

IGAP UNPACKED

A Practical Guide to the World Health Organization's *Intersectoral Global Action Plan on Epilepsy and Other Neurological Disorders 2022 - 2031*

Background

What is IGAP?

- IGAP is a **10-year roadmap** launched by WHO to effectively address neurological conditions and **improve the lives** of people with epilepsy and other neurological conditions worldwide. It consists of **5 strategic objectives** and **10 global targets**.

Why is IGAP important?

- First ever global action plan** on epilepsy and neurological conditions
- Unanimously approved by **all 194 member states** of the World Health Assembly
- Unique** multisectoral, person-centred, evidence-informed, human rights, and life course approach
- Includes **epilepsy specific objective** "to strengthen the public health approach to epilepsy"

How is IGAP relevant to you?

- IGAP speaks directly to the mission, needs, and aspirations of the global epilepsy community. It is therefore a **powerful tool** to support, guide, and promote our work moving forward. In this practical guide, we outline a series of **proposed actions** to support IBE chapters and our community in optimally leveraging IGAP.

10-Year Goal

*"To **reduce the stigma, impact and burden** of neurological disorders, including their associated mortality, morbidity and disability, and to **improve the quality of life** of people with neurological disorders, their carers and families."*¹

Abbreviations: EEG= electroencephalogram; LMIC= low- and middle-income countries; NCDs = non-communicable diseases; PWE= people with epilepsy; SDGs= sustainable development goals

IGAP in Practice

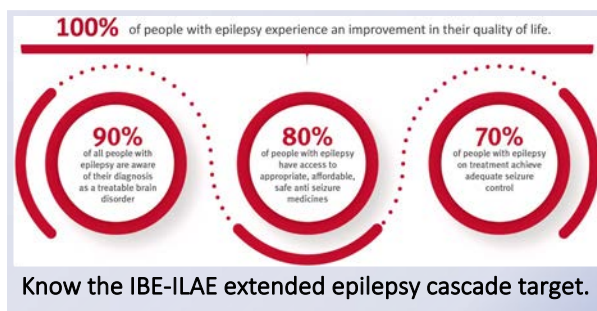
Strategic Objective (SO) / Global Target (GT)	Relevance for Epilepsy Community ²	Proposed Actions for IBE Chapters
SO 1: Raise policy prioritization and strengthen governance <i>GT 1.1: 75% of countries have National Plans/Policies/Strategies for neurological conditions</i> <i>GT 1.2: 100% of countries have functioning Awareness/Advocacy Programmes for neurological conditions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Over 50 million people have epilepsy worldwide; 80% live in LMICs ➤ Epilepsies are in the top 5 causes of neurological disability ➤ The majority of those affected receive no or insufficient treatment ➤ Low public awareness of epilepsy as a treatable brain condition ➤ Insufficient government action (<30% of LMIC have national plans) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use the IBE Advocate's Toolkit⁶ for policy advocacy actions (position papers, letters) holding governments accountable ✓ Unite chapters nationally for epilepsy awareness campaigns ✓ Engage key stakeholders (PWE, Ministries, WHO, ILAE) to define national IGAP priorities ✓ Build partnerships within neurology, NCDs, and intersectorally - beyond health
SO 2: Provide effective, timely and responsive diagnosis, treatment, care <i>GT 2.1: 75% of countries have included neurological conditions in UHC benefits package</i> <i>GT 2.2: 80% of countries provide essential medicines / technologies for neurological conditions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Epilepsy treatment gaps remain high (>75% in many LMICs) ➤ Antiseizure medicines are highly affordable (\$5/person/year) and effective (for 70% of all epilepsies) ➤ Insufficient neurological workforce (0.1 per 100.000 people in LMIC) and lack of tools (EEG) impair diagnosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Policy advocacy actions to hold governments accountable ✓ Build health system capacity via educational interventions (e.g., for community health workers, teachers, traditional healers, and the public) ✓ Partner with local ILAE chapters
SO 3: Implement strategies for promotion and prevention <i>GT 3.1: 80% of countries have ≥1 functioning prevention / brain health promotion programme</i> <i>GT 3.2: Global targets for prevention of neurological disorders are achieved</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 25% of epilepsies are preventable² ➤ Preventable causes include stroke, infections (e.g., meningitis), birth trauma, and other brain injuries ➤ Fostering brain health³ and development can improve outcomes and quality of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Raise awareness on epilepsy prevention (campaigns, educational activities) ✓ Position epilepsy within wider policy dialogues (establish cross-links to UN SDGs⁷, WHO NCD agenda)

IGAP in Practice (continued)

Strategic Objective (SO) / Global Target (GT)	Relevance for Epilepsy Community	Proposed Actions for IBE Chapters
<p>SO 4: Foster research and innovation and strengthen information systems</p> <p><i>GT 4.1: 80% of countries routinely collect indicators for neurological conditions</i></p> <p><i>GT 4.2: Global research on neurological conditions doubles</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Robust epidemiological data on epilepsy are lacking in most countries ➤ Most existing research does not include the voice of people with epilepsy ➤ Beyond medical variables, indicators for quality of life and lived experience are needed ➤ Generating this data is critical to address unmet needs and narrow the <i>inclusion gap</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Know your community! Conduct needs assessment to identify real priorities / unmet needs ✓ Get involved in IBE’s forthcoming Global Epilepsy Needs Survey ✓ Exchange knowledge and best practices with other IBE chapters, including research activities (via <i>IBE Knowledge Hub</i>) ✓ Lobby governments for increased research funding
<p>SO 5: Strengthen the public health approach to epilepsy</p> <p><i>GT 5.1: 50% increase in epilepsy service coverage</i></p> <p><i>GT 5.2: 80% of countries have replaced discriminatory legislation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Epilepsy-related stigma exists at all societal levels, impairing quality of life and social wellbeing ➤ Myths, false beliefs, and misinformation around epilepsy are prevalent and key barriers to healthcare seeking ➤ Discriminatory legislation must be removed to eradicate stigma and safeguard human rights of people with epilepsy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ WHO and all member states have committed to this epilepsy-specific objective: leverage it to the maximum! ✓ Raise awareness on / advocate against discriminatory legislation ✓ Use the IBE Stigma Reduction Toolkit⁶ for interventions (e.g., in schools, workplace) ✓ Build lived experience repository for use in social media/campaigns

What IBE is doing about IGAP

- Aligned with IGAP, IBE has launched its [Strategic Plan 2022 - 26](#)⁴, focusing on 1) advocacy/awareness, 2) knowledge creation, 3) capacity-building, and 4) strong partnerships.
- IBE has extended the IGAP-supporting [Epilepsy Cascade Target](#)⁵, ensuring that “100% of people with epilepsy will experience an improvement in their quality of life.”
- IBE has contributed to the [WHO Epilepsy Technical Brief](#)², launched as a technical complement to IGAP.
- Aligned with IGAP, IBE is **launching 3 flagship projects** in 2023:
 - ✓ **IBE Global Advocacy Action** – *policy advocacy across regions*
 - ✓ **IBE INVOLVE** – *involving people with epilepsy in all activities*
 - ✓ **IBE Knowledge Hub** – *connecting our IBE chapters*
- **IBE is partnering** closely with ILAE, WHO, OneNeurology and others to make IGAP a success.



Adapted from: Winter et al., *Seizure: European Journal of Epilepsy* (2022)

Key Takeaways: Make IGAP work for your chapter!

- **IGAP provides a global mandate** to close *inclusion, treatment, prevention, and research* gaps in epilepsy.
- **IGAP is a powerful tool** to support your policy advocacy agenda and a key to hold policymakers accountable.
- **IGAP serves as an overarching framework:** make it your own by leveraging those elements that matter most to your country, chapter, and community.
- **IGAP is only the beginning:** consider complementary policy frameworks (WHO NCD agenda, UN SDGs⁶) to make epilepsy central in global policy dialogue.
- **IGAP adoption does not equal implementation:** we must now put words into action to achieve our goals.

References & Tools

- (1) [Draft WHO Intersectoral Global Action Plan on Epilepsy and Other Neurological Disorders 2022 – 31](#)
- (2) [Improving the lives of people with epilepsy: a technical brief.](#)
- (3) [Optimizing brain health across the life course: WHO position paper](#)
- (4) [IBE Strategic Plan 2022 – 26](#)
- (5) [IBE Editorial | The WHO intersectoral global action plan and epilepsy cascade target: Towards a roadmap for implementation](#)
- (6) [IBE Advocate’s Toolkit ; IBE Stigma Reduction Toolkit](#)
- (7) [The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#)