

## POLICY RELATED TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

One of the major challenges in the prevention of noncommunicable diseases and in the promotion of physical activity and other healthy lifestyle choices is communicating the importance of action now in return for future benefits. Despite the fact that prevention has been the major contributor to health gains, including 30 added years of life expectancy, in the past century, most studies of health expenditures indicate that less than five percent of resources are devoted to prevention.

Prevention and health promotion activities are seldom a priority for policy-makers. However, it is at the policy level, rather than in the realm of medical care, where most decisions about prevention are made. Thus, it is important that advocacy move beyond individuals to reach policy-makers as well.

Physical inactivity is not merely about individual behaviour. Crowding, crime, traffic, poor air quality, a lack of parks, sports and recreational facilities and sidewalks make physical activity a difficult choice for many people. The challenge of prevention is therefore as much the responsibility of governments as it is for people.

### ■ The health sector should take the leading role in making policy decisions. They can lead the way by

- Providing nation-wide evidence-based advocacy on the health, social and economic benefits of physical activity
- Developing action-oriented networks with other relevant sectors and stakeholders on physical activity
- Promoting an integrated, multi-sectoral public policy
- Formulating relevant legislation
- Preparing health professionals, especially on physical activity counselling and programme development
- Organizing specific physical activity programmes in health services
- Promoting physical activity programmes in community and family
- Securing seed investment and mobilizing resources for physical activity
- Participating in global actions to promote physical activity

### ■ The sports sector could support this effort by

- Strengthening programmes for physical activity and *Sport for All*, a movement supported by the International Olympic Committee promoting the Olympic ideal that sport is a human right for all individuals regardless of race, social class and sex
- Making community use of local sport facilities easy and convenient
- Allocating a proportion of sport funds to promoting physical activity
- Teaching about the benefits of physical activity in the sport sector training programmes
- Advocating for physical activity and *Sport for All* at professional, amateur and scholastic sporting events
- Organizing physical activity events in the community





## ■ Policy-makers in education and culture could focus on

- Strengthening national policies related to physical education, physical activity and *Sport for All* in schools
- Implementing sufficient physical education programmes by trained teachers in school curricula
- Providing sufficient playgrounds and sports facilities on school premises
- Making schools' sport facilities available for public use
- Increasing physical activity in cultural and leisure programmes and events

## ■ Decisions related to media and information could help promote physical activity by

- Disseminating of appealing messages and information about the benefits of physical activity
- Organizing regular media programmes/campaigns to promote physical activity
- Preparing journalists (e.g. sports, health or science journalists) to advocate for physical activity

## ■ Urban planning policy choices should include

- Planning for plenty of safe sidewalks and cycling paths
- Inclusion of open spaces, parks and facilities for physical activity
- Support to municipal or local authorities to implement these choices

## ■ The transport sector can

- Strengthen efforts to reduce traffic speed reduction in cities
- Support action for clean cars, thus clean air

## ■ Action by local governments and municipalities should concentrate on

- Developing local legislation and policy to support physical activity
- Allocating safe indoor and outdoor spaces for physical activity, including play and sports
- Organizing community programmes
- Supporting physical activity initiatives initiated by various sectors and actors
- Strengthening, through local actions, national public policy in support of physical activity

## ■ Financial and economic planning decisions should aim at

- Looking seriously at the health, social and economic benefits of physical activity
- Taking relevant measures to allocate resources to concerned sectors
- Encouraging public and private sectors to invest in physical activity
- Supporting physical activity programmes
- To raise funds through levies of certain taxes (e. g. tobacco, alcohol, soft drinks, etc.) for physical activity and other health promotion programmes

