



Voluntary Health
Association of India

2022-23

ANNUAL REPORT



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Voluntary Health Association of India

Making health and development a reality for people of India

ABOUT VHAI

Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) is a non-profit, registered society formed in the year 1970. We are one of the largest health and development networks in the world. VHAI advocates people-centered policies for dynamic health planning and programme management in India. We initiate and support innovative health and development programmes at the grassroots with the active participation of the people. VHAI strives to build a strong health movement in the country for a cost-effective, preventive, promotive and rehabilitative health care system. We work towards a responsive public health sector and responsible private sector with accountability and quality service.

VHAI promotes issues of health, human right and development. The beneficiaries of VHAI's programme include health professionals, researchers, social activists, government functionaries, media personnel and of course communities at large.

VHAI is recognised by the Government of India as an organisation of national importance

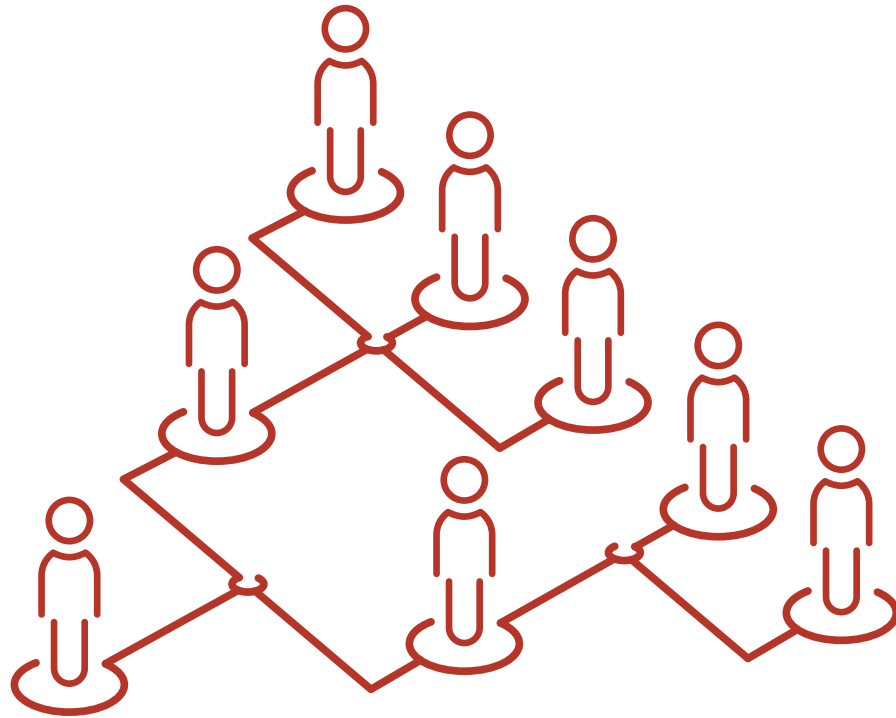
Our Vision

To make health and development a reality for people of India

Our Mission

- To promote social justice, equity and human rights in the provision and distribution of health services for all, with emphasis on the less privileged sections.
- To promote and strengthen a medically rational, culturally acceptable and economically sustainable healthcare system in the country.
- To develop sustainable and innovative strategies to ensure health and overall community development in remote, vulnerable and poorest areas through several interventions, community action and participation.
- To provide relief and rehabilitation in areas affected by disasters & calamities and help the affected rebuild a better life for themselves.





Organisational Structure

VHAI is governed by an Executive Board that includes 9 members. These distinguished members are elected by the General Body through board elections conducted every alternate year. The Chief Executive heads a decentralized management system. The Chief Executive is supported by a highly skilled & proficient technical and administrative staff in Delhi and the regional offices. The planning, execution and performance of various projects is monitored regularly through staff meetings and on ground visits. VHAI invests in regular capacity building of staff by conducting need analysis and frequent in-house trainings. The staff is encouraged to attend conferences, workshop and seminars organized by prestigious organizations in India and internationally.





Voluntary Health Association of India Golden Jubilee Celebrations

29th September, 2022

India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

Fifty years of making health & development
a reality for the people of India



A Milestone Year: Celebrating 50 Golden Years

**In 2022, VHA
marked its 50th
anniversary,
symbolizing five
decades of
unwavering
commitment and
service to the nation**

On September 29th, 2022, VHA celebrated its golden jubilee, acknowledging the remarkable impact it has had in numerous aspects of Public Health & Development. Attended by approximately 150 individuals from the health and development sectors, including State VHA's, member organizations, and public health professionals, the event served as a tribute to VHA's significant contributions.

On the occasion, VHAI felicitated a few pioneering organizations and individuals who have contributed significantly to the Health and Development in the post-Independent India. The organizations and individuals who were felicitated are summarised below:

- All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS, New Delhi) for pioneering contribution in the field of secondary and tertiary care as well as medical education in the country.
- Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation for their contribution towards eradication of Leprosy.
- National Health System Resource Centre (NHSRC) for their significant role in conceptualising and rolling out almost one million ASHA workers throughout the country.
- Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore for their exceptional contribution in the field of secondary and tertiary care as well as medical education in the country.
- Arya Vaidya Sala, Kottakkal for promoting and delivering authentic Indian System of Medicine in India.
- Dr. Harsh Vardhan, ex- Health Minister, Government of India, for his leadership role in elimination of Polio and pioneering role in Tobacco Control in India.
- Mr. A.R. Nanda for his contribution in the formulation of National Population Policy and overseeing its implementation in the country.
- Mr. J.V.R. Prasada Rao for his role in planning, developing and implementing the successful intervention on HIV/AIDS in India
- Dr. H. Sudarshan for VGKK's innovative approach in reaching out health and development initiatives in the unreached areas of the country.



Mr. Alok Mukhopadhyay, Chairman, VHAI and Ms. Anjana Borkakoti, Vice President, VHAI Board, felicitating Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Former Health Minister, Government of India, for his leadership role in elimination of Polio and pioneering role in Tobacco Control in India.



Mr. Alok Mukhopadhyay, Chairman, VHA and Mr. K K Swain, Treasurer, VHA Board felicitating Mr. A.R. Nanda for his contribution in the formulation of National Population Policy and overseeing its implementation in the country.



Mr. Alok Mukhopadhyay, Chairman, VHA and Sister Jancy Jacob, VHA Board Member felicitating Mr. J.V.R. Prasada Rao for his role in planning, developing and implementing the successful intervention on HIV/AIDS in India



Ms. Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, Chief Executive, VHA and Mr. Shaik Ismail, VHA Board Member, felicitating Arya Vaidya Sala, Kottakkal for promoting and delivering authentic Indian System of Medicine across the country..

Paths Are Made By Walking

Fifty Years of VHAI's Journey



Making Health and Development a Reality for the People of India



**Voluntary Health
Association of India**



PATHS ARE MADE BY WALKING

Path are made by Walking” is a comprehensive document that chronicles the remarkable 50-year journey of VHAI in its unwavering commitment to making health and development a reality for the people of India. This document highlights several key aspects of VHAI’s work.

Vision and Mission: The document outlines VHAI's vision and mission, capturing its overarching goals of promoting health, well-being, and equity among individuals and communities across India.

Milestones and Achievements: It showcases the significant milestones and achievements that VHAI has accomplished throughout its five-decade-long journey. These achievements encompass various areas such as, disease prevention, advocacy, capacity building, policy impact, and community development.

Program Initiatives: The document provides an overview of the diverse program initiatives undertaken by VHAI. These initiatives encompass a wide range of health and development issues, including community health and development, reproductive, maternal & adolescent health, nutrition, non-communicable diseases, tobacco control, Communicable diseases, HIV/AIDS prevention, NCDs, social protection, and women's empowerment amongst others.

Advocacy and Policy Impact: It highlights VHAI's impactful advocacy efforts and its instrumental role in influencing policies and programs at the national, state, and community levels. This includes advocacy for the enactment of major health-related legislations such as COTPA, and the establishment of sustainable health systems, rights of marginalized communities etc.

Community Engagement and Empowerment: The document underscores VHAI's emphasis on community engagement and empowerment. It details the initiatives undertaken to mobilize and empower communities, foster participation, and build capacity among individuals and local organizations in addressing health and development challenges.

Partnerships and Collaboration: It recognizes the significance of partnerships and collaboration in VHAI's journey. The document highlights key partners, stakeholders, and collaborations that have played a critical role in supporting and amplifying VHAI's impact and achievements.

Overall, "Paths are made by Walking" serves as a comprehensive testament to VHAI's evolution, growth, and dedication over the span of 50 years, illuminating its transformative contributions to health and development in India.



HEALTH POLICY KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIP

Voluntary Health Association of India has successfully broadened the horizons of public health at the Grassroots, National and International level. VHAI actively partners with renowned national and international agencies.

VHAI's significant presence in the Advisory committees of Government Bodies & International organizations

- National AIDS Control Board
- Task Force on Tobacco Control
- Task Force on Nasha Mukti Abhiyan
- National Disaster Management Authority
- National Nutrition Mission
- Governing Body of National Institute of Health and Family Welfare
- Technical Experts Committee for National Programme on Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases & Stroke (NPCDCS)
- Common Review Mission of NRHM
- Technical Review Committee of School Health under AYUSHMAN Bharat
- Committee to Review COTPA and suggest appropriate amendments
- Expert Committee for Development of New Specified Health Warnings
- Technical Advisory and Monitoring Committee for the Global Adult Tobacco Survey-3 (GATS-3), India
- National Steering Committee for National Tobacco Control Programme
- Expert Committee for Online Violations of COTPA, 2003 and Prohibition of E-cigarette Act, 2019
- Task Force on Public Private Partnership
- Advisory Group on Community Action under NRHM
- National Mentoring Group for ASHA
- Geoscience for Sustainable Development of Central Geological Programme Board
- Advisory Committee – National Policy for Children
- Technical Advisory Committee on Vector Borne Diseases
- Institute Ethical Committee, NICD
- Rajasthan Population Council
- Bihar State Institute of Health and Family Welfare
- Madhya Pradesh State Population and Development Council
- State Health Society, Madhya Pradesh
- Delhi State Health Mission
- Governing Board of IUHPE
- Governing Board of SRHR Alliance

International & National Collaborations

- WHO
- World Bank
- International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE)
- Global Fund
- Public Health England
- European Union
- Bloomberg Philanthropy
- Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids
- Simavi
- UNICEF
- Civic Engagement Alliance
- ICMR
- FSSAI
- Constellation
- SRHR Alliance
- MTBA Alliance
- Girls Not Bride Alliance

KEY MEETINGS HELD DURING THE YEAR 2022-23

Advisory Group on Community Action (AGCA)

The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, had constituted the Advisory Group on Community Action (AGCA) to provide valuable guidance on community action initiatives under the National Health Mission at the national level. Comprising eminent public health professionals associated with major NGOs, this group advises the Ministry on fostering community partnerships and ownership for the mission. They provide essential feedback based on ground realities, develop new models of community action, and recommend their adoption or extension to the Central and State Governments.

As a distinguished member of AGCA, Mr. Alok Mukhopadhyay, Chairman (Advisory Committee), VHAJ actively participated in the meeting held on 25th August 2022. During this meeting, Mr. Mukhopadhyay provided invaluable insights regarding the significance of community participation and involvement to ensure the effective implementation of State Programme Implementation Plans (PIPs).

The meeting facilitated the sharing of observations from the field, including the functioning of Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs) and the rollout of Jan Arogya Samitis (JASs). Furthermore, the findings from a study assessing the functioning of Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHNSCs) were also shared. By sharing valuable insights and field experiences, VHAJ contributes to the development of effective community action strategies, with an ultimate goal of improving health outcomes for all.

Pre-Budget-Consultation for Social Sector by Ministry of Finance, Government of India

VHAJ actively participated in the Pre-Budget Consultation organized by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India held on 24th November 2022. The consultation brought together civil society representatives working in the domains of public health, nutrition, and social welfare to provide their valuable insights. Ms. Bhavna Mukhopadhyay represented VHAJ and presented the recommendations on crucial public health policies. The consultation was chaired by Honorable Finance Minister of India, Nirmala Sitharaman, and was attended by esteemed officials of the Finance Ministry and other Government departments.



Ms. Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, Chief Executive, VHAJ participating in the Pre-Budget Consultation chaired by the Finance Minister

Advisory Committee Meeting of the Global Tobacco Control Index Project

In a collaborative effort, ASH Canada and the Institute for Global Tobacco Control have embarked on an initiative to establish an interactive online platform known as the Global Tobacco Control Index. The primary objective of this initiative is to effectively monitor, measure, and influence the progress and performance of tobacco control efforts across nations, including those in low- and middle-income brackets. The index will be aligned with the articles, indicators, and measures outlined in the WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control.

To ensure the successful development and implementation of the index, a Project Advisory Committee has been assembled. This committee comprises of esteemed organizations such as VHAI, WHO, CDC, CTFK, Vital Strategies, and the Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control, among others. The first meeting of the Project Advisory Committee took place on 14th April 2022, where VHAI actively participated alongside the afore mentioned organizations. This collaborative effort aims to foster global cooperation and drive substantial advancements in tobacco control on a global scale. A series of meetings were held last year to finalise the framework for global tobacco control index.

Expert Committee’s Meeting for Development of New Specified Health Warnings

Ms. Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, Chief Executive of VHAI, plays an integral role in the Expert Committee for Development of New Specified Health Warnings. This committee has been constituted by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, with the purpose of recommending updated health warnings within the framework of COTPA, 2003 (Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act) and in line with the guidelines of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO-FCTC) and international best practices. VHAI actively participated in the committee’s meetings, which took place on 7th April, 22nd April, and 29th June 2022. By leveraging their expertise, VHAI contributed to the formulation of impactful and effective health warnings that will enhance public awareness about the health risks associated with tobacco consumption.

Global Community Health Annual Workshop organised by UNESCO

Ms. Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, Chief Executive of VHAI, was invited as a distinguished speaker for the Global Community Health Annual Workshop. This esteemed event, organized from 28th to 30th June 2022, was jointly hosted by the UNESCO Chair Global Health & Education and the EHESP School of Public Health, in collaboration with the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE).



Under the theme of 'How to Build Resilient Communities for Times of Crisis,' Ms. Mukhopadhyay delivered a captivating presentation titled 'Building Community Resilience on COVID-19 Prevention and Control: Some Best Practices from India.' Her insightful talk shed light on VHA's collaborative efforts with IUHPE, focusing on COVID-19 prevention and management through a sustainable, community-based approach in rural areas of India.

Ms. Mukhopadhyay's participation in this workshop showcased VHA's commitment to community resilience and highlighted the organization's dedicated work in the field of public health. Her presentation contributed to the collective knowledge and strategies needed to address global health challenges, particularly during times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

National Steering Committee for National Tobacco Control Programme

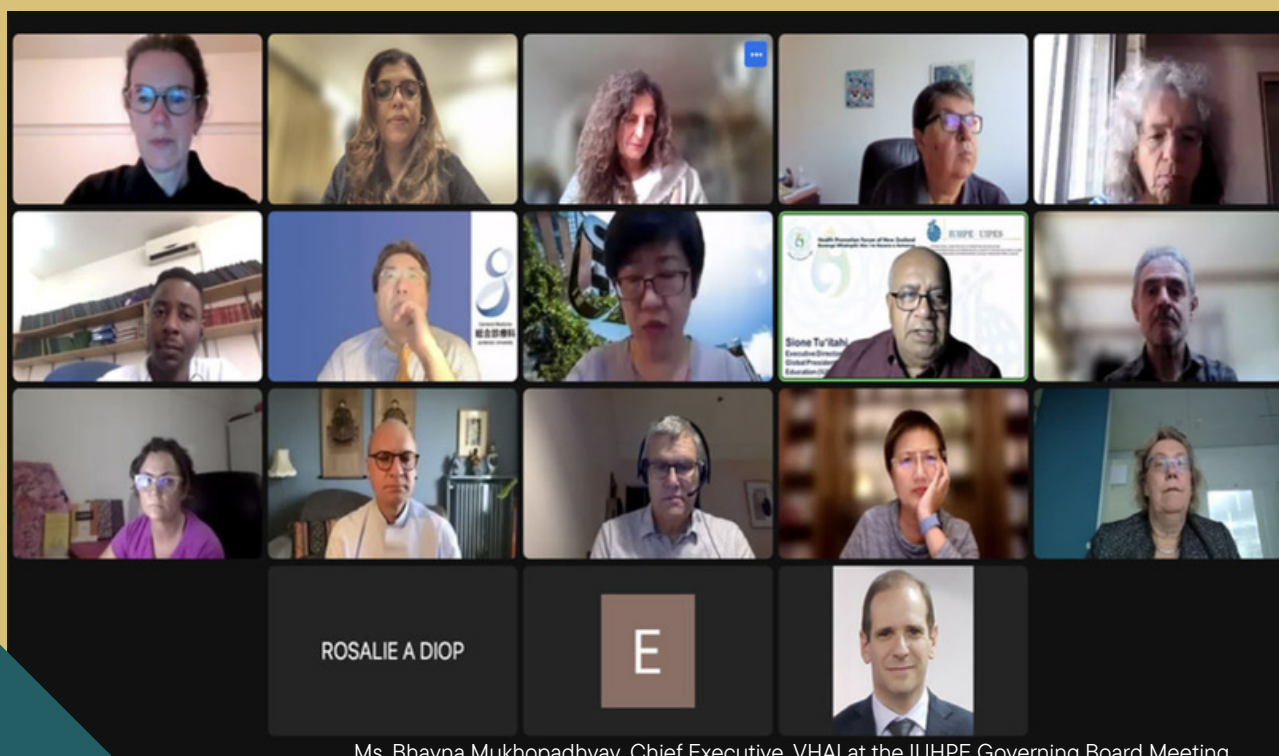
To ensure the efficient implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the National Tobacco Control Programme in the country, a National Steering Committee was constituted. Under the leadership of Dr. L. Swasticharan, Additional Deputy Director General (EMR) and Director at the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), this committee was tasked with addressing capacity building, policy matters, and other important aspects related to tobacco control.

As an esteemed member of the committee, Ms. Bhavna Mukhopadhyay actively participated in two meetings held on 25th July and 6th December 2022. These meetings provided a platform for valuable discussions and collaborative efforts aimed at advancing tobacco control initiatives across the nation.

The National Steering Committee, through its collective expertise and strategic guidance, aims to drive impactful and effective measures in tobacco control, ensuring the well-being and health of the population. Ms. Mukhopadhyay's involvement in the committee further exemplifies VHA's commitment to promoting public health in India.

IUHPE Governing Board Meeting: Strategic Planning and Priorities

As a member of the governing board of the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE), Ms. Bhavna Mukhopadhyay actively participated in the board meetings held on 16th September 2022. The meeting focused on a comprehensive review of IUHPE's Strategic Plan (2021-2026), encompassing ongoing progress and the establishment of strategic priorities.



Ms. Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, Chief Executive, VHA at the IUHPE Governing Board Meeting

With a shared commitment to advancing health promotion and education globally, the board members convened to assess the organization's achievements, challenges, and future direction. This collaborative effort aimed to ensure that IUHPE's strategic plan aligns with the evolving landscape of health promotion, effectively addressing the needs and priorities of the global community. Ms Mukhopadhyay's contributions and insights during the meeting helped shape IUHPE's strategic roadmap, guiding their efforts to expand their health promotion work in South East Asia Region more systematically.

International Symposium to Celebrate World Tuberculosis Day

Amity Institute of Biotechnology, located at Amity University in Mumbai, hosted an International Symposium in honour of World Tuberculosis Day on March 27, 2023. This symposium aimed to bring together experts from around the world to discuss and commemorate the significance of this day. As part of the event, the organizers have extended invitations to both international and national speakers, as well as NGOs actively involved in the rehabilitation of Tuberculosis and leprosy patients.

Dr. P.C. Bhatnagar, Senior Technical Advisor, VHAI participated as a distinguished speaker, sharing his valuable insights and vision on how to effectively achieve the World Health Organization's ambitious goal of ending Tuberculosis by 2030.

ASHA State Mentoring Group Meeting, Government of Delhi

As a member of the ASHA State Mentoring Group constituted by the Government of Delhi, VHAI participated in the meeting held on 14th October 2022 at the Delhi Secretariat. The meeting was chaired by the Mission Director of the National Health Mission, and its primary focus was to provide technical guidance and input for the comprehensive implementation and advancement of the ASHA Programme in Delhi NCT.

During the meeting, participants engaged in meaningful discussions regarding the progress, challenges, and innovations related to the ASHA Programme. The aim was to propose strategies and solutions that would lead to improved outcomes and further enhance the effectiveness of the program. Recognizing the imminent threat posed by chronic diseases, VHAI has put forward a recommendation to provide ASHA workers with more comprehensive training on non-communicable diseases (NCDs). By expanding the training curriculum to include NCDs more holistically, ASHA workers will be better prepared to educate and empower communities in the prevention, early detection, and management of these diseases.

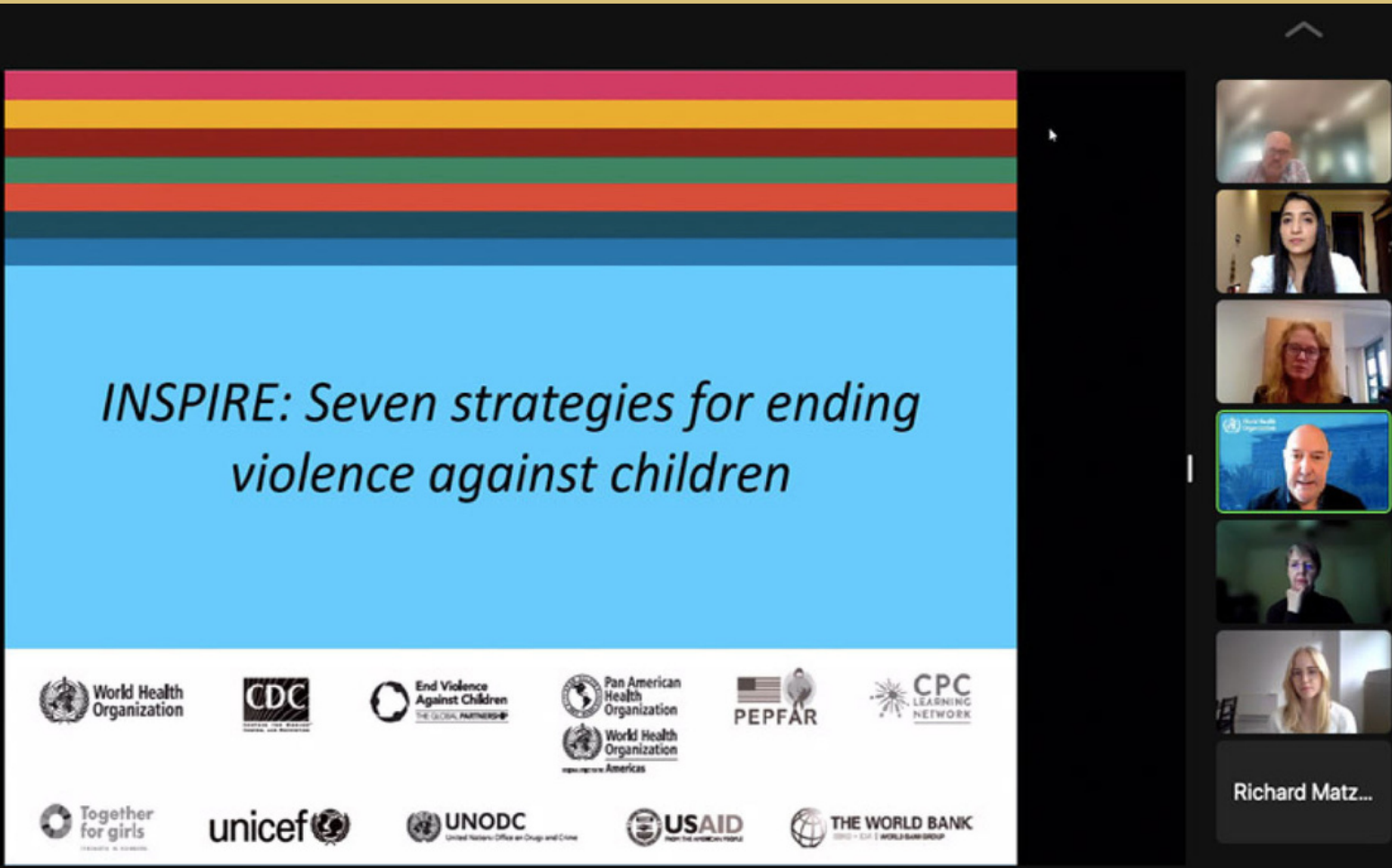
24th IUHPE World Conference on Health Promotion

The International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE) successfully organized the 24th World Conference on Health Promotion, held from 15th-19th May, 2023. The conference centered around the theme of "Promoting Policies for Health, Well-being, and Equity." This theme aligns with the core knowledge and action that the international health promotion community upholds.

VHAI actively participated in the conference by submitting an abstract to be presented during a symposium. The abstract was selected, granting VHAI the opportunity to share their work and insights with attendees. VHAI's contribution focused on the symposium discussion titled "Risk Communication and Community Engagement on COVID-19 Prevention and Control." During the symposium, the VHAI team highlighted the organization's efforts in building resilience within local communities during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as future preparedness. By sharing their experiences and strategies, VHAI aimed to foster discussions and promote the exchange of best practices in risk communication and community engagement at the international level. Participation in the 24th World Conference on Health Promotion showcased VHAI's commitment to advancing health promotion agenda at the National & International level and addressing the challenges posed by the pandemic.

Meeting of the Advisory group on Project INSPIRE

VHAI team along with other key stakeholders, took part in the meeting of the expert advisory group for the implementation framework of Project INSPIRE. This collaborative effort involved several renowned organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Bank. Together, they worked towards the development of the comprehensive INSPIRE package—a technical resource comprising seven strategies aimed at assisting countries in preventing and addressing violence against children. Conducted virtually on the 21st of October 2022, the primary objective of this meeting was to finalize the social determinants framework and outline an initial plan of action for the project's implementation.



Team VHAI participating in the meeting of the Advisory group on Project INSPIRE

Independent Commission on Development and Health in India

VHAI was instrumental in setting up the Independent Commission on Health and Development in India (ICDHI) in 1995. ICDHI was set up to assess the current health and development status as well as facilitate the process of need based and people-centric sustainable health and development plans.

Distinguished individuals from the health and development sector were a part of this commission. The first comprehensive report of the commission was presented to the then Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1998. The Honorable Prime Minister ensured that the major recommendations of the report were incorporated in various programmes, leading to many significant policy changes. This resulted in the formation of the National Rural Health Mission to overhaul the rural health services. Since 1998, the commission has released a significant number of reports on specific health problems faced by the country.

State Health Policy

Health systems and policies have a critical role in determining the manner in which health services are delivered, utilized and affect health outcomes. Health is a state subject as per the Constitution of India. The primary responsibility to provide quality health care services to the people including in rural, tribal and hilly areas lies with State/UT Governments.

A relevant State Health Policy under the overall framework of National Health Policy can go a long way in improving systems and services of the State. Health is a state subject and to provide quality universal health care services to the people is the responsibility of the State and Union Government. Recent COVID-19 pandemic has clearly exposed the underbelly of our health systems highlighting the importance of re-organizing, strengthening and prioritizing our health services and the available infrastructure.

Health is a vital human good and the public health system needs to play a key role in promoting it. Totally commercializing health care for the sake of choice and efficiency run a potent risk of submitting to the vagaries of market forces. Therefore, it is important that Public Health Systems under States remain the principal provider of health care for the citizens. This was clearly evident during the successful management of health challenges during COVID-19 pandemic.

Keeping the above evidence in mind, every State of India need to have relevant, robust and sustainable Health Policy, which reaches out to the people effectively, meeting the continuous and emerging health challenges. Under the overarching National Health Policy 2017, every State need to formulate an appropriate Health Policy for the State, keeping in mind specific epidemiological challenges as well as various strengths and weaknesses that clearly emerged during the management of COVID-19.

The Commission's research team has conducted extensive secondary research to assess the "Status of State Health Policy" in different states across the country. Last year, they prepared a detailed paper based on their findings, which was shared with the Commission Members for their input and feedback. Taking into account the valuable suggestions received, the paper has been revised accordingly.

Moving forward, the Commission intends to provide technical assistance to state governments that are interested in formulating new policies or updating existing ones based on the National Health Policy 2017 and the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. This support will be extended during the upcoming financial year, with the aim of ensuring that states have robust and responsive health policies that align with the national framework and incorporate the insights gained from the recent healthcare challenges.

The Health Status of Aspirant States in India: Ongoing Research

The Commission is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the health status of aspirant states in India. This research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the health indicators of states that are lagging behind and identify the underlying reasons for their performance, while also comparing them with states that are performing better in terms of health outcomes.

Through a thorough review and analysis of the situation, the Commission is poised to provide technical support to these lagging states in the upcoming financial year. The goal is to assist these states in addressing the specific challenges they face and to help them improve their health systems and outcomes. The Commission recognizes the importance of targeted interventions and tailored strategies to uplift the healthcare infrastructure and services in these states, ultimately leading to better health outcomes for all.





Health, Wellbeing and Equity

In a diverse and complex country like India, creating a lasting impact on health and development, especially for vulnerable populations, necessitates a nuanced and adaptable understanding of the evolving development landscape. It is crucial to respond promptly and innovatively to the ever-changing challenges. VHAI has consistently risen to this demand in the past, demonstrating its commitment to making a difference.

The situation has become even more intricate with the direct influence of globalization and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has presented new and unprecedented challenges, requiring us to re-evaluate our strategies and approaches. However, the learnings we have gained from this global health crisis have only reinforced our commitment and dedication to our agenda.

As we navigate through these challenging times, VHAI remains steadfast in its mission to tackle the complexities of health and development in India. We are determined to adapt, innovate, and continue our efforts to improve the well-being of vulnerable populations. By embracing change and building on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, we are confident in our ability to make a meaningful impact on the health and development landscape of the country particularly through our recent holistic programme on Health, Wellbeing and Equity.

A. Development of the Concept

VHAI has recently developed and launched a comprehensive concept that focuses on Health, Wellbeing, and Equity, built upon three fundamental pillars:

- **Health Promotion:** VHAI emphasizes the proactive promotion of health, aiming to prevent illnesses and enhance overall well-being through various initiatives and interventions.
- **Self-Care for Health and Common Ailments:** Recognizing the importance of empowering individuals to take charge of their own health, VHAI advocates for self-care practices that enable people to manage common ailments and promote a healthier lifestyle.

- **Social Determinants for Health:** VHAI acknowledges the impact of social and economic factors on health outcomes, particularly for marginalized and disadvantaged communities. Their approach encompasses addressing the specific needs of these communities to ensure equitable access to healthcare.

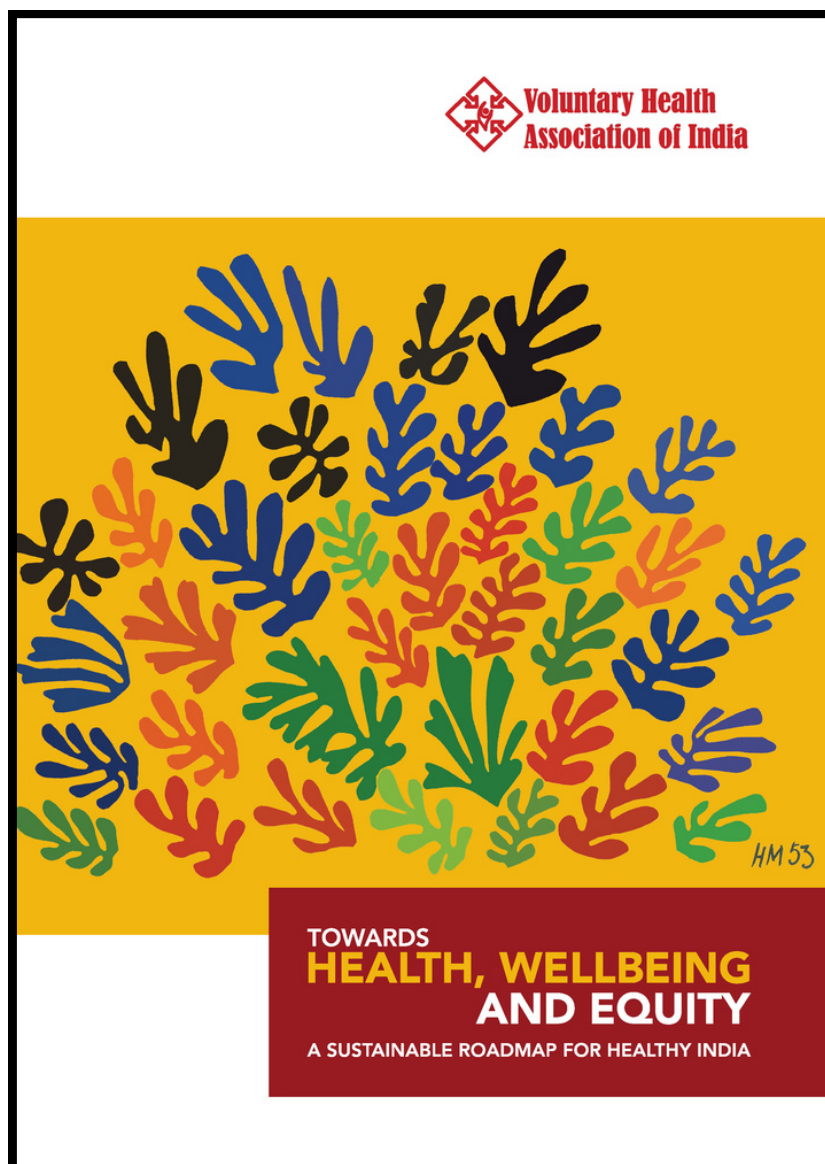
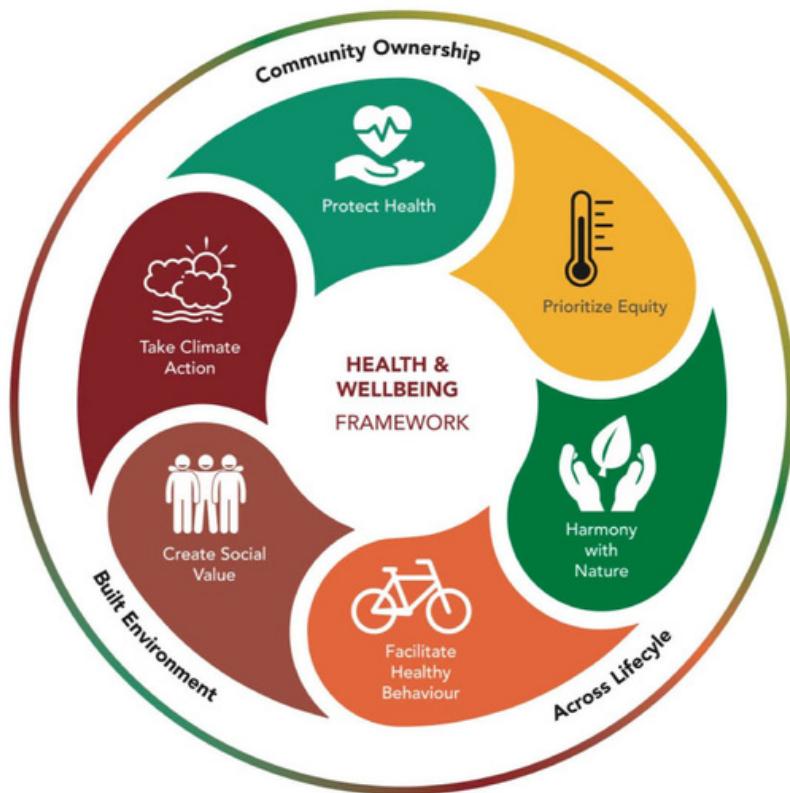
VHAI's team developed the comprehensive concept and specific modules on Health Promotion and Self-Care. These modules were shared with State VHAs for feedback, enabling refinement and improvement.

Additionally, VHAI initiated the compilation of Module 3 and modules focusing on climate change and mental health, which are currently in draft stage. These modules will be shared with state partners, and training sessions will be conducted to facilitate effective implementation.

Development of Health, Wellbeing and Equity Brochure: To disseminate information about the concept and its pillars, VHAI developed a brochure on Health, Wellbeing, and Equity, which was also translated into Hindi to cater to a wider audience and promote accessibility. This multi-faceted approach demonstrates our commitment to advancing health, well-being, and equity through comprehensive and inclusive strategies.

B. Regional Workshop on Health & Wellbeing

Building on the success of the National Workshop conducted for State VHAs in 2021, it was collectively agreed to organize similar regional workshops for member organizations of the State VHAs. Three regional workshops were successfully conducted last year, focusing on specific geographical areas.





Mr. Alok Mukhopadhyay, Chairman, VHAI addressing the participants at the State Level Workshop on Health Wellbeing and Equity in Bihar



Mr. Swapan Mazumder, Executive Director, BVHA at the State Level Workshop on Health Wellbeing and Equity in Bihar

Regional Workshop for North India- The two day online workshop was organized with active participation from State VHAs and their member institutions representing North India on 11th and 12th April, 2022. The workshop included representatives from Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi. Its primary objective was to provide training and promote learning on Health promotion and Self-care. The workshop served as a platform for collective reflection on the future roadmap of Health & Wellbeing and discussed strategies for integrating these principles into ongoing work on the ground. Over 75 participants actively took part in the workshop, contributing to its success.

Regional Workshop for Central and West India- Similarly, a two-day workshop was conducted for Central and West India, focusing on State VHAs and their member institutions in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Goa on 12th and 13th July, 2022. With over 60 participants in attendance, the workshop provided a valuable platform for networking and exchange of ideas.

These series of workshops were conducted online, led by VHAI and regional State VHAs. The agendas for each workshop were tailored to the specific region, considering the local context and challenges. In addition to the core agenda, the workshops fostered discussions on state-level experiences related to health promotion, gender empowerment and women's rights, supporting and strengthening food and nutrition security, social media promotion, and fundraising, including crowdfunding platforms

State Level Workshop for Bihar- A State-level workshop was held on December 8th, 2022 at Sewa Kurjee Kendra, Patna for the state of Bihar. The workshop had a diverse participation, including BVHA staff, member institutions, representatives from the state health department, other like-minded organizations, professionals, health administrators, grassroots level workers, and representatives such as ASHAs, ANMs, local panchayat leaders, PHC doctors, and youth representatives.

The training workshop, conducted by VHAI in collaboration with the BVHA team, focused on various aspects of health, wellbeing, and equity. The main objective was to explore how these principles could be integrated into existing public health programs on the ground with minimal cost. The workshop featured enriching sessions where participants shared their experiences, including representatives from the Health Department and ground-level workers. During active discussions, a clear roadmap was developed to implement the concepts discussed. With the active engagement of over 100 participants, the workshop provided valuable insights into the agenda of Health, Wellbeing, and Equity. All training resource materials were shared with the participants for easy reference and continued learning.

State level workshop for Kerala- A State-level workshop for Kerala was held on 20th August, 2022. The one day training workshop was organized by VHAI in collaboration with Kerala VHA which focussed on integrating the concept of health, wellbeing, and equity in the existing programmes on the ground. The workshop witnessed participation from a diverse group of professionals from the State health department, member institutions and grassroots level workers. It included exchange of knowledge and experiences from the ground. The workshop served as a platform for collective reflection on the future roadmap of Health & Wellbeing.



Ms. Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, Chief Executive, VHAI addressing the participants at the State Level Workshop on Health, Wellbeing and Equity in Kerala



Mr. Sajju Itty, Executive Director, Kerala VHA at the State Level Workshop in Kerala

C. Promoting Access to Social and Economic Welfare Schemes: Ensuring Equity, Social Justice, and Inclusion among Vulnerable Populations

Central and State Government social welfare services are designed to meet the needs of individuals who, due to social, economic, and physical factors, are unable to access essential amenities and services. These marginalized sections encompass women, children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Primitive Tribal Groups, and other vulnerable populations.

Despite the presence of numerous schemes and programs, a significant portion of the population, particularly those residing in remote, hard-to-reach areas, and tribal communities, face challenges in accessing these initiatives for various reasons. VHAI has undertaken efforts to bridge this gap and facilitate access to government social security and welfare schemes for these vulnerable communities. This initiative was initiated in the remote and hard-to-reach districts of Ganjam and Mayurbhanj in Odisha in 2022 and has expanded to other regions in the current year (2023).



KEY ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED DURING THE YEAR 2022-23

BASELINE ASSESSMENT

Assessing the knowledge, perception, and accessibility of tribal and vulnerable communities regarding government schemes and programs, as well as evaluating the implementation status of various social welfare and social protection schemes.

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Engaging with relevant stakeholders at the village, Gram Panchayat (GP), block, and district levels to discuss and address concerns related to linking eligible beneficiaries with government social protection and welfare schemes

HOUSEHOLD ASSESSMENTS

Trained volunteers conduct assessments at the household level to map eligible beneficiaries and identify issues they face in availing social protection schemes and programs.

ENGAGEMENT WITH OFFICIALS

Meetings with GP and block-level officials, frontline health workers, and Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members to propose effective modalities for linking eligible beneficiaries with government social protection and welfare schemes.

COMMUNITY SENSITIZATION

Raising awareness among mapped beneficiaries about government social welfare and social protection schemes through community sensitization activities.

FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS

Regularly engaging with officials at the block and district levels to ensure the enrollment of eligible beneficiaries in pension, housing, public distribution system & other social protection schemes.

AWARENESS SESSIONS

Conducting sessions for women's group members, Village Health, Sanitation, and Nutrition Committees (VHSNC) members, adolescent groups, PRI members, and community leaders to sensitize them about existing central and state government social welfare and social protection schemes.

COLLABORATIVE CAMPS

Organizing camps in collaboration with relevant government departments, PRI members, and local NGOs to assist eligible beneficiaries with Aadhaar card preparation and correction, online application assistance for job cards, ration cards, E-Shram cards, pensions, housing, and other schemes such as ASHIRBAD and SAFAL (Scheme for agro-based assistance for small farmers).

Through these concerted efforts, VHAI aims to empower marginalized communities by facilitating their access to government social welfare and social protection schemes. By addressing barriers and providing assistance, VHAI strives to ensure that these vulnerable populations receive the support and benefits they are entitled to.

Notable Achievements in Promoting Access to Social Welfare Schemes

Our dedicated efforts in promoting access to social welfare schemes for vulnerable populations have yielded significant milestones. We successfully reached out to over 20,000 vulnerable individuals through an extensive on-the-ground campaign. Awareness sessions were conducted for various groups, including women's group members, farmer club members, adolescent group members, Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members, community leaders, Village Health, Sanitation, and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC) members, as well as male group members. The objective of these sessions was to raise awareness and enhance knowledge among individuals, empowering them with the necessary information to effectively access and benefit from these schemes.



Young Enabler Assisting Senior Citizen for enrollment in Pension Schemes

Key Achievements

Food Security and Public Distribution System (PDS): Enrolled more than 2000 eligible families in the food security and PDS scheme, ensuring their access to essential food supplies through ration cards.

E-Shram Card and Health Insurance Card: Prepared E-Shram cards and health insurance cards for 1672 eligible beneficiaries, providing them with access to social security benefits and healthcare coverage.

Aadhaar Card: Assisted 2246 beneficiaries in preparing or correcting their Aadhaar cards, enabling them to avail various government services and schemes more easily.

Pension Schemes: Enrolled 1554 eligible beneficiaries in different pension schemes, including widow pension, old age pension, and disability pension, providing them with financial support for their livelihood and well-being.

Housing Schemes: Facilitated the enrollment of 882 beneficiaries in housing schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and Biju Pukka Ghar Yojana, ensuring access to safe and adequate housing for vulnerable individuals and families.

Agro-Based Schemes: Supported 716 beneficiaries in accessing agro-based schemes and programs, assisting them in agricultural activities and enhancing their livelihoods.



These achievements reflect our collective commitment to ensuring equity, social justice, and inclusion for vulnerable population. By ensuring that vulnerable population are well-informed, we strive to create a more inclusive society where everyone has equal access to social welfare programs.

D. Community Health Promotion

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. Health promotion and disease prevention programs can empower individuals to make healthier choices and reduce their risk of disease and disability. At the population level, they can eliminate health disparities, improve quality of life, and improve the availability of healthcare and related services.



Based on the emerging health needs, suggestions and feedback from health & ICDS officials, peer educators, front line health workers and CBO members, community health promotion activities were planned and intervened in 2 blocks of District Ganjam, Odisha.

Activities

- Sensitization programmes was organized in remote villages for VHSNC members on prevention and management of NCDs, preparation of action plan was done to create mass awareness on prevention of NCDs.
- Demonstration sessions were organized at the village level covering lactating and pregnant mothers, adolescent girls on Eat Right practice, hand washing, hygiene & sanitation during VHND in collaboration with front line health workers, Peer Educators & Volunteers.
- Screening cum awareness sessions on prevention and management of non-communicable diseases were organized in remote and hard to reach villages in collaboration with local PHC. Health checkups were provided to high risk population and positive cases were referred to the public health facilities.
- Sensitization programmes were organized in Gram Panchayats for women SHG federation leaders on Hygiene promotion, Food & Nutrition and COVID-19 appropriate behaviour during their monthly meetings. These leaders are further sensitizing SHG members in their respective group during their monthly meeting with support from AWW and trained Peer Educators.
- Orientation sessions were organized in remote and distant villages for lactating and pregnant mothers on ANC/NC/PNC, child feeding, diarrhoeal disease management at Anganwadi Centre with support from concerned AWWs and Peer Educators.



E. Promotion of Kitchen Garden

Kitchen gardens are a micro-solution and an affordable way of ensuring healthy food and balanced nutrition within a family. They can play an important role in enhancing national food security and dietary diversity to combat malnutrition. Kitchen gardens are known to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, bring health and nutrition behaviour change, and have a positive effect on the health of the family especially among children and adolescents.

VHAI in collaboration with Odisha Livelihood Mission (OLM) endeavored the following activities to promote kitchen garden among rural households:

- Organized sensitization meetings in Khallikote, Ganjam and in Jashipur, Mayurbhanj in collaboration with panchayat level personnel from OLM and sensitized women SHG members and girls group members on the importance of kitchen gardens.
- Women SHG members and adolescent group members were sensitized on the importance of kitchen gardens in improving health and nutrition status of the community especially within children and adolescents.
- Supported 886 households with seeds, fertilizers to develop kitchen garden.



F. School Health Promotion

The concept of Health Promoting Schools has gained recognition as an effective strategy for fostering positive development and encouraging healthy behaviors among children. Our approach encompasses various aspects such as promoting physical activity, enhancing physical fitness, encouraging recreational activities and play, advocating for balanced nutrition and preventing tobacco use. Our strategy's ultimate objective is to empower school communities to make well-informed decisions regarding their health and overall well-being.

To create a healthy environment in schools, VHAI has been implementing school health promotion for the last two decades in various settings of our country. Last year, over 8500 students along with 466 teachers were sensitized on various aspects of health promotion including nutrition and physical activity. The following specific areas were covered during the health education session:

- Personal Hygiene & Sanitation
- Adverse effect of tobacco
- Prevention of anaemia and malnutrition
- Nutrition & Eat Right Practice
- Environmental Sustainability
- Benefits of regular consumption of millets



Sowing the Seeds of Wellness

Millet for Health and Sustainability



In an effort to promote the consumption and production of millets, the Indian government proposed to the United Nations to designate the year 2023 as the International Year of Millets (IYOM). This initiative garnered support from 72 countries, leading to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declaring 2023 as the International Year of Millets on March 5th, 2021.

To support the Government of India's initiative and recognizing the nutritional benefits of millets, **VHAI launched a program called "Sowing the Seeds of Wellness - Millets for Health and Sustainability" in February 2023.** As part of this program, VHAI initiated a nationwide campaign titled **"Millets Pe Charcha."** The campaign aims to engage with experts through webinars at the National and State levels. At the grassroots level, VHAI has been conducting dialogues and discussions with local communities, including millet farmers, VHSNCs, CBOs, community influencers, AWWs, and ASHAs. This campaign perfectly aligns with our recently launched programme on Health, Wellbeing and Equity. Promoting millets will contribute to improve the well-being of individuals, communities, and the environment.

Collaboration has been established with FSSAI and Odisha Millet Mission at the National and State levels to promote millets. VHAI actively seeks collaboration and partnerships with State Government organizations and expert organizations like Indian Institute of Millets Research. To equip State VHAs and member institutions with the necessary knowledge and skills, VHAI is proposing to organize a webinar in the coming months.

At the grassroots level, VHAI has initiated millet promotion initiatives in two districts of Odisha, one tribal and one non-tribal, to create awareness about the benefits of millet consumption, revive millet cultivation, promote climate-resilient farming, and address micronutrient deficiencies.



KEY ACTIVITIES

MASS AWARENESS

Organizing awareness campaigns and sessions to educate people about nutritional benefits of millets and their role in improving health. This includes conducting awareness events at the community level, schools, colleges, and universities in collaboration with the Government of India, Eat Right Campaign, FSSAI, State Governments, and local administrations. Engagement with women and pregnant and lactating mothers at Anganwadi Centers is also emphasized, along with promoting the inclusion of millets in mid-meals at the Anganwadi Centers and schools. Over 10,500 individuals have been sensitized on health benefits of millets.

SUPPORT FOR MILLET FARMING

Support for Millet Farming: Providing assistance to local farmers in cultivating millets, including technical support and promoting the adoption of sustainable and profitable farming practices.

ORGANIZING COOKING WORKSHOPS

Conducting workshops to teach people how to prepare millet-based dishes and documenting traditional millet recipes from remote tribal areas.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Initiating a creative social media campaign with the right messaging to raise mass awareness about millets and encourage their incorporation into daily diets.

DOCUMENTATION

Documenting best practices, success stories, and experiences related to millet cultivation, recipes, and more for the purpose of replication and sustainability.



DEVELOPMENT AND ADAPTATION OF IEC MATERIALS

Developing and contextualizing Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials specifically focused on promoting millets.

Power Millets

Millets are small grained cereals belonging to grass family. The crop has low requirements for water and fertility - making them a more sustainable option. They are resistant to drought and other extreme weather conditions. They are readily accessible and convenient to store. Millets are nutri-cereals comprising of sorghum, pearl millet (major millets) foxtail, little, Kodo, proso and barnyard millet (minor millets).

Health Benefits of Millets

- **Powerhouse of Nutrients** : Millets are rich in nutrients such as fiber, protein, micronutrients (vitamins, and minerals including calcium, iron & phosphorus), phytochemicals making them a healthy addition to any diet.
- **Good for Digestive Health** : The high fiber in millets acts a prebiotic, feeding micro-flora which helps to improve digestive health by preventing constipation & promoting regular bowel movements. Eliminate other digestive problem like excess gas, bloating & cramping. Millet proteins are more easily digestible, possibly due to their lower levels of cross-linked prolamins.
- **Gluten-Free** : Making them a great alternative for people who are sensitive to gluten particularly celiac disease.
- **Regulates Blood Sugar and Aids in Weight Loss** : It has low glycemic index which helps to prevent type 2 diabetes. Low in calories and high in fiber, which helps you feel fuller for longer.
- **Heart Health** : Rich in antioxidants and vitamin B3 (niacin), which help prevent heart disease, lower cholesterol level, regulate blood pressure.
- **Slows Down Muscle Degradation and Improve Skin Elasticity** : The high amino acid content creates collagen in the body, which gives structure to the body's tissues and prevents wrinkling of the skin.
- **Reduce Oxidative Stress** : High antioxidants such as phytates, polyphenols, tannins, anthocyanins, phytosterols & pinacosanols present in it also have important role in aging and metabolic diseases.
- **Detoxifies the Body** : Most of the antioxidants present in millet help in cleaning up the toxins from your body, especially from your kidney and liver.
- **Anti-Cancerous** : Millet extracts have anti-proliferic effects on cancer cell line. inhibit DNA damage and induce the production of phase- 2 detoxifying enzymes.
- **Relieves Menstrual Cramps** : Millet is rich in magnesium, which helps in relieving pain and cramps during the menstrual cycle.

Nutritional Value of Millet (Per 100 Gms)

Protein	(7-12%)
Fat	(2-5%)
Carbohydrates	(65- 75%)
Dietary Fibre	(15-20%)
Other	Vitamins & Minerals including Calcium, Magnesium Iron & Phosphorus

Kodu Millet (Kodon)

- Has antibacterial properties.
- Contains a high amount of lecithin and is excellent for strengthening the nervous system.
- Anti-oxidant properties.
- Easy to digest and Gluten Free. Safe for Celiac's disease.

Eat it as Kheer, Cheela, Doa or Upma

Foxtail Millet (Kaku)

- Regulates blood sugar levels as it has a low glycemic index.
- Rich in iron and calcium, and thus maintains bones health.
- Rich in Vitamin B12.
- Loaded with vitamin A and zinc, prevents night blindness, provides better vision.
- Boosts Cardiac Health.

Eat it as Poha, Pulao, Dosa or Upma

Tobacco Control



Tobacco use causes a significant number of diseases in India every year. It is responsible for 1.5 lakh cases of cancer, 4.2 million heart diseases, and 3.7 million lung diseases. India has the highest rate of oral cancer worldwide due to widespread tobacco chewing. More than 65% of cancer cases in India are linked to tobacco use, including breast and cervical cancer. Additionally, 30% of head and neck cancers are caused by non-smoking forms of tobacco used in India.

According to the latest available data from the Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2016-17 (GATS 2), an alarming 28.6% (approximately 26 crore) Indians above 15 years of age use tobacco in some form. Out of these, 23 crore are daily users, and 19 crore reside in rural areas. Smokeless tobacco or gutkha is the most commonly consumed tobacco product. Tobacco claims the lives of over 13 lakh Indians annually. In 2017, the health and economic burden of tobacco consumption amounted to 1.77 lakh crore, which accounted for 1.04% of the GDP. 's comprehensive 139th report on Cancer Care Plan and Management (by the Parliament Standing Committee on Health) submitted in September 2022, highlighted that oral cancer caused by tobacco is responsible for the highest number of deaths in India, followed by lung, esophageal, and stomach cancer. The committee also noted that nearly 50% of all preventable cancers in India are linked to tobacco use in various forms.

India has made significant progress in reducing tobacco use among adults by 17% since 2010, thanks to strong measures implemented by the National and State Governments, as well as other key stakeholders

To save millions of lives, Voluntary Health Association of India has been implementing a comprehensive tobacco control program at the national and state levels for the last one decade. The program aims to strengthen tobacco control policies through initiatives such as policy development, media partnerships, and collaboration at all levels based on evidence and best practices. The crucial attributes of VHAI tobacco control work have been building effective partnerships, sensitization of stakeholders, capacity building of state partners coordinated efforts with civil society organizations. The organization has conducted numerous impactful campaigns that have received widespread appreciation.

At the National Level

a. Strengthening COTPA

The 2003 Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement & Regulation of Trade, Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act is India's primary tobacco control legislation. Although the Act has been effective in the country's battle against tobacco, it requires further strengthening to address the increasing health and economic burdens associated with tobacco consumption.

In this regard, VHAJ supported the Government of India in developing a revised COTPA draft Bill, which was made available to the public in December 2020 for comments until January 2021. The proposed Bill includes several progressive changes:

1. Eliminating designated smoking areas at airports, restaurants, hotels, and bars due to inadequate construction, which allows smoke to escape and exposes non-smokers to secondhand smoke.
2. Raising the legal age for tobacco consumption from 18 to 21 years, as evidence shows that delaying tobacco initiation reduces the likelihood of addiction.
3. Expanding the ban on tobacco product promotion and advertising to effectively prevent youth tobacco addiction.
4. Prohibiting the sale of tobacco products in unsealed packaging, as selling individual cigarettes and bidis in lieu of full packets makes tobacco consumption easier and cheaper for young people.
5. Increasing fines and penalties for law violations, as the current maximum fine of Rs.200 is insufficient.

However, there has been no progress on the Bill since then, and it is yet to be introduced in the Parliament. VHAJ has worked to raise awareness among policymakers, medical professionals, educational institutions, health departments, media houses, NGOs, tourism departments, municipal corporations, and others about the need to enhance the existing tobacco control law.



Presenting 'Roadmap to India's Health' to Shri Gaurav Gogoi, Hon'ble Member of Parliament



Sensitization meeting with Shri Dharmendra Kashyap, Hon'ble Member of Parliament on key public health issues

b. Tobacco Taxation

In 2017, India implemented the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime, which consolidated various national and state taxes. Before GST, tobacco products were subject to excise tax and state-level Value Added Tax (VAT). However, after the implementation of GST, State VAT on tobacco products was abolished. Currently, tobacco products are subject to GST, Central excise, National Calamity and Contingence Duty, and Compensation cess. While all tobacco products fall under the 28% GST slab, other taxes, duties, and cesses vary across different tobacco products.

Despite the introduction of GST, tobacco products have not seen significant tax increases, resulting in limited price hikes. Recent studies indicate that cigarettes, bidis, and smokeless tobacco have become increasingly affordable over the past decade. In fact, India has one of the lowest tobacco prices globally. VHAI has been actively engaging with key stakeholders including ministry officials, citizen representatives, youth groups, civil society organizations, economists, doctors, media personnel, and influencers to raise awareness about the use of taxation as an effective policy measure to discourage tobacco consumption.

Consultation on Tobacco Taxes

In collaboration with the Policy Think Tank and with the guidance of economist Dr. Arvind Mohan, VHAI organized a Consultation on Tobacco Taxes in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh on October 14, 2022. The consultation brought together important stakeholders, such as Mr. Parthasarathi Sen Sharma, Principal Secretary of Health for the Government of Uttar Pradesh, Mr. Vivek Arya, Joint Commissioner of Law in the Department of Commercial Tax for the Government of UP, Dr. (Prof.) Arvind Mohan from the Department of Economics at the University of Lucknow, Dr. Harshvardhan, Head of Hospital Administration at SGPGI, Prof. Debashish Dasgupta from IIM Lucknow, Sh. Sanjay Rai from AIM Trust, Mr. Siddharth Kalhans from Business Standard, Dr. Rijo M. John, economist and public health policy specialist, Mr. Narender Kumar, Principal Consultant for National Policy at CTFK, and Ms. Bhavna B. Mukhopadhyay, CEO of VHAI.



VHAI participating at the State Level Consultation on Tobacco Taxation at Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh



Ms. Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, Chief Executive, VHAI participating in the Pre-Budget Consultation chaired by the Hon'ble Finance Minister of India

Pre-Budget Consultation

VHAI actively took part in the Pre-Budget Consultation held on November 24, 2022, by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India. The consultation aimed to gather input from civil society representatives working on public health, nutrition, and other social welfare issues. Ms. Bhavna Mukhopadhyay represented VHAI and submitted our recommendations regarding public health policies. The consultation was chaired by the esteemed Finance Minister of India, Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman, and was attended by other officials from the Ministry of Finance, Government of India.

Additionally, VHAI team attended a roundtable meeting on tobacco taxation on December 13, 2022, at the IIC organized by the Institute of Economic Growth. During this meeting, discussions on tobacco taxation were held and insights were shared.

It is worth mentioning that in the 2023-24 Budget, there was a 16% increase in the National Calamity and Contingent Duty (NCCD) imposed on certain cigarettes.

c. Public awareness events with citizen's representatives

VHAI received several requests from representatives of citizens to organize anti-tobacco awareness events in schools and colleges within their constituencies, especially targeting the youth and promoting the message of 'Choose Life, Not Tobacco'. In response, VHAI successfully coordinated the following events:

On October 19, 2022, an interactive session on Tobacco Control was conducted between students of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Deoria, and MP Dr. Ramapati Ram Tripathi. More than 100 students and faculty members attended the session at Kendriya Vidyalaya.

On November 29, 2022, a similar interactive session on Tobacco Control was held at IIMT University, Meerut with MP Rajendra Agrawal. The event included students from IIMT University and was conducted in collaboration with the Meerut District Tobacco Control Cell (DTCC) and IIMT Radio 90.4 FM. Over 200 students and faculty members participated in this session.



Shri Rajendra Agrawal, Hon'ble Member of Parliament addressing college students on health harms of tobacco

During these interactions, VHAJ presented engaging presentations on tobacco control, which were highly praised by the students. The Member of Parliament also educated the students about the harmful health effects linked to tobacco and encouraged them to abstain from tobacco consumption.

d. Tobacco depiction on OTT Platforms

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a significant increase in the consumption of content on OTT platforms like Disney Hotstar, Amazon Prime, and Netflix. Research shows that the primary users of these platforms are individuals between the ages of 15 and 34. Currently, these platforms operate under a self-regulatory mechanism to monitor the content being streamed. However, while the Ministry of Health has established Film Rules under the COTPA Act to regulate the depiction of tobacco in movies and TV shows, these regulations have not been extended to OTT platforms. Consequently, there is widespread portrayal and glorification of tobacco consumption on these platforms without any statutory or health warnings.

To address this issue, on May 4, 2022, VHAJ partnered with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to organize a webinar titled “Tobacco imagery in on-demand streaming content popular among adolescents and young adults in India: implications for global tobacco control.” The goal of the webinar was to develop a roadmap and provide recommendations for the regulation of OTT platforms. VHAJ, in consultation with CTFK, prepared and submitted a representation along with the webinar report to the officials at the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, urging them to regulate OTT platforms.

REGULATING THE DEPICTION OF TOBACCO IN ON-DEMAND STREAMING PLATFORMS: IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA AND WAY FORWARD

4th May, 2022
4:00- 5:30 pm

SPEAKERS

- Dr. L. Swasticheran**
Chief Medical Officer & DGHS, MoHFW
- Vandana Shah**
Regional Director, South Asia Programs, CTFK & Global Health Advocacy Incubator
- Praveen Sinha**
National Professional Officer, WHO India
- Sumitra Pednekar**
Actor & Social Activist
- Dr. Pankaj Chaturvedi**
Head Neck Cancer Surgeon, Tata Memorial Hospital, Deputy Director, Center for Cancer Epidemiology
- Ranjit Singh**
Advocate, Supreme Court of India
- Dr. Charu Arya**
Asst. Prof., Dept. of English, Delhi University
- Bhavna Mukhopadhyay**
Chief Executive, VHAJ

REGISTER NOW

zoom https://us06web.zoom.us/join/wn_tvam7f78r-qf7gc_xw2emw
Meeting ID: 842 8914 4616 Password: 442998

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India

Voluntary Health Association of India

The webinar saw the participation of over 120 individuals, including representatives from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, public health organizations, medical associations, youth associations, and civil society at large. VHAI collaborated with NYKS, medical professionals, CSOs, economists, media personnel, parents, and teachers to seek support for regulating the depiction of tobacco consumption on OTT platforms.

On World No Tobacco Day, May 31, 2023, the Ministry of Health officially notified amendments to the COTPA Rules, making it mandatory for OTT platforms to display health warnings during the depiction of tobacco and banning the promotion of tobacco products and brand placement.

e. Implementation of prohibition on E-cigarettes

In 2019, the Government of India enacted a law to prohibit the sale, trade, and distribution of E-cigarettes, aiming to protect young individuals from addiction to vaping, which the tobacco industry was promoting as a safer alternative. Despite this ban, the market today is inundated with various types and brands of E-cigarettes, being sold both in stores and online. Many young children, including school and college students, can easily purchase and use e-cigarettes, with sellers often neglecting to refuse sales to minors.

To assess the level of compliance with the e-cigarette ban, VHAI team conducted a survey in February-March 2023. E-cigarette samples from retail shops in Delhi/NCR, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana were collected. The survey report on e-cigarette compliance was then submitted to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).

On February 23, 2023, VHAI team participated in a consultation on E-cigarettes at the Indian Law Institute, organized by the National Law School. Notable attendees included Additional Health Secretary Ms. V. Hekali Zhimomi and Deputy Health Secretary, Pulkesh Kumar, among others.

In February 2023, the Health Secretary sent a letter to the Chief Secretaries of all the states, urging stricter implementation of the E-cigarette ban within their respective jurisdictions. This was followed by a public notice published in prominent newspapers, informing the public about the prohibition on the trade, sale, and purchase of E-cigarettes. The notice also warned against violating the law, highlighting that offenders could face fines and imprisonment.

At the State Level

Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh has one of the highest rates of tobacco consumption in India. As a part of the program, VHAI organized various activities in Uttar Pradesh to assist the state government in reducing the burden of tobacco-related illnesses and protecting its citizens from the harmful effects of tobacco.

I. Tobacco Vendor Licensing

The VHAI team supported the Lucknow Municipal Corporation in implementing the Tobacco Vendor Licensing (TVL) initiative. The team held meetings with the Urban Development Minister, Mr. AK Sharma and Municipal Commissioner, Mr. Indrajit Singh to revive TVL and establish regular monthly review meetings to monitor its progress. After effective coordination with the Municipal Commissioner's office, a notification was issued instructing zonal officers to start the implementation of TVL in their respective zones. VHAI provided on-field support to the zonal offices in identifying vendors and completing necessary documentation.

With support of VHAI, around 1500 TVLs were issued in Lucknow during the reporting year, marking the highest number of licenses granted since the inception of this intervention. Additionally, the first VL Review Meeting was successfully conducted on October 3, 2022, at the Smart City Office in Lucknow. VHAI also provided technical support to the Municipal Corporations of Ghaziabad, Noida, Mathura, Ayodhya, and Moradabad to initiate TVL in their respective jurisdictions.

II. COTPA Amendment

The team had a meeting with the State Health Minister, Mr. Brijesh Pathak, to brief him about VHA's Tobacco Control program in Uttar Pradesh and emphasize on the importance of amending COTPA at the state level. Additionally, the team worked towards garnering support for COTPA amendment from various stakeholders such as youths, CSOs, trader's associations, hospitality associations, educational institutes and doctors.



Felicitating Hon'ble State Deputy CM & Health Minister of UP, Shri Brijesh Pathak

III. Coordination with UPSCPCR

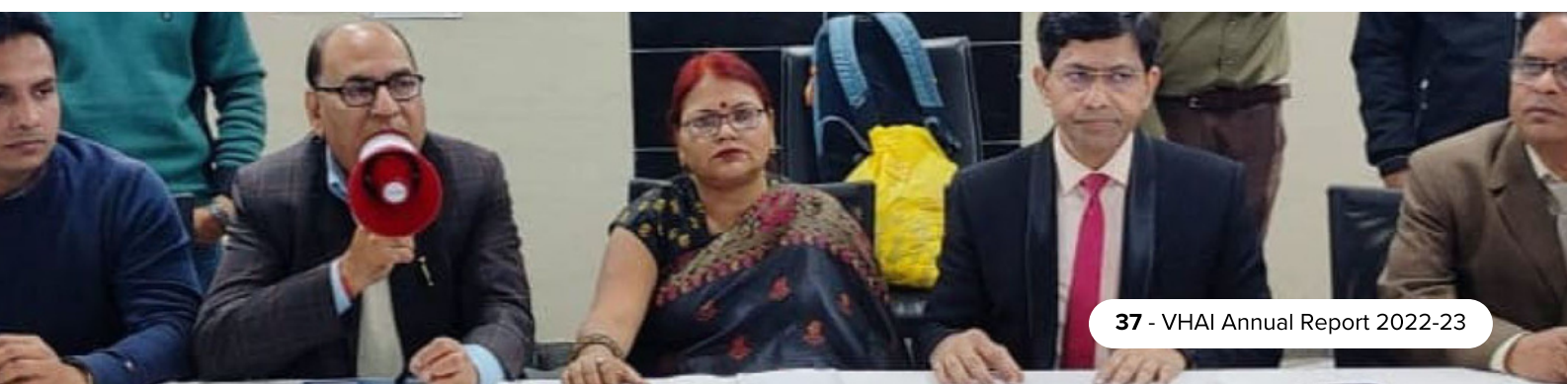
The team worked closely with the Chairman of the UP-State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (UPSCPCR) to request a letter be issued to relevant departments in order to ensure the enforcement of the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act (PECA), 2019 in the state. On March 13, 2023, UPSCPCR released the letter to all District Magistrates, with copies sent to the Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh and the Principal Secretary of the Home department, and also requested a report on the action taken.

IV. Campaign on regulating the depiction of tobacco consumption on OTT platforms: The team collaborated with NYKS, medical professionals, CSOs, economists, media personnel, parents, and teachers to gather support for regulating the portrayal of tobacco consumption on OTT platforms.

V. Coordination with the Joint Commissioner of Police (Law & Order): The team also coordinated with Mr. Piyush Mordiya, the Joint Commissioner of Police (Law & Order), and submitted a representation along with the letter from the Secretary of Health & Family Welfare. The aim was to issue an order to police officers, directing them to monitor and enforce the Prohibition of E-Cigarette Act, 2019.

VI. Awareness activities: The team conducted awareness sessions for about 35 medical officers and CMOs, focusing on the "Enforcement Mechanism of COTPA to make Tobacco Free Hospitals."

- The team offered support to the District Tobacco Control Cell, Noida, and provided training to police officers from three regions on the "Role of Police Officers in the Implementation of COTPA 2003."
- The team sensitized 105 police officers from 48 police stations on the "Different provisions of COTPA" and the "Role of Police Officers in COTPA Enforcement Mechanism."
- The team also provided technical support to AIIMS, Gorakhpur, in a study assessing the implementation of Tobacco Vendor Licensing (TVL) in Lucknow.



Chhattisgarh

VHAI commenced the implementation of the Tobacco Control program in Chhattisgarh from February 2023. The highlights of the major activities undertaken in the state during the last year (2022-23) are as follows:

A. State Level COTPA Amendment

- The team had a meeting with the State Health Minister, Mr. TS Singh Deo, to seek support in strengthening the existing COTPA laws at the state level. The health minister was sensitized about the need for amending the current COTPA law.
- Coordination was established with the Secretary-Health, Mr. R. Prasanna, and a request was made to strengthen COTPA at the state level.
- Technical support is being provided by VHAI to the State Tobacco Control Cell to facilitate effective implementation of tobacco control measures.

B. Ban on Spitting in Public Places

After receiving a request from Health Secretary, Mr. R Prasanna, VHAI offered technical support to the Health Department to issue a public order prohibiting the act of spitting chewing tobacco in public places. Efforts were made to enforce this ban in Chhattisgarh. Additionally, VHAI shared a draft public notice for the spitting ban in the state.

C. Coordination with Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) State Chapter

Recognizing the significance of engaging youths in the tobacco control movement, VHAI collaborated with NYKS in Chhattisgarh. Meetings were conducted with the Director and other senior officials of NYKS to orient them about VHAI's tobacco control program and seek their support. As a result of these efforts, NYKS invited VHAI to deliver a session on the role of youths in tobacco control at an event in Raipur. Around 100 volunteers of NYKS were sensitized on the tobacco control issue during this session.



Meeting with the Hon'ble State Health Minister, Shri. TS Singh Deo

D. Tambakoo Utpad Nished Diwas

The Government of Chhattisgarh issued a circular to all districts, directing them to observe March 17, 2023, as Tambakoo Utpad Nished Diwas (Tobacco Prohibition Day). VHAI provided technical support to the State Tobacco Control Cell in organizing the program. This included assistance in developing IEC materials and ensuring media coverage of the event.



Meeting with Shri Bhupesh Baghel, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh

E. State Level Coordination Committee (SLCC) meeting on Tobacco Control

The State Level Coordination Committee was established to facilitate tobacco control efforts in the state. This committee consists of key government departments including Health, Finance, Education, Police, Panchayat, Law, Transport, and Prison. After a gap of 8 years, the committee held its first meeting on March 29th. VHAI was invited by the Government of Chhattisgarh to participate in the meeting and contribute to the planning of future tobacco control implementation in the state, with the goal of achieving a tobacco-free Chhattisgarh.

F. State Level Consultation on E-cigarettes and Hookah Bars

VHAI was invited as a speaker by the State Tobacco Control Cell to participate in a consultation on E-cigarettes and Hookah bars. This event, jointly organized by the State Tobacco Control Cell and The Union, aimed to address the issues related to these products. During the consultation, VHAI presented on the violations of the E-cigarette ban and highlighted the need for stringent enforcement by the state government. The event was attended by representatives from various state and district-level agencies, including Police, FDA, Education, Nodal Officers, and NSS, who actively engaged in discussions regarding these concerns.

World No Tobacco Day Activities 2022

A. Uttar Pradesh

- **Youth Engagement:** VHAI collaborated with the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan District Office in Lucknow to organize a 'Run Against Tobacco' event at A.S. Defence Academy in Kankha, Mohanlalganj, Lucknow. The event attracted the participation of over 150 youths. Notable attendees included Mr. Amaresh Kumar Rawat, MLA of Mohanlalganj, and Shri Vikas Kumar Singh, District Youth Officer of NYKS. Mr. Rawat encouraged the youth to refrain from tobacco consumption.
- **Engagement with the District Tobacco Control Cell:** VHAI took part in the World No Tobacco Day workshop organized by the District Tobacco Control Cell at Balrampur Hospital. Chaired by Director Dr. Alok Kumar, the workshop entailed sensitization of approximately 75 doctors and medical professionals on tobacco control issues and the importance of amending COTPA regulations.
- **Engagement with the Regional Director Office, MoHFW:** VHAI was invited by the Regional Director Office of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, along with ACMO Dr. R.K. Chaudhary, to participate in the World No Tobacco Day workshop. Around 35 representatives from various departments actively engaged in the workshop and were sensitized on tobacco control issues and significance of COTPA amendments.

B. Telangana

Youth Engagement

VHAI, in collaboration with STCC, DM & HO in Hyderabad, organized a rally against tobacco, which attracted the participation of approximately 500 youths, doctors, and medical students. Key participants included the State Nodal Officer for NCD and STCC, the State Programme Officer for STCC, a WHO Consultant for NCD, and police officials. Eminent speakers sensitized the participants about protecting youth from tobacco addiction and safeguarding them from the influence of the tobacco industry. The rally was followed by a signature campaign.

Engagement with Renowned Sports Personality

VHAI facilitated a video message from ace badminton player Ms. PV Sindhu, in which she urged the youth of our country to break free from tobacco. Her message was widely disseminated in the media.



Video message by Ms. PV Sindhu, Ace Badminton player & Olympian, Padma Bhushan & Padma Shri



State Level Multi Stakeholder Consultation on 'Tobacco: Threat to Environment' in Kerala

Raising Awareness on “Tobacco: Threat to Our Environment” for World No Tobacco Day 2022

To generate awareness on the theme “Tobacco: Threat to Our Environment” for World No Tobacco Day 2022, VHAJ in collaboration with WHO-India organized state-level multi-stakeholder consultations involving key government stakeholders from various sectors including Health, Environment, Education, Agriculture, and Labor. These consultations were conducted in 10 states in partnership with State Voluntary Health Associations and allied organizations.

The objective of these consultations was to engage and empower key stakeholders through comprehensive strategies, both upstream and downstream, to enhance the implementation of WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and MPOWER policies at the national and sub-national levels. Additionally, the consultations aimed to disseminate the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) findings in the respective states through partnerships with state governments. Furthermore, a future roadmap on the environmental impact of tobacco was developed during these discussions.

The multi-stakeholder consultations facilitated crucial dialogues on the environmental impact of tobacco among policymakers from various sectors. It also aimed to sensitize these key decision-makers on the importance of strengthening tobacco control policies and the necessity of inter-sectoral coordination for the development and implementation of comprehensive tobacco control strategies.

Media

The media initially considered Tobacco Control a low priority issue; therefore, our main objective was to raise awareness among policymakers, involve multiple stakeholders, educate the public, and garner support from enforcement officials for tobacco control measures in the interest of public health. The team actively networked with senior journalists from various newspapers, magazines, and electronic media to encourage the coverage of public health issues related to tobacco control.

The team shared relevant information, such as orders and circulars, with the journalists to facilitate the creation of media stories in leading English, Telugu, and Hindi dailies. Our team also took the initiative to sensitize journalists about the importance of tobacco control measures. As a result of these efforts, over 1050 news stories (including print, electronic, and online coverage) have been generated on various tobacco control issues. This increased media attention has played a crucial role in disseminating information and raising awareness about the importance of tobacco control for public health



Empowering Community-Based Institutions for Improving Routine Immunization

India boasts the largest immunization program globally, targeting approximately 26.7 million infants and 29 million pregnant women annually. As a result of the government's dedicated efforts in strengthening this program, immunization rates have significantly improved. However, there is still much work to be done in reaching every child in the country. Challenges such as a large population, community ignorance and resistance, and difficult-to-access areas contribute to low immunization rates in certain states.

Particularly in Nagaland, Arunachal, Assam, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and Manipur, the full immunization coverage status is extremely poor compared to the national average. To achieve the nationwide target of 90% coverage, special attention must be given to these underperforming states and districts. Low demand for immunization services also plays a critical role in the low uptake rate. Despite the availability of immunization services in various areas, communities often refrain from utilizing them due to fears and misconceptions, which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lockdowns, restrictions, and the diversion of health staff to COVID-19 efforts, further hindered immunization services throughout the country. Therefore, it is crucial that immunization and COVID-19 prevention efforts go hand in hand. Community-based organizations (CBOs) and influencers can play a significant role in addressing these issues and strengthening the demand for immunization services in low-performing districts. CBOs can mobilize the community and support the health team in delivering immunization services.

As part of VHAI's comprehensive program, partner NGOs are working with CBOs and influencers to mobilize communities, raise awareness about immunization, eliminate COVID-19 stigmas, and promote vaccination. This initiative has been ongoing for the last three years and focuses on remote and hard-to-reach areas, including the northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, and Arunachal Pradesh. Partner NGOs collaborate with block-level NGOs to engage local CBOs and influencers, building their capacity to promote COVID-19 vaccination, routine immunization, and adherence to COVID-19 appropriate behavior.

Highlights of the Year (2022-23)

VHAI, along with its field team, remains dedicated to empowering local CSOs, CBOs, and influencers to improve routine immunization in their respective localities. Through close coordination with government frontline workers, empowered local CBOs are still continuing with the work in their locality areas to increase demand for routine immunization services, and to overcome vaccine hesitancy.

Inter-Agency Regional AAP/RCCE Training by UNICEF

VHAI participated in the interagency training workshop organized by UNICEF in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from 7th-9th November 2022. This workshop brought together various partners such as WHO and IFRC, along with stakeholders in AAP (Accountability to Affected Populations) and RCCE (Risk Communication and Community Engagement).



Team VHAJ participated in Inter- Agency training workshop organized by UNICEF in Colombo, Sri Lanka

The objective of this training workshop was to facilitate a collaboration among UNICEF, WHO, IFRC, government bodies, international organizations, civil society, academia, and other partners, including the private sector, from eight South Asian countries. These countries include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The aim was to enhance AAP and RCCE systems, promote innovation, and prepare for future emergencies.

During the workshop, VHAJ team had the opportunity to present its community engagement model, specifically highlighting its work in remote and challenging regions of the country, including the northeastern states. This model focused on COVID-19 prevention and management, as well as routine immunization. It showcased VHAJ's successful approach in these areas and provided valuable insights for the participants

Human-Centred Design Workshop by UNICEF India

UNICEF India organized a 'Human-Centred Design Workshop' in New Delhi from 7th to 10th February 2023, with the participation of UNICEF state teams and CSO partners including VHAJ. The primary goal of this workshop was to enhance capacity in innovative approaches, including Human-Centred Design and Behavioural Insights, with a specific focus on routine immunization in Uttar Pradesh. The workshop facilitated the development of methods to gather profound human insights and create novel interventions that challenge social norms and behaviours.

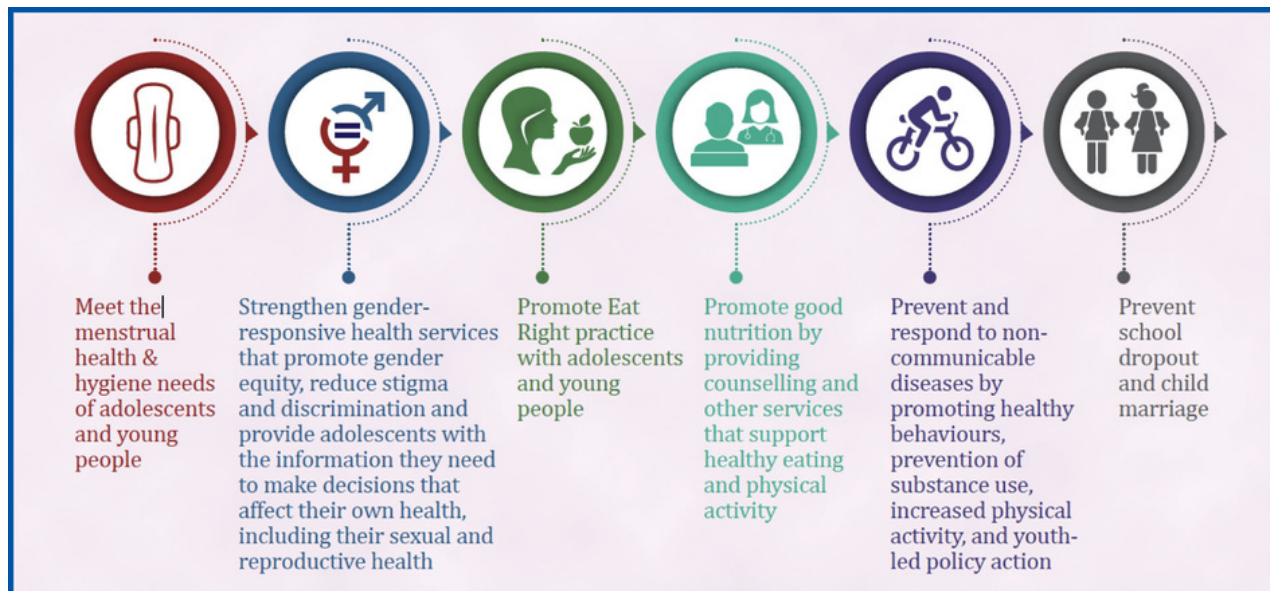


Team VHAJ participating in the Human-Centred Design Workshop by UNICEF India in New Delhi

Promoting Adolescent Health

Young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) play a vital role in their lives. However, due to a lack of comprehensive sex education and information about SRHR, accessing reproductive health services and achieving gender equality becomes incredibly challenging for young individuals. Moreover, societal norms that regulate female sexuality, unfavorable attitudes from healthcare professionals, and taboos surrounding sexual health further hinder their ability to openly discuss these issues.

In order to address these barriers, VHAI has taken the initiative to promote health-seeking behaviors among adolescents and young people residing in remote tribal villages of District Mayurbhanj and villages of District Ganjam, Odisha. The main objective of this initiative is to facilitate better access to necessary healthcare services for these communities.



Strengthening Peer Education Model

Over the course of our extensive five-decade-long service in public health, peer education has consistently demonstrated its effectiveness in various domains. This approach has successfully been utilized in areas such as SRHR, averting child marriage, nutrition education, family planning, substance use prevention, and violence prevention amongst others.

By harnessing the power of adolescent and young individuals as change agents, awareness can be raised and myths and misconceptions surrounding sexual and reproductive health, as well as other health and social issues, can be dispelled at the community level.

At the village level, we focused on the identification and capacity building of Peer Educators in areas such as SRHR, Life Skill Education, Nutrition, Prevention and management of COVID-19, and prevention and management of NCDs. These Peer Educators were then equipped to train and educate their respective groups on these crucial issues.



Significant Achievements through Peer Education Model

Developed and equipped 60 Anganwadi Centres as information dissemination hubs to facilitate group sessions and promote cross-learning among adolescents and young people.

Conducted comprehensive training for 150 Peer Educators, covering various aspects of SRHR, Life Skill Education (LSE), and familiarization with Government schemes and programs related to social security and welfare.

Implemented regular health education sessions in 60 villages, leveraging expertise of peer educators, along with the support of Anganwadi Workers (AWW) and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA).

Successfully sensitized over 4000 adolescents and youths on SRHR and LSE through engaging group sessions led by peer educators.

Organized demonstration sessions in 45 villages, facilitated by adolescent group members, to create widespread awareness on topics such as Eat Right, Nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation.

Preparation of village level child protection plan

VHAI facilitated the empowerment of VHSNCs and adolescent group members in the development of action plans aimed at child protection in 30 villages. Working in collaboration with women group members, front-line health workers, PRI members, and community leaders, these adolescent group members played a pivotal role in formulating strategies to ensure child protection and prevent child marriages at the village level. Their initiatives included organizing community awareness activities through small group interactions, engaging in discussions with parents of adolescent girls regarding the appropriate age for marriage, and highlighting the significance of education and government skill-building program.



Eat Right Movement

A healthy diet is one of the key responses to the rising incidence of non-communicable diseases. Launched in July 2018, 'The Eat Right Movement' is aligned with 'Ayushman Bharat', 'Jan-Aandolan' & 'Poshan Abhiyaan'. It is an all-encompassing nation-wide campaign with a focus on preventive and promotive healthcare through social and behavioural change on eating healthy and safe food. VHAI is a technical partner of FSSAI in the Eat Right Movement and is actively involved in the programme.

As a part of the movement, the EAT RIGHT toolkit has been co-developed by three organizations- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) & National Health Systems Resource Centers (NHSRC). The toolkit is developed with the aim to complement the existing components on preventive and promotive health. It will reach out to the citizens through the channel of Health & Wellness Centres under AYUSHMAN BHARAT, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India. The Eat Right Toolkit is built on two broad pillars- Eat Healthy and Eat Safe, delivering clear and simple messages on eating healthy, foods to eat (balanced diet, nutrition during first 1000 days of life and foods to avoid (high fat, sugar and salt foods). It also includes crucial components on eating safe which deals with maintaining hygiene (personal and environmental) and food safety & food adulteration. The toolkit through its engaging component aims to target the front-line health workers as well as local communities. It will be implemented by front-line health workers like ASHAs, Anganwadi workers (AWWs), Mid-level health providers and Medical Officers at the Primary Health Centers (PHCs) and Health & Wellness Centers (HWCs).

This toolkit has been contextualized and translated by VHAI in five languages - Hindi, Punjabi, Oriya, Assamese and Gujarati.

Training of State Trainers: In response to the demand from states, a comprehensive two-day training workshop for state trainers was organized at the National Health Systems Resource Centre (NHSRC) in New Delhi on 13th and 14th September 2022. 60 state and district nodal officers from 29 different states across the country attended the workshop.

Key Activities



Training of the State trainers who will thereafter train Medical Officers and Community Health Officers who in turn will further train their team of MPW-F, MPW- M and ASHAs at the facility level.



Eat right toolkit training as a part of VHAI's programmes to the field teams of various projects.



Eat Right India Website
The Eat Right Toolkit and videos are available in English, Hindi and all the regional languages and can be accessed at <https://eatrightindia.gov.in/eatright-toolkit.jsp>

The training sessions, conducted collaboratively by NHSRC, FSSAI and VHAI, were designed to focus on the three primary pillars of the Eat Right toolkit: Eat Balanced, Eat Safe, and Eat Sustainable. These pillars aim to promote healthy and balanced eating habits, ensure food safety and hygiene, and foster sustainable food practices.

To ensure effective learning, the training workshops employed participatory sessions, interactive group activities, and group work presentations. These methods facilitated a dynamic exchange of knowledge, allowing participants to engage actively with the training content, share experiences, and learn from one another.

To assess the participants' proficiency and qualification as master trainers, a pre-assessment was conducted at the beginning of the workshop. This initial assessment served as a baseline measure to gauge their existing knowledge and skills related to the Eat Right toolkit. Following the training, a post-assessment was administered to evaluate the effectiveness of the workshop and its impact on enhancing the participants' capabilities as trainers. Through these comprehensive training workshops, VHAI, NHSRC, and FSSAI aimed to equip the state trainers with the necessary knowledge, tools, and resources to effectively promote the Eat Right concept.



Team VHAI conducting training of State Trainers on Eat Right Toolkit at NHSRC, New Delhi

VHAI-IUHPE Collaborative Efforts

The major cause of disease burden and premature deaths among countries in the South- East Asia Region (SEAR) are communicable and non-communicable diseases as well as the new emerging threats such as COVID-19. Tuberculosis, malaria & HIV/AIDs remain a major public health concern, while non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancers are increasing even among the poor. Furthermore, due to rapid globalization, the countries in the region are experiencing drastic changes in consumption patterns of food, tobacco and alcohol. Added to these are the huge disparities between and within the countries.

As all of us know, Health Promotion is a sustainable strategy to address the underlying causes of the growing disease burden and to reduce premature mortality as well as inequalities. Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) and the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE) have collaborated to systematically expand IUHPE's Health Promotion agenda in the South East Asia Region (SEAR). The International Post of IUHPE for the SEAR is based at VHAI, New Delhi to carry out collaborative work in the region with specific objectives.

Leveraging existing networks to:



KEY ACTIVITIES

GOVERNING BOARD MEETING: STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PRIORITIES

Ms. Bhavna B Mukhopadhyay, as a governing board member of the International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE), played an active role in the board meeting held on September 16, 2022. The primary agenda of the meeting was a thorough review of IUHPE's Strategic Plan (2021-2026), which involved assessing the progress made so far and setting strategic priorities for the future. Ms. Mukhopadhyay's participation in these meetings exemplifies VHAI's commitment to shaping IUHPE's strategic direction and advancing the field of health promotion and education.



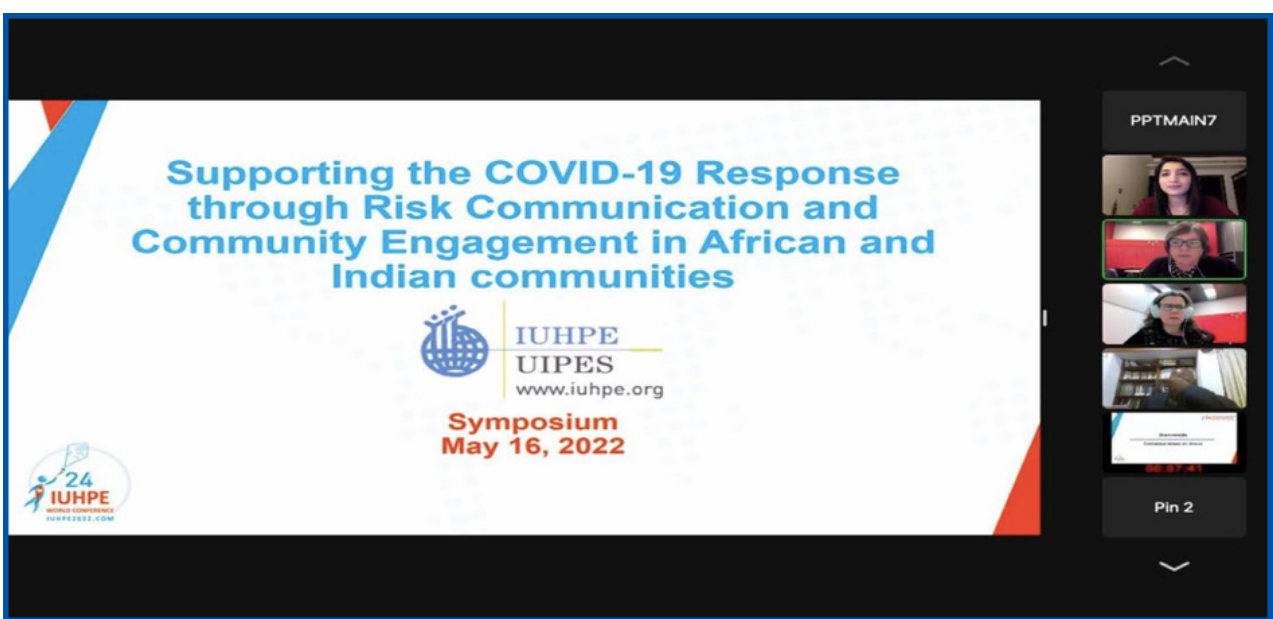
THE IUHPE EXECUTIVE BOARD 2022-2025



Ms. Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, Chief Executive, VHAJ has been elected to the Executive Board of IUHPE 2022-2025. The Executive Board governs and administers the IUHPE on behalf of the General Assembly. The board determines policies, strategies and integrated work programmes for the Organisation. The board is responsible for reviewing and approving triennial integrated Work Plan, financial budgets and approving Global and Regional Bye-Laws along with other administrative roles.

24th IUHPE World Conference on Health Promotion

The 24th World Conference on Health Promotion, organized by the IUHPE, took place from May 15-19, 2022. Themed “Promoting Policies for Health, Well-being, and Equity,” the conference provided VHAJ with the opportunity to present their work as a part of the symposium on risk communication and community engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through their participation, VHAJ showcased their commitment to advancing health promotion at the national and international levels, addressing the challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic.



VHAI's 48th Annual General Body Meeting

VHAI successfully held its 48th Annual General Body Meeting on September 29, 2022, at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi. This event brought together VHAI, its State VHAs, and esteemed board members to address pressing issues related to the health and development of our nation. The meeting was attended by professionals from diverse backgrounds, including doctors, social activists, health workers, and public health professionals. VHAI seized the opportunity to update attendees on its ongoing initiatives, accomplishments, and also shed light on recent endeavours centred around health, wellbeing, and equity. The organization also outlined its future course of action, emphasizing its commitment to furthering these important causes. The meeting provided a significant platform for crucial discussions and collaboration.





Social Media Snippets

The Social Media team at VHAI regularly updated VHAI's social media handles on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. Updates on project activities, observation of important days and social media campaigns were regularly posted on the social media handles.

Voluntary Health Association of India
Published by Vhai India · May 2, 2022

India is facing a severe heat wave with temperatures soaring rapidly much earlier than usual. As per the information available, early heat waves have affected 15 States in India and this trend may continue. The negative health impacts of heat are predictable and largely preventable with specific public health actions & precautionary measures. Following some simple measures can help us cope with this extreme heat.
#VHAI #HeatWave #HeatWaveIndia

YOU HAVE SYMPTOMS OF HEAT STRESS COVID-19?

- Headache
- Exhaustion
- Raised body temperature
- Excessive sweating
- Breathlessness

Stay in a cool environment for 30 minutes. If your temperature drops and you feel better, it is most probably heat stress.

HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES IN CHILDREN

Contact a doctor or nearest health centre, if your symptoms persist.

Wear a mask, Wash your hands, Watch your distance.

See insights and ads

VHAI @vhai_india · Feb 24
To promote 'Health Wellbeing and Equity', team #VHAI conducted education sessions on #HealthPromotion in several schools in #Odisha. The sessions were organised among students to culminate health seeking behaviour at the right age.

VHAI @vhai_india · Feb 24
Replying to @vhai_india
The students through demonstration sessions were educated on creating a healthy environment in #schools with a focus on #nutrition, #hygiene and #sanitation and #SafeDrinkingWater among others.

See insights and ads

VHAI @vhai_india · Jan 6
Cigarettes and other tobacco products are easily available and cheap especially to attract the youth of our country.
@nsitharaman @FinMinIndia @PMOIndia @mppchaudhary @narendramodi @DrBhagwatKarat #IncreaseTobaccoTax #Budget2023

See insights and ads

Voluntary Health Association of India
Published by Vhai India · February 6

VHAI organised an awareness session on #WorldCancerDay2023 in collaboration with Health and Wellness Centre, Khalkote block, District Ganjam, Odisha. About 40 women SHG leaders participated in the rally followed by a session by Medical Officers on cancer awareness including importance of periodic screening and exiting government programs on prevention, control and treatment for cancer in India.
#CloseTheCancerGap

See insights and ads

Voluntary Health Association of India
Published by Vhai India · October 7, 2022

VHAI in collaboration with NYKS and Tech Mahindra Foundation in Telangana, organised an awareness session for the youth on Tobacco Control issues. The event was conducted on October 2022, to commemorate Gandhi Jayanti and 14th anniversary of Smoke-Free India. About 150 youth were present in the event and participated in the rally and campaign.

See insights and ads

Voluntary Health Association of India
Published by Vhai India · April 20, 2022

Team VHAI met Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odhishaghar, Sri Biju Patnaik ji on 18th April, 2022. The team apprised him about VHAI's programmes and network and presence of State VHAI's and member institutions working across the country. The team also had a fruitful discussion on several public health concerns with him.
#VHAI #Odishaghar #PublicHealth

See insights and ads

VHAI @vhai_india · Mar 20
#OTTPlatforms must comply to Films and TV rules and display static warning during tobacco depiction scenes as done in theatres and other television networks.
#RegulateOTTNow @mansukhmandviya @MoHFW_INDIA

See insights and ads

Social Media Snippets

← Tweet

You Retweeted

VHAI
@vhai_india

Why are we treating **#OTT** any different from TVs and Films? Tobacco use on OTT is negatively impacting young minds. We must **#RegulateOTT** now!
[@mansukhmandviya](#)
[@MoHFW_INDIA](#)




12:07 PM · 13 Sep 22 · Twitter Web App

5 Retweets 10 Likes

VHAI @vhai_india · Oct 10, 2022

As per WHO, in 2019, 970 million people around the world were living with a **#mentaldisorder**. Despite this, only few people around the world have access to quality mental health services.

Mental health & well-being for all a global priority!
[#WorldMentalHealthDay2022](#)



3 Likes

VHAI
@vhai_india

#OTT platforms should be held responsible for such rampant depiction of tobacco use without any warnings. We must **#regulateOTT** now to protect our youth.
[@mansukhmandviya](#)
[@MoHFW_INDIA](#)



VHAI @vhai_india · Oct 13, 2022

VHAI organized its 48th Annual General Body Meeting on 29th September 2022. VHAI, its State VHAs and board members meet annually to discuss the issues of critical concern linked to health and development, particularly from the perspective of their work in different sectors.

VHAI @vhai_india · Oct 13, 2022

Replying to [@vhai_india](#)

Professionals from various walks of life – doctors, social activists, health workers, public health professionals who have given decades of service to social developmental work constitute this group.



VHAI @vhai_india · Nov 3, 2022

VHAI, as a member of the ASHA State Mentor Group was invited for their meeting on 14th October, 2022 at Delhi Secretariat Dr. Nancepreet Kaur, VHAI participated in the meeting with several other officials from Delhi State Health Mission.

VHAI @vhai_india · Nov 3, 2022

Replying to [@vhai_india](#)

The primary agenda of the meeting was to provide technical guidance and inputs for the overall implementation and development of the ASHA Programme and discuss progress, challenges, and innovations and propose strategies for improved outcomes.



VHAI @vhai_india · Sep 5, 2022

In our intervention districts in Arunachal Pradesh, the major inhabitants, Namsai are people belonging to Khamti and Singpho tribe who are followers of Buddhism. Our team is engaging Buddhist monks for motivating the community for **#immunization** and importance of **#handwashing**.



1 Retweet 4 Likes





HEALTH

INDIA'S PROGRESS IN TOBACCO CONTROL: GOOD GOING BUT MORE TO GO

WHO released a report on 'Global Tobacco Pandemic Epidemic, 2022' which tracks the progress made by countries in tobacco control since 2000 and marks 25 years since MPOWER measures were introduced. Read here to learn more about MPOWER and Indian efforts for tobacco control.

DECEMBER MEDIA 1 September 2023 | 16

by TEAM VHAI

With over 8 million tobacco-related deaths a year, tobacco use continues to be one of the leading public health threats and tobacco control remains a global health priority. This is the sixth WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic and the 15th year since MPOWER was introduced as a tobacco package designed to help countries to implement the demand reduction measures of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. This report shows that, in 2022, more than 1 billion people, 75% of the world's population were covered by at least one MPOWER measure implemented to the highest level.

Global Tobacco Epidemic

The global tobacco epidemic refers to the widespread and growing public health threats caused by the use of tobacco products. Tobacco use is one of the leading preventable causes of death worldwide and poses significant health risks to both users and non-users exposed to second-hand smoke.

The epidemic is driven by the concentration and addiction to tobacco products, primarily cigarettes, which contain nicotine and other harmful substances.

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) and its guidelines provide the foundation for countries to implement and manage tobacco control. To help make this a reality, WHO introduced the MPOWER measures:

- Monitoring tobacco use and prevention policies
- Protecting people from tobacco smoke
- Offering help to quit tobacco use
- Enforcing laws on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship
- Raising taxes on tobacco
- Encouraging people for a tobacco-free life

75% of the world's population were covered by at least one MPOWER measure to the highest level in 2022.



DECEMBER MEDIA 1 September 2023 | 17

epidemic and is a crucial component of the MPOWER package.

Key highlights of the report are:

- In 2022, the number of countries implementing at least one MPOWER measure has increased to 175.
- Only 4 countries (Bhutan, Tonga, Northern Ireland, and Mauritius) have implemented all measures.
- Tobacco kills more than 8 million people each year, including 1.3 million non-users who are exposed to WHO-defined second-hand smoke.
- But it is ranked among the highest achievers in tobacco dependence.

Effects related to the global tobacco epidemic

Tobacco use is linked to a wide range of health problems, including various types of cancer (e.g., lung, throat, mouth, esophagus, cervix and bladder), respiratory diseases, and reproductive disorders. Smoking is responsible for millions of preventable deaths each year.

Second-hand smoke is also a health hazard, contributing to the persistence of tobacco use despite known health risks. Non-users exposed to second-hand smoke are also at risk of adverse health effects, including respiratory illness, cardiovascular disease, and lung cancer.

The tobacco industry often targets young people with aggressive marketing strategies and appealing product designs. As a result, more individuals start using tobacco products at a young age, leading to addiction and long-term health consequences.

The tobacco epidemic is a global health challenge affecting developed and developing countries. Lower- and middle-income countries are particularly vulnerable due to the increasing prevalence of tobacco use and limited resources for tobacco control.

The tobacco industry's marketing and lobbying efforts have been a significant obstacle to effective tobacco control measures. They have managed to undermine tobacco control policies and regulations that aim to reduce tobacco use.

Tobacco control efforts

Various countries and international organisations have implemented tobacco control measures.

One of the biggest steps in the world is implementing warnings on CFT platform content. Various actions are seen using tobacco products. This would make India the first country in the world to do so. If it is needed, it is needed. Warnings already display such messages when it comes to CFT platforms.

National Health Policy 2023: The national health policy targets to reduce tobacco use by 20% by 2025.

Tobacco Cessation Services: The government promotes tobacco cessation through various programs and initiatives, providing training to healthcare professionals to offer counseling and treatment for tobacco dependence.

Surveillance and Monitoring: India conducts national and sub-national surveys to monitor tobacco use prevalence, compliance with tobacco control laws, and the impact of tobacco control interventions.

Ensure effective compliance of ban on e-cigarettes: Centre to states



Synopsis

It highlighted that the Union government has prohibited electronic cigarettes and like devices vide Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes

जगरण SUBSCRIBE

डोम ताज़ा राष्ट्रीय स्पेशल शेयर बाजार प्राइम न्यूज़

मैसूर परीक्षा संस्कारशाला चुनाव 21

Hindi News / National

संसदीय समिति ने कहा, तंबाकू की बिक्री पर लगाम लगे, कोटपा सख्त हो

SKAND VIVEK DHAR
Publish Date: Thu, 10 Nov 2022 05:17 PM (IST)
Updated Date: Thu, 10 Nov 2022 05:17 PM (IST)

At many places, compliance to the smoking ban is limited, enforcement is lax, and SHS exposure remains high," said Rijo John, a health economist at the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kochi who led the study.

A survey in 2017 had indicated that non-smoking adults are more likely to be exposed to SHS in their homes (38 per cent), followed by their workplaces (30 per cent) and restaurants (7 per cent).

The latest study by John and co-author Estelle Dauchy, associate director for international research at the US-based Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, has also found that the SHS-linked healthcare costs are larger among Indians from lower socio-economic status groups, consistent with higher smoking prevalence in these groups.

कैंसर के लगभग आधे मामले तंबाकू की वजह

PRIME



measures to combat the epidemic.

- These measures include tobacco taxes, smoke-free policies, graphic health warnings on tobacco packaging, public awareness campaigns, and support for smoking cessation programs.

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is an international treaty that aims to reduce the demand for tobacco products, control tobacco advertising, protect people from second-hand smoke, and regulate tobacco product packaging.

India

Tobacco control in India is a critical public health priority due to the significant health and economic burden caused by tobacco use.



The Indian Tobacco Control Program (ITCP) was launched in 2007 to support the implementation of tobacco control measures at the national and state levels. It focuses on public awareness campaigns, monitoring tobacco use, and facilitating tobacco cessation services.

Tobacco Taxation: The Indian government periodically increases taxes on tobacco products to make them less affordable and deter consumption. Higher taxes also generate revenue that can be invested in public health initiatives.

Ban on Advertisement and Sponsorship: India prohibits direct and indirect advertising of tobacco products. It also bans tobacco companies from sponsoring events, sports, cultural activities, and other public relations activities.

Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes: In 2019, the government issued an ordinance to ban e-cigarettes and other electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) to prevent their potential harm to public health, especially among youth.

National Health Policy 2023: The national health policy targets to reduce tobacco use by 20% by 2025.

Tobacco Cessation Services: The government promotes tobacco cessation through various programs and initiatives, providing training to healthcare professionals to offer counseling and treatment for tobacco dependence.

Surveillance and Monitoring: India conducts national and sub-national surveys to monitor tobacco use prevalence, compliance with tobacco control laws, and the impact of tobacco control interventions.

TREATMENT EXPENSES HALF OF HEALTH BUDGET

Passive smoking cost: Rs 56,700cr

GS. MUDUR

New Delhi: Despite the ban on public smoking, second-hand smoke exposure in India leads to direct annual healthcare costs of Rs 56,700 crore, or more than half the Centre's health budget, a new study has estimated.

The estimate—the first for healthcare costs attributable to illnesses resulting from SHS exposure in the country—is more than twice the estimated healthcare expenditure of Rs 25,700 crore resulting from smoking among adults. The healthcare costs of Rs 56,700 crore is equivalent to 0.33 per cent of India's GDP in 2017. The Union health budget for 2022-23 is Rs 83,000 crore.

The healthcare burden attributable to SHS exposure indicated by the new study highlights the need for urgent policy measures to address passive smoking, tobacco policy researchers who con-



ducted the study have said. Although smoking prevalence declined by around 24 per cent over six years from 2009-19 to 2016-17, India still has the second-highest number of smokers in the world with a smoking prevalence of about 10 per cent. The country's tobacco control laws prohibit smoking in public places, but it is permitted in designated areas in airports and hotels with 30

or more rooms and restaurants with a seating capacity of 30 or higher.

"At many places, compliance to the smoking ban is limited, enforcement is lax, and SHS exposure remains high," said Rijo John, a health economist at the Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kochi who led the study.

A survey in 2017 had indicated that non-smoking adults are more likely to be exposed to SHS in their homes (38 per cent), followed by their workplaces (30 per cent) and restaurants (7 per cent).

The latest study by John and co-author Estelle Dauchy, associate director for international research at the US-based Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, has also found that the SHS-linked healthcare costs are larger among Indians from lower socio-economic status groups, consistent with higher smoking prevalence in these groups.

कैंसर के लगभग आधे मामले तंबाकू की वजह

VHAI IN MEDIA

ई-सिगरेट पर लगे प्रतिबंध का प्रभावी अनुपालन सुनिश्चित करें राज्य: केंद्र सरकार

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: Bhasha, February 15, 2023 / 08:07 PM IST



40% of cancers, cardiovascular diseases directly linked to tobacco use: ICMR

Strengthen the tobacco control laws to reduce tobacco consumption and prevalence of cancer cases, doctors and health activists have urged the Government as they cited a Parliamentary panel report which flagged that while crores of funds is being spent on treatment on cancer, desired steps are not taken to curb consumption of the deadly items.

Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, Professor & Surgeon, Department of Head & Neck Surgery, Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai said, "It is scientifically established that if a person is kept away from tobacco till the age of 21 years and above, there is a very high probability that s/he will remain tobacco free for rest of his life. "Several countries have now increased the minimum age of sale of tobacco products to 21 years.

Increasing minimum legal age for sale of tobacco products from 18 years to 21 years and banning smoking area/point of sale advertisements by amending COTPA 2003, is crucial to protect youth from tobacco." As per the Indian Council of Medical Research, the number of Indians suffering from cancer is likely to experience a rise of about 29.8 million in 2025 from 26.7 million in 2022.



Secondhand smoke takes toll on healthcare system

Hans News Service | 24 March 2022 1:44 AM IST



ADVERTISEMENT

Hyderabad: A new study published in the Journal of Nicotine and Tobacco Research, for the first time, quantified the tremendous economic burden of secondhand smoke exposure in India. According to the findings, secondhand smoke causes Rs 567 billion in health care costs annually, which accounts for 8 per cent of total annual health care

ThePrint

OTT platforms to carry anti-tobacco disclaimers soon as health ministry set to notify new rules

New rules under Cigarettes & Other Tobacco Products Act will be notified on 31 May. Changes come after intra- & inter-ministerial deliberations, consultations with industry representatives.

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA

30 May, 2023 05:05 pm IST



Person smoking a cigarette / Wikimedia Commons

Bhavna Mukhopadhyay, chief executive with the Voluntary Health Association of India, a network of non-government health organisations, said the notification "closes the regulatory gap in OTT by extending the rules for films and TV to OTT".

The health ministry said failure to comply with the guidelines may result in action by an inter-ministerial panel which will identify the publisher, issue a notice seeking an explanation for the failure and demand modifications to the content.

'Remove smoking rooms at hotels, airports'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

On the occasion of No Smoking Day, doctors, cancer victims and restaurateurs urged the Indian government to remove designated smoking rooms at hotels/restaurants and airports to protect people from second-hand smoke.

While appreciating the government for initiating the process to amend COTPA 2003, they appealed for immediate removal of the current provision that permits smoking areas to make India 100 per cent smoke free and check the spread of Covid-19 infection in India.

In India, smoking is banned in all public places as per the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003.



Advertisement and Commerce Production, Hyderabad

COTPA 2003. Section 4 of this Act prohibits smoking in any place to which the public has access. However, COTPA 2003, presently allows smoking in certain public places like restaurants, hotels, and airports, in designated smoking areas.

Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi, Head Neck Cancer Surgeon, Tata Memorial Hospital, says, "There is growing evidence that smoking is a risk for Covid infection. Smoking worsens lung function and reduces immunity. Smokers who develop Covid infection have more complications and greater risk of fatality. All designated smoking areas in hotels and restaurants and even airports should be abolished to ensure a 100 per cent smoke free

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS 2022-23

FUNDS		
PARTICULARS	AS ON 31.03.2023	AS ON 31.03.2022
Capital Fund	7,07,38,702.88	7,06,52,101.00
Other Funds & Reserves	7,10,36,080.00	7,30,61,638.00
Unutilised Grant Balances	62,10,331.16	54,34,558.00
Bank Loan for Vehicle (Secured by Vehicle)	3,78,814.83	6,38,087.00
Income & Expenditure Account	(14,70,975.25)	(9,42,328.00)
Total	14,68,92,953.62	14,88,44,056.00

APPLICATION OF FUNDS			
PARTICULARS		AS ON 31.03.2023	AS ON 31.03.2022
Fixed Assets (at Cost)		6,97,63,703.88	6,96,77,102.00
Investments		6,65,29,341.67	6,13,97,372.00
Current Assets, Loans, Advances	1,19,46,724.57		1,84,07,003.00
Less: Current Liabilities	32,00,636.50	87,46,088.07	24,91,242.00
Grants Awaiting Reimbursement		18,53,820.00	18,53,820.00
Total		14,68,92,953.62	14,88,44,056.00

BALANCE SHEET AS ON 31st MARCH, 2023

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31.03.2023

EXPENDITURE	AMOUNT (Rs.)	INCOME		AMOUNT (Rs.)
Immunisation Programmes	56,29,135.00	Opening Balance of Grant Funds (Net)	35,80,738.16	
Tobacco Control Programmes	1,81,34,833.00	Add: Grants Received for Specific Projects:		
Community Health & Communicable Diseases control	7,12,225.00	UN Agencies	42,90,520.00	
Policy Research work for better development - ICHI	21,09,148.00	Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids	2,03,69,572.00	
Health Programmes in Aspirational Distt	39,68,547.00	Sub Total	2,82,40,830.16	
Support to SVHAs	6,00,156.00	Less : Closing Balance of Grant Funds (Net)	43,56,511.16	2,38,84,319.00
Information, Publications & Website	2,45,026.00			
Finance Services	11,91,361.00	Core & Local Donations		14,60,000.00
Administrative Expenses	56,28,428.61	Membership Fee		80,000.00
Support Staff costs	15,12,942.00	Rent Income		49,57,500.00
Gratuity paid to outgoing staff	16,24,177.00	Collection from Distribution of Material		1,37,489.29
Loss in sale of Assets	1,89,156.00	Interest on Investments & Savings account		46,89,492.44
		Local Fund Raising		37,17,757.00
		Misc Income		1,50,974.00
Transfer to Land Equipment & Furniture Fund	2,48,258.00	Transfer from Land Equipment & Furniture Fund		1,61,656.00
Transfer to Gratuity Reserves	7,98,619.00	Transfer from Gratuity Reserve - Paid during the year		16,24,177.00
Excess of Expenditure over Income	(5,28,646.88)	Transfer from General Reserve		12,00,000.00
	4,20,63,364.73			4,20,63,364.73

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VHAI Anthem

Where the mind is without
fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been
broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from
the depth of truth
Where tireless striving
stretches its arms towards
perfection
Where the clear stream of
reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of
dead habit
Where the mind is led forward
by thee Into ever-widening
thought and action Into that
heaven of freedom, my
Father, let my country awake!

- Rabindranath Tagore





Voluntary Health Association of India

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