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HEALTH PROMOTION IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflect the interconnected nature of development challenges and present an opportunity to mobilize action across governments and societies. Health promotion offers a means to achieve the SDGs by equipping and empowering individuals and communities; by promoting an inclusive model of governance; and by advocating healthy public policies and environments.

Member States face tremendous obstacles to progress in health and sustainable development, including the lack of a systems approach to addressing the broad determinants of health, poor health literacy, policy gaps and misalignments, and weak health promotion infrastructure and capability.

As an outcome of the 9th Global Conference on Health Promotion, the *Shanghai Declaration on Promoting Health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* outlined participants' commitments to address these obstacles by furthering good governance, building healthy cities and communities, and enhancing health literacy. The draft *Regional Action Plan on Health Promotion in the Sustainable Development Goals 2018–2030* translates these commitments to practical action for health and other sectors.

The Regional Committee for the Western Pacific is requested to consider for endorsement the *draft Regional Action Plan on Health Promotion in the Sustainable Development Goals 2018–2030*.

1. CURRENT SITUATION

Over the past few decades, economic development in the Western Pacific region has led to improvements in the quality of life. More people have access to clean and safe water, higher education and health services. However, against a backdrop of dynamic forces – rapid and unplanned urbanization, population ageing, trade liberalization, new technologies and climate change – widespread inequity continues to impede progress in improving health for all. An alarming number of adults, young people and children are at increased risk for disease, injury, disability and premature death.

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure that future generations are not deprived of the resources and conditions necessary to live dignified, healthy and meaningful lives – and that environments supporting their well-being are intact.

The SDGs are inclusive, reflecting the breadth and interconnected nature of development challenges and goals. They aim to ensure that all people, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, can fulfil their potential. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a plan of action for prosperity, people and the planet. It presents an opportunity to mobilize intersectoral, whole-of-government and whole-of-society action that leaves no one behind and secures the prerequisites for health.

Health promotion offers a means to achieve the SDGs through promoting: (1) health literacy and empowering people across sectors and settings; (2) an inclusive model of governance by involving people and different sectors in decision-making; (3) healthy public policies and environments; and (4) a strong health promotion infrastructure and cross-disciplinary approaches.

In the WHO Western Pacific Region, a settings-based approach has proven to be invaluable for integrating actions to address a variety of risk factors. The concept of settings is defined as “the place or social context in which people engage in daily activities in which environmental, organizational and personal factors interact to affect health and well-being”. As well as settings-based initiatives, efforts in the Region to strengthen implementation of policy frameworks, secure sustainable financing and establish health promotion infrastructure are also ongoing and will be accelerated to support achievement of the SDGs.

In October 2016, the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific endorsed the *Regional Action Agenda on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the Western Pacific*, which provides

strategic guidance to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. In November 2016, the 9th Global Conference on Health Promotion in Shanghai, China, produced the *Shanghai Declaration on Promoting Health in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Countries and the global health promotion community pledged to accelerate implementation of the SDGs through increased political engagement and financial investment in health promotion.

The draft *Regional Action Plan on Health Promotion in the Sustainable Development Goals 2018–2030* aims to mainstream and accelerate effective practices. The Action Plan proposes a menu of practical actions to support informed decision-making for health and sustainable development. In developing the Action Plan, the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific consulted with experts and delegates from Member States, at a consultation in Manila, Philippines, from 15 to 19 May 2017.

2. ISSUES

2.1 Effective approaches to promote health at the local level, such as healthy settings, have not been widely adopted.

Health is essential to sustainable development and is also the ultimate objective of sustainable development. Health is created in settings where people live, learn, work and play. A “healthy settings” approach is an effective platform to reach people where they are and address broad determinants of health through local policy and environmental change as well as health education. Healthy settings enable people to make decisions that have a positive impact on the individual’s and the population’s health and well-being. However, implementation of “healthy settings” interventions has been limited to projects rather than integrated into systems. There is a need to mainstream health promotion through healthy settings in the SDG agenda of each country.

2.2 Health promotion interventions do not reach segments of the population.

Vulnerable or marginalized groups of society are often not reached by health services and health promotion interventions. To promote the health of all people is of critical importance to ensure sustainable development. Enhancing health literacy is an effective health promotion approach that can accelerate action to improve health outcomes for those who have been least served. Health literacy is the ability to “gain access to, understand and use information in ways which promote and maintain good health”. As complex social and commercial environments are increasingly difficult for people to navigate and manage, it is important to make health literacy a priority. Developing health literacy empowers people and strengthens individual and collective capacity to act for health and sustainable

development. This could be done through establishing strategic partnerships across disciplines and sectors and using innovative approaches that reach population groups who are often left behind.

2.3 Persistent policy gaps and misalignment exist.

Policies and plans to spur economic growth may not have considered sufficiently the impact of development on health. As a result, policy gaps may exist – such as the lack of comprehensive policies to mitigate potential health hazards posed by development or its products. In some cases, the mandates of government ministries may be at odds or simply have different priorities and policies that are not aligned. Effective governance is crucial to addressing health determinants and health equity and, in turn, is essential to achieving sustainable development. Gaps or misalignment in policies and plans must be identified and analysed to inform the development of actions that protect health and promote health equity and well-being.

2.4 Health promotion infrastructure and capabilities are inadequate.

Public health professionals are now confronted with complex health challenges. To solve these challenges, they need authority and mature skills in leadership, negotiation and diplomacy to reach informed decisions and mediate action on shared goals. A health promotion unit within the Ministry of Health may not be adequate to lead action across sectors and settings on challenges shaped by global forces. While the SDGs encourage a holistic and systematic approach to health and development, such an approach requires expertise from other disciplines such as anthropology, psychology, behavioural economics, design and communications to develop more inclusive solutions. To collaborate for health across government and society, Member States must continuously build robust health promotion infrastructure with the required capabilities and apply cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches to health promotion.

3. ACTIONS PROPOSED

The Regional Committee for the Western Pacific is requested to consider for endorsement the draft *Regional Action Plan on Health Promotion in the Sustainable Development Goals 2018–2030*.