

Foreword

The cycle of making a difference in any community endeavour involves five things:

- **Feelings** - they come from concern, anger and hope
- **Words** - the articulation of those feelings into words that can be communicated
- **Action** - words must be translated into activities and measures - the talk must be walked
- **Change** - the mission is realised
- **Vigilance** - achievements can be lost if there is no constant attention to ensuring that changes continue to be in place and are renewed and strengthened

Nowhere is this virtuous cycle more significant than when it relates to health issues. The wealth of nations is ultimately about the health of nations. The wealth of people is ultimately measured by the health of people. And *health* must be defined in all its dimensions - physical, mental and social, and where people's *intelligence* quotient (IQ) is balanced with *emotional* quotient (EQ) and also *spiritual* quotient (SQ).

If an inter-planetary commission visited the planet Earth to review what we have achieved in health, they would be gravely disappointed. Two decades have passed when the world issued the Alma Alta Declaration with the goal *Health for All by the Year 2000*. The world had failed to turn this vision into reality. Instead, the world continues to be wrecked by violence, manipulation and waste while globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation (the "GLP" virus) are spread by powerful global organisations, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the World Bank.

The global "**Health Divide**" is shocking, even criminal. Disease and ill health abound while access remains abysmally poor. The power of those hungry for profits seem to grow. Whether it is access to medicines for AIDS or continued systematic subversion of breastfeeding, it must be countered ever more forcefully, intelligently and comprehensively by civil society.

A few of us who were part of the original team that over a decade ago, dared to dream of the idea of a People's Health Assembly and thought about what we should do to move the idea forward. We agreed that in all social movements, memory and monitoring are important. These are the building blocks of making real progress for real people.

Those of us who are engaged in the breastfeeding movement have realised how important it is to remember declarations, to remember our commitments, and build on these as organising tools to set in motion the virtuous five path cycle of feelings, words, action, changes and vigilance. We had the experience of the *International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes* and the *Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding*. And we know the importance of documentation and the value of making information popularly accessible.

So when WABA was planning our involvement in the People's Health Assembly, I said lets do something from our experience that will be an important building block, a useful tool, even something that will last and empower. Like we learnt in breastfeeding, we thought going back to basics meant looking at the key and fundamental documents on health issues. And so came the idea of *Healthy Documents*. There was very little time before the People's Health Assembly to get this initiative off the ground and I know I had to get the support of the one person who could bring competence, passion and compassion and who combines documentation skill, speed and selection quite unparalleled

among social movements. So I emailed Lakshmi Menon who had done many such ventures. And to our good fortune, she agreed even though we could only provide her “rice and water” as compensation. It was to be a labour of love.

And this remarkable collection is the result. We tested it at the People’s Health Assembly and our prototype was enthusiastically received. It was even referred to by the team making the final *People’s Charter for Health*.

We hope to put all this documentation on a website and to keep it going as our contribution to the movement for “health for all people”. We hope that it will help to create the political will that is so central to that achievement. And we hope that it will contribute to the **Gross National Happiness** (GNH) of countries as against the **Gross National Product** (GNP) which as the late Robert Kennedy said so eloquently in 1968 before he was tragically killed:

Gross National Product measures neither the health of our children, the quality of their education, nor the joy of their play. It measures neither the beauty of our poetry, nor the strength of our marriages. It is indifferent to the decency of our factories and safety of our streets alike. It measures neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our wit nor our courage, neither our compassion nor our devotion to country. It measures everything in short, except that which makes life worth living, and it can tell us everything about our country except those things that make us proud to be part of it.

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