

Child Centred Health Education Approaches

GRAMYATRA

(Village rally)



Child Resource Centre

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(Village rally)

Centre for Health Education, Training and Nutrition Awareness (CHETNA), is a voluntary organisation based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. CHETNA's mission is to assist in the empowerment of disadvantaged women and children to gain control on their own health, that of their family and community.

As a result of its experience with child centred activities, CHETNA has now established the **Child Resource Centre (CRC)**. The CRC is a central exchange for ideas on planning, implementing, evaluating, popularising and advocating for programmes which focus on child centred health education and development. The CRC offers support for activities, such as a liaison between child centred organisations and concerned government departments. Above all, the CRC seeks to improve the effectiveness and enhance the capabilities of functionaries and organisations working in this area. Needbased education and training materials are also developed and disseminated for effective exposition of ideas.

Child health and development is an area of programmatic interest to the **Aga Khan Foundation India (AKFI)**. The Foundation has sponsored several Child Centred Health Education programmes in India. These programmes are different in settings, scale, mode of implementation, content, and other aspects. In continuation with the endeavour of child centred programmes, AKFI has supported the publication of this document and the activities of the CRC of CHETNA.

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PREFACE

This booklet represents one in a series of publications of the Child Resource Centre (CRC), aimed at promoting activities and programmes which focus on child centred health education and development.

One of the aims of the **Child Resource Centre** is to assist in improving the effectiveness and capabilities of those working in the area of health education. Our strategy for achieving this is to document successful learning approaches, as is being done through these booklets.

Increasingly, traditional teaching techniques are being replaced by more participatory activities and methodologies. Many teachers are searching for new ideas. The ideas and methodology presented in this series of booklets are designed to be used by those interested in trying innovative, **ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES** in their work with children. The strategies are a step forward from static classroom teaching to a more relevant, hands-on and dynamic educational process.

The activities detailed in this booklet are specifically aimed at the community at a time when the Child Centred Health Education programme is in the implementation stage. This is considered necessary to enhance the health education work being done with children.

CRC team

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I

INTRODUCTION

Health education does not exist in schools only. In order for the strategies that teachers use to promote "child power" to be effective, they have to be supported by families and the community. Innovative teaching techniques with children stand null and void against rigid attitudes and traditional practices of the community. Thus to enhance the education work being done with children, it is advisable to work also with the community.

Children are a "captive audience" in schools. It is not so easy to gather parents and community members. The best that can be done is to bring them together for a one-time special event. This will necessarily limit the amount of information that can be shared. One of the best techniques is to adapt a traditional activity such as the **Gramyatra (village rally)**, and build health education messages into the activity.



What is rally?

In the ancient Indian tradition, groups of people going from one place to another for pilgrimage is often referred to as a **yatra (rally)**, the literal meaning of which is a journey undertaken for a noble cause. Villagers in a tradition of sharing, make local arrangements to host the travelling groups. There is therefore the expectation on the part of the villagers of sharing in the blessings or advantages which the yatris or pilgrims will gain.

In the modern context, the term yatra has evolved to assume a secular meaning. Villagers are by now familiar with the concept of the **pad yatra or rally on foot**, from village to village, undertaken by various individuals and groups. And the villagers associate it with a strongly felt idealistic issue.

The same idea can be used effectively for an educational purpose, where the blessing to be shared in return for hospitality, will be the health education knowledge of those who come to the village.

Why a rally?

The purpose of the rally is to involve adults in the health education being imparted to children through use of innovative strategies.

It is important that the adults organising a rally are warm, children-oriented beings, who have not quite forgotten what it feels like to be a child. These adults must be oriented prior to the commencement of the rally.

The emphasis of the orientation should be that while keeping in mind the central focus of the approach, they should give free reign to their imagination to make the various units of the rally as stimulating and innovative as possible, encouraging maximum participation and initiative from the participants.

One of the principles of adult learning is that things are learned more effectively, if they are learned through experience rather than simply through book-knowledge. The creation of a village rally certainly provides experiential learning for all. The village rally allows for dialogue with the village, and the festive atmosphere motivates people to learn and retains their attention. If well designed, the activities at the event can help them remember the messages.

Who is the rally for?

The rally is for the whole village, but special programmes should be conducted with all the important groups within the community such as teachers, community workers, women and farmers. Other programmes should be planned for the whole village, so that the comprehension, acceptance and retention of the messages which have occurred in the different groups are more clearly understood and retained.

When is it best to organise a rally?

It is best to find a time when there are not a lot of demands on people's time. For example, it is not a good idea to organise the event during planting or harvest season. Likewise, since the rally involves teachers it is best to organise the event in the school itself but in a period which is free from examinations.



How are rallies organised?

The rally requires moving from village to village over several days, and so should be organised in an area where more than one village can be involved. Our experience is that ten villages covered through one rally is optimal for effective learning.

It is best to explore the readiness of the community to extend hospitality to the organising team, before the event. The community needs to agree to provide board and lodging to the health education team. A strategy like the village rally also needs careful pre-planning. Carry along as much audio-visual material on nutrition and health as possible. Adequate art material such as papers, colours etc. should also be carried so as to be sufficient for all villages. Wherever possible, use local resources and material.

It would be helpful if meetings are organised to create awareness before the actual rally takes place. Local institutions, teachers, youth and others should be encouraged to take the responsibility for making the local arrangements. Make daywise plans in consultation with the villagers and share these with all the local groups.

Need for movement

As the group of implementors move from village to village imparting their health messages, the number of individuals in the group will increase. After a stop at each village, new motivated villagers will join the group. Such individuals are members of the community who have been convinced by the health messages that were imparted. Their presence in the group will increase the credibility of the group as a whole. As new members join, make a special effort to encourage spontaneity and individual initiative and creativity. A brisk tempo of activities will help in holding interest and keeping everyone's spirits high.

And miles to go before I sleep.....

Need for demonstration

It is best to plan a full day of activities. The activities can involve introducing new information to the community. They might be follow-up activities for health education learning that has been taking place with the children in schools. They might be designed by the children as a way of telling others what they have learned.

Either the same activities can be conducted the next day at the next village, or they can be changed by both the organisers as well as the villagers who have joined the rally. The new members may be able to present the health messages in ways more suitable to the local conditions.

Need for stimulating presentation

A village rally becomes successful when a large number of people take part in it enthusiastically. In order to bring this about, identify such health education activities which represent the common health problems of the village and present them in a stimulating way. Experience has indicated that the following topics can be presented in an interesting manner : **malaria, clean water, balanced diet, vitamin A deficiency, personal hygiene, anaemia, diarrhoea and immunisation.** While explaining this approach to health educators, make it clear why children are involved in this process. Explain that children are very effective change agents for the preventive and promotive aspects of health care. But children need to be believed in and supported in the information that they bring home.

The village rally can be utilised in many ways. For instance, the rally can be used to create initial awareness for health education programmes. Or it can be organised to increase the effectiveness of the ongoing Child Centred Health Education programmes. It can also be used to supplement or follow-up the activities or other initiatives of Child Centred Health Education programmes. Instead of involving the whole village, the rally could also be used with special groups within the community such as women, health workers and so on.

Arrival

It is important to reach the destination in the morning and to meet at a public place. The school is the ideal place for arrival. Let everyone in the village know that you have arrived by taking a round of the village, playing the drum, singing health songs or carrying colourful placards.

Programme at the school

Contact the principal to take his permission to organise an exhibition on nutrition and health in one room of the school or in the open ground. Encourage the children to visit the exhibition in classwise groups. If lively and interesting activities are organised during this visit, it will arouse and captivate the children's interest. Such activities could include a demonstration of how to make the Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) or a slide show with a story on balanced diet. It would be fun for the children to wear scary masks which depict the different diseases that are preventable through immunisation and to perform an on the spot skit on the topic. More information could be given to them later on. Children will also enjoy singing action based health songs set to lively tunes.

Meeting with teachers

Invite the teachers to the exhibition establishing initial contact with the children. They will be able to see how much the children enjoy the exhibition and the health related activities. Conduct a meeting with the teachers and talk of what Child Centred Health Education and activity oriented teaching is all about. Explain clearly how using such an approach, children can become effective communicators of health messages to their families and communities.

This could also be a good time to make a plan with the principal and the teachers to introduce activity oriented health

education in each class. Go through the text books and select appropriate health related topics. Give a practical demonstration of how it can be taught by conducting a class.

Explain to the class teachers that a cultural show is planned for the evening, before an audience of the whole village. Request the teachers' assistance to help the children present cultural items on health related topics.



Conducting activities with children

There are many ways in which activity oriented health education approaches for/by children can be demonstrated to both children and to different adult groups. Some examples are given below. These will create an interest in the health education being imparted to children in the school and also in building up support for the programme in the community.

Story

In order to teach the topic of balanced diet, a story could be told along the following lines:

A king wanted to build a beautiful palace for his queen, but every time it was built, it would crumble into separate heaps of bricks, sand, wood and so on. Ultimately it was realised that appropriate proportions of the different ingredients were not being used. When the craftsmen realised the importance of balanced proportions, a beautiful palace was built which the queen adored and which lasted for years and years. Like the palace, our body also needs correct proportions of a variety of foods to keep it healthy and disease free.

The story should be spiced with humour and suspense and should depend for its effect on lively and brisk narrative skill. A nutrition and health discussion should follow, covering a wide range of issues such as why we need to eat, functions of foods, sources of nutrients - specially local ones. To help children retain this knowledge, play a related game.

Game

Make three circles on the ground, one each for energy giving foods, foods for growth and development and protective foods.

Children should stand away from the circles while the organiser stands in the centre and calls out names of foods. Depending on its function, the children should run into the correct circle. All those who go to the wrong circle or are late are **out**. Explain at the end of the game why some children got **out** and others won the game. This will help to revise the health messages.

Health songs

Music is the universal language of communication and children have a great love for it. Convert well known community based songs in the local language, with rousing tunes, into health songs. To give an English example, Old Mc Donald Had a Farm can be reworded to say:

Old Ram Chaudhary had a farm
And on his farm he had some puddles
With mosquitoes here and mosquitoes there
Here a bite there a bite and shiver shiver everywhere
On his farm he also had fever
And so he called a Doc
The Doc looked here and the Doc looked there
And said there was Malaria everywhere
Old Ram Chaudhary ! What is this?
Mosquitoes breed here and mosquitoes breed there
And they spread Malaria everywhere
Old Ram Chaudhary listen well !
There should be no puddles anywhere
The Doc went here and the Doc went there
Giving chloroquine tablets everywhere
Old Ram Chaudhary when he was well
He filled up puddles everywhere
Everyone was happy once again
Here a smile, there a smile, everywhere a smile smile
Old Ram Chaudhary.....

Puppet show

Everyone loves puppets, which are a traditional source of entertainment and worldlywise learning for the community. The idea of what fun health education is, can be seen through a puppet show on personal hygiene.

Chunni : Munni, you look so beautiful and you are
(dirty puppet) never sick. Why do I become sick so often?
I don't like having this sickness. I am not
regular at school. What is your secret?

Munni Chunni why are you so sad? I will gladly
(clean puppet) tell you my secret. But first see yourself in
this mirror. How do you look?

Chunni Are you trying to make me ashamed of
myself?

- Munni No Chunni, I want you to understand the importance of staying clean.
- Chunni O.K. I look very dirty. No one likes to play with me. My nails are also long and dirty. I have lice in my hair. My breath smells, for I don't brush my teeth regularly.
- Munni Chunni you know half the secret. Now let me help you.
- (Munni helps Chunni clean herself. She helps her to brush her teeth. Makes her take a head-bath and combs her hair. She helps her to put on clean clothes and cuts her nails. She then brings her back to the mirror).
- Munni Now tell me who is that in the mirror?
- Chunni Oh my, I never thought I could look so good. Munni, who is this girl? I would like to play with her.
- Munni If you keep yourself clean you will not fall sick very often and can go to school regularly and have lots of friends.
- (The two girls hug each other)
- Chunni Thank you Munni for telling me the secret. Now I am determined to stay clean and healthy for I not only look good but I also feel good.

Demonstration

A dramatic demonstration is an effective way of imparting messages on topics like clean water.

Take two glasses of clean water. Take one glass and have a child wash his hand in that water. Let the water from the hand drop into a white saucer. Show the difference between the clean water in the glass and the unclean water in the white saucer.

Placard making

Children love to be asked to create things which are to be used in a programme involving them. Involve them in designing placards carrying health slogans. These can be made of card-boards of a size visible from a distance. This activity will arouse enthusiasm and encourage creativity. These placards can either be displayed or used during prabhat pheris (morning processions) which can be planned for the next morning.

Divide the children into small groups. Jointly decide which messages are the important ones. Discuss the different ways in which they could be written and the art work that should go with them. Then encourage the children to complete their placards. To make the session more interesting, divide the children into groups which can take up different topics such as malaria or diarrhoea. Practise the slogan shouting in the large group.



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Visiting the panchayat (local government office)

By the time the school visit is over, the panchayat office will open. Visit the panchayat and talk to members about the Child Centred Health Education programme going on at school and in the village.

The panchayat should be involved in arranging for the team's hospitality. It would be a good idea for all team members to take their meals with different families. This will help them to get to know more people and the availability of local foods. Informal talks with host families will enable the team to have a clearer understanding of the local nutrition and health problems as well.

Accepting the hospitality of many of the people belonging to the village will also be in keeping with the concept of the **yatra**, where the members and the hosts depend upon each other. In the Indian tradition, such jointly shared meals create a feeling of togetherness, a sense of purpose and a combined movement towards a joint goal - in this case the imparting and gaining of important health related knowledge.

Ask for the community's help in organising a cultural programme in the evening for all the villagers. Listen carefully to their opinions and take their help in deciding upon the location and in making other arrangements. If there is a community worker, encourage him to take leadership in organising the event.

Meeting with village leaders

Involve as many interested and enthusiastic people as possible and talk to them about Child Centred Health Education, its usefulness and need and talk to them also about the evening's cultural programme and ask for their assistance. Their leadership, support and enthusiasm will help to stimulate the whole village to take an interest in the new approach to health education for their children.

Let no one have doubts regarding your visit to the village. Explain to them the purpose of your visit.

Meeting with women

Hold a separate meeting with women. Their wholehearted support is necessary if the health related messages, that the children bring home, are to be put into practice at home and in the community. Discuss the following points with them:

- Talk to them about the common health topics, which their children will learn about in school, such as contamination of water leading to diarrhoea, anaemia, vitamin A deficiency and so on.
- Emphasise that they should listen carefully to the information brought home by children. If they have doubts on certain issues, teachers or community workers can clarify them. Underline that this programme can be successful only if they encourage healthy habits in their children.
- Explain how the children will gain this new health knowledge through actually performing different activities.
- They should listen to the children's account of the day's learning at school, respecting their views and encouraging them to try out their new health related knowledge.

Use different methods such as songs, plays and puppet shows to demonstrate to the women the fun aspect and usefulness of health education imparted through such formats.

Programmes at the community level

A village rally is ideally organised for the benefit and involvement of the whole community and can be considered to be successful only when people respond to it in large numbers. Due to socio-cultural organisations of villages, it often becomes necessary to talk to the different groups in the village separately. To consolidate this group learning, it is also important to conduct certain programmes for the entire community.

Two such programmes have proved to be very effective. These are the cultural show which can be organised at night and the prabhat pheri (morning procession) and cleanliness drive which can be organised the next morning.

Such activities help to create a demand for more Child Centred Health Education approaches in the village. They also mobilise enthusiastic motivated members, who are willing to join the rally as it leaves the next day for the next village.

Cultural programme

This programme should be performed in a central place of the village. The local leaders, workers, teachers, youth and others should help to organise it. This will enable the community to feel that it is "their" programme and not something forced from top or outside.

The cultural programme can begin with a prayer and local songs and continue to go on to health education focused entertainment. This can take the form of songs, bhajans (devotional songs) quawallis (form of vocal music inviting audience participation), folk songs, skits, role plays, jokes, mono acting, folk and group dances and puppet shows.

To maintain the enthusiasm of the audience, the organising team should also present some items. They will be greatly appreciated and will assist in creating a bond.

This function will help to explain what Child Centred Health Education is all about, to the largest groups of people who are all collected at one place at one time. Most of the education imparted about the approach to the various groups, should now be reproduced. The following areas can be emphasised:

- The usefulness and importance of Child Centred Health Education programmes.
- Imaginative use of different formats for imparting such education.
- The need for teachers to be actively involved.
- For the village leaders to lend support to the programme.
- The need for parents to take an interest in the information brought home by the children. And to make an active effort to introduce the health related changes in the home and community.

Importance of role play

A role play is a very effective way of presenting an issue. A role play can be presented on how children are prevented by parents from trying out their newly learned health education at home and how it effects the goals of the programme. An example of such a role play is given here. Many other similar plays can be written bearing in mind the necessity of making them short, brisk, building to a climax and having an element of humour in them.

Role play on difficulties faced by children in communicating health messages in the home

Mother (Shanti) Manju, hurry up and come to eat, what in the world is taking you so long? Can't you see how busy I am?

Manju Mother, I am just coming, I was only washing my hands properly, our teacher says...

Mother Oh, please don't start off with that again. Teacher tells you a lot of silly things like washing your hands before you eat, eating green leafy vegetables and filtering water. Now who has time to do all these things? Why should we eat grass like animals when there are other things to eat? Besides it is of no practical use whatsoever. Of what use is such education?

Manju But mother such education is most important for day to day life. What? Potatoes again? Why don't we have leafy green vegetables? They are very good for health.

Mother That is enough. I know more than you. I have seen more seasons than you have and have more experience than your young teacher for that matter. Finish your food and go and fetch water.

Scene II

(Manju sits down to cut her nails)

Mother And now may I know what you are busy with? Didn't you hear me telling you to fetch some water? Is this the time to dress up?

Manju But mother, I am not dressing up. I am only cutting my nails. Teacher says that dirty nails make the water dirty and make us ill.

Mother That wretched teacher again. I don't want another word out of you. Now just get up IMMEDIATELY and fetch the water. Do you hear me?

Your teacher doesn't seem to be teaching you anything. She is only playing games. I tell you, next year you are not going to school. Enough is enough.

- Parvati (neighbour) Why Shanti? What is enough?
- Shanti Do come Parvati. This girl is driving me mad with her new fangled educational ideas. When I asked her to fetch some water, she started cutting her nails and preaching to me that dirty nails can cause diarrhoea. It is really the limit.
- Parvati But Shanti what she says is absolutely true.
- Shanti What? Don't tell me you have also joined this crazy force?
- Parvati Oh no Shanti. You know me. I was also extremely against the information my son Sunil brought home from school. But when his little sister Suman had diarrhoea, Sunil insisted on giving her some sugar- salt solution while we took her to the doctor. The doctor said that it was due to Sunil that Suman was saved from dehydration. Now our whole family listens to the health information that Sunil brings home from school about cutting nails and so on. All such information has helped to keep our family healthy.
- Shanti I see, since Manju studies with Sunil, I suppose she too must be right. But tell me Parvati did the doctor also suggest eating green leafy vegetables?
- Parvati But of course he did. Not only that, he said that we can stay healthy if we eat a variety of different foods rather than just cereals and potatoes.
- Shanti Manju dear just see how ignorant I am. I am so sorry for scolding my dear learned daughter. Tell me what shall we make for dinner tonight? And pass me that nailcutter after you finish. And Manju?
- Manju Yes mother?
- Shanti I do hope you have enough sense to remember to take the filtering cloth with you when you go to fetch water?
- Manju (Saluting smartly) Yes mother, I will indeed remember, for you are beginning to sound even sterner than our teacher.

Prabhat pheri (morning procession) and cleanliness drive

This session can become a natural outlet for the usual enthusiasm children have for physical activity. It is also an opportunity to draw the attention of the community to a common health problem and to assist them to take joint action.

Make an early morning start. Have another rehearsal of holding the placards and shouting of slogans and then proceed to march through the village. In the centre of the village the large group can divide itself into smaller groups which can take the responsibility of cleaning a particular street or lane of the village. Take the help of the villagers while cleaning, like asking for broomsticks or dustbins from the houses and thus encouraging them to participate in the activity.

At the end of the session, the groups can come together at the central place in the village and sing health songs. Such an opportunity can be used to demonstrate preparation of ORS or first-aid or a role play can also be performed.

A discussion can take place with the villagers, which also involves children, on how they can keep their village and houses clean. The diseases resulting from an unhygienic environment can also be discussed.

Display the posters and placards prepared by children at prominent places. For instance a poster related to cleanliness around a water source can be put up on the wall near a well or a handpump. Encourage children to write health slogans at the key places of the village.



And so, on to the next village...

At the end of this activity, it is time to depart for the next village. By this time, almost the entire community will have been involved in the village rally for twenty four hours and good-byes will be warm and emotional.

It is an excellent time to use the good-will created, by quickly revising the health messages covered and seeking an assurance from the community that they will actively participate in and support the Child Centred Health Education process.

A few local villagers may join the rally on to the next village. This will lend additional support and credibility to the entire effort. Ideally the village rally can begin with four team members and end up with about fifteen to twenty members.



Follow-up and feedback will also reveal level of awareness and changes that have occurred in their day to day nutrition and health habits. If several messages have been accepted, improvement in standards of health, hygiene and environmental sanitation of the community will also be observed.

At implementators' level

The success of the rally can be assessed both during and after the event.

If the rally succeeds in involving the community in the nutrition and health messages being imparted, it will enhance effectiveness of ongoing health programmes being implemented in the area. The community will also find it easier to ask questions and clarify their doubts.

Follow-up of health education messages in the community, is an important part of any new educational approach. If the rally has been a success, there will be improved future interactions with the community. The community will also demand more need based health education and volunteers will come forward to help in this process.



The Child Resource Centre (CRC) has published a series of booklets in English, Hindi and Gujarati focusing on Child Centred Health Education Approaches.

These booklets are written in a simple, clear and concise style and are attractively illustrated. They will be useful additions to libraries and to individuals and organisations involved in child centred activities. A list of the booklets available is given below.

Health Education Can be Fun

Khel-Khel Mein
(Learning whilst playing)

Growing Up Healthy

Balmela (Children's Fair)

Gramyatra (Village Rally)

Activity Oriented Health Learning for Children - A Teacher's Manual.



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