

UPSC Syllabus Topic GS2- Governance- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Tuberculosis in India: Striving Towards Victory

Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious airborne bacterial disease caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis. It primarily affects the lungs but can also harm other parts of the body.

Findings of the WHO report on the TB situation in India:

Positive Findings:

1. **Mortality and Incidence Reduction:** The WHO report acknowledges a decrease in TB mortality and incidence in India over the past eight years, signifying progress. For example, India recorded a staggering 28 lakh TB cases in 2022.
2. **Improved Case Detection:** The report highlights enhancements in India's TB case detection system, ensuring more timely diagnosis and treatment. This progress is crucial in addressing the TB burden.
3. **TB Reporting Resilience:** Despite challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, India's TB reporting rebounded to 2019 levels, demonstrating the resilience of surveillance programs.

Negative Findings:

1. **Multi-Drug Resistant TB Challenge:** The report mentions that India faces a substantial challenge with multi-drug-resistant (MDR) TB, with only slightly over half of the estimated 1,19,000 new cases reported annually.
2. **Undiagnosed Cases:** The WHO report raises concerns about the possibility that some "new cases" might actually be undiagnosed patients from the pandemic years.
3. **Missed Elimination Target:** Despite progress, India is likely to miss its target of eliminating TB by 2025.

Suggestions in the WHO Report:

1. **Utilize Molecular Diagnostics:** The WHO recommends the use of molecular diagnostic tests for TB, similar to those used for COVID-19 detection. These tests have been effective in the pandemic and can be repurposed for TB diagnostics, providing more accurate results.
2. **Address MDR TB Epidemic:** The report suggests improving prescription practices, drug quality, and completing medications to effectively tackle the MDR TB epidemic.
3. **Enhance Patient Care:** TB treatment is challenging, with side effects like nausea and jaundice. The report emphasizes the need for dedicated and caring physicians to support patients throughout their treatment, improving treatment completion rates.

Steps Taken to Combat TB in India:

1. **Setting Ambitious Targets:** India aims to eliminate TB by 2025, five years ahead of the global goal. The NSP targets no more than 44 new TB cases or 65 total cases per lakh population by 2025.
2. **Expanded Testing:** The government has increased access to molecular test kits like CB-NAAT and TureNat across all districts, facilitating faster and more accurate TB diagnosis.
3. **Community Engagement:** Ni-Kshay Mitras engage in community programs, offering nutritional support to TB patients.

4. **Free Medication:** Essential medicines like Bedaquiline and Delamanid are provided free by the government for TB treatment.
5. **Vaccine Research:** Ongoing research on vaccines such as Immuvac and VPM1002 demonstrates India's commitment to finding more effective ways to combat TB.

UPSC Syllabus Topic GS2- International relation- Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.

Ministerial Conference of the WTO: Key Reforms for the 13th Session

The Ministerial Conference, as the paramount authority within the WTO, convenes biennially, bringing together all member nations and customs unions to make decisions on various aspects of multilateral trade agreements. With 12 meetings held thus far, the upcoming 13th session, scheduled for Abu Dhabi in 2024, holds significance for pushing essential reforms.

Proposed Reforms for the 13th Ministerial Conference:

1. **Dispute Settlement Reform:** Addressing the deadlock in the WTO's dispute resolution mechanism, which has been stalled since 2019 due to the U.S. blocking appointments to the Appellate Body. A formal process is imperative to fulfil the commitment for a functional system by 2024.
2. **Agriculture Support for Developing Countries:**
 - **Public Stockholding (PSH):** Urgent need for a permanent solution to PSH, crucial for ensuring food security in developing countries. While the Bali Decision of 2013 provided a temporary fix, a lasting solution remains pending.
 - **Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM):** Developing countries require an SSM to protect against volatile agricultural markets. Despite a decade of discussions, the issue remains unresolved.
3. **Fisheries Subsidies Discipline:** Following the agreement from MC-12, addressing undecided disciplines on overcapacity and overfishing. Striking a balance is crucial for sustainable fishing, safeguarding the rights of developing countries, food security, and social justice.
4. **Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Adjustments:** Advocating for the extension of the TRIPS waiver to include diagnostics and therapeutics for COVID-19, as proposed by South Africa and India. This aims to enhance access to medical products.
5. **Development-Centric Reforms:** The Africa Group is championing reforms that consider the development needs of poorer nations. This includes advocating for policy space for industrialization and providing support for least-developed countries (LDCs) facing graduation challenges.

Terminology Used:

- **Peace Clause:** Introduced at the 2013 Bali ministerial meeting, the Peace Clause addresses disparities in food subsidies. It shields developing nations from arbitration if they exceed the 10% support limit for farmers, managing disputes until a lasting resolution is established.

UPSC Syllabus Topic GS Paper 2, Social Issues, government policies and interventions for development in various sectors

Draft Menstrual Hygiene Policy, 2023: Addressing Sustainable Development Goals and Influencing Factors

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The proposed Menstrual Hygiene Policy for 2023 aligns with India's commitment to achieving specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), emphasizing the importance of:

1. **Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being**
2. **Goal 4: Quality Education**
3. **Goal 5: Gender Equality**
4. **Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation**

This comprehensive policy adopts a life cycle approach, acknowledging the entirety of the menstrual journey for girls. It particularly prioritizes underserved and vulnerable populations, aiming to ensure equitable access to menstrual hygiene resources.

Factors Influencing the Use of Menstrual Hygiene Products:

The connection between menstruation, school dropout rates, and the absence of access to sanitary products and facilities is evident. Key factors include:

1. **Accessibility:** While menstrual hygiene products are increasingly accessible, challenges persist in semi-urban and rural areas, particularly concerning affordability and availability.
2. **Education:** NFHS-5 indicates a significant correlation between education levels and the preference for hygienic methods. Women with 12 or more years of schooling are more likely to use such products compared to those with no formal education.

Measures Advocated by the Menstrual Hygiene Policy:

1. **Ensuring Access to Affordable Menstrual Hygiene Products:** The policy underscores the need to make menstrual hygiene products affordable and accessible, especially in semi-urban and rural areas. This includes addressing challenges related to availability and pricing.
2. **Providing Clean Toilets and Water:** Recognizing the importance of sanitation facilities, the policy calls for ensuring clean toilets and access to water for all menstruating girls. This contributes significantly to maintaining hygiene and dignity.
3. **Comprehensive Lifecycle Approach:** The policy advocates for addressing the entire lifecycle of menstruation, encompassing not only physical health aspects but also considering the social consequences. This holistic approach aims to tackle the multifaceted challenges associated with menstruation.

By implementing these measures, the Menstrual Hygiene Policy strives to create an inclusive and supportive environment that empowers girls and women throughout their menstrual journey, fostering health, education, gender equality, and overall well-being.