

Health Communication for Sustainable Social Development (A Study in the State of Rajasthan)

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Abstract—Sustainability has emerged as a new buzz word in the 21st century. It has drawn a lot of attention from the policy-makers, community leaders, corporate sector, academics, and non-government organisations etc. Social Development is a step towards national development. Sustainable social development is considered as a process, involving a number of qualitative & quantitative changes, aimed at preserving natural resources for achieving the overall development. Essentially, social development is a prerequisite for achieving overall national development. According to WHO, health communication is an important input in the process of social development.

Mass media provide vital input for the development of any community, society or nation. Mass media play instrumental role in production & dissemination of health news & health information across the globe. By facilitating day-to-day affairs between societies and governments, mass media thus help in achieving the process of sustainable social development.

This study tried to explore the role of health communication in sustainable social development of a community, society, or nation. This study is part of the ongoing research study on 'role of mass media on health-seeking behaviour of general public'.

Data were collected through primary as well as secondary sources.

Keywords: Mass Media, Community Development, Sustainable development Globalisation, Political process.

INTRODUCTION

DEVELOPMENT

Development generally means economic development of a society, state or nation. Development may be defined as “the process of increasing the real per capita income of a country over a long period of time, which is often accompanied by changes in its structure and institutions.” Interestingly, real development is not in the figure of the per capita income. It must be seen and felt. Some may interpret development as “attainment of a number of modernization ideals, such as rise in productivity, social and economic equalization, modern knowledge, and improved institutions and attitudes...and importantly health of the people...”

THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development is seeking to meet the needs of the present without compromising those of future generations. It means that we have to learn our way out of current social and environmental problems and learn to live sustainably. It is a vision of development that encompasses populations, animal and plant species, ecosystems, natural resources and that integrates concerns such as the fight against poverty, gender equality, human rights, education for all, human security, intercultural dialogue, and health to all populace, etc.

For some people maintaining some overall equilibrium between resources use and resources availability is the essence of Sustainable Development. A minimum necessary condition for sustainability is the maintenance of the total natural resources at or above the current level. While lower natural resources may be sustainable, society can allow no further decline in natural capital given the large uncertainty and the dire consequences of guessing wrong. This is especially true in reference to human health. Without providing complete and sustainable health facilities to the people of a society, attainment of sustainable development would be incomplete.

HEALTH AS AN IMPORTANT INPUT IN DEVELOPMENT

Health is an important ingredient of development. It is a common fact that public health status of developed nations is often better than those of developing nations or third world nations. Any country cannot grow fast, if the health of its citizens is in poor shape, as the health is an important ingredient of development. The World Health Organisation's constitution mentions that the health is a fundamental human right of every human being WHO¹ (1986). WHO constitution says that each and every individual on earth has the right to the attainable standard of health. It is a basic right of every human being. This right to health includes access to affordable, accessible, appropriate & timely healthcare facilities. Who emphasises that health is an important input in development.

Health is, therefore, seen as a resource for everyday life, not the objective of living. Health is a positive concept emphasizing social and personal resources, as well as physical capacities. The declaration further states that the health is a positive and multifaceted concept combining many personal traits and social resources.

HEALTH COMMUNICATION

According to WHO¹ (1998) health promotion glossary, “health communication is the use of the mass media, multimedia and other technological innovations to disseminate useful health information to the public, with a view to increase awareness of specific aspects of individual and collective health (Public Health) as well as importance of health in development”, as mentioned by WHO.



While going through the definition of health communication given by WHO; we see that health communication is:

- A. The use of mass media, multimedia, and other technological innovations.
- B. To disseminate information to public
- C. With a view to increase awareness.
- D. About specific aspects of individual health and collective health (public health)
- E. And to highlight the importance of health in development.

Here we see that health is an important ingredient in development. WHO emphasises that health is a basic constituent of development. We see that development of a nation depends upon the health status of its population.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Main objective of this paper is:

- A. to explore the role of health communication in the sustainable social development

METHODOLOGY

An exploratory approach has been adopted for the purpose of study. For the purpose of this study, data are collected mainly from the secondary sources. Data from Primary sources are also used for this study as and where required.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An economic definition places greater emphasis on the use of “Renewable natural resources² in a manner that does not eliminate or otherwise diminish their usefulness for future generations”(Goodland and Ledec, 1987).

A technology based interpretation is that "Sustainable Development³ includes a rapid transformation of the technological base of industrial civilization with the use of new technologies that should be cleaner, more efficient and less natural resource intensive”(James Gustore Speth, 1989).

An ecological interpretation⁴ of sustainable development explains “It involves improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco systems (IUCN UNEP and WWF, 1991).

From consumption point of view, sustainable development means “A change in consumption patterns⁵ towards environmentally more benign products and a change in investment patterns towards augmenting environmental capital (David William Pearce, Anil Markandy, Edward B. Barbier, 1989)

Bircher⁶ defined that health is a dynamic state of well-being, which is characterised with mental and physical soundness that satisfies the requirements of life according to the culture, age, and personal and social responsibility. Health is combination of mental and physical characteristics in tune with contemporary social and cultural values enabling a person in fulfilling his/her social responsibilities according to the age, mentioned Bircher.

Paul⁷(2006) suggested that health is the basic foundation of humanity, which helps all the human beings and communities to exist. Therefore, the state of health in any given population not only indicates the well-being of the people, it also reflects upon the human development of the given population as well. Paul emphasises that besides being the basic foundation of life, health is an indicator of human development in any given society.

Sharma et al.⁸ have stated that health is much more than the biomedical health. Health includes physical health, mental health, spiritual health, family health, social health & well-being etc. Health is the combination and result of many activities of an individual governed by the prevailing socio-economic conditions.

Juliana⁹ mentioned that as an applied research discipline health communication tries to identify a problem related to human behaviour and health care management and focuses on

the solution of these problems with the help of different communication theories and principles along with the application of different communication models.

Schiavo¹⁰ (2007) said that health communication is a multi-disciplinary and multifaceted approach of communicating with diverse audiences who have a common concern among them i.e. they seek health related information. The goal of health communication is to influence the attitude of the audiences, to shape their behaviour to help improve their health outcome. These audiences include all the stakeholders of health i.e. individuals, families, communities, health-care professionals, patients, policymakers, authorities,

Kreps¹¹ (1988) suggested that health communication can be used for health promotion & health education for different aspects of prevention of disease and it is useful in various situations. It includes formulation of public health messages and disseminating them for promoting healthy behaviour among the common populace.

Health communication means producing and exchanging the useful information¹² with a view to motivate, influence or educate different audiences i.e. individual, general public, institutions, communities or societies, as mentioned by Maibach et al. (2007).

According to the Gupta (2006), all the media in the emerging society act as purveyor¹³ of information, providers of pleasure and enjoyment, furnishers of channels of expression and enjoyment, economic activists and changers of perceptions, influencers of behaviours, builders of institutions, and shapers of the future.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Since health is related to each and every individual on earth, the scope of health communication for sustainable social development is vast and varied. Health communication works for every individual (i.e. general public) in different societies, cultures and nations. Sustainable social development can only be achieved, if the health of every individual is maintained in good shape in a given society. Health communication is an integral aspect of every human being, as it touches the life every child, man, & woman in a family, society, and nation. Health communication (through media) contributes to modernizing the traditional society by helping to change the attitudes of people. For example change in attitudes relating to environment, work, gender, customs, communities, and beliefs etc can be brought in the society. By promoting national, cultural, geographical and emotional integration, media bring about a creative understanding between different regions and their people. Through media, health communication enquiries provide a good platform for educating people against superstitions and providing scientific temperaments and modern ideas, and thus maintaining good health.

HEALTH COMMUNICATION FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Health communication tries to evaluate the impact and influence of human communication on the different facets of health care management, contributing to the societal development. By trying to improve the quality of healthcare system, health communication helps to promote public health and health education and thus ultimately helps in the sustainable development of a given society, nation or state.

Health communication enquiries try to:

1. FOCUS ON A PROBLEM, And
2. TRY TO IDENTIFY THE SOLUTION
3. OF HEALTHCARE ISSUES WITH A VIEW TO
4. PROMOTE PUBLIC HEALTH
5. IN A SOCIETY, COMMUNITY, OR NATION

Health communication professionals try to identify the contexts, channels, messages and reasons that will create & disseminate health messages to motivate individuals to use health information to promote the public health. Improvement in public health would lead to societal development.

The scope of health communication is very wide.

Health communication includes:

1. PUBLIC HEALTH
2. HEALTH PROMOTION
3. HEALTH EDUCATION

Effective health communication can play an important role in increasing awareness about health risks among common men in a particular society. Health communication can also motivate the people and help them acquire necessary skills required to reduce these health risks. On one hand effective health communication can play a great role in creating demand for appropriate health services; on the other hand, it can reduce the needs for inappropriate health services.

ROLE OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION (MEDIA) IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Health communication plays the following four responsible roles:

1. It circulates the knowledge that will inform people of significant events, events, opportunities, dangers, and changes in their community, country and the world.
2. Health communication provides a forum where issues affecting the national or community life may be aired, discussed and debated to reach a common understanding.
3. Health communication enquiries aimed at promoting those ideas, skills and attitudes that people need to achieve for a healthy life.
4. Health communication creates and maintains a base of consensus that is needed for maintaining good health not only the populace but for the sustainability of resources.

CONCLUSION

Health communication is an important input in sustainable social development. And the proper use of health communication can foster the pace and process of sustainable social development.

Health communication for sustainable social development is mainly concerned with providing the requisite health information and fulfilling health communication needs of society and this maintaining a healthy society, which ultimately helps in sustainable development of an individual, society and nation by directly or indirectly improve the quality of life to both urban and rural masses while preserving the present natural resources for the future generations.

SUGGESTION

Coordinated efforts of the policy makers in tune with media (health communication) to integrate the developmental goals would help in achieving the sustainable goals with the participation of common men at the implementation level.

If we want to preserve the natural resources while saving our beautiful planet, the best way is to remain healthy and maintain our planet healthy.

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