

GLOBAL ACTION PLAN ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY 2018-2030

# MORE ACTIVE PEOPLE FOR A HEALTHIER WORLD





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Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030: more active people for a healthier world

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

Regular physical activity is proven to help prevent and treat noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and breast and colon cancer. It also helps to prevent hypertension, overweight and obesity and can improve mental health, quality of life and well-being.

In addition to the multiple health benefits of physical activity, societies that are more active can generate additional returns on investment including a reduced use of fossil fuels, cleaner air and less congested, safer roads. These outcomes are interconnected with achieving the shared goals, political priorities and ambition of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.<sup>1</sup>

The new WHO global action plan to promote physical activity responds to the requests by countries for updated guidance, and a framework of effective and feasible policy actions to increase physical activity at all levels. It also responds to requests for global leadership and stronger regional and national coordination, and the need for a whole-of-society response to achieve a paradigm shift in both supporting and valuing all people being regularly active, according to ability and across the life course.

The action plan was developed through a worldwide consultation process involving governments and key stakeholders across multiple sectors including health, sports, transport, urban design, civil society, academia and the private sector.

## What is physical activity?

Physical activity can be undertaken in many different ways: walking, cycling, sports and active forms of recreation (for example, dance, yoga, tai chi). Physical activity can also be undertaken at work and around the home. All forms of physical activity can provide health benefits if undertaken regularly and of sufficient duration and intensity.

## The current situation

Global progress to increase physical activity has been slow, largely due to lack of awareness and investment.

Worldwide, 1 in 4 adults, and 3 in 4 adolescents (aged 11–17 years), do not currently meet the global recommendations for physical activity set by WHO. As countries develop

<sup>1</sup> At the seventieth session of the United Nations General Assembly 2015, all countries adopted resolution A/RES/70/1, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

economically, levels of inactivity increase. In some countries, levels of inactivity can be as high as 70%, due to changing patterns of transportation, increased use of technology and urbanization.

Physical activity levels are also influenced by cultural values. In most countries, girls, women, older adults, underprivileged groups, and people with disabilities and chronic diseases, all have fewer opportunities to access safe, affordable and appropriate programmes and places in which to be physically active.

The global cost of physical inactivity is estimated to be INT\$ 54 billion per year in direct health care, in 2013, with an additional INT\$ 14 billion attributable to lost productivity. Inactivity accounts for 1–3% of national health care costs, although this excludes costs associated with mental health and musculoskeletal conditions.

## Multiple opportunities: multiple benefits

Physical activity can and should be integrated into the settings in which people live, work and play. Walking and cycling are key means of transportation and enable engagement in regular physical activity on a daily basis, but their role and popularity is declining in many countries. Sport and active recreation can help promote physical activity for people of all ages and abilities. Globally it can be a key driver of tourism, employment and infrastructure, and can also help in humanitarian programmes, fostering community development and social integration.

Physical activity is important across all ages. Active play and recreation is important for

early childhood as well as for healthy growth and development in children and adolescents. Quality physical education and supportive school environments can provide physical and health literacy for long-lasting healthy, active lifestyles.

It is also important that adults can be physically active and less sedentary at work. Whether working or not, older adults, in particular, can benefit from regular physical activity to maintain physical, mental and social health and enable healthy ageing. Primary and secondary health and social care providers can help individuals of all ages become more active and prevent NCDs, while also using physical activity as a means to increase rates of rehabilitation and recovery.

Across all settings there are opportunities for digital innovations to promote and support people of all ages to be more active and to build upon the rapidly growing practice of mHealth to harness the potential of data to help promote, support and monitor physical activity.

## Physical activity and the Sustainable Development Goals 2030

Investing in policies to promote walking, cycling, sport, active recreation and play can contribute directly to achieving many of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Policy actions on physical activity have multiplicative health, social and economic benefits, and will directly contribute to achieving SDG3 (good health and well-being), as well as other Goals including SDG2 (ending all forms of malnutrition); SDG4 (quality education); SDG5 (gender equality); SDG8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure);

SDG10 (reduced inequalities); SDG11 (sustainable cities and communities); SDG12 (responsible production and consumption); SDG13 (climate action); SDG15 (life on land); SDG16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG17 (partnerships).

## Framework for action

Effective national action to reverse current trends and reduce disparities in physical activity requires a “systems-based” approach with a strategic combination of “upstream” policy actions aimed at improving the social, cultural, economic and environmental factors that support physical activity, combined with “downstream”, individually focused (educational and informational) approaches.

This global action plan sets out four strategic objectives achievable through 20 policy actions that are universally applicable to all countries, recognizing that each country is at a different starting point in their efforts to reduce levels of physical inactivity and sedentary behaviour.

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Increasing physical activity requires a systems-based

## Vision

**More active people for a healthier world.**



## Mission

**To ensure that all people have access to safe and enabling environments and to diverse opportunities to be physically active in their daily lives, as a means of improving individual and community health and contributing to the social, cultural and economic development of all nations.**



## Target

**A 15% relative reduction in the global prevalence of physical inactivity in adults and in**



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