

Chapter 12

Ranking Districts of West Bengal in Selected Health Indicators

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Abstract

Here eleven women and child health indicators are selected on the basis of data availability for nineteen districts of West Bengal. District-level data is taken from National Family Health Survey-4 (2015-16). Here it is attempted to rank the districts on the basis of their health achievements. The government can target the lagged districts to improve the State's overall health achievement.

Keywords: NFHS-4, Borda ranking, PCA ranking, Women and child health, West Bengal.

Introduction

Improvement of health care services is of highest importance for its intrinsic value. The delivery of public health is a basic human right and a vital merit good. With the inception of the Human Development Index (HDI), the Human Poverty Index (HPI), and the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) by the United Nations

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Development Programme (UNDP), governments are required to redefine development. Universal access to health together with safe drinking water, sanitation, nutrition, basic education, information and employment are essential to balanced development.

Since the Bhore Committee Report (GoI 1946) and the Constitution of India, the Government of India (GoI) has corroborated many times its aim of advancing the average health of its citizens, reducing inequalities in health, and fostering financial access to health care, particularly for the most destitute. In the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution of India, Articles 38 (2) and 41, stress the need for equitable access and assistance to the sick and the underserved, and right to employment, education, while Article 47 stresses on improving nutrition, the standard of living and public health. Article 39 and Article 45 directs for gender equality and protection of children rights including education (Bakshi 2006: 84-91).

Govt. of India identified *High Priority Districts* (HPDs) as the bottom 25% of the districts in every State according to the ranking of districts based on composite health index to ensure equitable health care and to bring about sharper improvements in health outcomes (GoI 2015). Uttar Dinajpur, Maldah, South 24 Parganas, Murshidabad and Koch Bihar are the five districts of West Bengal identified as HPDs. Hati and Majumder (2011) explored relative position of the districts of West Bengal and shown strong relation between primary health infrastructure and preventive and curative health achievements. Bhattacharya (1998) argues human development levels across West Bengal districts vary sharply and are more in favour of the urbanised regions. Niti Aayog uses several health indicators to rank the States of India using health index. The health index is a useful tool to measure and compare the overall performance and incremental performance across States and Union Territories (UTs) over time. The health index scores for 2017-

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