

29 Health promotion

OVERVIEW



To avoid the spread of diseases and epidemics, it is important to teach individuals in your community how to take care of themselves and maintain healthy practices.

To do this, you need to promote health in your community.

What you need to KNOW

- ➔ Changing the behaviour of people in your community is not a simple task.
- ➔ It is important to know the community's traditional beliefs about diseases. Once you know what people believe, you can begin to think about how to change those beliefs for the better.
- ➔ You can learn a lot by being a good listener to people in your community.

What you can DO

- ➔ House-to-house visits are one of the best ways to promote healthy living in your community. They involve going to individual households (at least once a month) to deliver key messages about health.
- ➔ Talk to your local National Society branch and health authorities to decide what messages you need to promote as a priority in your community. For example, if malaria is a big problem in your community, it would be a very good idea to tell people how the disease spreads, how to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes and how to use bed nets properly.
- ➔ Use simple, straightforward language to avoid misunderstandings.
- ➔ Avoid using non-local dialects or foreign languages.
- ➔ Respect your audience and treat their beliefs with respect.
- ➔ Avoid changing topics too quickly and never give contradictory information.
- ➔ Use the actions on the other side of this sheet: ASK, PLAN, PROMOTE.

Use community message(s): 23

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ASK, PLAN, PROMOTE

Use these questions to help you provide good and useful knowledge about health to people in your community.

Ask

Decide what behaviours need to change

- What are the key behaviours that contribute to bad health in the community?
- What behaviours could be changed to help the community avoid disease?
- What are the barriers to changing that behaviour? (What do people believe now?)
- Who is the target group for health promotion? For change communication?

Plan

Plan a community strategy

- What behaviours have the greatest impact on the health prevention programme?
- What health behaviour can be realistically achieved by health promotion?
- How can you promote the benefits of the new behaviour?
- What key messages should you promote?
- Who should communicate the messages along with you (teachers, parents, health authorities)?

Promote

Promote key messages

- Promote a single clear message, be specific.
- Determine the best forms of communication (see *Action tool 32*).
- Repeat key messages using different channels.
- Combine education with entertainment.
- Link your work with what is being done at the local and national.