

## Essence of ‘My Health, My Right’

IT is imperative to understand that our actions and the environment we live in affect our overall health. Being healthy is not just about following a strict lifestyle and not suffering from any disease or infection. It is much more than this, encompassing the overall well-being of an individual, including the physical, mental and social well-being.

The previous few years have clearly shown that we have overlooked our health system and healthy living. The COVID pandemic wreaked havoc worldwide and made us realise that we must be proactive in our actions to have an overall healthy environment to lead a happy and healthy life. The World Health Organization (WHO) states, “The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being”. However, this powerful message is too often ignored even though it significantly promotes the quality of life worldwide.

The more challenging situation is that we have countless threats to the right to the health of millions of people. The reasons are many, like death and disabilities due to diseases & disasters, lack of access to affordable and quality services, psychological distress, etc., all limit our actions to prioritise our health. Above all, we do not have clean air to breathe due to global environmental challenges.

Realising the dire situation that climate crisis is also a health crisis, researchers and decision-makers across the globe are reporting more and more about the effects of climate change on our health, raising concerns about the realisation of the right to health.

According to the WHO Council on the Economics of Health for All, at least 140 nations have constitutions that have health as a human right. Still, nations are not implementing laws guaranteeing the right to access health services.

However, Aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 3 — “Good Health and Well-being”, several initiatives have been taken globally to improve health outcomes. For example, according to the 2023 SDG Report, out of 200 countries, 146 have already achieved or are on track to achieve the SDG target for under-5 mortality. As a result of effective HIV treatment, AIDS-related deaths have fallen by 52 % since 2010, and 47 countries have eliminated one or more neglected tropical diseases. The report also suggested that investing in health systems is necessary to overcome and address long-standing shortcomings in healthcare.

Recently, India has also taken great strides towards improving healthcare by completing the Genome India Project (GIP) initial phase, which will provide a better understanding of the genetic diversity of Indian populations that influences health and illnesses. Such an achievement will also secure the right to health by enabling personalised healthcare and more efficient medical interventions.

Keeping in view health as a fundamental right of all, this year’s theme for World Health Day, “My Health, My Right”, serves as a strong reminder of the importance of one’s health and well-being. The theme emphasises the right to health for all to access quality healthcare and make informed decisions. The ‘My Health, My Right’ theme calls for a new focus on universal health equity and access to healthcare services and stresses the need for awareness, initiatives and policies to help prioritise one’s health rights and ensure a healthy life.

In view of the importance of health challenges, and on the occasion of World Health Day, *Science Reporter*, in its April issue, has given a special focus on Health. We hope our readers will find the issue informative.

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