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The Global Consortium on Community Health Promotion – a collaborative initiative of the IUHPE - has been established to foster and strengthen effective community health promotion efforts at international, regional, national and local levels to enable people within communities to increase control over and improve their health. Encompassing diverse and complementary actions directed towards determinants of health, community health promotion focuses on communities as a whole in the context of their everyday lives. The concept of ‘community health promotion’ builds on the Ottawa Charter (WHO, 1986) emphasising that health promotion *must* be a value-based, empowering process, enabling people, in their communities, to take control over the determinants of their health. It is this participatory, empowering and equity-focused *process* that forms the fundamental bedrock of community health promotion. The concept also envisages strengthening linkages between health professionals that serve within community settings and people within communities to broaden the base of health systems from ones orientated to ‘healthcare’ to ones focused on improving health. Within this context a set of strategic and operational parameters are outlined. These form the cornerstones of the Community Health Promotion initiative.

Strategic parameters

The Global Consortium on Community Health Promotion has set out a vision for the future in which all populations have an equal opportunity to attain the highest possible level of health and well-being; where the right to health for all people is upheld and acted upon as a fundamental principle of social justice; where health inequities are eliminated and where community assets for health are fully actualized. This initiative is grounded in the realization that health promotion is essential to advancing health equity and social justice across the life course and is critical to well being and quality of life.

The Consortium recognises that community participation is essential and must drive every stage of health promoting actions – setting priorities, making decisions, planning strategies and conducting evaluation. The Consortium also recognises that communities have assets and local knowledge that must be acknowledged and taken into account and that they also need support and encouragement to create the necessary conditions for health. The Consortium maintains that developing and implementing participatory healthy public policies is fundamental for ensuring the right to healthy environments for all people and that this is a prerequisite to move beyond approaches focused primarily on individual behaviour change.

The Consortium’s strategies underscore the need for complementary and integrated approaches directed towards determinants of health. The Consortium believes that these approaches are critical to impact global agreed health and development targets as embodied within the Millennium Development Goals.

Mainstreaming health promotion into global, national, regional and local health policies and integrating health outcomes into a broader policy context is critical to improving health outcomes. This stems from the Consortium’s belief that factors, which impact health status are much broader than those that are within the realm of the health sector and that these encompass social welfare, economic development, social justice, politics, trade, environment and national security. The Consortium believes objectives and targets within the health sector must take into account the aforementioned societal factors and that these need to be set within a more explicit policy framework in order to foster inter-sectoral collaboration between stakeholders both within and outside of the traditional health sector. The Consortium underscores the need for adequate resources to ensure the effective implementation of these policies and the

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setting up of approaches to health that are based on inter-sectoral action linking people with their environments. The Consortium is committed to encouraging to international agencies, governments and other stakeholders to mainstream community health promotion as part of global and country development agendas and to lobby for appropriate resources in line with this approach.

Based on these values and principles, the primary purpose of the Consortium is to promote the use of sustainable participatory methodologies to improve community health. Within this context, we will identify, review and analyse practices and policies from different parts of the world that are relevant to developing and disseminate policy recommendations for strengthening effective community health promotion programmes. The Consortium will provide technical assistance – as appropriate – to promote the use of evidence of effective community health promotion interventions particularly to specialty networks; it is envisaged that this will contribute to the development of strategic plans, which increase international impact of research in effective community health programmes. Other objectives focus on providing networking opportunities between policy makers and practitioners to raise awareness about the range and variability of community health

practices, training opportunities, and infrastructures around the world; catalyzing sharing of experiences; and developing and strengthening collaborative efforts to promote community health promotion.

Operational parameters

Given its strategic parameters, the Consortium has outlined a number of initial steps towards operationalising its vision into concerted action. The creation of an institutional mechanism as an entity coordinated by the IUHPE and consisting of a network of experts in community health promotion is the first step in this direction. As a next step, a consensus has been achieved to develop a “Community Health Promotion Dossier”. This Dossier aims to improve understanding about community health promotion; present an analysis of the current community health promotion practices and describes evidence upon which policy recommendations for community health promotion can be issued. The Consortium will also use the process of developing the Community Health Promotion Dossier as a tool to establish global partnerships for community health promotion including mainstreaming community health promotion on the global health and sustainable development agenda. Additional activities of the Consortium include overseeing a forthcoming issue

of the IUHPE official Journal *Promotion & Education* dedicated to community health promotion a one day symposium preceding the upcoming 19th IUHPE World Conference on Health Promotion and Health Education in 2007 in Vancouver, Canada.

With these modest beginnings, the Consortium is contributing to existing efforts to place community health promotion prominently on the global and country health and development agendas – a place it rightly deserves.

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Reference

WHO (1986) Ottawa Charter. Proceedings of the First International Conference on Health Promotion. Ottawa, Canada, 21 November 1986. www.who.int/hpr/NPH/docs/ottawa_charter_hp.pdf [accessed 06, 05]