



## REACH NATIONAL MEDIA FELLOWSHIP for REPORTING ON NCDs 2018-19 THEME: CHRONIC RESPIRATORY DISEASES (CRDs)

### **BACKGROUND NOTE**

REACH is delighted to invite applications for the first edition of the REACH National Media Fellowship for Reporting on Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs, namely Chronic Respiratory Diseases, diabetes, cardiac diseases, cancer and mental health). Non-Communicable Chronic diseases account for 60% of deaths in India, exceeding mortality from infectious diseases.<sup>1</sup> NCDs are set to increase greatly the country's disease burden over the next two decades.

The REACH National Media Fellowship is intended to support the selected journalist to explore issues related to Non Communicable Diseases that impact the entire nation or the nation's policies. The Fellowship programme is in keeping with our mandate to engage the media for consistent, high-quality reporting on NCDs.

**Chronic Respiratory Diseases (CRDs) will be the theme of this first edition of the NCD Fellowship programme.** CRDs are long-standing diseases of the airways and other parts of the lung. Most of the CRDs prevent the free flow of air through the airways of the lungs and so are called Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases (COPDs). Occupational lung diseases and pulmonary hypertension are some of the common CRDs. Outdoor and indoor air pollution, tobacco smoke, occupational exposure to chemicals and dusts, and frequent lower respiratory infections during childhood are major risk factors for CRDs. Asthma is another common CRD with a prevalence of nearly 3% in the country in 2016.

### **COPDs/CRDs in India**

In India, COPDs and asthma are the second highest contributors to the total mortality burden at 10.9%, next only to heart disease. Between 1990 and 2016, the crude prevalence rates of these diseases increased by 29.2% for COPD and 8.6% for asthma. As the population of India ages, the burden of CRDs is rising.

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<sup>1</sup> Global Status Report on NCDs 2014 – WHO <http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ncd-status-report-2014/en/>

The country also shows marked differences in the prevalence of NCDs, including COPDs between the various states, pointing to the need for in depth state-specific media reportage. An India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative study showed that the age-standardised increase in the prevalence of ischaemic heart disease and diabetes, as well as their DALYs, has generally been highest in the less developed states of India, where the burden of another major NCDs, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), and communicable diseases is already high.

Among the major risk factors for ischaemic heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, the prevalence of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high fasting plasma glucose, and overweight and obesity has increased in all parts of India. The high exposure to ambient and household air pollution in the less developed northern states is contributing to the high burden of COPD in these states, in which the case-fatality rate of COPD is twice as high as in the more developed states

CRDs cannot be cured. The treatment of CRDs is a lifelong approach and consists of dilating the airways to help breathing and reduce breathlessness with the help of medications, as well as behavioural changes such as avoiding allergens such as dust and stopping tobacco smoking.

### What media reporting can achieve

Stories of high quality and impact in the mainstream (national and international) media can lead to changes in the way NCDs are understood and addressed.

The media has a critical role to play in:

- Explaining the basic facts about NCDs, particularly CRDs
- Informing readers about how widespread CRDs are at the global, national and local levels
- Explaining how CRDs are diagnosed and managed
- Explaining what the environmental, behavioral, genetic, nutrition-related risk factors of CRDs are
- Raising public awareness and advocate for policy changes in the ways CRDs are addressed in India and abroad
- Focusing on CRDs among women and children
- Focusing on the efforts of the National Program on NCDs that currently prioritizes cardiovascular diseases, stroke and cancer over CRDs
- Highlighting the needs of individual states to develop strong CRD prevention and management programmes

News media content can influence individuals to make evidence-based healthy lifestyle choices<sup>2</sup> and generate action around creating healthier environments and foods, cleaner air and water and safer transportation and this is a critical need for NCD prevention and control to progress in India. The REACH National Media Fellowship is designed to address these needs and contribute to an effective public discourse on NCDs in the Indian media.

For more information on how to apply, please go to <http://bit.do/media-fellowship>

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<sup>2</sup> Rigotti NA, Wakefield M. Real People, Real Stories: A New Mass Media Campaign That Could Help Smokers Quit. *Ann Intern Med.* 2012;157:907-909. doi: 10.7326/0003-4819-156-1-201201010-00541