

## Executive summary



The Regional Director pledges to get in the Blue Circle, symbolizing the fight against diabetes, during World Health Day 2016 at the Regional Office in Manila.

WHO and Member States in the Western Pacific Region worked collaboratively over the past year to further a shared objective – the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health.

Health outcomes have continued to improve, with significant progress achieved in the fight against both communicable and noncommunicable diseases. Health systems have been strengthened, and a growing number of Member States

have taken important steps towards universal health coverage (UHC).

Results at the country level are the yardstick by which the Organization measures its effectiveness. The Regional Office for the Western Pacific, the Division of Pacific Technical Support and WHO country offices in 15 Member States worked diligently to support the health goals of the countries and areas they serve.

Morbidity and mortality from communicable diseases have continued to decline. There has been growing success in addressing risk factors for noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), which are responsible for nearly 80% of preventable deaths in the Region. And Member States are working together more closely than ever to face the threats posed by disasters, emergencies and emerging infectious diseases.

Despite the progress, many challenges remain in further reducing NCDs, sustaining progress against communicable diseases, strengthening health systems and improving our response to public health emergencies. This brief summary of achievements and challenges serves as an introduction to the work of WHO in the Western Pacific Region for the year that ended on 30 June 2016.

### Communicable Diseases

Significant achievements have been made in the fight against communicable diseases, but it is imperative that Member States, with WHO support, sustain and build upon these successes.

Member States have made progress on the eight immunization goals included in the *Regional Framework for Implementation of the Global Vaccine Action Plan in the Western Pacific*. The Region has maintained its polio-free status, and 13 countries and areas have now reached

the target of less than 1% chronic hepatitis B infection in 5-year-old children.

Nine out of 10 endemic countries achieved the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target for malaria. WHO has worked intensively with the countries in the Greater Mekong Subregion to accelerate control and eliminate the threat of artemisinin-resistant *falciparum* malaria.

The past year also ushered in a new era for tuberculosis control, with innovative approaches and tools including new diagnostics and drugs. Throughout the Region, viral hepatitis has been a major focus of work as countries have moved beyond immunization to prevent new in-

fections and address the needs of people living with hepatitis.

Significant progress has been achieved in the battle against neglected tropical diseases, including lymphatic filariasis and trachoma. Continued support also was provided to strengthen vector-control response in countries affected by arboviral outbreaks, such as dengue and Zika virus.

Member States can build on this progress with the various tools available to combat these health challenges. But as donors reduce support to the Region, a key challenge for Member States will be to organize and fund effective and sustainable efforts to fight these diseases.

## Health Security and Emergencies

Outbreaks and emergencies pose serious threats to health security in the Region, which is a hotspot for emerging infectious diseases. Past events have taught us that we must prepare for the unexpected by investing in preparedness, even when no outbreak or threat seems imminent.

On the global level, the largest-ever Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa was the catalyst for the reform of WHO's work in health emergency management. A new WHO Health Emergencies Programme, approved by the World Health Assembly in May 2016, created a new structure, with one workforce, one budget, and one set of emergency management processes and performance metrics. The Western Pacific Region is committed to aligning the regional structure and priorities with the Organization-wide emergency reform.

WHO and Member States have employed a new way of managing responses to outbreaks such as Zika virus and disasters such as Cyclone Winston in Fiji by synchronizing response structures at all levels of the Organization, leading to streamlined communication, information flow and coordinated responses.

At the regional level, Member States and WHO have made great strides in recent years in building country capacities to prepare for and respond to health security threats. Nineteen out of 27 States Parties in the Region have achieved core capacities mandated under the Interna-



The Regional Director meets President Hilda Heine of the Marshall Islands on a tour of Member States to coordinate WHO support in the ongoing fight against communicable diseases.

tional Health Regulations, known as IHR (2005). WHO and Member States have updated the *Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases* (APSED) for consideration by the sixty-seventh session of the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific. Learning from the past, the Division of Health Security and Emergencies is committed to working with Member States to mitigate, prepare for and respond to emergencies and other health security threats.

## NCD and Health through the Life-Course

The Division of NCD and Health through the Life-Course emphasizes the strategic

use of information for action, highlighting the importance of knowledge translation and health literacy. Articulating co-benefits and shared values in ways that are easily understood by all sectors and stakeholders can help the health sector influence policy, support multisectoral approaches to health, and mobilize civil society and the public at large.

The *Regional Framework for Urban Health in the Western Pacific 2016–2020: Healthy and Resilient Cities* and the *Regional Action Plan for Violence and Injury Prevention in the Western Pacific (2016–2020)*, endorsed by the Regional Committee in October 2015, are helping national and local authorities use reliable data to address broad determinants of health.

NCDs are responsible for nearly 80% of preventable mortality in the Region, with diabetes being one of the four major NCDs. On 6 April 2016, the Regional Office convened a first-ever meeting of experts and advocates on diabetes, resulting in the Call to Action on Diabetes. On the following day, the diplomatic community, diabetes associations and the media joined the Regional Director for the Western Pacific in a World Health Day campaign targeting diabetes.

Other important work during the year included a focus on environment health risks, such as unsafe water and sanitation, air pollution and climate change. In addition, an emphasis on hospital data has helped improve clinical practices for newborn infants.

## Health Systems

WHO in the Western Pacific Region has worked with Member States to facilitate UHC and strengthen health systems, which are the foundation for achieving better and more equitable health outcomes.

*Universal Health Coverage: Moving Towards Better Health*, endorsed in October 2015 by the Regional Committee, provides a framework to advance UHC

Highlighting the need to monitor the risk factors that lead to noncommunicable diseases, the Regional Director checks his blood pressure at a clinic in the Pacific.





During World Antibiotics Awareness Week in November 2015, the Regional Director urges the rational use of antibiotics to protect public health in the Western Pacific Region.

strategically across five essential health system attributes – quality, efficiency, equity, accountability, and sustainability and resilience – reflecting health policy goals in countries in the Region.

Next steps on the path to UHC include facilitating high-level policy dialogues, supporting more integrated approaches and partner engagement with national planning processes, developing country-specific UHC road maps, and establishing a regional platform to explore options to advance UHC.

Fostering quality in health services is an important dimension of UHC. WHO has continued to support policy development and institutional capacity-building, with initiatives such as the Policy Roundtable

on Quality in Health Services in Hong Kong SAR (China) in September 2015.

WHO also has focused on the role of hospitals as a key driver of service delivery and system efficiency, specifically by supporting better clinical services planning and strengthening capacity in hospital management throughout the Region, including Pacific island countries and areas. To foster accountability and the rule of law, WHO supported Member States in strengthening health governance and expanding the role of law in developing, implementing and evaluating health policy. To strengthen health system resilience and raise awareness, WHO promoted World Antibiotics Awareness Week in November 2015.

## Pacific Technical Support

The unique health challenges and demographics of the Pacific – some three million people spread across vast expanses of ocean – require WHO to tailor its support in an effort to improve the health and well-being of Pacific islanders. This need has been met since 2010 by the Division of Pacific Technical Support, based in Suva, Fiji. In addition, seven WHO country offices in the Pacific serve the 21 Pacific island countries and areas, working under the guidance of the *WHO Multi-Country Cooperation Strategy for the Pacific 2013–2017*.

The proportion of premature deaths in the Pacific due to NCDs is among the highest in the world, while various communicable diseases still pose a significant burden. WHO has supported Pacific island countries to incorporate multisectoral approaches into revitalized country NCD strategies that use a range of approaches, including improved monitoring.

Climate change poses a very real threat for low-lying Pacific islands. The division supports the development of climate-resilient health systems through strengthened governance and policies, early warning systems, and preventive and curative service delivery. Earlier this year, the division published *Human Health and Climate Change in Pacific Island Countries*.

UHC is also a priority in the Pacific, with WHO supporting work to meet challenges including limited health in-

infrastructure and scarce human, material and financial resources. WHO continues to support the adaptation of the *WHO Package of Essential Noncommunicable Disease Interventions for Primary Health Care in Low-Resource Settings*.

With Pacific island countries particularly vulnerable to emerging infectious diseases, emergencies and disasters, WHO has worked closely with countries in building core capacities for IHR (2005) and in implementing APSED. WHO also is working with the Pacific Community to support a monitoring framework and core indicators to track progress towards the vision of Healthy Islands, as requested by Pacific health ministers.

## Sustainable Development Goals

The MDGs provided milestones through 2015 for global, regional and national development efforts, including health. The newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set 17 goals with 169 targets to be achieved by 2030.

SDG 3 specifically calls for Good Health and Well-Being, while several health-related targets are also incorporated in other goals – for example, SDG 2 (nutrition), SDG 5 (violence against women) and SDG 16 (civil registration and vital statistics). UHC is a target under SDG 3. It is not parallel to efforts in specific health programmes but rather acts as a broader platform that can bring diverse health and development efforts together.



The Regional Director and Dr Ki-Suck Jung, Director of the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, celebrate a new agreement on field epidemiology training that will strengthen preparedness, alert and response capacity. Fifty-three agreements are in place in the Western Pacific Region for technical and financial cooperation.

Achieving the SDGs will require building on lessons learnt from the MDGs. Member States in the Western Pacific Region achieved five of the seven health-related MDG targets and made significant progress towards achieving the remaining two.

The SDGs provide an opportunity to build on recent successes, reaffirm commitment, and take action on health and development by 2030. The SDGs place both renewed and unique demands on Member States and WHO. Learning from the MDGs, the SDGs draw atten-

tion to leaving no one behind, including equity-focused action within and beyond the health sector. Given their integrated and indivisible nature, the SDGs require changes in ways of working across sectors and stakeholders. The SDGs also imply a new role for the health sector in advancing this agenda. WHO will support Member States in the Region in prioritizing and operationalizing actions towards the SDGs. The sixty-seventh session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific will discuss a draft regional action agenda for the SDGs.

## Leadership, Coordination and Support

The Office of the Regional Director, the Division of Programme Management, and the Division of Administration and Finance work collectively to provide leadership for WHO work in the Western Pacific Region.

The Office of the Regional Director (RDO) has led a variety of groundbreaking initiatives in recent years, introducing wide-ranging reforms focused on results at the country level. RDO has led the drive to strengthen strategic partnerships and relations with donors. Technical and financial cooperation with partners has been formalized with 53 memoranda of

understanding, 13 with non-state actors. RDO also coordinates the activities of External Relationships and Partnerships, the Public Information Office, and Information Products and Services.

The Division of Programme Management coordinates technical cooperation with Member States through programme development and operations, country support and editorial services. The Programme Development and Operations unit coordinated operational planning and the approval of work plans for the Western Pacific Region Programme Budget 2016–2017 and the first phase of preparation of the Programme Budget 2018–2019. The Country Support Unit assisted WHO country offices in delivering

on their commitments to Member States, while the Editorial Services team ensured the quality of WHO official documents and information products by providing editorial guidance and support.

The Division of Administration and Finance is comprised of three units – Budget and Finance, Human Resources, and Information Technology and Administration. The division ensures accountability and transparency in the use of funds through comprehensive reporting and diligent oversight. It also has established effective procedures for recruiting and retaining skilled staff who help WHO deliver meaningful results in the Region, and has supported emergency response activities in the Region. ■



The Regional Director meets mothers and children in Davao, Philippines, where WHO assists with a subnational initiative on maternal and newborn health, part of the Organization's focus on country- and people-centred support.