

Key facts

Communication, when used strategically, can **change people's attitudes and behaviours** and empower them to **protect and improve their health** and that of their family and community.

There is greater recognition of the **importance of strategic communication for achieving public health goals**, but its full power has not yet been leveraged.

The **Communication for Health (C4H)** approach is based on **six principles for IMPACT**: Informed by data and theory; Measurable; Planned; Audience- and people-centred; Collaborative; and Targeted.

The **C4H approach requires a series of steps** to first understand, then plan, develop, test and implement a communication intervention, before evaluating, identifying and applying lessons.



In the digital age with a growing number of health threats, strategic communication is more important than ever in improving public health. **Using communication strategically requires technical expertise, skills and resources** to plan, implement and evaluate interventions that **encourage governments and other institutions to implement policies** that improve people's lives and well-being, that **empower health workers to deliver the best care possible**, and that **encourage people to take actions that protect and improve their health** and that of their family and community.

To gain the maximum public health benefits from communication, WHO in the Western Pacific Region developed and is using the C4H approach in its communication efforts and is supporting Member States to do so. For example, In China, the C4H approach was used to nudge users of an online food delivery app to **reduce their salt intake**. In Malaysia, it was applied to **ensure communication was as effective as possible** to reduce COVID-19 transmission. In Fiji, C4H helped **increase care seeking** by understanding and responding to community members' concerns. In Papua New Guinea, it was used to help **address high maternal and newborn mortality** through a television and radio drama designed to increase awareness and encourage uptake of antenatal services.

The C4H approach can be applied to campaigns and health promotion activities, risk communication and community engagement programmes, and more, to ensure they are as strategic and effective as possible. It involves research and data analysis, use of behavioural science and insights, effective storytelling and other communication-related skills and approaches. It builds on years of accumulated knowledge and experience across a range of disciplines. Application of the C4H approach **requires technical expertise and concerted efforts with stakeholders and partners to deliver health impact**.

WHO response

To more fully leverage the power of strategic communication to improve health in the Western Pacific, WHO has consulted Member States, experts and partners. This resulted in the development of the draft *Regional Action Framework on Communication for Health*.

The Framework aims to support and guide countries as they apply C4H, and work to make it an integral part of health ministry functions and public health programmes.

WHO will support Member States as they:

- **assess capacity** for implementation of the C4H approach, identify where additional capacity is needed and/or can be developed internally and invest to fill gaps;
- **identify priority public health programmes** for application of the C4H approach;
- **plan, develop, test and implement** appropriate interventions; and
- **measure, evaluate and report** on results.

WHO is building its technical capacity and experience in C4H, at both the regional and country levels, in collaboration with academic experts and other partners. Guided by the Regional Action Framework, WHO, Member States and partners can work together to use C4H to contribute to improved health outcomes in the Western Pacific, working towards the shared vision of making this the world's healthiest and safest region.