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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## INDIA'S HEALTH STATUS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT- ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES.

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### Abstract

Health is crucial for sustainable human development, both as an inalienable human right and as an essential contributor to the economic growth of society. Health is also a good summative measure of the progress of nations in achieving sustainable development. It contributes to national development through productive employment, reduced expenditure on illness care and greater social cohesion. By promoting good health at all ages, the benefits of development extend across generations (UN, 2016). At the dawn of Independence India was facing a stiff challenge of improving the health outcomes because it was having huge maternal mortality ratio (MMR), infant mortality rate (IMR), under-5 mortality rate (U5MR), crude death rate (CDR) and very low life expectancy at birth (LEB). Ever since then significant progress has been made on these fronts, especially in the last 25 years. The maternal mortality ratio (MMR), IMR, U5MR and CDR have been reduced from 560, 88.3, 126 and 10.85 in 1990 to 181, 39.3, 49.8 and 7.33 respectively in 2015. However, in comparison to other developing and developed countries of the world, India lies at the bottom as far as health outcomes are concerned. It is because of poverty, low public expenditure on determinants of health outcomes and also the loopholes in the existing health system. Therefore, if India has to achieve sustainable development goals by 2030, health has to be at the centre stage of policy formation.

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### Introduction:-

Health is crucial for sustainable human development, both as an inalienable human right and as an essential contributor to the economic growth of society. Health is also a good summative measure of the progress of nations in achieving sustainable development. It contributes to national development through productive employment, reduced expenditure on illness care and greater social cohesion. By promoting good health at all ages, the benefits of development extend across generations (UN, 2016). Health and economic development are two inseparable entities, with one complementing the other. Better health status of citizens of a nation leads to its economic growth and development and vice-versa. Developed countries like Japan are testimony to the fact that not only physical capital and natural resources are going to uplift a nation but also the rich Human Capital. Human capital of a country needs to be healthy enough to contribute to the fullest in the process of growth and development. Recognizing the importance of health, the United Nations in 2000 dedicated three out of its eight millennium development goals for

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achieving better health outcomes across the globe in general and developing world in particular by the end of 2015. At the end of 2015 significant progress has been made in reducing maternal mortality, improving maternal health and combating dreadful diseases like AIDS and malaria across the globe. However, there are significant international and inter- regional variations in the progress made. On one hand we have countries like Brazil and china which have made significant progress in reducing the maternal mortality rate, under five mortality deaths by 2015 and on other hand we have countries like India, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh which are still lagging behind very much on these fronts. Therefore, some serious efforts have to be made to bring the developing countries closer to the developed world on these fronts. Since the millennium development goals were to achieved by 2015, the world leaders under the ambit of UN in 2015 agreed to develop development goals from 2015-2030, which came to be known as sustainable development goals. Good health and well being is one of the key goals of the sustainable development goals. It aims to ensure health and well-being for all at all ages by improving reproductive, maternal and child health; ending the epidemics of major communicable diseases; reducing non-communicable and environmental diseases; achieving universal health coverage; and ensuring access to safe, affordable and effective medicines and vaccines for all.

### Present Health Scenario of India:-

At the dawn of Independence India was facing the stiff challenge of improving the health outcomes because it was having huge maternal mortality ratio (MMR), infant mortality rate (IMR), under-5 mortality rate(U5MR), crude death rate (CDR) and very low life expectancy at birth (LEB). Ever since then significant progress has been made on these fronts, especially in the last 25 years. The maternal mortality ratio (MMR), IMR, U5MMR and CDR have been reduced from 560 ,88.3,126 and 10.85 in 1990 to 181,39.3,49.8 and 7.33 respectively in 2015. Polio has been completely eradicated. The life expectancy has increased from 58.3 years in 1990 to 68.01 in 2015. Deaths due to tuberculosis among HIV-negative people (per 100000 population) reduced from 39 in 1990 to 19 in 2012. Deaths due to Malaria (per 100000 population) have gone down from 5 in 1990 to 2.3 in 2012. However, when we compare these health outcomes to other developing and developed countries like China Brazil, USA, Australia, Srilanka, Germany etc, India is lagging behind and lies at the bottom as far these health indicators are concerned. The comparatively poor health indicators of India are given in Table 1

**Table 1:-** Health Indicators of selected Developing and Developed Countries, 2015

Country	IMR	MMR	LEB
Australia	3.2	6	82.25
Bangladesh	32.1	188	71.62
Brazil	14.2	46	74.40
China	9.8	28	75.78
Germany	3.2	6	80.84
India	39.1	181	68.01
Japan	2.1	6	83.58
Norway	2.2	5	81.75
South Africa	34.4	140	57.18
Srilanka	8.6	31	74.79
USA	5.7	14	78.94

Source, WHO (2015)

Table1 clearly reveals that India lies at the bottom in comparison to other developed and developing countries of the world. There are several reasons responsible for the comparatively poor health outcomes viz ; poverty, low government spending on public health, inadequate health facilities and skilled health personnel, illiteracy etc. Hence, the government of India needs to speed up its efforts for the sustainable and holistic development of its citizens on the health front through increased budgetary allocations on determinants of better health outcomes like infrastructure, manpower, sanitation, immunization etc, especially in the rural areas as there is a significant difference in health achievements between rural and urban India.

### Expenditure on Health and Achieving Sustainable Development Goals

India spends just 1.40% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on public health, which by no means is adequate, given the huge disease burden, large population and poverty. Since India lives in its villages, where people don't have access to the private health facilities like that in urban areas and also don't have enough resources to avail the

private healthcare services, it becomes mandatory for the government to provide them basic quality healthcare at their places. Government of India too realized this fact and has established a vast network of primary health centres (PHCs) and sub centres at the village level. Besides in 2005 the Central government launched a flagship programme in the form of National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) to improve the health status of rural people. In the post-NRHM period the expenditure on public health has increased in absolute terms, which led to the improvement in rural health infrastructure and services. The improvement in rural health infrastructure and services translated into better health outcomes. Similarly Janani Suraksha Yojna (JSY) scheme was launched in 2005 for improving the maternal and child health by promoting the institutional deliveries and antenatal and post-natal checkups. The scheme provides cash incentives to those mothers who deliver their babies in recognized health institutes under the supervision of professionals. The scheme has succeeded in increasing the number of institutional deliveries, thereby reducing MMR and IMR, especially in rural areas. However, there still exists a rural – urban divide in the health indicators and also across States. The divide is due to difference in the determinants of health across regions. Out of the 25020 PHCs spread across the length and breadth of the country only 5201 function as per the Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS), which is a cause of concern (Rural Health Statistics, 2015). Also, significant proportion of population is not having access to safe drinking water, which gives rise to many water born diseases. Similarly, significant chunk of the population, particularly those who belong to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) and other under-privileged categories don't have toilets. Therefore, if India has to achieve the sustainable development goal of Good Health and Well- Being for its citizens by 2030, it has to make some serious efforts on the above mentioned and other determinants of health. Sustainable development on health front can be achieved through various interventions. One of the key interventions is that government should not only increase its allocation on public health in absolute terms but as percentage of GDP. The increased investment in health and determinants of better health is going to have significant positive externalities, which will in turn contribute in achieving other sustainable development targets. In comparison to major developing and developed countries of the world, India's expenditure on public health is very dismal (1.40%). Table 2 provides details of health expenditure of select developed and developing countries.

**Table 2:-** Health Expenditure of Selected Developed and Developing Countries, 2014

Country	% of GDP	% of GDP (Public)	% of GDP (Private)	OOP % of THE
Australia	9.42	6.31	3.10	18.81
Bangladesh	2.81	0.78	2.03	66.97
Brazil	8.32	3.83	4.49	25.46
China	5.54	3.09	2.45	31.98
Germany	11.29	8.69	2.59	13.19
India	4.68	1.40	3.27	62.41
Japan	10.22	8.55	1.67	13.91
Norway	9.71	8.30	1.41	13.60
South Africa	8.79	4.24	4.55	6.49
Srilanka	3.50	1.96	1.53	42.09
USA	17.14	8.27	8.86	11.04

Source, WHO (2014)

\*\* OOP (Out of Pocket Expenditure) THE (Total Health Expenditure)

### Conclusion:-

Sustainable and holistic development of the world in general and India in particular is not possible without the better health and well- being of the people. For a huge country like India which is facing the challenges of huge disease burden, malnourishment and poverty, public health occupies the centre stage for achieving most of the sustainable development goals, as health being a merit good has significant positive externalities. Therefore, the immediate need is that both the State and Central governments not only need to implement the existing programmes like NRHM and JSY in letter and spirit but also come up with some new interventions. Public – private partnerships need to be fostered for providing quality healthcare services at subsidized rates to the underprivileged sections of the society. The primary healthcare institutions like Sub-Centres and PHCs need to be made more vibrant by equipping them with professional staff, requisite medicines and equipment to provide quality and easily accessible healthcare at the gross route level. Also, public expenditure on determinants of health outcomes like safe drinking water and

sanitation needs to be increased significantly. With meagre 1.4% of GDP being spent on public health, achieving sustainable development by 2030 might not materialise.

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