14 April 2013, Khartoum – To mark World Health Day on 7 April, the World Health Organization (WHO) is calling for intensified efforts to prevent and control hypertension, also known as high blood pressure. Worldwide, high blood pressure is estimated to affect more than one in three adults aged 25 and over, or about one billion people.

Hypertension is one of the most important contributors to heart disease and stroke – which together make up the world's number one cause of premature death and disability.

Researchers estimate that high blood pressure contributes to nearly 9.4 million deaths from cardiovascular disease each year. It also increases the risk of conditions such as kidney failure and blindness. Overall, high-income countries have a lower prevalence of hypertension (35% of adults) than low -and -middle income groups (40% of adults).

Detecting high blood pressure is the first step in preventing and controlling it. On this year's World Health Day, WHO is calling on all adults around the world to get their blood pressure measured. When people know their blood pressure level, they can take steps to control it.

"In Sudan hypertension affects 1 in 4 people suffering from noncommunicable diseases such as heart disease and stroke, cancers, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases," says Dr Anshu Banerjee, WHO Representative in Sudan,

In 2012, at the WHO World Health Assembly, governments decided to adopt a global target of a 25% reduction in premature death from noncommunicable diseases by 2025 as a response to the United Nations Political Declaration on Noncommunicable Diseases, which was adopted by Heads of State and Government in September 2011.

The Declaration commits countries to make greater efforts to promote public awareness campaigns to further the prevention and control of noncommunicable. WHO's campaign to encourage people to measure their blood pressure is part of this.

"WHO in Sudan has supported the development of the national strategy to prevent and control noncommunicable diseases," says Dr Banerjee, "and we are now in the process of setting up a Multisectoral Technical Committee that will implement the strategy."

A recent study shows that in Khartoum 86% of people do not regularly exercise and that their general diet is low in intake of vegetables and fruits. People can cut the risks of high blood pressure by:

- consuming less salt (not more than 5 gm per day, which is less than one teaspoon)

- eating a balanced diet
- engaging in regular physical activity (a minimum of 30 minutes brisk walking 5 days in a week)
- avoiding tobacco use in any form (cigarettes, pipes, shisha, tumbak, snuff)
- avoiding harmful use of alcohol.

World Health Day is celebrated on 7 April every year to mark the anniversary of the founding of WHO in 1948. Each year, a theme is selected to highlight a priority area of public health concern in the world.

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