Strengthening rehabilitation for health and well-being
Fact sheet: August 2018

Key facts
By 2050, one in four people will be aged 60 years or over in the Western Pacific Region.

Noncommunicable disease prevalence is increasing as much as 50% for key health conditions such as stroke.

When rehabilitation services are weak or non-existent, the burden of support for individuals in need falls on families and caregivers.

Rehabilitation is a health strategy for everyone, to restore health and well-being while recovering from illness or injury, and managing long-term health conditions.

In the Western Pacific Region, governments are facing health and demographic challenges as populations are ageing. More people are living longer with chronic disease and impairment. Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are on the rise despite prevention measures for NCD risk factors. Between 2006 and 2016, severe disability related to ageing populations and NCDs increased by 25%. In the same period, the prevalence of stroke, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease and diabetes increased by more than 50%, 35%, 16% and 13%, respectively.

Rehabilitation is part of universal health coverage and the continuum of care for everyone. However, rehabilitation is still often seen as a specific service for persons with disabilities, but non-essential for all people. When rehabilitation services are weak or non-existent, the burden of support for individuals in need falls on families and caregivers, especially women and girls. By strengthening rehabilitation services, Member States can help ensure their citizens enjoy a good quality of life as they age, even as they manage chronic diseases, impairment and disability, without undue hardship for their families.

Rehabilitation allows people to maximize daily functioning to manage basic but essential skills, such as communication, mobility and self-care. The benefits of rehabilitation extend beyond basics to other areas of life, such as education and employment. While individuals and their families benefit most from rehabilitation, the community also gains as individuals with improved functioning participate more in community life, education and employment. Good health is an essential condition for everyone and contributes to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Good health supports sustainable development, and sustainable development supports good health.

WHO response
In consultation with Member States in the Region, WHO has developed the Western Pacific Regional Framework on Rehabilitation. The Framework offers options for countries to strengthen rehabilitation within their own contexts. The Regional Framework supports the WHO Global Disability Action Plan 2014–2021: Better Health for All People with Disability and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which most countries in the Western Pacific Region have ratified.

WHO will continue to support addressing priority rehabilitation issues for countries to improve rehabilitation within their contexts. In particular, WHO will provide technical support to strengthen service delivery, governance, health workforce and health information on rehabilitation. WHO will facilitate productive collaboration and information sharing among stakeholders, including governments, Nongovernmental organizations and donor agencies in the Region.