



HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

promotion in urban settings

ISSUES: The negative effects of globalization, unplanned urbanization, irrational food consumption and sedentary lifestyles have led to an unprecedented growth in risk factors and a shift in disease burden towards noncommunicable diseases across all socioeconomic strata. The increase in noncommunicable diseases poses a double burden for many low-income and middle-income countries which still deal with traditional problems such as under-nutrition and infectious diseases.

In 2005, noncommunicable diseases accounted for an estimated 60% of deaths worldwide, and 80% of deaths in low-income and middle-income countries. Five of the key risk factors for chronic disease (high blood pressure, high concentrations of cholesterol, overweight and obesity, physical inactivity and tobacco use) are closely related to physical activity and diet.

In 2004, noncommunicable diseases caused about 55% of mortality in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The situation is complex. Economic development and the benefits of prosperity contributed to the rising burden of noncommunicable disease in some countries, while increasing poverty and health inequities have increased population vulnerabilities in low-income and middle-income countries, making their populations more prone to developing noncommunicable diseases.

SOLUTIONS: To address these issues, WHO developed the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health (DPAS) in 2004. Implementing DPAS in the Region will lead to a significant reduction in the mortality and morbidity of major noncommunicable diseases and related risk factors. In order to strengthen WHO's technical support in developing and implementation of comprehensive national plan of action for DPAS in countries, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean developed the Regional Framework for Implementation of the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. This framework provides a tool for countries in the

development and implementation of a national plan addressing unbalanced diet and physical inactivity and provides guidance on policy options for effective promotion of physical activity and healthy diets at the national and subnational level.

ACTIONS DURING 2010:

- Ensure multisectoral and community participation in discussions around urban planning that promotes physical activity;
- Conduct advocacy with policy-makers and community leaders for:
 - Adopting the Regional Framework for Implementation of the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region;
 - Understanding that noncommunicable diseases are increasingly affecting the rich and poor alike;
 - Promoting the importance of physical activity and healthy diet in disease prevention and building the health potential;
 - Recognizing the importance of sound urban planning and infrastructure development to promote physical activity through providing sufficient walking areas that allow easy and safe mobility;
- Include in public and media campaigns around World Health Day 2010 interventions for modification of prevalent public perceptions related to physical activity and healthy diet and their integration into daily life in urban settings.

THE WAY FORWARD: World Health Day 2010 should be a springboard for changing social norms and improving community understanding and acceptance of the need to integrate physical activity into everyday life. This cannot be done without building a supportive environment that enables people across the socio-economic spectrum to make healthy choices.



World Health Day 2010
Urbanization and Health



World Health
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