



IUHPE Statement

United Nations High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage

Moving Together to Build a Healthier World

23rd September 2019, New York

This Statement outlines the IUHPE position on the critical role of Health Promotion for effective Universal Health Coverage. The Statement links to existing IUHPE positions on Health Promotion Systems as a support for NCD Prevention and Control (1), on Health Literacy (2) and on Social Determinants of Health (3).

The IUHPE is pleased to have this opportunity to strongly support the Political Declaration of the High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage. On behalf of our members, representing high-, middle- and low-income countries globally, we welcome the focus on universal health coverage (UHC) and the reaffirmation of health as a precondition for sustainable development. As reflected in the Declaration, **health promotion is an essential component of UHC.**

The “health for all” message resonates with the IUHPE. To promote and protect people’s health and wellbeing, leaving no one behind, calls for health promoting health systems that will deliver on improved health for all, especially the most vulnerable. The goal of ensuring that all human beings can have healthy lives and can maximise their health potential calls for concerted action on health promotion and primary prevention as an integral component of our health systems.

The most effective and sustainable interventions for ensuring healthy lives and reducing the risks of poor mental and physical health are health promotion measures. Cost-effective and feasible health promotion interventions have been shown to make a real difference in improving population health, reducing risks for non-communicable diseases (NCDs), improving mental health, increasing health literacy, and addressing the social determinants of health and health equity.



Strengthening health promotion within primary care is an effective and efficient means of enhancing people's mental and physical health and ensuring their social wellbeing across the life course.

A narrow focus on disease-oriented health care and treatment on its own is unsustainable financially and will not achieve the necessary improvements in population health. Closing the health equity gap calls for more comprehensive action based on a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

The broad determinants of health can be addressed by mainstreaming a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach. This requires intersectoral actions to create supportive policies and environments that will protect and promote people's health and wellbeing, reduce exposure to risk factors, and empower individuals, families and communities in optimising their health and wellbeing.

There is an urgent need to move beyond the mere rhetoric of health promotion towards concrete action and strengthening the capacity of countries to implement health promotion at a political and policy level. It is imperative to ensure that the organisational and workforce capacity is put in place to deliver effective health promotion interventions at the national and local level.

The IUHPE argues that reorienting health systems to focus more on health promotion, prevention and primary health care, as advocated in the Ottawa Charter (4), is the most effective and sustainable way to achieve national health goals and targets, and reduce the escalating burden of preventable diseases and mental ill-health on health care systems and treasuries. At the 2018 United Nations High-Level Meeting on NCDs, the IUHPE proposed ten system requirements to achieve a sustainable health system and, therefore, contribute to enabling UHC. These requirements are divided into three types:



- **Political and policy requirements:** including real political commitment to effective health promotion policies and to well-funded action plans
- **Enabler requirements:** which ensure
 - Well-supported and dedicated health promotion institutions
 - High-level health promotion leadership
 - A competent workforce
 - Allocation of sustainable financing to support implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- **Implementation requirements:** that support comprehensive health promotion initiatives, including bold policies, fiscal measures, environment changes and health literacy programmes and resourcing of the ‘best ’and ‘good’ buys for health promotion and NCD interventions (1).

The IUHPE further calls on all Member States to conduct an audit to assess how their systems measure-up to these requirements. This important audit will inform further investment in service and system gaps and help determine priorities to advance health promotion.

The IUHPE can help

The IUHPE provides technical guidance and support to countries on health promotion implementation strategies that will strengthen the quality of health promotion practice. This includes:

- Providing leadership in mobilizing IUHPE members, namely regional and national institutions, as key actors in prioritizing health promotion in public health policy in their regions
- Developing and implementing an audit tool for member states to assess how their health promotion systems measure up to the IUHPE ‘ten system requirements for health promotion’
- Conducting training in advocacy for professionals and policy-makers, to improve knowledge and skills and to mobilise efforts towards health promotion approaches



- Supporting capacity development through the [IUHPE Accreditation System](#) for quality assurance of health promotion practitioners, and education and training programmes
- Conducting and co-organising global and regional conferences on health promotion
- Supporting effective partnerships and alliances through our global networks, expert working groups and through IUHPE individual and institutional membership
- Developing and translating health promotion knowledge, evidence and information through the IUHPE family of scientific journals, newsletters, our website and social media, as well as promoting exchanges on effective action through webinars.

It is time to step up implementation of health promotion approaches to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The delivery of UHC and the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for concerted action at all levels of government and civil society to invest in developing and scaling-up transformative health promotion actions that will deliver on population health improvement, reduce health inequities, and enhance wellbeing and sustainable development.

Delivering on UHC and meeting the ambitious targets of the SDGs means moving beyond a focus on curative health care to also embrace health promotion and primary prevention interventions that will address the broader determinants of health and place empowered citizens at the centre of their own health and wellbeing.

The complexity of current threats to health and well-being, combined with ambitious SDGs, means that action is urgently required to make measurable progress. We ask Member States to take immediate action to strengthen their health promotion systems. This is necessary to meet the health challenges of our time, including the unfolding NCD crisis, and provides a critical and sustainable bedrock for the delivery of UHC.



References:

1. International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE). *Beating NCDs Equitably: Ten system requirements for health promotion and the primary prevention of NCDs*. Paris: IUHPE, 2018. Available at :
https://www.iuhpe.org/images/IUHPE/Advocacy/IUHPE_NCDs_positionstatement.pdf
2. International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE). *IUHPE position statement on health literacy. A practical vision for a health literate world*. Paris: IUHPE, 2018. Available at :
https://www.iuhpe.org/images/IUHPE/Advocacy/IUHPEHealth_Literacy_2018.pdf
3. International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE). *IUHPE position statement on the social determinants of health*. Paris: IUHPE, 2011. Available at:
https://www.iuhpe.org/images/IUHPE/Advocacy/20120611_IUHPEPositionPaper_SDH_WEB.pdf
4. World Health Organization, *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*. Geneva: WHO, 1986. Available at:
<https://www.who.int/healthpromotion/conferences/previous/ottawa/en/>