September 20th, 2017

World Health Organization

Re: Consultation on the Physical Activity Action Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the WHO global action plan on physical activity 2018 – 2030. The document is an important as it sets out the framework for action which lays down the foundation for policies and practices within countries, and is an important call for action by leaders within countries.

On behalf of the National Health and Medical Research Council Centre for Research Excellence in Healthy Liveable Communities, we would like to congratulate the World Health Organization team, on their excellent call to action: it is timely; important; far reaching and sophisticated; and, evidence-based.

To assist in fine-tuning the WHO global action plan, we have drafted some comments. Most suggested edits are minor, with those comments we regard as more important and requiring action indicated in **bold text**. The reasons are outlined in the comment boxes. The most significant comments are as follows:

1. While reference is made throughout to supporting active transportation, there could be greater emphasis on active recreation.
2. The action plan is lengthy possibly due to some duplication throughout. If addressed, this could shorten the document and facilitate its readability. We have provided some examples, highlighted in yellow. This text refers to a very similar topic, which could be condensed into one point.
3. Reference to active living and ageing research, although included, is limited in this draft.
4. Perhaps a paragraph could also be added about research, highlighting the role that they could play in producing evidence that: (1) enables communities to increase control over their own health outcomes by advocating for better neighbourhood environments (Levasseur et al. 2017); and (2) informs urban and transport planning policies, infrastructure, and services that facilitates walking in all demographic groups everywhere (Barton and Grant 2013).

Congratulations once again, on highly relevant, and very comprehensive action plan.

Billie Giles-Corti, Lucy Gunn and Fatima Ghani Gonzalo on behalf of the NHMRC Centre for Research Excellence in Healthy Liveable Communities
SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE DOCUMENT

21. Policy actions to support walking and cycling as part of meeting daily needs and contributing to public life, from fetching water and food, to accessing the city opportunities for work and education, must be accompanied by measures to create a safe and healthy supportive environment for active lifestyles. This would include: actions to reduce air pollution levels, since 92% of the world’s population live in places with air quality levels exceeding WHO limits;33 the appropriate provision of adequate infrastructure and traffic regulations supportive of active transportation and recreation as well as prevent road injuries; and policy measures to prevent and protect walkers and cyclists against other forms of violence. Recognition of the close interactions between these policy agendas and efforts to increase physical activity is essential because coherent policy alignment is central to establishing joint agendas and accelerating implementation of actions.

27. Given the strong evidence of the importance of physical activity as part of healthy child growth and development, especially in the early years,51,52 there is a need to secure and improve provision for toddlers and children under 5 years of age, ensuring positive early interactions and stimulating experiences of play and movement, within the family context, in child care settings and in the community.53 This global action plan includes a priority focus on the development of positive attitudes and active lifestyles for the benefit of all people, including individuals, parents, families and communities, consistent with recommendations made by the WHO Ending Childhood Obesity Commission.54 This can be achieved by strengthening relevant policy and by scaling up the implementation of quality, age appropriate programs and opportunities for children, families and communities within safe and movement-conducive environments.

28. Physical activity is important at every age, and this includes in later life and for healthy aging. Specific activities such as muscle strengthening, and balance and stability exercises are important for the prevention of falls and maintenance of independent living and ageing in place. New evidence also indicates physical activity as an important modifiable risk factor for dementia55 and the global gains in life expectancy require that programmes and supportive environments that increase physical activity in all demographic groups, particularly in vulnerable groups such as women and the elderly, who are predisposed to inactivity, experience more individual and environmental barriers to PA participation compared to men and younger adults (Beard and Bloom 2015; Costello et al. 2011; Vrazel et al. 2008), and who favour walking rather than more vigorous activity, explicitly include older people, and through action on working age adults help individuals build physical capacity for healthy ageing. (Satariano et al. 2012; Stronegger et al. 2010) (Hallal et al. 2012).

35. Increasing participation in physical activity will also require improved urban infrastructure. Strong evidence supports the importance of compact urban design and access to public and green open spaces71 in providing the positive enabling environments for higher levels of physical activity.72,73 We can double the levels of walking can be doubled through the use of liveable neighbourhood design principles74 and this is also supported by evidence for LMICs.75 These same design principles, when applied to new brownfield site developments, as well as brownfield city regeneration projects, not only provide multiple potential health benefits but can also benefit the environment and contribute to delivering on the New Urban Agenda76 and sustainable development but also has the co-benefits for environmental sustainability, social justice and economic development (Barton and Grant 2013) and contributing to delivering the New Urban Agenda76.

37. Given the increasingly urbanized world, with over 70% of the population living in urban centers, cities have a particular responsibility and opportunity to contribute to this agenda.81 The Shanghai Declaration,82 WHO Healthy Cities,83 The Bloomberg Healthy Cities Partnership84 and other related initiatives85,86 provide important openings for collaboration. City leaders have an unparalleled opportunity to take bold steps towards increasing physical activity and can use the city governance structures to implement...
comprehensive whole of community initiatives that can create supportive environments, have a wide reach of all demographic groups, people, deliver results and demonstrate the benefits of joint actions.

Vision 45. A world where all countries provide the enabling environments and opportunities for all citizens to be physically active throughout the life course, and through this enhance the social, cultural, economic development and wellbeing of nations.

Goal 46. One hundred million people more active by 2030.

Cross Cutting Guiding Principles

f) Cross-sectoral Engagement and Partnership for Joint Action: National policies in sectors other than health have a major bearing on premature mortality from NCDs. Health gains can be achieved more readily by influencing public policies in sectors like agriculture, food production, environment, trade, transport, recreation and urban development than by making changes in health policy alone. A comprehensive, integrated and intersectoral approach is required to reduce the prevalence of physical inactivity introduced at the individual, community, cultural, political and environmental level including non-state actors.

II. CREATING ACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

This strategic objective aims to create environments that promote and safeguard the rights of all demographic groups of all ages and abilities to have equitable access to safe places and spaces in their cities and communities to be physically active through walking, cycling, active transportation and recreation, sports, dance and play.

53. Objective I: Indicators of success

I. X % of countries that have implemented a communication campaign on physical activity
II. X % of countries with inclusion of physical activity in professional training of sectors in health and X% including in training beyond health
III. X % of countries conducting at least one community based mass participation event annually
IV. X % of cities have urban design guidelines that prioritise walking, cycling, and public transport use;
V. X % of cities have integrated urban planning policies that require integrated planning
VI. X % of cities/countries meeting the WHO air quality guidelines for PM10 (20 micrograms per cubic metre (µg/m3) as an annual average).

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PARTNERS:

73. Build, strengthen and participate in broad coalitions to ensure collaborative cross sectoral grassroots approach to advocate for and change environments and behaviour, improving efficiency and efficacy by leveraging each other efforts to promote physical activity.

Proposed Action 1.4: Committed to raise community wide awareness of the contribution that promoting walking and cycling have to cleaner air, sustainable development, mitigation of the impact of climate change, local economies, reducing inequalities, and sense of community and promoting health and well-being and is an enabler to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals including SDG 3, SDG 11 and SDG 15.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES:

74. Promote and support implementation of programs that encourage, facilitate and sustain walking, cycling and use of public transport for trips to local destinations, including travel to school and travel to work initiatives, and may include city and community cycle hire schemes.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE SECRETARIAT:

75. Develop and disseminate an operation manual including case studies and a menu of options to increase physical activity through public transport, travel to school, travel to work and cycle hire schemes.

76. Develop tools to promote awareness of the contribution of active travel (cycling & walking) into economic and environmental sustainability including actions through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PARTNERS:
77. Lead and support communications campaigns to promote awareness of the contribution of active travel (cycling, walking, and public transport) into economic and environmental sustainability agendas and the need for comprehensive policies and interventions, and recreation.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PARTNERS:
88. Development Banks should integrate evidence-based interventions to prioritize pedestrian and cyclist safety into core transport infrastructure investment and new city and urban investment.
89. Development banks and other agencies should conduct demonstration projects comparing current versus full cost modelling of private motorised travel on infrastructure and urban development business case investment.
90. Development agencies, city leaders and other stakeholders to integrate walkability and cyclability assessment into new city investment and development business and investment cases -investment to inform and priorities and resources.

Proposed Action 2.2: Accelerate implementation of actions, infrastructure and actions, to improve the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport passengers with priority given to actions that reduce risk for the most vulnerable road users including vulnerable demographic groups such as women, young people, older adults, and those people with physical or mental disability.

91. Implement and enforce effective traffic management policies, interventions and programmes, including but not limited to: traffic speed restrictions including 30km/hr in all residential neighbourhoods and 50km/hr on urban road; traffic calming interventions and other demand management strategies as recommended in the Decade of Action on Road Safety and Vision Zero and agreed by member States in WHA69.713.
92. Implement effective education campaigns aimed at increasing knowledge and awareness of road injury risks factors and effective interventions for pedestrians, cyclists and other road users.
PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE SECRETARIAT:
93. Provide technical support for implementation of actions, interventions to improve safety of pedestrians and cyclists in the Decade of Action on Road Safety.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PARTNERS:
94. Investment agencies should mandate the integration of road safety and accessibility into transport infrastructure investment criteria.

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Proposed Action 2.3: Improve the level of safe access to proximate, larger, higher quality and safe public and green open space, recreational spaces and sports amenities by for all demographic groups, including people of all ages and abilities, in all cities and communities, with a priority focus on reducing inequalities of access?

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES:
95. Mandate and enforce urban planning, land use and spatial policy guidelines, at all levels of government, that require provision and enhancement of equitable access to quality, safe public and green open spaces, recreational areas and sports facilities.
96. Facilitate the active engagement of community members in the location, design and improvement of public and green open spaces and recreational spaces, including for example in urban gardening/agriculture projects, initiatives to enhance biodiversity, the development of open streets programs.
97. Implement comprehensive health and economic assessments of public and green open spaces interventions to address the full-range of health, climate and environmental benefits of urban ecosystems, including their impact on physical activity, with a focus on health in all policies approach and focus on equity of access.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE SECRETARIAT:
98. Develop and disseminate guidance on equitable access to quality, safe public and green open spaces, recreational areas and sports facilities toolkit including case studies for provision of quality, safe and green open spaces.

**PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PARTNERS:**

99. Support development and dissemination of urban spatial design guidelines at all relevant levels of government that promote active travel and the provision and enhancement of equitable access to quality, safe public and green open spaces, recreational areas and sports facilities.

Proposed Action 2.4: Ensure the design of new, and refurbishment of older buildings and public amenities, including educational, health care, sports, offices and all social housing, that enables occupants and visitors to be physically active in and around the buildings, including prioritizing access by pedestrians, cyclists and public transit.

**PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES:**

100. Develop and implement design guidelines regulations for buildings (including all places of employment) that prioritize design principles that encourage occupants and visitors to be physically active, including but not limited to, through use of stairs, office design, provision of open spaces and safe access by walking and cycling and limiting car parking options for private vehicles.

101. Develop and implement design guidelines for education and child care facilities that ensure adequate, provision of accessible and safe environments for children and young people to be physically active (e.g., play areas, recreational spaces), which reduce sitting-sedentary behaviours (e.g., activity permissive classroom and internal design) and support walking and cycling to and from educational institutions, including with provision of appropriate end of trip facilities.

102. Develop and implement design guidelines for recreational and sports facilities that optimize location to ensure equitable, safe and universal, access by all demographic populations, of all ages and abilities, and provision of accessible and safe access by walking and cycling opportunities, including with provision of appropriate end of trip facilities.

**PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE SECRETARIAT:**

103. In partnership with other UN agencies and stakeholders support the development of design guidelines that encourage occupants and visitors to be physically active.

**PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PARTNERS:**

104. Develop and implement guidance to support employers to create workplaces that support active lifestyles during the working day and enable active commuting.

105. Develop and implement mechanism for sharing within – and between – countries success stories and examples of best practice of interventions across all key settings.

106. Foster public private partnerships and private-third sector partnerships to maximize the contributions and capabilities of different sectors.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: CREATING ACTIVE LIVES**

107. The objective is to increase provision and access to opportunities and programmes that support the healthy lifestyle of all demographic groups (including people of all ages, abilities and diverse identities) in multiple settings, to be physically active, including in their community through walking, cycling, active recreation, sports, dance and play.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Indicators of success</th>
<th>Means of Verification</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. % of countries where physical education is mandatory and taught</td>
<td>G-SHPPS*</td>
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<tr>
<td>II. % of schools where students are taught basic motor skills and movement patterns needed to perform a variety of physical activities</td>
<td>G-SHPPS*</td>
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<tr>
<td>III. % of schools where physical education to students is taught by a physical education teacher or specialist</td>
<td>G-SHPPS*</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV. % of countries with brief counselling at primary and secondary health care services</td>
<td>NCD CCS*</td>
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<tr>
<td>V. No. of countries with whole of community Physical Activity programs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>VI. % of adults and children by gender who use active modes of transport (walking, cycling and public transport use).</td>
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Proposed Action 3.1: Enhance the provision of positive experiences in physical education and physical activity for girls and boys, in all pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions to establish and reinforce life-long skills, enjoyment and participation in physical activity according to abilities.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES:

108. Strengthen, assess and annually report on the implementation and adherence of mandated national policy on the provision of quality, inclusive, physical education curricula in primary and secondary schools for all boys and girls.

109. Develop and implement policy guidelines on the provision of inclusive and diverse physical activity opportunities, and the limiting of time spent in sedentary activities, in public and private settings where children under 5 years and young people receive care or social services.

110. Develop and implement age appropriate programs and opportunities in all educational settings (from early years to tertiary level) that encourage a variety of different forms of physical activity, in primary and secondary schools; this should include both opportunities inside the classroom and outside formal curriculum such as during recess and immediately before and after the formal school day.

111. Integrate inclusive, diverse and adapted physical activity opportunities into programs relating to children, young people and early year, particularly those at most risk of being excluded such as children and young people with disabilities.

112. Promote and implement initiatives that support parents and caregivers promoting physical activity in the family environment.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE SECRETARIAT:

113. Partner with UNESCO and other relevant agencies to disseminate and support implementation of the Quality Physical Education Policy package in country.

114. Develop and disseminate an operational manual including a menu of options and case studies for the promotion of physical activity through physical education, school based physical activities and whole of school programmes.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PARTNERS:

115. Advocate and support action on providing opportunities for early years physical activity through partnership with Public Health Nursing, child care services, and other relevant public and private agencies.

116. Partner and support the development and implementation of programs and policies to improve and increase the opportunities for physically active in early years.

Proposed Action 3.2: Implement the integration of patient assessment and provision of advice on physical activity by appropriately trained health and social care providers in primary and secondary healthcare and social services.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES:

117. Develop and implement standardized protocols on assessment and brief advice on physical activity in primary health and social care settings and, where appropriate, include systems of referral to community based opportunities for additional support for users to be physically active, adapted to local context and culture.

118. Integrate into health policy and patient services the assessment, brief advice and, when needed appropriate supervised support for physical activity as part of treatment and rehabilitation pathways for patients diagnosed with long term conditions e.g. CVD, diabetes, cancer, disabilities and mental health disorders as well as into the care and services for pregnant women and older patients.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE SECRETARIAT:

Comment [BG22]: Add in an action about active transportation and recreation to school?

Comment [BG23]: Put in place a national performance framework for cities to foster investments and interventions that encourage active forms of travel.
129. Develop and disseminate an operational manual including case studies and a menu of options for the promotion of physical activity through recreation and sports sectors and incorporating a physical literacy across the life course across the ability range.

130. Support UN agencies adopt and implement workplace health programs and promotion of physical activity to employees using example of WHO “Walk the Talk” initiative.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL PARTNERS:

161. Provision and input of data and information, including health inequalities monitoring into established data systems for coordinated surveillance, monitoring and accountability across sectors.

162. Support the development and implementation of evaluation frameworks, policy and programme evaluation of national actions.

Proposed Action 4.4: Strengthen financing mechanisms to secure sustained implementation of national actions, and the development of the enabling systems that support national and sub national action aimed at increasing physical activity through walking, cycling, active recreation, sports, dance and play.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR MEMBER STATES:

163. Develop innovative and dedicated financing mechanisms to support a multisectoral approach and joint actions to increase levels of physical activity, for example implementation of a fixed proportion of total annual transport budgets (such as 15%) allocated to fund walking and cycling network infrastructure.


World Health Organization. 2014. Health economic assessment of transport for walking and cycling.