STOCKTAKE OF GLOBAL PROGRESS ON INCREASING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND SPORT

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This article highlights the findings of the World Health Organization’s first Global status report on physical activity, and asks how sporting goods manufacturers can help support government efforts to increase physical activity and reach global goals for healthier populations.

Regular physical activity and sport is good for hearts, bodies and minds – quite literally. It helps prevents heart disease, diabetes, obesity, cancers and other noncommunicable diseases. It also makes us feel good – and it is particularly effective for managing depression and anxiety. However, given stagnant levels of participation in physical activity, in 2018 WHO launched the Global action plan on physical activity (GAPPA) 2018-2030 and all countries agreed to increase physical activity by 15% by 2030 (https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241514187). Governments committed to implement a set of recommended policies to support communities be more active, reduce noncommunicable disease and reduce the large economic toll on public health systems. So, where are we today - five years on?

Has your country implemented public communication campaigns to promote physical activity? Does your government have national guidelines on physical activity and set targets to increase participation in children and adults? Are national physical activity policies being implemented? Is road safety addressed to make roads safer for walkers, scooters, and wheelers and other forms of active transport?

The answers to these questions and others can be found in the recently launched Global status report on physical activity 2022 which presents a global ‘stock take’ of national progress in implementing the policy recommendations set out in the WHO Global action plan on physical activity 2018-2030.
Using the best available and comparable data from 194 countries, results were reported for 29 indicators across the four GAPPA policy pillars: active systems, active environments, active societies and active people.

**What we found**

This first global assessment of national action aimed at increasing physical activity revealed that while there had been some implementation of some policies, overall progress is slow and uneven.

Table 1 provides selected results. The full report and 194 country profiles are available on the WHO website (https://www.who.int).

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<td><strong>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY – PA</strong></td>
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### Active systems in countries

Governance, policies and guidelines are essential:

- 92% have national surveillance on PA
- less than 50% have standalone national PA policy, strategy, or action plan.
- over 50% have specific national target for PA
- 30% guidelines for all age groups.
- 46% an operational National NCD Coordination mechanism.

### Active environments in countries

Creating an enabling active environment is critical to encourage people to use active forms of transport.

- only 40% have national design standards for three key road-safety criteria,
  - separating pedestrians and cyclists from motorized traffic,
  - safe crossings for pedestrians and cyclists, and
  - road design for management of speed.
- only 42% have national policies to encourage walking and cycling for transport.

### Active societies in countries

An important step in promoting PA and creating active societies, is building awareness. Over the last two years:

- 52% conducted one communication campaign on the benefits of PA
- 56% organised free mass-participation events

### Active people

Overall less than 50% of countries showed progress in implementing PA policies to promote active people where they live, work and play:

- 30% implementing national PA policies in child-care settings
- 42% implementing PA policies in public open spaces (including parks)
- 40% have national protocols for managing PA in primary health care
- 40% implementing national policies for promoting walking and cycling
The Global status report concludes by recommending five actions to help countries and accelerate the recovery from the impact of COVID-19, develop new and effective policies, ensure existing policies are implemented, and strengthen the national promotion of physical activity. The recommendations address key enabling factors for policy implementation and are listed below:

1. All relevant government departments recognize their contribution to increasing PA and reinforce a joined-up approach to PA in the interests of national development.
2. Ensure PA is embedded in all relevant policies, facilitate implementation with simple tools and “how to” guidance, and strengthen workforce capacity through multi-sector training.
3. Establish national coordination mechanisms to provide direction and oversight of the national agenda on PA involving government and non-government stakeholders, including the voice of the local communities.
4. Ensure data systems are aligned and provide tracking of policy implementation as well as participation levels.
5. Identify and secure sustainable funding and align with needs to ensure sustained national policy commitments.

In launching the Global status report, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, urged countries to get moving. “We need more countries to scale up implementation of policies. The benefits are huge, not only for the physical and mental health of individuals, but also for societies, environments, and economies.”

The Global Status report also revealed new estimates of the cost to the public health system of not acting on physical activity. The price tag is significant. WHO estimates the total cost of treating predicted new cases of seven NCDs and mental health conditions will reach nearly US$ 300 billion by 2030, or around US$ 27 billion annually. This is a substantial amount for already fragile and overburdened health systems and is, for example, equivalent to the cost of training around 1 million medical doctors in the UK, or 2.3 million medical doctors in Brazil. However, these data are conservative as they do not include some key diseases, nor an assessment of the cost of the impact of physical inactivity on economic productivity.

The way forward - accelerating GAPPa implementation to achieve greater impact

In the majority of countries, policy development and policy implementation must improve if global targets on physical activity are to be met.

The potential savings of US$ 300 billion, would train over 1 million (1,019,022), medical doctors, in the UK, and about 2.3 million (2,307,692) medical doctors in Brazil, for example.
What is the role of sports industry?

Sporting goods manufacturers have a key role to play to support government efforts to act on these recommendations and increase participation in physical activity, particularly in those who are the least active. There are at least three ways in which the sector can assist. First, through advocacy and communications on the value of the multiple benefits that increasing physical activity can provide to people, community, the environment and the economy. Second, by sharing knowledge and scaling capabilities across the ecosystem in communications and marketing of physical activity, and third through supporting initiatives that create more inclusive, accessible opportunities for people to be active in ways they enjoy and sustain - especially the young, girls and women, and people living with disabilities.

The Global status report is a wake-up call to government and all other stakeholders - academia, researchers, civil society, advocates and the private sector - to join efforts and drive both policy making and policy implementation so we can really get the world moving.

Did you know?
The WFSGI’s Physical Activity Committee is the global platform for the sporting goods industry that’s committed to raising awareness of the benefits of physical activity and sport and increasing participation levels, especially among the next generations.

What we do.
The Physical Activity Committee is comprised of many of the leading sporting goods brands including NIKE, Inc., adidas, Pentland Brands, ASICS, Decathlon, and many more. We work directly with the World Health Organisation, UNESCO, and many other key stakeholders to leverage the power of the sporting goods industry to reverse the physical inactivity trend.

What’s at stake?
28% of the world’s adult population is insufficiently active and that rises to 80% when we look at the world’s adolescent population. Gen Z is the least active in history.

Why join us?
By working together, the industry is stronger and can achieve sustainable and scalable action to reverse physical inactivity. Together, we can be one voice on physical activity.

Interested in joining?
Scan the QR code to know more or contact Emma (Mason) Zwiebler on emason@wfsgi.org.