

Key Elements of Chapter 6, Agenda 21: Protecting and Promoting Human Health

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A) Meeting Primary Health Care Needs, Particularly in Rural Areas

Objectives

- to meet the basic health needs of rural, peri-urban and urban populations
- to provide the necessary specialized environmental health services
- to coordinate the involvement of citizens, the health sector, health-related sectors and relevant non-health sectors in solutions to health problems.

Health service coverage for population groups in greatest need, particularly those living in rural areas, is a priority.

Activities

National governments and local authorities, with the support of NGOs and international organizations, should strengthen health sector programs (paying special attention to rural needs), along the following lines:

A) Build Basic Health Infrastructures, Monitoring and Planning Systems

- Develop and strengthen primary health care systems to ensure that basic health needs are met, including for clean water, safe food and sanitation
- Support the use of strengthened mechanisms that improve coordination between health and other sectors at all levels of government, in communities and relevant organizations
- Ensure appropriate provision of social services support
- Develop strategies, including health indicators, to monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of health programmes
- Assess resource needs, and identify financing alternatives for the health system
- Develop and implement rational and affordable approaches to establishing and maintaining health facilities
- Support initiatives for self-management of services by vulnerable groups
- Integrate as appropriate, traditional knowledge and experience into national health systems
- Promote health education in schools, information exchange, technical support and training
- Promote provision of logistical means for outreach activities, particularly in rural areas
- Promote and strengthen community-based rehabilitation activities for the rural handicapped

B) Support Research and Methodology Development

- Establish mechanisms to sustain community involvement in environmental health activities, optimising appropriate use of financial and human resources
- Conduct environmental health research, including behavioural research, and research on ways to increase coverage and utilization of services (preventive and health care) by peripheral, underserved and vulnerable populations
- Conduct research into traditional knowledge of preventative and curative health practices

Means of Implementation:

A) Scientific and Technological Means

- Test new approaches to planning and managing health care systems and facilities
- Support research on integration of appropriate technologies into health infrastructures

- Develop scientifically sound health technology that enhances adaptability to local needs and maintainability by community resources, including of healthcare equipment

- Develop programmes which facilitate the transfer and sharing of information and expertise (including communication methods and educational materials).

B) Human Resource Development and Capacity Building

- Strengthen intersectoral approaches to reform of health personnel development, ensuring relevance to Health For All strategies
- Support efforts to enhance managerial skills at the district level
- Develop training programmes for local personnel in all sectors of social development to enhance skills in communication, community organization, and behavioural change
- In cooperation with the education sector develop special health education programmes which focus on the role of women within the health care system
- Consider adoption of enabling and facilitating strategies to promote participation of communities in meeting their own needs. These should include a major focus on preparing community-based health and health-related workers to play an active role in community health education, including social mobilisation and support of other development workers. National programmes should cover district health systems in urban, peri-urban and rural areas, the delivery of health programmes at the district level, and the development and support of referral systems.

B) Control of Communicable Diseases

Objectives

- By 1995, to reduce measles deaths by 95 percent and reduce measles cases by 90% compared with pre-immunization levels;
- By the year 2000:
 - to eliminate guinea worm disease (dracunculiasis)
 - to eradicate polio
 - to effectively control onchocerciasis (river blindness) and leprosy
 - by continued efforts, to provide health and hygiene education and to ensure universal access to safe drinking water and universal access to sanitary measures of excreta disposal, thereby markedly reducing waterborne diseases such as cholera and schistosomiasis and reducing (by the year 2000):
 - (i) the number of deaths from childhood diarrhoea in developing countries by 50-70 percent
 - (ii) the incidence of childhood diarrhoea in developing countries by at least 25-50 percent
 - to initiate comprehensive programmes to reduce mortality from acute respiratory infections in children under five years by at least one third, particularly in countries with high infant mortalities
 - to provide 95 percent of the world's child population with access to appropriate care for acute respiratory infections within the community and at first referral level
 - to institute anti-malaria programmes in all countries where malaria presents a significant health problem and to maintain the transmission-free status of areas freed from endemic malaria
 - to implement control programs in countries where major human parasitic infections are endemic, achieve an overall reduction in the prevalence of schistosomiasis and of other trematode infections by 40 percent and 25 percent, respectively, from a 1984 baseline, and achieve a marked reduction in incidence, prevalence and intensity of filarial infections;
- To mobilize and unify national international efforts against AIDS, to prevent infection and reduce the personal and social impact of HIV infection;
- To contain the resurgence of tuberculosis with particular emphasis on multiple antibiotic resistant forms;
- To accelerate research on improved vaccines and implement to the fullest extent possible use of vaccines in the prevention of disease.

Activities

Governments should develop national health action plans incorporating the following components:

A) National Public Health Systems:

- Programmes to identify environmental hazards in the causation of communicable diseases
- Monitoring systems of epidemiological data to ensure adequate forecasting of the introduction, spread or aggravation of communicable diseases
- Intervention programmes, including measures consistent with the principles of the global AIDS strategy
- Vaccines for the prevention of communicable diseases

B) Public Information and Health Education

Enable communities to play a role in the control of communicable diseases by:

- Providing education and disseminating information on the risks of endemic communicable diseases
- Building awareness on environmental methods for their control
- C) Intersectoral Cooperation and Coordination
 - Second health professionals to relevant sectors, such as planning, housing and agriculture
 - Develop guidelines for effective coordination in the areas of professional training, assessment of risks and development of control technology
- D) Control of Environmental Factors that Influence the Spread of Communicable Diseases
 - Apply methods for the prevention and control of communicable diseases, including water supply and sanitation control, water pollution control, food quality control, integrated vector control, garbage collection and disposal and environmentally sound irrigation practices.
- E) Primary Health Care System
 - Strengthen prevention programmes, with particular emphasis on adequate and balanced nutrition
 - Strengthen early diagnostic programmes and improve capacities for early preventative/treatment action
 - Reduce the vulnerability to HIV infection of women and their offspring
- F) Support for Research and Methodology Development
 - Intensify and expand multidisciplinary research, including focused efforts on the mitigation and environmental control of tropical diseases
 - Carry out intervention studies to provide a solid epidemiological basis for control policies and to evaluate the efficiency of alternative approaches
 - Undertake studies in the population and among health workers to determine the influence of cultural, behavioural and social factors on control policies
- G) Development and Dissemination of Technology
 - Develop new technologies for the effective control of communicable diseases
 - Promote studies to determine how optimally to disseminate results from research
 - Ensure technical assistance, including the sharing of knowledge and know-how

Means of Implementation

- A) Scientific and Technological Means
 - Include investigations of the epidemiological, social and economic bases for the development of more effective national strategies for the integrated control of communicable diseases
 - Adapt cost-effective methods of environmental control to local developmental conditions.
- B) Human Resource Development and Capacity Building
 - National and regional training institutions to promote broad intersectoral approaches to prevention and control of communicable diseases, including training in epidemiology and community prevention and control, immunology, molecular biology and the application of new vaccines
 - Health education materials to be developed for use by community health workers and for education of mothers regarding the prevention and treatment of diarrhoeal diseases in the home
 - The health sector to develop adequate data on the distribution of communicable diseases, as well as the institutional capacity to respond and collaborate with other sectors for prevention, mitigation and correction of communicable disease hazards through environmental protection
 - Promote advocacy at policy and decision-making levels, mobilization of professional and societal support, and organization of communities in developing self-reliance.

C) Protecting Vulnerable Groups

Objectives

- To ensure that all vulnerable groups are allowed to develop to their full potential;
- To ensure that young people can develop, establish and maintain healthy lives;
- To allow women to perform their key role in society;
- To support indigenous people through educational, economic and technical opportunities.

Specific major goals for child survival, development and protection, as agreed upon at the World Summit for Children, remain valid for Agenda 21 and for supporting and sectoral goals covering women's health and education, nutrition, child health, water and sanitation, basic education and children in difficult circumstances.

- Government to take steps to implement measures (in accordance with country-specific conditions....)
 - to ensure that women and men have the same right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children, and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise this right
 - to implement programmes to establish and strengthen preventative and curative health facilities, which include women-centered, women-managed, safe and effective reproductive health care and affordable, accessible services for the responsible planning of family size
 - to provide comprehensive health care, including pre-natal care, education and information on health and responsible parenthood, and provide for all women the opportunity to breast-feed fully, at least during the first four months post-partum
 - to fully support women's productive and reproductive roles and well-being, with special attention to the need for providing equal and improved health care for all children and the need to reduce the risk of maternal and child mortality and sickness.

Activities

National Governments, in cooperation with local and non-governmental organizations, should initiate or enhance programmes in the following areas:

A) Infants and Children

- Strengthen basic health care services for children in the context of primary health care delivery, including prenatal care, breast-feeding, immunization and nutrition programmes
- Undertake widespread adult education on the use of oral rehydration therapy for diarrhoea, treatment of respiratory infections and prevention of communicable diseases
- Promote a legal framework protecting children from sexual and workplace exploitation
- Protect children from effects of environmental and occupational toxins

B) Youth

- Strengthen services for youth in health, education and social sectors, in order to provide better information, education, counselling and treatment for specific health problems, including drug abuse

C) Women

- Involve women's groups in decision-making at national and community levels to identify health risks and incorporate health issues in national action programmes on women and development
- Provide incentives to encourage and maintain women's attendance, at all ages, in school and adult education courses, including health education and training in primary, home and maternal health care

- Conduct surveys and “knowledge, attitudes and practice” studies regarding the health and nutrition of women throughout their life cycle, especially in relation to the impact of environmental degradation and resources
- D) Indigenous People and Their Communities
- Strengthen, through resources and self-management, preventative and curative health services
 - Integrate traditional knowledge and experience into health systems

Means of Implementation

A) Scientific and Technological Means

- Strengthen education, health and research institutions to provide support to improve the health of vulnerable groups
- Expand social research on the specific problems of these groups and explore methods for implementing flexible pragmatic solutions, with emphasis on preventative measures
- Provide technical support to Governments, institutions and non-governmental organizations for youth, women and indigenous people in the health sector.

B) Human Resources Development and Capacity-Building

- Regarding development of human resources for health of children, youth and women:
 - reinforce educational institutions
 - promote interactive methods of education for health and increased use of the mass media in disseminating information to target groups
 - train more community health workers, nurses, midwives, physicians, social scientists and educators
 - promote more education of mothers, families and communities
 - strengthen ministries of education , health and population
- Governments to promote:
 - the exchange of information among agencies and groups concerned with the health of children, youth, women and indigenous people (e.g., through national, intercountry and interregional symposia and other meetings)
 - women's organizations, youth groups and indigenous peoples' organizations in order to facilitate health and consult on effective legal frameworks to ensure a healthy environment for youth, women and indigenous people.

D) Meeting the Urban Health Challenge

Objectives

- By the year 2000, achieve a 10-40 per cent improvement in (urban) health indicators by the year 2000.
- By the year 2000, achieve a 10-40 per cent improvement in environmental, housing and health service indicators, including quantitative objectives for infant mortality, maternal mortality, percentage of low-birthweight newborns and specific indicators (e.g., tuberculosis as indicator for crowded housing, diarrhoeal disease as indicator for inadequate water and sanitation, etc.)

Activities

Local authorities supported by national governments and international organizations should:

- A) Develop and Implement Municipal and Local Health Plans
 - Establish/strengthen intersectoral committees on both the political and technical level, using network arrangements
 - Adopt/strengthen municipal or local enabling strategies that create supportive environments for health
 - Ensure that public health education in schools, the workplace and in mass media is provided or strengthened
 - Encourage communities to develop personal skills and awareness of primary health care
 - Promote and strengthen community-based rehabilitation activities for urban and peri-urban disabled and for the elderly
- B) Survey, Where Necessary, the Existing Health, Social and Environmental Conditions in Cities, Including Documentation of Intra-Urban Differences
- C) Strengthen Environmental Health Services
 - Adopt health and environmental impact assessment procedures
 - Provide basic and in-service training for new and existing personnel
- D) Establish and Maintain City Networks for Collaboration and Exchange of Models of Good Practice

Means of Implementation

- A) Scientific and Technological Means
 - Further develop and use more widely, decision-making models to assess the costs and health and environmental impacts of alternative technologies and strategies
 - Ensure better national and municipal statistics based on practical and standardized indicators and develop methods for the measurement of intra-urban and intra-district variations in health status and environmental conditions, and for the application of this information in planning and management
- B) Human Resources Development and Capacity-Building
 - Supply the orientation and basic training of municipal staff required for healthy city processes
 - Provide basic and in-service training of environmental health personnel
 - Obtain sufficient information, improve coordination mechanisms linking all the key actors, and make better use of available instruments and resources for implementation, in order to improve urban planning and management capabilities in municipal and local government and its partners (central government, private sector, universities).

E) Reducing Health Risks from Environmental Pollution and Hazards

Objectives

- Minimize hazards and maintain the environment to a degree such that human health and safety is not impaired and yet encourage development to proceed.

Specific programme objectives include:

- By the year 2000, in all countries
 - to incorporate appropriate environmental and health safeguards as part of national development programmes
 - to establish adequate national infrastructure and programmes for preventing environmental injury, hazard surveillance and the basis for abatement
 - to establish integrated programmes for tackling pollution at the source and at the disposal site, with a focus on abatement actions
- To identify and compile, as appropriate, the necessary statistical information on health effects to support cost/benefit analysis, including environmental health impact assessment for pollution control, prevention and abatement measures.

Activities

National action programmes, with international assistance, support and coordination, where necessary, to include:

A) Air and Water Pollution

- Develop appropriate pollution control technology on the basis of risk assessment and epidemiological research for the introduction of environmentally sound production processes and suitable safe mass transport
- Develop air pollution control capacities in large cities emphasizing enforcement programmes and using monitoring networks, as appropriate
- Support research and develop programmes for applying prevention and control methods to reducing indoor air pollution, including the provision of economic incentives for the installation of appropriate technology
- Develop and implement health education campaigns, particularly in developing countries, to reduce the health impact of domestic use of biomass and coal
- Develop appropriate water pollution control technologies on the basis of health risk assessment
- Develop water pollution control capacities in large cities

B) Pesticides

- Develop mechanisms to control distribution and use in order to minimize risks to human health by transportation, storage, application, and residual effects of pesticides used in agriculture and preservation of wood

C) Solid Waste

- Develop disposal technologies on the basis of health risk assessment
- Develop disposal capacities in large cities

D) Human Settlements

- Develop programmes for improving health conditions within human settlements, particularly within slums and non-tenured settlements, on the basis of health risk assessments

E) Noise

- Develop criteria for maximum permitted safe noise exposure levels
- Promote noise assessment and control as part of environmental health programmes

F) Radiation

- Regarding ionising and non-ionising radiation, develop and implement appropriate national legislation, standards and enforcement procedures on the basis of existing international guidelines

 - Undertake, as a matter of urgency, research on the effects on human health of the increasing ultraviolet radiation reaching the earth's surface as a consequence of depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer
 - On the basis of the outcome of this research, consider taking appropriate remedial measures to mitigate the above-mentioned effects on human beings
- G) Industry and Energy Production
- Establish environmental health impact assessment procedures for the planning and development of new industries and energy facilities
 - Incorporate appropriate health risk analysis in all national programmes for pollution control and management, with particular emphasis on toxic compounds such as lead
 - Establish industrial hygiene programmes in all major industries for the surveillance of workers' exposure to health hazards
 - Promote the introduction of environmentally sound technologies within the industry and energy sectors
- H) Monitoring and Assessment
- Establish, as appropriate, adequate environmental monitoring capacities for the surveillance of environmental quality and the health status of populations
- I) Injury Monitoring and Reduction
- Support, as appropriate, the development of systems to monitor the incidence and cause of injury to allow well-targeted intervention/prevention strategies
 - Develop, in accordance with national plans, strategies in all sectors, consistent with the WHO safe cities and safe communities programmes, to reduce the frequency and severity of injury
 - Emphasize preventative strategies to reduce occupationally derived diseases and diseases caused by environmental and occupational toxins to enhance worker safety
- J) Research Promotion and Methodology Development
- Support the development of new methods for the quantitative assessment of health benefits and costs associated with different pollution control strategies
 - Develop and carry out interdisciplinary research on the combined health effects of exposure to multiple environmental hazards, including epidemiological investigations of long-term exposures to low levels of pollutants and the use of biological markers capable of estimating human exposures, adverse effects and susceptibility to environmental agents

Means of Implementation

- A) Scientific and Technological Means
- Regarding pollution control technology, as appropriate for programme and policy development, undertake research within an intersectoral framework (including collaboration with the business sector)
 - Develop cost/effect analysis and environmental impact assessment methods through cooperative international programmes and apply to the setting of priorities and strategies in relation to health and development
 - Regarding the above-mentioned activities, facilitate access to and transfer of technology, know-how and information, from the repositories of such knowledge and technologies, in conformity with chapter 34
- B) Human Resources Development and Capacity-Building
- Design comprehensive national strategies to overcome lack of qualified human resources
 - Ensure training of environmental and health officials at all levels (from manager to inspector).
 - Place more emphasis on the subject of environmental health in the curricula of secondary schools and universities and on educating the public.

- Develop the knowledge and practical skills to foresee and identify environmental health hazards, and the capacity to reduce the risks. Basic capacity requirements include:
 - knowledge about environmental health problems and awareness on the part of leaders, citizens and specialists

 - operational mechanisms for intersectoral and intergovernmental cooperation in development, planning and management and in combating pollution
 - arrangements for involving private and community interests in dealing with social issues
 - delegation of authority and distribution of resources to intermediate and local levels of governments to provide front-line capabilities to meet environmental health needs