



NCD and Health through the Life-Course

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The Division of NCD and Health through the Life-Course works with ministries of health and sectors that impact health to create conditions, methods and approaches to enable dialogue around key themes.

Those themes include: health and environment; health and sustainable development; violence and injury prevention; road safety; depression and mental health; healthy cities; restrictions on marketing of harmful food products to children; protecting the health of mothers and newborn babies; and tobacco-free settings.

Introduction

The power of convening for promoting health

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on marketing of harmful food products to children; protecting the health of mothers and newborn babies; and tobacco-free settings.

Health promotion principles guide the work of the division. Thirty years after the signing of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, WHO and China hosted the 9th Global Conference on Health Promotion in November 2016 in Shanghai. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang opened the conference, which had as its theme *Health Promotion in the Sustainable*

Development Goals: Health for All and All for Health. In all, some 2000 participants and guests came together from 129 countries, representing health and other sectors, government officials and international organizations.

The conference was a timely opportunity for the international community to renew its collective commitment to multisectoral action on the determinants of health and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Two landmark documents – the *Shanghai Declaration on Promoting Health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the *Shanghai Consensus on Healthy Cities 2016* – detailed the commitments made by participants at the conference. Highlighting the critical role of cities in achieving health, more than 100 mayors from all over the world participated in the discussions. The *Shanghai Consensus on Healthy Cities 2016* emphasizes that the SDGs cannot be achieved without local action and the leadership of cities.

Another highlight of the event was a symposium consisting of youth champions from across the globe. The event underscored the power of youth advocacy and the use of social media for health as a public good, a social goal and a shared value.

The health sector has many opportunities to take the lead in addressing today's complex global health landscape. As most health challenges have roots outside



At the 9th Global Conference on Health Promotion, more than 50 ministers highlighted the importance of bold political decisions for health in the face of other interests.

of the health sector, convening different sectors to share ideas and build consensus on policies and actions for health is an important component of this leadership.

The process can be difficult, especially for groups that do not typically work together. It can also be contentious because it involves how resources are allocated for water, food, housing and energy. However, health can also bridge social, economic, political and cultural divisions. It can be a unifying force that brings together multiple sectors and stakeholders to craft whole-of-society approaches that bolster the case for health as a primary consideration in national development agendas.

The WHO *Western Pacific Regional Framework for Action on Health and Environment on a Changing Planet* sets the course for the health sector to advocate adaptive measures, inclusive policies and innovative actions to protect people's health and well-being as a co-benefit of interventions in the spheres of energy, environment, agriculture, transport, housing and other areas of life. The Regional Committee for the Western Pacific in October 2016 endorsed the Framework, which also highlights the vulnerability of Pacific island countries and areas to the negative consequences of climate change and extreme weather conditions. The framework's strategic actions include:

- enhancing governance and leadership for stronger environmental health capacity;
- building networks, coalitions and alliances, including participation in the



The *Western Pacific Regional Framework for Action on Health and Environment on a Changing Planet* articulates the role of the health sector in convincing other sectors to address environmental health.

Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment;

- evidence and communication, making scientific evidence easily accessible and available to the public through communication, advocacy and social mobilization; and
- strategic financing and resource mobilization to ensure adequate resources for environmental health.

In anticipation of the Olympic Games to be held in Tokyo in 2020, WHO convened the Workshop on Tourism and Smoke-free Environments in the Western



Smoke-free World Heritage Sites, like Melaka City in Malaysia (pictured here), are becoming popular. With WHO support, more countries in the Region have expanded smoke-free areas.

Pacific in Yokohama in July 2016. The workshop brought the local government together with experts from the tourism and public health sectors to discuss ways in which smoke-free environments at tourist sites and large events can benefit the work of all three sectors.

Collaboration with the Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance has been ongoing since the 4th Regional Workshop on Smoke-Free Cities, organized jointly with WHO in Krabi, Thailand in October 2016. City officials and governors discussed issues with health

ministry representatives from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – namely Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Viet Nam – through the Smoke-free Cities ASEAN Network.

The theme of World No Tobacco Day on 31 May 2017 was: *Tobacco – a threat to development*, which focused on demonstrating the links between tobacco control and the SDGs. The regional launch of the event was held in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. The event included a workshop on tobacco control as a means to achieving the SDGs, as well as a walkathon to raise awareness on the impacts of tobacco on development.

Posters, brochures and other advocacy materials were disseminated in 14 countries and areas, namely Cambodia, China, Fiji, Kiribati, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, the Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Viet Nam and Tonga. Photos and videos highlighting the theme were shared on regional social media channels and garnered more than 430 000 impressions around the Region. Media outreach was successful, with more than 20 reports by international and local media across various platforms – print, radio, television and online.

In the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, an updated strategy for reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health (RMNCH) was launched in 2016 for implementation and monitoring by seven technical and four health system



A new national strategy for reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health was launched in 2016 in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. The strategy focuses on bringing quality essential services to everyone everywhere.

subcommittees. In collaboration with the Vice-Minister of Health, WHO co-convened and co-chaired the first national review meeting, which was attended by about 400 participants, including government officials, public health staff and development partners.

The event led to strategic actions, such as the upgrade of the subcommit-

tee leaders to directors general, thus making them accountable to the Vice-Minister and ultimately the Minister of Health. Additionally, a maternal and child health service package was drafted to delineate services provided at the national, provincial and district levels. ■

1. Convening health and environment sectors for planetary health



Delegates at the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment, held in Manila in October 2016, discussed ways “to safeguard and enhance health and the environment, thereby promoting development that reduces poverty”.

Established in 2004, the Regional Forum on Environment and Health has expanded to include ministries of health and environment from 48 Member States from the WHO South-East Asia and Western Pacific regions. Renamed the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Health and Environment, this meeting brings together the health and environment sectors to address common challenges, such as climate change, as well as subregional issues such as haze.

The October 2016 forum, hosted by the Government of the Philippines, was held at the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific. Chaired by the secretaries of health and environment of the

Philippines, the forum brought together participants from 36 countries. In all, 74 health officials and 35 environment officials attended.

The outcome of the forum was encapsulated in the *Manila Declaration on Health and the Environment*. Member States committed:

- to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, and orient development and public health systems to become more climate-resilient;
- to take urgent action to improve outdoor air quality, including prevention of the recurrence of transboundary haze in South-East Asia;

- to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;
- to substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water, and soil pollution and contamination through environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes; and
- to reduce the adverse environmental impact of cities by adopting sustainable urban design principles that promote healthy lifestyles and sound environmental management.

The declaration also pledged to support the work of WHO, the United Nations Environment Programme, and other international agencies and partners to address emerging policy priorities relevant to the SDGs, such as transboundary air pollution, including short-lived climate pollutants; illegal transboundary shipment and dumping of waste; destruction of coral reefs and marine pollution; antimicrobial resistance related to unsafe management of health-care waste and poor sanitation, hygiene and infection-prevention measures; promotion of environment and health impact assessments; and enhancing WHO's access to key resources like the Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund. ■

2. Convening to overcome commercial determinants of health



WHO calls on Member States to act together across sectors to support healthy diets and counteract efforts to promote products and choices that are detrimental to health.

Trade liberalization, globalization, rapid economic growth and urbanization have transformed the nutrition landscape. Populations in the Western Pacific Region are currently facing a double burden of malnutrition.

In a highly immersive modern communication environment, food marketers have almost unlimited access to consumers, and traditional diets are increasingly being replaced by convenient and attractive pre-packaged foods of poor nutritional value. Marketing of breast-milk substitutes negatively affects mothers' intentions to breastfeed, raising the

risk of all forms of malnutrition. There are 7.5 million chronically undernourished children aged under 5 years and 187 000 die annually. The stunting rate is 6.8%. Meanwhile, one in three adults is now overweight and 6.2 million children under 5 are overweight or obese. Diabetes has surged in the Region from 29 million (4.4%) cases in 1980 to 131 million (8.4%) in 2014.

These alarming trends, the endorsement of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition with six global nutrition and two nutrition-related noncommunicable disease (NCD) targets to be

met by 2025, and recommendations of the WHO Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity are galvanizing countries to support healthy diets and address the commercial determinants of health – “strategies and approaches used by the private sector to promote products and choices that are detrimental to health”.

Many governments are implementing fiscal measures such as taxing sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) and imposing taxes on unhealthy foods as part of a comprehensive approach to reduce risk factors for obesity and diabetes. Representatives of health and finance ministries and sectors participated in a workshop on taxing SSBs convened at the Regional Office in September 2016. It was the first in a series of activities to support Member States with advocacy, development and strengthening tax policies for SSBs.

School-based measures have proven especially effective. The June 2016 Regional Workshop on Regulating the Marketing and Sale of Foods and Non-alcoholic Beverages at Schools brought together participants from ministries of education and health to discuss health options. A follow-up guide on restricting the marketing and sale of unhealthy foods and sugary beverages was disseminated to school principals. The guide – *Be Smart, Drink Water* – has been translated into Chinese, and Bislama and French for the Pacific. ■

3. Convening for disability access and equity

Community-based rehabilitation is a powerful tool to reach communities with required services and ensure no one is left behind. Three Pacific subregional community-based rehabilitation forums – for countries in Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia – were convened to bring together civil society, government policy-makers and service providers to understand how to improve community-based services for people with disabilities, their families and the community.

The Meeting on Rehabilitation as Part of the Continuum of People-Centred Health Care, held in the Republic of Korea in December 2016, convened various stakeholders, including government representatives from health and social affairs sectors, to improve access and availability of rehabilitation services.

While rehabilitation services often are a prerequisite for many people with disabilities to be able to participate in society, rehabilitation services benefit all people who experience functional impairment as a result of injury, illness or ageing.

Member States agreed to prioritize a range of interventions to improve the access to quality rehabilitation services in the Region. Rehabilitation plans and strategies, including the development of tools and guidelines as well as engagement across the whole of government, were highlighted by Cambodia, Hong Kong SAR (China), Mongolia, the Philippines and Singapore.

The development of improved data collection methods and the utilization of these data to strengthen rehabilitation programmes and policies were prioritized by Cambodia, China, Malaysia, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea. The Lao People's Democratic Republic noted the need to focus on human resources for rehabilitation, and Viet Nam discussed plans to have more rehabilitation services covered by health insurance.

Many countries, including Malaysia, Mongolia and Viet Nam, committed to building awareness and strengthening

training on disability-inclusive health services and rehabilitation. Macao SAR (China), Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Viet Nam prioritized the need to improve community-based rehabilitation, including assistive technology.

While key priorities are evident, the broad application of rehabilitation services can serve as a mechanism to restore people's ability to function and as a preventive mechanism to maintain health and well-being, aligned with SDG 3: ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. ■



In the era of the Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring no one is left behind, equitable access to rehabilitation services for all, particularly people with disabilities, supports everyone's participation in society.

4. Convening intersectoral partnerships for safer roads

Road safety is a matter of serious concern in the Region. Every 95 seconds, a man, woman or child is killed on the Region's roads, making road traffic injuries the leading cause of death for people between the age of 15 and 49 years.

Approximately one third of all fatal road traffic crashes in high-income countries – and up to one half in low- and middle-income countries – are related to speed. Therefore, the Fourth United Nations Global Road Safety Week, 8–14 May 2017, focused on managing speed.

Effective road safety requires a whole-of-government approach. The management of excessive and inappropriate speed must encompass strategies to build safer roads and vehicles, establish and enforce speed limits, and raise public awareness of the injury and negative environmental consequences of speeding.

Road Safety Week advocacy events and activities across the Western Pacific Region engaged stakeholders at all levels – national and local governments, international agencies, civil society organizations, private companies and the general public – to increase awareness of the magnitude and severity, as well as the preventability, of road traffic injuries. The regional launch of Road Safety Week was hosted by the Australian Government in Sydney on 7 May and included inspiring remarks from various dignitaries, such as the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, the Minis-



The Fourth United Nations Global Road Safety Week, 8–14 May 2017, focused on raising awareness about injuries, deaths and negative environmental consequences of speeding.

ter of Transport and the WHO Regional Director. The iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge was lit up in yellow to mark the launch of the campaign.

Intersectoral country consultations have also been convened as part of the implementation of the *Regional Action Plan for Violence and Injury Prevention in the Western Pacific (2016–2020)*. The consultations are a platform that can

be used to strengthen coordinated collaborative action among various stakeholders not only for road safety but also for the prevention of drowning and interpersonal violence within a whole-of-government response that extends beyond ministries of health. ■

5. Convening and conversing for mental health through social media



Posters on depression for World Health Day 2017 were translated into languages across the Region. The campaign provided a platform to engage with stakeholders and deliver spoken key messages to millions of people, including those living with depression.

World Health Day 2017 – *Depression: Let's talk* – called for a global dialogue with governments, health professionals, advocates and the public to raise awareness of mental health issues. World Health Day activities encouraged people with depression to seek help, and their families and friends to provide support. A global campaign initiated in 2016 mobilized champions to be advocates for mental health. Various communication channels were employed to promote the theme.

World Health Day events, activities and media coverage were recorded in 23 countries and areas. These included statements of support from high-level government champions, including: the

Prime Minister of Samoa; ministers of health from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Fiji, Kiribati, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Tonga; two vice-ministers of health from China and one from Viet Nam; and the Director of Health of Hong Kong SAR (China).

Over 400 television, radio, print and online reports were filed by international and local media outlets. Celebrity champions – broadcaster James Chau from China, actress and singer Sammi Cheng from Hong Kong SAR (China) and Miss International 2016 Kylie Verzosa from the Philippines – used social media to share their personal stories in advocating

mental health awareness. Comprehensive national campaigns across various levels of government were also launched in China and the Republic of Korea.

A full range of communication products – micro-videos, public service announcements, interactive applications, short features and infographics – were produced and widely viewed. More than 1.2 million views of the videos and over 90 million social media interactions were recorded. Early mobilization efforts contributed to the campaign's success.

A regional meeting on strengthening mental health programmes was convened in January 2017 at the Regional Office. Member State representatives shared experiences and best practices in implementing the *Regional Agenda for Implementing the Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020 in the Western Pacific*. They prioritized next steps in mental health service delivery and developed strategic communication plans that include identifying champions to speak out about overcoming stigma against depression and mental illness.

Intercountry working groups were also convened to facilitate country-to-country learning on school mental health, training and capacity-building, mental health and disasters, scaling up of primary mental health care initiatives and integrated service delivery. ■