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A Study on Sustainable Development Goal with respect to Indian Healthcare Sector During Pre and Post Pandemic period

Abstract

“Sustainable Development Goal 3” considered as one of the 17 global goals set by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 pertains to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages." SDGs replaced the Millennium Development Goals started in the year 2000, mainly focusing on the aim of tackling poverty, hunger, preventing deadly diseases and providing education among all children, among other priorities. SDG 3 has come upon for strengthening the infrastructural facilities among all the sections where the deprived ones will be taken more care off. This paper seeks to dwell upon the improvement rate of healthcare facilities during post-pandemic period. It also highlighted how India has explored towards the healthcare development and to ensure significant mobilization of resources.

The paper mainly focuses on secondary data and it is descriptive in nature. It shows an analytical study which is based on the information that has been collected from many sources like research articles, journals, several government and non-governmental reports and so on. The major findings of this study are to see whether India has achieved the basic goal of SDG 3 and how they improved their Healthcare Sector during post pandemic period as compared to global countries.

Keywords: Sustainable Development Goals, Millennium Development Goals, Healthcare Sector, Mortality Ratio, Pre and Post Pandemic period.

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need but not any man’s greed.”
- Mahatma Gandhi

Inferring from the quote, it can be said that sustainable development is the key requirement for fulfilling the present needs without compromising the needs of forthcoming generation. It has a role in protecting the environment by assimilating the environmental and development policies to maintain the economic enhancement and progression. Good health is the essential factor for reaching towards sustainable development goals as it uplifts the standard of living and alleviates poverty and inequality in the society. Following this map, the third goal of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda takes up the idea of promoting good health and well-being for all, at all ages. Improving Maternal health and to reach towards getting universal health coverage are the main expectations in the global Sustainable Development Goals agenda. For the past few years from COVID-19, India has witnessed a good development in the healthcare infrastructure of the country, but to the contrary here the rich sections are much more benefitted rather than the lower strata of the society. So, the overall motto now stands to minimize the rate of hunger, provide enough food availability and good nutrition and make access to healthcare for all sections of the society. Noting for the need, the SDG aims to create a development pathway for upgrading the healthy well-being, trying to achieve the target to remove child death from preventable diseases and maternal care from deaths.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Some of the important studies found in this area are summarized below: Sharma, Bothra (2017) have mentioned in their study about the incapability of India in achieving the targets related to specific indicators under MDGs, which arouse to the need for SDGs to take it forward for the country’s development. To achieve the target path, India requires assistance in significant resources like technology, economic and trade policies, time-bound targets and quantitative benchmarks. For the progress of the SDGs, there should be active involvement of the government, non-government organisations and the society specially the marginalized groups. To alleviate the disparities in the healthcare sector mainly in maternal mortality, it requires obstetric health betterment and developed health services delivery to achieve a decent standard of living to all sections of the nation. Khetrapal, Bhatia (2020) have mentioned in their survey that five-year plans should be implemented for advancing technologies and gains in knowledge. It also mentioned that with the effect of minimizing the pandemic, the country should be prepared for improved health services to society to fight with diseases. Achievement of SDGs will provide us the
capability to deal with the global health risks and emerging infectious diseases. The impact of COVID-19 has called for greater financial investment to revigorated health systems to improve access and quality of health and better lifestyle of the country. Mir, Singh (2020) has found out that the well-organized health care reforms has made contribution towards ‘inclusive development’ by developing the well-being of the society by removing the inequalities and circumstances affecting health. The principle of ‘progressive universalization’ points on slowly developed health services with innovative policies and financial protection to greater mass of the society. He has found out that after the post COVID-19 breakout the country needs funding in healthcare and its allied industries to make upgradations in the Indian healthcare infrastructure following the SDGs agenda 2030. Shulla, Voigt, Martinez, and et.al (2021) has conducted their research in the area which is concerned with the interconnections of SDGs and their interconnections with goals. Their study shed light onto how the SDGs are interconnected under COVID-19 phase in relation to education, well-being, consumption, climate change, etc. Their analysis found out further expansion of the focus area and understanding of the interconnections for further betterment of the country. Pujar, Sabanna (2022) has done research where they have made a comprehensive analysis on COVID-19 and its effect on the healthcare area which is the main focus of the challenge. has found out that Indian Government has pulled its boots into providing funds and human resources to overcome the situation by increasing patient testing, isolation facilities and treatment mechanisms. The government has announced an aid package for a community by covering the costs under the national scheme of Ayushman Bharat and has seen that the poor souls should be more looked upon from the deadly virus. Elavarasan, Shafiullah, Kumar, and et.al (2022) have made an analysis by assessing the impact of the respective goals of the SDGs. The detailed insight of the SDGs has been brought into focus considering their factors like type of the goal and their depending and sensitive dependency factor to continue with their developments in the society. The results of the analysis have emphasized on the progress post pandemic period towards reaching the goals.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows -

- To see whether there is better advancement in the healthcare infrastructure of the country post covid period.
To ensure significant mobilization of resources of India being a developing country.

To see the healthcare services available during pre-pandemic period and the significant changes adopted by India after post-pandemic period for the betterment of the nation.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The relevant paper has detailed description of the required study and is exploratory in nature. It is based on the data and information that has been gathered from various secondary sources. It shows an analytical study which is based on the information that has been collected from many research journals, newspaper articles and from government and non-government reports like United Nations SDG reports, Niti Aayog reports, etc.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

On September 25, 2015, 193 member countries come together at the United Nations General Assembly to take pledge and to transform our world a better place to live. It also ensures that, the development must take place in such a manner that natural resources must be sustained and passed on to the future generations unimpaired by means of adopting Agenda 2030. Government of India, through different policy implementation trying to improve the socio-economic factors of the nation. Even in the health-care sector, India hit the worse during COVID-19 break-out in the second wave. Since then, The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has been the forefront of constantly evolving and trying to provide better solutions to every problem as the world is changing at a faster pace than ever before. They also join hands with Government's “Vision of Healthy India” for achieving the SDGs Agenda 2030 for Good Health and Well Being (SDG 3). The Indian Council of Medical Research also plans to realign their research and development to become truly complementary with the national policies.

Healthcare sectors also improved after the COVID-19 breakout when every part of the world was suffering due to COVID. The Government of India adapt the technology and introduced mobile applications “COWIN APP” which helps the people to register themselves and get vaccination. It also helps the government to have a track of the people those who gets vaccination. Initial it was a tough task for the Government to track a record of people getting vaccination or going through this procedure, but they also find a way to get out of this problem. On a routine basis they provide update regarding beds availability in the hospitals, oxygen availability, tele-medical facilities, etc. which was beyond our imagination even 15 years ago. Covid-19 also extend the healthcare facilities and
services to their limits. It also sets the stage for more investments as well as inclusion of advanced technology to fight the future pandemic battles and many severe existing life-threatening diseases.

We can highlight by giving an instance, like tele-medicine. It is a platform where doctors can diagnose and treat patients even in remote conditions using telecommunications, which is considered as one of the first technologies the government deployed during the pandemic period. Then comes E-Sanjeevani, which is a national tele-medicine facility provided by our government at free of cost for tele-consultations to citizens for COVID-19 as well as non-COVID-19 ailments. It has been noticed from the official websites that E-Sanjeevani has reached around 80 million tele-consultations till December 2022. It has also been recorded that within these three years, it has become the world’s largest government-owned tele-medicine platform.

Due to emergence of technology, better treatment is now possible at less cost. Over the next few years, Artificial Intelligence will play a huge role in the development of healthcare sectors in India. Starting from tracking heart rate signals to blood oxygen level measurement, AI will be predominant in their approach. It will be capable of handling every tricky scan to predict the condition of the patient which is going to be a game changing approach in the healthcare sector.

Due to outbreak of COVID-19, India as well as rest of the world were in the turbulence stage and hence the goal to achieve Good Heath and Well Being (SDG 3) has shaken a little. India has come a far way to focus on development of healthcare sector.

There has been a hike in the Healthcare Sector starting with Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) from Rs 6,412 crores to Rs 7,200 crores. It has also been estimated that, the government will spend over 2% of the country’s GDP on healthcare development facilities in the financial year 2022. It has been forecasted that it will reach over 2.5% of the GDP by financial year 2025. In 2023 year’s budget also, it has been noticed that over Rs. 89,155 crores have been allocated in the health care sector as compared to Rs. 79,145 crores in the year 2022. Notably, this allocation was an of approximately 13% over the allocation in 2022. Clearly it has been visible that Government is focusing more in the development of healthcare sector since COVID-19 breakout. India also shown the world, as a most populous nation, how they tackle this Covid and came out in flying colours. It was indeed one of the proudest moments of India as with minimal healthcare facilities, our healthcare sector fights this battle to overcome the drastic situation.
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<th>Under 5 Mortality Rate per 1000 Live Births</th>
<th>Rate of Fully Immunized Children</th>
<th>Total Physicians, Nurses and Midwives Per 10000 Population</th>
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(Compiled by the Researcher, Source: SDG Index Baseline Report 2017-18, SDG Index 2.0 2019-20 and SDG Index 3.0 2020-2021)
As per the Niti Aayog report, we get to know that the maternal mortality ratio had reduced to 130 in 2014-16 from 254 in 2004-06. So, it indicates that there is a good declination in the mortality rate in the years which is considered as a good indicator for our country. The incoming of the SDGs have made a goal to reduce Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) to 70 per 1 lakh live births by 2030. We have noticed that the above chart indicates Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu being the states have already achieved to this goal of MMR.

**Figure 1: Percentage of Maternal Mortality Rate in Different States and UTs during COVID-19**

**Source:** Presentation made on the basis of Table No. 1

**Figure 2: Percentage of Children Under Full Immunization Coverage In India**

**Source:** Presentation made on the basis of Table No. 1
From the report presented, it has been found that 62% of the children aged between 12-23 months are being fully vaccinated with three full doses from protection of severe diseases. But the target is to attain the percentage of full 100. As per the presentation, no such single state have so far achieved this target for providing vaccines to develop immunity. Mission Indradhanush has been taken adopted to make the immunization coverage reach to atleast 90% by December 2018. Till now, among states Punjab is seen walking along the path a bit faster to reach to 89% already and Puducherry among the UTs reach to 90%.

**Figure 3 : Total Physicians, Nurses and Midwives per 10000 Population**

*Pre and Post COVID-19*

![Bar chart showing physicians, nurses, and midwives per 10000 population for different states.]

**Source:** Presentation made as per Table No. 1

The National Health Mission covers 2 main prospects - National Rural Health and National Urban Health which focuses on providing better healthcare services by strenthening systems and human capabilities. From the chart above, we can on a hairline understand that the number of healthcare providers are increasing in number a bit. As per estimation, there are roughly 221 physicians, nurses and housewives per 10000 population. Kerala has highlighted itself among states to provide health workforce of about 762 and Delhi has penned itself as highest among Union Territories with about 344 health workers per 1 lakh population.
India has been working on with full determination in achieving the overall targets for the enhancement of sustainability in the healthcare sector during pre and post pandemic period. Being a developing nation, it had left no stones unturned in providing the maximum medical facilities, it could during the pandemic period to its people and kept on innovating new ideas technologically in healthcare sector so that it could reach out to its each citizen as and when required. Evaluating the overall improvements, the maximum SDG index score of 81 has been assigned to Sikkim among the states and Dadra & Nagar Haveli takes the top position with 91 score among the UTs.

Source: Data Presentation made as per information from Table No. 1

Source: https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/03/24/is-indias-health-infrastructure-equipped-to-handle-an-epidemic/
The above diagram puts a focus on the scenario which shows that before COVID-19, the count on government hospital beds were relatively low in India, as a result an epidemic equivalent to COVID-19 will make the situation much difficult to combat. An estimate showed that 5-10% of the patients will need support of ventilators and due to acute shortage of the services, India was unable to provide equal healthcare services and benefits as required by specially the elderly citizens. From a survey an estimate figure showed out of 7,13,986 government hospital beds 5% to 8% were ICU beds. Out of the ICU beds 50% were equipped with ventilators. So, it had been noticed that the emerging number of ventilators would surely help to cater the upcoming situations in future.

**Figure 6: 10 Most Funded Health Start-ups**

Source: https://www.businesstoday.in/magazine/health-care/story/indias-healthcare-sector-heres-how-a-massive-transformation-is-underway-369006-2023-02-05)

The above graphical representation portrays those funds where the companies have invested as start-ups by providing healthcare services at doorsteps through online consultation and tele-medicine services. The top 3 most funded companies topping this list are Cult-Fit, Pharmeasy and Innovaccer.

**Table 2: Comparison of India with few other Countries across the Globe**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Density of Selected Health Professionals per 10000 people as per 2014-2020 (Medical Doctors, Nursing and Midwifery Personnel)</th>
<th>No. of COVID-19 Vaccines given per 100 people, as per 2021</th>
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In terms of comparing India with respect to other countries across the globe, it has been chalked out that India, being a developing nation, was in quite a better situation in terms of medical requirements during the pandemic period than some of the other countries across the world. In that span of time, India could arrange for the medical emergencies and tried its best to keep the situation in control with an infrastructure that was much less developed than other nations by inventing and advancing more technologies and improving the medical infrastructures.

**CONCLUSION**

Health is the most important treasure for good living. Pandemic gives us threats that if we don’t look after our health, more specifically our healthcare sectors, then, even when it is required, we will not get adequate treatment. Healthcare sector plays a predominant role for the development of a society at large. Government of India took the initiative for procuring in advancement of technology during pandemic through uprising schemes and making it accessible and usable. Although, the task was a difficult one, but still India fights hard during pandemic period to maintain a good parity in the healthcare sector than compared to other developing nations. SDG 3 talks about maintaining healthy lifestyle and promoting betterment of the people across different segments of the society. India, as a developing nation, trying to fulfill the criteria by providing good medical facilities across masses. India’s healthcare sector trying its best in offering top notch treatment in upscale urban hospitals and making sure that these medical facilities encompass the rural area providing more reliance on digital health offerings.

Pandemic stretched its healthcare activities to the best of their capability, opening the door for more investments and bringing advanced technology to fight with future e pandemics and existing life-threatening diseases to achieve SDG 3.

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