

**WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION**

**Regional Office
for the Eastern Mediterranean**



**ORGANISATION MONDIALE
DE LA SANTÉ**

**ADDRESS BY DR A. H. TABA
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at the

**OPENING SESSION OF THE
UNESCO/WHO INTERREGIONAL CONSULTATION ON TRAINING IN
COMMUNICATION/EDUCATION IN SUPPORT OF FAMILY
HEALTH/PLANNING PROGRAMMES**

ALEXANDRIA, 24 - 28 November 1975

Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all on behalf of the World Health Organization to this Regional Office and to this meeting of Inter-Regional Consultation on Training in Communication and Education in Support of Family Health Programmes, jointly sponsored by WHO and UNESCO. It is my further privilege and pleasure to especially welcome His Excellency Dr Fouad Mohyeddin, the Minister of Public Health of the Arab Republic of Egypt, who, by accepting our invitation and finding time from his many official commitments has honoured us by his presence and thus strengthened our belief in the importance of this consultation.

I am also very happy to note the close collaboration between UNESCO and WHO which, among other joint activities, has culminated in this Consultation, and to see that so many eminent specialists from both the fields of public health and communication sciences are participating.

The World Health Organization has an abiding interest and commitment in the people's health, in its physical, mental and social aspects and for its protection and promotion. Human reproduction and family planning are seen to be closely related to people's health, and in this respect the resolutions adopted by the World Health Assemblies since 1965, have given the Organization a broad mandate to work in the health related areas.

The objectives of this Consultation are to identify priority needs for education, communication and information with respect to family health training programmes in the participating countries; and to consider specific ways and means for making more effective use of existing education and communication resources and facilities in order to make general recommendations for the future development of these activities in the participating Regions.

We must have a positive approach to the various aspects of the so-called population problem, viewing it in the context of the quality of life of communities, families and individuals, remembering that an essential ingredient of the desirable quality of life is "health", among other important ingredients such as social, economic and political well-being. Therefore, families and individuals have to be informed and enlightened in the context and relevance of existing conditions and their own genuine interests, so that they can decide voluntarily and responsibly about their own family size and spacing of childbirths. In this regard there should neither be coercion nor abandonment and neglect.

The negative philosophy that "ignorance is bliss" might have been an easy escapist's route in the past, but the increasing pressures of modern life in relation to one's own needs and those of others and the growing limitations of the environment as a whole, demand urgent attention for foresight and timely actions. Although untold millions are still enmeshed in the deceptive and murky labyrinths of various negative philosophies and will probably continue to be so handicapped, it behoves the enlightened and elite segments of all communities to help inform candidly yet gently the less privileged people around them about some important issues that confront humanity as a whole, in the modern and future world. One such important issue appears to be population, family health and quality of life. This approach of sharing information would by no means be charity towards any, but in the best interest of all concerned.

I would like to take this opportunity of recalling what I had said a few years back when I had welcomed the participants of the Group Meeting on Health Education convened here in April 1967. I had stated:

"It is quite evident that the more countries develop, the more need arises for public participation, awareness, cooperation and leadership. Obviously basic health services could not be called basic unless health education is an integral part of it. How can health services be accomplished unless the essential element - that is the people, their habits, their beliefs, their culture - are being taken into close consideration?...."

From the broader health needs point of view and in the context of the subject of this meeting, I would like to reiterate and emphasize the importance of close contact with people.

I would like to thank very much UNESCO, WHO's partner in this meeting for their close collaboration and for agreeing to hold this meeting in Alexandria.

I have observed from the agenda and programme of the meeting that you, the participants, have interesting and stimulating presentation and discussions ahead of you. On behalf of WHO, I wish you fruitful deliberations, a successful meeting and a very pleasant stay in Alexandria.