

**EDITORIAL**

**LIVING WITH GOALS**

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The exercise of writing goals and objectives helps to focus how the activity and vision will be achieved. Goals are specific and measurable components. Meeting them, mean that the program is successful and the vision achieved. For each goal, there is a list of objectives that must be achieved in order to reach the goal.

Millennium development goals are the most recent statement of commitment towards health and human development (1). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted by the United Nations in 2000, provide an opportunity for action in order to improve global health. They place health at a central issue of development and establish goals at a global level, linking developed and developing countries through clear, reciprocal obligations (2). International commitments at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, representatives from 189 countries, including 147 heads of state, met at the Millennium Summit in New York to adopt the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The declaration set out the principles and values that should govern international relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (2).

One of the most challenging goals is to achieve a two-thirds reduction in child mortality, requiring technical

interventions that tackle the major causes of child deaths, such as malnutrition, infections and parasitic diseases. The effectiveness of these interventions will be mediated through a network of public and private delivery systems, and will depend on adequate levels of financing. The MDGs are consequently a way of assessing and tracking progress in development on a number of critical fronts. The declaration, endorsed by 189 countries, was then translated into a roadmap, setting out goals to be reached by 2015 (2).

How flexible is the approach? Although such initiatives are seen as global priorities, many countries argue that the targets should be adapted more closely to their level of development. Other countries recognize the value of targets, but want to make them more ambitious or broaden their scope. Some countries argue that it is inappropriate in many parts of the world to concentrate on communicable diseases, given the rapid increases in the effects of non-communicable diseases, tobacco-caused illness and injuries on the health of poor populations (3). The current health-related goals, targets and indicators of the MDGs only partially reflect the rapid transition of the disease burden in developing countries.

There is an increasing call for a set of regional and global goals with timed targets for non-communicable diseases and their risk factors, neuropsychiatric disorders and injuries (3).

The Millennium Project conducts research on, and analysis of, the strategies needed to achieve the MDGs. Over a period of three years, its 10 task forces will work on the operational priorities, organizational means of implementation, and financing necessary to reach the goals (2).

Preliminary work produced by the project has been used in preparing the Human development report 2003 (3). A key role of the Millennium Project, as for the Commission on Macroeconomics and Health, will be generating a clear set of messages and making them available to a political audience. Operational support for achieving the MDGs is provided by United Nations country teams (4). The Millennium Campaign aims to raise public awareness of, and political commitment to, the MDGs in both developed and developing countries (3). The Millennium development goals represent desirable ends.

Some possible goals are:

- Assure access to and improve quality of health services.
- Improve outcomes of medical/surgical procedures.
- Reduce the behavioral risks that primary contribute to morbidity and mortality.
- Improve birth outcomes and early childhood development.
- Reduce unintended pregnancies.

- Reduce abortion.
- Promote health for all children, adolescents and their families.
- Promote and protect mental health.
- Reduce infectious diseases.
- Promote early detection and improved management of non-communicable diseases and chronic conditions.
- Reduce work related illness.
- Reduce exposure to environmental health hazards.
- Ensure an effective state and local government public health system.
- Eliminate the disparities/inequalities in health outcomes.
- Promote a violence-free society.
- Promote the well-being of the elderly.

Achieving the health millennium development goals represents some of the greatest challenges in international development.

#### REFERENCES

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