HEALTH AS A POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE

'Realities from the field: what has WHO learned in the 1990s'

"The role of physicians and other health workers in the preservation and promotion of peace is the most significant factor for the attainment of health for all" (World Health Assembly, Resolution 34.38, 1981)

HEALTH INITIATIVES' OUTCOMES IN WARS

Health initiatives may effectively reduce the levels of mortality and morbidity in the midst of wars and promote conflict prevention and a post-war reconciliation process, when a public health strategy combines with unhindered access to population in need.

Health initiatives may have a positive impact on peacebuilding, when they are based on wide perspective and strategic planning. The implies taking into consideration both short-term and medium/long-term concerns, addressing both basic needs and human rights, involving local capacities for change, and promoting international partnerships and networking.

On the contrary, when these conditions are not met and only short-term considerations are present, health initiatives have virtually no impact on peacebuilding. On some occasions, these initiatives may indirectly contribute to war economy.

HEALTH AS A BRIDGE FOR PEACE (HBP)

INTEGRATING PEACE BUILDING STRATEGIES INTO HEALTH RELIEF AND HEALTH SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

As a WHO programme, HBP started in August 1997 and was formally accepted by the 51st World Health Assembly in May 1998 as a feature of the 'Health for All in the 21st Century' Strategy. HBP, which term was coined by the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) in the 1980s, is a multidimensional and dynamic concept aimed at providing a policy and a full consideration of human rights issues.

HUMANITARIAN CEASE-FIRES (1985-2001)

Main outcomes:
- Facilitation of cross-community contacts, through joint health workshops and seminars.
- Support to local NGOs, social cooperatives and citizens' associations strengthening civil society participation.
- Prevention, health research and development of rehabilitation measures taking into account the needs of local communities.
- Promotion of health in the context of the peace process.

APPLICATION OF PRACTICE

In emergencies as well as in development, WHO has activated an evidences and positions against unhealthy behavior. This means of working and acting, in order to reduce the impact of power struggles, mediators can offer alternatives to positional negotiation. When we look below the surface we discover the interest, which their position reflects.

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APPLY A WIDER PUBLIC HEALTH VISION

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Stabilization & Rehabilitation

RECOMMENDATIONS

Before the conflict forms short-term programs promoting the democratic stability, peacebuilding and development processes.

Health initiatives can contribute to the peaceful transition and to ensure the long-term sustainability of peacebuilding efforts.

To achieve a lasting peace, health initiatives can promote a sustained effort of change, which may have been hindered in the context of violent conflict.

When health initiatives are not able to achieve a lasting peace, they must be ready to face the challenges of conflict and post-conflict situations.