

Congregation-based Health Care. Making community-based health and development a reality, Christian Medical Association of India/Presbyterian Church (USA), New Delhi n.d., 5. 95-98.

Acknowledgements

This book came out of an intense week of sharing in a workshop entitled "Congregations in Health: Making community-based health and development a reality" held at New Delhi, India in November 12-17, 2000, jointly organised by the Christian Medical Association of India and the Presbyterian Church, USA.

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And a very special thank you to the many of you who labour in health work around the world, for your commitment to strengthen the capacity of the Body of Christ to bring healing ministries to our communities. Without you this book could not have taken place.

Presbyterian Church, USA

Christian Medical Association of India |

Summary

This resource book is rich in concepts and its applications. It covers a broad range of issues relevant to congregations working in health care.

- a) helping churches understand their role and the need to be involved with communities (chapter 1)
- b) looking at involvement in areas of social justice and equity when they impact on health (chapter 2)
- c) addressing vision, relationships, program selection and finance, to ensure sustainability (chapter 3)
- d) spiritual preparedness for the work planned, and continual strengthening as an essential component of the work (chapter 4)
- e) The material presented in this resource book represents an international collection, a cross-cultural interpretation of problem situations, and a rich variety of solutions. It can be used as an analytical tool, as a road map, or just as a means to stimulate ideas for action. |

The experiences suggest that congregations workin in health care must focus attention

to three equally important areas (fig. 1):

- the community,
- the interface between the congregation and the community, and
- the congregation itself.

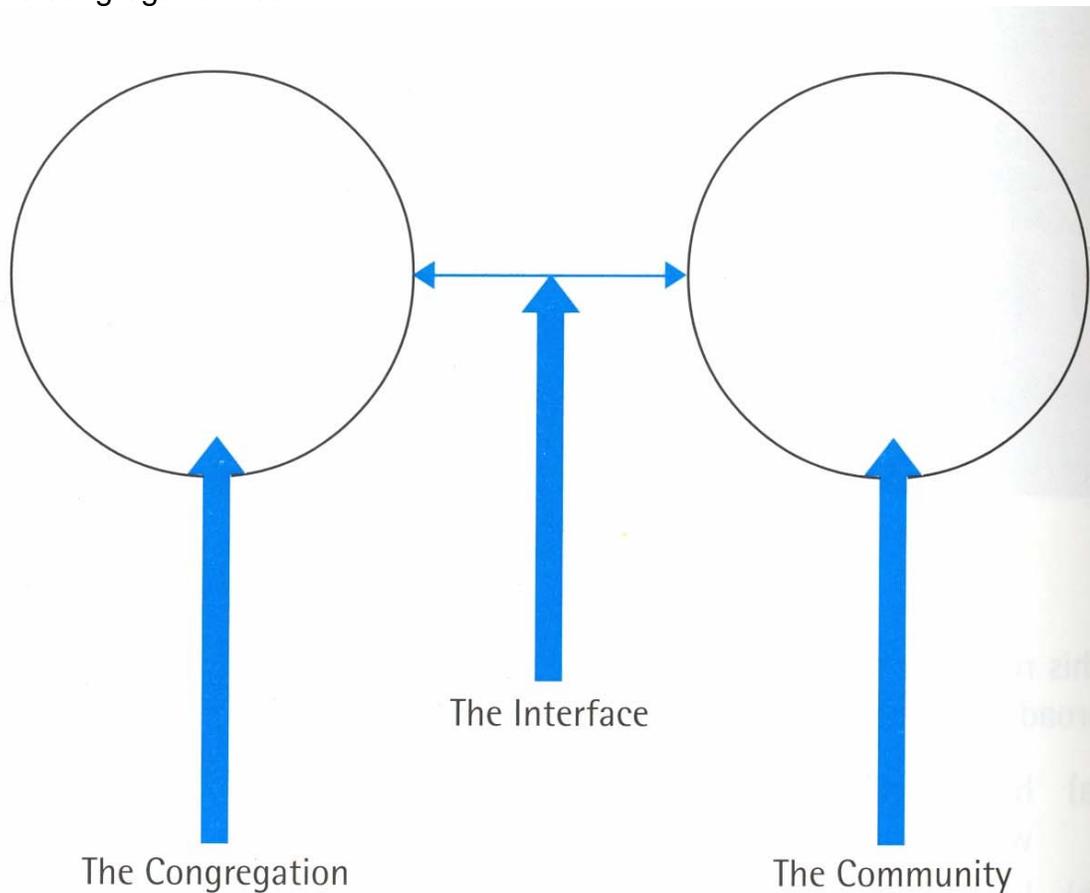


Fig. 1 : The three areas of involvement in congregation-based health activities.

Focus on the community

The community is the object of the health activity. Most of the attention in congregation-based health activities is on the benefit that the community can receive. This focus must be maintained if the community is to benefit.

Focus on the interface

The “interface” refers to the interaction between the congregation and the community. There is always a relationship interface between the community and the group working with it, the service provider. | When congregations are involved, they often serve as facilitators, helping communities help themselves, and access services provided by others. Whether as a service provider or as a service facilitator, the nature of the congregation enriches the interface, providing the opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ, to care for the whole person and to be concerned for the whole community.

Unless this focus is understood, appreciated and strengthened, its effectiveness will be diminished.

Focus on the congregation

Running through the stories is a common thread of involvement with communities, resulting in transformations in the congregations too. It is important that such transformations occur. Congregation members then take up other activities, and initiate activities in other congregations that they may move to or interact with. It also influences youth in the congregation. This multiplies the impact on the community.

Thus, the broader the focus of the involvement, the greater the impact on the community (fig 2).

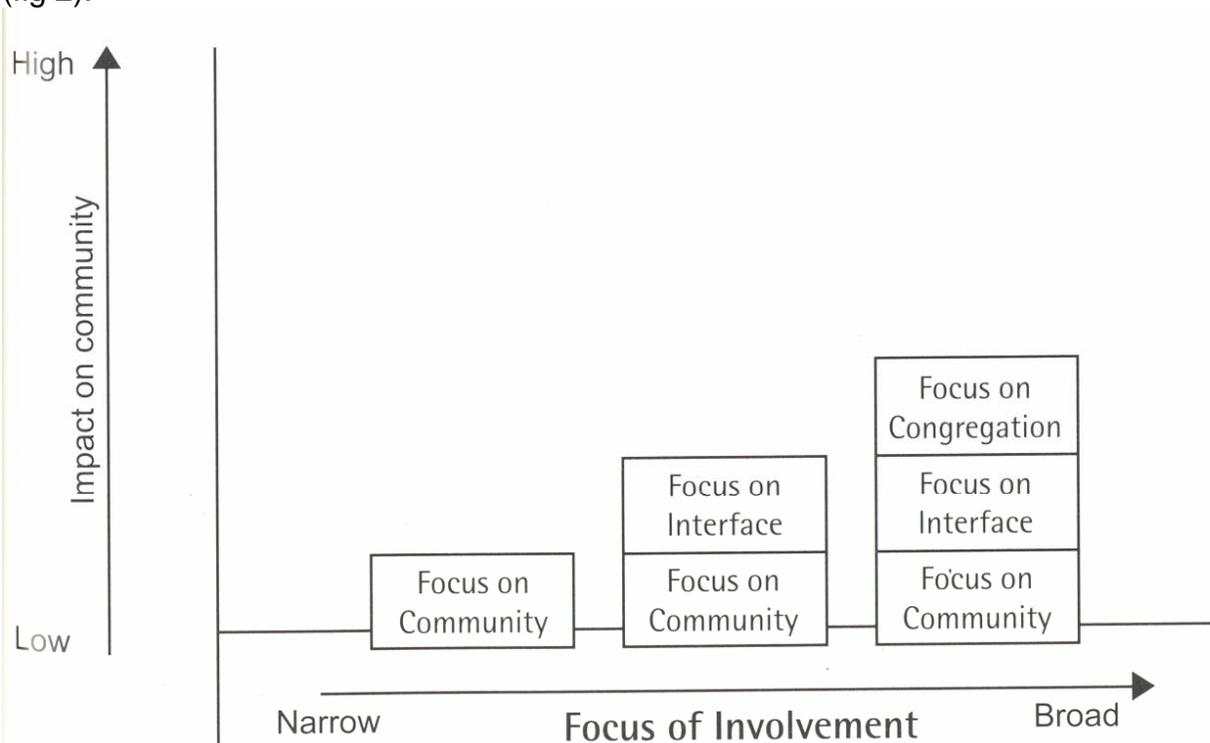


Fig. 2 : As breadth of involvement increases, so does the impact on the community

A call for Action

Disadvantaged groups exist in every part of the world. The need is vast, and professional organisations cannot meet the need adequately; they lack the manpower, the finances and often the skills to address the need in the most appropriate manner.

Congregation-based health activities offer an exciting alternative approach to working with communities. This approach incorporates the ability to reach many disadvantaged groups, the challenge of bringing God's Word to them, and the opportunity to also

transform congregations. By doing this, it also stimulates individual members to get increasingly involved in working with other disadvantaged groups, thus having a multiplier effect.

For all these reasons, congregation-based health activities must increase. Not only is it important, but it is also eminently doable, workable.

But this can happen only if you, the reader, take an active part in spreading the message contained in this book. Every change requires a champion. This resource book provides you the opportunity to be that champion for your congregation.

Some of the ways you can help are:

- 1) Get your church pastor and other interested persons to read this book.
- 2) Discuss the concept and its applications at a church retreat (family, men's, women's, youth).
- 3) Encourage your congregation to take up an activity.
- 4) Write to us with examples of active congregation-based health activities.
- 5) If you are interested or are already involved in this area, do write and let us know. We can work together on this.