Using World Cancer Day as an Advocacy Opportunity

World Cancer Day Session

Chair: Jeff Dunn, CEO, Cancer Council Queensland
Wondu Bekele Woldemariam,
Mathiwos Wondu-YeEthiopia Cancer Society (MWECS) (Ethiopia)

Session code: UICC.0.7
Introduction to MWECS

• Established in 2004

• Active in NCD and cancer related activities with focus on: Paediatric and Women cancers, Tobacco Control, Awareness creation to prevention, Care and support to cancer patients and their families. Resource and community mobilization.

MWECS is a member of:

National
• Christian Relief & Development Association (CRDA)
• Consortium of Ethiopian NCD-Association (CENCDA)
• Ethiopian Civil Society Health Forum/ECSHF

International
• Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)
• International Confederation of Childhood Cancer Parent Organizations (ICCCPO)
• Network for Cancer Treatment and Research (INCTR)
Using World Cancer Day as an Advocacy Opportunity – commemoration of the Day

Main Activity
Panel discussion at the Prime Minister’s Office on prevention and control of cancer in Ethiopia.

Opportunities Used
In addition to the panel discussion, a new Ethiopian Cancer Control Committee was established with more than 17 members of relevant organizations, and chaired by The First Lady of Ethiopia.
World Cancer Day Commemoration

Why did we choose World Cancer Day to convey our message?

Key Challenges in Ethiopia

• Lack of awareness about cancer issues

• Stigma and misconceptions about cancer; including that all cancers are incurable.

• There is little work done, to date, to promote awareness that most cancers can be prevented, can be cured if diagnosed early, and quality of life of patients can be improved even if the disease is diagnosed at an advanced stage.

• World Cancer Day is marked on February 4 with the aim to save millions of preventable deaths each year by raising awareness and education about cancer, and pressing governments and individuals across the world to take action against the disease.

• WCD presents a great opportunity to create awareness in Ethiopia, particularly around prevention.
World Cancer Day Commemoration

Why did we choose World Cancer Day to convey your message?

Some of the participants of the historical event, World Cancer Day 2014, posed for photo. In the middle Her Excellency Mrs. Roman Tesfaye, the First Lady of Ethiopia & Minister of Health actively participating in the first cancer advocacy briefing given to members of parliament on May 13, 2014. Far right members of parliament, far left House speaker and Wondu far right.
World Cancer Day Commemoration

How we measure the success/impact of our initiative?

• MWEC has commemorated WCD for the past 6 years (low profile)

• WCD 2014 marks a turning point in fight against cancer in Ethiopia:
  • Involvement of the wife of Ethiopian Prime Minister Her Excellency Mrs. Roman Tesfaye
  • Gathering of major stakeholders in the country working to prevent and control cancer at the Prime Minister’s Office on February 3, 2014.
  • Establishment of the Ethiopian Cancer Control Committee country to help stop the spread of cancer and gauge the country’s status in this regard.
World Cancer Day Commemoration

What is the value of engaging with World Cancer Day?

• In most cases, it is one day event, but it enables all concerned to have cancer as a common agenda and discuss how to join forces and challenge the growing burden of cancer in the world in general and Ethiopia in particular.

• Attracts nation-wide attention and response to the growing cancer burden and efforts being made to challenge it.

• WCD creates conducive atmosphere to form collaboration and partnership among organizations working on cancer.

• Opportunity to put pressure on government particularly on policy makers to respond to demand created by awareness creation on prevention.
World Cancer Day Commemoration

What kind of impact can an organisation have on World Cancer Day?

• Creation of conducive socio-political environments for preventing and controlling NCDs in general and cancer in particular.

• Policy change at the national level (e.g. in the Ethiopian case, through MWEC involvement in the National Technical Working Group /NTWG/on NCDs and National Cancer Control Committees etc as well as taskforces.

• Harness the efforts being made by government, other stakeholders and partners (e.g. First Lady of Ethiopia)
What advice would you give to organizations willing to mark WCD?

Establishing coalitions and consortiums are a key strategy for the success of any advocacy endeavor. MWEC has invested a lot of energy and resources in the creation of:

• National Technical Working Group on NCDs under the Federal Ministry of Health/FMoH/

• Consortium of Ethiopian NCD Associations/CENCDA/NGOs working on NCDs. The organization has continued supporting the consortium besides housing it at our office. MWECS general manager is founding member and Focal Person in the consortium.

• The establishment of Ethiopian Civil Society Health Forum/ECSHF/platform for more than 60 (members are now 130) civil society organizations working on health related assignments in Ethiopia

• Efficient prevention and control of NCDs in general and cancer in particular requires multi-sectoral collaboration of public-private and civil society organizations and a coordinated nationwide effort.
Thank you!