Regional Consultation to develop Strategic Framework on Social Determinants of Health Actions in South-East Asia (2023-2030)
New Delhi, India, 2-4 August 2022

Responding to the World Health Assembly resolutions 74.16 2021, and several global and regional commitments in accelerating actions to address the social, environmental and economic conditions affecting health in WHO Member States; the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia (SEARO) organized a regional consultation in New Delhi to share experiences of implementing SDH in countries as well as to consult on the draft strategic framework on SDH actions in South-East Asia. It brought together forty-seven participants representing multisectoral government bodies from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor-Leste, long with experts from academic institutions, United Nations agencies and different programmes of World Health Organization (on-site and on-line).

This regional consultation was timely as it provided a much-needed platform to the SEAR countries for taking stock of the progress made since the Rio Political declaration on SDH and discuss emerging challenges in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and rising inequities in health. Member States of WHO have an obligation to report the progress made on SDH to the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly in 2023. The countries consulted extensively on how to advance SDH actions in the region through the formulation of the regional strategic framework and implementation of the country-level intersectoral actions for achieving the region’s SDH targets as well as contributing to the attainment of the related-SDG goals by 2030.
Recommendation

The three-day regional consultation ultimately culminated into a set of pragmatic, inclusive and equity-enhancing recommendations that will prompt, prod and persuade member countries to take concrete measures through national and sub-national action plans on SDH, guided by the regional strategic framework to accelerate the SDH actions in the region. The recommendations are as follows:

At the WHO regional office level:
1. Finalize the regional strategic framework on SDH actions in South-East Asia (2023-2030) and disseminate it to all SEAR countries.
2. Guide member countries on the development and implementation of national and sub-national SDH action plans by using the regional strategic framework and adopting HiAP approach.
3. Develop training packages, tools and guidelines on the evolving areas of SDH, such as the social capital, digital and financial literacy, economics of well-being and sufficient economy, commercial determinants of health, whole-of-society engagement, equity in SDH, etc.
4. Assess ‘barriers and enablers’ in accelerating SDH actions, and document the best practices at the country and regional levels.
5. Establish a regional database on SDH and health equity.

At the country level:
1. Introduce SDH from a life-course approach and address the issue of intergenerational inequity.
2. Develop and implement national plans to strengthen governance mechanisms and advance SDH approaches and actions.
3. Assess and identify key actions on SDH within and outside the health sector.
4. Align SDH indicators with sustainable development goals and targets.
5. Develop a guideline on the engagement of civil society organizations, champions and community representatives for policy drives and actions.
6. Enable the health sector to collaborate effectively with other sectors through capacity building programmes using appropriate tools or guidelines.
7. Promote a research and development (R&D) programme in the health sector to generate concrete evidence on SDH and stimulate actions in other sectors.
8. Create a platform for evidence building, sharing of ideas, and allied actions to advance SDH.
9. Develop measurable and result-oriented SDH monitoring indicators to continue monitoring the socioeconomic conditions of populations that affect their health and wellbeing.
10. Social auditing of health programmes that will help the health sector to measure, understand, report and improve its social performance in terms of strengthening governance, addressing neglected social issues and narrowing of inequities.