Our City, Our Health, Our Future—the Case of Promoting Healthy City in Taipei

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Abstract
In 1986 the World Health Organization (WHO) initiated the Healthy Cities program, after discovering that solving most public health problems had exceeded the capacity of the health sector. The WHO thus began to promote the “Healthy Cities Project Movement”, which aimed to improve the health of cities through citizen participation and cooperation between public and private sectors. The Healthy Cities project was well-received by cities around the world, and to achieve that end, the WHO set up a Healthy Cities Project Office that same year, promoting healthy cities across the world’s six major regions, including the European Healthy Cities Network (European region), the Alliance for Healthy Cities (Western Pacific region), the Americas region, the Africa region, the Middle East region, and the Southeast Asia region. The European Healthy Cities Network led all regions in the promotion of healthy cities; currently the European and Western Pacific regions are the most active networks. Because of its geographical location, Taiwan belongs in the region managed by the Alliance for Healthy Cities (AFHC). As of August 2016, the AFHC has a total of 235 members, in which Taiwan has 24 cities and administrative districts granted as members. Taipei’s healthy cities project publicly obtained the Mayor’s support in 2002, who designated that same year to be the inaugural year of Taipei’s Healthy City. The city then gradually coordinated and planned Daan district in Taipei City to join the AFHC as a non-governmental organization in 2006, and by 2010 the city had completed the promotion of health cities in 6 districts and the promotion of safe communities in another 6 districts, all 12 districts joining their respective international organizations. In August 2016 Taipei City also successfully joined the AFHC under the name of “Taipei Healthy City Promotion Association”, becoming part of and connecting with the international healthy cities network.

According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), the proportion of urban population in 2025 is expected to reach 61%. High degree of urban development causes many social, health, and ecological problems, such as high population density, heavy traffic, life stress, unsanitary drinking water and food, pollution of the ecological environment, violence, and other harms. Echoing the main theme of the 7th Global Conference of the Alliance for Healthy Cities, “Our cities, Our health, Our future”, and under the leadership of Mayor Ko Wen-je, Taipei City in 2015 pushed an even more sophisticated healthy cities project, expecting to fulfill the
mission of “serving the citizens and innovating the city”. The city has followed the theme of “ensuring health and safety” found in the strategic map created by the Department of Health, using community health resources to promote healthy cities in six districts and safe communities in another six districts. The city has also secured cross-sectoral cooperation from the business, government, academic, and civil society sectors, in which healthy city policies were promoted “top-down” and consensus among the public and community groups were achieved “bottom-up”. With Taipei City Government’s Department of Health Commissioner Shier-Chieg Huang leading the cross-departmental and cross-sectoral effort, the city has combined health, safety, and age-friendly issues, organized a healthy city promotion task group, established 63 international and domestic indicators, and formulated 62 healthy city action programs in hopes of creating a “people-oriented”, livable, and sustainable city.
I. Introduction

Since the establishment of Taipeh Prefecture and the construction of Taipeh City Walls in the 1880s, Taipei began to take shape as Taiwan’s capital and foremost city. Not only has the political and administrative center of Taiwan officially moved from Tainan to Taipei, but Taipei also became Taiwan’s political and economic center, bringing rapid population growth with it. According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), the proportion of urban population in 2025 is expected to reach 61%. The Economic Development Commission of the Executive Yuan has indicated in a 2012 report that the world population in 2013 was 7.14 billion, the population of those over the age of 65 accounted for 8%, of which 35% lived in developed areas. Because Taipei City is located in a basin, rapid population growth and technological advances have not only led to high degree of urban development, but have also caused many social, health, and ecological problems, such as high population density, heavy traffic, life stress, unsanitary drinking water and food, pollution of the ecological environment, violence, and other harms. Therefore, the WHO launched the healthy cities concept in 1986, promoting the healthy cities project movement to improve the health of cities. Additionally, it made an appeal with respect to the survival and development of cities, stating that the city is not merely an economic entity, but can also be a healthy, happy living space. Because factors affecting health are multiple, complex, and beyond what the health sector can bear, integrating government departments, non-governmental organizations, social enterprises and community residents to jointly take effective measures that solve the health problems of urban residents is a top priority. Taipei City also obtained the Mayor’s support in 2002, who designated that same year to be the inaugural year of Taipei’s Healthy City. The city then gradually coordinated and planned the promotion of healthy cities and safe community initiatives district by district, becoming an age-friendly city by 2012. In 2016, the city further adhered to the “Health for All policies” concept, pushing forth an even more sophisticated healthy cities project that echoes the main theme of the 7th Global Conference of the Alliance for Healthy Cities, “Our cities, Our health, Our future”. With Taipei City Government’s Department of Health Commissioner Shier-Chieg Huang leading the cross-departmental and cross-sectoral effort, the city has followed the city government’s strategic map, successfully integrated resources and used community health to promote healthy cities in six districts and safe communities in another six districts. The city has also secured cross-sectoral and cross-departmental cooperation from the business, government, academic, and civil society sectors, in which healthy city policies were promoted “top-down” and consensus among the public and community groups were achieved “bottom-up”, all
for the purpose of providing attentive and sensible service to the public through the combination of health, safety, and age-friendly issues.

II. The Meaning of Healthy cities

A. Origin and Development of the Healthy Cities Concept

In 1986, the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, aiming to improve the overall health of the community, propositioned five major action programs to foster environmental health and citizen cooperation in the creation of a healthy city. To promote the implementation of healthy cities, the WHO set up a Healthy Cities Project Office in 1986 and developed a five-year promotional program. With technical assistance from the WHO, as of today at least more than 5,000 healthy cities have been established around the world. The concept of healthy cities was initiated by the WHO, which in its *Global Strategy for Health for All by the Year 2000* report defined health as: “health is not a single finite target; it is a process leading to progressive development in the health of people. Healthy cities are based on six characteristics: commitment to health, political decision-making, intersectoral action, community participation, innovation, and healthy public policy.

According to Hancock and Duhl’s definition (1986), a healthy city is “one that is continually creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing to their maximum potential”. Therefore, a healthy city is a process, not merely an outcome. The aim of a “healthy cities project” is thus a process to achieve public health by enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health. Through the community’s commitment to health and cross-departmental collaborations between government organizations, a healthy cities project encourages active participation among community residents, integrates community resources, facilitates political decision-making, fosters innovative activities, continues to create healthy communities, and achieves the goals of health for all.

B. Steps to Develop an International Healthy City

To assist countries in promoting the concept of healthy cities, the WHO proposed a 20-step framework (Figure 1) for developing a healthy cities project, divided into three parts: (i) the getting started phase, (ii) the getting organized phase, and (iii) the taking action phase (WHO, 1997).
C. International Healthy City Indicators

In 1999, Hancock indicated that to understand change and progress of healthy cities, there is a need to develop both basic information on cities and healthy city indicators, of which the latter is the more important of the two. Indicators can be used to assess the state of urban development from past to present, provide the basis for effectiveness evaluation, and serve as reference guidelines for future programs. To assist cities in establishing quantifiable healthy city indicators, in 1996 the WHO recommended the use of the following 32 quantifiable healthy city indicators (Table 1) as basis for cities to construct their own city health profile.

Table 1. WHO Healthy City Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Health Indicators</th>
<th>B. Health Service Indicators</th>
<th>C. Environmental Indicators</th>
<th>D. Socio-economic Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A3. Low birth weight</td>
<td>B3. Number of inhabitants per practicing primary health care practitioner</td>
<td>C3. Percentage of water pollutants removed from total sewage produced</td>
<td>D3. Unemployment rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B4. Number of inhabitants per</td>
<td>C4. Household waste collection quality index</td>
<td>D4. Percentage of people earning less than the mean per capita</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. The Promotion of Healthy Cities in Taiwan

As of August 2016, 24 entities from Taiwan have joined the AFHC network as Associate Members, including 13 municipalities or counties and 11 district areas. The 13 municipalities or counties are Taipei City, New Taipei City, Tainan City, Kaohsiung City, Taoyuan County, Hualien County, Miaoli County, Chiayi City, Taitung County, Nantou County, Hsinchu City, Hsinchu County, and Kinmen County. The 11 district areas are Pingtung City in Pingtung County, the districts of Tamsui, Shuangxi, Pingxi, Pinglin in New Taipei City, and the districts of Daan, Shilin, Beitou, Wanhua, Songshan, and Zhongshan in Taipei City. The current state of healthy city promotion at the country’s six special municipalities and their status in the AFHC are described in Table 2.

Table 2. The Current State of Healthy City Promotion at 6 Special Municipalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Municipality</th>
<th>Year Promoted</th>
<th>Year Joined AFHC</th>
<th>AFHC Membership Name</th>
<th>Promotion Highlights</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taipei City (launched in...</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Daan Health Promotion Association, Taipei City</td>
<td>1. 2002 was Taipei Healthy City’s inaugural year; the city established 5 task groups, including the safety group, sustainable ecology group,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Shilin Health Promotion Association, Taipei City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Municipality</td>
<td>Year Promoted</td>
<td>Year Joined AFHC</td>
<td>AFHC Membership Name</td>
<td>Promotion Highlights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beitou Health Promotion Association, Taipei City</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Beitou Health Promotion Association, Taipei City</td>
<td>friendly and culture group, health and vitality group, and prosperity and convenience group. These 5 groups promoted 10 city characteristics (safe, friendly, ecological, cultural, convenient, healthy, sustainable, prosperous, happy, vigorous). 2. In 2006, healthy city promoted according to each district’s characteristics. 3. In 2015, healthy city promoted in conjunction with age-friendly and safe community issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhongshan Health Promotion Association, Taipei City</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Zhongshan Health Promotion Association, Taipei City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songshan Health Promotion Association, Taipei City</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Songshan Health Promotion Association, Taipei City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanhua Health Promotion Association, Taipei</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Wanhua Health Promotion Association, Taipei</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taipei Healthy City Promotion Association</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Taipei Healthy City Promotion Association</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Taipei City Healthy City Promotion Association</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>New Taipei City Healthy City Promotion Association</td>
<td>1. Joined in 2005 as township 2. With Mayor serving as convener since 2011, the city established a healthy city and sustainable development commission. 3. Promotion of health and sustainable development issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taoyuan Healthy City Promotion Association</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Taoyuan Healthy City Promotion Association</td>
<td>1. With Mayor serving as convener, the city established a healthy and age-friendly city promotion commission. 2. Promotion of health and elderly issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Only included healthy city-related indicators for the purposes of tracking, management, and evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tainan Healthy City Association</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Tainan Healthy City Association</td>
<td>1. First city in Taiwan to join the AFHC (Alliance for Healthy Cities) 2. With Mayor serving as convener, the city established a healthy city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Municipality</td>
<td>Year Promoted</td>
<td>Year Joined AFHC</td>
<td>AFHC Membership Name</td>
<td>Promotion Highlights</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaohsiung City</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Kaohsiung Healthy Harbor City Association</td>
<td>promotion task group; healthy city promotion formed part of the city’s ten largest, cross-departmental flagship programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. The History of Promoting Healthy City in Taipei

In 2002 Taipei City completed community health assessment for all its 12 administrative districts, and designated the year 2002 as the inaugural year of Taipei Healthy City. To strengthen community participation, the Daan district in Taipei City was selected in 2006 as a demonstration area, in which the business, government, academic, and civil society sectors were combined to jointly promote healthy city initiatives. In the same year, the district successfully joined the AFHC as a non-government organization (NGO). In 2007, the city decided to adopt either a healthy cities or an international safe community program for all its administrative districts. By 2010, 6 administrative districts in Taipei City have successfully joined the AFHC, and 6 administrative districts have passed the International Safe Community certification process.
III. Taipei’s Healthy City Promotion Project

A. Analysis of Taipei City’s Current Situation

Since its founding in 1884 and after decades of constant urban development and renewal, Taipei City has transformed from an originally simple, traditional agricultural town into a political and economic metropolis. However, due to its rapid expansion as a metropolitan city, Taipei City must confront with the problems of security, health and wellness, environmental pollution, multicultural shock, and ecology after becoming highly developed. Because Taipei possesses a convenient transportation network, the city is also a major center for international trade and commercial activities. With increases in marriages between residents and foreign nationals and the arrival of new immigrants, Taipei City has become a truly multicultural society in terms in lifestyle and food. In responding to this phenomenon, Taipei City Government has been actively promoting various policies in the hope that the citizens of Taipei will understand and accept the diversity of Taipei. Additionally, the City Government has conducted exchanges with other global cities to enhance Taipei’s international visibility and showcase the city’s livability and sustainability.

From 2012 to 2014, the average life expectancy in Taipei City is 80.3 years for men, and 85.9 years for women. Compared to 78.9 years for men and 83.2 years for women from just a decade ago (2002 to 2004), it is clear that Taipei residents are living increasingly longer. According to estimates from the Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, the elderly population in Taipei will reach 14% of
its total population in 2018, formally meeting the definition of an aged society. Given this rapid change in population structure, the primary objective of governance in Taipei is maintaining the stability of an active and happy elderly population while simultaneously allowing the young people to live in the city peacefully and then to get married and have children. To safeguard the health of its residents, Taipei City actively promotes health and safety initiatives, implements elderly care programs, integrates emergency and rescue resources, strengthens food safety, and prevents epidemics and the spread of diseases.

In response to global warming challenges and to safeguard public health, Taipei City has insisted on upholding its mission “to serve the people, innovate the city, and sustain the environment”. The city has sought to improve air quality, water resources protection, waste disposal and recycling, disaster awareness, and other aspects, actively learning from and exchanging with other cities externally, and setting higher and higher standards internally. Taipei City has also promoted various energy conservation and greening policies, as well as a series of urban regeneration, health policies, and social welfare programs to maintain the city’s rich natural resources, improve the living environment, provide better service facilities so that Taipei would become a more livable and sustainable city.

B. SWOT Analysis of Taipei’s Health City Promotion Project

A SWOT analysis can provide an assessment of Taipei City’s competiveness in healthy city promotion. In addition to considering Taipei’s strengths in geographical location, rich resources, and high accessibility to information, and weakness in horizontal communication, we have also considered the opportunities and threats presented by the external environment. In sum, Figure 3 provides an analysis of Taipei’s competitiveness in promoting healthy city according to its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
C. Vision and Objectives of Taipei’s Healthy City Promotion

1. Vision

   a. Work together with all residents to achieve the WHO’s “Health for All” policy.
   
   b. Pay attention to the opinion of the people of Taipei, stimulate action on health city.
   
   c. Encourage empowerment, self-determination and self-help in local communities.
   
   d. Strengthen cultural development and market Taipei City’s characteristics and bright spots.
   
   e. Reduce health inequalities in society and improve the health of the population.
   
   f. Ensure the city’s sustainable development, protect the quality of the environment, and establish livable environment.
   
   g. Build partnerships with other civil society organizations to increase each other’s support networks, and enhance the sharing of resources, knowledge, information, and experiences.

2. Objectives

Based on basic public health principles that emphasize “health promotion and disease prevention rather than treatment”, the five major action programs of the Ottawa Charter are used to improve community health inequalities and maintain ecological sustainability, providing the people of Taipei with a green, healthy, safe, convenient, and comfortable support environment:
a. Reduce health inequalities and promote health awareness among Taipei residents.
b. Create a supportive physical and social environment, create a healthy environment, and protect citizens from health hazards.
c. Increase the average health and life expectancy of Taipei residents.
d. Promote community-based health service systems, and design a healthy living environment for the public.
e. Disseminate the concept of healthy city to the people of Taipei, so that it becomes internalized in their consciousness and life.

D. Strategies of Taipei’s Healthy City Promotion
The idea of Taipei’s Healthy City Project is to implement the principles of health at the grassroots level. The purpose of the project is to promote the physiological, psychological, and social health of residents through the cooperation of local governments and the public. The strategies of Taipei’s healthy city promotion include the following:

1. Establish indicators and action plans for Taipei’s healthy city promotion
   Taipei City has developed a comprehensive, interdepartmental Healthy City Promotion project (Figure 4) that is based on citizen needs and the city government’s strategic map theme of “enhancing health and safety”. In 2016, the city has also formulated 63 healthy city indicators.

![Figure 4. Bright spots in Taipei Healthy City’s action programs](image)

2. Achieve cooperation from business, government, academic, and civil society
sectors

The city has established a cross-departmental work organization (Figure 5), which includes the five major themes of safety, sustainable ecology, friendly culture, active health, and prosperous convenience. The city has held regular task group meetings, formed an advisory team of experts and scholars to provide counsel, and amassed public opinion to jointly map out the direction of Taipei’s Healthy City promotion.

Figure 5. Organizational structure of cross-departmental work in the promotion of Healthy City in Taipei

3. Continue to manage and control Taipei’s Healthy City indicators

Taipei City uses the PDCA management method and regular meetings to track the implementation of various healthy city indicators, in an effort to increase the effectiveness of various city government’s departments in executing the Taipei Healthy City project (Figure 6).
4. Organize educational training and forum for healthy city promotion

The Department of Health has regularly organized educational training for healthy city promotion personnel, consensus camps for departmental chiefs, practical workshops, and other activities, including healthy city promotion/healthy city program action writing workshops, as ways to increase of the knowledge and expertise of healthy city promotion personnel.

5. Communication and exchange through domestic and international conferences

To increase the international health visibility of Taipei, the city has also participated in various domestic and international conferences and activities related to healthy cities, age-friendly, and community safety issues, such as AFHC and the selection of Taiwan Healthy City and Age-friendly City Awards.

IV. Conclusion

Metropolitan cities often face the impact of rapid urban expansion. Since the establishment of Taipeh Prefecture and the construction of Taipeh City Walls in the 1880s, Taipei began to take shape as Taiwan’s capital and foremost city. The political and economic center of Taiwan officially moved from Tainan to Taipei, resulting in the rapid development of Taipei as a metropolitan city and generating problems such
as population explosion, transportation security, environmental pollution, health and safety, multicultural shock, and ecology. Taipei City obtained the Mayor’s support in 2002, who designated that same year to be the inaugural year of Taipei’s Healthy City. The city then gradually coordinated and planned Daan district in Taipei City to join the AFHC first as a non-governmental organization in 2006. By 2010, the city had completed the promotion of health cities in 6 districts and the promotion of safe communities in another 6 districts, before turning to the promotion of age-friendly city in the entire city in 2012. Seeing that Taipei City had been successful in promoting healthy cities and safe community at the district-level for many years, which utilized the city’s resources effectively and provided attentive and sensible services to the public, new Mayor Ko Wen-je continued to adhere to the “Health in All Policies” concept, giving top governance priority to the theme of “enhancing health and safety” in the city government’s strategic map, a policy which is based on 32 quantifiable international indicators (including health, environment, and socio-economic dimensions) set by the WHO. The city has also listened to citizen demands; gave heed to expert advice; cooperated across departments and agencies; integrated health, safety, and age-friendly policy issues; formulated 63 healthy city indicators along the five major themes of safety, sustainable ecology, friendly culture, active health, and prosperous convenience; and promoted healthy city through a rolling management approach. The city was granted membership in the Alliance for Healthy Cities in August 2016, successfully joining the ranks among the global healthy cities. Joining the AFHC is a crucial milestone for the promotion of healthy city in Taipei, but that is not the ultimate goal; rather, the goal of Taipei is to promote healthy city in a sustainable manner. In the future, the city hopes to obtain wide public participation and support from community groups; build a sound urban health network through innovation and cooperation between public and private sectors; improve the living environment and quality by enhancing resident health, safety, and age-friendliness; and make Taipei ever more “people-oriented”, livable, and sustainable (see Figure 7).
Figure 7. Future vision of Promoting Healthy City in Taipei

References


