

## 2. Raising public awareness: together on the front lines against diabetes

World Health Day 2016 called on stakeholders from all sectors to work collaboratively on halting the deadly rise of diabetes by raising awareness.

Diabetes is one of the four major NCDs, and its global prevalence has been steadily increasing. In the Western Pacific Region alone, an estimated 131 million people – a prevalence rate of 8.4% – were living with

diabetes in 2014, the most recent year with complete data.

A social mobilization plan was developed that included a primer, a broadcasters' manual and a guide for organizing local events. Social media played a major role in raising awareness. Key messages to improve health literacy on diabetes during World Health Day 2016 included:

1) diabetes is a hidden killer that may not show symptoms in early stages; 2) if anyone in your family has diabetes, then you are at risk; and 3) the normal blood-glucose level is below 110 mg/dl.

In a nod to the Blue Circle logo that symbolizes commitment to join the fight against diabetes, the diplomatic community, diabetes associations and members of the media joined staff at the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific in Manila on 7 April 2016 for World Health Day. The theme of the campaign was: *Get in the circle. Together on the front lines against diabetes.*

The regional campaign was rolled out with ministries of health, civil society and partners engaged in blood-glucose testing, patient education and awareness-raising in Cambodia, China, Guam, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Mongolia, Palau, the Philippines, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

On 6 April 2016, the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific convened a meeting of experts, professional associations, civil society groups and advocates on diabetes.

Consensus was reached on a call to action that outlines principles and approaches to improve governance, strengthen health systems, develop and implement policies, scale up multidisciplinary research, and strengthen partnerships with governments and non-state actors. ■



Health literacy: everyone should know how to take action to prevent diabetes.