

## **Report of the Medical Officer of Health / Municipality of Colombo.**

### **Contributors**

Colombo (Sri Lanka). Public Health Department.

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EXTRACT FROM THE MUNICIPAL COMMISSIONER'S ADMINISTRATION REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1945.]

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APPENDIX C.  
REPORT OF THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH  
FOR THE YEAR 1945.

I took charge of the Department on August 8, 1945, when Dr. C. H. Gunasekara went on long leave.

STATISTICAL SUMMARY, 1945.

Area within M. C. limits (exclusive of lake)	...	8,317 acres
Population at census of 1931	...	284,155
Estimated mean population, 1945	...	353,200
Number of live births registered	...	14,485
Birth-rate per 1,000 population	...	41'0
Birth-rate corrected for non-residents	...	29'0
Number of infantile deaths	...	2,145
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 births	...	148
Number of stillbirths	...	741
Stillbirth rate per 1,000 births, live and still	...	48'7
Number of deaths	...	9,330
Crude death-rate per 1,000 population	...	26'4
Death-rate corrected for non-residents	...	17'6
Pneumonia	{ Number of deaths	708*
	{ Death-rate per 1,000 population	2'0
Phthisis	{ Number of deaths	678*
	{ Death-rate per 1,000 population	1'9
Enteric Fever	{ Number of deaths	368*
	{ Death-rate per 1,000 population	1'0
Diarrhoea and Enteritis	{ Number of deaths	897*
	{ Death-rate per 1,000 population	2'5
Dysentery	{ Number of deaths	200*
	{ Death-rate per 1,000 population	0'6

POPULATION.

The estimated mean population for 1945 based on the census of 1931 was 353,200, exclusive of the Military, Shipping, and day workers.

The census of March 19, 1946, has revealed that the population of Colombo on that date was approximately 364,000, but the 1946 census figures are still subject to correction.

BIRTHS AND DEATHS.

The birth rate was 41'0 per 1,000 population as against 43'8 for the previous year.

The crude and corrected deathrates were 26'4 and 17'6 respectively as against 25'6 and 17'6 for the previous year.

INFANT MORTALITY.

The infant mortality rate was 148 per 1,000 births as against 145 for the previous year.

MAJOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

There were 158 City cases of smallpox and none of cholera or plague. The 158 cases of smallpox comprised three outbreaks, the third continuing into 1946. The figures are as follows:—

	Town Cases.	Contact Camp Cases.	Total.
1st outbreak	8	1	9
2nd outbreak	47	19	66
3rd outbreak up to 31-12-45	49	34	83
	<u>104</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>158</u>

\* Includes deaths of non-residents in hospitals.

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## INFECTIOUS DISEASES (GENERAL).

The number of City cases of notifiable diseases reported during the year was 4,362 as against 4,883 cases for the previous year.

## MUNICIPAL FREE DISPENSARIES.

112,446 patients were treated at the Municipal Free Dispensaries during 1945 as against 110,727 for the previous year. The total visits was 250,537 as against 248,293 for the previous year. The daily average attendance was 808 as against 804 for the previous year. 222 domiciliary visits were paid by the Medical Officers as against 253 for the previous year. It should be noted that in 1945 there were only 10 dispensaries functioning out of the 11, Mutwal South Dispensary being closed down.

## MATERNITY HOMES.

*Admissions of Expectant Mothers.*

St. Paul's	...	368
New Bazaar	...	306
Moderia	...	245

The following are the birth and death rates and the number of cases of enteric fever for the last ten years :—

Year.	Birth Rate.	Crude Death Rate.	Corrected Death Rate.	Infant Mortality Rate.	No. of Cases of Enteric Fever.
1936	... 37.6	... 27.2	... 19.1	... 150	... 258
1937	... 38.6	... 28.3	... 19.4	... 161	... 315
1938	... 38.6	... 25.8	... 17.8	... 151	... 344
1939	... 40.6	... 25.9	... 17.7	... 155	... 575
1940	... 44.7	... 25.8	... 16.6	... 142	... 405
1941	... 45.3	... 24.2	... 15.4	... 135	... 414
1942	... 28.5	... 16.1	... 10.5	... 116	... 168
1943	... 46.2	... 21.2	... 14.3	... 123	... 265
1944	... 43.8	... 25.6	... 17.6	... 145	... 373
1945	... 41.0	... 26.4	... 17.6	... 148	... 472

## VACCINATION AND IMMUNIZATION.

49,889 persons were vaccinated by the Public Health Department staff during the year including 1,212 primary vaccinations.

5,186 inoculations against typhoid were done by the Medical Officer of Health, Epidemiology and Vital Statistics, and the Medical Officers in charge of the Municipal Free Dispensaries.

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

The most outstanding event of the year was the general failure of the monsoon practically all over the Island with the result that so far as the City was concerned, apart from the general and indirect effects of a severe drought, the water supply was depleted to such an extent as to necessitate the City's supply being augmented with water drawn from the Kelaniya river at Ambatale.

This, however, produced no ill effects as the water was chlorinated before disposal into the mains.

Although the year under review had been free from some of the major epidemic diseases such as cholera and plague, nevertheless there occurred in the City three sporadic outbreaks of smallpox, all of which were clearly traceable to infection from India.

The crude death rate stands at 26.4 per mille as against 25.6 for the previous year, the infantile mortality rate at 148 as against 145 for the previous year. The incidence of enteric fever also showed a definite rise as compared with last year and the ten years preceding, except 1939.



The death rate of infants is the most sensitive index we possess of physical welfare. To produce healthy children both parents must be healthy. In order that the parents may be healthy there is need for good housing, and essential food-stuffs in adequate quantities. When we note the deficiency of air, light, food, the presence of dirty surroundings such as are found amongst the poor, need we be surprised that the children born and brought up in such circumstances are physically weak, unable in a great many instances to resist disease and succumb in the early stages of their lives? What then is the remedy? Good housing and a higher standard of living. These are the fundamentals. When both these conditions become available to the masses then and only then will our infant mortality rates decrease.

The inference from these figures is—

1. The general mortality of the City is still high as compared with that of advanced cities in the West.
2. The sickness and morbidity that prevails among the community are equally high.
3. We have not been able to provide those essential amenities which prolong life and diminish suffering in other cities of the world.

Misery and morbidity are seen in increasing measure as we go down the social scale. The last point seems to be the key to the question of high mortality.

On the question of housing much has been said and written. Practically everyone is agreed that the existing slums must be dealt with and more houses built to relieve overcrowding.

If substantial results are to be obtained there should be a bold and clear cut policy. What is really required is a comprehensive development scheme, a scheme that will be based on a scientific as well as a business point of view and carried out by a long term development policy.

There are in the City large areas covered by foul slums. It is not uncommon to find continuous areas of buildings which occupy practically the whole site on which it stands. These rows of buildings have, in the majority, hardly any proper supply of air or light and many of them are dark hovels with no breath of fresh air, let alone, light reaches.

Even in areas which are soiled drained, the drainage system is so imperfect, resulting in dampness and nuisance. Proper arrangements for disposal of refuse are absent.

The narrow lanes which provide access to these foul warrens are invariably traversed by open drains which act as the outlet for all domestic wastes, usually defiled also with urine and excreta.

It is under these conditions that the population of slum land live. To them "home" means a single room or a part of a room or verandah, where all domestic matters are performed, from cooking to child bearing and confinement.

Our building By-laws that exist are weak; the standard of comfort laid down is uncommonly low, so that it is no matter for surprise that the congestion of houses on land and overcrowding have been growing worse and worse and that slum conditions have consequently been extended and even intensified in modern times.

I have written on this subject at length because Colombo's most urgent problem is housing.

#### GENERAL SANITATION.

There has been a further deterioration as reflected by the high incidence of enteric fever which is a sensitive index of environmental conditions. This state of affairs has been brought about by cumulative effect of war conditions added to the fact that routine inspections had to be curtailed during the major part of the year owing to withdrawal of sanitary staff from normal duties for work in connection with the outbreaks of smallpox. There was also an outbreak on a fairly large scale of enteric fever in Maligakande area towards the close of the year. This was the result of concealment of cases and failure on the part of Private Medical Practitioners to notify cases at the early stage of the disease.

The sale of foodstuffs on public footways and the absence of rain water and soil sewers in many localities of the City also calls for Council's early attention and action.

Council has at long last taken steps to rid the City of its dairies and if Council's resolution is implemented, the City should be free of all dairies by the end of 1950. It is certainly a step in the right direction.

The present state of affairs in regard to our foodstuffs calls for comment. It is no exaggeration to state that the conditions under which they are prepared and sold are most disgusting.

Articles of food are exposed for sale under the most loathsome conditions, on footways, over public drains, round about public latrines and on the streets.

The conditions under which some of the foodstuffs are prepared are most primitive, without any consideration being paid to cleanliness. These conditions can be remedied by prohibiting the sale of foodstuffs except in Municipal markets where there is constant supervision by whole-time officers and also by action to control their preparation. This latter has been done to some extent by the introduction recently of new By-laws.

The City's milk supply which had all along been unsatisfactory became worse during the war years and continues to be so.

The reports of the City Microbiologist, the Special Officer, Chest Diseases and the Medical Officer, Maternity and Child Welfare, are attached. Owing to the death of Mr. A. Bruce, City Analyst, in the early part of this year his report is not available, but I submit a statement of analyses done by him during 1945.

April 3, 1946.

F. N. JAYEWARDENE,  
Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health.

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*Annexure A.*

REPORT OF THE CITY MICROBIOLOGIST FOR 1945.

1. LABORATORY.

THERE was little change as regards the activities of the laboratory during the year 1945 compared with the previous years. The cessation of hostilities did not make itself felt as regards import of supplies, and large number of items ordered months ago were still due to arrive at the end of the year under report. As regards most of the bacteriological media required for simple routine work our independence from imports allowed us to carry on the work without interruption but our endeavour to introduce some modern methods of bacteriological work have failed owing to the lack of chemicals required for the purpose.

The routine examinations were on about the same level as before. The number of clinical specimens rose from 5,291 to 5,746.

There was a good demand for typhoid vaccine and 6,618 c.c. were issued. The new method of preparing alcohol vaccine was introduced and part of the vaccine issued was of this nature.

During most of the year the water situation was rather disquieting from the bacteriological point of view. The continued drought combined with the increased demand for water necessitated the addition of river water for a number of long periods. In spite of the increased chlorination the standard of purity we had been used to for so long could not be maintained and warnings to the public to consume boiled water only had to be issued. A constant watch was kept and information on the condition of the water was passed on to the civil and service authorities.

## 2. ANALYSIS OF ROUTINE WORK.

(a) *General Distribution of Routine Specimens examined during 1945.*

Clinical specimens	...	5,746
Town water	...	823
Rodents for plague		
Port Commission	...	817
Public Health Department		13,145
		<hr/>
		20,531

(b) *Distribution of Clinical Specimens—1945.*

		Number examined.	Number positive.
Diagnostic service for practitioners	{ Enteric	1,476	703
	{ Human plague	0	0
	{ Tuberculosis	381	49
	{ Dysentery	519	49
	{ Diphtheria	308	62
	{ Ova	163	48
	{ Malaria { Parasites	68	22
	{ Malaria { Serological test	103	50
	{ Various	190	18
	Public Health Department	{ Enteric	263
{ Human plague		0	0
{ Tuberculosis		163	20
{ Dysentery		71	2
{ Diphtheria		1,805	25
{ Ova		32	17
{ Malaria { Parasites		3	1
{ Malaria { Serological test		0	0
{ Various		201	21
			<hr/>
		5,746	1,089

April 3, 1946.

E. K. WOLFF,  
City Microbiologist.*Annexure B.*

## TUBERCULOSIS SERVICE.

## REPORT OF WORK DONE DURING THE YEAR 1945.

1. Total number of patients seen at Chest Clinics	...	1,145
New cases ... 467	{ (a) Diagnosed as Pulmonary Tuberculosis	122
	{ (b) Diagnosed as Non-tubercular	254
	{ (c) Under observation	91
Subsequent visits	} 830	
Total	... 1,297	
2. Contacts examined by health visitors	{ (a) Negative	1,318
	{ (b) Positive	333
	Total	1,651

3. Diagnostic aid used	{	(a) Sputum ... ..	252
		(b) Blood ... ..	1
		(c) Faeces ... ..	8
		(d) X'Rays (read and interpreted by Special Officer, Chest Diseases) ... ..	302
4. Cases hospitalised ...	{	(a) Males ... ..	74
		(b) Females ... ..	31
5. Discharged patients ...	{	(a) Traced (by Health Visi- tors) ... ..	21
		(b) Untraced or gone out- station ... ..	17
6. Care and after-care	{	(a) Number of visits to families by Health Visitors ... ..	12,845
		(b) Number of visits to families by Special Officer, Chest Diseases ... ..	474
		(c) Number of families recom- mended for relief from Tuber- culosis Vote ... ..	55*
* Total amount spent on relief during 1945		...	Rs. 5,144 50
7. Number of patients isolated under domiciliary supervision	...	291	
8. Health, Education and Propaganda :—			
(a) Advice to patients and their friends.			
(b) Leaflets distributed among patients and the public.			

I have again to record that the arrangements with the Department of Medical and Sanitary Services for running the City's Anti-tuberculosis scheme are not satisfactory. Most of the City cases are not made bacillus free or segregated long enough to prevent them from infecting others when they return to their homes.

MILANIUS DE ALMEIDA,

April 3, 1946

Special Officer, Chest Diseases.

*Annexure C.*

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER, MATERNITY AND  
CHILD WELFARE, FOR THE YEAR 1945.

OUR Ante-natal and Infant Care Clinics continue to be popular and are well attended and the number of our deliveries in Maternity Homes shows a slight increase.

The tables annexed show the attendance at our various clinics and deliveries conducted in the district and in the Maternity Homes.

Our nursing staff is not at full strength. Owing to the paucity of nurses in the country we have not yet been able to fill up vacancies. We have however decided to continue as we are than burden ourselves with material of low quality.

J. E. D. MENDIS,

April 2, 1946.

Medical Officer, Maternity & Child Welfare.

*Attendance at the Ante-Natal, Baby and Post-Natal Clinics  
during the Year 1945. (Primary and Revisits.)*

Child Welfare Centre.	Ante-Natal Attendance (Primary & Revisits.)	Attendance at Baby Clinics. (Primary & Revisits.)	Post-Natal Attendance. (Primary & Revisits.)
St. Paul's ...	3239	758	286
New Bazaar ...	2549	464	177
Modera ...	2231	621	195
Maradana ...	2281	314	61
Slave Island ...	1789	313	71
Wellawatte ...	1476	392	112
<b>Total ...</b>	<b>13,565</b>	<b>2,862</b>	<b>902</b>

*Number of Cases conducted by the Municipal Midwives during the Year 1945.*

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	TOTAL
Child Welfare Centre, St. Paul's	57	39	49	59	59	46	37	52	55	49	46	57	605
Child Welfare Centre, New Bazaar ...	36	22	21	24	22	15	19	21	24	26	25	32	287
Child Welfare Centre, Modera	13	15	13	19	17	17	10	12	15	16	11	18	176
Child Welfare Centre, Maradana	60	54	62	49	51	40	43	37	59	55	48	69	627
Child Welfare Centre, Slave Island ...	49	41	44	48	30	33	38	50	39	42	37	47	498
Child Welfare Centre, Wellawatte ...	19	11	17	15	14	9	14	18	16	11	12	14	170
Maternity Home, St. Paul's ...	32	30	23	32	30	36	31	26	39	25	28	36	368
Maternity Home, New Bazaar	24	31	25	28	25	30	26	19	23	16	31	28	306
Maternity Home, Modera ...	20	24	20	22	21	21	13	13	19	19	16	37	245
<b>TOTAL ...</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>296</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>3,282</b>

*Number of Children to whom Free Milk was issued during the Year 1945.*

Centre	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	TOTAL
St. Paul's ...	22	21	22	23	28	24	28	25	22	18	19	12	264
New Bazaar ...	20	22	27	26	21	20	22	17	17	13	11	12	228
Modera ...	28	26	25	26	21	22	26	24	19	20	21	19	277
Maradana ...	30	33	30	29	24	20	22	26	27	26	28	23	318
Slave Island ...	25	30	30	30	31	32	32	31	31	31	32	36	371
Wellawatte ...	23	21	26	24	19	14	15	14	14	13	13	14	210
<b>TOTAL ...</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>1,668</b>



*Annexure D.*STATEMENT OF WORK DONE BY THE CITY ANALYST  
DURING THE YEAR 1945.

The number of samples analysed—

Town waters	...	...	175
Well water	...	...	1
Milk samples	...	...	151
Aerated waters	...	...	45
Gas tests	...	...	11
Tea Ciders	...	...	2
Sewages	...	...	6
Flour	...	...	4
Compost	...	...	1
Ghee	...	...	1
Powders	...	...	3
Solution	...	...	1
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		Total ...	401
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There was a fall in the number of milk samples as the Inspectors were not able to send in samples as regularly as before on account of smallpox duty.

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