

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE POLICY AND PRACTICE: IMPLEMENTING FOR BETTER RESULTS

**International conference celebrating the 45th anniversary of
Alma-Ata and 5th anniversary of Astana declarations**

23 October 2023, Astana, Kazakhstan

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION THE YOUTH-LED OUTCOME STATEMENT

The development of the zero draft of the outcome statement was led by youth representatives from the WHO Regional Office for Europe's Youth4Health network, the WHO Youth Council, the WHO Primary Health Care Young Leaders Network and UNICEF youth representatives. The youth representatives organized and co-led – with technical officers from WHO and UNICEF – online consultations with young people to bring their vision of the future of primary health care to the attention of decision-makers. This is a youth-led statement prepared on behalf of all Conference participants. Participants now can provide feedback on the draft, with youth representatives leading the process of considering and integrating these comments into the final statement presented at the Conference.

We, the participants gathered at the International Conference on Primary Health Care Policy and Practice: Implementing for Better Results in Astana, Kazakhstan on 23 October 2023, reaffirm in solidarity the commitments expressed in the ambitious and visionary Declaration of Alma-Ata of 1978, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in pursuit of Health for All and Declaration of Astana of 2018.

We celebrate the 45th anniversary of the Declaration of Alma-Ata and the 5th anniversary of the Declaration of Astana and recognize the importance of whole-of-society approaches and intergenerational collaboration to strengthen primary health care within and across the globe and to ensure the highest level of health and well-being for all.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of adaptable primary health care-oriented health systems, patient-centred integrated care models and innovative health financing and has accelerated digital health solutions supporting marginalized and vulnerable populations in having continued access to high-quality comprehensive essential health services. Further, the pandemic emphasized that the primary care workforce is key to building trust and a shared understanding between communities and decision-makers and, overall, bringing to the attention of decision-makers the vital role communities play in delivering primary care services, implementing essential public health functions and building resilient and safe communities.

The accessibility, quality and equity of primary health care-oriented health services remain key concerns. The younger generation is deeply concerned about the disparities in the accessibility and delivery of comprehensive essential health services, especially for vulnerable populations. Poor working conditions and environments remain a concern and create challenges for delivering health care in primary care. In addition, they pose a threat to the attractiveness of choosing primary care as a profession for young people and retaining the young workforce once they enter a primary care profession.

Primary health care remains the most inclusive, equitable, cost-effective and efficient approach to enhance people's physical and mental health and well-being.¹ As the current generation, we have a responsibility to future generations to confront and solve the challenges of our time and to work towards a healthier and safer future for all.

We envision primary health care-oriented health systems that give priority to solidarity and equity and that make health rights a fundamental principle. In this future, young people are not just beneficiaries but proactive partners in primary health care, with their voices amplified and their needs and aspirations at the heart of implementing and designing primary health care. We envision primary health care-oriented health systems that are sustainable and climate friendly, integrated into education and community engagement and well-equipped, resilient and empowered by a workforce working in supportive and safe environments.

This vision calls for future-proofing primary health care transformation and focusing on effective implementation strategies to move from vision to action. We urge all stakeholders to learn from successful primary health care transformers to identify and tailor key success factors for transformation such as political commitment, clear mandates for institutions at the national and local levels, adequate financing, effective health workforce strategies and participatory processes to channel the voices of practice and communities to decision-makers.

We call on decision-makers to give priority to the following.

¹ Primary health care. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/primary-health-care>).

1. Ensuring equitable and inclusive access to primary health care

We urgently advocate primary health care–oriented health systems that are accessible to every individual regardless of geographical, financial, time-bound and sociocultural barriers. To achieve this, we advocate implementing strategies to increase primary health care–oriented financing, provide affordable health services and integrate digital health solutions to bridge the urban and rural gap. Health literacy is also key to enable individuals to navigate primary health care–oriented health services with knowledge and confidence. Moreover, we strongly advocate primary health care–oriented health systems based on a preventive approach, bringing health and well-being services closer to communities, empowering individuals, families and communities to take charge of their own health and well-being.

2. Moving towards primary health care-oriented health systems that are safe, people centred and clinically effective

We envision future primary health care–oriented health systems in which the quality of care is not just a standard but a crucial commitment to its patients and its workers. Patient-centred care and a compassionate response should be the core of primary health care, in which people's needs and preferences are respected and treatments arise from thorough clinical investigation and an understanding of the social, financial and cultural environments of the patient, with all the accompanying challenges and opportunities.

3. Investing in a primary health care-oriented workforce

We urge greater investment in and better policies for the health-care workforce that aim to attract future professionals and retain current ones, especially those working in primary care. We call on decision-makers to take urgent action to guarantee decent pay and working conditions and to create healthy and supportive working environments by addressing issues such as burnout. We strongly advocate empowering the health workforce in primary health care by investing in continual training, research and international collaboration.

4. Ensuring the human and relational aspects of primary health care amid the opportunities of the digital era

The current digital revolution, including artificial intelligence and big data, can help to strengthen primary health care by offering multiple opportunities to leapfrog towards more effective models of care (multidisciplinary, networked and proactively working with people with complex needs). However, these should be implemented as part of a system-wide digitalization strategy aimed at preserving and enhancing the foundational values and principles of primary health care. The essence of primary health care is high-quality human care based on relationships, trust and compassion.

5. Enhancing resilience to current and emerging health and well-being challenges: mental health, social vulnerabilities, the impact of climate change and emergencies

The primary health care–oriented health systems of the future must be resilient to respond swiftly to emerging health challenges, including rapidly growing mental health problems, the multitude of social vulnerabilities, the impact of climate change and health emergencies. We want decision-makers to transform emerging challenges into opportunities to design and deliver high-quality health services.

Young people stand with you today united in shaping accessible, equitable, high-quality and innovative primary health care–oriented health systems for all generations throughout the life-course. We commit to championing these priorities and working together to create systems that leave no one behind and ensure a healthier and safer future for everyone.

Submit comments to phc2023@who.int by 12:00 CET on 12 October 2023.