

Malnourishment is Rampant

Rahim is five years old but looks hardly three. He suffers from anaemia apart from worm infections. He is being treated for both. His mother has been advised on the diet to follow for her family. She has also been invited to demonstrations on low cost nutrition and has been encouraged to try it herself. 56 percent of the children in slums are malnourished. Nearly 30 percent of all newborns have a low birth weight, making them vulnerable to further malnutrition and disease. Malnutrition is more common in India than in Sub-Saharan Africa. Around 46 percent of all children below the age of three are too small for their age, 47 percent are underweight and at least 16 percent are wasted. Malnutrition in children is not affected by food intake alone; it is also influenced by access to health services, quality of care for the child and pregnant mother as well as good hygiene practices. Girls are more at risk of malnutrition than boys because of their lower social status. Spreading awareness about low cost nutrition is essential to help combat malnutrition and vitamin deficiency.



Pic: Ibrahim is a malnourished child

Health Education- Key to Better Health

Simple habits and practice of hygiene can help prevent many common ailments. Water borne diseases like diarrhea can be prevented and other seasonal diseases like malaria can be cured if timely health care is sought. Through the multi media equipment installed in Hope on Wheels, health awareness and good health practices are shared with the community. Through the Mobile Medical Unit (Hope on Wheels) the health team travels thrice a week to three locations seeking out and educating the poor on different health issues like common diseases, hygiene, reproductive health, child care and a host of other good health practices. Hope on Wheels moves to the community at times convenient for the people and is parked just outside people's homes so that they can benefit from easy access.

<http://www.hope-project.de/>
<http://www.hopeprojectindia.org>

Dargah Hazrat Inayat Khan

Initiated by Pir Vilayat Khan in 1975

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“Hope on Wheels” - Taking Health Care to the Poor

Health does not necessarily mean wealth for the poor as much of their time and energy is spent on just surviving. All adults and even children are expected to help in earning an income. Still they are barely able to eke out a decent living. Under such circumstances seeking health care for seemingly simple ailments, aches and pains is a luxury and not a priority. Very often the government health centres in urban areas are outside slum areas, making access difficult. They also lack basic drugs, equipment and technical support.

When the poor are not able to visit a doctor, Hope on Wheels reaches them at their door steps with quality medical care and much needed health education.

Shabnam thought her granddaughter was about to die as she had no access to any health care. Thanks to care being made available through Hope on Wheels, just next to her hutment, she was able to save the young one who was suffering from diarrhea since the past three days. Apart from medicines, some friendly advice on how to prevent diarrhea and steps to take when a child is ill is provided by the health team on “Hope on Wheels”.

Jason Francis, a volunteer says “having been there and having seen the people's condition of health, I realized very fast that the significance of Health Melas cannot be overestimated. People do not know the seriousness of their little aches and pains and do not think of visiting a doctor”.



HIV/AIDS



Pic: Printed information on HIV/AIDS is distributed

The incidence of HIV/AIDS is on the increase and if awareness on this is not immediate the results could be alarming. Hope on Wheels spreads awareness through film shows, flip charts, health talks and other interesting ways. Youth and married couples are encouraged to get their HIV status checked. The number of persons going for the test now has increased. All pregnant women are screened for HIV so that any transmission of HIV from mother to child can be nipped in the bud.

Awareness on HIV/AIDS is important equally for the young women as it is for young men. In a society where interaction of the two is limited by social norms, education is provided in a culturally sensitive manner.

During health camps, leaflets, and brochures are distributed providing information on HIV/AIDS and how to prevent it. Facilities for testing are also provided to make it easier for persons desirous of knowing their HIV status. Confidentiality is maintained in all cases.

Along with it, the concept of a small and healthy family is also promoted and couples are advised on different methods of contraception.

Eye Care

The elderly feel lost, left out, forlorn and almost deserted as people go about their life from dawn to dusk trying to meet needs of their family's daily existence. Eye care and general health of especially the elderly in the family is the last priority as they are no longer productive members.

In collaboration with the best eye care Institute of the Govt (Rajendra Prasad Eye Institute of All India Institute of Medical Sciences), Hope on Wheels brings a ray of light to eyes affected by cataract and with poor vision. Spectacles are issued to those who need it and surgery for those with cataract.



Pic: Meena Kumari gets a date for cataract surgery

Meena Kumari all of seventy five years was unable to enjoy her grandchildren playing and also help in household chores due to blurred vision even with her spectacles. At the recently held health camp, she came to know that she had cataract and has been scheduled for surgery next week. She looks forward to getting this done.

Eye Care (cont.)



Pic: Haseena gets a new pair of Specs

Haseena used to fail in her class and was often pulled up for not completing her school work. Little did her parents and teachers realize that she had poor eyesight. Thanks to the medical team with Hope on Wheels, she received a new pair of specs and better vision.



Pic: Health Education for the community inside the Mobile Medical Unit

All Photographs courtesy Narayan