

Common aspects and challenges of community partnerships in health and nutrition

Overarching aim

- Reduce maternal, newborn and child mortality and morbidity.

Objectives

- Improve access to basic preventive and curative services.
- Foster direct and more frequent contact between health workers and caregivers, mothers and children.
- Encourage sustainable behaviour change.
- Support caring practices.
- Stimulate social mobilization by the community to demand better services and accountability.

Central features

- Health care and nutrition activities take place outside formal health facilities.
- Community health workers, often volunteers or part-time workers, are frequently key participants in dispensing essential services and promoting better caring practices.
- Training, support and supervision for community health workers are common features of programmes.
- There is often a central point within the geographical vicinity for the delivery of services or home visits.
- A community organization supports the programme and contributes not only administration and implementation, but often design and evaluation as well.

- Other aspects of primary health care – especially water and sanitation, and agricultural interventions – are part of the programme.

Additional features common to some, but not all, community partnerships

- Referral to facility-based care.
- Support from outreach workers.
- Integration of the programmes into the wider health sector.
- Integration into national development programmes and policies.
- Measures to strengthen the supportive environment, e.g. gender equality initiatives.

Common constraints on community partnerships

- Lack of community health workers to deliver quality services.
- Inadequate coordination of diverse participants.
- Insufficient funding for community-based activities.
- Irregular supply of drugs and commodities.
- Poor support and supervision of community health workers.
- Entrenched traditional childcare practices.
- Low economic status of women.

See References, page 107.