



World Health
Organization

Western Pacific



Regional health leaders agree on actions to promote health through schools, harness traditional and complementary medicine

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HIMEJI, Japan 1 28 October 2021 – The World Health Organization (WHO) Western Pacific Region’s health ministers today adopted a resolution to ensure schools promote the health and development of children and adolescents and help to entrench lifelong healthy habits. They also adopted a resolution to improve access to safe, effective and culturally accepted services to harness the role of traditional and complementary medicine for health and well-being.

Promoting positive development and health among children and adolescents

The *Regional Framework on Nurturing Resilient and Healthy Future Generations in the Western Pacific* endorsed by regional health leaders will help countries to achieve three goals:

1. entrench healthy behaviours that stick;
2. enable schools to positively influence communities through a “spillover” effect; and
3. invest in schools today to build a healthier tomorrow.

To achieve these goals, the Framework includes actions to be taken by WHO, governments and schools, adapted to country-specific contexts. WHO will provide technical support to Member States to develop, update and implement national guidelines, strategies and tools.

Governments will be encouraged to develop policy and programme innovations to foster schools as environments that invest in health. They also committed to spearheading cross-sectoral coordination to foster child and adolescent resilience. Schools can provide a positive and affirming environment that can generate the conditions

conducive to health – for example, through enlightened school policies, health-reinforcing teaching curricula, supportive and engaged relationships with teachers and peers, the provision of basic medical screening and healthcare services, safe and healthy school environments, and role modelling of healthy behaviours and respectful relationships.

“As many as 611 million children and adolescents call the Western Pacific Region home, and most spend a third of their time each year in school. That is why we need a special focus on health in schools – to address the risks children and adolescents face to their health today, and help them to form habits that will be a foundation for long, healthy lives,” said WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific, Dr Takeshi Kasai.

Key health and development needs of children and adolescents

Nutrition is a key challenge. In the Region, between 1975 and 2016, overweight and obesity among children and adolescents increased twentyfold. At the other end of the spectrum, some 12 million children remain stunted (too short for their age, as a result of undernutrition).

Injuries, violence, substance abuse, mental health conditions and unsafe environments also pose health challenges and risks. An estimated 14% of those aged 15–19 years in the Region drink alcohol, and nearly 6 million 13–15-year-olds use tobacco. Prolonged school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic have impacted students’ physical and mental health as well as their learning.

“We have an opportunity to act now to change the future by investing in schools as ‘incubators’ for health. They have a critical role, not only in supporting children in their academic learning, but also in influencing them to be healthier and achieve their highest capability and potential,” added Dr Kasai.

Role of traditional and complementary medicine in improving quality of life

In supporting Member States, WHO, in close collaboration with Member States, stakeholders, partners and experts, developed the *Regional Framework for Harnessing the Role of Traditional and Complementary Medicine for Achieving Health and Well-being in the Western Pacific*.

Endorsed today by Regional health leaders, the Framework will help:

- to promote the role of traditional and complementary medicine (T&CM) for health and well-being in national policies;
- to strengthen context-specific mechanisms to ensure safety, quality and effectiveness of T&CM services;
- to improve coverage and equitable access to T&CM; and
- to support documentation, research and innovation for T&CM services.

“Whether it’s to treat ailments or promote health, traditional and complementary medicine is used extensively by people in the Western Pacific, but its practice varies widely, depending on the social and cultural context. Traditional and complementary medicine services that are evidence-based, safe and of assured quality are valuable in contributing to a holistic, patient-centred approach to achieve health and well-being,” said WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific, Dr Takeshi Kasai.

Over the years, evidence has shown the important role of T&CM in improving quality of life. Traditional medicine can play a particularly important role in the health and well-being of ageing populations and people with chronic conditions.

The promotion and development of T&CM can help bring a shift from a disease-oriented approach to person- and community-oriented approaches to health. This is especially significant, given the Region's rapidly ageing population and growing burden of noncommunicable diseases.

WHO will provide technical support to Member States as they develop national policies and increase long-term investments in T&CM, and strengthen public and consumer education to enable informed decision-making about their care. Governments may consider context-specific development and full utilization of T&CM to ensure quality and safety of services. Countries may pursue the development of models for service delivery that are built into or are complementary to broader health systems and are based on the context and needs of the population, with mechanisms to accelerate the generation and dissemination of evidence, research and innovation.

Notes to editors:

A livestream of the Regional Committee proceedings, official documents, fact sheets and videos on the issues addressed this week can be accessed here: www.who.int/westernpacific/about/governance/regional-committee/session-72

For updates, follow @WHOWPRO on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#) and the hashtag #RCM72.

Working with 194 Member States across six regions, WHO is the United Nations specialized agency responsible for public health. Each WHO region has its own regional committee – a governing body composed of ministers of health and senior officials from the region's Member States. Each regional committee meets annually to agree on health actions and chart priorities for WHO's work.

Last year, because of COVID-19, regional committees were held virtually for the first time. This year, the Western Pacific Regional Committee will meet in a hybrid format for the first time, with some delegates traveling to Himeji, Japan, to attend the meeting in person, while others connect via videoconference.

Cooperation between countries is essential to address public health challenges such as COVID-19. Member States have acquired profound experience responding to the virus over the past 21 months. While the pandemic continues, the hybrid Regional Committee is an important opportunity to exchange experience, further strengthen cooperation and enhance countries' responses.

WHO is working closely with the Government of Japan and Himeji City on logistics and other arrangements. Stringent risk mitigation measures are being implemented to ensure the safety of all participants in the meeting and the host community. During the meeting and all associated events, the highest standards of infection prevention and control will be observed.

The WHO Western Pacific Region is home to more than 1.9 billion people across 37 countries and areas in Asia and the Pacific: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Cook Islands, Fiji, France (which has responsibility for French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Wallis and Futuna), Hong Kong SAR (China), Japan, Kiribati, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Macao SAR (China), Malaysia, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (which has responsibility for Pitcairn Islands), the United States of America (which has responsibility for American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Guam), Vanuatu, and Viet Nam.

Related links:

- School health [fact sheet](#); [video](#), [feature story](#).
- People of the Western Pacific: [Tim](#), [Singapore](#)
- Traditional and complementary medicine [fact sheet](#); [video](#), [feature story](#).
- People of the Western Pacific: [Dr Liu Tao](#), [Hong Kong SAR China](#)

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News release in other languages:

本区域卫生领导人商定通过学校促进健康、发挥传统和补充医学作用的行动

Les responsables régionaux de la santé conviennent des mesures à prendre pour promouvoir la santé en milieu scolaire, et tirer parti de la médecine traditionnelle et complémentaire

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