

Zero Leprosy Best Practices

Best Practice: *A School-based Leprosy Awareness Campaign in an Area School in Nepal*

Subthemes

- Early detection and prompt treatment
- Reduction of stigma, discrimination, and exclusion

Target Audience(s)

- Trainers

Contributors

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Key Messages

School-based health education programs can promote leprosy information and awareness in the community through the training of school children. Health education that uses classroom sessions and appealing messages is effective. Beyond the benefits to the participating students, other school children (peers), family members, and community members can be indirect beneficiaries of this approach through their interactions with these students.

Key Informant / Date Submitted

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Description of the Best Practice

Introduction

This initiative was conceptualized and implemented by International Nepal Fellowship (INF) community workers and local self-help groups (SHGs) to address the challenge of insufficient awareness and knowledge of leprosy among community members.

Through this intervention, ~400 students in classes 1-10 along with teachers, administrators, support staff, and other local influencers/decision-makers were educated on key leprosy issues. Also, as part of a competition, 9 students gave speeches on leprosy.

In addition, a reader-friendly leprosy information leaflet was given to each participant to take home so that others would be reached.

The annual World Leprosy Day (WLD) provided an opportunity to disseminate leprosy information to a wide audience and to do so by direct local involvement.

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Objectives and Methodology

The overall goal of this activity was to increase leprosy awareness and knowledge and to do so in close co-operation with local SHGs, which included leprosy-affected persons.

The annual WLD events provided a good opportunity to increase leprosy awareness and to encourage local decision-makers to engage in leprosy-related activities. Interventions were therefore planned and implemented as part of the WLD events.

The intervention was implemented in an area school with 400+ students and in an atmosphere of festivity, which included music, flags, refreshments, and other attractions.

Implementation of Practice

- Lectures on leprosy were given for classes 8-10, and included information folders that mainly focused on early signs and symptoms. This was combined with a 45-minute session that included time for questions. A speech-competition for students from these classes was also held in front of all classes, teachers, administrators, support staff, and other attendees.
- Printed, reader-friendly leprosy information materials (handbills and leaflets) were distributed
- Persons affected by leprosy and specific SHGs participated in the design and implementation of this activity, which was coordinated by the INF Surkhet program

Results—Outputs and Outcomes

One of the key results and outputs of this intervention was that representatives of various levels of the local society were thoroughly immersed in leprosy awareness and information.

The sessions were tailor-made for the situation (as far as could be observed), which worked well. Students and staff were interested and attentive and received understandable materials to take home.

The project was completed. There was no direct follow up; however, contact details for further information and interaction was provided on the distributed pamphlets. Alternatively, if a follow-up was needed, a short knowledge, attitude, and perception (KAP) survey could be given after some time. Another option would be to contact staff that had been engaged in the sessions and discuss how some of the information in the materials could be used in the lessons at school.

Lessons Learned

- Organising this event around WLD events enhanced involvement of all relevant stakeholders (students, parents, school management, others)
- The use of student volunteers for speech presentations also helped ensure participation and enthusiasm, and promoted creativity

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- It is important to ensure that the content of speeches given by the volunteer students is good and educative
- Recognition of the student volunteers by school management and teachers was also helpful
- School children will relay information learned to their peers, parents, and other community members

Replicability and Scalability

- The project was tailored for WLD, and activities were implemented in one school and were contextualized
- The cost was minimal since the project was done around WLD, which included involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

Conclusions

School-based leprosy health education interventions are effective for the dissemination of leprosy information to school children, their peers, family members, and the larger community and should be implemented around WLD.

Further Readings

1. Prem Kumar R, Keystone JS, Christian M, Jesudasan K. Transmission of health information on leprosy from children to their families: another approach to health education. *Lepr Rev* 1991;62:58-64.
2. Nandha B, Krishnamoorthy K. School-based health education campaign—a potential tool for social mobilization to promote the use of DEC-fortified salt towards elimination of lymphatic filariasis, *Health Educ Res* 2007;22(4):539–546.