



Christian Conference of Asia

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CCA's Statement on World Health Day–2022 'Our Planet, Our Health'

A healthy, sustainable, and equitable society is essential for the wellbeing of everyone on our planet. Social and economic conditions, together with accessible and high-quality health care are indispensable for the health of populations everywhere.

Differences in access to medical facilities and health care raise concerns about the prevailing system that often denies social disadvantage, especially with regard to people among socially vulnerable sectors, despite the universally accepted norm of "the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health". Medical care includes preventive services, such as vaccinations, preventive check-ups and health education, as well as treatment and rehabilitation services, all of which are essential parameters for an equitable society.

On the occasion of the World Health Day–2022, the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) emphasises the need for a healthy and sustainable society that is equitable to all. The theme of World Health Day–2022, 'Our Planet, Our Health', stresses the need to equate our health and wellbeing with our environment, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The wellbeing of all creation must be in balance for a healthier society.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that over 13 million deaths around the world each year are due to avoidable environmental causes. This includes the climate crisis, which is the single biggest health threat facing humanity today. The climate crisis is also a health crisis. Improving the quality of the environment in key areas such as air, water, and noise can prevent disease and improve human health. The impacts of climate change pose immediate threats to health, in terms of extreme temperatures, increased frequency of extreme weather events, and shifts in the patterns of infectious diseases and allergens. An individual's socioeconomic status influences their exposure to environmental stressors since poorer people are more likely to live in degraded environments or environments that face direct impacts of climate change. Such socially disadvantaged groups of people may be more sensitive to the impacts of environmental stressors due to pre-existing health conditions or poor nutritional status. In the Asia region, emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases, compromised food safety and security, and the health impacts of climate change all threaten regional health security.

The CCA, on World Health Day–2022, urges its member churches, councils, ecumenical partners, and like-minded organisations to take a positive step towards protecting our planet and controlling climate change and its implications to health, while also increasing resilience. Disease is the disruption of a balanced state. Healing is the restoration of balance. Churches are the instruments for healing and reconciliation. The healing ministry of the church relates to all dimensions of life and must be holistic in its nature.

The CCA believes that Asian churches have a crucial role in building awareness, taking measures to improve the environment, and promote healthy and healing communities at all levels, and being cognisant of the unique impacts of climate change on the health of vulnerable groups such as women, children, people with disabilities, people living with HIV, people living in poverty, and other marginalised communities. Community and congregation-based health initiatives have proven to be successful and replicable in many parts of the world, including areas that are hard-to-reach. Asian churches can leverage existing grassroots networks and community ministries to ensure sustainable health programmes and increased access to services for all. Additionally, churches must boost climate action initiatives so as to reduce insecurities and vulnerabilities while increasing adaptation and resilience.

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