

Statement of India
Fifth Session of Committee on Social Development
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Agenda Item No.3

Strategies for strengthening social protection in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia and the Pacific

India firmly believes in the objective of attainment by all peoples, of the highest possible level of health, where health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

In this direction, we have recently adopted the National Health policy 2017 with the aim to provide 'affordable healthcare for all'. This furthers the government's core belief of "Sabka Saath - Sabka Vikas" - Partnership with all and Development for all. The National Health Policy, 2017, specifies targets for universalizing primary health care, reducing infant and under-5 mortality, preventing premature deaths due to non-communicable diseases as well as increasing Government expenditure on health.

India is in the phase of demographic dividend having proportionately 64.7% people in working age giving us opportunity of gaining from their productive contribution to the economy. Economic and social development has resulted in improvement in life expectancy at birth from 49.7 to 68.3. Total fertility Rate (TFR) has come down to 2.3 with 11 states are below 2.1.

One of the most important steps that the Government of India has taken to fulfil its commitment to improving maternal health and child survival is the articulation of a comprehensive approach and linking together a set of initiatives and strategies that address each life stage. Improving the maternal and child health and their survival are central to the achievement of national health goals under the National Health Mission (NHM). Innovative strategies have evolved under the national programme to deliver evidence-based interventions to various population groups. A substantial increase in the availability of financial resources for Reproductive and Child Health (RCH), healthcare infrastructure and workforce provide an important opportunity to consolidate all our efforts.

To tackle the death of children due to vaccine-preventable diseases and the risk due to incomplete immunization, the Government is aiming to provide vaccination against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, tuberculosis, polio, measles and hepatitis to all unimmunized or partially immunized children by 2020. From a Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) of 437 per 100,000 live births in 1990-91, India came down to 130 in 2016. India's Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has declined to 34 per 1,000 live births in 2016.

As a step towards achieving universal health coverage, the Government of India has announced Ayushman Bharat -National Health Protection Mission which will cover over 10

crore poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) providing coverage upto 5 lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.

Interconnections across the 17 SDGs are so strong that the pursuit of the goals involves the promotion of other goals as well. Efforts in Improving universal immunization, improved sanitation, access to clean water, improved nutrition, healthy life styles and education has significantly improved our health index.

In the area of education, the Right to Education Act has established an effective legal framework entitling all children (6-14 years) to free and compulsory education based on principles of equity and non-discrimination. Similarly, NHM and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) initiatives strive to provide access to primary health care and nutrition for the population.

With a vision to build a society wherein members of the target groups can lead productive, safe and dignified lives, with all their basic needs being fulfilled, and where equal opportunities are ensured for their growth and development, the Government through various programmes of educational, economic and social development aims at the empowerment of the disadvantaged and marginalized sections of the society.

Promotion and protection of rights of persons with disabilities is a priority area for the Indian Government. While enacting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 in consonance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, care was taken to include appropriate legal provisions on social protection measures.

As per this new law, the Government is mandated to formulate necessary schemes and programme to guarantee adequate standard of living to enable persons with disabilities to live independently or in the community. In doing so, the quantum of assistance to the persons with disabilities shall be atleast 25% higher than the similar schemes applicable to persons without disabilities. These schemes should provide for – facilities for persons including children with disabilities who have no family or shelter or livelihood or have been abandoned; support to women with disabilities for livelihood and for upbringing of their children; access to safe drinking water, and appropriate and accessible sanitation facilities especially in urban slums and rural areas; provisions of aids and appliances, corrective surgery free of cost; disability pension or unemployment allowance; comprehensive insurance scheme etc.

The Government has recently formulated guidelines for setting up of rehabilitation homes for needy persons with disabilities by the Provincial Governments. Financial support is given to the Provinces by the National Government towards disability pension for persons with disabilities. The quantum of fund and other criteria are being reviewed. Moreover as per the

new legislation, disability categories have been increased from 7 to 21. So greater coverage will take place for which more funding is proposed to be earmarked.

Being aware that a number of persons with disabilities are close to poverty levels and that their living costs are more than persons with disabilities, the Government is providing financial and non-financial support to them to offset their expenditure. Aids and appliances are being provided to various categories of persons with disabilities. Scholarship is provided for students with disabilities from class IX till M.Phil/PhD and also for professional courses. Skill training is provided to increase their employability. Loan at concessional rates is given to promote self-employment.

In order to map actual financial requirement of persons with disabilities, a dynamic database has been created through a national based web-portal to identify every person with disability and capture crucial data regarding nature and extent of disability, educational and employment status, nature of support needed from the Government. This real-time data under Unique Disability ID project is expected to improve programme planning and implementation relating to social protection also.

In September this year, India has launched Ayushman Bharat – National Health Protection Mission to provide universal health coverage to 500 million people including persons with disabilities. The beneficiaries will be from marginalised sections depending on their socio-economic status. This health insurance scheme is expected to neutralise health costs for persons with disabilities.

To enhance livelihood security of poor households in rural areas, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) provides 100 day guaranteed unskilled manual work to every rural adult including persons with disabilities with an aim to alleviate poverty.

Challenges are many in this area of social protection to achieve Sustainable Development Goals in terms of identification, organisation, investment and diversity in persons with disabilities across age, gender and socio-economic status. India is grappling with these issues. There are various methods and strategies being planned through IT, financial management and human resources to strengthen social protection cover so as to include many persons with disabilities with focus mainly on those who are at risk. India is committed to ensure that "no one is left behind".

Please Check against Delivery

Bangkok, 28th November 2018