# **Note on Salaam Baalak Trust’s Health Programme**

## **Introduction**

Salaam Baalak Trust (SBT) has been striving to provide comprehensive care and protection services to street and working children. This package of services includes residential facilities, health and nutrition, education, vocational training and rehabilitation services. A critical component of this package is **medical and health facilities**. SBT strongly believes that health and nutrition lay a strong foundation of children’s holistic development. This becomes particularly significant in the case of children living on the streets who survive in deprived and hostile conditions. Evidence shows that children on streets live in insanitary conditions and are prone to various infections and diseases. Most of these children have low or no access to nutritious food. Many of them consume foods devoid of essential macro and micro nutrients and become susceptible to undernutrition or malnutrition.

Living on streets children face violence and abuse. Many of them are beaten by adults or elder children on streets. As a result they become vulnerable to physical injuries and road traffic incidents. Given these multiple reasons, providing children adequate medical facilities is often the first priority for SBT team. In an endeavour to ensure effective delivery of medical services, SBT has envisioned a multifaceted medical programme comprising medical check-ups, vaccination services, first-aid, hospital care and provision of medicines and other consumables

## **Goal and Objectives**

The overarching goal of the medical programme is to improve health and nutritional status of children rescued from the streets. In tandem with this broad goal the programme endeavours to achieve following three pronged objectives:

* To improve access of children living on streets to adequate and timely medical services through contact points
* To improve access to adequate and timely medical services of children rescued and/or motivated to residential centres
* To strengthen medical and health programme to ensure maximum quality health care

## **SBT Medical Team**

A skilled and experienced team forms the fulcrum of SBT’s medical programme. The team works relentlessly for providing quality services to children. The medical team comprises a medical coordinator, in-house doctors who work with SBT on part time basis and medical social workers. The entire medical team works under the close supervision of Executive Director and Executive Council.

## **Activities**

It has been SBT’s long standing principle that quality medical care must be provided to every child in its ambit. SBT envisions good health as the foundation on which a stable and happy future can be built. Thus, first aid (when needed) and a medical check-up is provided to every child within 24 hours of coming in touch with SBT. In certain cases when children come to SBT with any major medical problem, he/she is referred to hospital immediately and prescribed care is provided on priority and regular follow up is done.

To meet the nutritional needs of children nutritionally balanced and hot-cooked meals are served at residential centres and contact points. The meals are prepared in the kitchen space provided at the centres under the supervision of staff members to ensure safe and hygienic practices. In some cases children have special nutritional requirements due to illness such as tuberculosis and malnutrition. Such children are provided with special nutrition including protein supplements, additional servings of fruits and milk as prescribed by the doctor.

**Improving access of children living on streets to adequate and timely medical services**

SBT through its various contact points identifies vulnerable and deprived children who live on streets with their families and may not come under the purview of institutional child care. However, these children are in dire need of care and protection services. To ensure such children have access to medical care, the Trust provides them following services:

* ***First Aid*** care is provided to children who come in touch with SBT through outreach and are sick or injured.
* ***Regular health check-ups*** are conducted for all those children who regularly come to SBT contact points. These check-ups are conducted by in-house doctors of SBT. During the check-ups signs and symptoms of nutritional deficiencies and other infections and common childhood diseases are diagnosed and treatment along with medicines is provided to children.
* ***Weekly awareness sessions*** are conducted by the medical social workers to sensitize children on issues of health, hygiene, and sanitation. These sessions are important as they adopt a preventive approach and enable children understand how they can protect themselves from various diseases through hygienic behaviours and practices.
* ***Heath camps*** are organised to provide routine immunization and eye and dental check-ups at the contact points. The immunization camps help to protect children from six preventable childhood diseases.
* Children at contact points are provided ***one hot cooked meal*** to meet their nutritional demands

**Improving the access to adequate and timely medical services to children rescued and living in residential centres**

* + ***Regular medical check-ups*** of children are done at the full care residential centres of SBT. As soon as a child comes to the centre he/she is fully investigated by SBT doctors. His/her medical records and files are maintained. If the child is diagnosed with a medical problem he/she is provided specialised care and his/her medical progress is closely tracked by medical social workers and medical coordinator.
  + ***Individual health cards*** are maintained by the medical social workers to map the health profile of each child at the full care residential centres.
  + ***Immunization and pathological tests*** are conducted in cases where doctors diagnose symptoms of a disease or illness.
  + ***Weekly awareness sessions*** are conducted by the medical social workers to sensitize children on issues of health, hygiene, and sanitation.
  + Children at full care residential centres are provided ***three hot cooked meals***.

**To strengthen the medical and health programme to ensure maximum quality health care**

* The medical programme team makes continuous efforts to ***liaison with hospitals and health care facilities*** to ensure advanced and specialised care to children is provided when needed.
* The team works ***round the clock*** to ensure ***maximum outreach of quality services*** to street and working children specifically in emergency situations. Full-time medical social workers and medical coordinator assure a seamless continuum of medical and health services to children.
* Proactive steps are taken by the medical team to ***prevent dengue, swine flu and other infectious diseases*** through prophylactic measures.
* The medical team conducts r***egular vaccination to prevent the onset of Typhoid, Hepatitis B, and Tetanus*** among children, this has contributed in minimizing the incidence of diseases.
* Many ***difficult and serious cases*** of diseases are handled successfully by the time which include spine tumour, Nephrotic disorder and large intestine rupture among others.
* A ***robust de-addiction programme*** in partnership with Muskaan Foundation is in place. To overcome pangs of hunger, pain and loneliness, children who live on the streets generally fall prey to substance abuse. Thus, in order to lead them to the path of normal development de-addiction is critical. With the support of Muskaan Foundation 66 children were linked to de-addiction services.