

CHAPTER-6

MAJOR FINDINGS, POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusion

The evidence cited here conclusively demonstrates the multiple roles of healthcare workforce and media practitioners towards achieving the goals of Universal Health Care. The first part of the result presents a comprehensive snapshot of healthcare system in the peripheral region, followed by the role of healthcare workforce engaged in the region. In addition, the approach and functioning of news media is analysed in the current context of healthcare in peripheral region. Deeper into the analysis, the joint role of healthcare professionals with the media professionals can be an effective tool to address the prevailing healthcare inequity.

The study started with gauging the socio-economic conditions of the communities residing in rural regions bordering the international border with Bangladesh. It is pertinent to understand the healthcare status in remote peripheral region conditioned with several social determinants of health. The basic idea behind measuring the healthcare status and prevalent conditions in the remote areas of India is due to government initiatives towards 'healthcare for all'. The healthcare picture from the bordering region was found to be quite unlikely from the urban counterparts. The factors such as rough terrain, unavailability of all-weather roads, lack of adequate infrastructure and communication modes, largely hampers the reach of resources to the community members. At the same time, these factors impact the availability of healthcare workforce which directly influence the utilization and access of the healthcare services.

Several sets of dimensions that are underlined in this study are household wealth and housing conditions, age, and education of women which directly influence the access and utilization of the healthcare services. Individual household wealth was measured through systematic analysis of household amenities present at every house, which resembles their economic condition.

Furthermore, housing condition of the region is measure through availability of basic human necessities for a healthy life such as improved toilet facilities, clean drinking water, use of smokeless fuel for cooking, and adequate living space for every household member. Housing condition largely influence the extend of exposure towards potential diseases which further accentuate to the higher mortality and morbidity rate of any region. With increase in morbidity and mortality rate over home-borne diseases limits the resources for other crucial health services such as reproductive and childcare services.

Over the period of years, governmental interventions in India have primarily focused on the maternal and childcare. Structural changes have been undertaken primarily focusing on tackling the mortality ratio. The reproductive and childcare services in India have been a prime concern over the period of years. Interventions in the form of schemes and policies have saved lives of thousands of mothers and new borne every day. Despite the policy intervention at a large scale, the disparity persists and is reflected from the growing number of mortality ratios between rural and urban areas. Besides these rural-urban disparities, another pattern of disparity that has been visible in most of the low- and middle-income countries like India, is centre-peripheral disparity. Multiple factors are associated for the inconsistent in health outcome in Indian states. Lack of investment in health system infrastructure, implementation of welfare schemes, accountability towards community, community level and grassroot health workers training, incentive pattern for the health workers, and lack of communication links between the health workers and community members, together constitute to gap in centre and periphery health status.

The findings of this study point out the importance of healthcare workforce as a major stakeholder to ameliorate rural healthcare. Other than the clinical expertise, the healthcare workforce can effectively engage with the community members, direct immersion within the community, and understanding the community health needs. Other than that, actions like

working towards educating community on health and hygiene, inculcating healthy behaviour, and most crucial is making available to the community needs. The study also identified that training to the health workers on undertaking social responsibility is found to be crucial factor that contribute to the effective functioning of the healthcare. Furthermore, advocacy through effective use of media by healthcare workforce can have significant contribution towards their functioning. Healthcare workforce should practice both the internal and external means of communication. Internal communication is effective with the patients, whereas the external communication brings the policy and decision makers on board to focus the direction of policy towards improving healthcare sector.

The study also identified how the two different stakeholders of the community, with roles unlike from each other can coordinate and collaborate to effectively bring the disparity down. As already highlighted that reducing disparities require efforts and attentions by nation, state and local government, and policy design to systematically identify that communication can heighten the policy attention for health equity. Communication about health disparities in mass media comes from efforts to publicize findings about inequity through governmental efforts, network with journalists and editors to cover issues, and grassroots efforts to disseminate disparity-related messages. Coordinated effort of media and health workforce in dissemination of health disparity message is important for raising awareness of health disparities between social groups, mobilizing issues to advocate social change. Further, this effort can entails promoting support for policies that have potential to reduce health disparities. Through this study insights were provided to draw an agenda forward through media coverage of peripheral health setting, increasing public and media understanding of each other goals. Media advocacy program by the healthcare workforce should work toward providing reporters scientific information in simple terms, and resources to increase public dialogue about health disparities

in policy level solutions. Moreover, media professionals should critically disseminate health information to public, and focus on promote health journalism as vital for social change.

6.2 Major findings of the study

An overview of the major findings is briefly discussed as follows:

- The level of wealth-based inequality is significantly high in the bordering region of India. The households close to the border fence are more downtrodden than the communities close to the centre of the district. The survey revealed that communities with less wealth lacks improved housing facilities such as safe drinking water, hygiene toilet, and better housing conditions. The housing conditions of the community directly correlates with wealth of individual household. Existing literature stated that housing condition has direct impact on the health status of individual. Thereby, housing conditions and wealth of individual household has direct influence on the health outcome, that results in increase in morbidity and mortality rate.
- It is also pertinent to examine the effect of socioeconomic and demographic factors on the health outcomes of individuals resulting in under-utilization and inaccessibility of healthcare resources. The data revealed that wealthier household are less likely to utilize the public healthcare facilities, than the population from the poorer household. On the other hand, the beneficiaries for most healthcare schemes are the wealthier household rather than the household in need. Furthermore, utilization of healthcare facilities is more in poorer household members, but when it comes to access to health deliverables, poorer household has limited access to it. The gap in utilization and accessibility of services has significantly impacted the health outcome, which is also reflected from the National Family and Health Survey data. Hence, it is responsibility healthcare workforce to ensure equitable distribution and bridge the gap in utilization and accessibility of healthcare resources across the population.

- The study identified three primary factors influencing the functioning of healthcare workforce engaged in the public healthcare centre in the rural peripheral India. The three factors are Community Service and Engagement, Competency, and skills, and working for advocacy that would contribute to address the existing inequity in access and utilization of healthcare resources. The data revealed that the factor *Community service and engagement* affect 38 percent on the healthcare professionals functioning. It is reported that gender of healthcare professionals has a role to play in engagement with the community members. Engagement involves activities to improve social and economic conditions, community building, emphasizing doctor-patient relationship, and helping patients make informed health decision. Furthermore, it is being observed that healthcare providers practice facilitation and representational form of advocacy while engaging with the community.
- The study identified news media to be an important thread in advancing health equity combining along the role of healthcare workforce. It is found that the selection of health news is mostly driven by the perspective of media professionals, the complexities associated with presentation of health stories, and importance of the event for a larger section of society.

6.3 Policy Suggestions

The study elucidates the combining role of news media and healthcare workforce to ameliorate accessibility and utilization of healthcare services among the marginalised communities in bordering region. Here, few policy implications can be drawn based on the findings:

- The communities in the peripheral region significantly lack the basic amenities that limit the access to healthcare resources. The findings have corroborated that social conditioning and inadequate government intervention towards major health

determinants has significantly influenced the health outcome of the communities in bordering region of India. The systematic drawback attached to the communities in the peripheral region needs a more scientific approach that caters the health need of the communities.

- The results portray emerging need of smooth functioning of multiple stakeholders together in sync to address a single issue of inequality in healthcare. Engagement of healthcare workforce right from the ASHA workers to Medical Officers need to perform effectively and in synchronized way to address the unavailability and inaccessibility of healthcare services. It is the responsibility of the doctors to look after the health needs as well as ensure effective functioning of the ground level health workers that include ASHAs and Anganwadi workers. Although the Anganwadi workers do not come under the direct jurisdiction of the Medical Officer, but regular auditing and inspection can help ensure effective outcome in service delivery at grassroot level.
- The study illustrated the importance the community engagement, and advocacy role of healthcare professionals for better immersion into the community. The data revealed that increase in community engagement can positively change in the health seeking behaviour, resulting utilization of services. Involving the community members to participate in delivering the basic health amenities can help to achieve the expected outcome, thereby gaining confidence among the community members to utilize government healthcare services.
- Media is an important factor that influence all the stakeholders for a better functioning of healthcare machinery at the rural peripheral region. Effective reporting mechanism of the health news will positively change the communities' approach towards the public healthcare system. Furthermore, media significantly

plays an important role in engaging healthcare professionals in advocacy programme. It is pertinent for the healthcare professionals and media practitioners to work in sync to communicate the audience the importance of utilization of services. The executive and administrative bodies of health should attempt to integrate the implication to cater to the health needs of the community in peripheral region.

6.4 Limitation and Scope for Future Research

In the present context of the study, a detailed analysis on the status of overall healthcare facilities has not been possible. It is important to analyse the adult health in the peripheral region which will provide a holistic picture of the rural healthcare system in the peripheral region. The study is based on cross section data, and therefore presents a screenshot of a point of time. The present study could not carry out-in depth research to cover all the detail of stakeholders at different point of time. Measuring the effect of news media on health policy could be a better course of study in future.