

## HELP NEWSLETTER

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**Programme Manager**  
Dr Amara Shakeel

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### CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

The Karachi summer is upon us. In its wake, the incidence of diarrheal diseases, typhoid and other water borne diseases has increased (as it does every year). In addition to counseling families about the 'do's and don'ts' of methods of maintaining hygiene and importance of clean water, we need to demonstrate easy and handy methods of keeping food and water clean. Not everyone can afford bottled water and even that may not be safe. Sind and Punjab have seen an upsurge of measles in children-especially in those under 5 years of age. This is a clear reflection of dysfunctional state of EPI in Pakistan especially in the last 4-5 years. Polio still refuses to be vanquished. Although there is evidence of decrease in active disease, the presence of the wild viruses in water samples in every province is not a positive sign. In fact, the type 2 virus which has been out of circulation for half a decade has been grown from water samples recently. In addition, the fact that a Pakistani origin polio virus has been isolated in China and Egypt spells a difficult position for Pakistan. Our Polio 'experts' have to think out of the box to meet such challenges.

HELP has been progressing at all fronts. The number of our adult literacy centers will be increased later this year. Our teams are part of a larger 'CSO Alliance' in Pakistan and as such, we are working in Sanghar District to improve the vaccination status of women and children. We have, through GAVI, participated in the immunization week with additional doses of measles vaccines administered to school children in Karachi. These and other milestones are highlighted in our Newsletter. HELP has had the singular honor of being selected as a member of GAVI Steering Committee in Geneva for three years. Many thanks to our CSO alliance partners for supporting our nomination; representing Pakistan positively will be an important role for us.

**Prof. DS. Akram**

### One More Feather in HELP's Cap



Following intense advocacy by HELP's team with the Parliamentarians of Sindh and others including health department, Heads of Medical Universities, Media Persons and Religious Scholars, "The Sindh Protection & Promotion of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Bill 2013" was presented in the Provincial Assembly Sindh on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2013.



### Adoption of Child Nutrition Ordinance lauded



A week later, on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2013, the bill was unanimously approved by the members of the Assembly. It was signed by the Governor of Sindh on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013 and promulgated into law. The move was highly appreciated and acknowledged by the both the print and the electronic media.

## Inauguration of "HELP Maternal and Child Health Centre" Khuda Ki Basti, Gadap Town

HELP has established a Maternal and Child Health Centre in Khuda Ki Basti, Gadap Town, a peri-urban settlement for the impoverished and homeless. The centre will cater to the needs of the surrounding population of approximately 100,000. The services that will be provided include antenatal and post natal care, normal delivery, emergency obstetrics and child care, ultrasound, basic laboratory tests and ambulance services. Training of Community health workers will also be done.

An inauguration ceremony was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2013. The ceremony began with the recitation of the Holy Quran. It was followed by a welcome address by Prof. D.S Akram, Honorary Chairperson HELP. She thanked MISEREOR for its generous support for the construction of the MCH Centre. She also thanked the National Bank of Pakistan for furnishing and equipping the labor and delivery room section. Dr. Akram appreciated Mr. Tasneem Siddiqui for extending his support throughout the years that HELP has been working in Khuda Ki Basti.

Dr. Amara Shakeel, Programme Manager HELP, spoke briefly about the objectives of HELP and its history.

Dr. Yasmeen Suleman, Senior Programme Manager, HELP, gave a brief account on how, on the invitation of SAIBAN to provide medical help to the residents of the area, HELP began its activities in Khuda Ki Basti in 2004. It began with the provision of community and facility based primary health services to the women and children of the area. There were no maternity and in-patient care services available at that time and residents, especially women, faced difficulties in reaching public hospitals, located at long distances from Khuda Ki Basti.

HELP therefore, approached various donors and built an MCH centre in the area. Chairman SAIBAN, Tasneem Siddiqui, appreciated HELP's efforts in providing the much needed obstetric facilities in the area and assured HELP of its full support.



Mr. Ghulam Mohammad, an official from the National Bank of Pakistan, also spoke on the occasion and highly appreciated HELP's efforts in providing medical services to the poor residents of this distant area.

Mr. Tasneem Siddiqui and Mr. Ghulam Mohammad performed the ribbon cutting ceremony and formally opened the labour and delivery room section of the centre.

The program ended with a vote of thanks by Prof Dr. D.S. Akram followed by refreshments.



## Hepatitis B Vaccination Campaign

HELP carried out a vaccination campaign in its 5 schools located in various squatter settlements of Karachi. Hepatitis B vaccine was administered to more than 300 students and teachers of the schools. Additionally, awareness raising sessions were arranged for the mothers and other household caretakers regarding prevention of Hepatitis B.



## Best Employee Award

HELP has always endeavored to motivate its employees in order to accomplish its objectives with great

efficiency. In this regard, HELP school coordinator Miss. Rukhsana Anwar was selected as the best employee. Miss Rukhsana was presented with a certificate and cash prize.



## Advocacy Seminars on “Early Initiation and Exclusive Breastfeeding” in Karachi and Quetta

An Advocacy seminar on “Saving Lives of Newborns by Early Initiation of Breastfeeding and Exclusive Breastfeeding” was held in Karachi and Quetta, on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2013 and 26<sup>th</sup> February 2013, respectively. The project is being implemented by HELP in Sindh and Balochistan in collaboration with SAIFRN (South Asian Infant Feeding Research Network) and Nutrition Cell Balochistan and is funded by the Maternal and Newborn Health Programme, Research and Advocacy Fund (RAF). The event was attended by Sindh Rehabilitation Minister, Haji Muzafar Shujrah, MPA Pitamber Sewani and others including the media, pediatricians, government officials, faculty members from medical universities and representatives from PPA, UNICEF and various civil society organizations.



The objective of the seminar was to influence policy makers to have a consensus for the need to introduce the “Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002” in the Provincial Assemblies and its inclusion in the legislature. It also aimed to influence the academia to include the teaching of Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) and “Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002” in the undergraduate medical curriculum. The seminar in Karachi was held at Hotel Pearl Continental Karachi. It began with the name of Allah followed by a welcome address by Dr. Ambreen Saad. Dr. Yasmeen Suleman, Senior Programme Manager at HELP briefed the audience about the Project objectives and current activities being implemented in Sindh and Balochistan. Mr. Saleem Abbasi, from SAIFRN, spoke on “The determinants of Infant Feeding Practices in Pakistan: Secondary Analyses of PDHS 2006-07” and about the World Health Organization's (WHO) indicators for optimum breastfeeding. HELP's Chairperson, Prof. D.S Akram made a note that an international ‘Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes’ was developed by WHO in 1981, as a global public health strategy. The code suggested restrictions on the marketing of breast milks



substitutes, such as infant formula to ensure that mothers are not discouraged from breastfeeding. Pakistan was among the 118 countries that voted in favour of adopting the code, but to date implementation of the same, in the form of laws, is still awaited. She further elaborated the rules and regulations incorporated in the Ordinance and the procedures outlined for its implementation. The role of the "Infant Feeding Board" was presented and clarified. Its functions involve receiving reports of violation, planning and co-ordination, dissemination of information and educational material and advising the government on policies for protection of Breastfeeding and Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF). Pakistan has the

exclusive breastfeeding rates and highest bottle feeding rates, amongst South Asian countries. She noted that in order to restrict indiscriminate advertising and promotion of breast milk substitutes, it is imperative to adopt laws to check and regulate the marketing of infant feeding/milk. Through the project; religious scholars, parliamentarians and medical practitioners are being sensitized on the issue. Professor Fehmina Arif, from Dow University of Health Sciences Karachi, emphasized on the importance of early Initiation and exclusive Breastfeeding. She said that amongst South Asian countries the under 5 mortality rate of Pakistan is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest, being 72/1000 live births. Pakistan stands at the 5<sup>th</sup> rank in the early initiation of breastfeeding practices (27%) in South Asia. She informed that following the advocacy meeting with HELP, the “Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes” and "Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF)" has been included in the undergraduate medical curriculum of DUHS. Sindh Rehabilitation Minister, Haji Muzafar Shujrah, while sharing his views, appreciated HELP's efforts and assured his support to table the bill in the Sindh Assembly. Additionally he said that he will soon table a bill in the Sindh Assembly, on population control. MPA Pitamber Sewani announced that he will table the Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Bill in the Provincial Assembly as soon as the session begins. Zakarias Getachew, Nutrition Specialist at UNICEF Sindh, while sharing his views, said that Sindh was a vulnerable area, as assessed in the recent nutrition survey released by UNICEF and other organizations. He informed that UNICEF was supporting interventions in three main areas-to reduce child mortality rates by encouraging breastfeeding. Sharing the outcome of the nutrition survey, UNICEF representative said that five out of ten children in Sindh suffer from malnutrition. Dr. Jamal Raza, General Secretary of Pakistan Paediatric Association admitted that some pediatricians in the country encourage formula milk. He disclosed that a huge amount of Pakistan's foreign exchange, amounting to Rs 7.1 billion annually, is spent on formula milk. Qari Shaheryar, a religious scholar quoted the Holy Quran, saying that religion also encourages breastfeeding of children. The floor was then opened for group discussions and all queries were well attended by the speakers. Dr. Shehzad, a representative from HEALTH TV, said that, as doctors, it is our responsibility to inform parents about the importance of breastfeeding. A government representative informed that relevant legislation has been drafted by the Health department and they are actively pursuing it. Ms. Rozina Mistry, consultant UNICEF, asked the media to play its role in highlighting the issue. The program ended with a vote of thanks by Prof. D.S Akram, followed by Lunch. A similar programme was also held in Quetta on 26<sup>th</sup> February. Mr. Naseebullah Bazai, Secretary Health GoB, was the Chief Guest. Dr. Ali Nasir Bugti, Deputy Director Nutrition Cell Balochistan welcomed the participants and briefed the participants about the objectives of the project. (continue pg4)

**HELP in collaboration with UNICEF and GAVI Celebrated World Immunization and Mother and Child Week in Schools**



**Fund Raiser**

To raise funds for the extension of its MCH centre in Khuda Ki basti, HELP organized a comedy stage play 'Aangan Terha'. The script was written by Anwar Maqsood and produced by "Kopykat Productions". This was held on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at Arts council Karachi.



There was an overwhelming response both from the general public and corporate sector. Amongst those who came to watch the play was Justice (R) Mr. Fakhruddin G Ibrahim Mr. Anwar Maqsood speaking on the occasion praised HELP's efforts in providing maternal and child health services to the impoverished population of the squatter settlement.

**Visits to other South Asian Countries for training and research:**

Senior Program Manager HELP, Dr Yasmeen Suleman attended a workshop on 'Tele-counseling for Infant and young child feeding' in Nagpur India. The training was arranged by Lata Medical Research Foundation, India for South Asian Infant Feeding Research Network (SAIFRN). It was part of the multi-country trial on the role of peer counseling and tele-counseling in infant and young child feeding. The trial will be undertaken from June 2013 in five South Asian Countries.

**Advocacy Seminars on "Early Initiation and Exclusive Breastfeeding" in Karachi and Quetta (continued from pg3)**

A similar programme was also held in Quetta on 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2013. Mr. Naseebullah Bazai, Secretary Health GoB, was the Chief Guest. Project Coordinator Dr. Gul Sabeen Azam through a presentation on gave an overview of the project Prof. Dr. DS. Akram spoke on the "Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance-2002" elaborating upon the rules and regulations incorporated in the Ordinance and procedures outlined for its implementation. The role of the "Infant Feeding Board" was also discussed. Mr. Muhammad Sheraz from Nutrition Cell Baluchistan gave a



He shared that the under 5 mortality rate of Pakistan amongst countries of South Asia is 2<sup>nd</sup> from the bottom, being 72/1000 live births whereas Pakistan is number 5 in early breastfeeding practices (27%) in South Asia. He further elaborated that if the code is not implemented in its true sense the situation of morbidity and mortality can worsen in the coming years. The last presentation was on "Implementation of 'Code' in other South Asian countries" by Dr. Gul Sabeen Azam, wherein the status of implementation of Code of breast feeding substitutes in different South Asian countries was discussed in detail. After this an interactive discussion was held and the parliamentarians and policy makers agreed to enhance trainings of health workers.



Academia expressed an agreement to include the teaching of IYCF and "Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance 2002" in the medical teaching of undergraduates. Mr. Naseebullah Bazai expressed his gratitude to HELP & RAF for supporting the department in strengthening IYCF and promoting breastfeeding in the province. He said that Baluchistan is the most deprived and poorest of all provinces, IMR, U-5 Mortality and MMR in Balochistan are very alarming, therefore extra efforts are required to help Balochistan achieve the Millennium Development Goal. He assured that HELP team of full support for the implementation of the said project. Seminar ended with a vote of the thanks by Dr Gul Sabeen Azam followed by Lunch.

## HELP's current projects

- 'Mother and Child Friendly Community in Shadadpur', District Sanghar- Funded by GAVI.
- 'Saving New born lives by Early Initiation of Breastfeeding and Exclusive Breastfeeding' in Sindh and Balochistan- Funded by Research and Advocacy funds (RAF), British Council
- 'Community based Primary health care project' Lower Gizri, Neelam Colony & Khuda ki Basti in Karachi- Funded by MISEREOR Germany
- Maternal & Child Health Centres at Khuda Ki Basti and Neelum Colony Karachi.
- Pre-Primary Schools, Lower Gizri and Neelam Colony Karachi.
- P&G/HELP Pre-primary School in Ghaggar.
- Home Schools in Ghaggar, Bin Qasim Town.
- Non-Formal Education Project for Adult Literacy; 120 centres in slums of Karachi.
- HELP Public health Nutrition Institute involved with nutrition related training & research.

## Help in Media



HELP was invited to a TV show titled, "24/7 Round Up" on Health TV to discuss 'The Sindh Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Ordinance 2013'

## >92% coverage of routine immunization in HELP's Target communities

Like previous years with the help of highly committed and motivated staff, HELP has been able to maintain > 92% routine immunization coverage in its target areas in squatter settlements.

## Renovation of HELP Pre-Primary School , Neelam Colony by Students of Rana Liaquat Ali Khan College of Home Economics



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