

Medicus Mundi International

Meeting: Seventy-first World Health Assembly (A71/1)

Agenda Item: 12.2 Physical activity for health

Statement:

Medicus Mundi International would like to take this opportunity to address agenda item 12.2. This statement is supported by the People's Health Movement.

We appreciate the development of a global action plan on physical activity. However, the main emphasis of the document is on the responsibility of individuals, while not fully addressing the social determinants of health which contribute to physical inactivity and NCDs.

Unequal distribution of land, water and other, resources, low wages, and poor working conditions are factors that contribute to lack of leisure time and access to public spaces for people to undertake physical activity. People who are forced to work under poor conditions often work for longer hours, thus depriving them of leisure time. Women are affected more as they also face the burden of so-called "unproductive" household chores and reproductive work. Following reductions in public investment on welfare and rapid increase in urbanisation, public spaces for learning, participating and engaging in sports and related activities have shrunk. The document does not address this issue, and fails to propose measures to curb the influence of private actors, whose interest may run counter to the expansion of public spaces which promote physical activity. For example, in many cities, urban infrastructure promotes use of motor cars to the detriment of non-motorised forms of mobility.

Fundamental to measures that encourage measures to promote physical activity that address upstream barriers that differentially affect populations as regards access to spaces and opportunities for physical activity. We urge member states to increase public spending on accessible public spaces, sports facilities and further strengthen the global action plan by address inequality, exclusion and marginalization, as well as promote social and economic policies directed at reducing inequalities in income and wealth.