

Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

QUESTIONNAIRE

“Sport and healthy lifestyles as contributing factors to the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health”

Other respondents (non-Member States, including civil society)

1. In your view, what should United Nations Member States be doing to encourage individuals to participate in sport and adopt healthy lifestyles? What is the extent of their responsibilities to their population in this area?

UN Members States should be implementing population based interventions that encourage their citizens to adopt health lifestyles. UN Member states have already recognized the importance of these measures when they adopted the September 2011 “Political declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases” which calls on governments to “advance the implementation of multisectoral, cost-effective, population-wide interventions in order to reduce the impact of the common non-communicable disease risk factors, namely ..., physical inactivity ..., through the implementation of relevant international agreements and strategies, and education, legislative, regulatory and fiscal measures, ...by involving all relevant sectors, civil society...”

The adoption by the World Health Assembly of a [Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs 2013-2020](#) and a Global monitoring framework that includes a target for a 10% relative reduction in prevalence of insufficient physical activity reiterated the importance of these interventions.

This was further reinforced by the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals which include a target that calls on governments to “by 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being”. In order to achieve this target, as well as some of the other goals in the recently adopted SDGs, governments must do more to ensure that their citizens have the option to adopt healthy and active lifestyles.

Given that UN Member States will have a responsibility to achieve the SDG as well as the physical activity targets associated with the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs, they will need to include in their national plans measures that help their citizens engage in physical activity; they will need to allocate resources to the implementation of these measures and implement them; and finally, they will need to monitor the impact of these measures.

2. Do you know of any State that has introduced legislation or policy in relation to sport and/or healthy lifestyles? If so, please provide a brief description and evaluation of the laws or policies adopted.

Yes, there are some known best practices in this area. But while there is increasingly more evidence in support of these measures, they are not fully implemented across UN Member States.

The Toronto Chapter for Physical Activity calls on governments and society to

- Adopt evidence-based strategies that target the whole population as well as specific vulnerable subgroups
- Address the environmental, social, and individual determinants of physical inactivity
- In addressing determinants of physical activity behaviour, embrace an equity approach to reduce the disparity in access to opportunities for physical activity
- Implement sustainable actions in partnership at national, regional, and local levels and across many sectors to achieve greatest effect
- Build capacity and support training in research, practice, policy, evaluation, and surveillance
- Use a life course approach by addressing the needs of children, families, adults, elderly people, and people with disabilities as well as specific settings such as worksites and schools
- Increase in political commitment to physical activity and increase resources for physical activity
- Ensure tailoring to cultural sensitivities and adapt strategies to accommodate varying local realities, cultures, contexts, and resources
- Allow healthy personal choices by making the physically active choice the easy choice
- The WHO Global Recommendations on Physical Activity for Health are a useful resource for governments
http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44399/1/9789241599979_eng.pdf

3. What are the major challenges and opportunities that arise in adopting a right-to-health approach to participation in sport and adoption of healthy lifestyles?

Physical inactivity is the 4th leading cause of death in the world, and it has been identified as one of the key risk factors to the non-communicable diseases pandemic. Addressing physical inactivity is recognized as a critical element of a non-communicable disease strategy. However, the role of physical activity continues to be undervalued despite evidence of its protective effects and the cost burden posed by present levels of physical inactivity (A recent 2015 International Sport and Culture Association suggests that in Europe alone, the cost of physical inactivity in the 28 EU countries exceeded 80 billion euros per year) .

Lack of capacity remains a challenge, and there is an urgent need to build global capacity. In order to advance global capacity in this area, inter-sectoral collaboration and improved understanding of what works, particularly in countries with low and middle incomes are essential, as are comprehensive monitoring to assess progress in implementation of policies and action plans, and momentum in development of a highly skilled workforce in physical activity and public health.

Although progress has been made in policy and planning, leadership and advocacy, workforce training, and surveillance, much needs to be done to fully address this global issue.

4. What are the best ways that individuals can be encouraged to participate in sport and adopt healthy lifestyles by Member States? Please, provide and briefly describe any examples of “best practices” adopted in this respect.

Member States should:

- Develop and implement multi-sectoral strategies and action plans focused specifically on physical activity that are framed within a systems approach
- Assign a clear stewardship role for physical activity to a relevant government body to form a multi-sectoral infrastructure building on existing structures
- Adopt evidence-based national recommendations and policy guidance on physical activity for health and quantified population targets
- Allocate sufficient sustainable resources for implementation, as well as evaluation and comprehensive surveillance for accountability

Ministries of health should:

- Reorient services and funding at national, regional, and local levels to prioritise physical activity as a standalone area of work
- Foster partnerships including through cross-governmental implementation at all levels and gain input and engagement from all stakeholders that form a broad multi-sectoral constituency both within and outside government
- Make physical activity an integral part of an overall disease prevention and health promotion model, including screening for physical inactivity, counselling about physical activity in prevention and disease treatment and management strategies as well as increased investment in comprehensive physical activity promotion policies, action plans, and implementation programmes

Ministries of education and other education should:

- Implement policies that support high-quality, compulsory physical education
- Promote and implement policies that encourage and support active travel to school
- Provide opportunities for physical activity during and after the school day as well as healthy school environments

Ministries of sport and other recreation sectors should:

- Develop and implement sport and recreation policy and funding systems that prioritise increased community access to affordable physical activity opportunities
- Develop programmes adapted to the needs of particular segments of the community that are less active than others

Ministries of planning should:

- Support and implement urban and rural planning policies, design guidelines and building codes that support walking, cycling, public transport, sport, and recreation with a particular focus on equitable access and safety

We urge ministries of transport to:

- Prioritise transport policies and services that promote active forms of non-motorised transport, with an emphasis on equitable access and safety
- Fund infrastructure support for walking, cycling, and public transit

Development:

- OECD countries and other countries that fund development programs should include physical activity projects in the portfolio of programs they fund and they should include indicators to monitor progress towards this goal

5. Are there any targeted interventions that can be implemented to promote participation in sport and adoption of healthy lifestyles amongst populations who could face vulnerable situations, including women, children, and people with disabilities?

Yes, there are some evidence based policies, but again, they are unfortunately not universally implemented. The recent adoption of the SDGs do provide an incentive to implement them.

There are major barriers to physical activity for each of these vulnerable groups. For example, women are more likely to cite time constraints and caregiving as issues preventing them from exercising, so a program that includes a physical activity program within their regular routine that provides childcare services may help increase physical activity among women. Environmental access and safety are concerns that affect all three of these groups. Mothers will not take their children to play in a park that is not safe, and disabled people will not go to a gym with no accessible equipment. For some of these groups, targeted interventions may be needed. Regardless, public safety and public health are integrally related, and any effective program will need to be multi-sectoral to address all of the inter-related issues. Barriers vary across age, race, income levels and location, but many of them are similar. Any effective intervention will need to take into concern the specific barriers for each vulnerable group.

6. Other than Member States, which other actors should be taking steps to encourage individuals to participate in sport and adopt healthy lifestyles? How can this be achieved? Please list any “best practice” examples that apply.

To encourage individuals around the globe to be more physically active will require not only whole of government engagement, but it will also require multi-sectoral and whole of society engagement. This means civil society and NGOs will need to be fully engaged in this process. The private sector, especially given the role it plays as an employer, must also be fully engaged. More specifically, interventions can come through numerous settings, including clinical, family, school, and faith-based. All of these organization and institutions can play a part in achieving healthy lifestyles, and interventions should be tailored to allow success from all types of programs.

Lack of resources remains a key challenge when it comes to achieving physical activity targets, so engaging the donors and philanthropic community will be critical at this stage. Furthermore, lack of a cohesive framework for these policies remains a challenge. A coordinated action by civil society, similar to what the Framework Convention Alliance (FCA) has done for tobacco control and the WHO FCTC, could help illustrate and encourage best practices around the world and could be a catalyst for successful interventions. The NCD Alliance and the International Society for Physical Activity and Health can help advance this work.

Deadline for submission of responses to the questionnaire:

In order to give the Special Rapporteur the opportunity to take into account the different contributions, all parties are encouraged to submit their responses as soon as possible and at the latest by **15 October 2015**.

Answers can be submitted via email to the following address:

srhealth@ohchr.org

OR by postal mail or fax to:

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