

CAPACITY BUILDING

India is currently undergoing economic, demographic, nutritional and health transition. The pace of the transition varies between states and different segments of the population. Even now, undernutrition remains the major public health problem but unlike the earlier era where poverty and lack of purchasing power had been the major determinants of undernutrition, newer factors such as poor infant and young child feeding and caring practices, metabolic disorders, malignancies and HIV infection are emerging as important factors associated with undernutrition in different age groups.

The country has entered the era of dual disease burden where prevalence of overnutrition, obesity and associated increased risk of non-communicable diseases is rising. The major effort to combat this will be through dietary and lifestyle modifications.

There is an urgent need to update the knowledge of all segments of population on:

- changing trends in nutritional problems and their health consequences
- appropriate dietary lifestyle modifications for prevention of these problems
- available services for early detection of these problems and appropriate management.

NFI has always been at the forefront of institutions engaged in the task of capacity building at all levels. Some of the major activities in capacity building at various levels – policy makers, programme implementators, professionals and paraprofessionals, undergraduate and postgraduate students, educational institutions and people themselves – are described in the following pages.

EXTENSION EDUCATION

The Foundation has always recognized that the growing knowledge regarding diet and nutrition should be widely disseminated to the public in order to promote healthy dietary habits and lifestyles. Much of the macro and micro nutrient deficiencies in the country can be ameliorated through the judicious use of locally available inexpensive foods, which are within the economic reach of even poor families. Nutrition education emphasizing the importance of special attention to mothers and children (the vulnerable groups) by appropriate intra-familial distribution of food based on need is urgently required to reduce undernutrition in women and children. A crucial segment of population which has been totally neglected are the mothers-to-be – the adolescent girls

who will usher in and shape the generation of tomorrow. Sustained nutrition/health education programmes beamed to different sections of the populations must form part of health services of the country.

With the emergence of obesity and related chronic degenerative diseases due to altered dietary intake and lifestyles in the emerging affluent segments of the population, nutrition education aimed at correcting lifestyles and eating habits to prevent obesity become important. The Extension Education programmes of the Foundation are aimed at reaching out to the poor communities in the rural areas and the urban slums of Delhi as well as well-to-do sections of the society.

Education for Better Living in Rural Areas

In 1992, NFI's Extension Division adopted two villages – Chiksana and Undra in the Bharatpur District of Rajasthan for exploring the role of education for better living in rural adolescent girls; NFI attempted to demonstrate appropriate and effective methodology for the mobilization and training of rural youth (especially adolescent girls), many of whom had not had the benefit of even primary school education. Health brigades (Swasthya Sainiks) comprising 20 adolescent girls were formed in village Chiksana and Undra. The youth were trained so that they were aware of health/nutrition/environment problems and of ways of overcoming them; they were motivated to actively participate in local development programmes and to disseminate the knowledge and skills they had gained to other youth in the community. A perceptible qualitative change in knowledge, attitude and practice among youth and the community was brought about through nutrition and health education.

Nutrition Education in Urban Slums

Poor and illiterate communities bear the brunt of the problems of ill health and undernutrition. The promotion of personal and environmental hygiene, sound food handling and dietary practices can help al-

leviate to a large extent the ill effects of poor environment and inadequate food resources. This process may be effective if planned and executed keeping in view specific requirements of slum communities.

NFI developed three field urban units at Kirby Place, Brar Square and Purana Nangal. The residents of these urban slums are chiefly migrants from nearby rural areas. Majority of residents were employed as sweepers or daily wage earners in skilled or unskilled jobs. Both areas have access to schools for children and adult literacy centres set up by NGOs.

A number of lecture and demonstration sessions were held for the beneficiaries at these field units by the Extension Education Unit of the Foundation. The target group consisted mainly of adolescent girls, women and children. The demonstrations were planned keeping in mind the nutritional deficiencies common in the population targeted. After each demonstration, the group were given pictorial hand-outs prepared in Hindi to enable them to recapitulate the topic discussed and share it with the other family members, neighbours and friends. They were encouraged to interact with trained staff answered all their of queries.

The broad areas covered under this extension programme included hygiene and sanitation; balanced diets for healthy living;



Health checkup of children in an urban slum



Demonstration of low cost nutritious recipes at NFI extension unit

the common nutritional deficiencies and ways of overcoming them through dietary modification. They were taught to make low cost nutritious recipes incorporating iron and vitamin A rich foods. The mothers were given nutrition education about the importance of breast-feeding, weaning foods and immunization of their infants, and care of infants during illness such as diarrhoea. The population in these areas benefitted from these demonstrations and attempted to make optimal use of their own resources and available services to improve their health and nutritional status.

Nutrition/Health Education For Children And Adolescents In Schools

Through the vast network of schools, children can easily be approached in large numbers at a given time, for imparting the necessary nutrition and health related education. This education will not only create awareness among the children but the nutrition knowledge could gradually be transferred to their families as well. Schools can, therefore, serve as an important avenue for imparting nutrition knowledge to hundreds

of children under one roof. Hence, there is a need to explore the potential of the school education system for imparting nutrition health education effectively. The two approaches to this are:

- ensure, through the good offices of NCERT, that adequate focus is given to nutrition and health education in future textbooks/curricula
- reinforce this by drawing special attention to the importance of nutrition through sensitizing school children and teachers towards this issue.

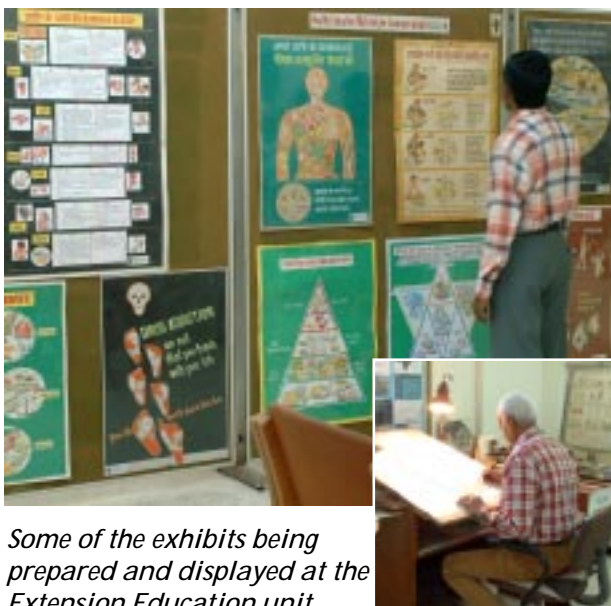
NFI-NCERT Collaboration

Nutrition Foundation of India has been preparing informative and handy visual aids to increase awareness about the nutritional aspects of the diet in school children and in general population. NFI has been exploring feasibility of collaboration with NCERT for wider dissemination of nutrition and health education messages among school children.

NFI has also been making efforts to collaborate with NCERT to improve the content and quality of educational material for 'Nutrition and Health' in primary school by utilizing NFI's expertise as well as educational material developed by NFI.

The knowledge about food and nutrition, emerging nutritional problems and their prevention can be incorporated in the existing school curriculum and in the teachers' pre- and in-service training modules so that the entire system moves synchronously and optimal improvement is achieved within a short time.

NFI has given their comments on the content of nutrition education material currently incorporated in the text books prepared by NCERT for primary school teaching.



Some of the exhibits being prepared and displayed at the Extension Education unit.

Nutrition Education at NFI

In order to provide information to all the visitors, a series of exhibits on relevant health and nutrition related issues have been developed by NFI and are displayed. The development and production of audiovisual aids for imparting Nutrition Education to different groups is a constant and continuous process and is being continuously updated and tailored to suit the needs of different groups that visit the Foundation. The exhibits cover a wide range of subjects such as:

- exhibits on nutrition, health, hygiene and sanitation
- information on nutritional deficiencies and chronic degenerative diseases
- adolescent nutrition is the major focus of this section
- exhibits on infant and child nutrition
- information on ongoing research activities at NFI.

These aids have been developed at NFI for use in demonstration lectures and spreading awareness about different aspects of health and nutrition.

Using these materials, NFI attempted to conduct need-based nutrition and health education to children and adolescents in schools. The basic themes for the education cum discussion sessions included:

- Diet for good health and
- Fast food/Street foods — some nutritional aspects.

At a time, a group of about 50-70 students and 2 to 3 teachers were invited for the lecture cum discussion sessions. Adolescent children and teachers of various schools came to NFI and attended specially arranged sessions. The school teams (students and teachers) participating in the sessions at NFI



School children after a session on nutrition education at NFI

were taken around to the Nutrition education/ exhibits section and the library. Children were encouraged to participate in the discussions related to health and nutrition so as to clarify any doubts and misconceptions.

A half-day Nutrition Seminar/workshop was organised for school teachers, wherein apart from discussion on diet for good health and the nutritional aspects on Fast foods/ street foods, emphasis was also being laid on Nutrition games as a way of entertainment coupled with nutrition education. Preparation of nutrition games by the participating teachers helped in generating a wide array of indoor/ outdoor nutrition games which the school teachers could employ for enhancing the nutrition/ health knowledge of the children while they were at play.

It is hoped that some of the students and teachers, who had been sensitised under this programme, were able to support and organise nutrition education activities for the community as part of non-formal education outside the school system and thus help to build a cadre of Health/ Nutrition Scouts in the community.

An entire spacious floor of the building of the Foundation is set apart for dissemination of nutrition information to the com-



A session during "Nutrition Awareness Programme" at the Mothers International School

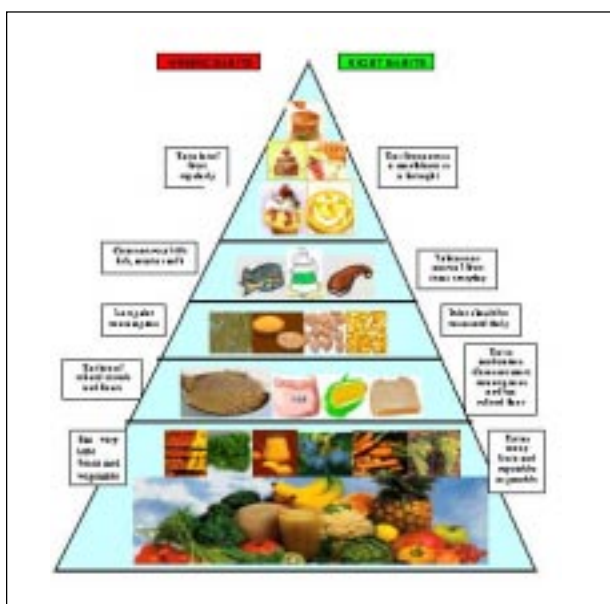
munity for persons from different age groups and socio-economic status ranging from slum dwellers to persons from affluent sections of the society. The facilities available at the Education/ Extension Unit include: a series of exhibits on relevant health and nutrition related issues; a demonstration unit for the preparation of nutritious recipes; and facilities for conducting diet counselling clinics.

'Nutrition Awareness Programme' was held at the Mother's International School as a part of their Heritage Week. The events planned were Nutrition Quiz followed by

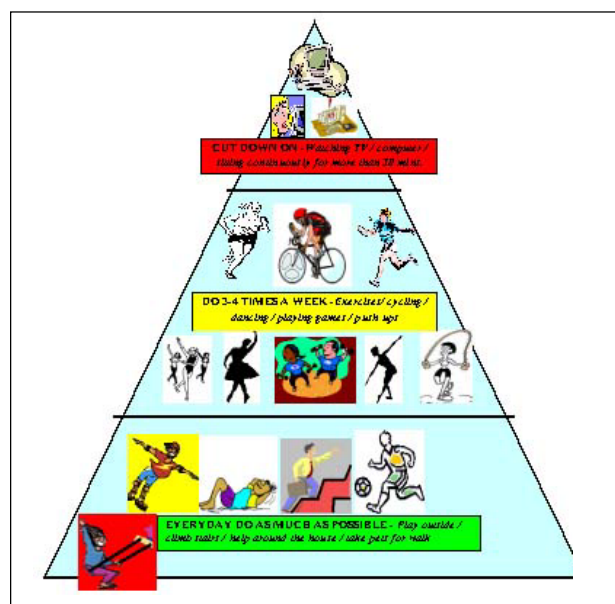
Group Discussion, Food Pyramid, Cross Word Game and Slogan Contest. It is expected that children/adolescents would carry these nutrition and health related messages to their homes and would thus act as nutrition/ health scouts not only for their families but even for the community as a whole.

The recent awakening of interest in implementation for National Mid-day Meal Programmes in schools following on the Supreme Court judgment has created a favourable climate for parallel reinforcing initiatives. The benefits of School Meal Programme will vastly improve with a well-organized School Health Service. The ongoing School Health Programme is apparently not designed to effectively converge with the School Meal Programme in a synergistic fashion. The Foundation has already been requested by Delhi Administration to evaluate the Mid-Day Meal Programme. The Foundation hopes to undertake the initiatives to revamp the School Health Service in order to make it an effective instrument for the health of children.

The Foundation had earlier envisaged the



Nutrition Education Material for Schools: A Food Pyramid



Health Education Material for Schools: An Activity Pyramid



A practical demonstration of the anthropometric techniques.



A lecture cum demonstration session for the participants of training programme

formation of a National Health Scout Movement based on the following considerations:

- national development depends upon quality of human resource, especially adolescents
- concentrating on training adolescents will pay rich dividends – both in promoting community acceptance and in shaping the attitudes of youth.

Unfortunately, due to multiplicity of overlapping programmes involving youth, it has been difficult to carve out a meaningful National Health Scout Movement. The Foundation proposes to take a fresh initiative towards evolving such a movement. It is expected that the National Health Scout Movement will provide a new direction to health programmes in the country.

Training Programme at NFI

NFI has been participating in the Reproductive Health Training Programme for master trainers, programme officers, medical college faculty and health care providers by National Institute of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi. In addition to lectures to update the knowledge on nutritional components of RCH programme, NFI staff undertakes practical demonstration of techniques used for assessment of nutritional status and quality control measures to be used to ensure accuracy in measurement of parameters used for assessment of nutritional status. NFI has undertaken a similar lecture cum demonstration session on nutrition for the participants in field epidemiology training programme of National Institute of Communicable Diseases, Delhi.

LIBRARY AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

Dr. Mrunalini Devi Puar, Chancellor of the M.S. University, Baroda, a member of the Governing Body and well-wisher of the Foundation had made a generous donation for setting up a Library for the Foundation. The ground floor of the NFI building now houses the Library. Over the years the Foundation had collected several useful publica-

tions related to nutrition, health and related subjects from India and abroad. Many journals, periodicals, bulletins and newsletters so collected are now available here. The Foundation is receiving a number of journals (national and international) and newsletters on complimentary/ exchange basis. The library also maintains a collection of 'fu-