

Promoting Community Environmental Health



It is clear what it means to improve the health of a child or of a family. But how do you improve the health of the environment?

When we talk about environmental health, we mean the way our health is affected by the world around us, and also how our activities affect the health of the world around us. If our food, water, and air are contaminated, they can make us sick. If we are not careful about how we use the air, water, and land, we can make ourselves and the world around us sick. By protecting our environment, we protect our health.

Improving environmental health often begins when people notice that a health problem is affecting not just one person or group, but is a problem for the whole community. When a problem is shared, people are more likely to work together to bring about change.

In this chapter we tell the story of a health center in the town of Manglaralto, Ecuador, where health workers stopped a cholera epidemic. Afterward, people in the community found ways to work together to overcome other health problems as well.