Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) accounted for nearly 65% of all deaths in the country and has surpassed several communicable diseases, maternal and child related deaths. India faces a rising burden of Non-communicable Diseases across all sections of society along with their escalating risk factors. The existing health systems are overburdened and overstretched to meet this huge demand. High out of pocket expenditure and financial burden preclude optimal health care for the people. The Government of India and the Ministry of Health are responding through a slew of policy measures to enable adequate ways to tackle NCDs: National Program for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDGS), National Health Policy 2017, National Tobacco control program, National NCD monitoring framework and NCD action plan 2025, adaptation of Sustainable Development Goals 2030, National NCD multi-sectoral action plan 2030, Ayushman Bharat and Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojna, the Health and Wellness Centers and many more. Screening for hypertension, diabetes and cancers of breast, cervix and oral cavity, tertiary cancer care scheme/state cancer institute scheme have been rolled out and are gaining momentum. The Department of Health Research and the Indian Council of Medical Research have responded with several research activities to address the rising burden of NCDs in the country.

Recognizing the need to measure all these efforts across the country and be able to assess progress being made towards achieving targets on NCDs, the Ministry of Health supported the ICMR National Center for Disease Informatics and Research, Bengaluru as the nodal agency for undertaking the National NCD Monitoring Survey (NNMS) during 2017-2018. This comprehensive survey covers various aspects of the National NCD Action Plan and NCD Monitoring Framework. The NNMS – 2017-18 uniquely involved a large number of diverse stakeholders, covered topics ranging from NCD risk factors, diseases, health systems response, covered adults (18-69 years) and adolescents (15-17 years) in urban and rural areas of the country based on a robust national sampling framework. Standard global tools were adapted to meet our requirements. It has developed protocols and capacities for undertaking similar surveys at state levels also. The results will be useful from policy and program perspectives, especially to augur multi-sectoral actions.

The Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt of India would continue its support for strengthening surveillance of NCDs and their risk factors through various mechanisms in order to inform policy and program development and their implementation.

(Balram Bhargava)