

# Chapter One

## INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY NUTRITION

### COMMUNITY

The term community may be defined in narrower sense as a group or collection of groups that inhabit in a limited geographical area and whose members live together in such a way that they share the basic conditions of a common life.

Therefore, community is an area marked by sentiments of common living. The two basic elements of a community are 'a geographical area', and sentiment of unity *i.e.* 'we feeling'.

#### Characteristics of community

Community refers to "a group of individuals and families living in a defined geographic area, usually comprising a village or town or a city". The basic characteristics of a community include :

**A group of people :** There is no existence of any community without people whose interests are based on mutual dependence and co-operation. During their interaction they come together to act so as to satisfy their needs in their chief concerns of life.

**Specific geographical area :** The community people inhabited in a specific geographical area *i.e.*, a village, a town, a city, a neighbourhood or a district in a state. Similarly, in broader sense, it may be a group of people in a province, a state, a nation or the world.

With the advancement in technologies, the transport, and communication facilities, the barriers between communities become less, so division of communities may create a problem.

**The relation of community to locality :** The community possesses a distinctive territorial characteristic. It implies a common soil, as well as, shared way of life. In a community, the people have a sense of 'we feeling' or 'community feeling' or 'community consciousness' and a strong feelings of 'belongingness' to that particular area.

**Common social values, norms and other aspects of culture :** Each community has a common set of social values which form a hierarchy of organizations in a community. They may vary from one society to another in culture. For instance ownership of farm land, type of residences, religion, cash in bank, financial investment, education and position in government service, all may influence the organizational hierarchy of a community.

**Common set of organization and institution :** A community is a self-contained group exhibiting a considerable sense of self-sufficiency. People in a community come together to meet their chief needs through a common set of institution and organization. Thus a variety of service agencies viz. school, dispensaries, medical and other institutions serve for the community people. The "Community feeling" is largely influenced by facilities available and thus affect contact and inter-relation or interaction with different community people. These agencies, institution, and organization are looked upon as belonging to community and help to maintain inter-personal relationship.

**Some common interests :** While individual interest of the members of a community may differ, there may always be some common interests that unite the community people and develop a sense of belongings. A community is characterized by sharing several common interests, working together to fulfill these interests and satisfy basic needs.

Therefore, community refers to a group of mutually dependent people living in a more or less compact, continuous geographical area, having a sense of belonging and sharing common values, norms, and some common interests and acting unitedly in an organized manner to satisfy their chief needs through a common set of institution and organization.

### Types of communities

Communities can be classified in various ways :

1. On the basis of governance : e.g., Nation, State, District
2. On the basis of locality : e.g., Rural community or Urban community
3. On the basis of profession : e.g., Doctor community, Engineer community, Teacher community, etc.
4. On the basis of family income : e.g., Low income group, middle income group and high income group.
5. On the basis of ethnicity : e.g., Negroes, Caucasians
6. On the basis of food habits : e.g., Vegetarian, Non-vegetarians, Vegan, Xenomacrobiotics etc.
7. On the basis of religion : e.g., Hindu community, Christian community, Sikh, Buddhist, Muslim or Jewish community etc.
8. On the basis of age group : e.g., preschoolers, schoolers, adolescent peer groups, aged community, adult community.

### Characteristics of rural and urban communities

**Rural or village community :** Rural or village community is the settlement of families in a natural surrounding. Life in a village is close to nature and the main occupation is farming. The total number of people in a village is enough for them to know each other. They have a common culture, belief, tradition and habits which guide their conduct and unite them. The people of village are interdependent. They may be farmers, carpenters, fish catchers, potters or basket makers etc. The most village occupations are connected with the product of land and farm.

The characteristics of a typical Indian village include :

- Isolation and self sufficiency
- Peace and simplicity
- Conservatism
- Poverty and illiteracy
- Semi-autonomy

**Urban community :** The people in an urban community are connected to profession related to industrial manufacture, trade, transport of goods, and materials as they move and migrate to cities. Scarcity of job, lack of planning, and insufficient land form slum area. In urban social life, relation assessment in towns, and cities are different from village. Family life is more or less disrupted. The main characteristics of a city community are :

- Namelessness
- Homelessness
- Class extreme
- Social heterogeneity
- Social distance
- Energy and speed

## THE FAMILY

The family is by far the most important primary group or basic unit found in every societies. MacIver and Page (1964) defined "family is a group defined by a sex relationship sufficiently precise, and enduring to provide for the procreation, and upbringing of children." In wider sense, the family can be defined after **Burges and Locke**, as a group of persons "united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption, constituting a single household, interacting, and communicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, of son and daughter, mother and father, brother and sister; creating and maintaining a common culture."

### Common characteristics of family

The family has certain common or general characteristics everywhere in human society, of which most important ones include :

1. A mating relationship.
2. A form of marriage or other institutional arrangement in accordance with which the mating relation is established and maintained.
3. A system of nomenclature, involving also a mode of reckoning descent.
4. Some economic provision shared by the members of the group (family) but having a special reference to the economic needs associated with child bearing and child rearing.
5. A common habitation, a home or household, which however, may not be exclusive to the family group.

### Distinctive features of the family organization

Of all the organizations, large or small, which society unfolds, none transcends the family in the intensity of its sociological significance. It influences the whole life of society in innumerable ways, and its changes, reverberate through the whole social structure. The family has some distinctive features which makes it a unique social organization.

**Universality** : It is the most nearly universal of all social forms. It is found in all societies, at all stages of social development, and exists for below the human level, among a myriad species of animal. Almost every human being is or has been a member of some family.

**Emotional basis** : It is based on a complex of most profound impulses of our organic nature, those of mating, procreation, maternal devotion, and parental care. These are fortified with blends of love, pride, affection, jealousy of personal economic security, and possession.

**Formative influence** : It is the earliest social environment of all the higher forms of life, including human and the profoundest formative influence in the awakening lives.

**Limited size** : The size of family is within a limit. It is necessary for a family to be in limited size with its own identity.

**Nuclear position in the social structure** : Family is the nucleus of other social organizations. Frequently in the simpler societies as well as in the more advanced types of patriarchal society, the whole social structure is built of family units.

**Responsibilities of the members** : Family makes more continuous and greater demand on its member than any other organization. It is the responsibility of each family members to form and maintain the family organization.

**Social regulation** : Family is peculiarly guarded both by social taboos and by legal regulation for the regulation of social structure and discipline.

**Family's permanent and temporary nature** : While the institution of the family is so permanent and universal, the family as an association is the most temporary and the most transitional of all important organizations in the society.

## Types of families

Though family is a universal or forms vary from one society to another, even from one class to another within the same society, family can be classified in various ways :

1. **On the basis of size or composition : The nuclear family**, consists of two adults living together in a household with their own or adopted children. This is also known as **two-generation family**. This is the predominant form in the modern industrialized societies.

**The extended or joint family**, consists of several nuclear families joined by kinship relations. It is a group of 3 or more generations living together in the same house, street or locality. This type of family is found in Traditional Indian families.

2. **On the basis of blood relationship : The consanguine family**, comprises a "nucleus of blood relatives surrounded by a fringe of wives" and others who are incidental to the maintenance of the family unit. Example : Nayer family.

**The conjugal family** : It is a nucleus of husband, the wife, and their offsprings who are surrounded by a "fringe of relatives", only incidental to the functioning of the family as a unit. Example : The conjugal family is found in modern society.

3. **On the basis of experience of each individual family : The family of orientation**, is family into which one person is born

**The family of procreation**; is the family into which an individual enters as an adult, and within which a new generation of children is brought up e.g., the life of an woman after marriage and child birth.

4. **On the basis of residence : Patrilocal or virilocal family**, here the bride and groom live with the parents of the groom, Example : Indian families.

**An matrilocal or uxorilocal family**, this pattern is the one where the couples goes to live with the bride's parents. The type of family is found among Hope, a Southwest pueble people.

**Neolocal family**, here the newly and couples generally set up their own household independent of their parents or of their relatives. e.g., Western families.

**Avuncu-local family**, here the couple goes to live in maternal uncles house.

5. **On the basis of descent : Patrilineal family**, under this system people trace descent and transmit property through the male side of the family, from father to son, e.g., Indian family.

**Matrilineal family**, under this system the descent and inheritance pass down through the maternal side of the family. e.g., khashis and Garos in India, Veddads in Ceylen, the North American red Indians, and some families of Malabar.

6. **On the basis of authority : Patriarchal family**, here the father, husband or eldest male is the chief authority and decision maker. This type of family found in Indian Joint families, feudal societies of West and well to do families of Chiana.

**Matriarchal family**, here the power or authority is vested in the senior most woman. Example : some families in rural Japan.

**Symmetrical or egalitarian family**, Here the power and authority are shared by both husband and wife equally. Example : families of modern USA or UK.

7. **On the basis of in-group and out-group affiliation : Endogamous family**, when people must have to marry within the larger group to which they belong (e.g., class, caste, race, ethnic group, or religion). e.g. traditional Indian families.

**Exogamous family**, where people must marry out of a group. their kin groups.

## 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.

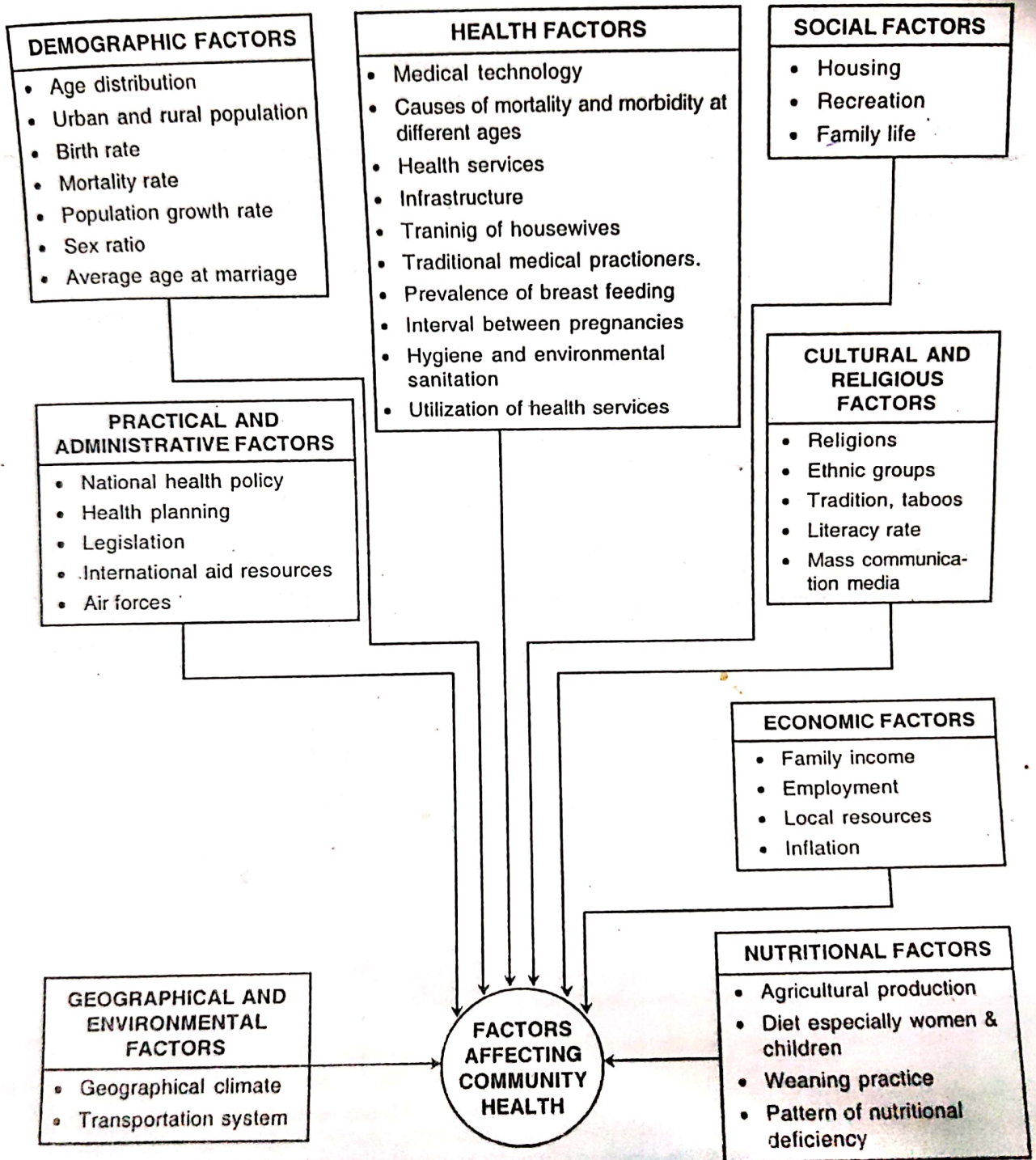


Fig. 1 : Factors affecting community health.

**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.