

# Strengthening health promotion for sustainable development

Fact sheet: August 2017

## Key facts

**Good governance** is crucial for health, **cities and communities** are critical settings for health, and **health literacy** empowers and drives equity.

**Increased political commitment and financial investment** in health promotion are needed in the Western Pacific Region.

Persistent gaps and misalignments in public policy **adversely impact health** and expose the population to social, economic and environmental threats.

Rapid, unplanned development creates **unhealthy settings**, which drive decisions that lead to poor health outcomes.

Leaders at the 9th Global Conference on Health Promotion in Shanghai, China in November 2016, agreed that **good governance is crucial for health; cities and communities are critical settings for health; and health literacy empowers and drives equity**. They committed to increase support for, and investment, in health promotion.

Economic development has brought about substantial gains—improving employment opportunities, health outcomes and quality of life. **But these gains are threatened if the development process is not well-managed**, unintended consequences are not promptly addressed, and future developments that may adversely impact health are not taken into consideration. Health gains may be eroded by rapid and unplanned urbanization, improper use or misuse of new technologies, environmental degradation, climate change and trade liberalization.

For example, **rapid and unplanned urbanization creates unhealthy settings**. Local governments do not have the capacity to manage and treat the amount of waste generated, which then pollutes the water and soil. Pollutants from transport, industry and farming cause deterioration in outdoor air quality—the Western Pacific is among the two WHO Regions suffering from the greatest burden of premature deaths from environmental causes. With 1.8 billion mobile phone subscribers in Asia—products that pose hazards to health can now be marketed widely and across borders into or out of countries with weak legislation and enforcement capacities. Furthermore, climate change is threatening the survival of some low-lying Pacific island countries, affecting water and food supplies, and causing extreme weather conditions in others.

Unhealthy settings, changing physical and social environments, and weak policy and legislative frameworks are adversely affecting health. **Countries need strengthened governance and bold political commitment** to address these determinants of health and build resilience. At the same time, countries **need to improve health literacy** to enable people to make better decisions, and to support policies that promote health for families and communities.

## WHO response

Over the past two decades, through the health promotion conferences from Ottawa to Shanghai, WHO has highlighted effective strategies and approaches to **create conditions necessary for optimal health and well-being**.

WHO has tapped into the expertise and experiences of dedicated health promotion bodies and WHO Collaborating Centres to **strengthen health promotion leadership, infrastructure and capacity** in the Western Pacific Region.

The Organization remains ready to work with countries to **scale up implementation of effective health promotion approaches** and expand support and reach to vulnerable and marginalized groups.

