

PHI Manual

Manual for the Sri Lanka Public Health Inspector

**Ministry of Health
Public Health Services**

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Foreword

Sri Lanka has the unique record, as the pioneer in the field of development of Public Health Services among the countries in this part of the world. As far back as 1858, Public Health became a function of the then Civil Department and in the same year, the Public Health and Suppression of Nuisances Ordinance was enacted, making the way of the creation of Boards of the Health with regulations to safeguard Public Health. Inspection of private and public premises, enforcement of the law in relation to Public Nuisances, ensuring sanitation of private and public places, were some of the functions of the Boards of Health.

The movement towards improvement of sanitary conditions in towns, villages and estates was gathering momentum in 1912, and a separate Sanitary Department was created under the Civil Medical Department. The first Sanitary Inspectors were trained in 1913 and worked under the supervision of Assistant Sanitary Officers, who were Medical Officers, in the areas of investigation and control of Infectious Diseases and epidemics, sanitation of rural and urban areas. A further impact was given to Public Health in 1925 by the amalgamation of Public Health activities to the General Health Services, thus creating the Department of Medical and Sanitary Services.

The establishment of the first Health Unit at Kalutara in 1926 was a significant landmark in the history of Public Health in this country. During the formative years of the Health Units, attention was on control of Communicable Diseases and Environmental Sanitation, where the Public Health Inspector played a major role.

An instruction for the guidance of Sanitary Inspectors was first published by the then Department of Medical and Sanitary Services in 1926. During the ensuing years, the role of the Public Health Inspector became more and more important and occupied a pivotal position in the Health Development of the country. Some notable achievements in the field of Public Health in this country have no doubt been due to the determination, devotion and dedication of the pioneer Public Health Inspectors at that time.

During the last few decades, Public Health has advanced rapidly and the key field officers such as Public Health Inspectors are called upon to play a new and a varied role in their spheres of activity, thus necessitating clear guidelines. Since the publication of the Manual of the Department of Health Part IV in 1958 where instructions for guidance of Public Health Inspectors was available, no major effort had been made to compile an up to date set of guidelines except in 1986 by Dr. H M S D Heath –DDG PHS. The Manual for the Sri Lanka Public Health Inspector fulfils a long felt need. This Manual is likely to be useful to the Trainee Public Health Inspectors as well.

The Editorial board has taken much trouble to prepare this document which is comprehensive, the subjects are well presented, thus providing the Public Health Inspector with an up to date Manual, serving as a valuable guide in performing his duties.

Dr U.A. Mendis
Director General of Health Services

Message from the Deputy Director General (Public Health Services) I

Sri Lanka has one of the best public health services in the region. Contributions came from many categories of health of personnel in the country, to reach this state of affairs. The Public Health Inspector has been in the forefront in the public health programmes that were launched in the past, and undoubtedly an important member of the health team functioning under the present 'Health Unit' system. Practically in all field-based programmes the Public Health inspector or the Public Health Midwife is the first person to make contact with the community.

Very clearly the public health problems in Sri Lanka have changed their order of priority. Not only that major communicable diseases have been eliminated, but even other important communicable diseases such as poliomyelitis, leprosy, and malaria, have been either eliminated or on their way to elimination. Dengue fever is one exception which has seen a global resurgence as well as a high incidence in Sri Lanka. Being a disease which is a direct result of an unsatisfactory environment, the Ministry expects the Public Health Inspector to play a key role in the control of this disease.

Much emphasis is now given to the control of non-communicable diseases such as mental illnesses, hypertension and diabetes mellitus. Efforts at changing unhealthy behaviour in persons, who have taken to undesirable habits such as tobacco, alcohol, and those involved in substance abuse, are now high priorities.

The Public health inspector who is required to study the behaviour patterns of the community in his care, can perform a yeomen service by carrying out necessary counseling on the affected individuals, or referring them for appropriate medical care.

I sincerely hope that both the Public Health Inspectors in service, and those who are undergoing training to become Public Health inspectors, will find this manual indispensable.

Dr. P.G Mahipala
Deputy Director General (Public Health Services) I

Note from the Editor

The period that has elapsed since the publication of the last Manual for Public Health Inspectors, in 1989, is quite a long one, especially in view of the major changes in the delivery of public health the world and our country have experienced. Therefore the public health administrators in the Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition are to be congratulated for having taken a very productive step in revising the said manual.

From the inception of the public health services in Sri Lanka as a separate division, originally as the Sanitary Branch of the Civil Medical Department in 1913, the Public Health Inspectors have played a crucial role as the officers liaising between the Medical Officer of Health and the public. They were originally designated as Health Assistants, and then as Sanitary Inspectors, before their designation were finally termed as Public Health Inspectors.

With the disappearance of some major infectious diseases such as smallpox at the global level, and diseases such as plague, at the country level, the PHIs have been able to divert their attention much more to other areas in public health such as nutrition, food hygiene, occupational health, and family planning.

The primary health care system which the country adopted in the seventies has been a most significant change in the public health delivery system in Sri Lanka. Additionally, the world has witnessed many technical advances in the sphere of public health, as well as changes in the attitude of policy makers towards public health problems.

This revised edition which has been contributed by experienced officers in their respective fields contains many subject areas that have been added to the sphere of public health practice in Sri Lanka, since the publication of the last edition.

It is much expected that the present manual will be found useful by the practicing Public Health Inspectors, as well as by the Public Health Inspector Trainees, as a technical guide.

Dr W. Punsiri Fernando
Editor

Acknowledgement

It is my duty to pay my honor to the stakeholders who contribute their most valuable efforts for the successfulness of the 1st review of this manual. Initially I must not forget Dr. H. M. S. S. D. Herath, (Former Deputy Director General (Public Health Services), who took initial step for developing a Manual for the Public Health Inspectors in Sri Lanka, in order to fulfill a long felt need pertaining to up liftmen of Environmental Sanitation in Sri Lanka, even after 60 years of long period establishing the Public Health Inspectors service in Sri Lanka.

It's my pleasure to thank Dr (Mrs.) U. K. D. Piyaseeli, Director, and Dr (Mrs.) Chandrani Jayasekara, Deputy Director (Training), National Institute of Health Sciences (NIHS), who gave me the great responsibility to coordinate this task.

I should mention the close cooperation and contribution received from Dr. W. K. Laxman, Head, Dr (Mrs.) L. P. Abeysinghe, Medical Officer of Environmental Health Teaching Unit, NIHS and my colleagues of the teaching faculty of NIHS and Regional Training Centers, Supervising Public Health Inspectors, Public Health Inspectors in various parts of Sri Lanka.

I like to pay my gratitude to Mrs. S. C. Samarasinghe, Librarian, and Mrs. M. G. J. Ranatunga, Asst. Librarian, NIHS, Mr. Lasitha Mendis, Data Entry Operator, NIHS and Mrs. P. W. K. Shantha, Management Assistant, NIHS, who delivered their valuable services on documentation of this manual.

At last but not the least I like to thank Mr. Jayasiri De Silva, Former Senior Tutor Public Health, NIHS, who gave me the courage to undertake this responsibility, rendered his expertise for developing the manual and editing with the cooperation of Dr (Mrs) U. K. D. Piyaseeli, Director, NIHS.

We are indebted to World Health Organization for the financial assistance for editing of this manual. Our thanks are also due to those who contributed by writing the chapters.

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