2. Communications

Strategic, effective and well-coordinated communications are crucial for WHO to help Member States and other partners build a better, healthier future for people across the Western Pacific Region.

The Regional Director has identified strategic communications as a key priority for WHO’s work in the Region. Communications is especially important in the era of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), when an increasingly crowded and complex development landscape means WHO must communicate proactively and strategically in order to do the job Member States expect. At the country level, strong communications and advocacy from WHO are more important than ever – to provide health information to the public, as well as to help shape the health policy agenda.

In order to strengthen WHO communications work in the Region from 2017 to 2018, RDO led a review of communications including a regional stakeholder survey – comprising in-depth interviews and an online survey of WHO staff, interviews with representatives of five Member States in the Region, as well as interviews with a range of media stakeholders.

Following the survey in July 2017, a new Strategic Communications Framework for WHO in the Western Pacific Region was developed and finalized. This framework guides WHO’s approach to communications in the Region. It focuses on strengthening communications support to country offices, stronger corporate communications, better media relations, more engagement on social media and other digital platforms, and strategic programme communications. The framework aims to use communications to drive positive health outcomes through, for instance, health awareness campaigns and advocacy. We are getting better at telling the story of WHO’s work in the Region. An overhaul of the WHO Regional Office website is also under way.

This new approach is already bearing fruit. The Western Pacific Regional Office has the biggest following of all Regions on Facebook, grew 500% on Twitter over the past year, and supported many country offices in increasing their engagement via social media. The network of WHO communicators across the Region is stronger than ever before, and country offices are increasingly active in using communications as a health promotion and programme tool.