

## Advancing Global Health Through Higher Education: Insights from the 53<sup>rd</sup> APACPH Conference

The 53<sup>rd</sup> Asia Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health (APACPH) Conference, with the theme “The Role of Higher Education Institutions in Attaining the Sustainable Development Goals,” is a testament to the crucial intersection between academia and global health and development initiatives. As public health professionals, educators, researchers, and policymakers gathered together for this annual event, this conference served as a vital platform to discuss, deliberate, and devise strategies and approaches that leverage higher education’s transformative power to achieve the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The APACPH is a regional organization established in 1984, dedicated to enhancing public health education, research, and practice in the Asia Pacific region. By fostering collaboration among academic institutions, public health organizations, and professionals, APACPH addresses regional health challenges through initiatives like joint research projects, policy advocacy, and capacity-building programs. The College of Public Health (then known as the Institute of Public Health), University of the Philippines Manila, is a founding member of this academic public health organization.

In support of APACPH’s goal of connecting Philippine public health higher education institutions (HEIs), the Philippine Academic Consortium for Public Health (PACPH) was established during Dr. Belizario’s deanship. Serving as APACPH’s counterpart in the Philippines, PACPH fosters collaboration and innovation to improve public health outcomes. It provides a platform for HEIs to align, engage, and collaborate in pursuit of excellence in public health education—including teaching, training, research, and public service—in support of health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and beyond.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a pivotal role in advancing the SDGs. At the heart of the 17 SDGs are objectives that encompass a wide range of critical areas, including health, education, gender equality, and climate action.<sup>1</sup> HEIs have a crucial yet underutilized role in addressing the health-related SDGs. By integrating approaches to addressing these into academia, evidence-based research, and community engagement, HEIs may contribute in major ways and align with global, regional, and local health and development priorities.<sup>2</sup>

The 53<sup>rd</sup> APACPH Conference highlights the notion that HEIs drive progress toward the SDGs by building long-term partnerships with governments and communities, fostering interdisciplinary research, and integrating SDG-focused practices in education to address global challenges.<sup>3</sup> The conference proceedings,<sup>4</sup> detail diverse and impactful initiatives undertaken by the HEIs in efforts to contribute to the achievement of health-related SDGs in the region.

We eagerly anticipate the insightful discussions, as well as the future collaborations, that will emerge from this issue which will propel us closer to achieving the SDGs.

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