

Local Engagement: Our contribution to the community

Background

The WHO Kobe Centre was established in 1995 following a WHO Executive Board Resolution and the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. WKC is a department of the WHO Headquarters and has a global mandate. At the same time, the WKC seeks to contribute to the community where we live and work by sharing information and knowledge. As such, WKC has both a global and local role. As part of the local role, WKC established partnerships with Kansai research institutions and local government to encourage collaboration towards common health challenges. We also seek to better communicate and disseminate our research findings about WKC's research and other activities and strive to contribute to the local community.

Objectives

1. To share lessons learned and encourage collaboration across countries as they strive to attain similar goals under the commitments for UHC and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
2. To communicate and disseminate information about WKC's research activities.
3. To contribute to the community in Kobe and Hyogo prefecture for awareness-raising and health advocacy.

Progress report 2019-20

Objective 1: To encourage collaborations across countries.

Joint research. The WKC continues to **partner with local research institutions** to jointly address common health challenges. Within each of the three research themes under the WKC Research Plan 2018-2026, we seek to identify the locally relevant challenge in the Kansai region and research partners. In such a way, lessons learned from the Kansai region form a part of our global research programme. WKC also strives to provide opportunities to integrate teams of researchers based in Kansai and international academia. This allows for strengthening ties and expanding WKC's network of research within the Kansai region, while maintaining a global mandate approach to research. In 2020, for example, new projects were started that jointly support researchers from the Kansai region to conduct research with academics in other parts of the world. These include partnerships with the Hyogo Institute for Traumatic Stress, Kobe University, Osaka University, Osaka Medical College, and the University of Hyogo, Kyoto Prefectural University of Medicine, Wakayama Medical University, and Nara Medical University. Detailed description of collaborative research is attached as **Annex 1** ([Annex 1. Kansai collaboration table](#)).

Study visits. The WKC partnered with the **Asian Development Bank (ADB) to organize study tours for local government officials from Bangladesh (2019-21)**. These study tours encourage learning from Kobe and the region on strong city planning for universal health coverage, disaster preparedness, as well as waste management and general management for health and social welfare. The 2019 study tour provided lessons from Kobe and the region to assist local officials in Bangladesh in promoting health and social welfare. These study tours have been organized in partnership with relevant WHO departments in HQ and the WHO Country Office in Bangladesh. A follow-up study tour is planned for 2021 with additional local officials from Bangladesh.

Secretariat for WHO Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management (Health EDRM) Research Network (TPRN).

WKC has played a key role in establishing the WHO Thematic Platform for Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management Research Network (TPRN), consisting of international specialists as well as Kansai-based experts. WKC is serving as the Secretariat of this network, the first of its kind in the world. One of the key global collaborative activities through the network is the development of WHO Guidance on Research Methods for Health EDRM. Twelve experts from Japan are involved as co-authors to share the history and best practices of disaster risk reduction in Japan, including the experiences responding to the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake (1995) written by Kansai local researchers at the University of Hyogo and the Hyogo Institute for Traumatic Stress. WKC has organized three key

meetings for the progress of TPRN activities in Hyogo and Kobe including the Kobe Expert Meeting on Health EDRM research needs at Asia Pacific Conference on Disaster Medicine 2018, the TPRN Core Group Meeting as well as the WKC Forum for Japanese experts in 2019 both on Awaji Island, and a workshop on Health EDRM research in Japan context at the Congress of Japanese Association of Disaster Medicine 2020 in Kobe.

International visitors and meetings. WKC has received more than 30 visitors between 2016 and 2020 from all regions of WHO including the Southeast Asia region, Western Pacific Region, Americas region, European Region, the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and the African Region. WKC held 12 international meetings since 2016, including seven meetings in 2019-20:

1. **February 2020. The "Disaster medicine research"** forum was organized in collaboration with the Japanese Society for Disaster Medicine and Hyogo Emergency Medical Centre. Held in Kobe.
2. **November 2020. The "Nurses on the Frontline"** is an online forum in partnership with the Hyogo Nursing Association and involving nursing schools in the Kansai region. In Kobe.
3. **October 2019. "Accelerating International Research Collaboration for Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management (Health-EDRM) – Dialogue on Japan/Hyogo/Kobe Contribution to Global Scientific Evidence Development."** Participants included the WHO Health-EDRM focal points from WHO HQ and WHO Regional Offices, the TPRN co-chairs, 50 leading experts in Japan on Health-EDRM and students from the local universities. The meeting shared the result of the TPRN Core Group Meeting and strategy towards WHO Health-EDRM Research Agenda with Japanese key stakeholders and discussed possible future collaboration and local contribution from Japan. The meeting was organized in collaboration with the University of Hyogo in Kobe. It was covered extensively in the press including three articles by the Kobe Newspaper before, during and after the meeting.
4. **October 2019. "The 1st Core Group Meeting of WHO Thematic Platform For Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management Research Network"**. This meeting followed the abovementioned meeting and focused on future global research collaborations.
5. **October 2019. "Assistive Technology" meeting at the 17th World Congress of the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO)** organized in cooperation with Hyogo Rehabilitation Centre and WHO HQ. The meeting was in Kobe.
6. **October 2019. WHO/WKC-ADB Workshop: Strengthening Local Capacity for Sustainable Health Development in Urban Bangladesh.** Sponsored by The Asian Development Bank, 26 local officials from Bangladesh conducted a study tour in Kobe and Hyogo prefecture. Held in Kobe.
7. **January 2019. Advancing public-private collaboration: Improving sustainability and affordability of health services globally in order to achieve health systems resilience, the SDGs and Universal Health Coverage (UHC).** Attended by over 20 international researchers to discuss and finalize a book on pricing health care.

Objective 2: To communicate and disseminate information about WKC's research activities.

The **WKC Forum** is an important means to communicate and disseminate WKC research as well as contributing to the community in which we live. WKC is committed to organizing at least three fora per year. The participants may include academics and/or the public. In 2019 and 2020, WKC organized 7 fora:

- February 2019. "Think global agenda with high school students" in cooperation with the Hyogo Prefectural Education Board and Osaka University. About 500 students participated, mainly from high schools in Hyogo prefecture, and shared their views about their contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.
- October 2019. "Assistive Technology" at the 17th World Congress of the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO) organized in cooperation with Hyogo Rehabilitation Centre and WHO HQ. The meeting was in Kobe.
- October 2019. "Accelerating International Research Collaboration for Health Emergency and Disaster Risk Management (Health-EDRM) – Dialogue on Japan/Hyogo/Kobe Contribution to Global Scientific Evidence Development." Participants included the WHO Health-EDRM focal points from WHO HQ and five WHO

Regional Offices, the TPRN co-chairs from Public Health England and Chinese University of Hong Kong, 50 leading experts in Japan on Health-EDRM and students from the local universities. The meeting shared the result of the TPRN Core Group Meeting and strategy towards WHO Health-EDRM Research Agenda with Japanese key stakeholders and discussed possible future collaboration and local contribution from Japan. The meeting was organized in collaboration with the University of Hyogo. It was covered extensively in the press including three articles by the Kobe Newspaper before, during and after the meeting.

- February 2020. "High School Summit" in cooperation with the Hyogo Prefectural Education Board and Osaka University. About 500 students participated, mainly from high schools in Hyogo prefecture, and shared their views about international issues in the context of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- January 2020. "Alcohol awareness Forum". This forum was conducted in collaboration with Hyogo Prefectural Civic Centre, Hyogo Prefecture, and Japan MOHLW, and discussed the status of measures to prevent and address the harmful use of alcohol.
- February 2020. The "Disaster medicine research" forum was organized in collaboration with the Japanese Society for Disaster Medicine and Hyogo Emergency Medical Centre.
- November 2020. The "Nurses on the Frontline" will be organized as an online forum in partnership with the Hyogo Nursing Association and involving nursing schools in the Kansai region.

Website and social media. The website aims to provide wider access to its programme of work and ongoing research activities. In July 2018, WKC launched its redesigned bilingual website. The website now includes details in English and Japanese of each of the three research themes, each project, and local engagement activities. The website is complemented by a Twitter feed and a YouTube account. WKC works with communications experts to more broadly disseminate information about WKC's agenda through a wide range of media, including short news stories, projects briefs, video interviews of researchers, and regular Tweets in both English and Japanese. This has resulted in increasing the readership to online activity and extending WKC's readership to new audiences both locally and globally.

This strategy has yielded visible results. Since April 2019, the Twitter and website activities have steadily increased and this has drawn more visitors to WKC's website, with approximately 60% of these users accessing the site in Japan. When campaigns have integrated the website, twitter and media, we also observed spikes in the number of visits and increased followers on social media.

Since the 2nd quarter of 2020, WKC has significantly contributed to providing reliable technical and general public information, with a dedicated COVID19 webpage, numerous risk communication campaigns about COVID19 on both YouTube and Twitter, with major posts reaching 3 million views on Twitter, more than 1 million visitors to our WKC website, and Twitter followers growing from 1000 to 6000 within a few months.

Expanding on print media interactions. Significant work has gone into updating our media contact list and engaging the media as appropriate. For example, significant media coverage was given to the WKC's Health-Emergency and Disaster Risk Management (Health-EDRM) Forum held on Awaji Island on 17–18 October 2019, including three articles by the health editor of Kobe newspaper and 1 article in Asahi Shimbun. Other articles in the last few months include a feature in the international publication, *The Diplomat*, featuring the work of our partner in the Lao Democratic Peoples' Republic on dementia. In 2020, numerous articles have been published on COVID19, and WKC has acted as a gateway and provide key information for Japanese and local media (Mint' programme of Mainichi broadcasting station, Yomiuri Shinbun, YTV, TBS TV, Kyodo News, NHK, Thomson Reuters, TV Asahi, Nihon Keizai Shinbun, Tokyo Shinbun, Kobe Shinbun, Mainichi Shinbun, Fuji TV, Chunichi Shinbun, Shizuoka online) to access the latest information on the outbreak from WHO, in pandemic in partnership with the WPRO and HQ media and communication teams. For local audiences, WKC provided a special one-page newspaper article for COVID-19 prevention in collaboration with the Kobe Newspaper. Key media reports are included in **Annex 2 ([Annex 2. Key media reports](#))**.

Communication plans to disseminate findings for each research project. For each research project, the WKC identifies how the results will be disseminated. This includes traditional journal articles, as well as initial and final research briefs in Japanese and English, updated website research descriptions, interviews with researchers, twitter

and videos of specific research projects and investigators. Stronger linkages have been made with the local newspaper, the Kobe newspaper, and local and national press clubs which receive media releases of important findings and events.

Objective 3: To contribute to health awareness in the community.

Student lectures. The WKC hosts visits and provides lectures about WHO and WKC activities for students in primary schools, high schools, and universities. In 2019, WKC provided 24 lectures in Hyogo and Kobe. In 2020, WKC innovated by providing 7 webinars and classes to schools and academic faculties to date.

Participation in local committees. WKC staff make every effort to contribute to local technical committees and meetings, to improve population health. In 2019 and 2020, WKC participated in the following committees:

- Hyogo Prefecture Expert Committee for COVID-19 Response
- Steering Committee Member, Hyogo Prefecture Smoke Free Ordinance Committee
- External Advisory Board; Department of Global Health, Kyoto University
- Health Creative City Kobe Promotion Committee
- Kobe Health Medical Strategy Meeting
- Hyogo Prefecture Council of Advisors on Influenza
- Hyogo/Kobe Expert Committee for Health Emergencies
- Kobe City Meeting of designated hospitals for New Influenza and other emerging communicable diseases
- Kobe City Expert Meeting for Dementia Friendly City
- Kobe City Expert Meeting for Healthcare Service Development
- Disaster Reduction Alliance Board Meeting
- International Recovery Platform (IRP) Steering Committee Meeting
- Kobe Quarantine Drill for Communicable Disease Control
- Osaka EXPO Planning Committee 2025

In addition, in January 2020, WKC contributed to the “Hyogo Prefecture Alcohol Addiction Prevention Forum” at the request of Hyogo Prefecture, to share WHO strategies to address the harmful use of alcohol.

Translation of WHO Disease Outbreak News. WKC continues to identify and translate the Global WHO Disease Outbreak News (DONs). This is done in close cooperation with the Kobe/Osaka/Kansai Airport quarantine offices and the Narita Airport quarantine office, in addition to the technical support of the Hyogo/Kobe expert committee on health emergencies. By end of 2019, 38 DONs were translated and posted on the Japan Ministry of Health Labour and Welfare website (www.forth.go.jp). In 2020, DONs translation continued and the WKC also shifted to provide more translations of technical guidance related to COVID19. A list of translated DONs provided to local government and regional quarantine offices at **Annex 3. ([Annex 3. List of DONs translated](#))**

Translation of WHO COVID Technical Guidance and public information. To respond to the needs of local policymakers as well as local citizens, WKC has provided relevant and accurate information on COVID19 in Japanese since February 2020. A dedicated set of pages have been created on WKC website that presents the Japanese translation of the WHO global situation reports, WHO technical guidance, and information for the general public (see https://extranet.who.int/kobe_centre/ja/covid). The statistics and Information are updated daily, and this information shared with local and national stakeholders, and also tweeted to thousands of followers. Since the pandemic started, eight WKC staff dedicate between 10 to 80% of their time to the identification of relevant guidance and public information, translation and checking translations for accuracy, and communication and dissemination of information on the website and through twitter.

By the end of August 2020, WKC has translated and disseminated 66 WHO technical guidance documents, and 38 documents with information for the public include MythBusters and brief Q&As. Both are disseminated through the website, and on Twitter and Youtube. All are growing in followers and reach to both health professionals and the general public. The WKC has reached as over 50,000 views on the COVID-19 webpage in Japanese language, and more than 6,000 people follow the WKC official twitter account. COVID-19 information has also been provided through media interviews in newspapers and TV including Yoimuri newspaper, Mainichi newspaper, Kobe newspaper and Fuji TV. For local audiences, WKC provided a special one-page newspaper article for COVID-19 prevention in collaboration with the Kobe Newspaper, and a special article in the newsletter for the Kobe Biomedical Innovation Cluster (KBIC). In this effort, WKC has cooperated closely with communications experts in WHO Geneva and the WPRO. A list of the 66 WHO technical guidance documents, and 38 public information documents is attached in **Annex 4. ([Annex 4. List of WHO COVID-19 documents translated into Japanese and disseminated](#))**. We also attach **Annex 5** with the local media coverage on COVID-19 (**[Annex 5. Media reports about COVID-19 publications](#)**).

Strengthen communications locally. The WKC and the Kobe Group have worked to strengthen their regular communications. The WKC and the Kobe Group held their annual program review committee meeting in July 2019 and virtually in 2020, to discuss progress made and planning for future research and local engagement. The WKC and the JCC Executive Committee also met regularly to review WKC progress. Monthly meetings were held to discuss local engagement activities and strengthen communications among other topics. The Kobe Group is also represented in the 2019 and 2020 Advisory Committee (ACWKC) meeting in November every year. In 2020, WKC and the Kobe Group initiated written-meetings and online meetings to ensure the health and safety of staff on both parties.

Proposed program for 2020-21 and ongoing activities

Objective 1: To encourage collaborations across countries.

WKC will continue to expand on the successful approach of encouraging collaboration between Kansai based institutions and international researchers outside of Japan, for all three research themes outlined in WKC's research plan. At present, direct research collaborations and engagement in meetings and technical events have expanded to at least 15 local academic institutes, including Kyoto University, Kobe University, Osaka University, Hyogo Emergency Medical Centre, Hyogo Institute for Traumatic Stress, University of Hyogo, Kobe Gakuin University, Shiga University of Medical Science, Shitennoji University, Setsunan University, Kobe City College of Nursing, Kansai University of Social Welfare, Himeji University, Konan Women's University, and Nara Gakuen University.

The **ADB Bangladesh follow-up study visits** originally planned for 2020 have been postponed to the end of 2021 due to the current travel and health measures related to COVID-19.

Secretariat for WHO Thematic Platform for Health EDRM Research Network (TPRN). Following the recommendations of the 2019 Core Group Meeting, efforts will be made to energize the TPRN. WKC seeks to build on ongoing activities in promoting research collaborations among local, national and international experts in Health EDRM. In 2021, WKC will create dedicated webpages for a knowledge hub on Health EDRM. The knowledge hub will provide a database of up-to-date research and evidence to share among TPRN members and the public for effective knowledge synthesis and dissemination that can translate to better evidence-based policies. Following the recommendations of the 2019 Core Group Meeting, WKC will facilitate the development of the WHO Research Agenda on Health EDRM, including aspects of emergency response in the context of infectious disease outbreaks including the COVID pandemic. Working within this network, in 2021, WKC also plans to revise the research method guidance with additional chapters on COVID-19 related issues.

Objective 2: To communicate and disseminate information about WKC's research activities.

WKC will continue to **organize at least three WKC Fora** per year. The following are planned for 2021:

- February 2021. The 8th High School Summit on International Affairs is being organized in cooperation with the Hyogo Prefectural Education Board, Osaka University and high schools in Hyogo Prefecture. WKC will moderate a panel discussion and serve on the judging panel for the student research presentation (video) contest as part of WKC's local contribution to the capacity building of local students. Students from 20 local high schools are expected to participate. The meeting will be held online for the first time due to COVID-19 impacts.
- Two other forums will be planned as well, pending discussions and concurrence with the Kobe Group. Possible topics an online workshop on Health EDRM in the context of COVID-19 to share WKC work resulting from the 2020 research call for proposals. This forum would invite different stakeholders including academia, government officials, frontline workers, NGOs and would also be open to the general public.

In addition, further efforts will be made to continue to strengthen WKC communication through its **website and social media accounts** to better understand the different needs of the local audience in our community, as well as the global audience. Recognizing that many people access the site from cell phones, we are working to improve the user interface, and to increase our social media presence on Twitter and YouTube.

WKC's 25th anniversary. The WKC is commemorating its 25th anniversary in 2020-21. This is an opportunity to communicate and disseminate information about WKC's research activities to different audiences. The commemoration started with a special news article on the WKC website and social media activity around 22 August 2020, the day of the original MOU signing 25 years earlier. This will be followed by the publication of two articles about WKC's research activities in two journals widely circulated among Japanese public health researchers and practitioners in September and October 2020, respectively. On 21 August 2020, WKC published a brochure that summarizes WKC's key local research and activities for Hyogo/Kobe audience, thanking local government and people for their continuous support and committing further contribution to local. The articles and brochure are attached in **Annex 6 ([Annex 6. WKC 25th Anniversary publications](#))**.

The commemoration of WKC's 25th anniversary will officially continue until March 2021, the date of the opening of the WKC office. A special anniversary brochure about WKC's first 25 years is expected to be published by March 2021 with an accompanying web story and social media activity

Expanding on information in print media. WKC has established a strong relationship with the Kobe Newspaper, who has been following WKC work on Health EDRM research and TPRN, including three reports about the introduction of TPRN Core Group Meeting and another article about the 2020 WKC Forum. We anticipate continued collaborations and interest in 2021 with the Kobe Newspaper and other local papers. The WKC COVID translation work is now essential reading for many national and local stakeholders, given that our website is the only WHO official website that provides WHO official information in the Japanese language. WKC has contributed to the Kobe Newspaper special article on COVID-19 (28 April 2020). Local and national papers covered the MythBusters extensively, and referred to WKC tweets in the media, leading to increased twitter followers and audience.

Communications plan for each research project. WKC staff continues to work with communications experts and has adopted tailored dissemination approaches for its research projects. This includes projects briefs updated at the beginning and end of the project, social media and web messaging about research results and feature stories about research collaborators in video interviews or social media clippings. The communication plan provides for a minimal set of actions for each research initiative (project brief, news article, and tweets of research result) as well as optional components actionable by WKC to highlight specific work (twitter storm campaign, webinars, media engagement, etc.). In 2021, WKC will continue to implement integrate its communication plan into each project cycle to ensure greater visibility and dissemination.

Objective 3: To contribute to health awareness in the community.

WKC will continue to translate the **Global WHO Disease Outbreak News (DON)** into Japanese and share the translation with experts and the public in collaboration with the quarantine office in Kobe City and Osaka. WKC will also continue to strengthen its ties to the community by **participating in technical committees and attending meetings in Hyogo/Kobe** as listed previously. WKC will also seek to continually improve communications with the Kobe Group to ensure mutual understanding and support.

Continued translation and dissemination of COVID-19 technical guidance and public information. WKC will continue to make specific efforts to translate and disseminate information on COVID19, involving staff effort, translation for technical and general public guidance, social media and media engagement. Over 50 volunteer experts support primary translation and translation review, and United Nations agencies in Japan also support translation and dissemination. WKC will make stronger efforts to increase its capacity to manage this work, including streamlining the work by selecting key relevant guidance for translation and better coordinating the translation and dissemination tasks. WKC will also make further efforts to effectively disseminate this information locally and promote sharing information in collaboration with Kobe City and Hyogo Prefecture.

School lectures. School lectures are continuing in 2020 and 2021, based on continuous ad-hoc requests from local primary and secondary schools and universities. WKC expects to provide mostly online lectures in 2020-21 in the form of webinars.

Strengthen communications locally. Plans are underway to review progress to date and consider new opportunities for local engagement. Most significantly, a systematic review of these activities will be done as a part of the Kobe Group/WKC mid-term review as agreed upon in the MoU. Through this process, we will work together with the Kobe Group and other stakeholders to identify common areas of interest. Through these discussions, WKC plans to expand on its local engagement activities.

WKC expects to maintain significant financial resources into local engagement activities. The ongoing and planned activities for local engagement including communications, local events and translation is estimated for the 2020/21 biennium as US\$445,000. This does not include the resources dedicated to Kansai research collaborations (detailed in Annex 1).