

A STUDY ON CHILDREN HUMAN RIGHT TO IMMUNIZATION

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Abstract: India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which means that we have agreed that, "In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration." Keeping this in view, National Health Mission which is a centrally sponsored scheme of Government of India (GoI) was launched in 2005. It provides many other programmes apart from child immunization such as Janani Suraksha Yojana etc. The paper provides a consolidated overview of immunization in India by bringing it under the lens of human rights as health is a basic human right. The paper relies on the extensive review of the empirical literature. The objective of the paper is to find the link between immunization and child health as a human right concern. As it is way more important for the healthy development of the child which can lead to healthy and productive adulthood. It was found that there are many reasons for refusal of immunization. The reasons that relate to mistrust were found more common. Also, there are certain social barriers which are creating hindrance for the full immunization of the child. The importance of trust in the institution involved for immunization or other health service providers is a must and foremost thing. The more research is needed on interventions to increase immunization so that every child can lead a healthy and dignified life.

Keywords: Child Rights, Health, Immunization, National Health Mission.

Introduction: Health confers freedom from illness and therefore emerges as an indispensable factor for defining well being of a person. It is inevitably connected not only with right to life but also with quality quotient of life. Good health adds to one's dignity and worth as a human person. Right to dignified existence undoubtedly is an inviolable human right.

Considering prevention to be better than cure, child immunization plays an immensely significant role in promoting health and healthcare from the very beginning of one's biological existence in the world. If basic health care services reach all strata of society, public health care system will be in a position to shift its focus from curative services to disease prevention and health promotion and thus add to development.

Health of any nation is difficult to define in terms of a single set of measures. One such arrangement through which we can assess the health of a population is by taking in to the consideration indicators like infant mortality and maternal mortality rates, life expectancy and nutrition, along with the incidence of communicable and non communicable diseases.

Children Human Right to Immunization: In any country, children constitute an important component of the population. They also turn out to be vulnerable or special risk group from health point of view. It is seen in the less developed countries, child development and child health is dominated by the twin problems of nutritional deficiency and infectious diseases. According to UNICEF, overall number of children below the age of five years, who die in the world each year fell from 20 million in 1960 to an estimated 9.6 million in 2006 to 5.9 million in 2015 and 16,000 every day. Still, there is inequality in child health, which reflects in terms of under five mortality in the world. If the current trend continues, around half of the 69 million child deaths between 2016 and 2030 will occur during the neonatal period. Therefore, many developing countries need to accelerate progress to reach

the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of a neonatal mortality rate of 12 deaths per 1000 live births by 2030.

The human right to health guarantees a system of health protection for all including one of the most vulnerable group i.e Children. As child is considered to be a national asset, it is important to provide children with adequate healthcare facilities. In view of health being a basic human right, health care services are of vital significance. These facilities and services must be available, accessible, acceptable, and must also be of good quality for everyone, on an equitable basis, where and when needed and particularly for the purposes of the present study to children. In case of children, immunization services are of great importance. A human rights based-approach identifies ways and measures to empower people to claim their rights. It also encourages policy makers and service providers to meet their obligations in creating more responsive health care systems involving hospitals, clinics, medicines, doctors, and para medical service providers.

India in the context of Global Immunization Coverage 2015: During 2015, about 86% or 116 million of infants worldwide received 3 doses of diphtheria- pertussis-tetanus (DTP₃) vaccine, to protect them against infectious diseases that can cause serious illness or can lead to disability. By 2015, 126 countries had reached at least 90% coverage of DTP₃ vaccine. For India, the percentage falls in the range of 80 % to 89%.

In 2015, 86% of infants around the world received 3 doses of polio vaccine. Targeted for global eradication, polio has been stopped in all countries except for two: Afghanistan and Pakistan. After witnessing continuous decline in polio cases since 1997, India was finally declared polio free in 2011. By the end of 2015, 85% of children had received 1 dose of measles vaccine by their second birthday. 160 countries had included a second dose as a part of routine immunization and 61% of children received 2 doses of measles vaccine according to national immunization schedule. For India the percentage again falls in the range of 80 % to 89%.

By monitoring this vaccination coverage data at subnational levels it became critical to help these countries and prioritize vaccination strategies and operational plans to address immunization gaps and reach every child with lifesaving vaccines.

Following the major milestones in immunization has been discussed:

Table 1.1: Major Milestones Since the Launch of Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI) in India (1978- till 2016)

Year	Milestones
1978	Expanded Programme of Immunization (EPI) launched in India.
1980	World declared smallpox free.
1985	Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) launched.
1986	Immunization became one of the five National Technology Missions in India.
1988	World Health Assembly passes a resolution to eradicate polio by the year 2000.
1989	First comprehensive review of UIP in India conducted. 1990 UIP universalized to cover the entire country.
1991	Cold chain maintenance was taken over by the state governments.
1992	UIP became part of Child Survival and safe Motherhood (CSSM) programme in the country.
1995	India conducted first National Immunization Day for Polio eradication.
1997	UIP became part of Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) programme in India.
2000	Immunization Strengthening Project (ISP) implemented.
2001	National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization (NTAGI) in India formed.
2004	First Maternal And Neonatal Tetanus Elimination (MNTE) validation done.
2005	UIP became part of overall umbrella health programme National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in India.
2005/6	The glass syringes in UIP were replaced by the policy of the use of auto-disable syringes only.
2006	Country conducted first Immunization Week for improving coverage with UIP antigens in

	poor performing districts.
2007/8	National, state and district level AEFI committees constituted.
2008	Immunization Handbook for Medical officer released and trainings started.
2009	Guidelines for the involvement of private practitioners in UIP released.
2010	India became the last country in the world to introduce measles second dose in the national immunization programme.
2011	Last wild polio virus case reported from India. National Vaccine Policy of India released.
2012	Declared as Year of 'Intensification of Routine Immunization' in India. WHO removed India from the list of polio endemic countries.
2015	Mission Indradhanush
2015	National Health Policy
2016	Inclusion of Rotavirus in UIP.

Source: Adapted from <http://icmr.nic.in/ijmr/april/0403.pdf>

Although various child health programme like EPI, UIP, NRHM and recently Mission Indradhanush have been introduced by the government of India to tackle the immunization related problems. There can be seen a considerable progress in achieving the immunization goals with the help of these programmes.

Conclusion: Immunization is a process of stimulating immunity system of the body against certain infectious diseases by administering vaccines. It has proven to be one of the main public health care interventions that have been successful in preventing childhood morbidity and mortality. Immunization will become more effective if the child receive the full course of recommended immunization doses.

In order to strengthen the child immunization efforts, the State must reach the unreached. In order to raise awareness about child immunization and enhance its coverage, health campaigns should be organized. Lastly, an adequately informed community is most essential for the success of the program.

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