

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2008-2010

The International Union for Health Promotion and Education is a unique worldwide association of individuals and organisations committed to improving the health and wellbeing of the people of the world and to reducing health inequalities created by social, political, economic and environmental determinants through health promotion, including health education, community action and the development and implementation of healthy public policy. In addition, the IUHPE has earned a strong reputation as an expert organisation providing health promotion research, training and capacity building services to a broad range of clients.

Over half a century marked by periods of major change in the external environment and within the field of health promotion, the organisation has proven to be relevant and resilient. It has flourished as the only global, independent and professional non-governmental organisation in this field, and works in close cooperation with UN agencies, such as WHO, UNESCO, UNICEF, or UN-Habitat, as well as other major intergovernmental institutions, non-governmental organisations, networks, national agencies, academic institutions and a broad range of practitioners in the field to influence and facilitate the development of health promotion strategies and projects.

It is an open and inviting organisation, providing an opportunity to build an international network that encourages the free exchange of ideas, knowledge and experiences, as well as facilitating the development of relevant collaborative projects at global, regional and local levels.

OUR CHANGING WORLD

In recent decades health promotion has proven to be an effective, efficient means to improve the health of populations. The IUHPE and the broader health promotion field have demonstrated and documented the significant improvements in the health and wellbeing of populations that can be brought about through planned social change. In many countries there have been significant reductions in premature mortality from both communicable and non-communicable diseases as well as reductions in morbidity and improvements in health literacy due to health promotion. At local levels, too, there is extensive evidence that health promotion works as a strategy and as a technology.

The pre-requisites for health – peace, shelter, food, income, a stable ecosystem, sustainable resources, social justice and equity – remain unchallenged. Their presence or absence continues to determine why some of the world's people are healthy and others are not. It is vital that the IUHPE, as an organisation, overtly accounts for the political, economic, social and physical environments within which it operates.

While health and social inequalities have existed for as long as human civilisation, these inequalities within and across countries persist despite the existence of the wealth and technological means to address them. It is widely held that these inequalities have increased as an outcome of global economic integration, accelerated urbanisation and ecological disruption, and market-based reform policies. These trends exacerbate the systematic and deeply rooted discrimination based on gender, class, religion, ethnicity or race that has a profound negative impact on health and wellbeing.

The burden of poor health that results from this unequal distribution of societies' resources continues to fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable in many countries, who experience much higher rates of mortality, infant mortality and chronic and infectious diseases. Combined with social and economic insecurity this is rapidly translating into an increasing gap between rich and poor within all countries in access to and application of the resources necessary for health.

In many countries the lack of political interest in or will to address health inequalities has resulted in significant portions of populations being left without reliable, accessible and affordable education and health care to even the most basic standard. In recent years it has become clearer that political power is an independent determinant of health and that those who have political power are responsible for creating the social, economic and environmental conditions that enable their populations to achieve optimum health and wellbeing.

Implications for the health of populations and individuals

Some hard won gains in improving the health of populations are being eroded with shorter life expectancies and rising levels of infant mortality in some countries. Inequalities in health status are increasing in accordance with increasing inequalities in socio-economic status. New global challenges arising from increases in chronic diseases, obesity in developed countries and dramatic increases in tobacco use in developing nations are taking their toll on the health and wellbeing of populations.

Growing numbers of people have less opportunity and fewer of the resources necessary to make healthy choices. The urgent need to address the significant inequalities in health status that have occurred or that have persisted and worsened over the last several decades is increas-

ingly obvious. With the increasing influence of globalisation there is a greater negative impact of the private sector on the health status of populations in all countries of the world.

Economic, social, trade and environmental policies are likely to have even more dramatic effects on the health of populations in the future. Policies that require payment for primary education are already having an impact on the participation of the poor. Policies that undermine food security and availability and employment have been demonstrably responsible for civil unrest in several countries. The absence of policy on environmental protection and sustainability contributes to growing health inequalities in many parts of the world.

Implications for health promotion

An overriding global concern for health promotion is to find effective ways to influence policies and practices at global and regional levels, in addition to national and local levels. Acting effectively to address the distribution of social and economic determinants of health is vital. This requires inter-sectoral collaboration, whole-of-government approaches and trans-national cooperation to address the determinants of health and redress health inequalities. Working closely with other global health-focused organisations is essential in this task as is a commitment to working with organisations outside the health sector, civil society and the private sector across a range of settings.

Our actions must be commensurate with the values and principles of health promotion.

CHALLENGES

The IUHPE, as a global organisation, has to respond to the changing global environment positively, recognising that:

The IUHPE can make a difference to global health

We must build on our considerable strengths to play a meaningful role in the world arena. The organisation's major strength lies in the quality of the skills and knowledge of the membership, and the capabilities of the Headquarters and Regional Offices in securing and managing partnerships and resources to enable the organisation to pursue its goals. The IUHPE unlocks this potential by enlarging and involving its membership. The Regional Offices have a key role in achieving the overall global strategy through regionally-focused priority actions and contributions to global programmes and activities.

The organisation is well positioned to take global leadership in health promotion alongside major partner organisations such as UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, UN-Habitat, UNIFEM, the World Bank, World Federations and others.

As an independent, global non-governmental organisation, the IUHPE is in a strong position to develop global perspectives on issues influencing the health and wellbeing of populations and be a catalyst for change. A significant contribution that the IUHPE can make is to advocate for and contribute to action to redress the significant and growing imbalance in the distribution of the world's resources between developed and developing countries, as well as among different population groups within countries.

Recent global challenges arising from disease pandemics and natural disasters such as tsunami, earthquakes, drought, and famine have been detrimental to the health and wellbeing of large numbers of people in the world. Likewise human-generated problems such as situations of war, terrorism and conflict have had great negative impact on the health and wellbeing of populations. The migration of peoples from their homelands, cultures and familiar practices that results from both natural and human-generated disasters also presents challenges for a global health promotion organisation, such as ours. The IUHPE is challenged to develop new ways of mobilising to provide whatever support is possible, to advocate for more health promoting outcomes, and to participate in effective partnerships that result in better health and wellbeing outcomes for people affected by these circumstances.

The work of the IUHPE is more important than ever

Influencing policy agendas: partnership and advocacy

As governments withdraw from a direct role in actions to promote and protect the health of their citizens, the role played by non-governmental organisations becomes increasingly important. As a global organisation outside the political dictates or environment of any individual country, the IUHPE is in a position to provide politically independent, technically sound expertise. Non-governmental organisations such as the IUHPE work most effectively through partnerships. The IUHPE has the commitment and people to play a leadership role in health promotion in collaboration with existing and new partners. We have to break through traditional barriers between public and private, government and non-government sectors in pursuit of our health promotion goals.

Developing the science supporting health promotion

The Global Programme for Health Promotion Effectiveness reaffirms the IUHPE's capacity to carry out complex projects that have international significance and to develop a global framework for assessing the effectiveness of health promotion. In face of the growing pressure on public investment across the globe, there is an urgent need for high quality evidence of the effectiveness and efficiency of health promotion. This will require the investment of significant resources in the development and testing of scientific methods to enable the evaluation of the complex set of interventions that comprise effective contemporary health promotion.

In addition, the IUHPE will be challenged to develop innovative ways of exchanging and translating this knowledge across cultures, contexts and regions. This may be done in a number of ways including linking research and practice in science dissemination, training and conferences. New developments in information and communication technologies may assist in addressing aspects of this challenge.

The IUHPE cannot do everything at once

Set priorities for action

We must make hard decisions about priorities, and invest our limited resources in pursuing strategic directions that address our priority goals and objectives.

This document is intended to provide focus and direction for activity by the Executive, the members, the Regional Offices and the Headquarters of the IUHPE.

VISION, VALUES, AND MISSION

The vision of the IUHPE is a world where all people achieve optimum health and wellbeing.

The values critical to the achievement of this vision include:

- Respect - for the innate dignity of all people; for cultural identity; for cultural diversity; and for natural resources and the environment;
- Inclusion and involvement of people in making the decisions that shape their lives and impact upon their health and wellbeing;
- Equity in health, social and economic outcomes for all people;
- Accountability and transparency— within governments, organisations and communities;
- Sustainability;
- Social justice for all people; and
- Compassion and empowerment.

The IUHPE's mission is to promote global health and wellbeing and to contribute to the achievement of equity in health between and within countries of the world.

To that end, we:

- Articulate a clear set of goals and priorities for the attainment of our vision;
- Build and operate an independent, global, professional network of people and institutions to encourage the free exchange of ideas, knowledge, expertise and experience;
- Advocate for action toward our goals and priorities;
- Achieve mutually desirable outcomes through projects, collaboration and cooperation with members, other organisations and institutions and governments;
- Train and build the health promotion capacity of members and other health promotion practitioners;
- Develop the evidence base for effective health promotion through research, publications, and conferences;
- Inform our members of our activities and provide opportunities for them to contribute to the work of the organisation; and
- Support and encourage new generations of health promotion expertise.

GOALS

The IUHPE has five goals:

- Greater equity in the health of populations between and within countries of the world;
- Effective alliances and partnerships to produce optimal health promotion outcomes;
- Broadly accessible evidence-based knowledge and practical experience in health promotion;
- Excellence in policy and practice for effective, quality health promotion; and
- High levels of capacity in individuals, organisations and countries to undertake health promotion activities.

OBJECTIVES

To achieve these goals the IUHPE will pursue the following:

- Increased investment in health promotion by governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, academic institutions and the private sector;
- An increase in organisational, governmental and inter-governmental policies and practices that result in greater equity in health between and within countries;
- Improvements in policy and practice of governments at all levels, organisations and sectors that influence the determinants of the health of populations;
- Strong alliances and partnerships among all sectors based on agreed ethical principles, mutual understanding and respect;
- Activities that contribute to the development, translation and exchange of knowledge and practice that advance the field of health promotion;
- The wide dissemination of knowledge to health promotion practitioners as well as to policy-makers, government officials and other key individuals and organisations;
- A strong and universally accessible knowledge base for effective, quality health promotion;
- Improved mechanisms for the exchange of ideas, experience and knowledge that promote health and wellbeing;
- A global forum for mutual support and professional advancement of members; and
- Capacity-building opportunities for individuals and institutions to better carry out health promotion initiatives and advocacy efforts.

STRATEGIES

The IUHPE will achieve its goals and objectives by implementing the following strategies:

ADVOCACY AND PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

- Gathering and presenting the evidence to enable advocacy to be conducted by the organisation on a range of issues of international significance;
- Providing consultation to governments and organisations about the implementation of effective health promotion structures, policies, and strategies;
- Continuing to assist countries to develop and improve their national institutions for health promotion;
- Developing partnerships that will enable the organisation to increase its active role in health promotion in international arenas; and
- Continuing to work in close collaboration with global organisations to improve health equity between and within countries by influencing and facilitating the development of equity-focused policies and strategies.

KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT, TRANSLATION, EXCHANGE AND DISSEMINATION

- Continuing to carry out, sponsor, and publish international reviews of evidence of effectiveness in health promotion – with particular emphasis on drawing together evidence from across the globe;
- Continuing to explore the most effective means by which to link evidence of effectiveness in health promotion to the formulation and adoption of public policy;
- Continuing to disseminate new learning and knowledge through publications, conferences, electronic exchange of information and experiences, training and mentoring;
- Providing opportunities for continuing education for members, in person and through distance learning to translate and exchange our knowledge across the globe; and
- Strengthening the networks of people and institutions involved in health promotion throughout the world, and creating new ones when the need arises.

PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT

- Continuing to contribute to the professional development of health promotion practitioners, and to the development of the range, quality and effectiveness of health promotion across the world; and
- Continuing to conduct projects and technical activities with a particular focus on synthesising and disseminating information about effective practice across the world.

STRENGTHENING THE ORGANISATION'S CAPACITY

- Increasing membership in all categories and across all regions of the world, with particular emphasis on increasing the membership of developing countries;
- Increasing awareness of the skills and capacities of members to respond quickly and more comprehensively to health challenges that result from natural and human-generated crises;
- Involving the membership (in all categories) actively in the work of the organisation;
- Increasing the security of funding for the basic infrastructure of the global organisation;
- Strengthening the working relationships between Headquarters and the Regional Offices, and among the Regional Offices;
- Facilitating interchange among members, regions and sectors to advance collaborative efforts across institutions, sectors, countries and regions as well as the sharing of lessons learned and application of learning;
- Continuing to explore the most effective means by which to deliver our vision, values and mission as an organisation; and
- Developing tools to evaluate our performance and demonstrate our organisational effectiveness.