

Healthy Marketplaces

working towards ensuring the
supply of safer food



World Health Organization
Regional Office for the
Eastern Mediterranean



Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH



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Preamble

Marketplaces as referred to in this document have one essential function in common, which is the provision of food. The implementation of a healthy marketplace project will be very different in different regions of the world, and this guide is meant as a point of orientation and reference. Marketplaces vary greatly, not only from country to country, but also even from district to district, which is one of their main attractions. This guide should not be seen as being prescriptive for each and every marketplace. Some principles do indeed apply to each market, whereas others should rather be seen in the particular local or cultural context.

Implementing a healthy marketplace project requires a community to establish its own, unique healthy marketplace vision. This guide is meant to serve as a reference point for establishing that vision.

We would like to encourage readers of this guide to send us any comments and feedback about the usefulness of the tools provided in this document, as well as any publications or reports on projects dealing with marketplaces, as these will be extremely valuable in the development of further guides.

1. Introduction

This guide has been prepared by GTZ and the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, and is intended to provide practical advice for the initiation, implementation and evaluation of healthy marketplaces projects. It can be used to advocate the value of establishing healthy marketplaces as appropriate settings through which food safety-based health protection and promotion can be effectively focused, or as a practical guide enabling the actual implementation of healthy marketplaces projects. The aim of this guide is to initiate projects that ultimately result in improved access to safe and nutritious food in marketplaces. It is therefore not intended to improve the health of the marketplace as a setting as such. Furthermore, it is mainly concerned with the part of the food chain that is directly related to marketplaces and food safety, although options for linkages to the primary production sector are described. The guide can be used in urban settings as well as in rural settings, either by local communities or their authorities. It is based on the experiences gained in numerous ongoing projects and studies, most of which are set within communities that have undertaken steps to improve their marketplaces. Examples are provided that highlight successful approaches and possible barriers to success, as well as the means to overcome these barriers.

Health problems, especially in cities, are typically aggravated by unplanned, uncontrolled, and under-financed growth and development. Rapid urban growth has overwhelmed the capacity of many municipal authorities to provide basic environmental services and other minimum prerequisites for a healthy population. A growing number of people in cities, particularly the poor, are experiencing stresses and exposures that result in serious health problems. In view of the projected trends of increasing urbanization and deteriorating physical and social environments, in 1986 the WHO developed the concept of healthy cities as a vital tool for assuring that health is explicitly considered in urban management and development planning through community empowerment. The objective of the healthy city initiative is to improve the health of urban dwellers, especially low-income groups, by improving living conditions and public health services. The initiative operates by raising awareness of unsatisfactory environmental and health conditions, and by mobilizing community participation.

In addition to schools and workplaces, one of the most important settings in the healthy city initiative is the marketplace. The marketplace is considered as the commercial and social centre of any given community, reflecting the local culture and traditions of the people, and it therefore represents an ideal setting for health education. In marketplaces, food is handled and distributed. Access to safe and nutritious food is essential; indeed, it is the foundation of health. There has been much interest in the concept of healthy marketplaces in recent years, with pilot projects being implemented or planned in every WHO region¹.

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