HSTP
Health Systems Transformation Platform

Enabling Indian Health Systems Respond to People's Needs

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

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> "**Our mission** *is to enable policymakers & researchers in the Indian health systems to generate and utilize evidence for improving health outcomes and financial protection.*
>
> *We do this in collaboration with Indian & global expertise through enhancing stakeholders' capabilities for health systems redesign, validating interventions and fostering policy dialogue."*

Contact- Rahul S Reddy Kadarpeta, National Coordinator, HSTP | rreddy@hstp.org.in.

This Annual Progress Report is developed by Health Systems Transformation Platform (HSTP) to share our work and achievements during the year 2020-21. Prof (Late) Maharaj Kishan Bhan, HSTP's pillar of strength, continues to inspire our work. We are grateful to the HSTP Board, Advisory Council, Donors, Collaborators and HSTP staff for their support and contribution.

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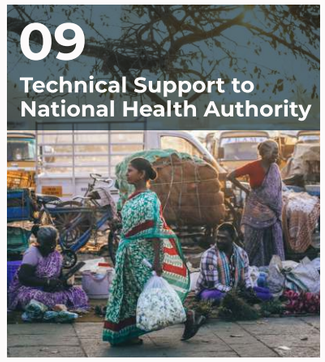
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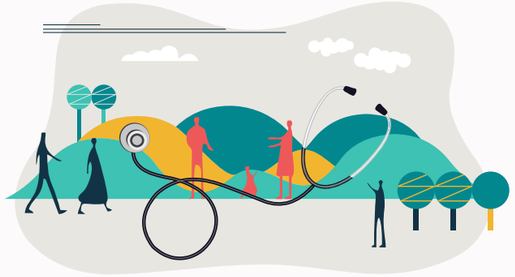

Message

Rajeev Sadanandan,
Chief Executive Officer

The year 2020 tested all individuals and organisations on their resilience and ability to collaborate with like minded partners, to survive one of the toughest crises that human race has faced in recent times. I am proud that HSTP could support governments and civil society organisations to respond to the pandemic. As an adviser to the Chief Minister of Kerala on Management of the COVID-19 pandemic, I provided crucial inputs to the government on policy responses and systems management, based on analysis of data and informed by the rapidly growing body of knowledge from across the world. I also contributed as a Commissioner on the Lancet Global Health Commission on Financing of Primary care and strategy thought partner for the Ashoka - Philips accelerating Healthcare ACCESS Globalizer. Other HSTP experts contributed to the discourse on health issues through active participation in policy dialogue, publishing opinion pieces and journal articles.

As part of our commitment to support the generation and use of evidence for policy making, we commenced the India Health Policy and Systems Research Fellowship program in partnership with six leading national and international institutes. We will equip 20 public health professionals each year, with knowledge and skills to conduct research in partnership with government and other stakeholders involved in policy and practice. We hope this will work as a force multiplier to improve and bring visibility to health policy and systems research in India and contribute to evidence based policy making.

Our other initiatives focused on generating momentum on the importance of strengthening health systems for universal health coverage, especially primary healthcare, and health regulations. In collaboration with Swasti, we analysed the Indian primary healthcare landscape to identify best practices and innovations that hold promise of scale up or reproducing in similar contexts. Our Health Systems Governance team developed a repository of health legislations in the country with focus on health service delivery and analysed the gaps and challenges.

Vulnerability of the informal workers to health shocks, exposed by the lockdown and subsequent economic disruption, highlighted the need for a safety net for them. Our work with the National Health Authority on expanding financial protection to non-poor informal sector worker populations was meant to address this need. It gained momentum and has moved to designing a pilot program to study the feasibility of different strategies for interventions.

In the coming year we will be engaged in re-shaping health systems based on lessons learnt from managing the crisis. We will continue our efforts to develop our sites to field test primary healthcare interventions, which suffered a setback due to the pandemic. Findings from the diagnostic assessment of Odisha Health System will lead to designing interventions to improve health outcomes. We look forward to publishing our work in collaboration with our partners, on global best practices in purchasing primary care with potential to be adapted to the Indian context and a case study of decentralization of health systems in Kerala. In addition to being valuable additions to existing literature, they will also provide the theoretical underpinnings of field research we plan to do in future.

It is a pleasure to be a part of the HSTP team and present our work through this report, with highlights and key milestones achieved in partnership with our collaborators. We gratefully acknowledge the able guidance of the HSTP Board and the support from our donors. With your support we hope to continue to grow as a thought leader in the Health Systems space and contribute to improving health outcomes of the people of India.

Highlights

1. Launched the India Health Policy & Systems Research Fellowship Program to enhance capabilities of 20 Indian public health professionals every year on complexities of health systems & policy making, related research methods and tools to translate evidence to policy and implementation.

2. Conceptualized strategies for expanding coverage to the non-poor population in India and designed an experiment to study if contributory health insurance can improve financial risk protection for these population groups.

3. Conducted a landscape study on primary healthcare in India to identify innovations & best practices in India through a systematic review and case study approach to understand what works and what does not.

4. Developed a framework for healthy cities outlining pathways for inter-sectoral collaboration and providing direction for future action with a focus on Indore and summarizing efforts towards Health Cities across the globe and in India.

5. Launched the Repository of Health legislations to provide access to information on health related acts, rules, schedules, and notifications issued by the Government of India over the years.

6. Conducted a primary household & health facility survey as part of the diagnostic assessment of Odisha health system to understand performance in terms of health status, financial risk protection, access to services, quality, and efficiency of delivering care.

Research for Health Systems Design

Through value-based partnerships with national, state & local governments, Indian and global research & knowledge partners, we conduct comprehensive health systems assessment and design strategies for improving outcomes with a focus on financial risk protection, population health & wellness.

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Thought Leadership for COVID-19 Response

We were one of the first organizations to recognize the impact COVID-19 and caution health authorities on its potential for devastation. Our Chief Executive Officer was a speaker at the seminar on 'Combating Coronavirus' organised jointly by Observer Research Foundation and the Consulate General of China in Mumbai on 3 March 2020. He used the occasion and the follow up discussion with the commissioner and health officials of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation to alert the city on the threat the city faced. He followed this up with a series of papers and interviews in which he stressed the need to prepare the nation for taking on the impact of COVID-19.

> ***Rajeev Sadanandan was appointed Advisor to the Chief Minister of Kerala to support with COVID-19 response. HSTP was invited by the Government of Kerala to support them on analysing the course of the epidemic and to advise them on the course corrections required in the health system.***

Working closely with HSTP, COVID-19 India Tracker was developed by Cambridge Judge Business School and the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, UK who advised Public Health England on the spread of COVID-19. Weekly reports for the Government of Kerala were produced on the pandemic in the state including effective reproduction number, daily average growth rate, doubling time and linked it to google mobility. Our experts then analysed the current health system capacity and advised the state government on augmentation /modifications to the health system. Support provided by HSTP was a crucial input for the successful management of Kerala's response to COVID-19, a fact acknowledged by the Government of Kerala.

As the pandemic evolved HSTP continued to analyse the dynamic situation, published and participated in webinars organized by several institutions.

- N Devadasan published an article in Scroll on trajectory of COVID-19 outbreak, April 2020.
- Rajeev Sadanandan published an article in Economic & Political Weekly on COVID-19, Public Health System and Local Governance in Kerala, May 2020.
- Sunil Nandraj & N Devadasan published an article in Scroll highlighting the composition & governance of committees for responding to COVID-19, May 2020.
- Rajeev Sadanandan published an article in Indian Journal of Public Health on Kerala's response to COVID-19, June 2020.
- Vijayshree Yellappa published an article in The Hindu on role of private sector in response to COVID-19 in India, June 2020.

HSTP Experts were panellists in webinars organized on response to COVID-19, impact on the health systems, the nature of new normal that would emerge after the epidemic and COVID-19 vaccination. by Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation, Indian Chamber of Commerce Kolkata, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Asia Society India Centre, TERI University, Dubai Health Authority, The Ramaiah Public Policy Center, Government of Andhra Pradesh, US Pharmacopeia - South Asia, Jan Swasthya Abhiyan, Max Institute for Healthcare Management: Indian School of Business, IDFC Institute, Duke Global Health Institute, Centre for Public Policy Research, Health Systems Research Symposium 2020, Oxford Policy Management - Women in Global Health Initiative, and Internews Health Journalism Network.

Technical Support to National Health Authority

> *We provide thought leadership and technical support to the National Health Authority, India (NHA) to develop strategies on*
> ◉ *Expanding health coverage to non-poor populations and*
> ◉ *Linkages between primary healthcare and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.*

This involves conceptualization of effective interventions, exploratory research, and conducting experiments to understand what works and what does not in the Indian/ State Context.

This year, in collaboration with ACCESS Health International and Nossal Institute of Global Health, we conceptualized strategies for expanding coverage to missing middle of which National Health Authority prioritized contributory health insurance for near-poor population groups facilitated through an intermediary organization. Our experts developed the concept note, supported National Health Authority to prepare the 'Expression of Interest' and facilitated the consultation with stakeholders. As a result, twenty insurance companies expressed interest to participate in the initiative. We are supporting the design for pilot in consultation with civil society organizations and insurance companies. In partnership with Indian Institute of Technology Madras and Nossal Institute for Global Health, research framework to assess feasibility of this strategy and understand the facilitating and inhibitory factors has been developed.

We also developed a concept note on Strategies for PMJAY linkages to primary healthcare and in collaboration with Institute of Tropical Medicine Antwerp are developing a report summarizing global best practices in purchasing primary healthcare and their adaptation to India.

Photo Credit: unsplash.com/Prashanth Pinha

Odisha Health Systems Strengthening

> *This initiative aims to conduct a comprehensive health systems diagnostic assessment, design interventions for identified challenges/ gaps, experiment socio-economically feasible solutions and evaluate them for refinement/scale up.*

HSTP, Tata Trusts and Government of Odisha agreed on a four-year memorandum of understanding (2019-2023). Harvard School of Public Health, and Indian Institute of Public Health Bhubaneswar are our technical collaborators.

This year, secondary research on performance and organization of Odisha health system components was completed in collaboration with Indian Institute of Public Health Bhubaneswar. Household and health facilities sample survey in Odisha was conducted in collaboration with Harvard School of Public Health and descriptive data analysis is being completed.

> *We are also engaged in providing technical assistance to the State Health Assurance Society for implementation of Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY), the universal health coverage program in Odisha State.*

Our healthcare financing experts support the BSKY scheme policy and implementation diligently working with the scheme Chief Executive Officer and the implementation team. This year we have produced policy briefs, technical notes, working papers that identify challenges and conducted/anchored several rounds of training on various financing & scheme implementation challenges.

- Workshop on Strengthening Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) Operations: Grievance Redressal, September 2020.
- Policy Brief on Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) Learnings & Way forward, March 2021.

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Strengthening Urban Health Systems

Increased investments on primary health care have seen India make improvements in health promotion, disease prevention and service outreach. Despite efforts, in urban areas, primary health care remains inadequate, fragmented, and associated with high out-of- pocket expenditures. Patient health seeking behavior and the organization of the urban health care system is complex with enormous disparities. We are trying to understand the underlying reasons for the poor performance of primary health systems in urban areas through following initiatives:

We developed a research framework, methods, and tools to assess comprehensive primary health care in Mysuru city in collaboration with Karnataka Health Promotion Trust & St. John's Research Institute. This allows us to analyse the status of primary health system and identify potential interventions to provide comprehensive primary healthcare in an urban setting.

We developed a Framework for Healthy City Indore in collaboration with Swasti and relevant health systems stakeholders outlining pathways for inter-sectoral collaboration. This includes summarizing efforts towards Healthy Cities across the globe and in India, providing direction for future action.

Landscape Analysis of Primary Healthcare in India

> *Strengthening primary health care systems is a foundation for universal health coverage. In collaboration with Swasti, we conducted a primary healthcare landscape study to identify models that go beyond the usual norm of providing episodic curative care and focus on preventive care, social determinants, and structural issues.*

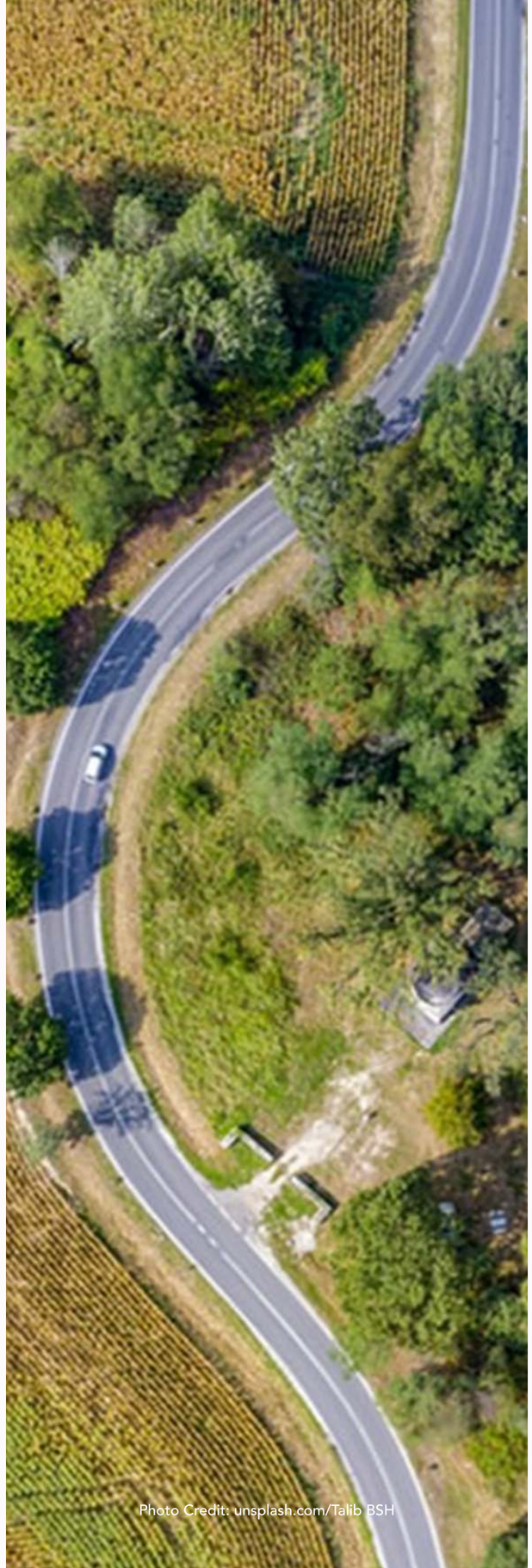
Several non-governmental and private organizations have been implementing innovative primary healthcare models for select populations, which provide an opportunity for learning to develop effective and efficient models. A systematic review of innovations/ solutions that exist for primary healthcare in India was conducted and these were categorized by health systems building blocks (ranging from systems level governance to audit and feedback loops for nurse performance). Further, an in-depth analysis of eight primary healthcare innovations & best practices in India using a case study approach was done to understand what works and what does not.

Role of Decentralization and Health: A Case Study of Kerala

> *In collaboration with Health Action by People, we are engaged in research to examine and document the factors that have ensured effective involvement of local governments in public health and historical evolution of decentralization related policies and practices.*

This year, with a focus on Kerala, a review of literature, key informant interviews, a scoping review of information on financing, laws, decentralization policies and government orders were conducted.

Kerala is one of the few states in India that carried out the decentralization of managing public health institutions, mandated by the 73rd and 74th amendment. The resultant mobilisation of additional resources, integration with other sectors that impact the social determinants of health and community involvement were crucial elements in Kerala's response to COVID-19. Analysing the regulatory framework, financial structure, deployment of human resources and assessing the impact will provide valuable lessons on decentralization for other Indian states and Low- and Middle-Income Countries.



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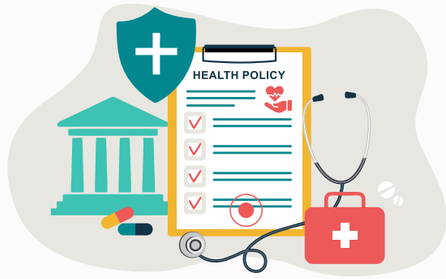

Health Systems Governance

One of our objectives is to provide technical assistance to governments, regulatory bodies and concerned stakeholders to strengthen health system governance with a focus on health regulations. This year, our focus was on generating a body of work which would act as a resource to facilitate the work of researchers, academia, policy makers, regulatory bodies, and other organizations, on strengthening regulations related to health care delivery in the country.

Two specific activities that we accomplished are:

Repository of health legislations: To provide easy access to information on health legislations in India, we compiled a repository of relevant acts, rules, schedules, and notifications issued by the Government of India over the years. This comprises of legislations divided into 28 categories pertaining to different aspects of health and may be accessed by anyone on the HSTP website. The present compilation is restricted to health legislations within the purview of the central government. Health being a state subject in India, states have their own legislations too, which we intend to compile, and update the repository periodically.

Landscape document on regulations related to health care delivery: We carried out an analysis of the central government regulations related to health care delivery in India. Using a framework of analysis, the regulations were analysed to identify the strengths, gaps, challenges, and opportunities for intervention to strengthen the regulatory framework of health care delivery in the country. The findings were shared with experts in the field and the document was finalized after incorporating their feedback. The document will be shared widely in the coming year and act as a resource to strengthen regulations, in collaboration with state/central governments and other stakeholders.

- Pallavi Gupta published a Working Paper on Access to abortion in India: Need to move from decriminalisation to an enabling legislation, October 2020.
- Pallavi Gupta published an article in The Wire on the National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill, 2020, November 2020.
- Sonali Randhawa published an article in The Wire on National Dental Commission Bill, February 2021.
- We submitted comments on the draft National Nursing and Midwifery Commission Bill, 2020, to the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India.

Enhancing Capabilities

Transformation is possible if policymakers, researchers & practitioners can conceptualize, design, and implement reforms. Our training programs, tailored to the Indian context, aim to build these capacities with a focus on knowledge and skill transfer through creating immersive experiences in real-world settings.

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India Health Policy & Systems Research Fellowship

An initiative of Health Systems Transformation Platform, the fellowship aims to enhance capacity of mid-career public health professionals in health policy and systems research (HPSR) methods to strengthen evidence-based policymaking in health. The fellowship is organized in collaboration with eminent partners. It is envisaged, every year the fellowship programme will identify twenty fellows and train them in HPSR methods along with practical experience of conducting a HPSR study.

> ***The fellowship is a blended training program, spread over a period of 18 months, comprising online, face to face modules, mentorship & implementation phase for conducting a HPSR study. The program trains the researcher about policies, contents and the processes. The researcher is empowered to identify the policy processes like agenda setting, listing of all the stakeholders and the power that they wield to generate evidence.***

Research with a systems perspective, that explores health issues within their specific contexts, is key for designing solutions for improved health outcomes. HPSR methods allow us to focus on the system as a whole and generate evidence for policymaking. Hence, the vision for strategically building capacity of researchers and practitioners in HPSR, culminated in the development of the India HPSR Fellowship program.

Our Partners

Fellowship Evolution

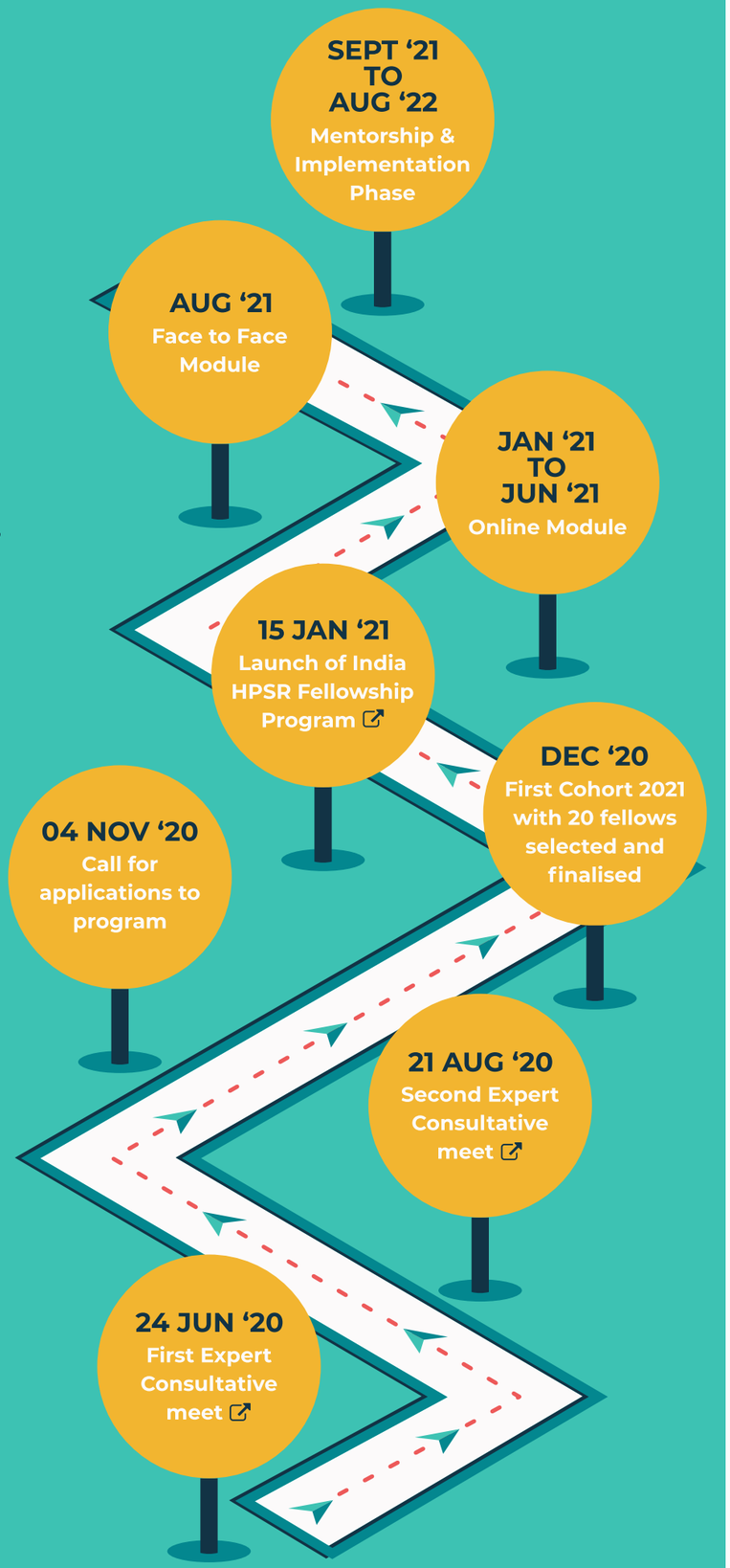
India HPSR fellowship program was inaugurated on 15th January 2021, by Shri Rajesh Bhushan, Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India and Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, World Health Organization.

"The fellowship ushers in a transformative change in Indian health systems as it engages policy makers and researchers to work together to develop research questions."

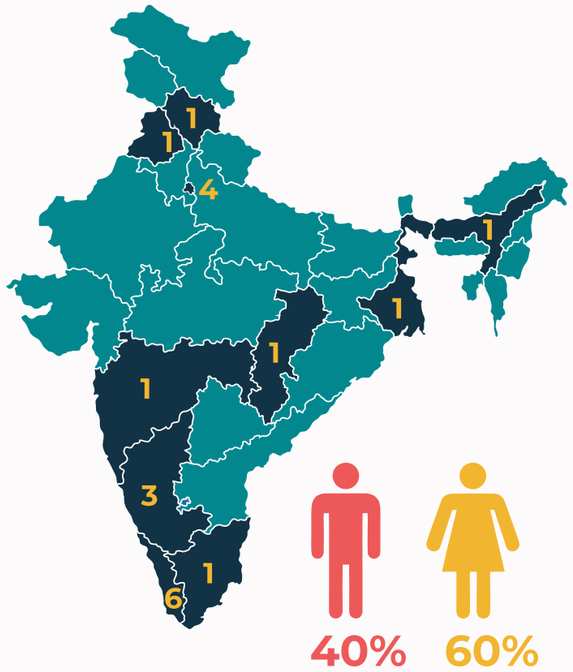
Sowmya Swaminathan
Chief Scientist, WHO

"This program aligns with the renewed interest in evidence-based research, that feeds into policymaking across interventions undertaken both by Union and State Governments."

Rajesh Bhushan
Secretary, MOHFW, GOI



Fellowship Cohort 2021



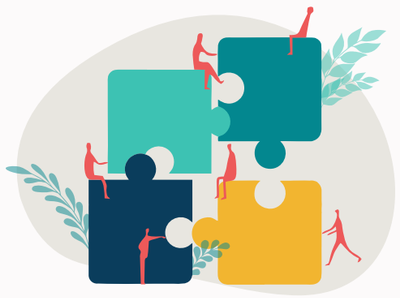
Fellowship Outline & Pedagogy

The fellowship is a blended training program, spread over a period of 18 months, comprising online, face to face modules, mentorship & implementation phase for conducting a HPSR study.

The online & face to face modules (6 months) provides a detailed overview of various health system frameworks, policy analysis, framing research questions & application of HPSR methods using a health systems, complexity, and equity lens for developing high value research proposals. By the end of this phase, the fellows will develop a problem area in health systems or health policy and formulate an HPSR research question using appropriate research designs.

During the mentorship & implementation phase (12 months), the fellows will conduct a HPSR study under the guidance of a mentor.

The curriculum and training plan was developed using a backward design. The pedagogy is learner-centred, keeping the participant at the core of all learning activities in the course.



Opinions & Publications

- **Sanjeev Kumar** authored a blog on financial & non-financial incentives to promote quality of care in the Indian health systems published in International Health Policies Blog in March 2021.

- **Vivek Panwar** authored an opinion piece on online healthcare platforms and their larger role in the Indian health systems published in The Wire in March 2021.

- **Rajeev Sadanandan** co-authored an opinion piece discussing the ethical challenges of engaging multiple stakeholders in participatory HPSR published in the BMJ Opinion in February 2021.

- **Vijayashree Yellappa** authored an opinion piece on the status of nursing education in India and ways of improving its quality, reach & standardisation published in The Hindu in December 2020.

- **Arun Tiwari** authored an opinion piece on analysis of the National Family Health Survey data to highlight India's progress towards Universal Health Coverage published in The Wire in December 2020.

- **Sudha Chandrasekhar** authored a case study on the role of stakeholder participation in amending the Karnataka Private Medical Establishment Act of 2017, in November 2020.

- **Rajeev Sadanandan** co-authored a research article on the conceptual framework and indicator inventory drawing upon existing evidence & experience for monitoring UHC published in PLOS One in August 2020.

- **Rajeev Sadanandan** co-authored a research article on The ORNATE India Project: United Kingdom–India Research Collaboration to tackle visual impairment due to diabetic retinopathy published in the Eye in May 2020.

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