

## **Safety and Safety Promotion: Conceptual and Operational Aspects**

### **Summary**

This document presents the conceptual and operational aspects of safety and safety promotion. More specifically, it proposes a framework to favour planning and implementation of safety enhancement interventions in a community. It concerns unintentional injury, suicide, violence and crime. These problems are tackled within a prevention and health promotion perspective. It also favours a better integration of the most frequently used intervention models designed to improve the safety of the population.

This framework was developed with the contribution of a number of intervening agents (that will herewith be named "actors" in this text) and experts involved in safety enhancement activities from many parts of the world. The numerous discussions held with them lead to a number of consensus, which represent an essential part of the framework summarised below:

Safety is a fundamental human right.

Safety is a state in which hazards and conditions leading to physical, psychological or material harm are controlled in order to preserve the health and well-being of individuals and the community. It is an essential resource for everyday life that an individual and a community need in order to realise their aspirations.

There are two dimensions to safety : one is objective and assessed by behavioural and environmental objective parameters and the other is subjective and appreciated according to the feeling of safety of the population. Both dimensions can influence each other either positively or negatively. It is therefore necessary to consider these two dimensions to improve the safety of the population

Safety is a pre-requisite to the maintenance and improvement of the well-being and health of the population. It is the result of a dynamic balance that is established between the different components within a specific setting.

Attaining an optimum level of safety requires individuals, communities, governments and others to create and maintain the four following conditions : 1) a climate of social cohesion and peace as well as of equity protecting human rights and freedoms, at a family, local, national or international level ; 2) the prevention and control of injuries and others consequences or harms caused by accidents; 3) the respect of values as well as the physical, material and psychological integrity of individuals ; and 4) the provision of effective preventive, control and rehabilitation measures to ensure the presence of the three previous conditions.

Safety promotion is the process used at a local, national and international level by individuals, communities, governments and others, including enterprises and non governmental organisations, to develop and sustain safety. This process includes all efforts agreed upon to modify the environment and structures as well as the attitudes and behaviours related to safety. It is based on a multisectorial approach and includes community enabling activities.

At least two types of processes can be used to promote safety in a community : the problem-oriented process and the setting-oriented process. The two processes, though quite distinct, are both complementary and essential. The problem-oriented process is the search of specific solutions to problems considered one at a time. The setting-oriented process consists above all in the assessment of the safety problems of a specific setting in a global perspective and in the identification of an integrated set of solutions aimed at improving the safety level of the population.

The mobilisation of a community towards safety improvement requires the presence of many critical factors, the most important being the following :

- 1) the existence of an multisectorial committee responsible for safety promotion;
- 2) the implementation of a programme covering all ages, environments and situations ;
- 3) the active involvement of the local community network ;
- 4) priorities for action based on what the community feels is most important ;
- 5) the capacity to assess the importance and causes of main safety issues and problems ;
- 6) a special concern for high risk groups and environments ;
- 7) a program planned on a long term rather than a short term basis; and

8) use of a wide range of techniques to mobilise the population, its representatives and decision makers.

These eight statements provide a global and positive point of view in regards to safety and safety promotion. It is useful to better understand and integrate the efforts made in a community to improve its safety. It should also favour mobilisation of the population and multisectorial partners aiming toward common safety goals, and thus should favour the effectiveness and efficiency of interventions.

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