



The Geneva Charter for Well-being *(unedited)*

The Geneva Charter for Well-being expresses the urgency of creating sustainable well-being societies, committed to achieving equitable health now and for future generations without breaching ecological limits. The Charter builds on the outcomes of the 10th Global Conference on Health Promotion hosted in Geneva and virtually 13-15 December 2021 and the legacy of the Ottawa Charter and previous global conferences on health promotion.

The urgency to act

The world faces complex and interrelated crises, but not all countries are impacted by them in the same way. Recent pandemics have exposed the fractures in society and highlight the impact of ecological, political, commercial, digital and social determinants of health and health inequities, within and between social groups and nations. Climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, rapid urbanization, geopolitical conflict and militarization, demographic change, population displacement, poverty, and widespread inequity create risks of future crises even more severe than those experienced today.

Responses require investments that integrate planetary, societal, community and individual health and well-being, as well as changes in social structures to support people to take control of their lives and health. Fundamental redirection of societal values and action consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are required.

Foundations for Well-being

Well-being societies provide the foundations for all members of current and future generations to thrive on a healthy planet, no matter where they live. Such societies apply bold policies and transformative approaches that are underpinned by:

- a positive vision of health integrating physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being;
- the principles of human rights, social and environmental justice, solidarity, gender and inter-generational equity, and peace;
- a commitment to sustainable low carbon development grounded in reciprocity and respect between humans and making peace with Nature;
- new indicators of success beyond GDP that take account of human and planetary well-being and lead to new priorities for public spending;
- the focus of health promotion on empowerment, inclusivity, equity, and meaningful participation.

21st century health promotion response

Creating well-being societies requires coordinated action in five areas:

Value, respect and nurture planet Earth and its ecosystems

A healthy planet is essential to the health and well-being of current and future generations and for enabling all to flourish. Well-being societies prioritize a rapid, just transition to a low-carbon economy to keep temperature rises below 1.50C this Century. They provide access to clean



energy for all, enhance biodiversity, reduce resource depletion and pollution, support harmonious relations between humans and Nature, and center Indigenous knowledge and leadership. They promote water and food systems which seek to reduce harm and promote healthy nutrition (including breastfeeding). Well-being societies need strong links to ‘One Health’ and planetary health to enhance pandemic preparedness and improve health and equity for the future.

Design an equitable economy that serves human development within planetary and local ecological boundaries

Well-being societies are characterized by decent and secure work; fair trade; inclusive social protection systems; production and consumption systems that operate on the principles of a circular economy; erasure of structural discrimination; sustainable urban transitions and respecting and preserving natural ecosystems. Well-being economies recognize labor rights and the contributions of the informal economy, including care provided by caregivers, families, and communities. They support the prevention and reduction of communicable and non-communicable diseases through effective regulation of the commercial determinants of health. Well-being economies seek to reduce harm through enforcing accountability and regulation of digital and arms industries. There is also a need to acknowledge and rectify colonial and economic policies that hamper economic and social development.

Well-being priorities are translated to action through investing in health, well-being budgets, social protection, and legal and fiscal strategies which lead towards a healthier and sustainable economy.

Develop healthy public policy for the common good

In a well-being society, government is the steward of all of society’s assets for a healthy, sustainable, and equitable planet on behalf of current and future generations. Governments are accountable to their people and ensure participation in governance. Well-being forms a new social contract and provides a compass for public policy, including budgetary and regulatory decisions to achieve better outcomes for individuals, communities, and society. Governance at all levels, from local to global, is committed to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, pursuing multi-sectoral policies for health, and a fair global distribution of health-enabling resources. Eliminating all forms of structural discrimination and injustice, including marginalization that impacts people in multiple ways, is essential for ensuring the right to health for all. Partnerships with a vibrant civil society are nourished to strengthen the social fabric and social solidarity locally and internationally.

Achieve universal health coverage

In a well-being society the provision of universal health coverage is central to social protection for all and societal stability. Funding priority is given to the development of primary care, health promotion and preventive services. Global health governance ensures equitable distribution of healthcare assets. Mental well-being is accorded high priority in re-orienting health services. Healthcare workers are nurtured and protected. Health financing is understood not as an expenditure but as an investment for well-being and societal resilience. Governance for health builds on co-design and makes full use of the digital transformation to achieve equitable benefits across populations, ensuring access and meaningful participation to avoid digital exclusion. This includes a high priority assigned to develop people’s health literacy throughout the life course.



Investment in the next generation, especially early child development and education, lays the foundation for healthy, active and connected lives.

Address the impacts of digital transformation

Digital transformation and technological change have the potential to create new opportunities for connection, health literacy, knowledge-sharing, and more effective and efficient service provision. Some digital features as well as digital exclusion can create isolation and exacerbate inequities. Furthermore, health and well-being may be at risk because of the increased time spent on digital activities and in virtual settings, from information overload, hate and bullying, the propagation of misinformation, and marketing of unhealthy products and behaviours. A well-being society would assess and counteract harm and disempowerment, ensure equitable access, and harness the potential of technology for human and planetary flourishing.

Stewarding a flourishing future

Well-being is a political choice. It is the outcome of the policies, institutions, economies, and ecosystems in which people live. This requires a whole of society approach involving action across all levels, stakeholders, and sectors, from communities and within organizations through to regional and national government. The role of health promotion is to catalyze and support this work by:

- ensuring that people and communities are enabled to take control of their health and lead fulfilling lives with a sense of meaning and purpose, in harmony with Nature, through education, culturally relevant health literacy, meaningful empowerment and engagement;
- enabling, mediating, and advocating for a unifying approach to creating well-being societies by shaping the determinants of health across settings;
- ensuring that promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health and social services are high quality, affordable, accessible and acceptable and are provided according to needs, especially for those often left behind.

This should be supported around the world by sustained investment in healthcare workers, health promotion, public health infrastructure and research.

The global development landscape will change if both the well-being of people and the planet become central to how success is defined. A well-being society measures success according to a different set of values than those that are dominant today and takes a long-term view. It looks beyond measures of economic activity to indicators of all the determinants of human and planetary well-being, including health in all its dimensions, health equity and the resources that will shape and safeguard the well-being of present and future generations. For people, this means everyone enjoys a long and healthy life, lived well.

The way forward is to transition to more sustainable, equitable societies and to learn from countries, regions, cities, communities, and cultures – especially Indigenous cultures - how to create more sustainable and equitable societies. WHO will support this by bringing all actors together to enact this vision for well-being societies, collect evidence and technically support its Member States and partners in the implementation of this Charter. Health and well-being



depend on the actions of all in society. This Charter calls upon non-governmental and civic organizations, academia, business, governments, international organizations, and all concerned to engage in partnership for decisive implementation of strategies for health and well-being. Together this will drive the transformation towards well-being societies in all countries, leaving no-one behind.

Note: The Geneva Charter was developed before and during the 10th Global Conference on Health Promotion. Over 5000 experts from 149 countries participated virtually, including ministers of health, other politicians, senior public servants, health practitioners, policymakers, researchers, teachers and community representatives. The Statement is complemented by a full conference report and a series of technical papers.