

Improved Health and Nutrition in Remote Areas

IFSP contributes to capacity building of its partner institutions by organising training programmes to enhance the knowledge and develop the skills of their staff. Two such training programmes in health and nutrition were conducted in the recent past.

Pre-school Teachers Training

During August and September 2000 a total number

doctors.

The main problems of the children related to health and nutrition were identified as lack of safe drinking water, lack of toilet facilities, inappropriate garbage disposal in the surroundings of the schools and poor building conditions. Main constraints for the pre-school teachers themselves were seen as lack of continuous training and irregular payment. In some

schools parents contribute to the teacher's salary, but due to poverty and lack of awareness this is difficult.

Teachers expressed their interest in obtaining more training on oral health, environmental sanitation, disease prevention and first aid. More posters and other teaching materials on health and nutrition are also desired.

In Muthur, Eachchilampathu and Kuchchaveli monthly meetings of the pre-school teachers with the IFSP health team (PHI's, midwives) have been initiated. Each meeting covers one specific topic and gives the opportunity to evaluate ongoing activities, plan for the next month and exchange problems and

successes in their day-to-day work.

A monthly growth monitoring of children in these pre-schools is planned and has already started in Kuchchaveli division.

A knowledge test at the end of the training enabled the participants to find out whether they understood the topics well. The results in turn give an indication to the trainers which topics need to be tackled more intensively in future. The pre-school teachers are suggested to be trained at least twice a year and further training is scheduled for February/March 2001.

Health Volunteers Training

Health facilities in Trincomalee district are damaged,



Presentation of group work in Muthur

of 157 pre-school teachers from Kuchchaveli, Muthur, Padavisiripura, Eachchilampathu, and Gomarankadawela were trained in topics related to health and nutrition. All pre-school teachers from these divisions were invited for the two days training sessions, which were held at the Agricultural Training Center in Uppuveli, Muthur Cultural Hall and at the DS-Offices of Gomarankadawela and Padavisiripura. The focus was on children aged three to five. Food during sickness, Vitamin A deficiency, child growth, safe drinking water, toilets and personal hygiene were some of the main topics. Participation was very lively and active, especially when group work and role-plays complemented the lectures from trained PHIs, midwives and medical

poorly equipped and under-staffed. Many staff positions remain vacant since officers are not willing to work in remote areas due to security reasons and difficult accessibility. As a consequence, preventive and curative health services cannot be provided as required.

Health volunteers based in villages play an important role to fill the gap between the lack of government staff in certain remote areas and the needs of the villagers. IFSP entered into co-operation with EHED, an NGO with many years of experience in training and supervision of village based health volunteers all over Trincomalee district. In addition to the 50 volunteers who are already working, 25 more volunteers have been trained, to assist each PNA village with at least one volunteer.

The volunteers were selected according to their educational level, interest and voluntary involvement in health activities, personality, family background and poverty level. The health volunteers' training was conducted in the Pastoral Centre in Uppuveli from 28th-30th August 2000.

The structure and work of the Department of Health, the work of EHED as well as the philosophy and activities of IFSP were introduced and the main results of the Health and Nutrition Baseline Survey 1999 were presented. Afterwards the duties of the health volunteers were explained and a pre-test was conducted to assess their initial knowledge.

The training sessions covered the following main topics: Personal hygiene, factors influencing the nutritional status, immunisation, breastfeeding, growth monitoring and safe drinking water. Responsible for the training was a team of trainers selected from Health Department staff, supported by EHED staff and Community Mobilisers from IFSP.

An Agricultural Instructor explained the purpose and technical aspects of home gardening.

All participants from different divisions and from all three ethnic groups worked very well together in a friendly atmosphere and were satisfied with the nice setting of the well-organised training. EHED provided healthy food and good care. They organised the translation from Tamil into Sinhala. The training ended with an evening programme including films, theatre play and singing of songs.

After the training the volunteers were equipped with notebooks, bicycles, uniforms etc. and started their work in their villages. They support the Department of Health as well as ICRC and SLRC in conducting regular health activities. Besides, they are involved in monthly clinics, awareness programmes on health and nutrition. They participate in campaigns such as



New Health volunteers trained in the Pastoral Centre in Uppuveli

de-worming and Vitamin A distribution. They also visit families in the villages on a regular basis to support them in finding solutions to health and nutrition related problems.

Altogether more than 70 health volunteers are now regularly trained, supervised and monitored by a joint effort of EHED, Department of Health and GTZ-IFSP.



INTEGRATED FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME
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