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Post of Research Assistant (one vacancy)

Project: Evaluation of the master trainers and cascade training programs of the National Program on Social and Behaviour Change Communication for Child Health Promotion by Health Promotion Bureau.

Background of the project

An individual under the age of 18 years is considered a child according to the Convention on the rights of the child. Early childhood (formative years), is upto 8 years. This is the most vital period of life where foundation for a range of habits and behaviours related to health and wellbeing is laid. Until the age of 2 years, majority of Sri Lankan children are solely cared by parents and guardians at home supported by grassroot level primary health care teams. The preschools or the Early Childhood Development Centres, primary and secondary schools' step into the care, development and wellbeing circle of a child thereafter.

During the period of birth to end of primary school, three distinctive settings can be identified to implement health promoting interventions. From 0 to 2 years family at home and community are the key care settings. During periods of 2 years to 5 years and 5 years to 11 years the preschool and primary school respectively are the main settings that have an impact on child's health and wellbeing.

Most children in Sri Lanka start pre-school at 3 to 4 years, then start primary school at 5 to 6 years and finishes primary schooling around 10 to 11 years. In Sri Lanka there are nearly 20,000 registered pre-schools, where approximately 600,000 children of 2-5 years attend for centre based early learning (NSECD, Sri Lanka). The Family Health Bureau (2022) statistics indicate less than 5 year population in the country is nearly 1.4 million. Sri Lanka Education Sector Assessment (World Bank, 2017), reflects only about 50% of children have access to pre-school learning in Sri Lanka. This reflects that a wider group of stakeholders are responsible for determinants of child health, early learning opportunities and behaviour formation. Therefore, an integrated multi-sector actions are needed to promote health and wellbeing of children in Sri Lanka.

Therefore, all relevant stakeholders should collaborate to facilitate children and their caregivers to have improved health knowledge and attitudes and develop healthy behaviours that will pave path for them to be happy, healthy and secure individuals by the time they become adults in another 15 to 20 years' time. Evidence suggest that children who are healthy in early life, not only grow up to be healthier adults, they are also better educated, earn more and contribute more to the economy of a country (Slater, 2015). The primary school years are a transitional period from early childhood to adolescence. Therefore, preschool and primary school years need to be considered as a continued period in a child's life.

National Secretariat for Early Childhood Care and Development (NSECD) of Ministry of Women and Child affairs, developed the National Early Childhood Care and Development Policy (2018).

Based on the policy, the National Multi-sector strategic action plan 2024-2028 was developed by the NSECD, and delegated the Health Promotion Bureau the task of developing and implementing a Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) Program for Child Health Promotion in Sri Lanka.

As a response the Health Promotion Bureau developed a National Program on Social and Behaviour Change Communication for child health promotion together with all relevant health and non-health sector stakeholders. The initial implementation is planned to be started in the Preschool Health Promotion Settings across all districts in the country. The Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials developed in this program were training tools, awareness tools and child engagement tools. The HPB plans to develop a pool of master trainers in all districts in the country, and conduct cascade trainings in respective districts to directly train the Preschool teachers of selected health promoting preschool settings to implement the package.

One significant gap identified in the current landscape is lack of data on health literacy and child and caregiver health related behavior patterns. Practice of assessing the effectiveness of training programs and implementation of programs also needs to be incorporated in the program implementation cycle. The Health Promotion Bureau plans to assess knowledge of the district level master trainers and preschool teachers before and after the training program of the SBCC implementation. Furthermore, to assess health literacy and behavior patterns after implementation of the program. However, HPB faces the challenge of lack of human resource to coordinate the assessments, documentation and reporting. Hence, there is a need of recruiting a research assistant who has the potential to coordinate these assessments. A pre-intern doctor would be most suitable for the scope of work listed below.

Scope of Work

Under the supervision of the unit head of Strategic Information, Monitoring and Evaluation and the National Preschool Health Promotion Setting Development Program of Health Promotion Bureau, the research assistant will perform the following.

1. Literature reviewing on aspects related to health literacy and healthy behaviours among children and caregivers.
 2. Tool development with national resource persons of the training
 3. Support coordinating the master trainers and district cascade training programs
 4. Data collection for the pre and post training assessments and data entry
 5. Data analysis, report writing and publication
 6. Visit districts along with national resource team for the assessments during district training programs
 7. Contribute for any other activities of the Preschool Health Promotion program of the unit
- Eg: Process of Annual Preschool Review
Development of social media page on child health promotion and maintenance

Selected research assistants will be posted to the Strategic Information, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit of Health Promotion Bureau.

Duration

Initially for three months, and extendable for 6 months (05 days a week from 8.30am-4.15 pm)

Desired qualification and experience for the post

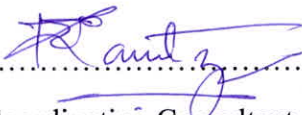
- Pre-intern Medical officer with MBBS qualifications
- Previous experience in carrying out literature review, scientific research, data collection, data entry and analysis
- Previous experience in scientific publications
- Good command of English and Sinhala or English and Tamil Languages
- Ability to work with Microsoft Office applications (Word/Excel/PowerPoint ect.) SPSS
- Ability on graphic designing/video editing will be and added advantage
- Excellent communication skills and team work

Monthly Allowance = RS 86,180/=

A Research Assistant is not entitled to any other privileges or claims from the Ministry of Health of funding agency, other than the benefits specified above.

Candidates are requested to provide a completed CV, including copies of relevant supporting documents (eg: any scientific publications), and contact details before 20.07.2025 to Strategic Information, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, Health Promotion Bureau, No.02 Kynsey Road, Colombo 10. (Tel- 0112696606, 0112699537, Email hpbsiplanning@gmail.com).


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Director (Health Education & Publicity)


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Coordinating Consultant