

Better Laws for Better Health

Western Pacific Regional Action Agenda
on Strengthening Legal Frameworks for Health
in the Sustainable Development Goals



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ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAC	Codex Alimentarius Commission
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
HiAP	Health in All Policies
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IHR (2005)	International Health Regulations
NCD	noncommunicable disease
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PIP Framework	Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UHC	universal health coverage
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
WHO FCTC	WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

FOREWORD

Legal frameworks – instruments of law and the institutions responsible for putting them into effect – are essential to advance universal health coverage (UHC) and achieve health in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Law can be used to organize and manage health systems, allocate responsibilities, set standards, and authorize and constrain action. Law can promote, protect and fulfil the right to health. Law can regulate health services and products to ensure quality, safety and efficacy. Law can shape markets, from regulating potentially harmful products to mandating procurement practices that promote healthier products. The very act of passing or deliberating a law can convey information, alerting people of health risks and influencing their behaviour. As many social determinants of health lie beyond the health sector, law can be a powerful tool for coordinating and consolidating action across sectors, such as agriculture, environment, education, labour and housing.

Strengthening legal frameworks for health presents enormous challenges for Member States in the Western Pacific Region. Countries vary greatly in terms of legal systems and traditions, as well as political, economic, social, cultural and historical circumstances. As reflected in the interlinked nature of the SDG agenda, laws that impact health may fall beyond the health sector, requiring careful multisectoral collaboration to ensure policy coherence and consistent implementation. In the age of global health, legal frameworks should be aligned with international health commitments. Legal frameworks should also be updated regularly based on the latest evidence, to respond appropriately to contemporary and emerging public health risks. To be effective, legal frameworks should be sufficiently resourced and enforced, with monitoring and regular evaluation to ensure

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