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The Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition

The Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition (IPAN), Deakin University welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the draft World Health Organization Global Action Plan on Physical Activity. IPAN is a world-leading research institute of more than 65 academic members of staff committed to improving health and quality of life in the population. Our vision is to improve the health of all populations through physical activity and nutrition research excellence. Our research is primarily focused on the primary and secondary prevention of disease through the understanding of and promoting engagement in physical activity and a healthy diet. Our research expertise includes healthy and active environments and lifestyles and the implementation of interventions at scale to influence systems-level change. IPAN is located within the School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences at Deakin University, which has been ranked number one in the world in the area of exercise and sport science for the past two years.

The Global Action Plan for Physical Activity

Rates of insufficient physical activity are high in all population groups globally and significantly contribute to the burden of non-communicable diseases and associated direct and indirect economic costs. In Australia, for example, physical inactivity is:

- Responsible for 10% of all deaths\(^1\)
- Accounts for 5% of the total burden of disease and injury\(^2\)
- Linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, including ischaemic heart disease, hypertension and stroke, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, breast and colon cancers, and increased risk of depression and Alzheimer’s disease.\(^3\)
- Estimated to cost the healthcare system $1.5bn per year\(^4\)

\(^1\) http://www.globalphysicalactivityobservatory.com/Country%20cards/Australia%20card.pdf
The time for action is urgent. We commend the World Health Organization on a timely and comprehensive plan to reduce the prevalence of insufficient physical activity globally. We strongly endorse the intent of the vision, principles, objectives and actions outlined in the draft Global Action Plan on Physical Activity. In particular, we strongly support the focus on people of all ages, including early childhood, the evidence-based approach, and the focus on equity as a cross-cutting principle. Linking to the Sustainable Development Goals will foster critical multisectoral and scalable actions that are needed to meet the objectives of the Plan. It will also ensure a health-in-all-policies outcome and achieve a range of co-benefits (eg, pollution, reduced fossil fuels and traffic congestion) associated with having an active population.3

We note that a Technical Package will be produced to provide Member States with practical advice for the delivery of the actions outlined in the Plan, taking into account context and resources. Such a Package should include advice on which actions may be most feasible or relevant to begin with to ensure some early wins and garner momentum. Practical advice on how to engage with multiple sectors and provide advocacy will be critical. Importantly, the Technical Package should provide a range of evidence-based, scalable approaches to promoting physical activity, strategies to support implementation of these approaches across multilevel systems, and examples of world-leading practice.

**Suggested improvements**

We note below some aspects of the draft Global Action Plan on Physical Activity that could be strengthened or amended for clarity.

**Goal – Point 46:** The goal of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity is to achieve a target of 100 million people *more active* by 2030. While this is a commendable goal, it would be difficult to measure and would require consensus about what constitutes ‘more active’. A more measurable target could be termed as a number of people or proportion of the population *meeting physical activity recommendations*. Such a target may also be more meaningful for Member States to strive toward and possible to measure within most existing monitoring systems.

Safe environments and opportunities for physical activity are promoted throughout the proposed actions. In many contexts, this will require involvement from the justice/policing sector. However, this sector is not explicitly mentioned within the plan.

In a number of proposed actions, it is noted that there should be a ‘priority focus on reducing inequalities’. This is highly commendable. We recommend a proportionate universalism approach (ie. resourcing and delivery of universal initiatives, programs and services at a scale and intensity proportionate to the degree of disadvantage or need) to achieve this action.

**Cross Cutting Guiding Principles – Point 48:** Here the need for multiple policy actions to be implemented across multiple settings is recommended. We commend this principle. As outlined in the Background section (Point 38), there has been a lack of policy implementation (and monitoring and surveillance) across many countries following the 2013 Global Action Plan. We recommend that Member States are provided specific guidance on strategies to achieve effective and sustained policy implementation at scale.

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Point 51: The development of a technical package to provide practical guidance on delivering physical activity interventions across different settings is introduced. We recommend that this technical package includes strategies for effective and sustainable intervention implementation at scale, beyond just delivery of interventions, and to include guidance on the equitable de-implementation of ineffective approaches.

Proposed Action 2.1, Point 83: Here the need for policy prioritising compact, mixed use neighbourhoods is outlined as a way of delivering pedestrian access to local amenities for daily living. We recommend tweaking the wording to refer to a diversity of local amenities for daily living. In addition, schools should be listed as an example of a local amenity for daily living.

Proposed Action 2.2, Point 91: This action is concerned with implementing and enforcing traffic management policies and programmes. Safe road crossing infrastructure is particularly important facilitator of active transport among children. We recommend including road crossing points in this action.

Proposed Action 2.4, Point 102: In this action, optimising the location of recreational and sport facilities to ensure equitable, safe and universal access by populations of all ages and abilities is emphasised. We contend that optimising the location of schools to ensure equitable, safe and universal access by children and youth is also critical and should be included as an action under Proposed Action 2.1. Distance to school is the strongest and most consistent correlate of active transport to/from school among children.

Strategic Objective 3, Creating Active Lives, Point 107: Indicator II refers to the % of schools where students are taught basic motor skills and movement patterns. We suggest expanding this indicator to also include early education settings, as ideally children should begin learning these skills prior to school entry. We also recommend amending Indicator IV to explicitly mention physical activity. This could read: % of countries with brief physical activity counselling at primary and secondary health care services.

Proposed Action 3.1, Point 109: We suggest rewording this Action from “the limiting of time spent in sedentary activities” to “the limiting of time spent in sedentary behaviors”. Also the current wording refers to ”settings where children under 5 years and young people receive care and social services”. Education settings should also be mentioned explicitly in the wording used in this Action.

Strategic Objective 4, Creating Active Systems, Point 141: This strategic objective describes the required leadership and systems at national and sub-national level. We recommend that this objective is extended to emphasise sustainability, beyond just delivery, of the noted outcomes (eg. building capacity, mobilising resources and implementing actions to increase physical activity participation).

Structure of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity: We recommend presenting Indicators after the actions for each Strategic Objective. In some cases, the relevance of the Indicator would be clearer if the actions were already outlined.

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