

Introduction

The power of convening for promoting health

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.

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. ■