THE OTTAWA CHARTER

Some Background

It has long been recognised that socially, economically and environmentally the maintenance of health has benefits over the correction of ill-health. However, within so-called "Western" approaches to medicine, these two activities have developed somewhat independently of each other - the former into socio-environmental "Public Health" and the latter into technocratic "medicine". Crudely, public health has concentrated on the "public good" aspects of health, and "medicine" has concentrated on the "private good" aspects of health. By the mid 1970's is was becoming increasingly recognised internationally that "medicine" had began to reach the level of diminishing returns for both financial and technical reasons in technically advanced nations. Furthermore the artificial division of "public health" and "medicine" was beginning to be questioned, particularly by non-technologically advanced nations.

The UN WHO Conference on health occurred at Alma Ata in 1977. The conference declared that "health, which is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being, and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity, is a fundamental human right and that the attainment of the highest possible level of health is the most important worldwide goal whose realisation requires the action of many other social and economic sectors in addition to the health sector."

Whilst an undoubtedly laudable vision, the Declaration merely defined the system and the purpose of the system. It did not on its own assist the design of systems to promote the vision. Crucially, as with all such complex mixtures of private and public good the issue of who actually is responsible for health is not given; it depends largely upon the philosophical viewpoint of the observer. Furthermore, by broadening the (relatively recent) definition of health it expands the boundary of the health system to the very corners of human experience.

A decade later the first UN WHO conference on health promotion was given the task of developing a framework which would be applicable internationally to the promotion of health as defined at Alma Ata. In doing so it drew on :-

- the experience of public health and the role of government (in its broadest sense);
- the role of education and the development of personal skills;
- the "medical model" and the impact of appropriate services;
- psychology and sociology in terms of the need for individuals and communities to feel supported in their endeavours;
- community development in terms of the impact of energy released when individuals and communities feel that they have a degree of influence and control over their lives.

Philosophically the conference asserted that no single person or institution "owns" either the problem or the solution, rather it is own collectively. Similarly the responsibility for the problem and the solutions is shared throughout the community. It also took a behavioural systems approach - there is an interaction between the individual and the environment. The healthy behaviour of an individual is shaped by his or her environment, and whose behaviour in turn shapes an healthy environment.

The Ottawa Conference produced a framework which is useful both as a tool for analysis and as a guide to action and evaluation. Crucially in this case it helps to categorise the kinds of initiatives necessary for individual behaviour change in those areas where the gain is neither immediate not necessarily apparent.

THE FRAMEWORK

This is the framework as finalised by the WHO :-

1. Healthy Public Policy

Policy and legislation must be consistent in its promotion of health. Therefore policy makers and legislators at all levels should be aware of and accept their responsibilities towards promoting healthy behaviour. Policy making and legislative processes must identify the barriers to healthy behaviour and seek to reduce them. This requires co-ordination and joint action in the areas of legislation, fiscal measures, taxation, and organisation.

2. Supportive Environments

There is a complex interaction between an individual and their social and physical environment. These social and physical environments must support healthy behaviour and the endeavours of individuals to adopt and maintain healthy behaviours. These social and physical environments include the built environment, the work social and physical environment, the non-work social and physical environment, economic factors, the support of peers and the support of those who are not peers.

3. Community determined solutions

At the heart of this state is the process by which communities (social and physical) gain ownership and control over their collective endeavours and destinies. Community development draws on existing human and material resources in the community to enhance self-help and social support and to develop flexible systems for strengthening public participation and direction of health matters be they setting priorities, making decisions, planning strategies and delivering services.

4. Personal skills

Health is promoted by the development of appropriate skills for behaviour change and maintenance. The processes of skill development need to take into account the social and other factors which affect the development of skills and recognise that skill development occurs in a variety of different settings and institutions.

5. Appropriate Health Services

Appropriate health services are those which contribute to the pursuit of health. They include services which lie outside of those normally considered as being part of the health sector. "Appropriate" means that they respect the cultural, social, physical and economic experiences of individuals and groups of individuals. The

responsibility for appropriate health services is shared between all those providing a service which can affect a person or a community's health.

IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK

There two interesting things about the framework :-

1.   Once the overall goal is set, then the co-ordination required to implement the framework is minimal. Once an organisation has bought into the overall goal and the framework, it is up to them what their particular contribution is and how they do it. It doesn't really matter that all organisations might do things differently, or that they do only one bit of it as long as they stick to the framework an overall pattern will emerge.

2.   It applies to whatever level of system you use it at. For instance, you can see things at a national level (eg policy = legislation); or a regional level. You can see things at an individual organisational level (eg an individual workplace will have policies and rules, it has a culture, it has particular services that it provides etc)

THE CHARTER AS A GENERIC FRAMEWORK

The Ottawa Charter has been a touchstone of health promotion in New Zealand. The Ministry of Health and many health authorities adopted it as a modus operandi for health promotion. It has provided a powerful tool for identifying the structural and process barriers to health promotion. Some organisations (eg the NZ AIDS Foundation) plan their activities and priorities around the framework of the Charter - it makes it possible to organise resources in a complex system and a basis on which to evaluate its own action and the action of others.

Although the framework has been developed in relation to health promotion, its empirical and systems base combined with the very broad definitions of health suggest that it can be applied to other areas of social change, particularly those such as resource conservation, environmental sustainability and energy conservation where areas where the individual gain is neither immediate not necessarily apparent.

Here are two examples I've used over the years. One was to help assess and redesign a program to promote women's involvement in the Australian dairy industry. The other was to explore ways of promoting energy efficiency in New Zealand :-

EXAMPLE ONE
THE WOMEN IN DAIRYING FRAMEWORK TO PROMOTE THE GREATER CONTRIBUTION AND IMPACT OF WOMEN IN THE DAIRYING INDUSTRY

1.   Personal skills

Greater contribution of women is promoted by the development of appropriate skills for greater impact and contribution. The processes of skill development need to take into account the social and other factors which affect the development of skills and recognise that skill development occurs in a variety of different settings and institutions.

2.   Appropriate dairying and other related services

Appropriate services are those which contribute to the pursuit of greater impact of women. They include services which lie outside of those normally considered as being part of the dairying sector. "Appropriate" means that they respect the cultural, social, physical and economic experiences of individuals and groups of individuals. The responsibility for appropriate services is shared between all those providing these services.

3.   Public policy that promotes greater impact of women

Policy and legislation must be consistent in its promotion of greater women's contribution and impact on the industry. Therefore policy makers and legislators at all levels should be aware of and accept their responsibilities towards promoting this involvement. Policy making and legislative processes must identify the barriers to women's contributions to the dairying industry and seek to reduce them. This requires co-ordination and joint action in the areas of legislation, fiscal measures, taxation, and organisation.

4.   Community determined solutions

At the heart of this is the process by which communities (social and physical) gain ownership and control over their collective endeavours and destinies. Community development draws on existing human and material resources in the community to enhance self-help and social support and to develop flexible systems for strengthening public participation and direction of increased impact of women be they setting priorities, making decisions, planning strategies and delivering services.

5.   Supportive Environments

There is a complex interaction between an individual and their social and physical environment. These social and physical environments must support greater impact of women and the endeavours of individuals to adopt and maintain that impact. These social and physical environments include the built environment, the work social and physical environment, the non-work social and physical environment, economic factors, the support of peers and the support of those who are not peers.

EXAMPLE TWO
PROMOTING ENERGY EFFICIENCY
(written originally by James Baines of Taylor Baines Associates;
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Building public policy

Promoting sustainable energy development goes beyond energy supply, distribution and marketing. It puts sustainable energy use on the agenda of policy makers in all sectors and at all levels, directing them to be aware of the sustainability implications of their decisions and to accept their responsibilities for energy use.

The promotion of sustainable energy policy combines diverse but complementary approaches including legislation, organisational change, taxation and fiscal measures. It is coordinated action that leads to sustainable energy supplies, secure access, increasingly energy efficient use, viable energy sector enterprises, managed environmental impacts and resource conflicts.

Promoting sustainable energy development requires identification of barriers to adoption of sustainable energy policies in non-energy sectors and ways of removing them. The aim must be to make the sustainable choice the easier choice for policy makers as well.

Creating supportive environments

Our societies are complex and inter-related. Energy use cannot be separated from other goals. The inextricable links between people and their environment constitute the basis for a socio-ecological approach to energy development (i.e. a blend of societal demands/choices and ecological opportunities/constraints).

Individual actions will be influenced by (i) their immediate social, financial and environmental circumstances, and (ii) by the absence or existence of a community-based ethic that supports steady improvement in the physical and financial efficiency of energy use, restraint on the environmental and health impacts of energy use, and security of access to essential energy supplies for all.

Strategies for the supply of energy services should minimise the risks of supply interruptions; indeed they should actively seek to promote a level of supply that is indefinitely secure to all consumers while not jeopardising other societal objectives related to environmental protection and human safety.

Changing patterns of energy demand can have significant impacts on energy resource availability and its capacity to support future use. Systematic assessment of all resource options, of energy use behaviours, of technological developments and priority areas for efficiency improvements and load management changes is essential. This must be followed by action to ensure positive benefit both in terms of security of supply and for environmental protection.

The aim must be to make the sustainable choice the easier choice for energy users as well.

Reorienting energy and related services

The responsibility for promoting energy efficiency is shared among individuals, community groups, energy professionals and energy service institutions,

professionals and institutions in other sectors (particularly sectors that have substantial fuel or electricity consumption or provide services that are key factors in energy consumption) and government. They must all work together towards an energy use regime which contributes to a vital economy and a healthy environment.

The role of the energy sector must move increasingly towards promotion of total energy services, beyond its traditional responsibility for providing supplies of energy through large-scale centralised technologies. Energy services need to embrace an expanded mandate that is sensitive to a broader definition of energy service and to alternative modes of providing such services. This mandate should support the needs of individuals, communities and commercial enterprises for more diversified and sustainable access to energy, and open channels between the energy sector and broader social, political, economic and environmental components.

Reorienting energy services also requires stronger attention to energy research as well as changes in professional education and training. This must lead to a change of attitude and organisation of energy services which re-focuses on ecological, commercial and social needs and looks beyond narrow engineering fixes to supply-side constraints.

Developing Personal Skills

Promoting sustainable energy use must involve support for personal and institutional development amongst all energy users through providing information, education and enhancing life skills. By doing so, it increases the options available for people to exercise more control over their own energy use activities and make choices conducive to sustainable energy use.

Enabling people to learn through life, to prepare themselves for all of its stages and to cope with the risks and uncertainties involved in using energy is essential. Energy users have to learn how to manage simultaneously for lifestyle, business and energy objective. This has to be facilitated in school, home, work and community settings. Action is required through educational, professional, commercial and voluntary agencies, and within the institutions that have responsibilities for energy planning and management.

Promoting community involvement and control

Promoting sustainable energy use works through concrete and effective community action in setting priorities, making decisions, planning strategies and implementing them to achieve more sustainable energy use.

At the heart of this is the empowerment of communities (defined in physical, social and interest terms), with the *appropriate* ownership and control of their own endeavours and destinies. Empowerment is the process by which knowledge, resources experiences are validated and shared. Community development draws on existing human and material resources in the community to enhance individual and collective ownership and control and to develop flexible approaches to strong and meaningful participation.

This requires full and continuous access to information, learning opportunities related to sustainable energy use options and practices, and appropriate and adequate resources to do so.