SUMMARY

A cross sectional study among 540 estate and 460 rural primary school children was performed during June - July in 1991 in the MOH area Padukka. The purpose of the study was to compare the prevalence of health problems among the primary school children in estate and rural sectors. Six estate schools and eight rural schools of the MOH area Padukka were selected for the study and twelve common health problems were screened on study groups.

The results of the study revealed that the health problems are fairly common among both study groups. The most common problem identified in both sectors was dental caries with 75% prevalence, pediculosis was the next (43%) and acute undernutrition was the 3rd common problem among both study groups. Acute malnutrition, acute on chronic malnutrition, xeropthalmia, bitot's spots, angulostomatitis, glossitis, anaemia, gingivits and scabies showed a significnantly higher prevalence in the estate sector compared to the rural sector. So health problems were found to be commoner among the estate children compared to the rural group which may have been contributed by poor socio-economic and environmental background of the estate population.

The comparision of health problems among male and female sex grops in different sectors demonstrated that acute undernutrition and angulostomatitis were more common among males and acute on chronic malnutrition and pediculosis were significantly common among females in the estate sector where as gingivitis showed a higher pervalence among males and pediculosis among females in the rural sector.

Analysis of data on teacher's assessment revealed that learning difficulties were common among the children with malnutrition in both sectors and school attendences did not show any relation to the nutritional status. A higher prevalence of pediculosis was shown among the estate children with poor personal hygiene. This demonstrates the importance of teacher's assessment in relation to the health status of children in school health activities.