

A Decade of Progress towards Better Health

WHO in the Western Pacific Region 2009–2018



World Health
Organization

Western Pacific Region

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Foreword

Earlier this year, I met a woman who had just given birth to her second child in her Lao village's small health clinic on the Mekong River. She talked about her hopes and fears for her new baby boy, as she swaddled him in a golden blanket.

Over the past decade, I have had hundreds of conversations like this one with people who wonder what the future holds. They worry about how everything from climate change to communicable disease will affect their well-being.

These worries cut across all communities — from mayors of megacities, to fishermen in Pacific island hamlets, to that young woman and her tiny baby with big questions. Will he grow up healthy and happy? Will he have a good life? Are we doing all we can to make sure this is the case?

As the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director, I take every one of these conversations as a mandate. They have helped me stay focused on the people that WHO exists to serve and the barriers to health and well-being they face.

Over the past 10 years, I have been fortunate to serve and hear from many people across the Western Pacific Region, which spans some 15 000 kilometres from Mongolia and China in the West to New Zealand and French Polynesia in the East.

This report presents our progress over that time towards better health for the more than 1.9 billion people of this

dynamic but disaster-prone Region, and our efforts to ensure their future health and well-being.

In the past decade, our Region has seen significant improvements in maternal and child health and in the battle against a range of communicable diseases, from hepatitis and HIV to malaria and tuberculosis (TB). Real progress has also been achieved in the fight against the epidemic of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), and major strides have been taken in improving health security and health systems.

We have worked hard to become more effective, efficient, transparent and accountable.

The report also summarizes WHO organizational reforms in the Western Pacific Region, aimed at making us an Organization that better delivers on the needs and priorities of Member States.

We have worked hard to become more effective, efficient, transparent and accountable in all that we do. In collaboration with Member States, we have sought to improve governance. We established the Division of Pacific Technical Support in Fiji to better address the unique health challenges of Pacific islands.

We created the Division of Health Security and Emergencies to strengthen our work on emergency preparedness and response – years before the establishment of the global WHO Health Emergencies Programme.

We have improved our communications and strengthened partnerships, including those with parliamentarians and others beyond the health sector.

In a world where health threats come largely from outside the health sector — and the development landscape is increasingly complex and crowded — the convening power of WHO is more important than ever.

I believe these changes have made WHO in the Western

Much of what we can do to safeguard health and well-being revolves around our work to make health systems stronger and advance universal health coverage.

We must ensure that everyone in every corner of this vast Region has access to the quality health services they need at a price they can afford.

When I began my tenure as Regional Director, I had the utmost respect for the Organization and its work. Leading WHO in the Western Pacific over the past decade has only served to strengthen my appreciation of the tremendous value of the Organization's work and my conviction that the world needs a stronger WHO.

Serving this Region has been my great privilege. I thank

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