Meeting the SDG target: Challenges of estimation of causes of death due to NCDs in India

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The 2030 agenda for sustainable development recognizes Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) as a major challenge for sustainable development. More than half of all countries are predicted to fail to reach the UN target to reduce premature deaths from cancers, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes by 2030. The challenge is seen at many levels: Detecting, treating and ensuring follow up and keeping disease status under control. In addition, one often neglected aspect is the ascertainment of NCD as a cause of death. This is a crucial element to determine whether a country has achieved SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) target 3.4. In developing countries like India, most deaths take place at home without medical attention and a proper certification of the cause of death and are often not available. In India, the system of death verification is done through the sample registration system whereby, a verbal autopsy is conducted in a sample of deaths by trained persons after which a trained physician assigns the cause of death. This system has its advantages and disadvantages. Verbal autopsy takes place approximately six months after death; therefore, recall of events leading to death is likely to be compromised. Secondly, NCDs like diabetes, hypertension are usually not the immediate cause of death. They are the underlying conditions which lead to complications and death. However, the advantage of the system is that the Sample Registration System (SRS) is a continuous activity which is done by trained persons and carried out in a representative sample of households, thereby providing a trend of deaths on the community. This system also ensures that all deaths even the ones that take place at home without medical attention are also captured by the system.

Biography
Baridalyne Nongkynrih is currently working as a Faculty in Community Medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences New Delhi, India. Her area of interest is non-communicable diseases and health systems. She has worked in the area of primary health care in NCDs with the WHO and Ministry of Health Government of India. She is also involved in the sample registration system of India and verbal autopsy based cause of death assignment under the office of the Registrar General of India where we are developing a system for cause of death estimation for the country.