

HEALTH INDICATORS AND INITIATIVES IN INDIA

*Shailly Chauhan

*Department of Economics, D.A.V. College for Girls Yamunanagar

ABSTRACT

Health is a very essential component of human development as well as economic growth of a country. There exists positive relationship between income, economic growth and health status. Healthcare system of a country totally depends upon its infrastructure and resources. Measurement of health can be done using life expectancy rate and infant mortality rate. Economic growth of a country is measured in terms of Gross National Income (GNI). Healthy person is more active and enthusiastic and adds more to productivity. Better and adequate health facilities help in increasing life expectancy rate and reducing infant mortality rate. With good health a worker can produce more within a stipulated time. Higher productivity can be achieved with the help of good physical health infrastructure. People with good health can work for more hours. With the passage of time health infrastructure of India has shown a significant improvement which in turn have raised the standard of living of people. In this paper we discuss different health indicators and initiatives taken by the government.

KEYWORDS: *Health, Economic growth, Human development, Life expectancy rate, Infant mortality rate, Productivity, Health facilities.*

INTRODUCTION

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. If the people are healthy then they will contribute more towards economic growth of a country. There will be increase in national wealth of the country. Thus good health plays a pivotal role in order to provide labour services. More demand for health services implies slow economic growth. When the people are healthy then they can enhance the quality of their life. Healthy people actively participates in every work and they become more efficient and productive by doing the same work again and again. Good health helps a person in increasing their mental abilities. In order to increase a person's productivity, it is essential to raise human capital. Education is the basis of human capital. Good health can be maintained with the help of proper medical care and balanced-nutritious diet. Before independence, the general health standard in India was very low due to poor infrastructure. There are several reasons for poor health such as living under unhygienic conditions, inadequate medical care and lack of nutritious diet. Poverty is the main cause of poor health. Improvement in health and economic growth has positive relation in the sense that healthy workers add more towards output with the help of given resources, skills and technology. It is not essential that good health can be maintained through adequate health facilities. Private sector plays a significant role in providing quality health care facilities to the huge mass of population in our country.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Health of a person is very essential in order to work efficiently so as to improve the quality of life and contributes towards the progress of the nation. In this paper, objectives of the study are as follows-

- To study the different indicators of health.
- To know the government initiatives in India.

ESSENTIAL INDICATORS OF GOOD HEALTH:

1.) NUTRITION:

A nutritious diet constitutes of carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, minerals, fat and fibre. It is must for an individual to have a balanced diet in order to be healthy. The productivity of a worker acts like a mediator between his health and economic growth of the country. Nutrition means having a meal full of nutrients such as iodine and iron, vitamins and minerals. Having such meals will help a person to fight against illness, increases energy level and improves the ability to recover from injury or illness.

Nutrition is very important from point of view of maintaining quality of life. Poor people are the most affected in this context as they do not have enough money to improve their nutrition. As a result of which they are prone to several diseases and many of which die due to starvation. Poor people remain malnourished due to which they cannot work well. According to National Family Health Survey 2015-16, there were 58.6 percent anaemic children and 38.4 percent were stunted under the age of 5 years. Around 35% of the children below the age of 5 years were malnourished. Among all the states of India, highest number of malnourished children have been found in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Meghalaya. It was 48.3% in Bihar while 42% in Madhya Pradesh. According to 'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2020' report, 14 percent of population of India is undernourished.

In the present pandemic, COVID-19, India's nutritional status has worsened. The most affected are the poor people. Due to the closure of schools and other educational institutions, the children are not able to get mid-day meals. As a result, there health deteriorates and they remain malnourished.

2.) SANITATION:

Sanitation plays a very crucial role in health and hygiene. It has been estimated by World Health Organisation that in 2019 around 663 million people all over the world do not have access to safe drinking water. According to UNICEF and WHO, in 2019 the estimation shows that around one- third of the population all over the world do not have access to proper sanitation. Due to inadequate sanitation facilities people are more prone to disease such as stomach infection, diarrhoea and damage to intestines. It is a challenge for poor people to have even the basic sanitation facilities, clean drinking water, two-meals per day and adequate health facilities. Having all these facilities is still a dream for majority of people of our country. According to UNICEF and World Health Organisation, in 2017 around 844 million people lack even the basic access to drinking water. As a result of poor sanitation facilities, the estimate shows that every year around 4 million people die from water borne diseases.

According to UNICEF, by 2019, there has been reduction in the number of people that do not have access to toilets. It was the result of *Swacch Bharat Mission* (SBM). This shows the increasing awareness of health and hygiene among the people.

3.) LIFE EXPECTANCY RATE:

Life expectancy rate is the total number of years a person is expected to live. Before independence life expectancy rate was very low due to the inadequate health care facilities. But slowly and gradually with improvement in health facilities life expectancy rate has increased. According to the Census of 1951 life expectancy rate was 37.2 years for males and 36.2 years for females. But now in 2021 it has increased to 69.96 years. The reason behind better health services is improvement in sanitation, increase in the number of hospitals, spread of education and awareness among the people and increase in the number of doctors.

4.) INFANT MORTALITY RATE AND DEATH RATE:

Infant mortality rate refers to the number of deaths per 1,000 live births of children under one year of age. With the passage of time there has been tremendous reduction in the infant mortality rate. According to SRS (Sample Registration System) Bulletin, in 1971, the infant mortality rate was 129 deaths per 1000 live births which reduced to 75.591 deaths per 1000 live births in 1996 which further fall to 36.249 deaths per 1000 births in 2015. Now, the current infant mortality rate has further declined to 28.771 deaths per 1000 live births. According to SRS Bulletin, in 2018 the state with maximum infant mortality rate of 48 infant deaths per 1000 live births was Madhya Pradesh and minimum IMR has been reported for Nagaland at 4. The estimation shows that over the year's health sector have shown a significant improvement.

Death rate refers to number of deaths in a particular population during a period of time. Currently, India is on 10th rank in terms of death rate all over the world. India's death rate has witnessed a significant decline over past many years. According to SRS Bulletin, death rate was 27.584 in 1951, 14.9 in 1971 which declined to 7.253 in 2015 and further declined to 6.2 in 2018. Up to 2019 death rate has always shown a declining trend. It is due to the several reasons such as adequate medication, balanced diet, better hygiene and sanitation, spread of education and awareness among the people and control of epidemics. But in 2020 due to severe pandemic, COVID-19, death rate has shown increment after so many years. It is for the first time that death rate has increased. Currently, death rate is 7.344.

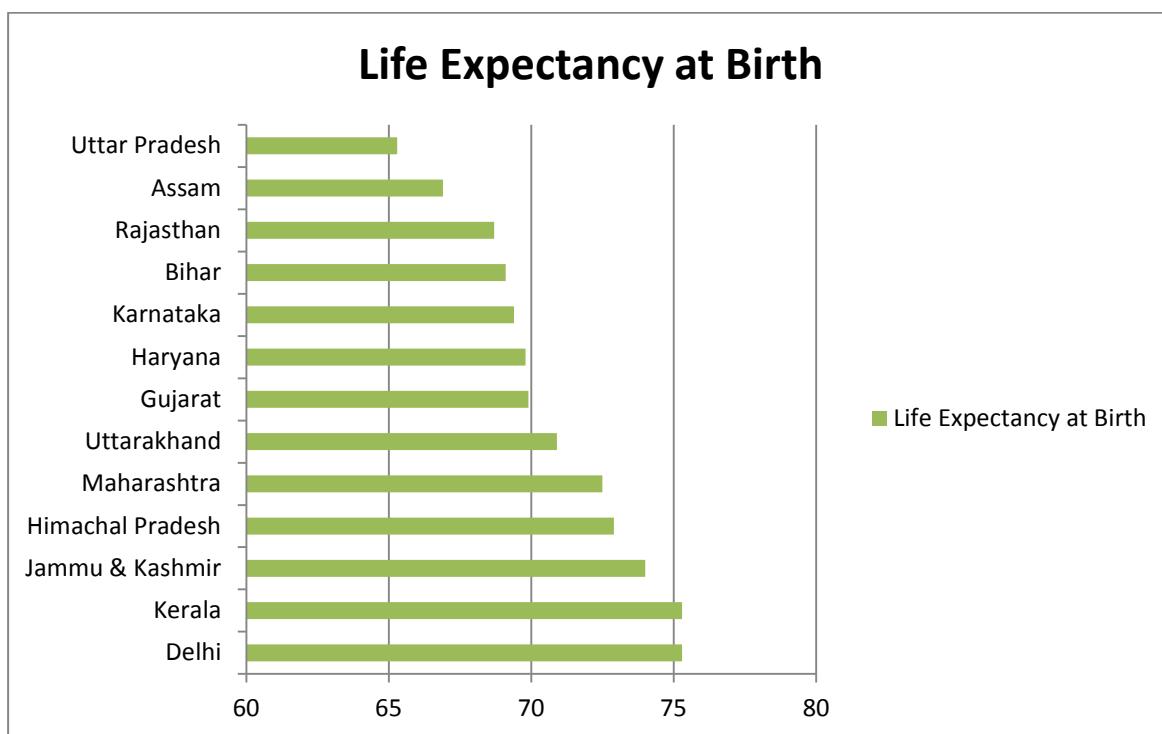
Table-1

YEAR	LIFE EXPECTANCY RATE (In Years)	INFANT MORTALITY RATE (Deaths per 1000 live births)	DEATH RATE
1951	35.80	186.737	27.584
1971	48.40	129.00	14.900
2010	68.30	45.10	7.589
2020	69.73	29.848	7.309

*National Health Profile 2020

The above table depicts the life expectancy rate, infant mortality rate and death rate of different years. With the passage of time, with better health facilities life expectancy rate has shown a tremendous rise while infant mortality rate and death rate have declined.

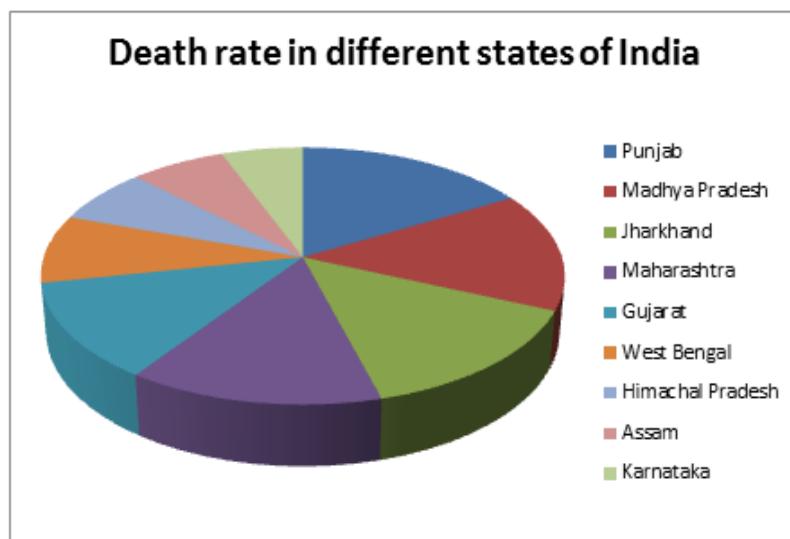
Figure-1



*Source- SRS Life Tables 2014-18

Figure 1 shows that life expectancy rate at birth in 2014-18 of several states. It was highest in Delhi and Kerala i.e. 75.3 years. It was 70.9 years in Uttarakhand. Life expectancy rate was lower in Assam and Uttar Pradesh i.e. 66.9 and 65.3 years respectively.

Figure-2



*Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, April 2020

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Figure 2 shows top states with highest death rates in 2020 due to severe pandemic Covid-19. It's clear from the figure that death rate was highest in Punjab that is 8.3. Covid-19 took away lives of so many people. It affected the economy badly. Death rate was 7.1 in Jharkhand, 6.9 in Maharashtra, 4.3 in West Bengal, 3.4 in Assam and 2.9 in Karnataka.

5.) INCREASED HEALTH CARE SPENDING- KEY TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

The health status of a person does not only impact him or his family but it may have either positive or adverse impact on the economic growth of a country. Long back there were no proper health facilities in India due to which the pace of economic growth was slow in the country. But improvement in health status leads towards the development of an economy.

Healthcare system of a country totally depends upon infrastructure and resources. The data reveals that India's health care system is poor amongst different countries of the world. As per the data shown by the WHO 2015, percentage of the GDP spent by public sector on health care system is only 1.16 percent. The study shows that out of 194 countries, India ranks 187th in terms of its GDP. The main reason highlighted here is inadequate investment. It has been seen that a country must spend at least 5-6 percentage of its GDP on health in order to meet its basic health care facilities. To have better health facilities investment should be made on that. Money spent on health facilities should not be treated as cost rather it's an investment. Increasing investment on health services will lead to improvement in the health of the people. Healthy population will supplement the efficiency, productivity and economic growth of the country.

According to the Census of 1951, during 1951 it has been seen that when there were inadequate health facilities then life expectancy rate was very low, as low as 37 years for males and 36 years for females. But due to development and increasing awareness regarding health facilities life expectancy rate was raised to 61 years for males and 63 years for females in 2005. The reasons highlighted here are improvement in health standard, decline in the infant mortality rate and inculcation of awareness among the people.

According to IMF in its annual Article IV report, country's economic growth can be stimulated by investing in healthcare and education which in turn will enhance the productivity of human capital. Human resource development is the key to economic growth of a country. The health sector leads to the development of both manufacturing and service sector as it can transform a low skilled worker into a high one.

Table – 2, Expansion of Health Services in India

S.No.	ITEM	1951	2011
1.	Medical colleges	28	321
2.	Dispensaries and Hospitals	9,209	35,071
3.	No. of Beds in Hospitals (both public and private per 10,000 population)	3.2	4.2
4.	Medical practitioners (per 10,000 population)	1.7	6.0
5.	No. of Doctors	61,840	8,16,629
6.	No. of Nurses	18,054	17,02,555

Source: Economic survey, 2011-12 and India 2012 (EPW Research Foundation)

The table shows that with increased healthcare spending there has been expansion in health services in India.

Health of a person is directly related to his wealth. A research was conducted by Soumik Basumallik in 2017 which shows that a rich person is able to live many more years than a poor person since he has enough money to bear all the medical expenses and maintain his health and hygiene. He can spend a large portion of his income to get recovered. Thus there life expectancy rate is higher. It implies that as income grows, health improves. With improved health a person can work for more hours and sacrifice his leisure time which leads to increase in his income. With more income he contributes more towards economic growth of the country. There exist a strong connection between health of a person and his family's savings decisions. As health of a person deteriorates it results in reduction in his lifetime savings and the current income since medical facilities have become so expensive. Once health issues develop it becomes so difficult for middle class people to survive. So, a person with more wealth can afford better treatment and healthcare facilities which leads to his good health. With improved health a person works more efficiently. Thus, there exists direct relationship between health and wealth.

Poor health leads to reduction in the number of working days thereby affecting the income of a person. Till now we have specified the factors that affect one's health like inadequate sanitation, poor hygiene and unbalanced diet. But there are several other factors that contribute to poor health such as smoking, drinking alcohol, eating junk food etc. Thus people are more prone to diseases that lead to their poor health.

Health facilities can be improved by disseminating awareness about healthcare and focusing on the importance of adequate nutrition. In 2017, in a project supported by IGC India, according to Vikas Dimble and Nidhiya Menon, there exists a dynamic relationship between health and economic growth. There are some tools with the help of which economic growth can be achieved through better health such as-

- Increase in productivity
- More savings due to more income
- Better education outcome

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES-

In order to raise health standard, the Government of India made a programme on the basis of recommendations made by the Health Survey and Development Committee (1946) and the Health Survey and Planning Committee (1961). It aims at-

- Provision to control epidemics
- Controlling various diseases as well as proper care of patients
- Providing training to the employees of Health Department

Some policies have been made the government that aims at achieving inclusive growth-

- **National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)** - It was launched in 2005 for improving health services and providing access to affordable and quality healthcare facilities in rural areas. The architectural correction envisaged under NRHM is organised around five pillars which includes:
 1. Increasing participation and ownership by the community.
 2. Flexible financing.
 3. Innovations in human resources development for the health sector.
 4. Improved management capacity.
 5. Setting of standards and norms with monitoring.
- **National Urban Health Mission (NUHM)** – NUHM aims to meet the health needs of the urban poor. It covers all state capitals, district headquarters and cities with a population of more than 50,000. The main focus of NUHM is on slum dwellers and other marginalised groups like homeless people, rickshaw pullers, street vendors and construction site workers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana** –
This Yojana was launched in March 2006. PMSSY makes availability of affordable healthcare facilities so as to correct regional imbalances prevailing in different parts of the country. The scheme also augments facilities for quality medical education.
- **Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH)**-
AYUSH aims at developing the Indian system of medicines. It was launched in 2012-13. AYUSH represents a way of healthy living with prevention of diseases and promotion of health. Yoga has now become the icon of global health. AYUSH medicines have proved to be effective and better utilized by the human body without any reactions. Besides, Ayushman Bharat Scheme was announced in 2018 in the Union Budget. It is a centrally sponsored health insurance scheme of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- **Mission Indradhanush**-
It was launched on 25th December, 2014 by Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to achieve full immunisation coverage for all children. It focuses on all those children who are either unvaccinated or partially vaccinated against diseases such as polio, TB, tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough, measles and hepatitis.
- **Rashtriya Kishor Suraksha Karyakram**-
It was launched on January 7, 2014 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. RKS is a health programme for adolescents which covers the age group of 10-19 years. The programme focuses on adolescent participation and leadership, equity and inclusion, gender equity and strategic partnership. The programme helps adolescents to realize their full potential by making responsible decisions related to their health and well-being. It aims at improving nutrition, enhancing mental health and preventing injuries and violence.
- **Rashtriya Bal Suraksha Karyakram**-
This scheme was launched under the National Health Mission. It aims at early identification and intervention from birth to 18 years. It covers 4D's viz. Defects at birth, Deficiencies, Diseases and Development delays.
- **Fit India Movement**-
This scheme was announced by Pradhan Mantri Narendra Modi from Indira Gandhi Stadium, Delhi on August 28, 2019. The aim is to encourage and inculcate the habit of undertaking physical activity and exercising among the citizens. Due to increasing physical activity many diseases can be prevented which can change the lifestyle of the people.

SOME IMPORTANT STATISTICS:

- 1.4% of GDP of India is spent on health. (Source: India Spend, January 2018)
- 70% of overall household expenditure is on medicines. (Source: WHO)
- Around 469 million people do not have access to essential medicines. (WHO)
- Around 55 million people were pushed into poverty in a single year due to unaffordable healthcare. (PHFI 2018)
- About 7% of Indians fall below the poverty line due to indebtedness. (WHO)
- About 23% of the sick cannot afford healthcare. (WHO)

CONCLUSION

We can conclude that economic growth of a country largely depends upon its health infrastructure. With more income people are able to raise their standard of living which in turn raises their life expectancy. As a result, economic growth of a country also increases. Before independence, health sector of India was not so developed. But with the passage of time due to better medical facilities, increase in life expectancy rate and reduction in the death rate health sector has shown tremendous improvements. But still there are certain challenges faced by Indian population that hinders the growth of healthcare. Public sector healthcare infrastructure is not of modern quality because of budget problem due to which private sector is being preferred by the people. But this is another obstacle for poor and rural population since they cannot afford such facilities due to low income. So India has been battling with deficient infrastructure as there is lack of well-equipped medical institutes. The shortage of efficient and trained manpower is another major issue in India. The situation is critical in rural areas. Hospitals are mostly located in urban areas due to which rural population lack facilities. So these are certain challenges that India is facing and in order to improve India's healthcare infrastructure these should be taken into prior consideration.

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