

## **Health Camp for Sanitation Workers in Karamadai Town Panchayat**

Handling, collection and disposal of waste and fecal sludge is not only considered as a critical component, but also the most vulnerable link in urban sanitation. The sanitation workers play this crucial role of collection, transportation and disposal of waste around us. However, due to the nature of their work, the workers are exposed to fecal sludge and unhygienic conditions and suffer from exposure to harmful gases like methane and hydrogen sulphide, which results in ailments ranging from cardiovascular degeneration, musculoskeletal disorders, and infections like hepatitis, skin problems, and respiratory system problems. Reducing health risk of sanitation workers who are continuously engaged in the upkeep and maintenance of urban sanitation will require creating a process and putting in place systems to institutionalise the practice of monitoring and delivering affordable healthcare. Institutional delivery of regular healthcare would significantly contribute to the growth in public health.

“We used to take dosage of immunisation only but have never come across such a detailed health check up for us and I feel now regular health checkups should be a must”, said Mr. Narayanan who is a the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation into sanitation work

The Tamil Nadu Urban Sanitation Support Programme (TNUSSP) supports the Government of Tamil Nadu (GoTN) and select cities in making improvements along the entire urban sanitation value chain. This Unit supports State-wide improvements in urban sanitation, as well as aims to demonstrating innovations along the entire sanitation chain in two urban locations of the state including Periyanaicken-palayam and Narsimhanaicken-palayam Town Panchayats in Coimbatore District.

One of the key focus of the programme has been to enable the Urban Local Bodies to strengthen the delivery of periodic and quality medical check-ups and treatment options for the sanitary work force involved in a variety of jobs related to sanitation, such as maintaining community toilets, cleaning storm water drains, collecting and managing waste from households and operating fecal sludge emptying trucks etc. Women sanitary workers involved in these jobs also face health issues as a result of handling heavy push carts for waste collection, and managing and segregating the waste.

In an attempt to solve the problem of lack of preventive healthcare among sanitation workers, TNUSSP has come up with a solution to partner with local hospitals, to provide long-term and sustained healthcare options in the form of period health camps for sanitary workers and their families.

TNUSSP Coimbatore in collaboration with Karpagam Medical Trust Hospital has been conducting regular medical camps for sanitation workers at their workplace for the past one year. These medical camps have provided free of cost and include basic medical services such as diagnostics such as monitoring blood sugar levels, blood pressure levels, general physical checkup and medical counselling and further references for affordable treatment with focus on specific communicable diseases and extending to lifestyle diseases that are common among the workers due to their nature of work.

Six such regular camps have been organised in Periyanaicken-palayam and Narasimhanaicken-palayam town panchayat, in which more than 200 sanitation workers and their families have participated. Based on the success of these health camps, other adjacent town panchayats such as Karamadai, Veerapandi and Gudalur have shown interest in conducting similar health camps for their sanitation workers.

You are true doctors who protect the public from getting affected by diseases, hence your wellness and health should be primary, said Dr. Naveen Prabhu, Chief Doctor, Karpagam Trust Hospital. A health camp for the sanitation workers and their families has been conducted at the Karamadai Town Panchayat Office on 14th of June 2019 at 11.00 am to 01.00 pm. This camp will be conducted by a medical team from Karpagam Trust Hospital, who organise specialised health camps for

disadvantaged people in the city. The health camp comprised of the blood sugar, pressure, eye test, ortho and other general body check up for the sanitary workers.

"This health camp for our workers was much needed at this point of time and would be great if it happens once in 6 months", said Mrs.Malliga, sanitary worker. About 90 sanitary workers were benefitted by this exclusive detailed health checkup.

"I appreciate the effort of TNUSSP of conducting such health camp and to continue the same at regular intervals", said Suresh Kumar, Executive officer, Karamadai.

It was observed that issues related to ortho, peptic ulcer due to skipping breakfast and alcoholism was predominant. Proper diet and medications were prescribed by the medical team. Few people who had problem with cataract were referred to the Karpagam trust hospital for free surgery.