

Project Alemari: Maternal & Child Health in an Indian Slum

Background/needs assessment:

Just outside the Southern Indian city of Mysore in Karnataka State, the residents of a slum settlement, and especially the children, suffer from the myriad health problems that accompany life in poverty. Despite the proximity to city life, this community of tribal peoples, Ekalaavyanagara, does not receive city services like solid waste removal and sanitation. The lack of sanitation and healthcare combined with overcrowding creates a destitute living environment. Children suffer from easily treatable worm infections and diarrheal disease, which contributes to anemia and chronic malnourishment. Women lack reproductive and prenatal healthcare leading to high rates of maternal and infant mortality.

Moved by our observations of children running around barefoot with visible signs of parasitic infection and pregnant women suffering from severe anemia, we founded Project Alemari to address these health concerns. Project Alemari aims to promote health awareness and improve health outcomes in Ekalaavyanagara. We are a mobile health clinic that will provide free, quality healthcare to women and children through monthly health camps in this neglected slum settlement. Through these efforts, we will provide maternal and child health services including: a comprehensive de-worming campaign for children, multivitamin supplements, symptomatic treatment of infections, prenatal care and family planning services for women. To promote health awareness and behavior, this medical care will be coupled with hygiene, nutrition, and health education.

Ekalaavyanagara is home to 266 families with a total population of approximately 1,600 people. A conglomerate of tribal peoples and musicians, displaced from various places in Karnataka State, began settling on the outskirts of Mysore City nearly 7 years ago. Most of the working men are daily wage earners with a salary of 100 rupees per day (approximately \$2.25 USD). On average, 6-8 family members are crammed into a one-room hut, sometimes encapsulating three family generations.

It is our hope that providing services to treat disease, improve nutrition, and promote education will allow the women and children of Ekalaavyanagara a healthier and brighter future. Our goals are to, step by step, improve health outcomes in this community for families, especially reducing maternal and infant mortality.

Project Plan/Goals:

Goal 1: Improve Infant & Child Health

Malnourishment and persistent infections cause approximately 50% of infants and children in Ekalaavyanagara to be underweight. Lacking access to proper sanitation, helminthic worm infections are rampant in the community. A community-wide de-worming campaign will cut the cycle of worm transmission for as little as 10 cents per dose, given every 6 months. Calorie-rich nutritional supplements will be given to the most underweight children and infants, while multivitamins for all children will curb nutrient deficiency. Monthly health camps, specific to infants and children will bring comprehensive healthcare, including medications, to the community, free of charge.



Goal 2: Improve Maternal Health



On average, there are approximately 20 pregnant women in the village. Some of these women are able to get care at the local government hospital, but traveling to the hospital and seeking care services can be an expensive endeavor. Some women simply cannot afford the time or the money to seek proper care. As a result, many of the pregnant

women are not healthy and some are severely anemic, which may lead to complications during pregnancy and adverse health outcomes. Project Alemari will support one monthly health camp aimed specifically at these women. In addition to providing essential prenatal care to all pregnant women, we hope to provide family planning services to women of reproductive age. Additionally, our clinics will provide iron and multivitamin supplements to curb anemia and other vitamin deficiencies, while treating other common infections found among women.

Goal 3: Improve Education for Young Children



Currently, the government of India supports the community's Anganwadi center, a school for children under 6 years of age, by providing a salary for the pre-school teacher and minimal governmental food rations. However, the structure housing the Anganwadi center is in dire need of repair. The roof is full of gaping holes, rendering it

useless against the almost daily monsoon rains. When it rains, the children must be sent home and they miss out on their education. Without proper space to store the government-supplied food in this open-roof building during rainy season, the children's meager food supplies spoil. With necessary funds, we can repair the roof and provide a safe, *dry* place to store the government rations. Rain should not prevent these children from gaining the education and nutritional supplements they deserve during this important developmental stage of life.

Budget:

Children's Camp:

Medications	6,000 Rs	\$146
Staff	5,000 Rs	\$116
Monthly Total	11,000 Rs	\$262 (\$3,144 per year)

Women's Camp

Medications	6,500 Rs	\$152
Staff	5,000 Rs	\$116
Monthly Total	11,500 Rs	\$268 (\$3,216 per year)

Roof for Anganwadi Center

Estimated at:	21,500 Rs	\$500
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