

ASSIGNMENT MODULE 1

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1. Suppose you work with a community radio station, describe what your radio station would do to address water, sanitation and hygiene issues with regard to your i) audience, and ii) WASH messages?

A radio station that wants to address water, sanitation and hygiene issues should use different ways and means, like short message spot, radio talk shows and storytelling.

The purpose of these WASH messages is to sensitize the communities, that are the major listeners of the radio. The messages have to be in the local language, if the targeted communities do not commonly speak the national language.

The knowledge of the situation in WASH of the targeted communities is crucial, in order to address content more focused on the reality and the needs. The topics can cover the disposal of waste, water supply, safe water chain (from the water source to the final use), personal hygiene and healthy home and environment.

The message will be addressed first to the individual, where each person will be responsible of the cleanliness of the home and surrounding area. Then the community leaders will be invited to be role model in the village and support good practices in WASH.

The type of messages will change according to the time of the day, where messages for children will be more during late afternoon and evening hours, while during the morning for the adults.

In order to give voice to the questions of the people, a special program on the radio will give the opportunity to call the hot line and ask issue about WASH.

In addition, the radio station will create a space (it can be in a form of inquiry box) where anybody can drop a message, that can be also a request for an intervention in the

community. Later these messages will be delivered to the stakeholders that are operating in the area, including the local government.

The scope of the sensitization includes improvement of the current situation where poor practices are in place, and big relevance is given to the disease prevention and control. Clear communications will be given regarding the key referral people that can support the spread of the knowledge in WASH: in addition of the local leaders mentioned above, the extension workers are the ones that can be consulted for any information needed on the ground.

2. In your own words, what is your understanding of public health and what are its key elements?

One of the most famous definition of “public health” was given by Acheson (1988, WHO), where it is defined as “the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts of society”.

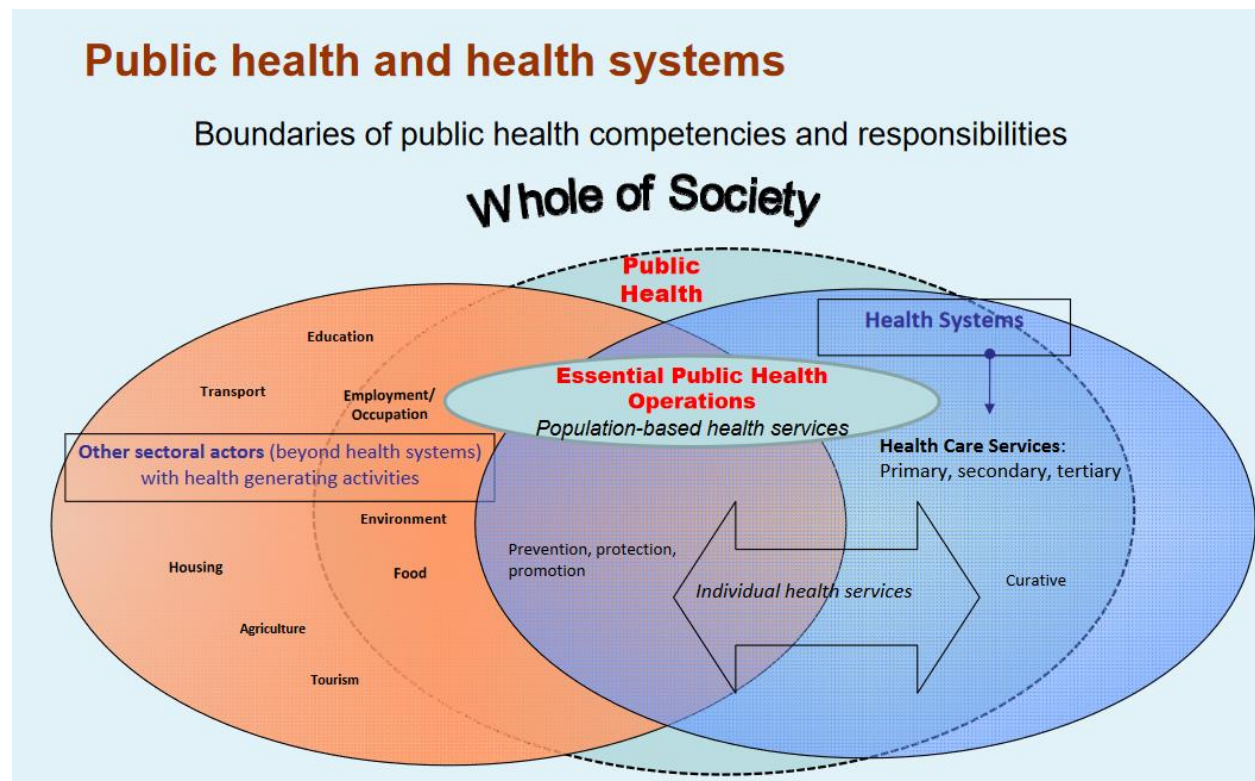
A key element of the public health is its target, that is the entire population, while clinic health targets the individual. This is a substantial difference that in practice in the clinic health gives the responsibility to the single person for his/her wellbeing while in public health the responsibility is collective. An additional difference is the time when the two branches are taking action: the public health has a preventative action whereas the clinic health heals the sick people. So, the more public health is effective, the less curative intervention will be necessary.

In order to develop effective strategies for the public health it is important to have a clear picture of the situation in the society, like the most common disease among the population, the risks that are there, the preparedness to cope with the disasters that can occur, etc.

Once that the policies and strategies are keeping high the level of public health, the benefits will reach not only the physical wellbeing of the population but also its availability of money since a good prevention reduces the expenses in health care; similar situation is for the State, where also the public expenditures in health sector will decrease.

The policy maker that works in public health should consider the multi-sectorial nature of the field: some authors highlight that “it uses a range of disciplines such as epidemiology, biostatistics, biology and biomedical science in its analysis of public health problems” (Lawson & Bauman 2001, Lin et al. 2007, Schneider 2006, quoted by Fleming and Parker, 2012).

The picture below (World Health Organisation, 2011) shows the complexity and the linkages with the public health system.



The key elements of public health are various, according to the different aspects of the science. As it is visible from the picture, there are prevention, protection and promotion. In addition, it can be considered prognosis and provision, where the first is including monitoring and surveillance of the health situation in the targeted population, and the second is indicating the capacity to provide health services by public or private institutions. The actions that are usually part of public health sector are: social behaviour change communication; sensitization of the communities; involvement of the private sector in the use of products that can improve the hygiene; advocacy to increase the budget for intervention in the sector; strengthening of the skills and capacity of the actors working in the sector or taking decisions about public health, and investment in researches.

One aspect that cannot be forgotten is that the environment where we live is influencing our health and that is why public health has a branch called “Environmental Health”.

3. Public health is about partnership between the different players. Explain how the role of international non-profit/NGO in terms of

i) recruitment ii) training iii) funding and iv) monitoring for public health projects contribute to the success or failure of those projects in the developing countries

- i) The recruitment of the International non-profit/NGO will happen before the beginning of the project and should take care of the professionalism of the staff. It should explore the previous experiences of the candidates examining the curriculum vitae. In addition, the knowledge of the context where the project will be implemented should be considered. The interviewers should analyse also if the candidate knows the approach and the strategies adopted in the intervention, because it can be an advantage. The recruitment should plan well the number of staff needed to implement the project. In case the area the population speaks a local language and doesn't know the national one, the staff is required to know it.
- ii) The capacity of the NGO staff should be built or strengthen in order to avoid any challenge that can come from the limited knowledge; generally, it is good to plan for it during the design of the project. The characteristic of the project will be explained in all the aspects, including but not limited to the interactions between the actors in public health, roles and responsibilities within the project and training on the different branches of public health, included WASH. The training can benefit also other stakeholders, like for members of local government, where the coordination is very relevant. With a coordinated action that is following the same strategy and it is implemented by all the stakeholders in public health can give out much better results than where the action is not collective because of gap in knowledge and strategy.
- iii) All the request of funding should start from a clear picture of the reality of the area where the NGO will implement the project.

The funding should be requested to target the needs of the population, so it should not intervene in aspect where the situation is already good. The funds should not be requested for activities where there are already many interventions, or in case they are a very attentive planning is required to avoid duplication and waste of money. The location is also important since it should target places where there is need of intervention.

- iv) The aspect of monitoring is very consistent since the constant control of what is happening in the project and the supervision of the situation allows the NGO to be effective in the implementation. The awareness of the reality on the ground is crucial also because in case of challenges or strategies that are not giving the expected results it will allow to adjust in a timely manner the actions that are implemented.

Monitoring is very important also related to the nature of public health: continuous surveillance of the health of a population is part of routine in this sector, so any project implemented by non-profit organizations should have a monitoring activity that will be able to track any change of the situation and then promptly adapt (i.e. in case of an hazard).

4. In your capacity as the environmental health officer you have been tasked to lead the assessment of a disaster situation. Come up with two key questions under each of the following five headings in your assessment list , namely i) General overview of the situation ii) Water supply iii) Solid-waste disposal iv) Excreta disposal and v) Vector-borne diseases for purposes of assessing local conditions, health needs and identifying local resources in the disaster situation that you are addressing.

Assessment list:

- i. How is the hygienic situation and the sanitation in the community?
Which are the elements of risk for the health in term of physical, chemical and biological factors?
- ii. Which are the sources where the community is fetching the water?
How is the management of the water in terms of storage, transport, use and safe practices?
- iii. How is managed the waste in the community? Is it gathered somewhere? Is it burnt?
How does the community manage harmful chemical and how it disposes it?
- iv. How is the situation about excreta disposal? Is open defecation present or there are sufficient latrines? Are they used?
How is the incidence of disease related to pathogenic bacteria, viruses, fungi, protozoa and parasites?
- v. Which are the diseases related to insects, rats, flies or other vector that are present in the community?
Which are the actions and precaution that the community is taking in order to prevent the presence of these vectors?

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