

Case study — CHC

Dr Vinay Vishwanatha was academically one of the best students from the prestigious Bangalore Medical Cas, in his own words, “tumultuous and stressful, with unresolved confusions.”



Parental pressure to ‘settle down’ early, societal pressure to obtain the ‘degree’, professional pressure to ‘choose an area of specialisation’, and peer pressure to ‘make a bee-line to the West’ was enough to induce a momentary lapse of reason in a young person.

In this moment of confusion, Dr Vishwanatha got in touch with the **Community Health Cell (CHC)**, Bangalore, and its Community Health Fellowship Programme, which, in a way, decided the course of his professional career.

During the six-month Fellowship Programme, Dr Vishwanatha was exposed to various activities, including:

- A month-long exposure to the tribal communities in Maharashtra to prepare a case study on the ‘Tribal Malaria Control Programme’
- Evaluation of the Mitanin Programme being undertaken by CHC
- Organisation of medical relief for the tsunami-affected communities in Tamil Nadu

“The Fellowship Programme completely changed the course of my life, on both personal and professional fronts,” recalls Dr Vishwanatha. Soon after his fellowship, he chose to work with a comprehensive rural health project in Hunur village, located within the remote Chamrajanagar district of Karnataka, where he facilitated a series of trainings to community health workers.

The interaction and experiences he had while treating the marginalised sections of the society, residing in remote locations, were instrumental in helping Dr Vishwanatha identify his plans for the future. While currently pursuing his Masters degree in Public Health from the John Hopkins School of Public Health, Baltimore, he is keen in his desire to continue to work for the downtrodden communities in India, at the same time focusing on campaigning for health rights, and training community health workers.

The public health sector of the country is plagued with critical gaps in human resources and lack of appropriately trained and sensitised manpower. Based on this, the Trust has invested extensively in addressing the training and capacity building needs of professionals in the health sector.

Amongst its objectives, CHC aims to:

- Create awareness regarding the principles and practice of community health
- Promote and support community health action
- Undertake research on community health and development

Since its inception, CHC has spearheaded community health action, innovative training, networking and policy action research in community health. Hence, the Trust partnered with the organisation and with the support provided by the Trust, the Community Health Fellowship Scheme was initiated by CHC in 2003.

Consequently, under this Programme, over forty young professionals have been oriented and trained in community health. Post training, over 95 per cent continue to work on community health issues in various parts of the country. Salient highlights of the fellowship scheme include:

- Three annual community health workshops
- Field placements in community health projects across the country according to the learning needs of each individual intern
- Individual mentorship throughout the fellowship phase
- Participation in several national and international meets held in the country

This sustained exposure, and training and mentorship support has strengthened the motivation of these individuals to choose community health as their life option. This, in turn, has enhanced the quality and availability of professionals in the sector.