

Workshop on a Systematic Approach
to Community Nutrition Work

Lajosmizse, Hungary, 9-20 May 1988

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SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

Persons working in community nutrition are very important to the implementation of a nutrition policy. Without personnel with proper training in problem-solving in nutrition, a nutrition policy risks remaining a theoretical exercise.

Many community nutritionists feel that they are working in isolation, having little contact with colleagues with problems similar to theirs. Their formal nutrition training seldom includes problem identification and analysis, planning of own activities, management and evaluation.

The present workshop, the second in a series, was therefore organized in order to stimulate, on an international level, persons working in community nutrition by inviting them to go through a course containing the above elements, and in the process to share their concerns and experiences with one another.

Participants

There were ten participating community nutritionists from six European countries (Spain, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, Israel, Switzerland and the United Kingdom).

Facilitators

Four facilitators were responsible for leading the course: Dr Arne Oshaug, Institute for Nutrition Research, University of Oslo, Dr Ivanka Gajic, Head of Nutrition Section, Institute of Public Health, Belgrade, Dr Gabor Zajkas, Department of Clinical Nutrition, Institute of Food Hygiene and Nutrition, Budapest, and Professor Antonia Trichopoulou, Department of Nutrition and Biochemistry, Athens School of Public Health, Athens (four days only).

Scope and purpose of the workshop

The workshop objectives were:

- to provide an opportunity for community nutritionists from different European countries to meet and discuss common problems;
- to develop a description of professional functions and tasks for a community nutritionist, based on nutrition related problem areas;
- to identify common problems and possible approaches and strategies to

solving these problems;

- to introduce a systematic approach to the planning and evaluation of community nutrition work in the European Region;
- to formulate strategies for development of community nutrition work in the European Region;
- to help participants set long-term objectives for own work, and to plan follow-up activities of the workshop.

Organization and Programme

The workshop lasted for two weeks and consisted to a large degree of group work, with lectures mainly in the evenings. The participants' own experience in community nutrition work was the backbone of the learning process. A manual on community nutrition work, written by Dr. Oshaug, provided the theoretical framework, and was also the paedagogical tool of the course. The manual was not yet finished, and the participants provided invaluable feedback towards making it even more useful.

After a brief introduction by a facilitator, participants worked on the subjects in groups, then presented in plenary the group's opinions, recommendations, and results, followed by a general discussion.

The groups worked on subjects such as "a community nutritionist's job analysis and description, identification of overall food and nutrition goals, and identification of food chain actors". The first week's work ended with identification of "supportive systems in nutrition work" and formulation of specific objectives for theoretical projects. During the second week, participants worked on evaluation (context, input, process and output evaluation.)

In addition, a whole day was devoted to nutrition education as a strategy in community nutrition work. There was an introduction of basic principles in marketing, by Miklos Csepregi, Vice-Director General of the Hungarian Advertising Agency. This was followed by group work and discussion in plenary.

Evening presentations included topics such as: "Trends in eating in Europe" and "Prerequisites for a nutrition policy", (Elisabet Helsing), "Nutrition policy in Norway" and "Nutrition education at a workplace in Norway" (Arne Oshaug), "Dietary guidelines for Hungarians" (Gabor Zajkas) and "Problems and possibilities in community nutrition work in Belgrade" (Ivanka Gajic). A video film on a new way of training medical students was discussed, and a Greek Comprehensive Health Intervention Programme was presented by Antonia Trichopoulou together with a video which was discussed by participants.

Participants also were in charge of several evening sessions. There was a presentation and discussion on the training of nutritionists in several countries in Europe, showing how different the training in this discipline is between countries. Special presentations were given on "Nutrition education in mass catering" (Heartbeat Wales), "Nutrition education in primary schools" (Spain) and "Nutrition tools for nurses" (Israel).

In order to encourage the feedback process, a systematic evaluation was introduced: every second day participants formulated oral opinions on the workshop by identifying three positive and three negative features. All opinions were noted and commented upon, and adjustment of the programme was made accordingly. At the end of each week the participants prepared a written evaluation. In the final evaluation it became clear that the participants thought that the course was maybe a bit long, but also giving a chance to internalize the subjects. The overall feeling about the course was that it was relevant, but that participants would have to find out in practice how to subsequently use the systematic approach in their day-to-day work.

The last day was devoted to the conclusions of the workshop, such as summing up what the systematic approach to community nutrition work consisted of, a discussion of follow-up activities in Yugoslavia 1990. Finally, participants were asked to prepare their own personal plan of action, keeping in mind the next meeting on community nutrition to be organized by WHO in Yugoslavia in 1990.