

# Background Paper developed by the Secretariat of Indian Academy of Public Health.

**Existing Definition of public Health by Winslow:** The term was first used during the Great Sanitary awakening in 1887 when medicine was dominated by the path breaking discoveries in Bacteriology and was one of the key factors affecting public health along with the emerging concept of “Socialized Medicine” & Social Medicine in Europe. The first definition of Public Health was coined by C.E.A. Winslow which states “Public Health is the science and the art of (1) preventing disease. (2) Prolonging life and organized community efforts for (a) the sanitation of the environment (b) the control of communicable infections, (c) the education of individuals in personal hygiene (d) organization of medical and nursing services for early diagnosis and preventive treatment of disease and (e) the development of social machinery to ensure everyone a standard of living adequate for the maintenance of health, so organizing these benefits as to enable every citizen to realize his birth right of health and longevity”

**A critical analysis of the Winslow’s Definition:** .The above definition has three sections in its opening part “Public Health is the science and the art of (1) preventing disease. (2) Prolonging life” it describes the discipline as a combination of science and arts (i.e. knowledge & skills) for two very specific domains known i.e. preventing disease and prolonging life. The second section depicts the specific interventions and the process/ strategy to implement the same. The specific interventions are “(a) the sanitation of the environment (b) the control of communicable infections, (c) the education of individuals in personal hygiene (d) organization of medical and nursing services for early diagnosis and preventive treatment of disease”. The process or strategy enunciated are “organized community efforts”&“the development of social machinery”. The third section includes “ensuring everyone a standard of living adequate for the maintenance of health, so organizing these benefits as to enable every citizen to realize his birth right of health and longevity”. The first part under this section states the objective of the definition as “to ensure everyone a standard of living adequate for the maintenance of health” and the last part “so organizing these benefits” is the bridge statement to connect the other elements with the aim/ goal of the definition “to enable every citizen to realize his birth right of health and longevity”. The conceptual background based on which the 1<sup>st</sup>. definition is coined is relevant for that period. The domain mentioned in the definition is confined to preventing disease and prolonging life. During that period promoting life was beyond the comprehension of the public health community. In the first definition we have added it. The interventions depicted are also limited to three specific activities. They are “(a) the sanitation of the environment (b) the control of communicable infections, (c) the education of individuals in personal hygiene (d) organization of medical and nursing services for early diagnosis and preventive treatment of disease. As we know the advent of “Socialized Medicine” or “Social Medicine” during that period in some countries like Europe the strategy includes two directives based on conceptual paradigm. They are “organized community efforts”&“the development of social machinery”. It emphasizes the role of the society including the state, the community and the governance structure. The other part is also based on concept that is the aim and the objective thereof. The statement “to ensure everyone a standard of living adequate for the maintenance of health, so organizing these benefits as to enable every citizen to realize his birth right of health and longevity”. Is based on the concept of social rights and responsibilities of the state and its citizens and the contemporary society endorses the same and emphasizes more on removing any discrimination or discrepancy among its citizens. This sentiment is also reflected in the HFA goal of WHO.

**The rationale for a change:** The elements necessary in a definition of a discipline is not clear cut but logically it should be based on a conceptual basis with a clear aim and objective to achieve and the specific intervention domains and package outlined and the delivery strategy included based on the contemporary, knowledge base and the prevailing societal governance structure and policy making mechanism to address public issues including health. The definition should be precise so that it can be easily translated into action. Winslow’s definition fulfils all the criteria except that a conceptual model is not observed. Without a conceptual basis and with the advancement of scientific knowledge and an understanding of the greater role of societal, political, economic & ecological factors along with the conventional biological & environmental factors as the determinants of health the focus of concern became broadened. With the formation of World Health Organization a platform of the committee of Nation to assist the nation’s to look after the health evolved various concepts on Health and health care delivery. They include the definition of Health, setting the Goal of Health for All and identifying Primary Health Care strategy as the Key to achieve the same. At the same time the scoping of public Health

problems and the consequent process of decision making on designing an intervention also drastically changed. The policy/decision makers on health issues gave equal or more emphasis on solving health issues with relevant community development package addressing the social and other determinants of health rather than depending solely on the Medical care package. On the other hand the ever increasing newer inventions in the field of diagnostic and therapeutic in an ever growing market economy made this life saving health care package costly beyond the reach of the common man. More so when the onus of delivering the personalized health care package gradually shifted from the state to the professional and private entrepreneurs the modern day wonders became out of reach of the common man and thus affecting the health of a major proportion of which constitutes a concern of "Public Health".

**Initiative taken by Indian Academy of Public Health:** On the above context the members of the Indian Academy of Public Health an academic platform under the aegis of Indian Public Health Association agreed that a participatory process is called for to identify the main principles constituting the content of "Public Health". Accordingly, and as a basis for its discussions, the members decided to focus on the definition of basic concepts and terminologies relating to "Public Health", providing an in depth assessment of such concepts, how they have evolved and how they are used and applied. The members felt that definition of the concept and related terminologies would greatly benefit the academia at large and discussion in governmental processes as well as in the work of practitioners. The process started with the circulation of one definition in the web site of the IPHA as well as of the Academy. This is depicted below:

**Conceptual background of the Definition 1:** Winslow's definition was appropriate for the time it was introduced. The definition was on the background of the Great "Sanitary awakening" and emerging trends towards "Socialized Medicine" & "Social Medicine" in Europe. The conceptual background takes into account of the contemporary public Health decisions approved by the WHO and the constituent Nation's Government. They are the definition of Health and the HFA Goal & Primary Health Care strategy as the key to achieve it. Besides the conventional areas like environmental sanitation and control of epidemic diseases, the other areas included are the newer domains identified in recent years under public health. Only those areas which are accepted by Public Health Professional Bodies & Academia are considered.. The delivery of Integrated package of Patient care(Personal Health) & Public Health Care through a common Health Delivery system as outlined Primary Health care Strategy of service delivery is also used.

**First draft definition by IAPH:**

"Public Health is the science and art of Promoting Health, Preventing disease, prolonging life, to ensure everyone a standard of living adequate for the maintenance of health and be economically active life, and to enable every citizen to realize his birth right of health and longevity, by developing a social machinery, as an integral part of Community Development, through intersectoral coordination and organized community effort & participation to maintain a healthy environment, to educate people to maintain a healthy life style & behavior , to control communicable, non communicable diseases and other social & behavioral maladies, by organizing a medical and nursing services to deliver a comprehensive health care package consisting of health promotion, prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of diseases which is to be universally available, equitably distributed and accessible to all at an affordable cost" .

**Indian Academy of Public Health' 2<sup>nd</sup> .definition of "Public Health" amended as per Dr. sanjay chaturvedis rejoinder.**

- "Public Health aims to ensure fullest attainment of health for all to lead a productive life, (i)by promoting a healthy environmental condition, access to safe water and food, adequate nutrition and housing, access to health related education and information including on sexual and reproductive health thus empowering & encouraging healthy life style & behavior, (ii)by preventing disease, injury, disability, epidemics and spread of communicable & non communicable diseases, protecting against the environmental hazards, preventing injuries, responding to disasters and also caring the sick ,disabled & vulnerable individuals and also rehabilitate them to lead a productive life(iii) by

developing a state policy and a social machinery, as an integral part of Community Development, through intersectoral coordination and organized community effort, participation and ownership (iv) through a process of evolving and organizing a health care delivery system, staffed with adequately trained health work force to deliver a comprehensive package of health promotion, prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of diseases along with other public health package to the individuals and the community which is to be universally available, equitably distributed and accessible to all at an affordable cost”

- The definition starts with an “aim” and has four components.
- The first section depicts the Aim or purpose of public health as” “Public Health aims to ensure fullest attainment of health for all to lead a productive life, (Fullest attainment of health” is referred to in Article III of the Alma Ata declaration.”)
- The second section of the definition outlines the specific means.
- “(i)by promoting a healthy environmental condition, access to safe water and food, adequate nutrition and housing, access to health related education and information including on sexual and reproductive health thus empowering & encouraging healthy life style & behavior, (ii)by preventing disease, injury, disability, epidemics and spread of communicable & non communicable diseases, protecting against the environmental hazards, preventing injuries, responding to disasters and also caring the sick ,disabled , vulnerable individuals and also rehabilitate them to lead a productive life”
- The third sections includes the strategy
- **“by developing a social machinery, as an integral part of Community Development, through intersectoral coordination, organized community effort, participation & ownership”**
- Fourth section depicts the type & nature of health care delivery system
- through a process of evolving and organizing a health care delivery system, staffed with adequately trained health work force to deliver a comprehensive package of health promotion, prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of diseases along with other public health package to the individuals and the community which is to be universally available, equitably distributed and accessible to all at an affordable cost”

Definition suggested by Ravi Naryan's Group

***"Public Health is the science and art of promoting health, preventing disease, and prolonging life to ensure for everyone a standard of living adequate for the maintenance of a healthy and productive life, by developing a social movement, as an integral part of community development, through intersectoral coordination and organized community effort, participation, equity and ownership – while maintaining healthy environment; empowering people to maintain a healthy life style & behavior; controlling communicable and non communicable diseases; addressing social and cultural realities having a bearing on health; informing health policies, interventions and programmes; and by evolving and organizing human resource and health care systems to deliver health promotion, disease prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation, which is available universally, distributed equitably and accessible to all at an affordable cost."***

In response to the Dr. Ravi and his groups definition.

***Dr. Sanjay suggested another definition: It is as follows:***

**“Public Health is the science and art of promoting health, preventing disease, and prolonging life to ensure for everyone a standard of living adequate for the maintenance of a healthy and **productive** life, by developing a social **movement**, as an integral part of community development, through intersectoral coordination and organized community effort, participation, **equity and ownership** - while maintaining healthy environment; **empowering** people to maintain a healthy life style & behavior; controlling communicable and non communicable diseases; addressing social and **cultural realities** having a bearing on health; **informing health policies, interventions and programmes**; and by **evolving** and organizing **human resource** and health **care systems** to deliver health promotion, disease prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation, which is available universally, distributed equitably and accessible to all at an affordable cost.”** The red words are the changes made by Dr. Sanjay chaturvedy.

## Annexure II

1. As an initial step a core team of three was constituted to prepare a limited inventory and listing of definitions of concepts and terminologies used by different stake holders. The main purpose is to serve as a point of departure for the committee to find out the necessity of changing the existing definition in the context of the emerging scientific evidence as well changing societal and political concept of governance and its effect on the understanding of Public Health problems and interventions and formulate guidelines on the basis of which a new definition will be coined. The members deliberated on the issues and formed a Core committee consisting of three members of each region.
2. The Secretariat of The Indian Academy of Public health has outlined the following as a structure to be modified and amended as a Academy guideline for defining "Public Health" They are (i) Conceptual model of health based on existing scientific knowledge (ii) domains & types of interventions acknowledged by the scientific community, practitioners and academia of the present time (iii) the delivery system matching with the available resources and needs (iv) an effective strategy mutually agreed upon by major stake holders involved in the governance of a society including the professional bodies, academia, practitioners and civil society. The definition should also help in outlining the knowledge and skills to be developed by a Public Health Professionals as well the role and responsibilities of the main stake holders of the public health. They are the political, economic, administrative, technical authority responsible for managing the communities' health needs at all level. It will also help the public i.e. citizens and groups to articulate their interest, their legal rights and meet their obligations and mediate their differences and ensures that each individual and or community irrespective of his/their ethnicity, gender, social class, and or any other discriminative factors existing or emerging receives the requisite package of services as per his/their actual needs through a process of good governance at a cost he/they can afford. There is only a request from the secretariat that the definition should be brief and should include only the well acknowledged and adopted generic terms by the professional bodies at international and national levels like W.H.O, Departments of health and the academia. Our endeavour should always be for a definition that should include the Public health concept its aims and objectives, important domains, specific intervention/, services and its strategies but not all the finer areas of concern which are implicit in the generic terms. However if the learned members feel that some specific areas implicit in the generic term needs further mentioning to emphasize the importance of such characteristics for the understanding of the non professionals as well as specific directives to the service providers and policy makers an accompanying note with the definition will be added. This will allay the apprehension of the members on the probable the conflict of interest between the professionals and the policy makers and major stake holders involved in governance.

**Basing on the above structure the IAPH has developed a model definition for circulation and deliberation:**

**Alternative definition (based on concepts):** "Public Health is the science and arts of maintaining a synergy between health of a community and the ecological, environmental, social, cultural, economic, and political, status around it and aims to achieve fullest attainment of health for all to lead a productive life by promoting health, preventing diseases and prolonging life , by evolving and organizing a health care delivery system, staffed with adequately trained health work force to deliver comprehensive personal care and public health services to the individuals and the community ; based on the contemporary knowledge and appropriate technologies approved by the scientific community and specific policies through a process of a social movement of community development based on the primary health care approach."

The definition has four distinctive sections. The first section depicts the concepts of public health and also its aims in the following lines. "Public Health is the science and arts of maintaining a synergy between health of a community and the ecological, environmental, social, cultural, economic, and political, status around it and aims to achieve fullest attainment of health for all to lead a productive life". Fullest attainment of health" is referred to in Article III of the Alma Ata declaration.

The second section includes the means the three domains and the process. It has two distinctive sections the domains and the process. The domain part is depicted as “by promoting health, preventing diseases and prolonging life” and the last part “by evolving and organizing a health care delivery system, staffed with adequately trained health work force to deliver comprehensive personal care and public health services to the individuals and the community; based on the contemporary knowledge and appropriate technologies approved by the scientific community and specific policies” includes the process. Promoting health, preventing diseases and prolonging life with improved quality encompasses the five levels of prevention they are 1. Health promotion which includes most of the community development activities, to address different social determinant of health, emerging environmental and ecological changes affecting health as well as empowering all the people in the community with knowledge so that they are responsible to change their life style, food habits, behaviour and thinking and to participate in make the surrounding environment conducive to health. The relevant domain is the Promoting health. 2. Specific protection for prevention of diseases viz. immunization, nutrition supplementation, specific personal and community protective measures voluntary or legislative sanitation measures, universal iodization, banning smoking in public places, seatbelts etc. This represents the domain of Disease prevention. 3. The third domain prolonging life with improved quality includes three remaining levels of preventions. They are early diagnosis & treatment, prevention of complication and rehabilitation. It includes early diagnosis & treatment and the objective of the same is to cut short the span of the natural history and revert back to health but in certain situation the complication is inevitable and may cause physical and or mental disability affecting the natural reversal to health. For these individuals the level of prevention necessary is rehabilitation and the aim is to revert back to health and if not improve the quality of life as far as practicable.

The third section of the definition depicts the process of achieving the domains identified and stated as “by evolving and organizing a health care delivery system, staffed with adequately trained health work force to deliver comprehensive personal care and public health services to the individuals and the community; based on the contemporary knowledge and appropriate technologies approved by the scientific community and specific policies”. The process is formatted in a prescriptive and not a directive format for the ease of implementation. In the prescriptive format the words “by evolving and organizing” is used to signify that according to the scope of public health needs and the societies resources the “Health care delivery System” has to be evolved and organized for a community and it is not a straight jacket directive. In the strategy section it will be clear how it will be possible. The prescription also outlines two distinct types of services to be delivered through the evolved and organized health care delivery system. They are “comprehensive personal care and public health services”. The personal care services include the services under the five levels of prevention, health promotion, health protection, early diagnosis and treatment and the prevention of complication and rehabilitation and are to be provided as a comprehensive package. The focus of attention for this service package is individuals and their families. The public health package

And the last and the fourth section depicts the type & nature of health care delivery system: *“through a process of evolving and organizing a health care delivery system, staffed with adequately trained health work force to deliver health promotion, prevention, early diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of diseases as a comprehensive package to the individuals and the community which is to be universally available, equitably distributed and accessible to all at an affordable cost”*