

Pilot School Health Scheme in Delhi

By

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Organization and Administration

The Directorate of Health Services, in close co-operation with the Directorate of Education, have organized a School Health Scheme for the benefit of school children in one of the most backward localities in Delhi i.e., Darya Ganj and Jama Masjid area. This project is known as the "Pilot School Health Scheme".

History in Brief

Between the Delhi State Government and UNICEF Agency a plan of operation was agreed upon for starting the project in the year 1953, as a joint effort. The latter agreed to supply transport, equipment and some medical and food supplies while the former was responsible for supplies of finance, staff, certain medical and hospital supplies, maintenance of the UNICEF vehicle etc.

In the initial stages we had to face numerous difficulties in respect of a proper place in which to work, but now we have an Office on 38, Faiz Bazar, Darya Ganj, Delhi.

Aims and Objects

To promote the quality of life that renders the individual *to live most and serve best*. If women are the ornaments of society, school children constitute the costume of a bright and prosperous tomorrow. Today's school children are tomorrow's citizens, though in different walks of life. Children of school going age should be considered as the nucleus for the future of a great country.

Young in body and mind as they are, careful attention is essential for their physical growth, mental development and emotional standard.

An average student who is constantly disturbed by physical ailments naturally cannot concentrate on his studies. Gradually his poor health, when not cared for, affects and upsets his mental balance and eventually finds in him emotional upheavels and disturbances. Looked down upon by fellow students, he loses confidence and interest in studies, games and other activities. Life presents a big question mark and he gropes in the dark for a solution. Parents and teachers are helpless in this matter.

How and What We did

Preliminary to the functioning of the scheme, a general survey of the schools in the area was carried out. The result revealed the great need for proper guidance starting from fundamental things to the very system of imparting health education.

The area which is about 2 square miles, is being served by 29 recognised schools with a student population of about 15,000. The schools are from primary to higher secondary under different management, viz., Government, Municipal and Private. The 29 schools consist of 18 boys schools and 11 for girls. There are 10 primary schools under the Municipal Board, 5 middle schools and 4 higher Secondary schools under the Government. The remaining 10 schools are private schools

giving high and higher secondary education.

The scene presents a strange contrast. Children belonging to the upper-class, middle-class and lower-class and of the different communities such as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians huddle together under the same roof to receive their education. Some of them are in well-furnished modern bungalows with all amenities while others are in very un-hygienic and slum like-dwellings.

School Buildings

Many of the school buildings situated in very un-hygienic and over crowded parts of the city are badly ventilated and unsanitary. Certain schools are found to be converted from hospitals and old type houses; most of them are over-crowded and poorly furnished.

In many cases parents are too poor to obtain any kind of medical aid for their children.

Medical Examination

Formerly done by a part time Medical Officer in some schools.

Minor Ailments Treatment

Some of the schools provided minor treatment while others maintained first-aid boxes.

Follow-Up of Defects

No follow-up at all, but the defects were reported to the parents after the medical examination.

School Working Days

Out of the 200 working days an average of 40 days are devoted to school examination purposes (3 examinations a year). Thus 160 days are left out of 365 days on which school children can be available for the school medical work.

School Working Hours

Timings are different during summer and winter:—

Primary schools : 5 to 6 hours a day.
High Schools : 6 to 7 hours a day.

Play Grounds

Practically nil.

School Canteen

Only one school is running a canteen and that is not up to the expected standard.

Accommodation for medical examination and school clinics were refused by the majority of institutions on the excuse of lack of space.

Staff

The School Health Scheme was started with one Medical Officer with post-graduate experience in School Health Services and one Public Health Nurse to assist him. At the beginning of the second year one woman Medical Officer and a Dispenser were added. By the middle of the second year one more Public Health Nurse joined the Scheme. During this period we had the honorary services from a Dental Surgeon and an Ophthalmic Surgeon, one hour per week.

The Scheme is now 3 years old and is an independent unit working with :

2 Medical Officers (one for boys and one for girls),

1 Full time Ophthalmic Surgeon,

1 Full time Dental Surgeon,

4 Public Health Nurses,

1 Dispenser,

1 Clerk,

1 Driver,

6 Servants.

Specialists

For other specialist services e.g. for ENT., Orthopedic, Child Guidance etc. children are referred to Irwin Hospital through their parents. Health education is also imparted by the specialists.

Dispenser

Attends the school treatment centres, and the balance of time is devoted to stores and dispensing.

Hours of Work

The Office working hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., but the Public Health Nurses are on duty from 9 a.m. There is an interval of one hour, 12 noon to 1 p.m.

Duties Doctors

1. Routine medical examination of each child twice or thrice during the school career and re-examination as and when necessary.
2. Advising and directing parents, guardians and teachers for treatment of defective children.
3. Advising Public Health Nurses with regard to the follow-up treatment of children.
4. Administrative affairs of the Scheme.
5. Health education.
6. Administration of treatment to school children as and when indicated.
7. Advising on school environmental sanitation.

Public Health Nurses

1. Prepare the students a day or two in advance for medical examination by testing of personal cleanliness, taking height and weight, testing vision, and informing the parents of date and time of medical examination.
2. Assisting the doctor at the time of medical examination.
3. Health education is imparted to the parents, students and teachers at the time of medical examination, and to small groups of children.
4. Discuss health problems of the student with the parents and teachers.
5. Running clinics at the schools to treat minor ailments of students.
6. Taking students to and from the school to the specialists' clinics.
7. Writing up and maintaining

record cards of each student.

8. Supervising milk distribution in the schools where skim-milk is supplied.

9. Arrange to discuss result of children's examinations with treatment with parents.

The Public Health Nurse spends nearly six hours in the school every day.

Quite a number of parents attend at the time of medical examination of their children and for their follow-up of treatment. Home Visits are conducted if and when necessary.

Equipment

The School Medical Scheme was fortunate enough to have received gifts of a Station Wagon, Cycles, Refrigerator, Weighing Scales, Physicians Bag, Public Health Nurses' Kit, Epidioscope, Portable Dental Chairs and Machinery for Dental Clinic, Eye Clinic Equipment etc. etc. from UNICEF. Other necessary equipment was supplied by the State Government.

Lack of co-operation and understanding from both the teachers and parents presented a real problem at first, however, it is gratifying to note that this position has changed and that the parents have realised the benefits of the Scheme. This undoubtedly has made our task easy. Some of the school authorities started helping some deserving students in the form of supplying free spectacles for them.

It is worth mentioning that the work we have carried out so far has started yielding results. We are left with much to do. As society looks ahead it can conceive the hope that some day almost every human being will be well, physically vigorous, mentally alert, emotionally stable and ethically sound.

Let us hope that this Scheme will develop every where and remain as a permanent feature in the school life of our children.

"Wanted Nurse-cum-Midwife-Pay 150-5-200 (inclusive of all allowances) and free residential accommodation. Apply to Medical Superintendent, Umar General Hospital, 494, Matya Mahal, Delhi before 20-12-1958 with copies of certificates and testimonials and a recent photograph.