

World Nutrition

Volume 3, Number 6, June 2012

Journal of the World Public Health Nutrition Association

Published monthly at www.wphna.org

The Association is an affiliated body of the International Union of Nutritional Sciences

For membership and for other contributions, news, columns and services, go to: www.wphna.org

This pdf is currently a free service offered by the Association

Please access our website at: www.wphna.org, renewed every month, for:

All our world news, information, discussion and services

Complete monthly issues of **World Nutrition**

Details of how to join the Association and to contribute to our work

Rio2012. What next

The Rio2012 Declaration

Yes, another Declaration. Conferences that make a difference have qualities in common. First, they have a beginning and an end, as well as a middle. That is to say, they are planned in advance according to agreed principles, and come to a stated conclusion, as well as being an occasion for presentation, discussion and debate. Second, their end is their beginning. That is to say, their conclusion is published and proclaimed, and marks the start of new movement. Third, they reach out to other actors in associated fields, and to policy-makers and decision-takers at all levels. The guiding phrase of our *Rio2012* conference, 'knowledge-policy-action', is a distillation of these aims and intentions, all of which are reasons for a political Declaration.

The introduction to the *Rio2012 Declaration* that follows, begins with a statement on the nature and purpose of public health nutrition, as part of the public health movement. It then lists some of the vast challenges confronting all who are working to maintain and improve public health and public goods in this century. It then indicates some of the general principles needed to govern policies and actions in the public interest. We plan to publish the entire Declaration in the July issue of *WN*. This will include specific recommended actions deriving from the presentations and interactive discussions at *Rio2012*. These will be written in a form that can be adopted or adapted by relevant health professional and civil society organisations, and by other actors including international organisations, governments at all levels, and indeed by people as community and family members and as citizens.

Rio 2012 Declaration

Public health and nutrition in the 21st century

This Rio2012 Declaration is a product of the World Nutrition Rio2012 congress held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, between 27-30 April 2012. The congress has followed two years of discussion and consultation. The Declaration derives from a process in which 1,800 professionals from 50 countries have participated. This introduction includes context, general principles, and a call to action. Specific actions, to be published soon, will be listed in the complete document.

Context

Public health nutrition is both political and technical. Its dimensions are social, economic and environmental, as well as biological and behavioural. It incorporates the underlying and structural causes as well as the immediate causes of disease, health and well-being. The guiding structure of the *Rio2012* congress has been knowledge-policy-action. This makes clear that public health nutrition is a central part of the public health movement, with lead responsibility in its areas of special knowledge.

With all relevant professionals and citizens, we who work in public health nutrition are faced by colossal challenges in this century. This *Rio2012* Declaration is our commitment to confront these challenges, to decide how to work together and respond, and to achieve what we can to protect and preserve public health, and public goods such as air, earth, and water.

A better world is possible. In such a world there will be increased safety, equity, justice, conviviality, cooperation, peace and fellowship, better protection of human rights especially of women, children and vulnerable populations, and a more balanced and sustainable relationship with the environment. These benefits are all aspects of or preconditions for human

health and well-being. They are also desirable or necessary for the sustained continuation of life on earth.

Knowledge

The achievements of scientific work in the fields of public health and of nutrition are immense. This said, knowledge goes beyond the results of scientific and other investigations. Knowledge is or should be based on specified ethical principles. It should respect long-standing and tested practice. It must also take into account emerging or ongoing scenarios. In our field these now include economic globalisation, widening inequities between and within countries, climate change, and the linked fuel, finance and food crises.

In the last century, human life expectancy has generally increased, and more populations are free from hunger. Now is a time of social and economic transformation, and accelerating scientific and technological development. For those with physical and financial security, adequate, nourishing and safe food and drink, and educational or professional qualifications, this century offers unprecedented opportunity. But even in the most prosperous countries only a minority of privileged and protected populations can expect to enjoy good health.

Current gross economic, social and political inequities have structural causes. Some of the major challenges are as follows. Continued rapid increases in national populations. Rapid increase in rates of obesity and chronic diseases, with persistence of nutritional deficiencies and infections especially of childhood. The displacement of breastfeeding and long-established food systems by branded commercial products. Deterioration of public health services. The invalidation of women as leaders and family members. Chaotic rises and fluctuations in staple food prices. Overuse and abuse of natural resources.

Policy

Public policy must be made in the public interest. Policy concerning public health and public goods is soundly based only when it is the product of

discussion and agreement in which claim-holders are equal participants with duty-bearers. Protection and maintenance of public health including nutrition is one of the prime duties of governments, along with other actors. Governments must gain, retain or recover the capacity to supply high-quality public services, to regulate all relevant actions that impact on public health, and to facilitate relationships between other actors.

Action

Knowledge and policy are necessary but not sufficient to protect and preserve public goods and public health, including prevention of disease and enhancement of well-being as influenced by food systems, dietary patterns and nutritional status. Continuously monitored and improved action is the essential outcome.

Effective action requires sustained and strengthened mobilisation of civil society, working with all actors whose duty is to work in the public interest. Actors include organised civil society, relevant professional groups, foundations and other funders, government at all levels from local to national, relevant international agencies, industry, the media, employers, and people as citizens and family members as well as individuals.

We urge all those addressed here to commit to the principles and actions in this *Rio2012* Declaration, taking their own capacity and circumstances into account. Our call to action is addressed first to the World Public Health Nutrition (the Association), and the Brazilian Association for Collective Health (Abrasco), the partners in *Rio2012*.

Acknowledgement and request

Readers may make use of the material in this editorial if acknowledgement is given to the Association, and WN is cited. Please cite as: Anon. Rio 2012. What next. The Rio Declaration. World Nutrition, June 2012, 3, 6, 285-288. Obtainable at www.wphna.org

*The opinions expressed in all contributions to the website of the World Public Health Nutrition Association (the Association) including **World Nutrition**, should not be taken to be the view or policy of the Association, or of any of its affiliated or associated bodies, unless this is explicitly stated.*