

Social Sector

Health, Education and Nutrition

Opening Remarks

I present a report on the panel discussion for “social sector”, with focus on health, nutrition and education. The chairperson, Hon’ble Minister Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, highlighted the shift to citizen centricity and the need to find innovative solutions for social development. Speaking of the need for structural percolations in policy planning, it was emphasized that ‘there could be NO compromise on education in the national interest’ and that literacy is key to improving public health in India.

With the context set by Ernst & Young – the Knowledge Partners, the panel comprising of Dr. Vinod Paul from AIIMS, Prof. Govinda NUEPA, Shri SC Behar Azim Premji Foundation and Shri Anil Sinha World Bank Group shared their views.

Key Challenges

The key challenges identified by the speakers were :

1. **On Nutrition** : The challenges posed by stunting, wasting and under-nutrition and its irreversible adverse impact not only on health, but also on growth and economic development were discussed. Women have to be educated to ensure a healthy population. The need for greater inter-sectoral convergence to impact health sensitive indicators, such as sanitation, hygiene, women empowerment and education was highlighted.
2. Speaking on **the goal of Education**, attention was drawn to the Preamble to the Constitution of India, and the need to focus on social development, with economic development being an instrument to support and accelerate social development. The need of the hour is for civil servants to act as agents of social change.
3. **On Learning outcomes** : it was proposed that the quality of education is more relevant than merely increasing enrolment or tests. The challenges highlighted were 1. The quality of teachers, their subject knowledge and ability to impart learning 2. The immediate need for penetration of knowledge banks up to the block and village level 3. The need to focus on holistic & cognitive learning and 4. The critical importance of girl child education, which has a multiplier effect on various socio-economic indicators.
4. **On Inclusive Development & Role of private sector**, there was a discussion on inclusive business models and the potential for making India the worlds innovations hub for products and services. The need for development of an enabling ecosystem to promote low cost frugal innovation such as the low cost new born baby warmer for rural India was also highlighted.

Opportunities & Way Forward

Opportunities & way forward, certain initiatives can be introduced or strengthened in the short term e.g. on education-refresher courses for teachers and retention and incentives based on performance and penetration of knowledge resources to the block level; On nutrition-State governments COULD supplement with programmes on adolescent nutrition; IEC strategies for birth spacing, conception post the age of 20 years and the strict adherence to ante natal care. The need for Skill development of frontline workers was also highlighted.

Perhaps the most critical learning from the panel was that while there was clearly a need for context specific solutions, certain common underlying principles were imperative for an informed policy discourse :

1. First principle – Greater interdepartmental convergence in policies and implementation, and the sharing of data for better monitoring & evaluation would help to address the challenges in health and education.
2. **Second – Inclusive development through partnerships** : There has been a fundamental shift in strategies, with market based solutions to tackle inclusion and creation of shared value between public and private sector. For eg India is home to the best minds of doctors and engineers so in the call for ‘Make in India’, R & D on medical devices can lead to availability of affordable, high quality medical care. To enhance delivery, the Government could co-opt social enterprises in their programmes. There is a need for a strong regulatory and institutional framework to encourage innovation and ease business for domestic manufacturer.
3. The third important principle – to **Focus on the life style (womb to tomb) approach in nutrition and health**. A holistic end to end solution which addresses the different developmental needs of the girl child like the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative is a very timely intervention. A programmatic focus is required on geriatric health in view of the changing demographics.
4. The fourth principle which is critical is the use of technology for healthcare and education to expand both outreach and awareness.

A framework based on these 4 is critical for any successful policy intervention.

The panel closed with concluding remarks from the chair.

Thank you.

