

Healthy villages programme (special presentation)

Agenda item 11, Document EM/RC45/8

The item was presented by H.E. Dr Mohammed Eyad Chatty, Minister of Health, Syrian Arab Republic, who summarized the achievements made in the country within the framework of the self-reliance strategy. These achievements were in preventive medicine, curative medicine and emergency medicine, in addition to training and the pharmaceutical industry. They had led to increases in immunization coverage, decreases in maternal and child mortality and an increase in the number of baby-friendly hospitals in the country.

The aims of the healthy villages programme were to accelerate the attainment of health for all by the year 2000 and beyond, to strengthen local primary health care facilities, achieve comprehensive social development, based on citizen partnership and intersectoral collaboration. Among the components of the healthy villages programme were activities relating to the following areas: basic development needs, self-care, village information centres, baby-friendly hospitals, women's development, environmental promotion and safe motherhood. The programme has been implemented in the village of Akra in the governorate of Dar'a.

A representative of a district in Jaba village in Quneitra governorate, Syrian Arab Republic, pointed out that the healthy villages programme played an essential role in responding to the basic requirements of development. She mentioned the duties assigned to district representatives and the different courses they had for training them in conducting health, social and economic surveys; home economics; development of skills; and the use of computers. She said that all the women in her village had been trained in self-care, received vocational training, given basic education and provided with health education.

A young Syrian villager described the environmentally, socially and culturally positive results of implementing the healthy village programme in his village. He described the important positive role played by the community school in his village, making students aware of the importance of preserving our planet and of turning arid pieces of land into green areas, training students in different skills, including dealing with beehives, and raising their awareness of the dangers of smoking, which was not only a health problem but also a social and economic one.

Dr Mohsen Kanaa, the Executive Director of the Healthy Village Programme, Syrian Ministry of Health, presented some technical issues regarding the programme: criteria for selecting healthy villages; management of the programme; and the stages of implementing the programme in the Syrian Arab Republic. He dealt also with the positive results of implementing the programme, including the increase of health units in those villages.

The Chairman of the meeting expressed his appreciation for the presentation, hoping that the Syrian experience would be replicated in all villages in all countries of the Region.