

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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AIMS

This unit aims to outline some of the main elements of social responsibility.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

When you have worked through this unit you should be able to:

- Identify different elements of social responsibility
- Describe how we can ensure people have equal and safe access to eyecare services

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Social responsibility is the idea that we have a responsibility to all elements of society. In the context of eye care, it refers to the idea that we need to make sure that every part of society can access our services equally and safely. Although we may think we offer services to all, certain groups of people may have problems accessing services, thus we need to ensure that we put strategies in place to help minimise these issues.

In this chapter, child protection, gender inequality, and disability will be addressed, however the ideas of these can be applied to other vulnerable groups (e.g. aged populations or ethnic minorities).

CHILD PROTECTION

WHAT IS IT?	<p>Child protection is about protecting children from abuse, violence or exploitation. It is important, as children often cannot tell us that something is wrong</p> <p>The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that parties shall protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.</p> <p>We must be aware of the risks to children in our programmes (and in the communities where we work) and actively minimise opportunities and situations where children can be harmed.</p>
WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?	<p>There are several forms of child abuse, all of which have the potential to have a significant impact on the ongoing life of the child. They include:</p> <p>Physical Abuse Physical abuse occurs when a person purposefully injures or threatens to injure a child or young person. This abuse may include slapping, punching, shaking, kicking, burning, shoving or grabbing.</p> <p>Emotional Abuse Emotional Abuse occurs when a child is repeatedly rejected or made frightened by threats to such an extent that it affects the child's physical and emotional growth. This may involve name-calling, being put down or continual coldness from a parent or caregiver.</p> <p>Neglect Neglect is the persistent failure or the deliberate denial of responsibility to provide a child with clean water, food, shelter, sanitation or supervision or care to the extent that the child's health and development are placed at risk.</p> <p>Child Sexual Abuse This occurs when a child or young person is used by an older or bigger child, adolescent or adult for his or her own sexual stimulation or gratification – regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. These can be contact or non-contact acts, including threats and exposure to pornography.</p>

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I BELIEVE A CHILD IS BEING ABUSED?	<p>Concerns of child abuse must be reported whether it is within our programmes or in the communities in which we work. This includes if someone tells you something regarding the safety/abuse of a child or if you see any concerning behaviour by someone you think might endanger the safety of a child (e.g. use of computers to view child pornography).</p> <p>Who you report to depends on where you are. Depending on the situation, you may report this to your manager or the police in your region. Whoever you report it to, it is important to remember that the person is entitled to a just process that does not prejudge guilt or innocence, and therefore it is important to maintain the confidentiality of all parties as much as possible.</p> <p>It is important to remember that protecting the child is the number one priority.</p>
CHALLENGES:	<p>Child protection can be difficult, as the context differs from country to country and in different situations. Things that may seem normal and innocent in a home situation may be inappropriate in a work situation. Other factors that can influence the way we think about child protection include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal views / reality • Law / Legislation • Amount of Information • Our own values and personal experiences • Cultural values • Religion / beliefs
PROTECTING YOURSELF:	<p>In our jobs it is often necessary to deal with children. It is important that you ensure that your approach to dealing with children takes into account child protection. Sometimes it is easy for people to misinterpret something that you think is innocent. Things that may be okay to do with your own children may not be okay to do while working.</p> <p>We need to make sure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – when planning projects, we ensure that we minimise risk to children – we do not do anything that can be interpreted as harming a child – we take care of children we interact with – we look out to make sure that children we work with are not hurt by others – we seek permission before taking photographs of children

PROJECT PLANNING – CHILD PROTECTION RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always plan activities and identify what could go wrong and how to avoid it • Risks should be monitored on an ongoing basis • The staff/child ratio should be adequate • Adequate supervision of staff and activities should be provided • Opportunities where children might be isolated by a staff member should be minimised • Open plan spaces should be used • Children should be educated about rules and encourage them to speak up if they have concerns • Staff should be carefully screened.
PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR – THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always be open in your behaviour with children • Avoid situations where you are alone with a child • Do not kiss or cuddle a child • Never smack or hit a child • Never make rude remarks about a child even as a joke • Do not photograph or video a child without the consent of the child and his/her parent or guardian • Avoid unnecessary physical contact of children

GENDER EQUALITY

WHAT IS IT:	<p>Gender equality means equal opportunities for men and women to realise their individual potential, to contribute to their country's economic and social development and to benefit equally from their participation in society.</p> <p>At the moment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-thirds of the people in the world who lack basic literacy skills are female • Approximately 25% of girls in developing countries are not in school • Half a million women die each year from complications during pregnancy - 99 per cent of them in developing countries • Women and girls access eye care services less than men and boys. • Cataract rates are higher in women than in men • Women account for 75% of trachoma blindness • In many settings women are two to four times as likely to have trichiasis • Presbyopia rates appear to be higher in women compared with men
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT:	<p>Gender inequality restricts a country's economic growth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When women and men have relative equality, economies grow faster, children's health improves and there is less corruption. • Investments in women's and girls' education and health yield high returns, including reduced rates of maternal mortality, better educated and healthier children and increased household incomes.
HOW DO WE ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY:	<p>Achieving gender equality is more than just improving female health and education. To achieve this, women must be able to access economic resources and participate in leadership within the community. In order to ensure gender inequalities are addressed, we need to develop strategies and targets to engage women and girls more effectively. We also need to make sure that these strategies work by monitoring and evaluating them.</p>
PROJECT PLANNING – GENDER EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS:	<p>In our projects we need to consider gender equality from two different perspectives. Firstly, we need to ensure that we have a non-biased method of recruiting to ensure that women have equal access to employment. We also need to consider gender inequality in our projects to ensure that women can access our services.</p> <p>Gender equality needs to be considered at all stages during the project. In the project design stage, it is important to consider access issues to ensure that everyone can access the services equally. This can include ensuring that services are available at times when women can access them and putting strategies in place to ensure women are aware of how to access the services.</p> <p>During the project, it is important to collect gender data in order to monitor gender imbalance. If there is a gender imbalance, it is important to implement strategies to help redirect health promotion activities and awareness campaigns as well as selection and recruitment of human resources.</p>

DISABILITY

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DISABILITY?	<p>People with disability are among the poorest and most vulnerable in developing countries. It is estimated that 650 million people have a disability and about 80% of these people live in developing countries.</p> <p>People with disability may have problems accessing education and health services or to earn a living. This can drive people into poverty.</p>
BARRIERS FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY:	<p>People with a disability can have problems accessing health care services. These problems can be broken up into three main groups.</p> <p>Access Physical access to a building can be a barrier for people with a disability. For example, if a vision screening is conducted in a building that has a steep staircase, people with mobility problems will have difficulty accessing it.</p> <p>Opinions/stigma Perceptions about people with a disability can hinder access to services.</p> <p>Communication The way we communicate can be a barrier for people with disability. For example, if a person has a hearing impairment, understanding verbal instructions during a vision screening can be a problem.</p>
HOW CAN WE ADDRESS THIS?	<p>We need to think about making our services accessible for all.</p> <p>Access This can include ensuring that there is easy access to services (e.g. on the ground floor or installation of a ramp)</p> <p>Opinions/Stigma That we do not make assumptions about what people with disabilities can and cannot do</p> <p>Communication That we ensure we communicate effectively with people with disabilities (e.g. written instructions or large, high contrast font)</p>

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

WHAT IS THE ENVIRONMENT?	<p>There are two kinds of environment – the built environment and the natural environment. The built environment refers to the conditions under which people and communities live. It can include things such as the quality of the houses where people live and the buildings where they work. The natural environment refers to our natural surroundings. It includes things such as the quality of air, water and climate.</p> <p>There is a link between communities of humans and their environment. Good built and natural environments help people to be healthy, earn a livelihood and have a good quality of life. Degradation to the environment and climate change has a detrimental effect on health, livelihoods and quality of life. The greatest impact of poor environment occurs on poor and marginalized people.</p>
HOW CAN THE ENVIRONMENT AFFECT VISION?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased ultraviolet light levels and ambient temperature appears to increase the incidence of pterygia, eye cancers, cataract and presbyopia • With poor air and water quality, the prevalence and severity of ocular infections increases • Air-borne pollutants cause ocular surface irritation and this can decrease the quality of life
HOW CAN WE MINIMISE THE EFFECTS OF OUR PROJECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT?	<p>It is important that we consider the environment by trying to avoid environmental harm and achieve environmentally sustainable progress when we plan our projects.</p> <p>Ideas to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid unnecessary travel by using other methods of communication (e.g. email or telephone) • Try to decrease printing and paper use by using electronic systems • Use double-sided printing where printing is necessary • Recycle where possible (including paper and plastic) • Turn off electrical equipment when not in use (e.g. lights, computers or air conditioners). <p>Infrastructural Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use existing buildings rather than construct new buildings • Retro-fit existing buildings to improve environmental standards • Ensure any new buildings have best-practice environmental standards and use appropriate local materials (such as bamboo) • Ensure that furniture purchased is locally made with appropriate local materials <p>Water Use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in rainwater tanks to supply optical laboratories whenever feasible • Recycle water in optical laboratories whenever feasible <p>Cleaning and Waste Disposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filter solid waste from waste water in the optical laboratories • Filtered waste water from optical laboratories should be appropriately plumbed to sewage systems and not into natural waterways • Use washable cloths rather than disposable tissues for cleaning lenses