

Midwives Union Section

The Village Medical, Maternity and Ambulance Service Centre Viramgam, Gujerat.



Aim :

The aim of this Village Medical Maternity Aid and Ambulance Service is to render free medical, maternity and surgical aid to the poor villagers of the distant remote and interior villages where no qualified and experienced doctor is available and to give lectures on health, hygiene and first aid.

How it was started :

Miss Stigen, the Organiser of the work, who is a norwegian by nationality, and who is a trained nursing sister and midwife as well as a social welfare worker came to India just after the war with a burning desire to assist the poor villagers in medical relief and welfare work. She came to Ahmedabad with the idea of getting mobile medical help for the villagers and to seek for this purpose, financial help from the charity minded and well-to-do persons of Ahmedabad ; not an easy task, but she was determined to get her scheme into action.

Miss Stigen came in contact with the family of Seth Mangaldas Girdhardas, who promptly promised to give a complete Ambulance Car suitable for a travelling dispensary and Ambulance Service work, but with the condition to procure assistance from other sources, to meet its running and maintenance expenditure for one year.

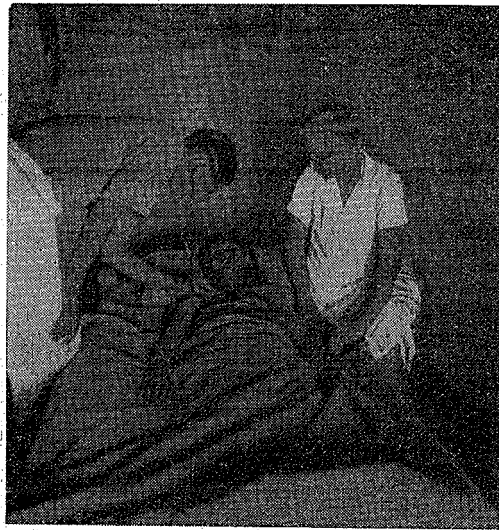
Encouraged with this, Miss Stigen approached Seth Kasturbhai Lalbhai, who kindly consented to help her in this work and through him the scheme got Rs. 15,000/- from the Mrs. Hathisingh Fund, Rs. 5000/- from the Maskati Cloth Merchants' Association and Rs. 2500/- from the Panchkuva Cloth Merchants' Association. She then approached Government of

Bombay with the above promises, who agreed to give Rs. 3,000/- as a grant for the first year.

The American Women's Club, Bombay, gave Rs. 1500/- for the complete maternity equipment of the scheme.

Starting with the work :

When at last there was certainty of the funds for one year and the car ready with the necessary instruments, medicines and other equipment, there was problem for selection of a suitable centre and a building. Moving to various places, viz. Viramgam, Sanand and Bavla, she found that the Nal-kantha area was badly neglected and devoid of proper medical aid, hence Bavla was chosen as a central place, from which to move to far off villages.



Patient in Village Home

A committee was formed consisting of members, who gave generous donations, with Mr. Mathuradas Mangaldas as the chairman. The staff was engaged and the actual work of the scheme was put in action for moving to

different villages from 17th Sept. 1947, and is continued upto this day.

How it is working :

In a week's time, after the service started to travel to different villages with the fully equipped Medical, Maternity and Surgical Aid. People began to collect in the villages chauras, and at the Bavla Centre.

Afterwards the Service had to vacate at the desire of the owner of the building at Bavla, and to move the centre to Sanand. It is now there and its work is carried on in villages around that place. There is no change however in the usefulness of this Service.

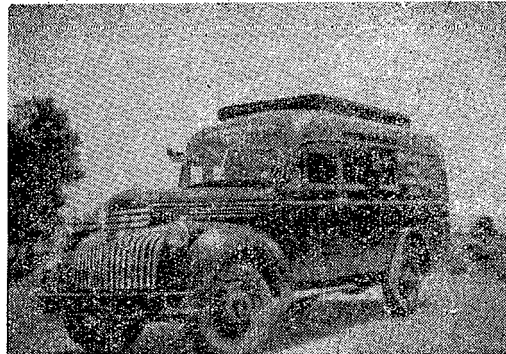
Four days in a week, Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, the Unit goes to the different villages, and on Wednesdays and Saturdays the dispensary is kept open at Sanand so that (1) those sick persons in villages, who require continuation of the medicines, can come on these days for their medicines or dressing and, (2) the staff can prepare and arrange stock mixtures and other necessities.

The whole village work can well be divided into four main heads :

1. Normal routine work for the day.
2. Special urgent extra visit calls.
3. Transport of serious and bad cases to hospital.
4. School children's medical examination.

(1) *Normal Routine work for the day.* Having reached the Village the first thing to be done is to call for the Mukhi and make preparation in the chaura. Then all necessities are taken out from the car ; complete dispensary arranged in the Doctor's examination room, compounder's counter for medicine, private examination room and a dressing room making use of curtains and folding furniture that is carried.

Having set up the dispensary, a general call in the village is made ask-



Village Ambulance Service

ing all the sick and needy persons to come to the chaura to get medical aid.

There being a private examination room, women, too, can come with confidence for their consultations. Those cases, which are bedridden, are treated in their homes.

If a village is not a very big one, time permits, two to three villages are visited in a day, also whenever the Ambulance passes by a village on way back to the centre, enquiries are made if there are bedridden sick persons, who may need immediate help. The staff returns home late in the evening and many times, they find some people waiting at the centre for treatment, or to take the doctor to their village for an urgent call. Usually it is a maternity case or a bad pneumonia.

Working this way 18,468 cases have been treated in 595 total visits of villages.

(2) *Special Urgent Calls.* A special boon to villagers by this Ambulance Service is that service can be urgently and immediately made available to them. We can reach even the far off and interior villages in a very short time. Many villagers have thus, been saved by the most timely medical and maternity aid. For such cases the staff never hesitates to go on visits at any time during day or night.

(3) *Maternity Aid.* Maternity aid requires a special mention.

The villagers are very ignorant and unaware of the dangers of unscientific treatment. Maternity cases in villages are invariably treated by untrained "dais" who have hardly any sense of proper treatment and cleanliness. There have been numerous cases of forced child birth which are in many cases fatal. The villagers after having tried the "dais" bring such cases to the centre at the last moment. If the patient is very weak and unable to go to the medical centre, a call is made on the doctor to visit the village immediately. There are scores of cases on record which show that timely medical aid has saved many lives.

There are some serious cases, which require immediate and special treatment; such cases are removed in the Ambulance to hospitals.

Thus many patients from far off villages have been shifted in time to various hospitals by the Ambulance service.

(4) *Medical Examination of School Children.* From August, 1948, this service has undertaken the complete medical examination of the village school children. Necessary instructions are given to the teachers and parents of the children with regard to their defects in health and hygiene. All necessary medicines are supplied with full directions.

One full report of the medical examination of school children is kept with the school master, one copy is sent to the District Local Board and the District Health Officer.

So far 136 visits to village schools have been paid and 8288 children examined out of which 4666 were diseased and defective.

At present the staff consists of:—

1. Dr. H. N. Shah,
Medical Officer.
2. Miss Stigen,
Lady Superintendent.
3. Compounder.
4. Driver.
5. Watchman.

The average monthly expenditure for salary and running expenses for medicines etc. comes to about Rs. 1800/-. The annual expenditure is thus about Rs. 21,600/-. As against that we have at the end of March, 1950, Rs. 10,404-3-9 only with our Banker and on hand.

We feel bound to observe that we have been receiving readily all manner of help and support from officers of the Government and the local authorities and we are grateful to them. We also are much indebted to those persons and Associations who have generously offered help in the shape of funds.

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