

PART FOUR

ACTIVITIES WITH MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

Most trainers of health workers agree that activities with mothers and children are the most important part of health work in a community. This is because . . .

- Women and children make up more than half the people (up to 75%).
- The health needs of mothers and children are especially great.
- Mothers and older children are the main providers of care for babies and younger children, whose needs are greatest of all.



Part Four of this book has three chapters:

In **Chapter 22**, we consider activities that help safeguard the health of pregnant women, mothers, and small children. We discuss the role of health workers in coordinating prenatal and 'under-fives' programs. But we also stress the importance of having local mothers and midwives take leadership in running these activities. Baby weighing is discussed. We explore creative teaching aids that help mothers understand Road to Health charts. Finally, we look at women's special strengths.

In **Chapter 23**, we examine family planning. We include this as a separate chapter, not because we feel birth control should be separated from the rest of mother and child health care. Rather, we do this because of the confusing politics and abuses connected with family planning. Too often, in the many arguments concerning birth control, the interests of the poor are forgotten. In this chapter, we discuss the conflicts of interest that often exist, and consider ways in which health workers can help people plan their families on their own terms.

Chapter 24 is about "Children as Health Workers." The material in this chapter is based on the CHILD-to-child Program. Many of the original CHILD-to-child activities were field tested by health workers and school teachers in Ajoia, Mexico. They include simple teaching aids and exciting approaches that help children discover things for themselves. The program attempts to bring schooling closer to children's lives and needs, and to place the focus of education on helping one another. The health worker can play an important role in this process.

THE ROLE OF FATHERS IN CHILD CARE

Traditionally, in most areas, it is the mother who takes the main responsibility for small children. But fathers are also responsible—or should be. In some societies, fathers share part of the child care or even take the children to the under-fives clinic. Although in this part of the book we mainly refer to mothers, the participation of fathers in child care should be encouraged.

Since mothers are the ones who generally take the children to 'under-fives' activities, it may be a good idea to arrange special sessions for fathers, or for fathers and mothers together. That way, the fathers will be more supportive of new ideas about child care and nutrition that mothers learn in the under-fives program.



Not only mothers and fathers, but also older brothers and sisters have a very important role in the care of small children. This is the subject of Chapter 24.