

## Communication, dissemination and local engagement

### Background

The WHO Kobe Centre was established in 1995 following a WHO Executive Board Resolution and the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. WKC is a department of the WHO Headquarters and has a global mandate. At the same time, the WKC seeks to contribute to the community where we live and work by sharing information and knowledge. As such, WKC has both a global and local role. As part of the local role, WKC established partnerships with Kansai research institutions and local government to encourage collaboration towards common health challenges. We also seek to better communicate and disseminate our research findings about WKC's research and other activities.

### Objectives

1. To share lessons learned and encourage collaboration across countries as they strive to attain similar goals under the commitments for UHC and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. To communicate and disseminate information about WKC's research activities.
3. To contribute to the community in Kobe and Hyogo prefecture for awareness-raising and health advocacy.

### Progress report 2018-19

#### Objective 1: To encourage collaborations across countries.

**Joint research.** The WKC has **partnered with local research institutions** to jointly address common health challenges. Within each of the three research themes, we seek to identify the locally relevant challenge in the Kansai region and research partners. In such a way, lessons learned from the Kansai region form a part of our global research programme. WKC also strives to provide opportunities to integrate teams of researchers based in Kansai and international academia. This allows for strengthening ties and expanding WKC's network of research within the Kansai region, while maintaining a global mandate approach to research. In 2019, for example, new projects were started that jointly support researchers from the Kansai region to conduct research with academics in other parts of the world. These include partnerships with University of Hyogo, Kobe University, Osaka University, and Kyoto University.

**Study visit.** The WKC also partnered with the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)**, in which WKC is organizing study tours for local government officials from Bangladesh. This study tour encourages learning from Kobe and the region on strong city planning and management for health and social welfare, and it is anticipated that lessons learned will assist local officials in Bangladesh in promoting social welfare. These study tours are being done in partnership with relevant WHO departments in HQ and the WHO Country Office in Bangladesh.

**Secretariat for Health-EDRM Research Network.** Research knowledge and evidence is critical for building community and country resilience to disasters; however, this field is under-researched and not well documented. WKC has played a key role in establishing the WHO Thematic Platform for Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management Research Network (TPRN), consisting of international specialists. WKC is serving as the Secretariat of this network, the first of its kind in the world.

#### Objective 2: To communicate and disseminate information about WKC's research activities.

The **WKC Forum** is a main means of communicating and disseminating WKC research as well as contributing to the community in which we live. WKC has committed to organizing at least three fora per year. The participants may include academics or the public. In 2018 and 2019, WKC organized eight meetings:

- February 2018. "Let's discuss international relations" in cooperation with the Hyogo Prefectural Board of Education and Osaka University. About 450 students participated, mainly from high schools in Hyogo prefecture, and shared their views of what the world and Japan would look like in 2050.

- April 2018. “HAT Kobe Health Fair.” This event celebrated World Health Day 2018 and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kobe Biomedical Innovation Cluster. WKC invited some researchers to present their projects.
- October 2018. “Global Action for Scientific Evidence Improvement in Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management (H-EDRM). Organized by the Hyogo Emergency Medical Center in cooperation with the Asia-Pacific Conference for Disaster Medicine. The Forum attracted about 200 people.
- November 2018. 72nd Annual Meeting of Japanese Society of National Medical Services. Three WKC supported research projects were presented.
- February 2019. “Think global agenda with high school students” in cooperation with the Hyogo Prefectural Education Board and Osaka University. About 500 students participated, mainly from high schools in Hyogo prefecture, and shared their views about their contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.
- October 2019. “Assistive Technology” at 17th World Congress of the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO), Hyogo Rehabilitation Centre and WHO HQ. The meeting was in Kobe.
- October 2019. “Accelerating International Research Collaboration for Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management (Health-EDRM) – Dialogue on Japan/Hyogo/Kobe Contribution to the Global Scientific Evidence Development.” WHO Health-EDRM focal points from HQ and 5 Regional Offices, TPRN co-chairs, 50 Japanese leading experts on Health-EDRM and students shared the result of the TPRN Core Group Meeting and strategy towards WHO Health-EDRM Research Agenda with Japanese key stakeholders and discussed possible future collaboration and Japan’s contribution.
- November 2019. “Hyogo Prefecture Alcohol Addiction Prevention Forum” at the request of Hyogo Prefecture, to share strategies to address alcohol addiction.

**Website and social media.** In July 2018, WKC launched its redesigned bilingual website. This aims to provide wider access to its programme of work and ongoing research activities. Global health days which relate to our work provide an excellent opportunity for further exposure. The website now includes details in English and Japanese of each of the three research themes, each project, and also local engagement activities. The website is complemented by a Twitter feed and a YouTube account. WKC has engaged a small team of communications experts which has expanded its use of multimedia information on WKC’s agenda through short news stories, projects briefs, video interviews of researchers, and regular Tweets in both English and Japanese. This has resulted in increasing access to online activity, increasing its readership and extending its reach to new audiences both locally and globally. This strategy has yielded visible results. Since April 2019, the combined Twitter and website activities have steadily increased the number of visitors to WKC’s website with approximately 60% of these users accessing the site in Japan. When campaigns integrated the website, twitter and media, we observed spikes in the number of visits and increased followers on social media.

***We are working on expanding our media interaction.***

Significant work has gone into updating our media contact list and engaging the media as appropriate. For example, these are clippings from WKC’s recent Health-Emergency and Disaster Risk Management (Health-EDRM) meeting held at Awaji on 17 – 18 October 2019; 3 articles by the health editor of Kobe newspaper with whom we are developing a good relationship, and 1 article in Asahi Shimbun. Other articles in the last few months include a feature in the international publication, The Diplomat, on dementia, featuring the work of our partner in the Laos Democratic Peoples’ Republic.

***Communication plans to disseminate findings for each research project.*** For each research project, the WKC identifies how the results will be disseminated. This includes traditional journal articles, as well as initial and final research briefs in Japanese and English, updated website research descriptions, interviews with researchers, twitter and videos of specific research projects and investigators. Stronger linkages have been made with the local newspaper, Kobe Shimbun, and local and national press clubs which receive media releases of important findings and events.

### **Objective 3: To contribute to health awareness in the community.**

**Student lectures.** The WKC hosts visits and provides lectures about WHO and WKC activities for students in primary schools, high schools, and universities. In 2018, WKC provided 33 lectures in Hyogo and Kobe. So far in 2019, WKC staff have given over 20 lectures to schools and academic faculties, and the Asian Medical Students' Association.

**Participation in local committees.** WKC staff make every effort to contribute to local committees and meetings, to improve population health. In 2018 and 2019, WKC participated in the following committees:

- Steering Committee Member, Hyogo Prefecture Smoke Free Ordinance Committee
- External Advisory Board; Department of Global Health, Kyoto University
- Health Creative City Kobe Promotion Committee
- Kobe Health Medical Strategy Meeting
- Hyogo Prefecture Council of Advisors on Influenza
- Hyogo/Kobe Expert Committee for Health Emergencies
- Kobe City Expert Meeting for Dementia Friendly City
- Kobe City Expert Meeting for Healthcare Service Development
- Disaster Reduction Alliance Board Meeting
- International Recovery Platform (IRP) Steering Committee Meeting
- Kobe Quarantine Drill for Communicable Disease Control

**Translation of WHO Disease Outbreak News (DON).** Responding to the request from Hyogo/Kobe Expert Committee on Health Emergencies in 2018, WKC now translates the Global WHO Disease Outbreak News. This is done in cooperation with the Kobe/Osaka/Kansai Airport Quarantines, and the Narita Airport Quarantine, in addition to the technical support of the Hyogo/Kobe expert committee on health emergencies. By 1 October 2019, 37 DONs had been translated and posted on the Japan Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare website ([www.forth.go.jp](http://www.forth.go.jp)).

**Strengthen communications locally.** The WKC and the Kobe Group have worked to strengthen their regular communications. The WKC and the Kobe Group formally meet in June/July of each year, to discuss progress made and planning for future research and local engagement. The WKC and the JCC Executive Committee also meet once a year in which local stakeholder and professional associations join to review WKC progress. Monthly meetings are held to discuss local engagement activities and strengthen communications. The Kobe Group is also represented and plays an important role in the Advisory Committee meeting in November every year.

### **Proposed program for 2020-21**

**Under Objective 1, to encourage global collaboration,** WKC will continue to expand on the successful approach of encouraging collaboration between Kansai based institutions and researchers outside of Japan, for all three research themes outlined in WKC's research plan. The study visit of Bangladesh officials supported by ADB will continue in 2020. We are writing a Health Emergencies and Disaster Risk Management guide with over 100 international researchers which will be released in 2020. Following the recent Health-EDRM meeting and Forum, scientific working groups for each research theme were set up to develop a research agenda by 2021.

**Under Objective 2, to communicate and disseminate information about WKC activities,** WKC will continue to organize at least three WKC Fora in 2020. The following are planned for 2020:

- February 2020. The 7th High School Summit on International Affairs is being organized in cooperation with the Hyogo Prefectural Education Board and Osaka University. WKC will give a keynote speech, moderate a panel discussion, and evaluate and award prizes for a poster competition as part of WKC's local contribution to the capacity building of local students. Some 500 students are expected to attend.

- February 2020. “From Activity to Science – International Collaborative Effort to Improve the Quality and Quantity of Health-EDRM Research” at the Annual Conference of Japanese Society for Disaster Medicine. Some 100 Japanese Health-EDRM experts are expected to attend and discuss research.
- Early 2020. Digital health technologies.
- June 2020. The WKC Forum on Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion for youth is being planned to highlight the existing knowledge on suicide prevention and mental health promotion, as well as advocate for mental health among youth. Some 100 experts may attend.

In addition, further efforts will be made to strengthen WKC communication through its website and social media accounts to better understand the different needs of the local audience in our community, as well as the global audience. Recognizing that many people access the site from cell phones, we are working to improve the user interface.

**Under objective 3, to contribute to health awareness,** WKC will continue to translate the Global WHO Disease Outbreak News into Japanese and share the translation with experts and the public in collaboration with the quarantines office in Kobe City and Osaka. WKC will continue to strengthen its ties to the community by participating in committees and attending meetings in Hyogo/Kobe. WKC will also seek to continually improve communications with the Kobe Group to ensure mutual understanding and support.

Plans are underway to review progress to date and consider new opportunities for local engagement. In doing so, we will work together with the Kobe Group, other potential collaborators (e.g. Boards of Education for Hyogo Prefecture), and other stakeholders to identify common areas of interest. Through these discussions, WKC plans to expand on its local engagement activities.