

4

NATIONAL OBJECTIVES FOR HEALTH: HEALTH PROMOTION AND PROTECTION

Health promotion is complementary to disease prevention. It is the first step to disease prevention and starts with people who are basically healthy by enhancing positive behaviors that promote well-being and strengthening community measures and individual lifestyles for the maintenance of good health. It is also concerned with reducing, preventing or controlling negative behaviors or lifestyle that increase the risk to illness or certain forms of diseases.

Health promotion to be more effective, should begin from conception and continue to old age. The programmatic approach to family health uses the life cycle approach which covers the stages of life – from the womb to newborn, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age. This approach is calculated to provide the most appropriate package of health services at each stage of life to ensure the state of well-being of all age groups. The cumulative impact of positive personal behaviors and practices started in childhood and maintained through adulthood and old age is made apparent on the length and quality of a person's life. Health seeking practices and positive personal habits acquired early in life are the best protection against diseases and illnesses.

Better economic opportunities and adverse environmental impact follow on the heels of development. The first improves income opportunity and fuels the government's capacity to provide more services to the people. Adverse environmental changes on the other hand, pose serious health consequences that put people and communities at risk. The presence of hazardous materials and technology in the workplace has contributed significantly to the alarming rise of certain work-related diseases. Dislocation of poor people to give way to factories and economic zones has pushed them to inner spaces and inadequate shelter bereft of basic life giving resources. Food security is equally threatened by irrational land utilization and conversion.

Truly, in the last decades before 2000, adverse environmental conditions have invaded households, communities, industries and workplaces and have become major threats to public health. In such conditions, promoting the health and protecting the well-being of the population becomes an urgent matter and should include strong advocacy for cleaner technology or less polluting and hazardous industrial and manufacturing processes; development of more people-friendly habitats and communities; education to stop people from carelessly throwing wastes and polluting the environment; and more enlightened trade, tourism, investment and industrial and health policies along the framework of sustainable development.

Education and information programs should also be developed to create a more health-informed population that can best deal with health-related problems and advocate for better and more responsive health policies.

Health promotion cost less and may be initiated by the individual or community with minimum effort and resources. Health promotion include any form of physical activities (e.g., household chores, brisk walking, dance, sports and play, exercise) done regularly to strengthen cardiovascular fitness, improve physical endurance and prolong life. A less stressful lifestyle free from the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol and peaceful surroundings promote sound minds not inclined to violence and abusive behavior. A healthy outlook in life prevents violence and its often fatal consequences that put undue burden on the health care system. Maintaining cleanliness of the body is a protection against diseases and poor health. Non-smoking of tobacco prolongs life and prevents fatal respiratory and cardiovascular diseases. Discipline with regard to diet, sleep, exercise and abstinence from alcohol and tobacco is a personal choice that should be cultivate and encouraged. In the long run, the individual's sense of responsibility towards his own health is the key to whether he will have a full, productive long life.