



What is going on with the Healthy Municipalities and Communities Initiative in the Americas

March, 2005

Contents

[Consultation was conducted to analyze the urban health challenges in the Americas](#)

[Brazil conducts workshop on Participatory Evaluation](#)

[The experience of Nuevo León, México, with the Healthy Municipalities and Communities Strategy](#)

[Evaluating Healthy Municipalities and Communities in the Caribbean](#)

[To Build a Healthy Peru, 689 professional gather in the First National Conference on Healthy Promotion in Peru](#)

[Getting to Know the National Networks of Healthy Municipalities, Cities and Communities: Argentina](#)

[Other News in the Region](#)

Consultation was conducted to analyze the urban health challenges in the Americas

Professionals from various Latin American countries gathered in Santiago, Chile, from 22 to 24 February 2005 for a Technical Consultation on “Challenges of Urban Health in the Americas: analysis of the impact of urbanization on health and the determinants of health”. The purpose of the event was to develop a framework for PAHO’s technical cooperation and to draft the priorities and strategies to elaborate a regional plan of action; one that would facilitate improvements in the social, economic, and environmental determinants of health within the context of the urban complexity, and especially to improve health and quality of life of those that live in marginal urban areas. The meeting organized by PAHO/WHO took place at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) with the participation and collaboration of participants from: the cities of Asuncion, Buenos Aires, Bogota, Guarulhos, Lima, Managua, Mexico DF, Montevideo, Rosario and Santiago; academic institutions from Belo Horizonte, Miami, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago and São Paulo; CEPAL, Organization of American States

(OAE), United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), the Chilean Association of Municipalities and Chile's Ministry of Health.

The Minister of Health, Dr. Pedro Garcia, inaugurated the meeting, pointing to some important priorities for the health of the Region's population, such as the challenges of urbanization. Dr. Sonia Fleury presented a conceptual framework on urban health: "The City of Citizens". Urban health profiles were presented from the participating cities. These profiles were prepared in response to a call for profiles from PAHO from cities with more than one million inhabitants in the Americas, and following the technical guide provided by PAHO.

A need was identified for developing a frame of reference for PAHO's technical cooperation in urban health that would articulate proposals to improve the determinants of urban health with the Healthy Municipalities and Communities strategy, and that would also be useful for advocating with health authorities of each country to mobilize their political will and allocation of resources for improving health. Participating cities recognized the need to publish their profiles and to develop a guide to initiate a public debate that would foster dialogue in countries and cities, and would generate greater political will and resources to improve living conditions in the cities. Participants from academic centers proposed definitions of urban health and they agreed on at least two lines of research to strengthen participation of researchers and academics in urban health and healthy cities. Within this context, the observatory as an analytical methodology was proposed and discussion focused on its potential to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of healthy public policies and, in general, health promotion related to the improvement of social determinants of health.

Another need identified was that of strengthening and developing local capacities to implement and evaluate health promotion strategies. Participants indicated that it would be useful to participate in the University Consortium of Health Promotion, also initiated and supported by PAHO, since it is a forum for discussion and updating the educational curriculum of personnel that work in cities and sectors involved in promoting health and improving quality of life in urban centers.

For more information and to obtain a copy of the presentations, contact:

Dr. Maria Teresa Cerqueira, Unit Chief, Healthy Setting Unit, Area of Sustainable Development and Environmental Health: cerqueim@paho.org

Brazil conducts workshop on Participatory Evaluation

Rosilda Mendes, CEPEDOC Cidades Saudáveis

Brazil launched the application of the Participatory Evaluation Resource Guide for Healthy Municipalities and Communities at various sites. The details of this initiative were defined during the workshop: "Participatory Evaluation of Healthy Municipalities and Communities (HMCs)" that took place on 25 and 26 of November, 2004, in São Paulo, at the Public Health School of the University of São Paulo. The meeting included participants from institutions from various parts of the country. Based on this workshop,

a work plan was developed which determined that during the first months of the year, until May, 2005, new mayors, who were recently elected, would be contacted in order to define which cities would be incorporated into the process. During this period, the teams responsible for following-up the process in communities and municipalities would also be defined. As part of this process, a proposal was also developed to support the conduct of an in-depth study on the application of the Participatory Evaluation Guide for Healthy Municipalities and Communities in Brazil. It will be a multicenter study with the objective of monitoring this process in Brazil, identifying aspects that allow its replication and integrating different groups and institutions that work in health promotion and evaluation of HMCs in Brazil. We hope that this experience will contribute to the “Evidences of the Effectiveness of Health Promotion in the Americas” Project, as well as increase and strengthen the networks and the Healthy Municipalities and Communities movement in Brazil. For more information contact: Rosilda Mendes (Rosilda@usp.br) and Miguel Malo, PAHO/Brazil (miguel@bra.ops-oms.org).

The experience of Nuevo León, México, with the Healthy Municipalities and Communities Strategy

Lourdes Huerta Perez

In our country, as well as in our State, the main causes of disease, disability and death are linked to multiple environmental, economic, political, cultural, and social factors, and to address them, multiple actions are required. In Mexico, the National Health Program 2001-2006 states that health promotion is oriented towards increasing awareness about health, promoting healthy lifestyles, and strengthening community action. It also states that the goal of health promotion is to help the development of healthy communities, in which the different actors participate in a co-responsible manner in the maintenance and improvement of their well-being.

In Nuevo León, the Healthy Communities Program has been assigned high priority. The authorities have identified its potential, based on its capacity to create spaces to restore co-responsibility in the social construction of health by calling upon social participation from authorities, public and private institutions, and the community. The Healthy Communities Program is implemented through two main lines of action. The first one is the Municipalities for Health Movement that is implemented through the leadership of Municipal Presidents, and is organized through the work of Municipal Networks. The Municipal Health Committee is also involved and it coordinates the participation of the institutions present in the municipality. The other line of action is the Healthy Community Certification, which aims at guaranteeing the achievement of health standards related to the main problems affecting individuals or collective health in communities, based on institutional, community and municipal work.

In Nuevo León the Municipalities for Health Movement has achieved significant results during the 2003-2006 administration. Intersectorial workshops and community assessments were conducted through which health problems were prioritized and an intervention program to address and resolve them was developed. The Neoleonesa Network is integrated by 6 regions: North, Citrícola, Center A (that comprise the municipalities of the

metropolitan area), Northeast, South and Center B. Its structure has 6 regional coordinators, the State Secretary of Health, the Sub-Secretary of Disease Prevention and Control, and the Director for Health Promotion for the State Health Department. As part of the Municipalities for Health Movement, intense work is being conducted with the integration of the Municipal Health Committees. As of today, 50 Municipal Committees out of 51 municipalities of the State have been integrated and the administration has conducted 45 intersectorial workshops. One hundred percent of the municipalities were present in the last meeting of the Neoleonesa Network. In 2004, in response to a call for nominations to receive resources from the Healthy Communities Program, the municipalities submitted 37 projects. Sixteen of these projects were awarded funds to advance health promotion at the local level.

In regards to the Healthy Communities Certificate, the current administration has comprehended the impact of actions geared at affecting the various areas that integrate health: physical, environmental, social and mental factors. The Certification creates opportunities to further promote programs that are under the responsibility of health professionals, by measuring the advances and impact of health programs in various population groups. The program has generated great social mobilization by bringing together the different sectors present in the community and the programs and actions of each sector.

The strategy was presented to those responsible for health programs at the State level. A State Committee was formed to propose and validate evaluation indicators and to conduct the final evaluation. In a following phase, trainings were offered to department chiefs and coordinators of each program, local teams and health personnel. During the third phase, the program was launched. The first step was to invite the community to participate in the “certification program”, launching the integration of the Local Health Committees. Educational activities were then offered such as training of mothers as community health workers and the formation of support groups for those who are diabetic, hypertensive, and pregnant, etc. Simultaneously, detection and prevention activities were implemented, such as immunizations for children and pregnant women, detection of cancer and TB, solid waste disposal, etc.

After they have met pre-determined standards, the health committee and health personnel apply to be evaluated. If the results indicate they achieved the expected results, the State designates the community as “certified.” It is important to mention that the indicators used to conduct evaluation include 60 aspects, some related to urban areas, others to rural areas. The Certification process is not an easy one. It requires team work among the community, health personnel and volunteers. It requires sufficient resources. It requires time, commitment, knowledge and experience from evaluators at different levels. Communities recognize the value and the feasibility of this process, and each community has celebrated its achievement based on its own customs and possibilities.

To date, the results show there are: 120 Committees integrated, 55 communities initiated in the process, 31 communities actively implementing the program, and 25 communities “certified”. It is important to note the fundamental role played by the municipal presidents, not only as witnesses to the process, but as committed and participating actors. These are truly the leaders that the community has elected to be their representatives, to lead

them towards development.

For more information about the experience of México and of Nuevo León, please contact:

Lourdes Huerta (luhuerta@att.net.mx)

PAHO-MEX: Juan Pablo Villa (villaj@mex.ops-oms.org)

Evaluating Healthy Municipalities and Communities in the Caribbean

Gina Watson, PAHO

The Caribbean Charter for Health Promotion celebrated its tenth anniversary since its endorsement in 1993. In this context, a series of activities are being held to develop a health promotion agenda in the sub region, as defined in the charter and operationalized through the Caribbean Cooperation for Health (CCH II) strategic plan. Technical collaboration from PAHO at regional and country levels has been instrumental in bringing the countries together to revisit the Charter and outline a way forward conducive to strengthening skills and developing competencies that will contribute to the growth of a healthy municipality/community network in the sub-region.

In 2003 Trinidad and Tobago hosted the Caribbean Health Promotion Technical Meeting, and in 2005 a workshop to prepare for the the field test for the Healthy Municipalities' Participatory Evaluation Guide. The latter provided an opportunity to involve strategic partners collaborating with the implementation of the healthy spaces initiative in the country. Noticeable in this exercise was the opportunity to train curriculum officers from the Ministry of Education, health promotion and health education officers of the Ministry of Health, staff from NGOs, and village councils from three communities developing the healthy spaces initiative: Plum Mithan a rural community, Las Cuevas a fishing community, both in Trinidad and Delaford a semi-rural community in Tobago. The participation of the youth group from the Plum Mithan Village provided an opportunity to evaluate a youth-driven initiative addressing skills development and jobs generation.

The workshop also contributed to strengthening health promotion ties between Trinidad and Guyana, with the participation of the health promotion advisor from PAHO and the health promotion coordinator from the Guyana Ministry of Health.

To build a healthy Peru, 689 professionals gather in the first Conference on Health Promotion in Peru

Lic. Elvia Campos

Ministry of Health, Office of Health Promotion

With the goal of contributing to the strengthening of human resources and institutional capacities that develop Health Promotion in Peru, the I National Conference on Health Promotion was conducted from 2-4 November, 2004, bringing together 689 professionals from sectors such as health, education, local and regional governments, and international experts.

The Office of Health Promotion, created two years ago, headed the Multisectorial Commission, formed by cooperating agencies, civil society, multisectorial commissions of health promoting schools, the Network of Healthy Municipalities and PAHO. The II Meeting of Healthy Municipalities and Communities took place simultaneously, including the participation of 93 municipalities and 39 mayors from different parts of the country. The Health Minister, Dra. Pilar Mazzetti Soler, oversaw the Third Meeting of the Directing Council of the Peruvian Healthy Municipalities and Communities Network, signing the mutual collaboration agreement with Mexico, which will facilitate the exchange of experiences between the two countries.

On this same occasion, the I National Meeting of Health Promoting Schools was held, providing an opportunity for a gathering of Andean countries of the Latin American Network of Health Promoting Schools, in which they signed a Letter of Commitment that includes cooperative agreements in this field.

The event also provided the opportunity for the endorsement of the Lima Declaration that contemplates commitments by the public and private sectors, and civil society in the development of health promotion. The Conference provided a forum for the national and international communities to learn about the advancements in the implementation of Healthy Municipalities and Healthy Schools in Peru and other countries such as Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia and the United States. For more information, go to the website: <http://www.minsa.gob.pe/dgps>, or contact:

Dr. Elvia Campos: ecampos@minsa.gob.pe

PAHO-Perú: frocabad@paho.org

Getting to Know the National Networks of Healthy Municipalities, Cities and Communities: Argentina

Functional Coordination of the Argentina Network for Healthy Municipalities and Communities

A little bit of history

The Argentine Network of Health Municipalities and Communities was established in 2001 based on the Tucumán Charter, endorsed in the 2° National Forum on Health Promotion. During 2002 and 2003, through the realization of national, provincial and local health promotion forums, various municipalities started to implement the strategy. The Health and Environment Ministry initiated a series of monthly meetings of the Coordinating Unit of the Argentine Network of Healthy Municipalities and Communities that culminated in the preparation of the Network Statute in August, 2003.

In 2004, the strategy was disseminated among mayors, demonstrating that the potential and scope of the Network increased exponentially in each new municipality. Sixty-three new municipalities and

communities joined the Network, affirming their commitment to health promotion at the local level. The sanitary authorities of the provinces of Misiones, Entre Ríos, Mendoza, Chubut, and Córdoba confirmed their adherence to the HMC strategy, providing support and the institutional framework.

Statute of the Network

The statute defines the network's values: respect, equity, solidarity. It also defines the vision, mission, objectives, and membership, accreditation and renovation criteria. Benefits of integrating the network include: technical support and training by specialized technicians, access to updated information through newsletters and publications, exchange and diffusion of information, and access to resources such as research fellowships, subsidies for health promotion interventions at the local level, as well as participation in meetings, courses, workshops, etc.

Roles and Functions

The Coordinating Unit is in charge of monitoring compliance with the statute, planning priority activities, evaluating requests to join the Network, promoting the exchange of experiences at the local level, among others. This Unit is formed by the Health and Environment Ministry, PAHO and 3 member municipalities from each region of the country: Center, Cuyo, Argentine Northeast (NOA) and Argentine Northwest (NEA) and Patagonia.

La Functional Coordination is in charge of coordinating field technical assistance in planning, monitoring and evaluating projects, reorienting and answering requests for information, articulating actions with other government sectors and actors, establishing collaborating activities and linking the Network with other movements or national and international Networks. As of December 2004, 90 municipalities and communities joined the Network.

Achievements

After the National Meeting "Municipalities in Network, for a Healthier Country", in March, 2004, the Network has been expanding and strengthening, achieving the commitment of local authorities and communities towards working under a health promotion approach to improve equity.

Strengths. The support and promotion of the HMC strategy from the national level, the reorientation based on demands, the building of consensus and the legitimacy of the Network as the guardian of sustainability, the multiplying effect of the Municipalities that implement the strategy as a positive factor for local development, and the development of communication channels (website, publications, etc.) have contributed to the continuity and expansion of the Network.

Weaknesses. The municipalities recognize as weaknesses the lack of monitoring and evaluation of experiences, difficulties among stakeholders to work in an intersectorial and interdisciplinary manner, and the high tendency to medicalize the processes.

Where we are

We are learning to walk together the road to construct healthy public policies at the local level, based on the problems felt by the community, strengthening the community work of Primary Care within the framework of the Federal Health Plan.

Challenges for 2005

The priorities for 2005 consist of consolidating the Network and evaluating evidences of the effectiveness of the interventions developed in healthy municipalities, as well as preparing the IV National Meeting of Healthy Municipalities under the theme: “Social Responsibility in the Collective Construction of Health.”

For more information about the Argentine Network of HMCs:

E-mail: redmunisal@msal.gov.ar

Website: www.msal.gov.ar

Phone Number: +54-11+4379-9309

Other News in the Region

- The Center for the Development and Evaluation of Policies and Technologies in Public Health (CEDETES), of the Universidad del Valle, in Cali, Colombia, has been designated a WHO/PAHO Collaborating Center in Evaluation, Training and Advocacy in Health Promotion in Health. For more information see: www.cedetes.org (in Spanish)
- The University of Kansas has been designated a WHO/PAHO Collaborating Center in Community Health and Development. For more information see: <http://ctb.ku.edu/wg/>
- For more information about the application process to become a WHO/PAHO Collaborating Center, see: <http://www.bireme.br/whocc/>