



Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018–2030: More Active People For A Healthier World

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The following consists of excerpts from WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018–2030 (GAPPA) which have direct connection to Sustainable Transportation and reducing the harm caused by automobile dependence. In particular we have extracted the proposed actions for Member States: specific actions that governments at all levels can implement to increase physical activity in their countries. These excerpts are reprinted here under the terms of the CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO license, which allows for the copying, redistributing and adaption of the work for non-commercial purposes, provided the work is appropriately cited.

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<https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/272722/9789241514187-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

BACKGROUND

Regular physical activity is a well-established protective factor for the prevention and treatment of the leading noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), namely heart disease, stroke, diabetes and breast and colon cancer. It also contributes to the prevention of other important NCD risk factors such as hypertension, overweight and obesity, and is associated with improved mental health delay in the onset of dementia and improved quality of life and well-being.

Photo credit: Bruno Nascimento, Juiz de Fora, Brazil, 2016.

<https://unsplash.com/photos/person-wearing-orange-and-gray-nike-shoes-walking-on-gray-concrete-stairs-PHlgYUGQPvU>.

MANDATE

In 2013, the World Health Assembly endorsed a global action plan on the prevention and control of NCDs, and agreed a set of nine global voluntary targets, which include a 25% reduction of premature mortality from NCDs and a 10% relative reduction in the prevalence of insufficient physical activity by 2025.

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

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.

(Appendix 2 contains) Recommended actions for WHO Member States, the WHO secretariat and other stakeholders to achieve implementation of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030.

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Four strategic objectives and 20 Policy Actions

Four strategic objectives provide a universally applicable framework for the 20 multidimensional policy actions, each identified as an important and effective component of a population-based response to increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary behaviour. In combination, they capture the whole-of-system approach required to create a society that intrinsically values and prioritizes policy investments in physical activity as a regular part of everyday life.

The four strategic objectives are:

1. Create active societies
2. Create active environments Spaces and Places
3. Create active people
4. Create active systems

To achieve these four objectives, 20 evidence-based policy actions are recommended and listed below. The recommended specific roles for the WHO Secretariat, WHO Member States and other stakeholders to support implementation are outlined for each action in Appendix 2.

Editor's note: All 20 Policy Actions are reprinted below. In addition the Proposed Actions For Member States from Appendix 2 which pertain to sustainable transportation or reducing the harm caused by automobiles are shown below as bullets under the pertinent Policy Action. These are specific actions that governments at all levels can implement, which we hope will be an inspiration to all readers to help their communities adopt similar measures. Refer to Appendix 2 of the full document for Proposed Actions for WHO Secretariat and for Stakeholders (NGOs, civil society organizations, academic and research community, donors, international and regional development organizations, cities and municipalities, private sector entities)

OBJECTIVE 1. CREATE ACTIVE SOCIETIES:

Four policy actions are proposed which aim to create positive social norms and attitudes and a paradigm shift in all of society by enhancing knowledge and understanding of, and appreciation for, the multiple benefits of regular physical activity, according to ability and at all ages.

Policy Action 1.1:

Implement best practice communication campaigns, linked with community-based programmes, to heighten awareness, knowledge and understanding of, and appreciation for, the multiple health benefits of regular physical activity and less sedentary behaviour, according to ability, for individual, family and community well-being.



Photo credit: Martins Zemlickis, Brussels marathon runners, Belgium, 2016. <https://unsplash.com/photos/people-running-on-road-during-daytime-NPFu4GfFZ7E>.

Policy Action 1.2:

Conduct national and community-based campaigns to enhance awareness and understanding of, and appreciation for, the social, economic, and environmental co-benefits of physical activity, and particularly more walking, cycling and other forms of mobility involving the use of wheels (including wheelchairs, scooters and skates) and thereby make a contribution to achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES
- Support and, where appropriate, partner with, national, regional and international campaigns on issues related to physical activity, such as Breathe Life (air quality),¹ Vision Zero (road safety),² Transport Delivers (sustainable transport),³ and Trees for Cities.

Policy Action 1.3:

Implement regular mass participation initiatives in public spaces, engaging entire communities, to provide free access to enjoyable and affordable, socially- and culturally-appropriate experiences of physical activity.

- PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES
- Implement free, universally accessible, whole-of-community events that provide opportunities to be active in local public spaces and which aim to cultivate positive experiences and build competencies, particularly in the least active. Examples include temporary or permanent closure of the road network to motorized vehicles for use for walking, cycling and other recreational activities (such as Ciclovía,¹ or Street Play²); free activities in local parks, beaches and other public open spaces (e.g. ParkRun, community walks); mass participation in events in sports, traditional, culturally important activities (e.g. yoga, tai chi, dance, fun runs), as well as other innovative activities.

Policy Action 1.4:

Strengthen pre- and in-service training of professionals, within and outside the health sector, to increase knowledge and skills related to their roles and contributions in creating inclusive, equitable opportunities for an active society including, but not limited to, the sectors of: transport, urban planning, education, tourism and recreation, sports and fitness, as well as in grassroots community groups and civil society organizations.

- PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES
- Partner with road safety experts to strengthen stakeholders' understanding of safe systems approaches to improving road safety for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users, in alignment with The Decade of Road Safety (2).

OBJECTIVE 2. CREATE ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Create and maintain environments that promote and safeguard the rights of all people, of all ages, to have equitable access to safe places and spaces, in their cities and communities, in which to engage in regular physical activity, according to ability.

Five policy actions address the need to create supportive spaces and places that promote and safeguard the rights of all people, of all ages and abilities, to have equitable access to safe places and spaces in their cities and communities in which they can engage in regular physical activity.



Photo Credit: Miguel A. Amutio, 2021. <https://unsplash.com/photos/people-running-on-gray-asphalt-road-during-daytime-QDv-uBc-poY>.



Photo Credit: Chander R, 2019. <https://unsplash.com/photos/man-in-yellow-tank-top-running-near-shore-z4WH1FMfIQ>.

Policy Action 2.1:

Strengthen the integration of urban and transport planning policies to prioritize the principles of compact, mixed-land use, at all levels of government as appropriate, to deliver highly connected neighbourhoods to enable and promote walking, cycling, other forms of mobility involving the use of wheels (including wheelchairs, scooters and skates) and the use of public transport, in urban, peri-urban and rural communities.

• PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES

- All levels of government should, as appropriate, prioritize walking, cycling and public transport as preferred modes of travel in relevant transport, spatial and urban planning policies, especially those related to urban centres.
- Support the development and implementation of planning and transport policy, guidelines and regulations that redistribute, as appropriate, urban space from private motorized transport to support increased walking, cycling and use of public transport, as well as provision of public open and green spaces, including regulations to limit car parking options for singular occupancy private vehicles.

Policy Action 2.2:

Improve the level of service¹ provided by walking and cycling network infrastructure, to enable and promote walking, cycling, other forms of mobility involving the use of wheels (including wheelchairs, scooters and skates) and the use of public transport, in urban, peri-urban and rural communities, with due regard for the principles of safe, universal and equitable access by people of all ages and abilities, and in alignment with other commitments.

Policy Action 2.3:

Accelerate implementation of policy actions to improve road safety and the personal safety of pedestrians, cyclists, people engaged in other forms of mobility involving the use of wheels (including wheelchairs, scooters and skates) and public transport passengers, with priority given to actions that reduce risk for the most vulnerable road users in accordance with the safe systems approach to road safety, and in alignment with other commitments.

• PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES

- Support the strengthening, where appropriate, of national road safety legislation and action plans, consistent with the Decade of Action on Road Safety 1 and the global road safety targets 1 and 2. 2.
- Collaborate and support the strengthening, as appropriate, of road transport systems in accordance with principles of safe systems³ as recommended in the Decade of Action on Road Safety to enable achievement of global road safety targets, specifically targets 3, 4, 6, 9 and 10. 4.
- Support the implementation and strengthening of the enforcement of traffic speed restrictions (e.g. 30 km/hr in all residential neighbourhoods and 50 km/hr on urban roads), as well as other traffic calming interventions and demand management strategies, with a priority focus on travel routes around education facilities.
- Partner and implement effective sustained education and social marketing campaigns aimed at increasing safe behaviours among all road users, notably driver behaviour to reduce speed, and reduce the use of mobile devices and consistent with Vision Zero.

Policy Action 2.4:

Strengthen access to good-quality public and green open spaces, green networks, recreational spaces (including river and coastal areas) and sports amenities by all people, of all ages and of diverse abilities in urban, peri-urban and rural communities, ensuring design is consistent with these principles of safe, universal, age-friendly and equitable access with a priority being to reduce inequalities and in alignment with other commitments.

• PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES

- Promote and enforce urban planning, land use and spatial policy at all levels of government, as appropriate, that requires the provision of a connected network of green infrastructure that enables equitable access to quality, safe public space, blue space¹ and green open spaces, natural spaces, recreational areas and sports facilities.
- Implement comprehensive health and economic assessments of public and green open spaces and natural spaces to evaluate the full range of health, climate and environmental benefits of urban ecosystems, including their impact on physical activity participation.
- Facilitate the active engagement of community members in the location, design and improvement of public, green, natural, open and recreational spaces, including for example in urban gardening/agriculture projects, initiatives to enhance biodiversity, and the development of “open streets” programmes.

Policy Action 2.5:

Strengthen the policy, regulatory and design guidelines and frameworks, at the national and subnational levels, as appropriate, to promote public amenities, schools, health care, sports and recreation facilities, workplaces and social housing that are designed to enable occupants and visitors with diverse abilities to be physically active in and around the buildings, and prioritize universal access by pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.



Photo Credit: Walter Martin, Chicago, IL, USA, 2022. <https://unsplash.com/photos/a-person-riding-a-bike-down-a-dirt-road-V20O6ApTeWg>.

OBJECTIVE 3. CREATE ACTIVE PEOPLE

Create and promote access to opportunities and programmes, across multiple settings, to help people of all ages and abilities to engage in regular physical activity as individuals, families and communities.

Six policy actions outline the multiple settings in which an increase in programmes and opportunities can help people of all ages and abilities to engage in regular physical activity as individuals, families and communities.

Policy Action 3.1:

Strengthen provision of good-quality physical education experiences and opportunities for active recreation, sports and play for girls and boys, applying the principles of the whole-of-school approach in all pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions, to establish and reinforce lifelong health and physical literacy, and promote the enjoyment of, and participation in, physical activity, according to capacity and ability.

• PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES

- Promote walk and cycle to school programmes which include actions to improve access by walking, cycling and public transport, and strengthen the promotion of walking; cycle training; and teaching road safety skills to children of all ages and abilities.

Policy Action 3.2:

Implement and strengthen systems of patient assessment and counselling on increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary behaviour, by appropriately trained health, community and social care providers, as appropriate, in primary and secondary health care and social services, as part of universal health care, ensuring community and patient involvement and coordinated links with community resources, where appropriate.

Policy Action 3.3:

Enhance provision of, and opportunities for, more physical activity programmes and promotion in parks and other natural environments (such as beach, rivers and foreshores) as well as in private and public workplaces, community centres, recreation and sports facilities and faith-based centres, to support participation in physical activity, by all people of diverse abilities.

Policy Action 3.4:

Enhance the provision of, and opportunities for, appropriately tailored programmes and services aimed at increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary behaviour in older adults, according to ability, in key settings such as local and community venues, health, social and long-term care settings, assisted living facilities and family environments, to support healthy ageing.

Policy Action 3.5:

Strengthen the development and implementation of programmes and services, across various community settings, to engage with, and increase the opportunities for, physical activity in the least active groups, as identified by each country, such as girls, women, older adults, rural and indigenous communities, and vulnerable or marginalized populations, embracing positive contributions by all people.

Policy Action 3.6:

Implement whole-of-community initiatives, at the city, town or community levels, that stimulate engagement by all stakeholders and optimize a combination of policy approaches, across different settings, to promote increased participation in physical activity and reduced sedentary behaviour by people of all ages and diverse abilities, focusing on grassroots community engagement, co-development and ownership.

• PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES

- Strengthen or establish national and/or subnational (municipality or local authority) networks of cities and communities implementing whole-of-community approaches to promote physical activity and share guidelines, resources and experiences (e.g. WHO Healthy Cities, Active Cities, Partnerships for Healthy Cities).

OBJECTIVE 4. CREATE ACTIVE SYSTEMS

Create and strengthen leadership, governance, multi-sectoral partnerships, workforce capabilities, advocacy and information systems across sectors to achieve excellence in resource mobilization and implementation of coordinated international, national and subnational action to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour.

Five policy actions outline the investments needed to strengthen the systems necessary to implement effective and coordinated international, national and subnational action to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour. These actions address governance, leadership, multi-sectoral partnerships, workforce capabilities, advocacy, information systems and financing mechanisms across all relevant sectors.

Policy Action 4.1:

Strengthen policy frameworks, leadership and governance systems, at the national and subnational levels, to support implementation of actions aimed at increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary behaviours, including multi-sectoral engagement and coordination mechanisms; policy coherence across sectors; guidelines, recommendations and actions plans on physical activity and sedentary behaviour for all ages; and progress monitoring and evaluation to strengthen accountability.

• PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES

- Partner with other sectors to review and, where needed, strengthen the position of physical activity within respective policy frameworks, including but not limited to community and grass roots sports within sports policy, walking and cycling within transport policy, physical education within education policy, and physical activity within integrated NCD and mental health policies.



Photo Credit: Ignacio Brosa, Munich, Germany, 2020. https://unsplash.com/photos/people-playing-soccer-on-green-grass-field-during-daytime-vJDbPuxUS_s.



Photo Credit: Benjamin Elliott, Sheffield, UK, 2023.

<https://unsplash.com/photos/a-couple-of-people-walking-down-a-street-next-to-tall-buildings-nl4mr4emfFs>.

Policy Action 4.2:

Enhance data systems and capabilities at the national and, where appropriate, subnational levels, to support: regular population surveillance of physical activity and sedentary behaviour, across all ages and multiple domains; development and testing of new digital technologies to strengthen surveillance systems; development of monitoring systems of wider sociocultural and environmental determinants of physical inactivity; and regular multi-sectoral monitoring and reporting on policy implementation to ensure accountability and inform policy and practice.

- PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES
- Strengthen population surveillance of physical activity ensuring coverage of all ages and domains of physical activity (including walking and cycling for transport) and the regular reporting of progress towards achieving targets set for reducing physical inactivity by 2025 and 2030.

Policy Action 4.3:

Strengthen the national and institutional research and evaluation capacity and stimulate the application of digital technologies and innovation to accelerate the development and implementation of effective policy solutions aimed at increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary behaviour.

Policy Action 4.4:

Escalate advocacy efforts to increase awareness and knowledge of, and engagement in, joint action at the global, regional and national levels, targeting key audiences, including but not limited to high-level leaders, policy-makers across multiple sectors, the media, the private sector, city and community leaders, and the wider community.

Policy Action 4.5:

Strengthen financing mechanisms to secure sustained implementation of national and subnational action and the development of the enabling systems that support the development and implementation of policies aimed at increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary behaviour.

- PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES
- Collaborate across ministries to identify or develop dedicated financing mechanisms to support multi-sectoral approaches and policy actions on physical activity. For example, implementation of a fixed proportion of total annual transport budgets allocated to fund walking and cycling network infrastructure; implementation of a fixed proportion of the annual national sports budget allocated to community and grassroots sports participation; funding of a national physical activity lottery; and use of “social impact bonds”.

Source: Read more about the WHO initiative here: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241514187>.