



Action for Healthier Families Toolkit

A Primer for Policy-makers and Health-care Professionals

What are noncommunicable diseases?

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading causes of death and disability in many countries. In 2015, 31 million deaths in low- and middle-income countries were due to NCDs. Of these, roughly **15 million people died before they reached the age of 70 years**. In countries with low resources, people at risk for or suffering from NCDs usually have difficulty accessing health-care services, leading to delayed care, disease progression and complications, higher costs of care, and early deaths.

NCDs are caused by a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioural factors; usually have a long duration; and require lifelong management. Successful prevention and control of NCDs depend partly on the willingness of individuals and their families to make daily decisions to practise healthy behaviours, address modifiable risk factors and follow medical advice.

What is the role of families in NCD prevention and control?

The family is the most important social group. It is the first environment where humans develop physically, psychologically and socially.

Families are crucial to the attainment of good health because they have the power to prevent and reduce lifestyle-related risks by modifying the household's environment, influencing the behaviour of family members and working with other families to advocate better services and environments.

To overcome the growing NCD burden, there is a need to engage families as partners and co-advocates for health and improve their health literacy.

Health literacy – being able to access, understand and use important health concepts– is particularly important for the prevention and control of NCDs. It empowers the **individual** to manage his or her health and allows **family members** to help loved ones with heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes to go to medical appointments, take medications, check their blood sugar and blood pressure as advised, exercise regularly, and maintain a healthier diet.



What is the Action for Healthier Families Toolkit?

The **Action for Healthier Families Toolkit (AHF Toolkit)** is a health literacy tool designed by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for the Western Pacific to empower families to identify health-related issues, understand behavioural health risks, adopt healthier behaviours, manage existing diseases and use health services appropriately.

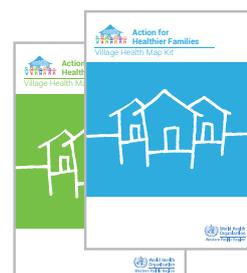
It also helps health champions or local leaders understand the prevailing health issues and risks in a village or bigger community, and develop and implement more relevant local health programmes.

It has four components that are packed and ready for use in one village:

- The **Action for Healthier Families – Family Tree Kit** (50 kits)
Each AHF **Family Tree Kit** is meant for one family to use. It is made up of one Family Tree Board and a set of stickers representing various icons. One AHF Toolkit contains 50 Family Tree Kits, so one health champion is able to reach 50 families in his or her village. This and the Village Health Map Kit are described further in the next section.
- The **Action for Healthier Families – Village Health Map Kit** (one kit)
The AHF **Village Health Map Kit** is intended for the health champion or local health leader of one or more villages. It contains one Village Health Map and another set of stickers.
- The **Action for Healthier Families Toolkit – User Guide** (one copy)
The AHF Toolkit User Guide is for community health workers, health-care professionals, village volunteers and other health champions. It provides detailed instructions on how to use the AHF **Family Tree Kit** and **Village Health Map Kit**.

This Toolkit User Guide may also be adapted by school nurses and teachers to use with students, and by health providers in work place settings to discuss health concerns that their employees may have about the health of their family members.

- The **Action for Healthier Families Toolkit - Primer** (one copy)
This document you are reading now is the AHF Toolkit Primer. It is intended to provide policy-makers, health-care professionals and other interested individuals an overview of the **AHF Toolkit**, the rationale for its development and use, and a brief description of its components.



What is the Family Tree Kit?

The most important component of the AHF Toolkit is the Family Tree Kit. It contains a **Family Tree Board** and a set of **stickers** that are used to conduct an interactive exercise that helps families understand their health issues and health risks, and identify corresponding actions they can take to address these.

The Family Tree Board has an illustration of a big tree with roots and branches that represent the family's multigenerational nature.

Characters: These stickers are meant to represent family members.



Health issues: These stickers have pink borders and represent health problems and issues in the family.



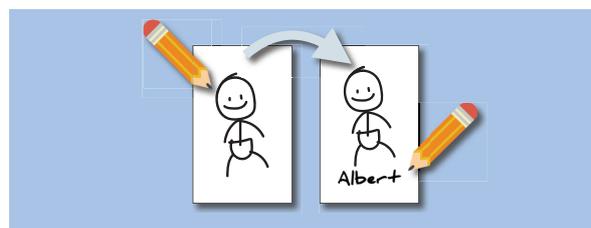
Health risks: These stickers have yellow borders and represent various behavioural and environmental factors that cause or aggravate a health problem or issue.



Family actions: These stickers have green borders and represent actions that family members may take to address health issues and risks they have identified.



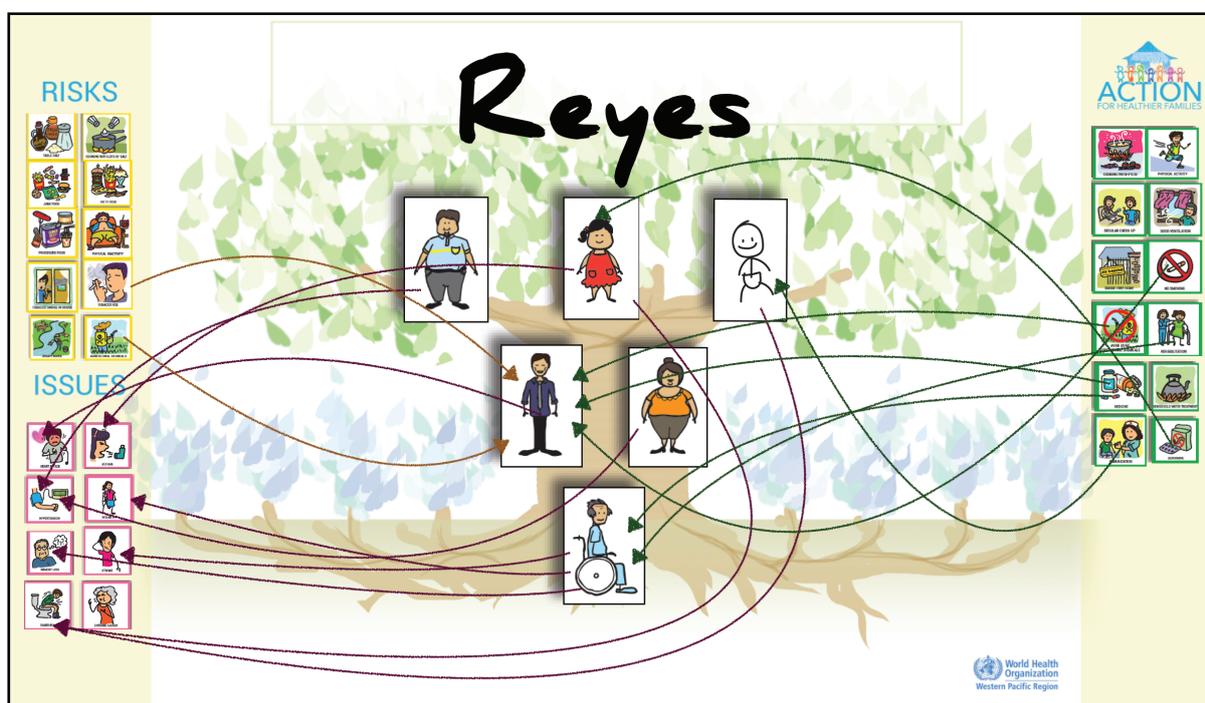
For each sticker type, blank stickers are also available to allow family members to create characters, risks, issues or action stickers relevant to their family but not represented.



Ideally, a group of health champions in your community should be trained on the use of the AHF Toolkit. After the training, each health champion is provided with an AHF Toolkit and encouraged to visit families in the community with suspected or known health problems and risks.

During the home visit, the health champion will introduce the AHF Family Tree Kit as a fun and interactive tool that helps improve family health. Family members will be guided to fill up the Family Tree Board by using the stickers to represent themselves, their family's health issues and risks, and feasible actions they can take.

An example of the filled-up Family Tree Board is shown below.



The board is kept by the family as a visual health record of their state of health at the time of the visit. It may be used by health champions to monitor issues, risks and actions identified in the previous visit, and reinforce earlier health messages.

What is the Village Health Map Kit?

The **Village Health Map Kit** is meant to help health champions or community leaders summarize common health issues and risks of families in their community and then identify appropriate community resources and actions to address these.

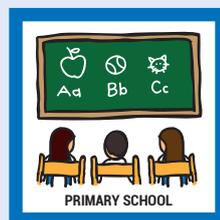
This kit contains one **Village Health Map** and another set of **stickers**.

The **Village Health Map** itself has an inner circle for common "HEALTH ISSUES AND RISKS" in the village or community and an outer circle for "STRUCTURES AND RESOURCES". Its right side has a section for "ACTION".

The kit also contains five types of stickers. Three are also used in the Family Tree Exercise - Health Issues, Health Risks and Family Actions - while two are new: (1) Structures and Resources, and (2) Community Actions.

Structures and resources:

These stickers have blue borders and are meant to represent existing natural or human-made structures as well as other resources in the village or larger community.



Community actions:

These stickers have orange borders and represent actions that government agencies, leaders, health champions and other members of the village or community may take to address common health-related issues and risks.

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https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_25967

