

# The Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalized World

## Introduction

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**Scope** The Bangkok Charter identifies actions, commitments and pledges required to address the determinants of health in a globalized world through health promotion.

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**Purpose** The Bangkok Charter affirms that policies and partnerships to empower communities, and to improve health and health equality, should be at the centre of global and national development.

The Bangkok Charter complements and builds upon the values, principles and action strategies of health promotion established by the *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* and the recommendations of the subsequent global health promotion conferences which have been confirmed by Member States through the World Health Assembly.

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**Audience** The Bangkok Charter reaches out to people, groups and organizations that are critical to the achievement of health, including:

- governments and politicians at all levels
  - civil society
  - the private sector
  - international organizations, and
  - the public health community.
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**Health promotion** The United Nations recognizes that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without discrimination.

Health promotion is based on this critical human right and offers a positive and inclusive concept of health as a determinant of the quality of life and encompassing mental and spiritual well-being.

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants, and thereby improve their health. It is a core function of public health and contributes to the work of tackling communicable and noncommunicable diseases and other threats to health.

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# Addressing the determinants of health

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## **Changing context**

The global context for health promotion has changed markedly since the development of the *Ottawa Charter*.

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## **Critical factors**

Some of the critical factors that now influence health include:

- increasing inequalities within and between countries
  - new patterns of consumption and communication
  - commercialization
  - global environmental change, and
  - urbanization.
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## **Further challenges**

Other factors that influence health include rapid and often adverse social, economic and demographic changes that affect working conditions, learning environments, family patterns, and the culture and social fabric of communities.

Women and men are affected differently. The vulnerability of children and exclusion of marginalized, disabled and indigenous peoples have increased.

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## **New opportunities**

Globalization opens up new opportunities for cooperation to improve health and reduce transnational health risks; these opportunities include:

- enhanced information and communications technology, and
  - improved mechanisms for global governance and the sharing of experiences.
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## **Policy coherence**

To manage the challenges of globalization, policy must be coherent across all:

- levels of governments
- United Nations bodies, and
- other organizations, including the private sector.

This coherence will strengthen compliance, transparency and accountability with international agreements and treaties that affect health.

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## **Progress made**

Progress has been made in placing health at the centre of development, for example through the Millennium Development Goals, but much more remains to be achieved; the active participation of civil society is crucial in this process.

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## Strategies for health promotion in a globalized world

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### Effective interventions

Progress towards a healthier world requires strong political action, broad participation and sustained advocacy.

Health promotion has an established repertoire of proven effective strategies which need to be fully utilized.

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### Required actions

To make further advances in implementing these strategies, all sectors and settings must act to:

- **advocate** for health based on human rights and solidarity
  - **invest** in sustainable policies, actions and infrastructure to address the determinants of health
  - **build capacity** for policy development, leadership, health promotion practice, knowledge transfer and research, and health literacy
  - **regulate and legislate** to ensure a high level of protection from harm and enable equal opportunity for health and well-being for all people
  - **partner and build alliances** with public, private, nongovernmental and international organizations and civil society to create sustainable actions.
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# Commitments to Health for All

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## Rationale

The health sector has a key leadership role in the building of policies and partnerships for health promotion.

An integrated policy approach within government and international organizations, as well as a commitment to working with civil society and the private sector and across settings, are essential if progress is to be made in addressing the determinants of health.

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## Key commitments

The four key commitments are to make the promotion of health:

1. central to the global development agenda
  2. a core responsibility for all of government
  3. a key focus of communities and civil society
  4. a requirement for good corporate practice.
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### 1. Make the promotion of health central to the global development agenda

Strong intergovernmental agreements that increase health and collective health security are needed. Government and international bodies must act to close the health gap between rich and poor. Effective mechanisms for global governance for health are required to address all the harmful effects of:

- trade
- products
- services, and
- marketing strategies.

Health promotion must become an integral part of domestic and foreign policy and international relations, including in situations of war and conflict.

This requires actions to promote dialogue and cooperation among nation states, civil society, and the private sector. These efforts can build on the example of existing treaties such as the World Health Organization Framework Convention for Tobacco Control.

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### 2. Make the promotion of health a core responsibility for all of government

All governments at all levels must tackle poor health and inequalities as a matter of urgency because health is a major determinant of socioeconomic and political development. Local, regional and national governments must:

- give priority to investments in health, within and outside the health sector
- provide sustainable financing for health promotion.

To ensure this, all levels of government should make the health consequences of policies and legislation explicit, using tools such as equity-focused health impact assessment.

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## Commitments to Health for All, Continued

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### **3. Make the promotion of health a key focus of communities and civil society**

Communities and civil society often lead in initiating, shaping and undertaking health promotion. They need to have the rights, resources and opportunities to enable their contributions to be amplified and sustained. In less developed communities, support for capacity building is particularly important.

Well organized and empowered communities are highly effective in determining their own health, and are capable of making governments and the private sector accountable for the health consequences of their policies and practices.

Civil society needs to exercise its power in the marketplace by giving preference to the goods, services and shares of companies that exemplify corporate social responsibility.

Grass-roots community projects, civil society groups and women's organizations have demonstrated their effectiveness in health promotion, and provide models of practice for others to follow.

Health professional associations have a special contribution to make.

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### **4. Make the promotion of health a requirement for good corporate practice**

The corporate sector has a direct impact on the health of people and on the determinants of health through its influence on:

- local settings
- national cultures
- environments, and
- wealth distribution.

The private sector, like other employers and the informal sector, has a responsibility to ensure health and safety in the workplace, and to promote the health and well-being of their employees, their families and communities.

The private sector can also contribute to lessening wider global health impacts, such as those associated with global environmental change by complying with local national and international regulations and agreements that promote and protect health. Ethical and responsible business practices and fair trade exemplify the type of business practice that should be supported by consumers and civil society, and by government incentives and regulations.

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## A global pledge to make it happen

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**All for health** Meeting these commitments requires better application of proven strategies, as well as the use of new entry points and innovative responses.

Partnerships, alliances, networks and collaborations provide exciting and rewarding ways of bringing people and organizations together around common goals and joint actions to improve the health of populations.

Each sector – intergovernmental, government, civil society and private – has a unique role and responsibility.

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**Closing the implementation gap** Since the adoption of the *Ottawa Charter*, a significant number of resolutions at national and global level have been signed in support of health promotion, but these have not always been followed by action. The participants of this Bangkok Conference forcefully call on Member States of the World Health Organization to close this implementation gap and move to policies and partnerships for action.

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**Call for action** Conference participants request the World Health Organization and its Member States, in collaboration with others, to allocate resources for health promotion, initiate plans of action and monitor performance through appropriate indicators and targets, and to report on progress at regular intervals. United Nations organizations are asked to explore the benefits of developing a Global Treaty for Health.

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**Worldwide partnership** This Bangkok Charter urges all stakeholders to join in a worldwide partnership to promote health, with both global and local engagement and action.

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**Commitment to improve health** We, the participants of the 6<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Health Promotion in Bangkok, Thailand, pledge to advance these actions and commitments to improve health.

*11 August 2005*

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**Note:** This charter contains the collective views of an international group of experts, participants of the 6<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Health Promotion, Bangkok, Thailand, August 2005, and does not necessarily represent the decisions or the stated policy of the World Health Organization.