

Draft Concept Paper of the NEAT Working Group on Enhancement of Regional Health in East Asia with Special Reference to the Public Health and Universal Health Coverage

1. Theme

This Working Group aims to clarify the current situation and challenges on issues related to healthcare in East Asia, thereby seeking ways to enhance regional cooperation, with special reference to promotion on a regional basis of public healthcare and the universal health coverage.

2. Background

In East Asia, as exemplified by the institutionalization of ASEAN+3 (APT) in 1997 and East Asia Summit (EAS) in 2005, regional cooperation and integration have advanced particularly in such areas as economy, finance, education, and disaster prevention, etc. Worthy to note is the burgeoning economic interdependence deriving from establishment of an intra-regional supply chain in parallel with the rapid economic development. Under the circumstances, the question of how to maintain and promote health of the people or how to develop cooperation in healthcare appears to be an indispensable agenda for sustainable development in the region, let alone a common issue for humanity at large.

The international society has made efforts for health promotion including improvement of the health condition of pregnant women, prevention of such disease as HIV / AIDS and malaria, etc., as an integral development goal under the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) established in 2000. The issue of healthcare has been on the agenda of the summit meetings among major countries, leading to the establishment of the Global Fund in Geneva to fight diseases. These efforts have resulted in many achievements, such as the significant decreases of such disease as malaria and tuberculosis as well as the fatality rate of pregnant women.

However, the recent changes in people's life habit along with economic development, induced serious non-communicable disease, such as cancer, diabetes, heart diseases. In addition, new infectious disease, such as SARS and MERS, have also appeared. Global disease structure has changed significantly as the vulnerability to epidemics along with globalization has been revealed, as seen in the case of the pandemic of Ebola. Furthermore, these diseases and vulnerability lead to other diseases, causing multi-faceted issues. Hence, the international society requires a new approach to healthcare including enhancement of comprehensive healthcare system, instead of traditional approach based on individual disease.

Especially, Asia is a region inherent of many tropical and infectious disease. The region also has various folded issues of international health field, environmental issues which cause diseases, and aging issues which significantly change healthcare system of each country. Thus, it is a region in need of further cooperation and management in the field of health.

Nevertheless, East Asian countries have not simply left the situation unaddressed. The APT, for example, has convened health ministerial meetings approximately every other year since 2004 and shared the recognition that the APT is facing two-folded issue of communicable and non-communicable diseases and that it is important to enhance collaboration in the region, cooperation in training health experts, as well as universal health coverage. And in 2014, ASEAN+3 UHC Network was established by the APT Senior Official's Meeting on Health Development (APTSOMHD). Future development of the regional UHC is expected.

As for Japan-ASEAN bilateral framework, "ASEAN-Japan Health Initiative" was advocated at The ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit Meeting in 2013, to make the ASEAN a region of advanced region of health and longevity, which claimed the cooperation to promote UHC, to manage transmittal diseases, and to spread health services and medical machines for non-transmittal diseases.

Hence, in the East Asian region, cooperation in the newly-developed health related issues has already been initiated. Should the East Asian region be able to develop cooperation in this field and achieve sustainable development, that would considerably contribute not only to regional prosperity but also to the solution of issues in the field on a global scale. Therefore, there is no significant to promote regional cooperation in this field.

3. Objective

With the background and awareness explained above, what is the "cooperation in the field of health" to be focused in the East Asian region? Especially today, because transmittal and non-transmittal diseases have appeared as multi-faceted issues due to the changes in people's living environment along with globalization and economic development, it is necessary to consider how to promote comprehensively management of public healthcare rather than an approach targeting individual disease. It is necessary to clarify the issues in public healthcare in each country and to share ideas on how to promote cooperation in the field of healthcare.

Also, as a concrete means to maintaining health, securing impartial access to basic medical service in each society would be indispensable and adoption of universal health coverage is thus an immediate task.

Besides, research and development in health related issues, including managing new transmittal diseases, would be indispensable. Cooperation for technological innovation and human resource development are also necessary.

Based on these backgrounds and awareness and with the understanding of the current situation of regional cooperation in East Asia with a broad perspective, this Working Group aims to make concrete and detailed policy proposals for “Cooperation in the field of healthcare in East Asia” and to submit the proposals to the APT Summit.

4. Schedule

July, 2016

NEAT WG Meeting in Tokyo (Each country of ASEAN, China and Korea and the ASEAN Secretariat are requested to nominate one expert on “Enhancement of Regional Health in East Asia with Special Reference to the Public Health and Universal Health Coverage “ issues to participate in the WG Meeting.) on the eve of the WG Meeting, Working Dinner in honor of the participants of the WG is held.

5. Sponsor

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