

## General Studies – 2; Topic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health;

### Health Budget 2017

#### 1) Introduction

- Since Independence, a significant portion of the health budget has been channelised into infectious disease control programmes
- The Finance Minister in his budget speech announced that the government has prepared an action plan for eliminating kala-azar, filariasis, leprosy, measles & TB.
- The announcement is significant because India shares a high global burden of these diseases.

#### 2) 2017 Budget Provisions

- The health budget this year has made special provisions for elimination of five infectious diseases, strengthening of rural sub-centres,
- Recruitment of specialist doctors in government hospitals, increased allocation for programmes for women and children, and free treatment for the elderly poor.
- Missing in this list is a mention of increased budgetary support for the prevention, control and care for non-communicable diseases (NCDs)
- NCDs like cancer, diabetes, hypertension and heart diseases — the major causes of ill health, disability and death in the country today.
- The Budget outlined an ambitious action plan to eliminate Kala-Azar and Filariasis by 2017, Leprosy by 2018, Measles by 2020 and Tuberculosis by 2025.
- Budget 2017-18 is equally silent about the National Health Policy

#### 3) Viability and ambition of these targets.

- **Tuberculosis**
  - a) With around 3 million cases, India shares a quarter of this disease.
  - b) New elimination deadline of 2025 will also depend on improved capabilities in the health system to meet the daily drugs requirement
  - c) Integration of private practitioners with the national mission on tuberculosis is needed for guaranteed access to drugs
  - d) Continuous monitoring of such patients.
- **leprosy**
  - a) Once hailed as eliminated in hurry, has again showed its head with more than 1 lakh cases.
  - b) Detecting new cases early and preventing them from progressing to disability-inducing grade two level is crucial
  - c) More research institutes like one in Agra with the help of Japan are needed to rehabilitate such patients.
  - d) Complete removal by 2018 as envisaged in the Budget may prove difficult.
- **Kala-azar**
  - a) Kala-azar, though underreported and mainly confined to Bihar and Jharkhand, is a promising candidate for elimination in the current year
  - b) Since the few thousand cases are caused by a protozoal parasite with no animal reservoir; control of the vector, the sand fly, holds the key.
- **Filariasis**
  - a) If good medical protocol is pursued, pockets of filariasis in many States can be removed.

b) Rehabilitation programmes for these diseases require more resources and policy support.

- **Measles**

- a) Measles is a deadly disease and one of the major causes of disability and death among children.
- b) Diseases can make child vulnerable to life threatening complications like pneumonia and diarrhoea
- c) Elimination by 2020 is very much needed since it may render India a blow for its young population and their capacity to be a healthy workforce.

#### 4) Spending in Health Sector

- An additional Rs 10,600 crores have been allocated for health in this budget compared to previous year.
- With severe cuts in health budget over last three years, the increase in allocation this year may not be enough to maintain existing health programmes.
- The union and states' health spending together is about 1.2% of GDP.
- WHO recommends that governments spend between 2.5% to 5% of their GDP on health.
- Funds allocated in the budget were transferred to health ministry with considerable delays and with cuts and as a result little was spent on the ground.
- As a result most central programmes were facing severe cash crunches.
- The Economic survey glosses over the persistent underfunding by the government.
- With centre's tax devolution to states accelerated from 32% to 42%, a sharp deceleration in Central govt. allocation to states through health schemes was also effected

#### 5) Steps in the Right Direction

- Immunizations against TB and measles have been included in Mission Indradhanush.
- Incentives are given to ASHA workers in bringing Kala Azar patients to healthcare facility, Regular supply of diagnostic kits and drugs to states is ensured.
- Mass administration of DEC tablets is being given to check filariasis.
- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is reducing sanitation and hygiene issues.
- Government has also announced steps to improve secondary and tertiary health care facility by increasing and strengthening PG courses, opening of new AIIMS etc.
- Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana makes BPL people avail healthcare facility all over India.

#### 6) Concerns / Challenges

- The Budget allocation for the health sector is not even one-third of the target laid out in the draft National Health Policy.
- Investments are needed for strengthening health services for the urban poor.
- The unhealthy, over-crowded and impoverished living conditions of urban slums provide the ideal environment for proliferation of infectious diseases, and could easily undo targets of eliminating tuberculosis and leprosy.
- planning to address the health problems of India is a daunting task especially as health priorities vary widely across the country
- There has been poor rehabilitation facilities for leprosy patients