

Talking points for Civil Society Hearing on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development agenda

Sandra Mullin.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak today. I want to tell you a story about a very brave young woman.

Her name is Sunita Tomar and she was a bride at 14 with an enduring partnership. So when Sunita hit her mid 20s she felt life had been good to her. She was “married to a good man, and had two lovely children.”

Tobacco changed all that.

She used it innocently in the form of mishri, marketed as a breath freshener.

Sunita’s oral cancer diagnosis came at age 27. A growing tumor had to be removed, along with part of her mouth.

Sunita knew her life was at risk, and feared for the future of her sons, ages 12 and 13. Even successful surgery would leave her face permanently disfigured and in her small, impoverished Madhya Pradesh town, she was likely to be stigmatized too.

Sunita died on April the first, less than two months ago.

These are the faces behind the SDGs and targets. The people who depend on our ability to create a healthy future for all, one free from the preventable suffering caused by non-communicable diseases, and other conditions that are largely avoidable if we do our jobs correctly in the next 15 years.

Delivering on the SDGs requires deliberate and thorough attention to health at every step of the way, and within every aspect of the post-2015 development agenda. The NCD Alliance therefore calls on Member States to ensure strong references to health, including NCDs and mental health and wellbeing in all elements of the post-2015 agenda. Health has been

recognized as a prerequisite, outcome, and indicator of sustainable human development. We are looking forward to a final agenda that reflects this.

Fulfilling SDG 3 on *Ensuring healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages* offers a chance for the inclusive, holistic approach to health that we need- an agenda that goes beyond the MDG priorities and is inclusive of priority issues including the growing global burden of non-communicable diseases – responsible for two-thirds of all global deaths and half of all global disability- road traffic injuries and accidents, tobacco control, and universal health coverage. We also need approaches that reach all population groups, across the lifespan.

But if we are to deliver on SDG 3, action cannot be confined only to the health sector. Action on the social determinants of health and environmental factors must be part of the work.

Delivering on SDG 3 will also require strong, specific commitments at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development that maximise the human and financial resources allocated to health, specifically as countries work to strengthen their health systems and enable them to respond to emergencies as well as provide care for chronic conditions.

All countries must commit to strengthening national tobacco control and NCD policies, in addition to reorienting health systems to address prevention of NCDs, most notably through tobacco control. It is especially critical that nations step up efforts to increase tobacco taxes, which is the most direct and effective strategy to reduce tobacco use and can provide sustainable domestic funding for tobacco control.

We also call on Member States to define a clear role for civil society in all levels of post-2015 follow-up and review mechanisms, and ensure comprehensive and cohesive reporting with existing health reporting mechanisms, including the World Health Assembly.

Finally, as member States consider national implementation strategies for the SDGs, we urge prioritizing NCD prevention and control, as part of strong cross-health efforts, within national development planning and programmes, starting in 2016.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen- Please be assured that the NCD Alliance stands ready to do our part and facilitate the work of others to secure a healthy future for all, a future where women like Sunit have a fair and equal chance to thrive. Thank you.