SIDS have emphasized the need for deliberate action on NCDs and mental health in the 2007 Port of Spain Declaration, 2014 SAMOA pathway, and recently the [2023 Bridgetown Declaration on NCDs and mental health](#). The call is clear: bold action is needed ‘by the SIDS, and for the SIDS’ to accelerate progress towards achieving SDG target 3.4 for a one-third reduction in premature mortality from NCDs and for the promotion of mental health and well-being, by 2030. SIDS Member States are sharing their specific commitments to implement cost-effective interventions (including [WHO ‘Best buys’](#)) to accelerate progress on NCDs, mental health, their risk factors and environmental action, in line with national priorities, through an online [SIDS commitment page](#). However, moving from commitment to action is a shared journey. The next decade of action on NCDs and mental health will require SIDS-specific tailored solutions, strategic partnerships and investment to ensure sustained impact.

Key Issues discussed (5-8 bullet points)

- **Raising Awareness and Political Commitment for the NCD and mental health agenda:** It is crucial to elevate the urgency of addressing NCDs and mental health to the highest political levels to ensure sustained commitment and action. Engaging national leaders, policymakers, and communities in advocacy efforts to prioritize health on the national

agenda is key. Utilizing personal stories, like those shared by Ms. Eunetta Bird, can help humanize the issues and galvanize public and political support.

- **Strengthening and Expanding Primary Health Care Services:** Investment in strengthening primary health care systems is critical to ensure the timely delivery of comprehensive services for NCDs and mental health. Initiatives like PAHO's '[Better Care for NCDs](#)' can be adapted in all SIDS countries to enhance service delivery.
- **Promoting and Implementing Cost-effective Interventions:** Implementing all WHO-recommended "Best buys" and other cost-effective interventions to prevent and control NCDs and improve mental health is required in SIDS. These interventions include measures such as reducing tobacco use, promoting healthy diets, increasing physical activity, reducing harmful use of alcohol and effectively managing conditions in primary health care, and addressing commercial, social and environmental determinants of health.
- **Enhancing Data Collection and Research:** Panelists discussed the need for developing and supporting robust data collection and research initiatives focused on NCDs and mental health within SIDS. This will provide the necessary evidence base to inform policy decisions, monitor progress, and tailor interventions to the specific needs and contexts of different islands. Collaboration with research institutions and leveraging technology for data management should be prioritized.
- **Fostering Strategic Partnerships and Increased Investment:** Building and strengthening partnerships with international organizations, private sector entities, and civil society can help mobilize resources and expertise. Partners should work together to secure increased and sustainable financing for NCD and mental health programs, recognizing the unique financial challenges faced by SIDS. Collaborative efforts for capacity building, technology transfer, and shared research initiatives are needed, leveraging tools such as the Commonwealth's youth focused guiding framework for physical inactivity and unhealthy diets.

Key recommendations for action (5-6 bullet points)

- **To Encourage All Member State to Support Implementation of the 2023 Bridgetown Declaration:** Call on all SIDS Member States to fully support and implement the provisions of the 2023 Bridgetown Declaration on NCDs and mental health which are further reflected in the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS).
- **To Request All SIDS to Submit Commitments:** Urge all SIDS Member States to actively submit their specific commitments to the online SIDS Commitment Page for NCDs and mental health to enable sharing of best practices and fostering accountability.
- **To Mobilize Donor Support for SIDS:** Appeal to international donors, development partners, and financial institutions to increase their support for SIDS in addressing NCDs and mental health challenges. Advocate for targeted funding, technical assistance, and capacity-building initiatives tailored to the unique needs of SIDS, noting the importance of sustained and predictable financing to ensure long-term health improvements.
- **To Grow and Empower the 'Voices of SIDS' Community:** Promote the expansion of the Voices of SIDS community, encouraging individuals to share their experiences and insights to help shape NCD and mental health policies in all countries.
- **To Engage SIDS Heads of State as Champions:** Encourage Heads of State to champion the NCD and mental health response nationally and internationally, ensuring strong representation in the Fourth UN high-level meeting on NCDs in 2025.