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## ROLE OF GOVERNMENT IN PUBLIC HEALTH SECTOR IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT:

*“Life is not merely being alive but being well.”*

*–Martial, 66 AD, Epigrams*

The role of the government in controlling the people health is not restricted within the health area but also by various other areas outside the health structure. This research paper is a literature review of the existing government mechanism for public health needs in India, its success, limitations as well as future possibilities. Governments have the liability for the health of the people which can be satisfied only by the proviso of sufficient health and social measures”. Growth of Health system, human resource advancement and regulation in public health are significant areas inside the health sector. Involvement in the health of a population also originate from social determinants of health for instance living environment, nourishment, safe drinking water, hygiene, education, early child growth and social security dealings. Population stabilization, gender mainstreaming and empowerment, lessening the effect of climate change as well as disasters on health, stabilizing community contribution and governance concerns are other significant areas for accomplishment. Creation of public health as a common value across the variety of sectors is a politically difficult approach, but such cooperative accomplishment is essential. The Constitution of India guarantees “right to life” under Article 21 underneath “right to health” is a crucial part.

**Keywords:** Health sector, public health, role of government, social measures, social determinants.

## INTRODUCTION:

India is currently home to more than 1.15 billion people, representing around 17% of the world's population.<sup>1</sup> The country's health related indicators shows that there is uneven progress in health indicators all over India. There is gender i.e., male - female and even transgender differences and even there is rural – urban differences in health indicators suffices in India. In order to lessen this gap between the above; the government has launched many different schemes and programs and is providing affordable, accessible and equitable health care system to all. How the healthcare system in a country can be an ideal one? The answer comes with the four pillars- Firstly, universal access to an adequate level with no excessive burden, Secondly, fair distribution of financial cost for the just system, thirdly, training providers be competence for empathy and should provide quality care and assistance. Lastly, special care to the vulnerable groups like disabled persons, children, women and aged. Schemes like PM Ayushman Bharat Yojana, Mission Indradhanush, Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana, Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi, Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana are among the few.

Health infrastructure is a significant indicator to understand the welfare machinery and health care policy in the country. It indicates that investment is the main concern in relation to the creation of health care facilities in the country. As India is one of the largest countries in the world and is coupled with the poverty that is found across the country and this is the serious problem that the country is facing in this era of globalization. This issue has created more health related issues in India. The country is geographically challenged; this is due to its tropical climate which acts both as a boon and a bane, a Sub Tropical Climate is conducive to agriculture however it also provides a ground for germination of diseases.<sup>2</sup> Due to an increasing and combined effect of poverty, climatic factors and population load; India's population is seriously susceptible to diseases and thus there is vulnerable conditions in the country.

The country is encumbered with two phases, the well-known ones are the infectious diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, smallpox and the recently developed Corona Virus that has been stated as a pandemic by WHO etc and the novel and increasing one are the non-infectious chronic diseases like cancer and coronary diseases. Study of available qualitative as well as quantitative data undoubtedly demonstrates exceptionally irregular health as well as development improvement in different parts of the nation. Yet, in the practically well performing states, there are areas where there has been slight change since Independence. The government segment is over-centralized and the issues linked with it are the lop-sided planning, inadequate and unbalanced financial outlays, and low moral values, lack of accountability and dereliction of duties by medical plus nursing professionals. There has been an extraordinary growth of the private segment in both most important and less important health

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<sup>1</sup> Govt of India. National Commission on Population. Population and Human and Social Development, Facts I, available from <http://populationcommission.nic.in/facts1.htm>

<sup>2</sup> University of Georgia, "Emerging Infectious Diseases On The Rise: Tropical Countries Predicted As Next Hot Spot." SCIENCE DAILY (Jun, 16, 2020 11: 20 A.M.), [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/02/080220132611.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/02/080220132611.htm).

care all over the nation. As per the present ethical principles of the medical profession as well as free market technology-driven operational principles, the private sector usually does not give quality health care at a rational cost.

## HEALTH CONDITION IN INDIA:

India is a federal state whereby the constitution of India which is the supreme law of land deals out with the allocation of social services to the particular states who are aided by the union by all the economic services. However, there are regional disparities in the fundamental services such as the generation of revenue which in totality varies from state to state. This problem of disparity amongst the assets which is determined by the union in the form of particular grants which are given to the states in managing the centrally sponsored health programmes. It is the duty of the state government to give health services, as per the state list in the seventh schedule of the Indian Constitution.

The requirement for health infrastructure particularly in emergency circumstances is discussed in the landmark case of, *Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samiti vs. State of W.B.*<sup>3</sup> the concern before the Supreme Court was the legal obligation of the Government to give amenities in government hospitals for the treatment of persons who had severe injuries as well as need urgent medical notice. The court held that, giving adequate medical amenities is a compulsory part of the duty that is to be rendered by the State in a welfare nation. The Government discharges this duty by running hospitals along with health centers. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution obliges a responsibility on the State to maintain right to life of every person. Safeguarding the human life is therefore of supreme significance. Any breakdown on part of the government hospitals to give timely medical treatment to a person would effect in the violation of the right to life. Many a times, states have struggled to preserve and manage health care facilities; they have turn out to be dependent on the Central Government for financial aid to implement health policies.

Health condition of any nation is represented by health care and demographic indicators which also determine government's efficiency along with performance in health area. In addition, it has significance in national progress.

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<sup>3</sup> *Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samiti vs. State of W.B.*, (1996)4 S.C.C. 37 (India).

India's Human developmental Index is 0.647 and it ranks 129 out of 189 countries.<sup>4</sup> India spends 1.4% of GDP on health, less than Nepal, Sri Lanka.<sup>5</sup> 70 percent of the overall household expenditure on health in the country is on medicines.<sup>6</sup> An estimated 469 million people in India do not have regular access to essential medicines.<sup>7</sup> Various studies have shown the rising out-of-pocket expenditures on healthcare is pushing around 32-39 million Indians below the poverty line annually.<sup>8</sup> While 63% of primary health centres did not have an operation theatre and 29% lacked a labour room, community health centres were short of 81.5% specialists—surgeon, gynecologists and pediatricians.<sup>9</sup> 7% of Indians fall below the poverty line just because of indebtedness due to this expenditure, as well as that this figure hasn't changed much in a decade. About 23% of the sick can't afford healthcare because of these payments.<sup>10</sup> All these show the incapability of Indian government towards fulfilling the role of the health care provider.

Constitution of WHO envisages “the enjoyment of highest attainable standard of health is fundamental right of every human being, without distinction of race, religion, political belief or economic & social conditions. Governments have the responsibility for the health of the people which can be fulfilled only by the provision of adequate health & social measures”.<sup>11</sup> The Constitution of India also provides that, “the state shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition & standard of living of its people & the improvement of the public health, as among its primary duties”.<sup>12</sup> The government therefore has to play a significant role in the health and related ministries for health development of the nation. Role of government in public health problem is multifaceted and multi-functional, satisfying roles of insurer, regulator and provider of health care. It is the high time that the role of government must be reviewed in the public health of the country.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*, UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, (Jun.12, 2020 10:00 A.M.), <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/IND>.

<sup>5</sup> Rhythma Kaul, *India's public spending on healthcare continues to remain lowest globally*, HINDUSTAN TIMES (May. 12, 2020 1:00 P.M.), <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-s-public-health-spending-lagging-behind/story-6YPZFSfWMVIHGipDXyUEFO.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Anup Karan, *Quantifying the financial burden of households' out-of-pocket payments on medicines in India: a repeated cross-sectional analysis of National Sample Survey data, 1994–2014*, US NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH (JUN. 1, 2020 10:00 P.M.), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5988077/>.

<sup>7</sup> Denny John, *Why public health facilities are failing to meet demand for generic drugs*, BUSINESS STANDARD (JUN. 3, 2020 9:00 P.M.), [https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/why-public-health-facilities-are-failing-to-meet-demand-for-generic-drugs-118061300152\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/why-public-health-facilities-are-failing-to-meet-demand-for-generic-drugs-118061300152_1.html).

<sup>8</sup> Rema Nagrajan, *Health spending pushed 55 million Indians into poverty in a year: Study*, THE TIMES OF INDIA (Jun. 7. 2020 11:00 P.M.), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/health-spending-pushed-55-million-indians-into-poverty-in-a-year-study/articleshow/64564548.cms>.

<sup>9</sup> Swagata Yadavar, *Budget 2018: India's Healthcare Crisis Is Holding back National Potential*, INDIA SPEND (Jun. 8, 2020 5:00 P.M.), <https://www.indiaspend.com/budget-2018-indias-healthcare-crisis-is-holding-back-national-potential-29517/>.

<sup>10</sup> Chhaya Pachauli, *Whatever Happened to India's National Free Medicines Scheme?*, THE WIRE (Jun. 15, 2020 1:00 A.M.), <https://thewire.in/health/whatever-happened-to-indias-national-free-medicines-scheme>.

<sup>11</sup> Constitution of WHO, Basic Documents, Forty-Fifth edition, Supplement, October 2006.

<sup>12</sup> Constitution of India, Article 47, Part IV, Directive Principles of State Policy.

## AYUSHMAN BHARAT YOJANA

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA) in the year 2017 stated, 76% of the population do not have any health insurance that put financial burden to family that results in high rate of out of pocket (OOP) expenditure on health.<sup>13</sup> Taking this point into account the GOI announced Ayushman Bharat Yojana- National Health Protection Scheme (AB-NHPM) in the year 2018 which got implemented in the whole country. The aim of this yojana is to provide a service to build a healthy and competent new India and it has two goals:

- To create a system of health as well as wellness infrastructure throughout the nation to deliver complete primary healthcare services;
- To provide health insurance cover to at least 40% of India's population i.e., 75% of the citizens<sup>14</sup> who are deprived of secondary and tertiary health care services.

Under this Yojana all types of medical treatments will be provided except organ transplantation for those qualified families. The benefit cover will also comprise of pre and post hospitalization expenses incurred and there will be no constraint on the size and age of the covered recipient's family. The imbursement for medical treatment will be made on package rate basis that includes paperless costs related with treatment and transactions of money to the beneficiary. The beneficiaries can be benefitted in both public and empanelled private hospitals. The estimated cost for the scheme is about 64,000 crore in 2020-2021<sup>15</sup>. AB-NHPM works on the principle of cooperative federalism and works on the flexibility of the states. It also covers deprived rural families, poor and below poverty line (BPL) families and identified occupational category for urban families as per 2011 Socio-economic caste census data.

The scheme is taken as Modi government's top scheme and is taken to be politically advantageous too. PM said "This is not my victory or the BJP's victory alone. It is the victory of citizens who aspire for an honest government... For the sick, who wait for years to save money to seek treatment and who are now covered by Ayushman Bharat".<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> KE XU, PUBLIC SPENDING ON HEALTH: A CLOSE LOOK FOR GLOBAL TRENDS, (World Health Organisation 2018).

<sup>14</sup> Himani Chandana, *Modi govt plans to bring 75% of all Indians under Ayushman Bharat*, THE PRINT (Jun. 9, 2020 2:00 A.M.), <https://theprint.in/india/governance/modi-govt-plans-to-bring-75-of-all-indians-under-ayushman-bharat/244718/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20central%20government%2Drun%20schemes,end%20of%20this%20year%2C%E2%80%9D%20a.>

<sup>15</sup> ET Health World, *budget 2020:healthcare gets Rs. 69,000 crore; Rs. 64,000 crore for Ayushman Bharat*, HEALTH WORLD.COM FROM THE ECONOMIC TIMES ( Jun. 17, 2020 4:00 A.M.), <https://health.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/policy/budget-2020-healthcare-gets-rs-69000-crore-rs-6400-crore-for-ayushman-bharat/73833215#:~:text=Budget%202020%20%3A%20Healthcare%20gets%20Rs%2069%2C000%20crore%3B%20Rs,6%2C400%20crore%20for%20Ayushman%20Bharat&text=Finance%20minister%20Nirmala%20Sitharaman%20informed,will%20be%20for%20Ayushman%20Bharat.>

<sup>16</sup> Himani Chandana, *Modi govt plans to bring 75% of all Indians under Ayushman Bharat*, THE PRINT (Jun. 9, 2020 2:00 A.M.), <https://theprint.in/india/governance/modi-govt-plans-to-bring-75-of-all-indians-under-ayushman-bharat/244718/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20central%20government%2Drun%20schemes,end%20of%20this%20year%2C%E2%80%9D%20a.>

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS:

Governments have an essential role in health development in all types of economies. Role of government is to make sure the accessibility, availability, quality and responsibility of health care to the people on the principle of equity. So, a structured and decentralized public health service scheme must be there to which prioritize the health related concerns and take it as a need of the hour.

- Governments should support investment in health schemes and must advocate the centrality of health.
- Governments should continuously play leadership role in health expansion in order to safeguard communal values of justness, commonality and equity in case of health for all the strategies and policies as health is a basic human right and not a commodity.
- Governments should toughen their governance competency, predominantly in policy expansion.
- The government should provide healthcare benefits and make it accessible to poor, vulnerable groups and rural and remote population of the country.
- Specific attention should be paid to improving working situation for professionals working full time in government sectors.

The efforts started by governments to make modern health systems have to be continuous and modified as per the new modification and challenges in the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres.

