

WHO Healthy Cities Recognition: Call for Nominations

The Alliance for Healthy Cities (AFHC) is an international network collaborating with the World Health Organization (WHO) that aims to protect and enhance the health of city dwellers. The Virtual 9th AFHC Global Conference will be convened in November 2021 with the key theme “Smarter Healthy Cities Beyond COVID-19”. The conference provides the opportunity for cities to showcase how the lessons learned from COVID-19 has allowed cities to re-imagine multisectoral and whole of society approaches, innovations and new technologies for the development of a sustainable, equitable and inclusive society.

Since 2004, during the conference, WHO-Western Pacific Regional Office recognizes the outstanding work of certain cities in promoting and protecting health of urban populations through the WHO Healthy Cities Recognition. All awards will be related to the innovations that cities have adopted and amplified in the community to protect its citizens against the direct and indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including innovations aimed at reaching vulnerable groups. The awards will be presented at the Virtual Ninth Global Conference of the Alliance for Healthy Cities and is officially awarded by WHO WPR.

Eligible applicants: Cities from Member States of the Western Pacific Region, World Health Organization

Deadline for submission: The last day nominations will be accepted is 10 September 2021. Any nominations received after this date may not be considered.

How to submit: Please complete the WHO Healthy Cities Recognition nomination form. Email your submission and supporting documents to the Social Determinants of Health and Violence and Injury Prevention Unit of WHO-WPRO email address: wprosdh@who.int

Recognition: Recognition will be awarded to nominees who successfully demonstrate best practice in the following areas. Awardees will be announced at the virtual Ninth Global Conference of the Alliance for Healthy Cities Global Conference, 03-05 November 2021.

List of WHO Healthy Cities Recognition award categories:

- Innovative Approaches to address Air Pollution in Cities
- Reduction of harmful alcohol consumption and alcohol related harm
- Healthy Ageing through multi-sectoral collaboration
- Promoting healthy food environments, for all
- Commitment to physical fitness through effective partnerships
- Sharing clean air: Committed to multisectoral implementation of smoke-free laws
- Reaching and engaging vulnerable groups for their care and protection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Award title: Innovative Approaches to address Air Pollution in Cities

Award description:

Air pollution, both outdoor and indoor, is now established as the single greatest environment-related health hazard in the Region. It is estimated that more than 80% of people in cities are regularly exposed to air pollution. The Region reports 2.88 million deaths each year or 41% of global air pollution-related deaths, despite having just 25% of the world's population. The leading pathway is ischemic heart disease (or coronary heart disease), followed by stroke, chronic lung disease, lung cancer and acute lower-respiratory disease. Further, air pollution increases the susceptibility and vulnerability of COVID-19. Developing countries and poorer communities are at higher risk for pollution-related disease.

Cities, in particular, have major roles to address air quality, because they deal with contributors of air pollution such as the management of traffic congestion caused by motor vehicles which is the largest source of air pollution in cities. Dealing with air pollution is also a practical pathway to address climate change - air pollution and climate change are closely linked due to their same root cause: combustion of fossil fuels for energy, transport, industry and heating¹. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the pace at which cities must adapt and prepare for changes on the health horizon attributed to the environment, including the existential threat that climate changes poses to countries in the Region.

For the Future, Towards the Healthiest and Safest Region identifies climate change and the environment (CCE) as one of the thematic priorities for the Region, with the goal of ensuring that countries and communities have the capacity to anticipate and respond to the changing environment and climate, with the health sector taking a lead role in cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder efforts. This award seeks cities across the region who are champions of this regional strategy and, despite the challenges brought about by COVID-19, have sustained, prioritized and accelerated its implementation.

This award is to recognize innovative approaches by cities to deal with air pollution and the co-benefits which it brings to address climate change. The awarded policy and/or programme should meet the following criteria:

- Advocacy by cities to articulate the health co-benefits of actions and policies to reduce air pollution from non-health sectors (especially in the transport sectors);
 - Building resilience of urban populations to adapt to climate change impacts through green and healthy activities such as cycling, sustaining green lungs in cities, promote recycling and waste minimization etc;
 - Monitoring the impact of air pollution on health to provide timely, accurate and strategic information to the general public;
 - Innovative ideas of applying a climate change and environment lens to other works in the cities.
 - Address gender and equity gaps
- Support COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts

¹ WHO. COP24 Special Report, Health and Climate Change. Geneva. 2018

Award title: Reduction of harmful alcohol consumption and alcohol related harm

Award description:

Alcohol use has major impacts on population health and wellbeing. The Western Pacific Region (WPR) has some of the highest alcohol consumption rates among adults in the world. Every minute, one person dies from alcohol-related harm in the WPR. Beyond its link to multiple non-communicable diseases (NCDs), alcohol use significantly increases risk of violence and injures. Young people are especially at risk for alcohol-related injury (including drink driving, violence and suicide), while elderly people are at increased risk of falls. Alcohol consumption can have broader social and economic impacts across cities. It's association with increased incidence of injuries and violence has implications beyond health, impacting transport, law enforcement, housing and welfare sectors, among others. This award calls for leading examples of multisectoral involvement/programs to reduce alcohol related harm and strive to build safe communities and societies.

To meet our goal of becoming the healthiest and safest Region, as stated in our regional vision *For the Future*, it is important to tackle the underlying causes of alcohol consumption and in-turn, prevent alcohol-related injury and violence. Actions to reduce the harmful use of alcohol are further reflected in a range of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹, with Target 3.5 specifically aiming to “*strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance use, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol*”. Many cities have already taken action to identify and address the social and commercial determinants that contribute to alcohol-related harm.

There is global consensus on the need to decrease harmful use of alcohol by at least 10% as part of the overarching aim to reduce premature deaths from NCDs by 25% by 2025. The COVID-19 pandemic has had introduced new urgency to achieve this goal. This award seeks cities across the region who are champions of these regional and global goals and, despite the challenges brought about by COVID-19, have sustained, prioritized and accelerated its implementation.

This award seeks to recognize and share innovative policies and/or programmes that addresses the challenges in the harmful consumption of alcohol. The awarded policy and/or programme should meet the following criteria:

- Cities which have implemented cost-effective interventions to reduce harmful use of alcohol and alcohol related harm, such as restricting physical availability of alcohol, increasing prices, and regulating marketing of alcohol.
- Be innovative and have potential to be scaled-up throughout the Region.
- Engages both health and non-health sectors, as well as the community, in planning, implementation and monitoring the policy and/or programmes.
- Address gender and equity gaps
- Support COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts

Award title: Healthy Ageing through multi-sectoral collaboration

Award description:

More than 240 million of people over the age of 65 live in the Western Pacific Region, and that number is expected to double by 2050. The COVID-19 pandemic affected older adults disproportionately, underscoring the importance of promoting healthy ageing. COVID-19 has transformed older people's livelihoods, routines, access to care and support, social connection, and how they are outwardly perceived. With older people being a key vulnerable group to the effects of COVID-19, the senior community has been burdened to spend more time at home, limit social engagement with family members, friends and colleagues, and cease other activities. This has led to heightened risk of anxiety and poor mental health. This award seeks cities which have led innovations and programmes to target their older populations and created opportunities to foster healthy ageing during the pandemic.

The Regional Committee for the Western Pacific in October 2020 adopted an action plan on healthy ageing that addresses the needs of current and future ageing populations in the Region. As per the action plan, many cities are already taking early action to prepare for population ageing and promote healthier older adults who are thriving and contributing in society with a whole of society approach. This award seeks cities across the region who are champions of this action plan and despite the challenges brought about by COVID-19 have sustained, prioritized and accelerated its implementation.

This award seeks to recognize and share innovative policies and/or programmes that addresses the challenges in ageing societies. The awarded policy and/or programme should meet the following criteria:

- Be innovative and potential to be scaled-up throughout the Region.
- Engages both health and non-health sectors, as well as the community, in planning, implementation and monitoring the policy and/or programmes.
- Address gender and equity gaps which is related to ageing society
- Support COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts

Award title: Promoting healthy food environments, for all

Award description:

Unhealthy diets that consist of processed foods high in salt, sugar and fat, are one of the main common risk factors for noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Recent available data in the Western Pacific Region have showed the continued rise in the prevalence of overweight and obesity among adults, children and adolescents. The issue is exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as physical and economic access to healthy diets have been disrupted. Moreover, there has been an unprecedented rise in the rate of wasting in children under-5 years old, globally as an indirect economic impact of the pandemic. An important step in the reduction of double burden of malnutrition, and prevention and control of NCDs along with addressing the impact of COVID-19 on nutrition and health, is to promote a healthy diet, which is heavily influenced by the food environment.

The food environment is the interface where people interact with the wider food system to acquire and consume foods. Food marketing, a component of the food environment, plays a powerful role in shaping attitudes towards and encouraging consumption of unhealthy foods and beverages - particularly among children, who are most susceptible to marketing messages. Further, the healthiness of diets is dependent on other components, including availability, prices, accessibility, affordability, desirability, and convenience. Recognizing that there is no single food to protect you against COVID-19, this award seeks cities who innovatively promote environments with a variety of foods for a healthy and balanced diet, including whole grains, legumes, vegetables, fruits, nuts and animal source foods.

The *Action Plan to Reduce the Double Burden of Malnutrition in the Western Pacific Region* and the *Regional action framework on protecting children from the harmful impact of food marketing in the Western Pacific* recommend the promotion of healthy diet through comprehensive approaches that improve food environments. This award seeks cities across the region who are champions of these strategies and, despite the challenges brought about by COVID-19, have sustained, prioritized and accelerated its implementation.

This award seeks to recognize and share innovative policies and/or programmes that equitable access, and removes COVID-19 related barriers to access, healthy foods such as vegetables and fruits, and healthy snack options for all, and capitalizes on food marketing as means to influence healthy consumer behaviors. The awarded policy and/or programme should meet the following criteria:

- Measures may include: adoption of policies that regulate food marketing; promotion of proper labelling; provision of subsidies in selling and buying healthy food; implementation of food safety standards to prevent food-borne illnesses; and implementation of interventions that promote availability and accessibility of healthy foods in different settings such as schools and workplaces.
- Recognition may be given to cities that have adopted and developed public health services and social marketing campaigns tailored to the COVID-19 situation to promote healthy eating and drinking among all age groups.
- Be innovative and potential to be scaled-up throughout the Region.
- Engages both health and non-health sectors, as well as the community, in planning, implementation and monitoring the policy and/or programmes.
- Address gender and equity gaps
- Support COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts

Award title: Commitment to physical fitness through effective partnerships

Award description:

In the Western Pacific Region, 1 in 5 adults, and 8 in 10 adolescents (aged 11-17 years) do not currently meet the global recommendations for physical activity set by WHO. Physical activity includes all forms of active recreation, sports participation, cycling and walking, as well as activities at work and home, play, dance and gardening. Regular physical activity is a well-established protective factor for the prevention and treatment of the leading noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart diseases, stroke, and diabetes. These diseases are amongst the top 10 leading cause of death in the region and increase the risk of COVID-19 disease severity. During this COVID-19 pandemic, movement restrictions meant that many more people were required to stay at home and thus risked a more sedentary lifestyle, with increased challenges to engage in physical exercise. Many cities implemented innovative approaches to encourage their citizens to be more active. Acknowledging the importance of maintaining physical activity during the pandemic, this award seeks cities who have demonstrated whole of society and local community driven solutions to abide by COVID-19 guidelines, yet enable the enjoyment of physical activity.

The *Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018-2030* outlines recommended policy actions to support member states in ensuring that all people have access to safe and enabling environments conducive to physical activity. This award seeks cities across the region who are champions of this action plan and, despite the challenges brought about by COVID-19, have sustained, prioritized and accelerated its implementation.

This award seeks to recognize and share innovative policies and/or programmes that addresses the challenges in physical inactivity. The awarded policy and/or programme should meet the following criteria:

- Decreasing physical inactivity using a systems-based multi-sectoral approach and engaging diverse partners
- Be innovative and have potential to scale-up throughout the Region.
- Engages both health and non-health sectors, as well as communities, in planning, implementation and monitoring the policy and/or programmes.
- Address gender and equity gaps
- Support COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts

Award title: Sharing clean air: Committed to multisectoral implementation of smoke-free laws

Award description:

The Western Pacific Region (WPR) is home to 386.5 million adult smokers. Tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke are preventable risk factors for noncommunicable diseases, as well as respiratory infections. Tobacco smokers face around a 40 – 50% higher risk of developing severe disease and death from COVID-19 compared to non-smokers. Only 100% smoke-free environments can offer effective protection from secondhand smoke. WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) emphasizes how all indoor public places should be 100% smoke-free. This award seeks cities across the Western Pacific Region who innovate and strive to create and maintain smoke-free environments.

Many cities across WPR have adopted laws and policies aimed at protecting people, particularly vulnerable populations, from exposure to tobacco smoke and emissions from emerging tobacco and electronic nicotine and non-nicotine delivery systems. This upholds the principle that people everywhere, especially in cities where they live and work, have the right to share clean air. Enforcement of, and promoting public compliance with, smoke- and emissions-free air laws and policies requires innovation, commitment and involvement of partners beyond the health sector including civil society.

The WPRO Regional Action Plan for Tobacco Control 2020-2030 includes objectives on implementing measures to protect people from exposure to tobacco smoke and emissions from emerging tobacco and electronic nicotine delivery systems through multisectoral action for effective enforcement. This award seeks cities across the region who are champions of such efforts and, despite the challenges brought about by COVID-19, have sustained, prioritized and accelerated action.

This award seeks to recognize jurisdictions or program which meet the following criteria:

- Is led by or involves at least two non-health government sectors and at least one civil society group in the implementation of smoke- and emissions-free laws
- Has undertaken a situational analysis to identify strengths and limitations (including barriers related to COVID-19), with smoke- and emissions-free air law and policy implementation
- Includes an innovative approach to enforcement which incorporates measures to reduce potential inequities in enforcement and to adapt to the dynamic COVID-19 situation
- Includes a communications campaign to promote compliance with smoke- and emissions-free laws policies
- Be innovative and have potential to scale-up throughout the Region.
- Engages both health and non-health sectors, as well as communities, in planning, implementation and monitoring the policy and/or programmes.
- Address gender and equity gaps
- Support COVID-19 preparedness and response efforts

Award title: Reaching and engaging vulnerable groups for their care and protection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Award description:

COVID-19 has affected all communities in various ways, yet, there are some communities that are disproportionately more vulnerable to the health and socio-economic effects of COVID-19. Vulnerable groups may include indigenous populations, migrants, rural, urban poor, people with disabilities, and more. These groups vary across country and city contexts, and they may experience multiple intersecting vulnerabilities and compounding barriers to access the support they require. Throughout the pandemic, many cities have meaningfully and intentionally engaged people who are disproportionately vulnerable.

Inclusive approaches are necessary to ensure that public health measures are effective, this includes access to necessary support and resources. However, while handwashing is identified as an most effective method for reducing COVID-19 transmission, 4.2 billion people lack access to safely managed sanitation around the world². International reports now estimate millions of additional people living in extreme poverty due to COVID-19³. The economic downturn is expected to widen the income inequality gap and descend additional groups into poverty, meaning an insecure standard of living and inheritance of inequities for the next generation.

For an equitable response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many cities have underscored the importance of putting these communities at the centre to ensure innovations, policies and practices developed and implemented are inclusive, equitable and reflective of the realities on the ground for now and for the future. Community engagement, and the use of community organizations as trusted voices, has been key to achieve this. This award seeks cities who have addressed the diverse needs of these groups by adopting community driven innovations for COVID-19 public health and social measures with the engagement of all members of society and community organizations, such as civil society organizations.

For the Future: towards the healthiest and safest region is a Western Pacific Regional implementation strategy of GPW13. The Reaching the Unreached thematic priority emphasizes the need to leave no one behind in our approach of implementing public health interventions. This award seeks cities across the region who are champions of this thematic priority and, despite the challenges brought about by COVID-19, have sustained, prioritized and accelerated its implementation.

This award seeks to recognize and share innovative policies and/or programmes that addresses the challenges in reaching vulnerable groups through engaging community organization. The awarded policy and/or programme should meet the following criteria:

- Collaboration across sectors beyond health and engagement with community organizations to create an enabling environment for vulnerable groups to minimize health and socio-economic impacts of COVID-19;
- Identifying and supporting the expansion of community driven innovations to stay safe and support against COVID-19;
- Communication and community engagement mechanisms to promote social inclusion and prevent the stigmatization/marginalization of vulnerable groups as a result of COVID-19;
- Building trust with vulnerable groups to engage and empower them in the COVID-19 response.
- Be innovative and have potential to scale-up throughout the Region.
- Address gender and equity gaps

1. ² Goal 6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. In: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development [website]. 2020 (accessed 10 January, 2021).

2. ³ Susantono B, Sawada Y, Park CY. Navigating COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific. Asian Development Bank. 2020. (<https://dx.doi.org/10.22617/TCS200247-2>, accessed 10 November, 2020)