



The aim of the Nizwa healthy lifestyles project is to adopt a community-based approach for the primary prevention of noncommunicable diseases and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

Nizwa wilayat district is in the Ad Dakhliyah region of Oman, approximately 175 km from Muscat. The district consists of 120 communities and has a population of over 80 000.

The project commenced in 2004 and is ongoing. Work is currently underway to develop a plan for the next 5 years of implementation.

Each partner in the project has contributed financial or in-kind support. The project is spearheaded by the Ministry of Health.

Partners include the Ministries of Education, Regional Municipalities, Social Development, and Sports Affairs; Oman Woman Association; Royal Oman Police; World Health Organization; academic institutions; private companies; and various clubs and sports teams in Nizwa wilayat district.

The project focuses on four key aspects of health: physical activity; healthy eating; tobacco use; and accidents (traffic and household). Programme interventions can be broadly categorized into 'population-based' and 'high-risk'.

Key components for physical activity

Move for Health project

The Move for Health Programme was integrated into the primary school curriculum. It offered teachers a series of interactive training focused on physical activities which can be performed in the context of daily lives. It consisted of four teaching modules and supporting documents including a teachers' guide, a parents' guide, worksheets, and a weekly programme of activities.

Building supportive environments for physical activity

- Two gymnasiums were established in two female secondary school in Nizwa.
- A gymnasium was established in the Oman Women's Association in Nizwa.
- Three walking pathways were built in different communities within Nizwa (7.4 km in total).

Awareness-raising campaigns

Awareness raising activities included the production of 'advocacy kits', articles in local newspapers, and radio interviews. In addition, a range of events were organized including marathons, walkathons and sport competitions.

Increasing capacity of health care professionals

To address high-risk patients the project focused on training and skill development of the health workforce through seminars and training workshops in addition to providing them with the necessary tools and guidelines to promote healthy lifestyles.

An evaluation of NHLP took place between March 2009 and August 2010, conducted by the Department of Community Based Initiatives and the Directorate General of Health Services in Dhakhlyya Region. Full details are contained in the evaluation report published by the Ministry of Health (Ministry of Health Oman. *Nizwa Healthy Lifestyle Evaluation Report*, 2012).

Key findings

- Almost 50% of participants reported to have changed their lifestyle due to Nizwa healthy lifestyles projects interventions.
- Awareness of physical inactivity as a risk factor for noncommunicable diseases increased from 6.9% in 2001, to 93% in 2010.
- Participation in leisure time physical activity increased from 39.9% in 2001 to 71.3% in 2010.

Key factors contributing to the success of the project

- Strong political commitment
- Working in partnership to deliver the programme
- Community involvement during both the planning and implementation of the initiative.

Challenges

- Limited decision-making authority at local level for some partner institutions
- Limited experience in community management
- High burden of interventions in local schools.

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