

COMMUNITY HEALTH

The term '**Community Health**' refers to the organization of an array and range of promotive, preventive and curative health services required at individual and community levels for the people living in a community.

It also refers to preventive services, mainly outside the hospital, involving the surveillance of special groups of the people, such as preschool and school children, women and the elderly, by means of routine clinical assessment, and screening tests.

Routine preventive measures, such as immunization, family planning and dietary advice, are offered in special clinics staffed by community nurses, clinical medical officers and senior clinical medical officers, and public health nutritionist, and sometimes community paediatricians are the basic roles of community health.

The term 'community health' has been replaced in some countries by the terms 'public health', 'preventive medicine' and 'social medicine'.

EURO symposium (1966) defined community health which includes 'all the personal health and environmental services in any public or private one'.

The community health reflects the dimensions of health, vital statistics (maternal morbidity, maternal mortality, child mortality, death rate etc.) health and sanitation, hygiene condition, life style, public health child health services, water supplies, vaccination, child rearing etc. Community health also reflects the standard of health service and potency of the administration in allocating the resource, and proper work force in health services.

Thus, it may be said that community health means the service given to the people for their promotion of health and prevention, and curation of health problems in a community.

Factors affecting community health

Community health is an important aspect of better health and Nutritional status. The factors influencing the community health include :

Topographical and physical conditions : The geographical location and physical conditions like natural resources, type of land, temperature, humidity, rain fall, roads, mode of transport etc. may affect the health of community people. For example; in kolkata, air pollution with lead particles may affect respiratory health.

Agricultural procedures : The agricultural facilities like types and quantity of agricultural production, availability and utilization of land for agricultural procedures, post-harvest technologies all may influence community health.

Demographical profile : The population characteristics like size, composition and distribution of community people, family size, and type of family have effects on community health.

Cultural belief and attitude : Belief towards disease, its cure, prevention, maternal and child health and child rearing, and family welfare practices have important roles in affecting community health.

Socio economic status : Socio economic conditions like total family income, per capita income, availability of land for cultivation owning of house, economic inflation, women literacy rate particularly have influencing impact on community health.

Health status : Health profile plays significant role in community health. The morbidity and mortality rates with age and cause, distribution, seasonal variation, and geographical variation can affect community health.

Available health facilities : The availability and accessibility of health facilities such as hospital health centres, maternal and child health (MCH) centres, dispensaries, private, and voluntary agencies all may influence community health.

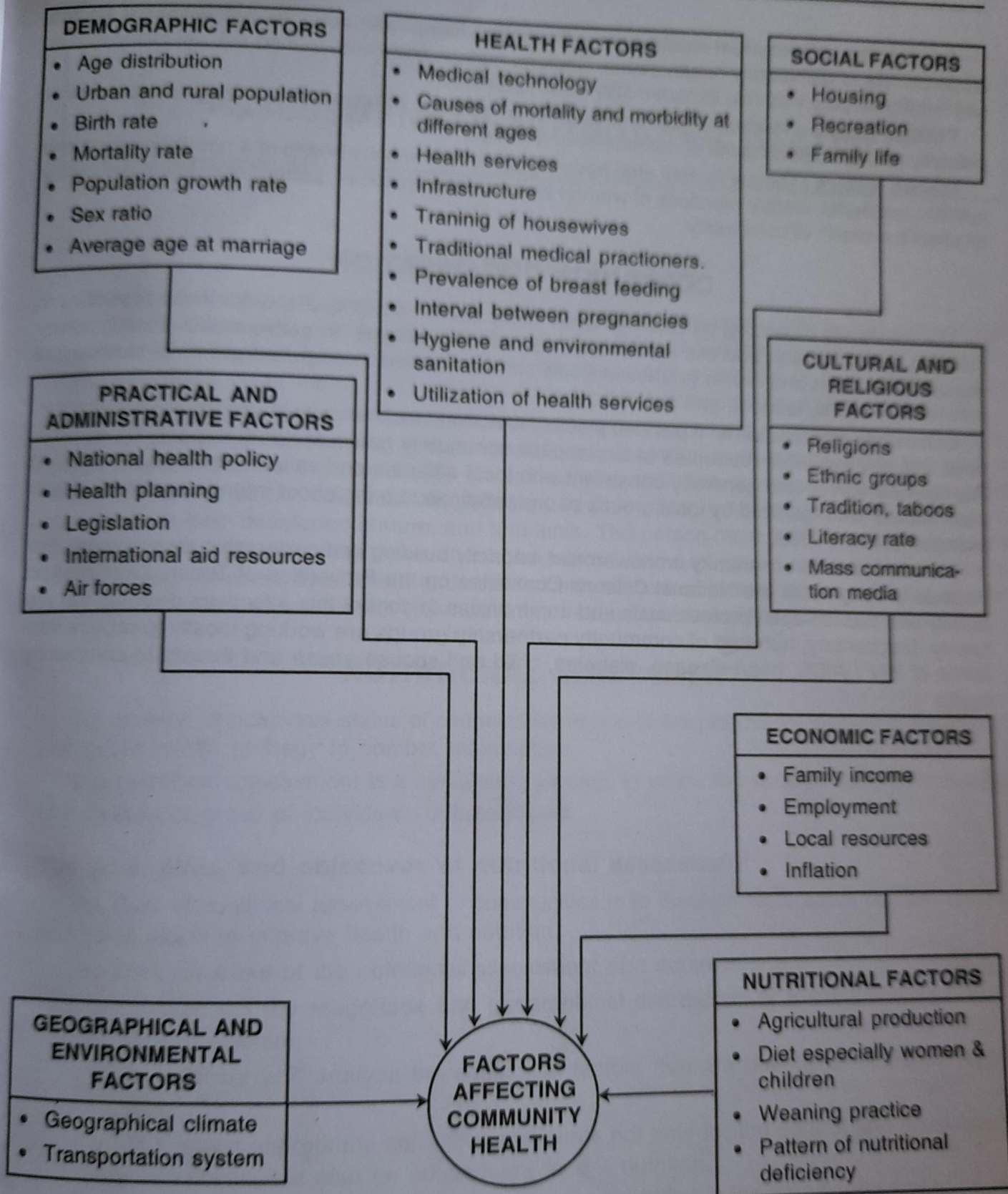


Fig. 1 : Factors affecting community health.

Availability of technical manpower : Technical manpower services are essential for the enhancement of community health status. Doctors, nurses, midwives, trained dai, voluntary worker and nutritionist play vital role in community health promotion.

Political factors : Political instability change in government policies, strike, change in government authority also can affect health of community of a Nation.

Dietary factors : Dietary factors also have impact on community health of a population food and nutrition insecurity, dietary practices of women and weaning practices, pattern of nutrition deficiency all affect the health of community.

COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

The community organizing process has been widely used in developed and developing countries to assist to recognize and address local health and social problems. In public health service, many disease prevention and health promotion goals can be realized through the active involvement of community citizens, leaders, and organizations.

Community organization is "a planned process to activate a community to use its own social structures and any available resources to accomplish community goals decided primarily by community representatives and generally consistent with local attitudes and values. Strategically planned interventions are organized by local groups or organizations to bring about intended social or health changes" (Bracht, 1999)

It is referred to as community empowerment, capacity building and partnership development. For instance in early 1900, the National Citizens Committee on the Prevention of Tuberculosis worked closely with public health professionals and communities to control this infectious disease. On the twenty-first century, hundred of community partnership groups are working locally to reduce incidence of HIV / AIDS, heart disease, diabetes, child and spouse abuse and threats to community health.