

Key issues

Government action and accountability



Proactive and effective actions on national health planning are possible and feasible in every country, and when governments step up efforts to reduce and prevent cancer, they place their nations in a stronger position to advance socially and economically.

Cancer undermines a nation's development

Cancer is a major barrier to sustainable development, undermining social and economic advances throughout the world, particularly in low -to-middle income countries.

High costs of cancer treatments (often paid out-of-pocket) demands on families to provide care and support, as well as disability and death from increasing cancer cases is threatening improvements in economic and social and human development.

As citizens and advocates, we can use our voices to press our governments to take decisive action around cancer, including committing adequate resources and placing cancer at the heart of health and development plans.

How governments are taking action

- **National cancer control plans (NCCPs):** Governments are developing NCCPs that identifies national priorities and how countries will work with civil society organisations, academics, UN agencies, international donors and appropriate private sector organisations to achieve these.
- **Tobacco control:** Governments can take leadership on reducing consumption of tobacco through taxes, smoke-free public spaces, regulations on plain packaging, advertising and legal age limits for tobacco use.
- **Tackling obesity:** Governments can encourage healthier habits through taxing sugary beverages, reducing marketing of unhealthy foods to children, and promoting easy-to-understand nutrition labels on packaged foods¹.
- **Vaccination:** Governments are including two key anti-cancer vaccines (against Hepatitis B and Human Papillomavirus) in national schedules, with assistance from organisations like Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance where needed.

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- **Early detection:** Governments are working with different partners to improve awareness of the different signs and symptoms of common cancers nationally, and are investing in screening and diagnosis programmes to catch cancers early.
- **Improving access to essential medicines and technologies:** Governments are using WHO guidance to develop essential medicines and technology lists to treat priority national diseases, and then are using these to improve the purchasing price and availability of these treatments nationally – including for palliative care.

“Health is a fundamental human right, so guaranteeing universal access to health services is one of our duties as the state.”

President Enrique Peña Nieto,
President of Mexico

What can we do?

- **Learn more:** find out what your government is doing on cancer. Do you have a national cancer plan, or a national Noncommunicable diseases plan? Are there any policies on vaccination or tobacco control? Does your country do screening and early detection, is this linked to treatment or palliative care?
- **Raise your voice:** share World Cancer Day materials to help highlight key actions that your country could take to improve cancer nationally, help to dispel myths and misconceptions that nothing can be done on cancer and urge your government to commit to implementing the cancer resolution
- **Empower yourself and your communities:** learn more about what cancer control efforts are taking place nationally and help to celebrate these on World Cancer Day, share information on cancer control and opportunities to raise voices for stronger cancer control

1. Bloomberg Philanthropies (2017) What Governments can do to address cancer. Accessed 06.07.2018: <https://www.bloomberg.org/blog/governments-can-address-cancer/>