

## **Study of Rural Health Infrastructure - Issues and Challenges**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The health infrastructure plays an important and integral role in development of any society. In terms of public health, these infrastructures are nothing but, the formal and enduring structures that support public health. Health infrastructure is an important indicator to understand the healthcare delivery provisions and mechanisms in a country. Lack of health infrastructure puts lot of pressure on health sector which leads to a definite impact on the overall health index of the country. This paper explores need for adequate and appropriate healthy infrastructures and also the role of local bodies and govt.

**Keywords:** Health, infrastructure, rural development, health index.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The health infrastructures and the rural development share common goals and objectives. Both aim to improve human well-being and emphasize on needs of the community.

The health infrastructure plays an important and integral role in development of any society. From the beginnings of human civilization, it was recognized that polluted water and lack of proper waste disposal spread communicable diseases. Early religions attempted to regulate behaviour that specifically related to health, from types of food eaten, to regulating certain indulgent behaviours, such as drinking alcohol or sexual relations. The establishment of governments placed responsibility on leaders to develop public health policies and programmes in order to gain some understanding of the causes of disease and thus ensure social stability prosperity, and maintain order. In the developing world, including India, people living in towns and cities today have advantages that are not shared by many rural dwellers. Cities can be tremendously efficient. It is easier to provide water and sanitation to people living

closer together, while access to health, education, and other social and cultural services is also much more readily available.

## **2. CONTEXT AND THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

Karnataka has been declared as third most urbanized state in India due to rapid economic growth and urban population increase witnessed in the last two decades. As per provisional data of 2011 census, 65% of the state population lives in villages. The state needs to renew its focus towards developing health infrastructure in rural areas and hence there is need for proper planning, management and execution of health related activities in villages with the active involvement of stakeholders.

The present study explores the public health and health infrastructure, problems, solutions and role of government in Shimoga Dist.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The most of the work is carried out with secondary data collection and review of available data from various sources like village panchayat and primary health centres. The primary data was collected to a limited extent through field surveys and consultations with random sampling in 5 villages of shimoga dist.

## **4. HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Profile of Shimoga**

Shimoga district is located in the southern part of Karnataka state. The district is famous for its art, culture and natural resources. The country's famous Jog falls is quite known. The Shimoga city has mainly developed as a trading hub for the agricultural products, which are predominantly grown in the district. The location of the industrial estate in Machenalli triggered the industrial growth. The city is also an administrative centre. It is also the centre for trade and commerce, education and industries.

Located in the central part of Karnataka state, Shimoga district is landlocked, i.e. neither does it have a coastline, nor does it border any other state of India. Agriculture and animal husbandry are the major contributors to the economy of Shimoga dist. Rice, Areca nut, Cotton, Maize and Ragi are the major crops cultivated in this district. Karnataka is the largest producer of areca nut in India, majority of which is cultivated in the Shimoga district.

## **5. HEALTH CHALLENGES FACED BY VILLAGES**

Primary health care is a vital strategy which is a backbone of health service delivery for our country. India was one of the first few countries to recognize the importance of Primary Health Care Approach. Health challenges, particularly evident in villages relate to water, environment, diseases like cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity, increased alcohol consumption, unhealthy lifestyle, and risks associated with disease outbreaks. Availability of unhealthy food choices

(junk foods) and accessibility to automation and transport all have an effect on lifestyle that directly affects health of an individual.

## **5. KEY FINDINGS**

- Rural Health Care services Shimoga dist. are mainly based on Primary health care centres.
- Lack of adequate beds in primary health centres and lack of adequate medicines is major concern
- Study reveals that ambulance service (108) by govt. is doing some great work.
- Lack of health awareness among villagers is a major concern.
- Non availability of qualified doctors and no specialists in villages.
- Main source of water in dhimoga dist. are Tunga and Bhadra rivers which are famous for the sweetness of water. There is a belief that "Thunga pana Ganga snana" which means we should drink the water of river thunga and take bath in river Ganga. But due to urbanization and industrialization the water is getting contaminated.
- Most of the village people are exposed to contaminated water due to lack of any filtration.
- Life style of slum people in populated villages is far from good, due to lack of proper infrastructure. They lack regular maintenance and cleaning, slums improvement is needed.
- Schools are the most important places of learning for children and they have a central place in the community. Water and sanitation have an impact on the enrolment and attendance of children in the schools and their health conditions.
- School sensitisation is very important for girl students, schools need adequate private toilets and rest rooms for girls
- No solid waste management system in villages as is indicated by primary surveys
- The solid waste is being dumped openly all along the drains and the roads creating a very unhygienic condition that leads to breeding grounds for mosquitoes, flies etc..
- Even though shimoga dist. enjoys good air due to its geographical location, which is surrounded by forest. Air is getting polluted by vehicles and industries and is affecting villages near cities.

## **6. DISCUSSIONS AND SOLUTIONS (Role of local and govt. bodies)**

- There is a need to undertake a comprehensive study of waste water drainage system and take up its implementation in a scientific manner.
- People are not satisfied with the existing solid waste management system, as is indicated by primary surveys. At present there is no segregation of waste being practiced by villages in Shimoga dist.
- Hospitals with bed facility should be increased in proportional to the population of the growing villages.
- The focus on public health intervention is needed to improve health and quality of life through the prevention and treatment of disease and other physical and mental health conditions.

- Promotion of healthy behaviours. Promotion of hand washing and breastfeeding, delivery of vaccinations, and distribution of condoms to control the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, improved family planning are examples of common public health measures.
- Improve rural living conditions, including access to adequate shelter and sanitation for all.
- Control of many infectious diseases including polio, diphtheria, yellow fever and smallpox through vaccination and treatment.
- Involve communities in local decision- making.
- Creating health awareness and health practices in schools and colleges

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The people living in villages are deprived of the well-established infrastructure and available social benefits and have no access to transportation systems, have limited access to access to public facilities such as hospitals, libraries and schools. Therefore in this context health infrastructure is one of the key rural development issues. Improved rural health infrastructure is definitely the need of the hour for the developing India. Shimoga dist. is one of the fast developing districts in Karnataka and is developing rapidly in the last five years. Lack of health infrastructure has resulted in migration of people to cities and has put health sector under pressure. There is a scope for improvements in all the areas including health infrastructure. Villages need establishment of healthy public policy at the local level through health promotion. Thus all villages can be healthy with proper health infrastructure and public health care policy in place.

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