

## POLICY BRIEF

# “A JOURNEY OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

From South-East Asia Regional Committee  
to World Health Assembly ”

### KEY MESSAGES

- The issue of “**participation, engagement, inclusiveness, empowerment of individuals and communities**” have been reflected in many declarations and resolutions globally, but less attention is paid to this issue due to absence of indicator, monitoring, evaluation and reporting.
- WHO together with the social participation technical network aims to put forward the issue of “**Social Participation**” to the 77th World Health Assembly (WHA77) in 2024 and to build a regional movement of WHO regions from now on until 2024.
- **Expected outputs from WHA77**
  - An investment in government capacities to create, maintain, and sustain participatory mechanisms and ensuring that participatory and deliberative interaction between the population and decision-makers does not remain ad-hoc or one-off but is regular.
  - A monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework on social participation is developed and applied taking into account the context of Member States.

## INTRODUCTION

Participation, engagement, inclusiveness, empowerment of individuals, communities and civil societies have been reflected in many resolutions and declarations of World Health Assembly and United Nations General Assembly as it is a strategic action to enhance health systems responsiveness and performance, strengthen primary health care in support of universal health coverage (UHC), address social determinants of health (SDH) and accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Additionally, The COVID-19 situation indicates the role of individuals, communities and civil societies in health emergency preparedness and response.

“**Social participation**” used in this policy brief refers to mean working with, consulting and empowering individuals, communities and civil societies for societal well-being. In the context of health policy and planning, it is conceived as the government interaction with the population, communities and civil society at the level of decision-making.

# SOCIAL PARTICIPATION MOVEMENT GLOBALLY

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recently released the publication '**Voice, agency, empowerment Handbook on social participation for universal health coverage**' with the objectives to advocate for prioritizing and investing social participation and for building government capacities to design, manage, and sustain participatory mechanisms. The Handbook was developed through extensive consultations with the Social Participation Technical Network which consists of government sector, academia and civil society across geographies and income categories.

The Handbook reveals interesting social participation processes and mechanisms across the globe.

## The Consultative National Committee on Bioethics (CNNE) FRANCE

The CNNE has the mandate to lead the drafting of a Bioethics law every seven years and uses a variety of participatory mechanisms to obtain broad-based input on topics of bioethical relevance, for example, regional discussion events for the general public, online consultation via website, hearings for the partisan public and citizen's jury. A combination of participatory mechanisms is used to reach out different types of target populations.

## The Societal Dialogue for Health (SDH) TUNISIA

The SDH creates multiple participatory mechanisms for exchange between population, communities, civil society, health professionals and government, for example, citizen's meetings on health organized at a regional level, open mic sessions for general public, focus groups at the community level for marginalized and vulnerable groups, citizens' jury which people are selected with the task of pronouncing a verdict on specific questions linked to specific themes and the National Health Conference - a large variety of participant to validate policies and decisions.

## The Communitization pillar in the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) INDIA

The NRHM engages communities in the health systems by creating ASHA/village health worker programme, hospital management committees (Rogi Kalyaan Samitis), community and local self-governance bodies with access to untied funds, village health sanitation and nutrition committee and community-based monitoring processes.

South-East Asia Region has long promoted social participation through primary health care. Health volunteers are institutionalized in many countries, for example, multi-purpose health volunteers (MHV) in Bangladesh, volunteers in multi-sectoral task force (MSTF) and community based support system (CBSS) in Bhutan, female community health volunteers (FCHV) in Nepal, village health volunteers (VHV) in Thailand and promotor saude familia (PSF) in Timor Leste. Stakeholder consultation at the national and community level in policy formulation are promoted at a different degree in the countries of the region.

## The National Health Assembly (NHA) THAILAND

The NHA is a participatory mechanism that brings together the government, academia and people represented in the tri-power that moves the mountain principle to combine top-down and bottom-up approaches to discuss and propose solutions for complex health challenges. Resolutions of the NHA is submitted to the National Health Commission, a multisectoral governance chaired by the Prime Minister, and further to the Cabinet. Meanwhile, Provincial Health Assemblies are conducted as a mechanism to solve their problems under their context.

## PAIN POINT OF SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Despite of having social participation related terminology reflected in many resolutions and declarations of World Health Assembly and United Nations General Assembly, the absence of indicator, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting system can undermine progress made toward social participation

# PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

## Advocacy in the WHO South-East Asia Region

### EXPECTED OUTPUTS FROM WHA77

- 1** Build a South-East Asian regional movement by convening a Regional Consultation with Member States and other relevant stakeholders to consider the technical background paper on social participation developed by WHO Head Quarter.
- 2** Organize, if appropriate, the National Consultation with relevant stakeholder to consider the technical background paper on social participation as aforementioned.
- 3** Join the online Global Consultation on social participation, hosted by WHO Head Quarter, in preparation for the future World Health Assembly resolution.
- 4** Put forward the issue of **"Social Participation"** on behalf of the South-East Asia Region to the 77th World Health Assembly in 2024.

- An investment in government capacities to create, maintain, and sustain participatory mechanisms and ensuring that participatory and deliberative interaction between the population and decision-makers does not remain ad-hoc or one-off but is regular.
- A monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework on social participation is developed and applied respectively to the context of Member States.

2024

WHA77

2023

Global  
Consultation  
on Social  
Participation

2023

National  
Consultation  
on Social  
Participation  
(Thailand)

2022

Regional  
Consultation  
on Social  
Participation

2022

South-East Asia  
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### REFERENCES

World Health Organization. (2021).  
Voice, agency, empowerment:  
Handbook on social participation  
for universal health coverage.

World Health Organization. (2021).  
Draft Technical Background Paper  
on Social Participation in preparation  
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