

## Health Watch - A Report

One of the most effective ways to improve public health services is for the community to actively demand and claim them. Empowerment and better participation by the community will lead to better quality services. At present, however, there is no effective way in which the community can channel its desire for improved public health services. Moreover, although HMCs exist, their mandate is restricted and, being internal to the hospitals/health centers concerned, they cannot take an impartial or independent view of the services delivered; nor can they access independent data on hospital performance. There is, therefore, an obvious need for an organized, independent body - of prominent, knowledgeable and non-controversial citizens, who will be accessible, credible and committed - to undertake advocacy with Local Governments, obtain and assess relevant independent information, act as a catalyst for change, and monitor progress in the project areas. Health Watch is a unique concept of the QIPHS project. Health watch will reflect the aspirations of the community in the planning and development of the hospital. They will function in collaboration with the concerned local government, Hospital Management Committee and Hospital administration.



Formation of health watch was one of the major activities scheduled for the third quarter and it will be continued in the fourth quarter as well. Under the project we have proposed health watch for three project locations and also a District level health watch for the entire district of Thrissur. During the stakeholder meetings under the project our intention to form Health watch for each hospital was shared and the proposal was welcomed by the

participants of these meetings including local government representatives and hospital administration. The members who are found suitable for the health watch were largely identified from among the participants who attended the meetings regularly organized to discuss the development of hospitals under the project. Few members were identified through personal connection and references. After listing the personnel who are identified as suitable for health watch, general meetings were organized in three project locations to discuss and formulate a working plan of health watch. These meetings were conducted without the representation from respective local government, hospital management committee and hospital administration.



Under the project Health watch is conceived as an independent body of committed and capable personnel's hence the Local Government Representatives and Hospital Staff were not invited to the preliminary meetings and the reason for their absence was well explained to the members who were present in the meetings. The meetings were successful in terms of participation and discussion. However we were confronted with a major challenge after the preliminary health watch meeting at Vaniyampara. Pananchery Panchayath authorities who were in close ally of Jananethi had turned hostile for holding health watch meeting without their representation. Somebody with vested interest and power had played a dubious game by portraying the health watch initiative as anti-panchayath movement. The message went to the local government authorities in power was that Jananeethi had joined with groups belonging to opposition in order to tarnish the image of the ruling party. And they were made to believe that if any development takes place in the hospital the credit will go to Jananeethi and Health Watch which will negatively affects their political prospects in the coming election to local government. We strongly believe that those people in power who controls the hospital don't want the presence of any external body like Health Watch or Jananeethi which will monitor and question them. Strangely this happened only in Vaniyamapara, the preliminary health watch meetings at Ollukkara and Irinjalakuda were

concluded successfully and have not brought any issue like that in Vaniyamapara. But the unexpected challenge at vaniyampara has compelled us to rethink about the structure and approach of Health Watch. Based on internal evaluation meeting at Jananeethi, advices given during the conference call from our project advisers and personal briefing with key personnel of Health Watch we decided to call a larger meeting in each project location in collaboration with the respective local government. In pursuance of this strategic move we had organized two meetings of health watch at Vaniyamapara and Ollukkara in association with Panachery Grama Panchayath and Ollukkara Block Panchayath. Health watch meeting with Irinjalakuda Municipality is under way and will be conducted in the final quarter of the project. During the larger meeting with representation from respective local government and hospital the objective and strategy of Health watch was comprehensively explained. The authorities were given assurance that the Health Watch will function in collaboration with respective Local Government and Hospital Management Committee and Hospital administration. A general committee with executive members were elected in consensus. This practical approach had helped us in regaining confidence of the local government and HMC . As a result of



this meeting Health watch for CHC Vellanikkara has now been entrusted with the responsibility to find resources for the proposed Dialysis Unit at the Hospital. Medical Superintendent of CHC Vellanikkara has appointed Jananeethi to coordinate with Health Watch, Ollukkara Block Panchayath and HMC in future initiatives. An official letter was issued by the superintendent specifying the delegation. ( Copy of the letter attached) We were also invited to the HMC Meeting with M.L.A. for deliberating the short and long term plans for the development of the hospital. After the formation of Health Watch for Ollukkara CHC, Ms. Prema one of the members of Health Watch invited us to a meeting of Kudumbasree (Women's entrepreneurial Initiative) on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2019 to brief about the project. Health Watch Vaniyamapara had also started functioning with great enthusiasm. As a first intervention they have submitted a memorandum to HMC and Medical Officer of Vaniyamapara PHC demanding immediate filling of vacant posts at the hospital.

We strongly believe that, among all the successful initiatives under the project the most productive initiative is the formation of Health Watch. With the formation of health watch, the community in respective locations who were completely neglected earlier has slowly started to realize their stake in the development of their hospital. We are quite sure that the three health watch already formed and the District Health Watch once formed is going to usher significant changes in service delivery from public health institutions.

### **Health Watch- for PHC Vaniyampara**

One preliminary meeting and a larger meeting of Health watch with local government members were organized on 29-05-2019 and 20-06-2019. Both meetings were organized at M.G.M Parish Hall, Vaniyampara. The aim, objectives and expectations form Health Watch was shared in detail. During the



preliminary meeting an adhoc committee was formed under the energetic leadership of Mr. Joy Poovathingal a prominent businessman and active social worker from the locality. The larger meeting was organized by Jananeethi with the help of the adhoc committee lead by Mr. Joy Poovathingal. There were around 75 members present in the larger meeting. Ms.K.V.Anitha, President of Pananchery Grama Panchayath was the chief guest. Vice-President Mr. K.A. Abubakker, Ollukkara Block Panchayath Vice-President Mr.K.V.Chandran, Local member Mr.N.K.Vijayankuty, Medical Officer Ms.V.Sreeja and other prominent personalities were present. A general committee with an executive body was formed in consensus.

### **Health Watch-for CHC Vellanikkara**

Preliminary meeting for the formation of Health Watch for CHC Vellanikkara was held on 17-05-2019 at Jananeethi Office. The members who were present during the meeting were included in the Adhoc committee. On 25-06-2019 a larger meeting for the formation of Health Watch was organized in association with Ollukkara Block Panchayath. Both meetings were concluded successfully. Block Panchayath President Mrs. I.S. Umadevi inaugurated the meeting and she shared the initiatives undertaken by the Block Panachayath for the development of CHC Vellanikkara. Vice



President MR.K.V.Chandran, Health Standing Committee Chairperson Mrs.Rajani Janardhanan, prominent and committed persons from the locality was present during the meeting. A general committee with an executive body was formed in consensus.

## **Health Watch for General Hospital Irinjalakuda**

A preliminary meeting with the objective of forming Health Watch for General Hospital, Irinjalakuda was conducted on 27-05-2019. Prominent persons from different walks of the society including the former Municipal Secretary Mr. Ajithkumar with whom we were in liaison was present during the meeting. The aim, objectives and purpose of the Health Watch was



lucidly explained. Participants of the meeting shared their invaluable experiences, comments and concrete opinions for the development of Irinjalakuda General Hospital like Punalur Hospital. All the participants were in full support of such initiative and with them an Adhoc committee was formed. It was decided to call for a larger meeting with Municipal and Hospital Authorities in order to form a final health watch committee. This will be conducted in the final quarter of the project.

(List of the members of the health watch attached with the report.)

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