3. Dementia: a public health priority

In the Western Pacific Region, an estimated 16 million people suffered from dementia in 2016, a 45% increase since 2006. This corresponds to 11.9% of years lived with disability due to an NCD. More than 70% of people with dementia live in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Dementia can overwhelm persons with dementia and their families and carers. The Global Action Plan on the Public Health Response to Dementia 2017–2025 outlines seven action areas for reducing the risk of developing dementia and ensuring people with dementia live with respect, dignity and autonomy. WHO in the Region has collaborated with Member States to implement the global plan.

China, with 63% of dementia cases in the Region, and the Philippines have convened stakeholder meetings to develop multisectoral national action plans and strengthen dementia service delivery. The Government of the Republic of Korea has identified dementia as a national health-care priority and included it in long-term care insurance.


To build community workers’ capacity, WHO developed a community-based dementia management toolkit for use in LMICs. This complements the Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP), which trains primary health-care providers to deliver mental health services. China and the Philippines have tested the toolkit and are conducting training on the toolkit and mhGAP intervention guide. To raise awareness and reduce stigma, WHO has developed and disseminated dementia posters and information cards.

The Memory Café in Beijing, China, provides a place for people with early stage memory loss and their families to engage with peers. WHO supports community-based efforts to help people cope with emotional, behavioural and personality changes.