

Chronic diseases and their impact on the economy

By 2030, the proportion of total global deaths due to chronic lifestyle diseases - such as diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity - is expected to increase to 70% and the global burden of disease to 56%.



Image source: Getty/Gallo

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Africa will have the world's largest increase in NCD deaths over the next decade.

These diseases not only place a considerable economic burden on health services, also driving up the cost of life-saving medication, but negatively impact the country's economic growth prospects.

Speaking at a media round table held to highlight the need for urgent intervention in the growing epidemic, Inmed Partnerships for Children founder and CEO, Dr Linda Pfeiffer highlighted that widespread chronic illness translates into decreased labour outputs, lower returns on human capital investments and increased health care costs.

"Strong intervention methods are needed to address these risks at a young age, thus ensuring that the next generation of workers and leaders are stronger, healthier and better able to lead the country to growth," she added.

"We have introduced several innovative adaptive agricultural programmes – including aquaponics – to not only ensure access to fresh food for communities but to educate children, their teachers and their parents on how to manage this on a

sustainable basis going forward."

Unfortunately, in South Africa and in the rest of the world, many schools within low-resource communities are faced with many challenges when trying to promote healthy lifestyles for their learners. "These include an absence of policies relating to healthy lifestyles, the regulation and availability of inexpensive, yet unhealthy food and snack foods from school tuck shops or street vendors outside school premises, as well as limited access to fresh produce," said Unathi Sihlahla, Inmed South Africa programme director.

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