

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Health Professionals in India**

Recently a new study found that around 54% of health professionals including doctors, nurses, midwives and other paramedics in India do not have the required qualifications. On the other hand, 20% of adequately qualified doctors are not in the current workforce. It highlights the concerns about a severe dearth of quality care across the country, particularly in the hinterland.

Who conducted the study?

- This new study was conducted by the British Medical Journal.
- As per the study qualified health workforce is around 3.8 million under the National Sample Survey (NSS). But the qualified health professionals registered with different councils and associations stands at 5 million.
- The density of doctors and nurses and midwives per 10,000 population is 20.6 according to the NSS and 26.7 based on the registry data, reflecting a widening gap between demand and supply of health resources which is already in shortage.

Which are the prescribed qualifications for health professions?

- For doctors (allopathic, dental and AYUSH) it is graduate or postgraduate in medicine.
- For nurse and midwife, it is higher secondary with technical education in medicine or related field.
- For others, it is higher secondary with technical education in paramedical related fields.

How Indian Medical workforce is composed?

- More than 58% of all health workers are male.
- The proportion of males is higher in allopathic, AYUSH and dental categories, and lower in the nurse and midwife category.
- Around 80% of all health workers are in the 25–60 years age group.
- Around 30% of all health workers, 15% among allopathic doctors, reported their educational level below the higher secondary level.
- Most of the health workers reported being employed as regular wage earners (57%). However, as high as 63% of allopathic and 88% of AYUSH doctors reported themselves as self-employed.
- More than 80% of doctors and 70% of nurses and midwives are employed in the private sector.

Where lies the solution?

- Distribution and qualification of health professionals are serious problems in India when compared with the overall size of the health workers.
- The policy should focus on enhancing the quality of health workers and mainstreaming professionally qualified persons into the health workforce.

Global Childhood Report

Recently Global Childhood Report 2019, also known as End of Childhood index, was published by a voluntary organisation called 'Save the Children'. It ranks 176 countries based on its score on a scale of 1000 on eight childhood indicators - health, education, labour, marriage, childbirth and violence.

Key Highlights of the report on India

- India is ranked at 113 out of 176 countries, the score is up by 137 points, from 632 to 769 from 2000 to 2019, primarily because of improvements in child health and survival.
- As per the report India alone accounts for nearly three-quarters of the global reduction in adolescent births between 2000 to 2019.
- This reduction has meant two million fewer births by teenage girls in India when compared to 2000 (3.5 million versus 1.4 million).
- The decline in child marriage is due to a large part to economic growth, rising rates of girl's education, proactive investments by government and partners in adolescent girls (such as cash

transfers to keep girls in schools), increased public awareness about the illegality of child marriage and community-based interventions

Cause of Concern

- In the 2018 index, under 5 mortality rates (deaths per 1000 live births) was 43 and rated as moderate in terms of prevalence. This is further reduced to 39.4 in the 2019 index.
- Stunting due to malnutrition is still high but since 2000 a decline of 30% is estimated, resulting in 23 million fewer stunted children.
- Child stunting (% children aged 0-59 months) an indicator of a severely malnourished child was 38.4 and rated as high prevalence in the 2018 index, this percentage continues to be the same for 2019 index, which is a matter of concern.

Drug Demand Reduction Programme

The Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry is set to roll out targeted Drug Demand Reduction Programme, in high-risk areas of 127 districts in the country.

- The 127 areas had been identified with the help of NGOs and from a report prepared by the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre.
- All 127 districts will have outreach and drop-in centres, among them 68 (It includes all state capitals and Union Territories) will have community-based peer-led intervention among adolescents.
- The programme would focus on initiating peer-led interventions for teenagers and setting up outreach and drop-in centres for those affected.
- The programme is a part of the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction for 2019-2020, which was announced by the Ministry's National Institute of Social Defence (NISD) in February 2019.

How does it work?

- The peer-led interventions would involve students reaching out to their fellow students.
- The objective of this would be to assess drug use in the community, provide early prevention and give referrals to counselling, treatment and rehabilitation services.
- The outreach centres would reach out to vulnerable youth, provide a safe space for drug users to drop in for counselling and provide linkage to treatment and rehab facilities.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Fighting Air Pollution

Government has finalised a proposal to increase tax on older vehicle of pre-2000 make, particularly commercial one. Such vehicles will have to undergo frequent fitness tests and there will also be an about 15-20-fold increase in the fees for both first time registration of diesel/ petrol vehicles and for renewal of their registration. These are some of the disincentives that the government has finalised in its blueprint to push the phasing out of older polluting vehicles. According to different studies, older vehicles are 25 times more polluting as compared to new ones.

The scrapping of old vehicles

- Government will also convince the vehicle manufacturers to offer discounts. Government has proposed a carrot and stick policy to give the incentive to scrap their old vehicles and buy a new one while making it difficult for owners of older vehicles.
- There is a proposal to waive off the registration fee for new vehicle if the buyer shows a certificate of scrapping his/her old vehicle.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

When someone says, "You can't do it." Do it twice and take pictures.