

National Rural Health Mission: An Overview of the Salient Features

*H.C .Srivastava**

The National Rural Health Mission was launched by the Honorable Prime Minister on 12th April 2005, to provide accessible, affordable and accountable quality health services even to the poorest households in the remotest rural regions. The thrust of the Mission was on establishing a fully functional, community owned, decentralized health delivery system with inter sectoral convergence at all levels, to ensure simultaneous action on a wide range of determinants of health like water, sanitation, education, nutrition, social and gender equality.

The mission adopted a synergistic approach by relating health to determinants of good health viz. nutrition, sanitation, hygiene and safe drinking water. The plan of action of NRHM includes increasing public expenditure on health, reducing regional imbalance in health infrastructure, pooling resources, integration of organisational structures, and optimisation of health manpower, decentralisation and district management of health programmes. NRHM (2005-2012) seeks to provide effective healthcare to rural population throughout the country with special focus on 18 states, which have weak public health indicators and/or weak infrastructure.

The goals of NRHM include reduction in Infant Mortality Rate and Maternal Mortality Ratio, prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases, population stabilisation gender and demographic balance, mainstream AYUSH and promotion of healthy life style among the people. To achieve these goals the Government has formulated several strategies, amongst them some important are to train and enhance the capacity of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to own, control and manage public health services, promote access to improved healthcare at household level through the female health activist (ASHA), developing capacities for preventive health care at all levels and promotion of public private partnerships for achieving public health goals. Further the paper tries to investigate present situation of NRHM and its progress and areas of improvement. In addition it tries to present constraints before NRHM and the way ahead.

*Former Professor and Head, Dept. Of Development studies, International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai-400088.
Email: harish_srivastava@hotmail.com