



CASE STUDY

# STRENGTHENING THE PHILIPPINES' NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES RESPONSE THROUGH RESIST-NCD

December 2025

RESist-NCD

## SUMMARY

RESist-NCD has successfully catalysed national level dialogue on non-communicable diseases (NCD) in the Philippines, bringing together the Department of Health, World Health Organization, professional organisations, advocacy groups and a wide network of stakeholders to align priorities and strengthen primary health care-based NCD services. Through high-level engagements, joint workshops, and coordinated planning, the program has initiated renewed momentum and collaboration toward enhancing NCD programming and advancing an integrated, people-centred approach to diabetes and hypertension care.

## OVERVIEW

NCDs are a leading health challenge in the Philippines, accounting for 8 of the top 10 causes of death in 2024. National data show that NCDs are responsible for 68% of all deaths, and Filipinos face a 29% risk of premature mortality from conditions such as hypertension and type 2 diabetes. These diseases place a heavy social and economic burden on communities, particularly those already experiencing poverty and limited access to care. The Philippine government has expressed strong commitment to strengthening its response, yet major gaps remain in implementing national NCD programs, particularly at the primary health care level. Although the country adapted the World Health Organization (WHO) Package of Essential NCD Interventions (PEN) to the Philippines context – nationally known as PhilPEN, progress has been limited due to system fragmentation, supply and workforce constraints, and uneven implementation across Local Government Units.

## CATALYSING DIALOGUE

The Resilient and People-Centred Health Systems for Non-Communicable Disease Prevention and Control program (RESist-NCD) (2024–2028), funded by the Australian Government’s Partnerships for a Healthy Region Initiative, is helping address these challenges by strengthening equitable diabetes and hypertension services within primary health care. Implemented by The George Institute, the Clinton Health Access Initiative, and University of New South Wales Sydney, and our in-country implementing partners, the Philippine Society for Public Health Physicians, the program supports governments to:



**Adapt and implement evidence-based models for hypertension and diabetes control**



**Strengthen critical health system components**



**Build workforce capacity**



**Improve data use and digital systems**



**Integrate gender, disability, and social inclusion considerations**

In a context where NCD programs have long been fragmented and decentralised, RESist-NCD has played a catalytic role in re-energising dialogue among key stakeholders—including the Department of Health, WHO, academic institutions, professional societies, and development partners—to promote a more coordinated and equitable national response.

## EARLY MOMENTUM

In early 2025, high-level meetings initiated by RESist-NCD brought together national and local leaders to align priorities, share ongoing NCD initiatives, and explore how RESist-NCD can support the government’s efforts to enhance and scale up PhilPEN. A one-day workshop convened during the visit provided a first-of-its-kind forum for stakeholders to share ongoing NCD initiatives, identify policy implementation gaps, exchange learnings, and consider how RESist-NCD could complement and support efforts to expand PhilPEN nationwide and align activities of various stakeholders and development partners. These discussions reaffirmed the government’s commitment to NCD control and highlighted RESist-NCD’s potential to support scalable, primary health care-focused solutions.

*Further meetings with the Department of Health and other stakeholders explored priorities related to the overarching objectives of RESist-NCD:*

- **Updating and operationalising PhilPEN;**
- **Assessing and strengthening NCD service delivery at the primary health care level;**
- **Building capacity and training the health workforce;**
- **Enhancing digital systems and data use;**
- **Integrating climate, equity and gender perspectives; and**
- **Ensuring long-term sustainability of NCD interventions.**

## LOOKING AHEAD

The RESist-NCD Philippines Launch and Stakeholder Meeting in September 2025 marked a significant milestone, formally introducing the program to the broader NCD community and strengthening collaboration among government agencies, WHO, civil society, academic partners, and development organisations. This momentum is helping advance a more integrated, people-centred approach to NCD prevention and management in the Philippines. Moving forward, RESist-NCD will work closely with the government to ensure full alignment with national initiatives, including the revised PhilPEN, the Multisectoral Action Plan on NCDs 2030, and the Healthy Hearts campaign.

The next phase of collaboration will focus on delivering an evidence-based intervention to strengthen NCD screening, treatment, and workforce capacity in the major implementation sites of Malabon and Laguna. RESist-NCD will continue supporting a more coordinated national approach - one that leverages shared expertise, resources, and innovations - through ongoing dialogue, regular steering committee meetings, and stakeholder meetings that promote communication and collaboration.

## WHAT HAS CHANGED?

The RESist-NCD program has generated early but meaningful progress in supporting the Philippines' response to NCDs. By convening high-level meetings with the Department of Health, WHO, Local Government Units, professional societies, bilateral partners, and academic institutions, the program has supported the reestablishment of national coordination. This shift is significant because fragmentation has been one of the main barriers to scaling NCD interventions such as the PhilPEN.

RESist-NCD has echoed support for renewed government commitment to updating and operationalising PhilPEN. Through targeted discussions with Department of Health leadership, the program will support the revised PhilPEN and align implementation with RESist-NCD activities at the primary health care level. This includes addressing key bottlenecks related to supply chain management, workforce training, digital data systems, and climate and gender-related considerations. Because PhilPEN has not been evaluated or scaled since its pilot in 2012, this renewed focus represents a critical opportunity to improve early detection and treatment for hypertension and diabetes across primary care settings.

Importantly, RESist-NCD has introduced structured approaches to integrate gender equality, disability inclusion, social equity, and climate risk into NCD planning—areas historically under-emphasised in the country's NCD programming.

The RESist-NCD Philippines launch in September 2025 further strengthened visibility, political support, and stakeholder alignment, helping to showcase the program alongside national priorities such as the Multisectoral Action Plan on NCDs 2030 and the Healthy Hearts campaign. Looking ahead, these collective achievements lay the foundation for more equitable and consistent NCD care, improved early detection and management of diabetes and hypertension, and more resilient primary health care systems that better serve vulnerable populations.



## HOW HAS THE PROGRAM CONTRIBUTED TO THE CHANGE?

RESist-NCD helped drive these changes by convening national and local stakeholders, including the Department of Health, WHO, Local Government Units, and civil society, to re-establish coordinated dialogue on NCD priorities and PhilPEN implementation. The project strengthened key health system functions through discussions on supply chains, workforce capacity, data systems, and long-term sustainability, while also introducing structured approaches to gender equality, disability inclusion, and climate health integration. These combined efforts have created renewed momentum and alignment toward a more integrated, equitable NCD response in the Philippines.



## CONCLUSION

With NCDs posing a growing threat to health and development, the Philippines is taking decisive steps to strengthen its response. RESist-NCD is supporting this progress by catalysing dialogue, fostering collaboration, improving coordination, supporting evidence-based models of care, and building stronger primary health care systems. The program offers a timely and strategic opportunity to accelerate progress toward improved NCD outcomes and stronger primary health care for all Filipinos.



### RESIST-NCD PHILIPPINES PARTNERS

- UNSW Sydney
- Philippine Society of Public Health Physicians
- Philippine Department of Health

RESist-NCD is supported by the Australian Government through the Partnerships for a Healthy Region initiative

