New ways to promote community participation
Four key-questions

► Which national health policies can strengthen community participation (CP)?
► How can social movements reinforce local communities to realize their right to health?
► How can international agencies and NGO’s reinforce communities to realize their right to health?
► What are possible strategies to promote CP?
Panel

►► Venezuela (Pedro Villasana)
►► Cuba (Mario Bonett)
►► Philippines (Wim De Ceukeleire)
►► Uganda (Johan Wagisi)
►► Belgium (Leen Deroo)
►► India (Thelma Narayan)
Obvious (or pretended?)
advantages of CP approach

► Empowerment
► Improved responsiveness to “real” health needs of populations
► Improved ownership
► Shared responsibility for health (health providers & communities)
► Etc.
Weaknesses

- Lack of international consensus or decrees “about community rights”
- Stakeholders (health providers, local authorities, community) lack required skills for the application of a CP approach and a good understanding of the concept/relevance of CP
- Variable support of CP model by states (Venezuela 90ties <-> Cuba)
- Lack of “implementation oriented” research
Threats

- Decentralisation => power abuse, favoritism, corruption
- CP ~ conflict (emPOWERment)
  - Gain of power for some
  - Loss of power for others
- Those who shout loudest are best heard (neglected population groups)
- Weakness of social organisations
- Important influence at macro-level of (commercial) agents that are not prone to CP (e.g. pharmaceutical lobby)
- Weak health systems => CP doesn’t work
- Risk of imposing visions, paradigms far away from community’s perspectives (right not to participate)
- CP approach imposing health as a priority for communities
- Partial Focus on health determinants (e.g. health care)
- CP approach passing over EBM (e.g. promoting ineffective health interventions)
Preconditions for a CP approach

- Decentralisation of power
- Essential roll of states:
  - Supporting national health policies
  - Structural imbedding of CP in health systems
- Good local government
- Involvement of all stakeholders in the process
- Well established health system
- Sector wide approach of health
- A meticulous assessment of health needs taking into account a wide range of environmental aspects (felt need ⇔ expressed need ⇔ perceived need ⇔ normative need)
Strategies for the promotion of CP approach

- Capacity building (of communities, health professionals, authorities) in the concepts of CP and skills required for applying CP.
- Community based approaches can be made acceptable for (local) authorities by involving them in the process.
- Create alliances and networks for advocating a PC approach at different levels (national and international policy, funding agencies, research groups etc.)
- Optimize successful experiences (e.g., Cuba) as triggers for new initiatives
- Strengthen civic organisations
Strategies for promoting CP

- ONG’s and international organisations voicing communities which are barely heard at macro-level
- Involvement of communities in health system research (e.g., community-based participatory action research)
- Promotion of “implementation oriented” research
- Creation of a favourable environment for sharing with the different stakeholders of a CP process
- Optimize the availability of communication technology to liaise