

SEMINAR ON THE PROVISION OF HEALTH  
SERVICES FOR THE PRE-SCHOOL CHILD

Mogadishu, 21 - 26 July 1974

22 July 1974

COUNTRY REPORT ON PRE-SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES  
IN THE REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

by

Dr Abdul Rashid Ghani\*

Dear Friends,

I am very happy to be amidst distinguished colleagues representing their respective countries. Paediatricians all over the world are facing difficulties and problems which are more or less common. We have assembled here to discuss ways and means to improve the health and well-being of child who is going to be the father of men tomorrow.

With regrets we have to admit that sufficient steps have not been taken to improve the child's health.

Innumerable children die every year because of preventible diseases. There are children with physical, mental and psychological handicaps and there are very few places where they could be sent for improvement.

Illegitimate and unwanted children are still forced to die or to start their life in the streets and mosques. Poor young children are still forced to do hard work and other jobs unsuitable for their age, for want of money.

Medical facilities provided are too inadequate and unsatisfactory. Hospitals, beds and medical personnel required to deliver the goods are too limited.

We are assigned the responsible duties for creating a better world for the child and every country now realized the burden which the paediatrician has to bear. We have not only charged with responsibility to create better conditions for the child today but also to make him fit to face life and its difficulties in times to come.

---

\* Chief of Paediatric Department, Institute of Child Health, Ministry of Health, Kabul, Afghanistan

Now coming to the report of health conditions of children in Afghanistan. Health and medical facilities for children are limited. It is also limited as compared to similar facilities available for the adults. Total number of beds provided for treatment of children in the whole of Afghanistan is 300. There are only 30 qualified paediatricians in the country. Eight more doctors are presently undergoing training for Diploma in Child Health. To look after the health of more than 6 million children in Afghanistan, the above mentioned facilities are absolutely insufficient. The result is that only those children are able to get admission and proper treatment in a hospital who are having progressed diseases and serious general conditions. The others are left to the mercy of efficacy of domestic treatment and when they do some to the hospitals, the chance of recovery is very remote. Preventible diseases are the common causes of mortality in children. These diseases are malnutrition, infectious and communicable diseases. Poor sanitary and socio-economic conditions are also responsible for their diseases and deaths. Parents also do not pay much attention to the preventive and treatment aspects of their children and presence of large number of children also add to the magnitude of the problem.

In this part of the report, I wish to mention the medical institutions and departments which are rendering medical services to children in pre-school age group.

Institute of Child Health, Kabul

This Institute is very young having started functioning about 2 years back with technical and financial assistance from our friendly country - India. This Institution is located in Kabul and has a capacity of 100 beds. Afghan doctors and para-medical personnel are working with their Indian friends in different departments and services. There are departments of medicine, surgery, E.N.T. orthopaedics, anaesthesiology, X-ray, laboratories, social and preventive department, nutrition, rehabilitation, medical statistics, polyclinic and emergency services. Preventive and curative medical services are rendered by this Institute. Only a month back it was raised to the status of a training and research centre for paediatrics. The diploma in child health will be awarded by this Institute for the first time in Afghanistan. Research and study in paediatric field: Under -five clinics and follow-up clinics are to be opened shortly.

The Paediatrics Departments in Kabul Medical College and Jalalabad Medical College also provide health facilities and teaching of the young doctors. They had bed capacities of 90 & 40 beds respectively for sick children. The Gyn. and Obst. Department of Kabul and Jalalabad Medical Colleges with a total number of 160 beds for the mothers provide health facilities for newborn babies also. The Maternity Hospital of Kabul with a capacity of 90 beds also provides health facilities for babies besides mothers. In other cities of Afghanistan, there are 15-20 beds for mothers as well as children.

Maternity and Child Health Clinics:

There are 16 clinics functioning in Kabul and other big cities for treatment, prevention, nutritional facilities for children as well as for mothers.

Family Guidance Clinics:

At present 20 clinics are functioning in Kabul and other towns in Afghanistan for promoting small and health families.

Nurseries and Kindergartens:

There are 5 nurseries in Kabul and 1 creche in the city. There are two nurseries in two other towns in Afghanistan. Children of pre-school age are looked after.

Primary Health Centres:

112 Primary Health Centres are working in different places in Afghanistan where the people living away from towns and hospitals receive medical attention.

Young Republic of Afghanistan is a mountainous country with an area of about 800 000 square kilometers and height of 6 000 - 11 000 meters from the sea level.

Afghanistan is a land-locked country bound by USSR, Pakistan, Iran and China.

A total population of 17 million most of them are doing agriculture and animal husbandries. 20% living in urban areas and 80% in rural areas. 15% of our population are nomads travelling all the time to find work, and to find places for their cattle. National income 82 US dollars per capita (annually). More than 40% of the population is below 15 years age group.

Average family size= 6

Vital Statistics

Birth rate = 50 per 1000  
Death rate = 25 per 1000  
Rate of natural increase 2.5% annually  
Infant mortality = 160 per 1000 live births.  
Maternal mortality = Urban = 5 per 1000  
Rural = 10 per 1000

Deliveries

Urban 30% in the hospital  
40% by midwife at home.  
Rural only 5% by doctors and midwives  
95% by traditional midwife relatives.

Number of medical and paramedical personnel:

Doctors: 1 / 00  
Midwives: 350  
Nurses: 550  
vaccinators: 750  
Sanitarians and health educators: 300  
Laboratory assistants: 250  
Auxiliary nurses: 200

Finances allocated for the medical services - Budget allocated for health services throughout the country - 3.7% of ordinary budget and 1.7% of the development budget.

In the end, I wish to say that Medical services are rendered free.