

**Declaration of the International Conference on Health Promotion
Health Promotion in Latin America
Santa Fe de Bogota, November 1992**

Health promotion in Latin America seeks to create conditions which guarantee the general well-being of the population as a fundamental purpose of development, and presupposes the interrelationship of health and development. Torn apart by the inequity which is increasingly aggravated by prolonged economic crisis and macroeconomic adjustment programs, the majority of the region's population faces deteriorating living conditions coupled by an increase in health risks and a reduction in the resources required to confront these risks. Consequently, the challenges of health promotion in Latin America are to change exclusionary policies while reconciling economic interests and pursuing the goal of well being for all, and to work towards solidarity and social equity, conditions indispensable for health and development.

1. Significant portions of the population have been unable to obtain the bare necessities required for securing the most basic standard of living. Complex and overwhelming inequalities- economic, environmental, social, political, and cultural, as well as those concerning coverage by, access to and quality of health care services- tend to be exacerbated by recurring reductions in social expenditures and adjustment policies. Therefore, it is imperative that these problems be faced and resolved with constant regard to attaining health for all.
2. The present inequity in the health care of the countries of Latin America reiterates the need to opt for new alternatives in public health action that will combat the suffering caused by underdevelopment and poverty coupled with the side-effects of urbanization and industrialization. The region is experiencing an epidemiologic situation characterized by the persistence and resurgence of endemic diseases such as malaria, cholera, tuberculosis, and malnutrition; by an increase in problems such as cancer and cardiovascular illnesses; and by the appearance of new diseases such as AIDS and those caused by the deteriorating environment.
3. In the political arena, there exist barriers which limit democratic practices and citizen participation in decision-making. Under these circumstances, violence- in all its forms- contributes notably to the deterioration of public services, causes numerous psychosocial complications, and constitutes the background for countless public health problems.
4. Attainment of equity requires the elimination of unnecessary, avoidable and unjust differences that restrict access to the right to well-being. Each society defines its well-being as the right to choose a dignified way of life. The role of health promotion in reaching this goal is not only to identify the factors that encourage inequity and to propose actions to alleviate their effects, but also to act as an agent of change bringing about radical transformation in the attitudes and behaviors of the public and its leaders, the starting point of these problems.

5. Integral and reciprocal development of human beings and societies is the essence of the strategy for health promotion in all societies. Consequently, the strategy must incorporate the cultural traditions and social procedures which have forged our nationalities and make it possible to face adversity, structural obstacles and recurring crises with creativity and solidarity. Recognition, recovery, stimulation and dissemination of these experiences are indispensable for the transformation of our societies and for bringing about a culture of health.

Strategies

At the international level, the health promotion movement has generated theoretical and practical proposals among which the “Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion” stands out for its clarity in defining the elements that constitute health promotion and the mechanisms for putting them into practice. The incorporation of these proposals is indispensable to the strategy of health promotion in Latin America.

1. Promote a culture of health by modifying values, beliefs, attitudes, and policies in order to allow access to production, as well as to promote the fruitful use of goods and opportunities which facilitate healthy options. Accordingly, it will be possible to create healthy environments and to prolong full lives with maximum development of personal and social capacities.
2. Transform the health sector, emphasizing the strategy of health promotion which means guaranteeing universal access to health care services, changing conditioning factors which produce morbidity and mortality, and promoting processes that encourage the public to forge ideals about health, with full awareness of the importance of health and the determination to take transcendental actions that have impact on this area.
3. Convene, inspire and mobilize a strong social commitment toward making health a high priority on the political agenda. This movement will change the interrelationships in society so that marginalization, inequity, destruction of the environment, and the conditions which these produce will become unacceptable.

Commitments

The right to and respect for life and peace are the fundamental ethical values of the culture health. As a result, it is indispensable to the promotion of health in Latin America that these values be accepted, cultivated and practiced daily.

1. Instill the concept that health is conditioned by political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and biological factors, and that health promotion is a strategy to change these conditioning factors.

2. Enlist social factors in the application of the health promotion strategy, subordinating economic interests to social goals, with the purpose of creating and maintaining family, physical, natural, labor, social, economic, and political settings that promote life rather than degrade it.
3. Encourage public policies that guarantee equity and favor adopting healthy environments and options.
4. Refine coordination and negotiation mechanisms among the social and institutional sectors in order to follow through with health promotion activities, keeping in mind the overall improvement of well-being and fostering the transfer of social investment resources to civilian organizations.
5. Consolidate a committed and effective plan to curtail unproductive spending in areas such as military budgets, diversion of public funds for producing private gains, excessively bureaucracies, and other sources of inefficiency and waste.
6. Strengthen the ability of the people to participate in the decision-making that affects their lives, and to choose healthy life styles.
7. Eliminate the excessive burden of inequity on women. The participation of women, providers of life and well-being, constitutes an indispensable axis of health promotion in Latin America.
8. Stimulate dialogue among intellectual leaders so that the process of health development is incorporated in the cultural heritage of the region.
9. Strengthen the health sector's capacity to mobilize resources toward social production of health, assigning responsibility for tasks to the social players in their actions related to health.
10. Recognize the people committed to the process of health promotion, as health workers and agents, in the same way that professionals trained to provide health services are recognized.
11. Encourage health promotion research to generate appropriate science and technology, and disseminate the knowledge gained in a way that transforms it into a means for liberation, change and participation.