

Appendix B: 10 health promotion action areas

The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (World Health Organisation 1986) and the Jakarta Declaration for Health Promotion (World Health Organisation 1997) have provided 10 areas in which action should be taken to promote health.

The Ottawa charter set out the first five action areas:

1. Build healthy public policy

Health promotion goes beyond health care. It puts health on the agenda of policy makers in all sectors and at all levels, directing them to be aware of the health consequences of their decisions and to accept their responsibilities for health.

Health promotion policy combines diverse but complementary approaches, including legislation, fiscal measures, taxation and organisational change. It is coordinated action that leads to health, income and social policies that foster greater equity. Joint action contributes to ensuring safer and healthier goods and services, healthier public services and cleaner, more enjoyable environments.

Health promotion policy requires the identification of obstacles to the adoption of healthy public policies in non-health sectors, and ways of removing those obstacles. The aim must be to make the healthier choice the easier choice for policy makers as well.

2. Create supportive environments

Our societies are complex and interrelated, so health cannot be separated from other goals. The inextricable links between people and their environment constitute the basis for a socioecological approach to health. The overall guiding principle for the world, nations, regions and communities alike is the need to encourage reciprocal maintenance – that is, to take care of each other, our communities and our natural environment. The conservation of natural resources throughout the world should be emphasised as a global responsibility.

Changing patterns of life, work and leisure have a significant impact on health. Work and leisure should be a source of health for people. And the way in which society organises work should help create a healthy society. Health promotion generates living and working conditions that are safe, stimulating, satisfying and enjoyable.

Systematic assessment of the health impact of a rapidly changing environment – particularly in areas of technology, work, energy production and urbanisation – is essential and must be followed by action to ensure a positive benefit to public health. Any health promotion strategy must address the protection of the natural and built environments and the conservation of natural resources.

3. Strengthen community action

Health promotion works through concrete and effective community action in setting priorities, making decisions, planning strategies and implementing them to achieve better health. At the heart of this process is the empowerment of communities, whereby they own and control their own endeavours and destinies.

Community development draws on existing human and material resources in the community to enhance self-help and social support, and to develop flexible systems for strengthening public participation and direction of health matters. This process requires full and continual access to information, learning opportunities for health, and funding support.

4. Develop personal skills

Health promotion supports personal and social development by providing information, educating about health and enhancing life skills. By doing so, it increases the options available to people to exercise more control over their own health and environments, and to make choices conducive to health.

Enabling people to learn throughout life, to prepare themselves for all of its stages and to cope with chronic illness and injuries is essential. This enablement has to be facilitated in school, home, work and community settings. Action is required through educational, professional, commercial and voluntary bodies, and within the institutions themselves.

5. Re-orient health services towards primary health care

Individuals, community groups, health professionals, health service institutions and governments share the responsibility for health promotion in health services. They must work together towards a health care system that contributes to the pursuit of health.

The role of the health sector must move increasingly in a health promotion direction, beyond its responsibility for providing clinical and curative services. Health services also need to embrace an expanded mandate that is sensitive and respects cultural needs. This mandate should support the needs of individuals and communities for a healthier life, and open channels between the health sector and broader social, political, economic and physical environments.

The Jakarta declaration added the following action areas:

6. Promote social responsibility for health

Policies and practices should be pursued that: avoid harming the health of other individuals; protect the environment and ensure sustainable use of resources; restrict production and trade in inherently harmful goods and substances; safeguard both the citizen in the marketplace and the individual in the workplace; and include equity focused health impact assessments as an integral part of policy development

7. Increase investments for health development to address health and social inequities

Increasing investment for health development requires a truly multi-sectoral approach, including additional resources to education and housing as well as the health sector. Investments for health should reflect the need to address health and social inequities, focusing on groups such as women, children, older people, Indigenous people, those in poverty and marginalised populations.

8. Consolidate and expand partnerships for health

Health promotion requires health and social development partnerships among the different sectors at all levels of governance and society. Existing partnerships need to be strengthened and the potential for new partnerships must be explored. Partnerships offer mutual benefit for health through the sharing of expertise, skills and resources.

9. Strengthen communities and increase community capacity to empower the individual

Key strategies at a community level are:

- strengthening advocacy through community action, particularly through groups organised by women
- enabling communities and individuals to take control over their health and environment through education and empowerment
- building alliances for health and supportive environments to strengthen the cooperation between health and environmental campaigns and strategies
- mediating between conflicting interests in society to ensure equitable access to supportive environments for health
- improving the capacity of communities for health promotion, which requires practical education, leadership training, and access to resources
- empowering individuals, which demands more consistent, reliable access to the decision-making process and the skills and knowledge essential to effect change
- re-orienting health services, which requires stronger attention to health research and changes in professional education and training. This must lead to a change of attitude and organisation of health services, refocusing on the total needs of the individual as a whole person.

10. Secure an infrastructure for health promotion

Governments are the stewards of the health of populations. They have a responsibility to establish a strong infrastructure for public health that includes a funded commitment to health promotion. 'Settings for health' represent the organisational base of the infrastructure required for health promotion. New health challenges mean that health and non-health organisations need to be able to respond effectively, so new and diverse networks need to be created to achieve intersectoral collaboration. Training in, and practice of, local leadership skills should be encouraged to support health promotion activities.

