Proposal

WFPHA Work Group on Women, Children and Adolescents (WCAWG)

Judy Lewis and Deborah Klein Walker (APHA Members)

Rationale for Work Group: Women, children and adolescents continue to die at high rates from preventable causes. Of the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the only three that won’t be achieved by 2015 are those related to Maternal and Child Health—MDGs 3) promote gender equality and empower women; 4) reduce child mortality; and 5) improve maternal health. This demonstrates the ongoing need for public health advocacy and innovations to improve outcomes for these still vulnerable populations. Child well-being and survival are directly related to the health of mothers. Women’s equality and health equity are closely related, and women’s health throughout the lifespan must also be addressed. Adolescents are another neglected population representing 1/6th of the world’s population, most of whom live in Lower and Middle Income Countries (LMIC). This Work Group (WG) will address interventions and advocacy to improve the health of women, children and adolescents (WCA). As the SDGs are further refined into one health goal and a gender equity goal, we need to make sure that WCA targets remain in place. If we are to end preventable maternal and child deaths, and improve quality of life for all of the world’s people, women’s voices must be heard and engaged. It is important to learn from our colleagues in the global south about culturally appropriate and effective interventions.

The need for a Work Group on Women, Children and Adolescents is reflected in WFPHA resolutions and declarations from the World Congresses. In reviewing the WFPHA advocacy documents, it is clear that there is a need for a focus on women, children and adolescents. Universal health care, equity and health as a basic human right are found in the Addis Ababa and Istanbul Declarations and these are critical issues for the health of women, children and adolescents. The only specific WFPHA Resolutions for WCA are under the category Diverse Issues (Marketing Breast Milk Substitutes 1981; Beijing Conference on Women 1995) indicating the need for a WG to focus on the many important public health issues affecting the health of women (1/2 of the world’s population) and children (25% < age 18). The WCA WG would focus on addressing health and equity for this population with an emphasis on the most vulnerable groups. The WCA WG would provide a forum for developing WCA resolutions for the WFPHA.

The goals of the Work Group will parallel those of the WFPHA Strategic Plan:

1. Advocate for effective global policies to improve the health of women, children and adolescents
2. Advance public health practice, education, training and research related to women, children and adolescents
3. Expand and strengthen partnerships to improve the health of women, children and adolescents
4. Promote and support the advancement of women, children and adolescent health in strong member associations
5. Build an effective, responsive and sustainable Work Group on Women, Children and Adolescents within WFPHA
Proposed Membership:

The following members of country public health associations have agreed to be a part of the Working Group.

Deyanira Gonzalez de León, Mexico, Mexican Society of Public Health
Godwin Aja, Nigeria, Society of Public Health Professionals of Nigeria
Amany Refaat, Egypt, Egyptian Association of Public Health Promotion
Shakuntala Chhabra, India, Indian Public Health Association
Mohamed Moukyer, Sudan, Sudanese Public Health Association
Hester Julie, South Africa, Public Health Association of South Africa
Sarah Kiguli, Uganda, Uganda National Association of Community and Occupational Health
Judy Lewis and Deborah Klein Walker, United States, American Public Health Association

*Representation from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Brazil, Indonesia and Iran is being solicited.*

Many of the founding members have worked together as part of the Women and Health Task Force (WHTF) which receives administrative support and grant funding from GHETS (Global Health through Education, Training and Service). In 2015, the WHTF will publish the 3rd edition of the Women and Health Learning Package: modules on 9 global women's health topics, with country overviews and cases from the global south. The WHTF is a group of academic, public health and community professionals and advocates working to improve the health of women and their communities.

Chair: Judy Lewis is an Emeritus Professor at University of Connecticut School of Medicine where she has been on the faculty for over 40 years. She is a well-recognized public health sociologist, medical educator, and MCH leader. She was one of the founding members of the WHTF in 1991. She is a member of APHA, a leader in the MCH Section, and will serve as the first chair of the Work Group. A co-chair will be selected from another country in the initial working group membership.

Action Plan:

During the first three years of the work group, the following will be accomplished:

- Develop resolutions on women and children for the WFPHA
- Contribute to all the goals of the WFPHA strategic plan
- Plan sessions for the next World Congress and regional meetings of the WFPHA
- Participate in global meetings and networks related to women and children (e.g., Network: TUFH, Women Deliver, Coalition for Adolescent Girls, Global Maternal Newborn Health Conference, NCD Child Network, and other relevant meetings)
- Select several programmatic initiatives as determined by work group members and seek funds to support the initiatives.

Budget: The Work Group will solicit funding for its activities.