

PRESS RELEASE

India hosts national roundtable to advance action on obesity as part of global initiative

Multi-stakeholder roundtable identifies key challenges and opportunities to strengthen obesity prevention and care.

London / New Delhi, [24/04/26] – A national multi-stakeholder roundtable co-hosted by the World Obesity Federation and the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) has brought together key stakeholders to advance action on obesity in India, highlighting the need for coordinated, systems-based approaches to prevention and care.

Held on **23 April 2026** on the sidelines of the **PHFI@20 symposium in New Delhi**, the roundtable convened over 40 representatives from government, civil society, academia, UN organisations, including WHO and UNICEF, healthcare, and people with lived experience to discuss current challenges and priorities for addressing obesity. The event was also supported by leading organisations working on obesity in India, including the Healthy India Alliance, United World Against Diabetes, HRIDAY, All India Association for Advancing Research in Obesity and Diabetes India.

The roundtable forms part of the **MAPPS (Management and Advocacy for Providers, Patients and Systems)** programme, a global initiative led by the World Obesity Federation. The programme examines how different systems, including national health systems, are responding to obesity and identifies opportunities to strengthen policy, care and prevention.

India has been selected as a focus country for more in-depth collaborative work as part of this global effort, reflecting growing national attention on obesity and related policy developments.

A timely opportunity to strengthen national action

The roundtable took place in the context of **recent national focus on obesity**, including recently updated dietary guidelines including a focus on obesity, national nutrition campaigns like *'Let's Fix Our Food'*, and the anticipated increase in the availability of generic obesity drugs. This roundtable is also aligned with the Honourable Prime Minister of India's clarion call to address the increasing obesity rates in India.

Participants explored how India can build on this momentum to strengthen prevention, improve access to care, and address the broader determinants of obesity.

Obesity is a complex, chronic disease shaped by biological, environmental and societal factors. Addressing it effectively requires coordinated action across sectors, including health systems, policy, and community-level interventions.

Key challenges and priorities identified

Discussions during the roundtable highlighted several priority areas for action in India, including:

- **Elevating obesity as a policy priority:** Leverage current political momentum to position obesity as a disease and an urgent public health challenge, reframing it beyond individual responsibility and recognising increased risks for Indians from other non-communicable diseases such as diabetes.
- **Advancing a whole-of-system, multisector approach:** Address fragmentation by embedding cross-sector coordination mechanisms spanning health and non-health sectors (labour, education, climate).
- **Strengthening policy coherence and adopting a life course approach:** Build on existing frameworks by enhancing coordination and adopting a gender-responsive and life course approach, from preconception through healthy ageing, including mental health support.
- **Addressing stigma and strengthening recognition through education:** Tackle stigma as a systemic barrier by promoting recognition of obesity as a disease and scaling education across families, communities, health systems, and policymakers.
- **Embedding equity and inclusion:** Prioritise at-risk populations such as children and young people through community-based delivery and social support systems, and integrate lived experience and youth engagement.
- **Measuring progress:** Roll out universal screening at all ages and measure success through outcomes that matter in people's lives as well as for health systems.

Participants emphasised the importance of moving beyond individual-level approaches and addressing the wider systems and environments that shape health outcomes.

Informing national and global action

Insights from the roundtable will inform a forthcoming **national MAPPS report on India**, to be published later this year. Findings will also contribute to global reports and advocacy efforts.

These outputs will feed into global policy discussions in the lead-up to the **United Nations High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in 2027**, supporting efforts to ensure obesity is recognised and addressed within global health agendas.

In addition, the World Obesity Federation and PHFI are collaborating on a **sub-national MAPPS II study in Telangana and Gujarat**, which will support the development of **SCOPE-accredited obesity training for primary care professionals**, planned for 2026-2027.

Quotes

Prof. Monika Arora, Vice President, Research & Health Promotion, Public Health Foundation of India, said:

“Confronting India’s dual burden of malnutrition requires reorienting healthcare, especially primary healthcare. This global MAPPS initiative will help strengthen provider capacity to deliver patient-centered obesity prevention and management, grounded in evidence and lived experience. By identifying training gaps, developing a context-specific curriculum, and strengthening public health delivery at subnational levels, the PHFI–WOF partnership aims to expand equitable, effective care for underserved populations. This national roundtable emphasized integrated, evidence-based lifestyle care, alongside appropriate training on the safe, guideline-based use of newer therapies, including GLP-1 receptor agonists.”

Johanna Ralston, CEO, World Obesity Federation, said:

“India is third only to China and the US in terms of the number of people living with obesity, including among children. Yet there is much that can be done, starting with the recognition of the systemic and multisectoral approaches required to manage and prevent obesity. World Obesity is pleased to work with its members in India, including PHFI, on mapping the barriers and enablers to successful action on obesity across food and health systems. Central to this is the role for obesity in health systems and Universal Health Coverage (UHC).”

Dr Premchandra Singh, NCD Nodal Officer (State Government), Manipur, said:

“State health policies must increasingly recognize obesity as a critical entry point for NCD prevention across India. In Manipur, we are advancing innovative approaches through CMHealth for All (CMHA) population-based screening, where obesity screening and awareness are integral components, alongside integrated NCD services, strengthened food safety, and nutrition initiatives. Wellness sessions at Ayushman Arogya Mandirs provide a pivotal platform for sustained lifestyle modification and community engagement, and we are also addressing emerging concerns such as NAFLD within the broader metabolic disease spectrum. At the same time, creating supportive environments—such as access to parks, walkable spaces, and opportunities for sports and physical activity—is essential. A coordinated multisectoral approach spanning health, nutrition, urban planning, and community systems will be key to achieving sustained impact nationwide.”

Mr Devang Gandhi, Lived Experience Advocate, Mumbai, said:

“We need to stop measuring success by weight and BMI alone, and start asking what truly matters to people. For many people over 50 or living with other conditions, the real fear isn’t dying from obesity. It’s losing the ability to live well and independently. It’s not being able to carry your grandchildren or join in activities that keep you connected to life. We need approaches that are inclusive of who we actually are.”

Dr Hema Divakar, Senior Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist and Division Director Well Women Healthcare, International Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, said:

“We must move beyond episodic care and adopt a life course strategy for obesity prevention and management in women. This means aligning policy, healthcare systems, and community action to support women at every stage of life—because healthier women build healthier societies.”

ENDS

Notes to editors

- The roundtable was held on **23 April 2026** on the sidelines of the PHFI@20 symposium in New Delhi.
- The event was co-hosted by the **Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI)** and the **World Obesity Federation**.
- The roundtable forms part of the **MAPPS (Management and Advocacy for Providers, Patients and Systems)** programme, a global initiative assessing how obesity is addressed within health systems, public health and policy responses.
- A national report on India will be published later in 2026, with findings contributing to global advocacy efforts ahead of the **2027 UN High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage**.
- Further details on MAPPS and related outputs will be made available in due course.

About World Obesity Federation

The World Obesity Federation (World Obesity) is the only global organisation focused exclusively on obesity.

World Obesity represents stakeholders in high-, medium- and low-income countries, including experts, advocates, people with lived experience and healthcare professionals. It works with global partners, including the World Health Organization (WHO), to drive action across prevention, treatment and care.

World Obesity Federation strongly encourages journalists and editors to use people-first language and respectful imagery when reporting on obesity and overweight.

About Public Health Foundation of India

The Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) is a pioneering public–private initiative that has evolved through extensive consultations with various stakeholders, including Indian and international academia, state and central governments, multi and bilateral agencies, and civil society groups, to advance public health education, research, policy and practice. The PHFI was set up in 2006, as a response to redress the limited institutional capacity in India by strengthening training, research, and policy development in the area of public health. The PHFI adopts a comprehensive and integrative approach to public health, tailoring its efforts to national and sub-national contexts in India, while leading and partnering in global initiatives to address similar public health challenges. It focuses on broad dimensions of public health that include promotive, preventive, and therapeutic services through a trans-disciplinary approach encompassing health policy and financing, and social determinants of health.

Access to images:

The World Obesity Federation [Image Bank](#) is a gallery of free-to-use images that are accurate, non-biased and respectful.