Story of Jhattipur Panchayat: Creating Child Friendly Environment for a better future

The Constitution of India promises Fundamental Rights to all children of the country belonging to any caste, community or religion on equal basis, whether they live in the cities or in the villages. It is know that children grow, develop & learn throughout their lives from birth & infancy to adulthood. However, it is necessary to provide safe, accessible and good learning environment during their first six years of life. The focus on first 1000 days which starts from the time when child is conceived in mother’s womb till 2 years of age is of utmost care and importance. Most of the neuroscience research provides evidence that the development of brain during the first 1000 days acts as a golden period which establishes the foundation of a child’s future. According to a research of Harvard University’s Center on the Developing Child provides data on babies’ brain ing forming new connections at an astounding rate of 1 million every single second a pace which is never repeated again during the entire life span of a child¹.

During the early years of life till the age of six children need good nutrition, social protection and interactive stimulations for making them as productive human capital for the country. The combination of nature and nurture establishes the foundation of a child’s future. Thinking in this term Sarpanch of Jhattipur panchayat created a milestone by winning the award of Child Friendly Panchayat.

¹ https://www.unicef.org/early-childhood-development
Children grow, develop and learn throughout life the first five years of life are critical, and so an increasing number of early childhood interventions are being developed and implemented both by the government & the private sectors. Apart from these social, religious, economic and political institutions, media & cultural values can also influence how children live their lives. Study of child development is important because it provides practical guidance for all those who care for children.

Jhattipur Panchayat is located in Panipat block of Panipat district. The panchayat accommodates around 1100 household and having a population of 5948. The panchayat is well connected with roads and have good infrastructure facilities. There are 2 higher secondary schools and 2 primary schools and 3 AWCs in the Panchayat.

The Sarpanch Mr. Ashok kumar (2016-2020) is a well-educated young personality who envisions change as a social process and believes that entire community need to be responsible and aware about the same. During his tenure to make the Panchayat Child Friendly he has taken several initiatives which includes organizing several health camps by collaborating from the private hospitals and doctors of the city. Black jaundice was a common problem occurring due to the contagious ground water, taking this ahead water purifier has been installed in the schools for safe drinking water of the children. Childhood Vaccines are some of the safest and most effective medicines we have, and they have made many dangerous childhood diseases rare today.

None of the children in the age group of 0-6 years should miss their routine immunization. The Panchayat ensured timely Immunization of all the children in the said age group and have increased awareness among the people of the panchayat on the same. Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Day (VHSND) is jointly organized by ICDS and Health Department. Convergence with Panchayat department can ensure proper implementation of VHSND which benefits pregnant women, children, lactating women and children of the village.
If children fail to develop properly, they may be unable to reach their full potential. However, health care professionals & parents can work together as partners to help children grow healthy & strong. The intent of early child interventions is to lay a foundation in conjunction with the family to support infants as they grow & mature into healthy individuals. A healthy status means achieving the best possible outcome for a child in physical, mental & social functioning.

Good infrastructure in the school not only looks good instead also make it attractive for students. The infrastructural development of the schools has helped the students to actively participate in the process of learning. The teachers also now feel empowered with the strengthened infrastructure of the school. With the advancement in technology, Smart Classes has become the new essentials for all the schools. With the efforts of the Sarpanch the government school of the panchayat is now equipped with smart classroom. This upgradation in the infrastructure has not only increased students’ attendance but also has drastically reduced the dropout rates of students.

Games/Sports play a major role in maintaining a healthy mind, body, and soul of the child as it gives a lot of exercises for the formation of an overall healthy physic. The panchayat has taken the initiative and have developed open gym in the school campus for students. There are volleyball court, basketball court and huge ground for cricket and football in the panchayat. Playgrounds are essential safe spaces where children can be themselves and express their fun-loving nature while developing crucial cognitive, physical, social and emotional skills.

Poor sanitation is linked to transmission of diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, dysentery, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio and exacerbates stunting. Poor sanitation reduces human well-being, social and economic development due to impacts such as anxiety, risk of sexual assault, and lost educational opportunities. Inadequate sanitation is estimated to cause 432 000 diarrhoeal deaths annually and is a
major factor in several neglected tropical diseases, including intestinal worms, schistosomiasis, and trachoma. Poor sanitation also contributes to malnutrition. Sanitation is more than just toilets, it encompasses the facilities, behaviors, and services that prevent diseases caused by contact with human waste. Hygiene refers to behaviors that can improve cleanliness and lead to good health. The Jhattipur Panchayat has been declared as ODF panchayat. To maintain the menstrual hygiene among the girls Incinerators have been installed in the schools.

Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) plays a vital role in behavior change communication of development work, as it determines the level of awareness building and sustained behavior change. It is a journey which starts from shifting in knowledge, then attitude and ultimately change in behavior. The panchayat for the sustained behavior change among the population has developed several IEC on the walls of the government buildings.

International agreement on standard child development indicators has been reached only for health and nutrition. The commonly used child development indicators by the ministry can be broadly divided into health indicators, nutrition indicators and cognitive development indicators. The child friendly award to a panchayat is reviewed on the following indicators by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj:-

- Vaccination/Immunization of Children in Gram Panchayat
- School Enrollment in Gram Panchayat
- Attendance of Teachers in Government Schools of Gram Panchayat
- Dropout Rate in Schools of Gram Panchayat at primary/upper primary/secondary
- Open Defecation Free Status of Gram Panchayat
- Girl Child Hygiene (Sanitary Pads distribution to adolescent girls in GP
Implementation of Mid-day Meal Scheme in Schools of the Gram Panchayat

Drinking Water Facility in Gram Panchayat

Availability of properly demarcated secure and functional playgrounds in Gram Panchayat

Nutrition status of Children in Gram Panchayat

One of the most important and very basic to the idea of social development is to create conducive and creative atmosphere for the healthy growth and development of children of the society. Child-friendly governance ensures all rights of children such that every child can enjoy their rights for survival, development, participation and protection. Child-friendly governance is an approach to guarantee children’s right for all of their rightful entitlements such as health, nutrition, education, safe water, sanitation and protection from abuse and exploitations. Developments and Panchayat Department, Haryana is working to promote child friendly local governance and make it a universal compulsion for all the Panchayats.

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