

Role of Government in Health

It is considered that the government in a democracy has to work towards the welfare of the people. One of the most important aspects of welfare is the health department. In a developing country like India meeting the health requirements of all the different types of people can be quite a challenge. In CBSE Class 7 Social Science (Political Science) Chapter 2, we shall look into the different aspects of the health department, the requirements of the department, the disadvantages and the strategies adopted to meet the requirements.

What is Health?

- Many scholars have different ideas of 'health.' For simplifying the matter, we look at health as our ability to resist illness and injuries.
- Illness is not only concerned with diseases. Apart from diseases, basic health criteria have to be met with in order to ensure health. For example, someone drinking unclean water is unhealthy even if it is not causing diseases.

- Improper living conditions make one more prone to illnesses.
- Apart from this, remaining active is an important aspect of health.
- One must also take into consideration mental conditions also when discussing health.

Healthcare System in India

- Healthcare service of a country is responsible for maintaining the health conditions of its citizens and their welfare.
- India apparently has a very strong healthcare system. With the most number of medical colleges, a large number of doctors and a growing healthcare chain, it is considered that India provides one of the best healthcare services.
- This, coupled with the fact that it is the largest producer of medicine and has a large number of medical tourists, has made the healthcare system of India worth to be proud of.
- Despite all these India has not seen a decrease in the number of people affected by tuberculosis and

malaria. Apart from this, India is unable to provide clean water to all her citizens; half of the children in India do not get adequate food and water.

- In order to overcome these difficulties, the healthcare resources should be appropriated. The healthcare system has the required knowledge and experience required for successfully controlling the healthcare system.

Private and Public Healthcare Systems

The healthcare system of India has two distinct branches. They are :

- 1) The public healthcare systems
- 2) The private healthcare systems

The public health service of India:

- The public healthcare system in India is a network of government health centres and hospitals. They connect the rural and urban areas. This facilitates treatment availability to people in the rural as well as in the urban areas. They are equipped to provide

treatment to common problems and specialised services.

- Contrasting to this, the village level health care centres usually have a nurse and a village worker to provide all the care. The nurse as well as the villager work under the supervision of a doctor working at the Primary Health Care centre.
- The Primary Health Care centre is responsible for providing healthcare services to many villages in a rural area.
- At the district level, the district level hospitals also supervise the health centres.
- The cities have a number of government hospitals and private hospitals.

Private healthcare services:

- Unlike public healthcare services, private healthcare services are owned by private enterprises.
- These enterprises are not responsible for providing services to all the citizens of the country. They mainly run for profit.

- In the cities, we can see a large number of private health care service centres such as private nursing homes and private hospitals.

Healthcare and Equality: Is Adequate Healthcare Available to All?

- Due to various reasons, India has seen a larger growth in the number of private health care service systems as compared to the public healthcare service systems. However, one main drawback of this is that the urban areas get more private services than the people in rural areas.
- The private healthcare services are owned by organisations which are profit-oriented. Therefore, the cost of private healthcare services is higher. Due to the high price of all the available services, not many people in the country are able to afford them. People from a lower economic background have to borrow money when they need private health services.
- It is said that private services encourage practices that are incorrect just for profit. In government-

owned hospitals, the cheaper alternatives available are used. Examples of immoral practices practised by doctors in private sectors include prescribing unnecessary medicines, injections or saline bottles when in fact cheaper oral medicines can suffice for treatment.

- According to data, approximately 20% of the population is capable of affording the medicines required for treatment in a private health care service centre.
- Even for families that may seem better off than some, the cost of treatment in the hospital may become an economical burden. According to a survey, it was noted that 40% of the people who had to be admitted to a hospital for some kind of injury or illness have had to sell their property or borrow money to pay for the expenses of the treatment.
- For poor people, it may be a greater cause of anxiety and distress. This is made worse by the fact that the living conditions of the poor people are way worse than that of economically stable people.

- Most of the poor people of the country are undernourished and not eating as much food as they are required to. They are deprived of adequate housing, clean and hygienic surroundings and so on. This is why they are more prone to falling ill than other people. The cost of the treatment of the illness is only going to make their economic condition worse.
- Apart from the economical burden of treatment, there are other miscellaneous reasons that prevent people from getting proper medical attention. For example, women in India are less likely to get medical attention for their illnesses than the male head of the family. This is because the hardships faced by women are often considered to be of less importance than the hardships faced by men.
- Another point to be noted is that the scarcity of available health care centres in remote places. Thus it becomes difficult for the tribal people to avail healthcare services. There is also a scarcity of private health care service centres in these remote areas.

What can be done?

- It is no secret that the health of most of the citizens of India does not get enough medical attention. The health condition of the general public is also not very good.
- According to the Constitution, it is the responsibility of the government of the country to provide equality in terms of healthcare services available to the citizens. The government is responsible for taking care of the health of poor and backward people.

There are many famous approaches taken by different government systems to deal with the problems of the healthcare system. We shall now look at examples to search famous approaches:

- **The Kerala approach:** Use government money to effectively plan the healthcare services needed.
- **The Costa Rican approach:** To invest in healthcare as the first priority above all to meet the health requirements of all its people

Important Questions and Answers

Q1. What are the characteristics of the public healthcare system?

Ans. Some notable characteristics of the public healthcare system are:

- One notable characteristic of the public health service is that it aims at providing quality treatment for free or for a very low price. This ensures that poor people can get healthcare services too.
- Another important characteristic of the public healthcare system is that it aims at reducing the number of instances of communicable diseases such as dengue, malaria, chikungunya, tuberculosis and so on.
- Such important tasks are not possible without the support of the public. The general public is made aware of various forms of communicable diseases and how to control their spread by healthcare

personnel who take initiatives to control the outbreak.

Q2. Write a short not on the Kerala experience?

Ans. In the year of 1996, the Kerala government made some major changes in the economic distribution of resources to different government sectors. 40% of the entire state budget was given to the panchayats who were responsible for the planning of means required to meet their needs. That is why it was possible for a village to ensure that proper planning for water, food, devices, education and human development services could be provided to the residents. This meant that water supply schemes were in place along with the working of schools. Anganwadis were set up extensively. Short and specific problems of the villagers were discussed to reach a solution. Due to the joint effort of the government at all levels, this plan actually improved the situation.

Despite all this, there were a few problems which persisted. One of the most common problems was the

scarcity of medicines for common problems. Other problems included scarcity of available doctors and scarcity of available beds.

Q3. Why is the public health care system so-called?

Ans. There are a number of reasons that the public healthcare service system is named like this. They are:

- The government established these healthcare institutes to guarantee proper healthcare services to all the citizens.
- The monetary resources needed to run the service system is derived from the taxes paid by the public.
- As the public indirectly paid for the services, these services should provide service to all of the population
- According to the Constitution of our country, it is the government's primary duty to provide welfare to the countrymen. The government must also take measures to ensure that all people avail the services and each and every citizen attains the right to live.

Q4. Write about the Costa Rican approach

Ans. Costa Rica is considered to be one of the best health care providers in all of South America. This is because of certain changes made to its constitution several years ago. Long ago the Costa Rican government decided not to have an army of its own. This meant that the resources that would otherwise be spent on the army could now be spent on healthcare services. The government made it a priority to invest heavily for the development of health conditions of its citizens. All the citizens of the country have access to basic amenities of life like clean water and healthy living conditions. Another important belief of the government was that good health education is also an important part of their government agenda and knowledge about health is essential at all levels.

Q5. Why does the public healthcare system provide cheap treatments?

Ans. The public healthcare system is paid for by the money of the public in the form of taxes. Thus the public must have these services at his disposal. All the sections of the population irrespective of the difference of their economic status should be allowed to access the services of this system whenever the need arises. There have been instances of people being compensated by the State Government for its negligence towards his or her health. Government hospitals and services often resort to cheaper alternatives and cheaper medicines to lower the cost of treatment for each and every patient.