



Position Statement from the International Union for Health Promotion and Education

Meeting:

Seventy-third World Health Assembly, 18-19 May 2020

Agenda Item:

Written statements exceptionally considered under provisional agenda item 3 Address by WHO Director-General devoted to the COVID-19 pandemic response in advance of the opening of the Health Assembly

Statement:

The International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE) strongly supports the leadership of WHO during the COVID-19 pandemic and calls for global cooperation in addressing the far-reaching impacts of the virus on our physical and mental health, and social and economic wellbeing.

This pandemic highlights the importance of strong public health systems that promote and protect the health and wellbeing of all. It also underscores the need for universal health coverage and strong global systems that effectively coordinate actions across sectors, ensuring a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response based on principles of equity and global solidarity.

IUHPE advocates health promotion action at a global and local level, supporting community engagement strategies that will empower communities in stopping the spread of the virus, while protecting people's basic needs and promoting their health. In the absence of a vaccine, non-medical interventions such as improved health literacy, effective health communication and community mobilisation are required.

This pandemic exacerbates health inequities, especially among economically and socially vulnerable groups, women and children, and those in low-and middle-income countries with fragile health and economic systems. We have a collective responsibility to ensure that the most vulnerable are protected from the negative impacts of this pandemic. Mental health impacts of the virus must also be considered, including the effects of isolation and loneliness, fear, anxiety, depression, domestic violence and substance misuse.

IUHPE calls on WHO and Member States to:

- **Strengthen health promotion systems** that will increase people's control over their health, enhance social cohesion and solidarity, and **build public trust and collective responsibility for promoting health and wellbeing**.
- **Support health promotion actions** that enable people and communities to cope with the pandemic and its consequences, investing in sustainable actions that will **address the wider determinants of health and reduce inequities** now and in future crises.