

## AIR Spotlight: Health Priorities Under India's G20 Presidency

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio News on air. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation.

This article is about the discussion on: ‘**Health Priorities Under India's G20 Presidency**’.

### Participants:

- Dr Narendra Saini: Former Secretary General, Indian Medical Association
- Ishan Mittal: Anchor

**Context** - The 3rd Health Working Group meeting as a part of the G20 India Presidency took place in Hyderabad and focussed on health emergency prevention, preparedness and response with a focus on [antimicrobial resistance](#) and the One Health framework.

### Introduction

1st December 2022 marked a historic milestone for India as it took charge of the [G20](#) Presidency with the theme of ‘One Earth, One Family, One Future - Vasudhaiva kutumbakam’. India's G20 presidency presents a unique opportunity to voice the concerns of the Global South as the predecessor, Indonesia and the successor, Brazil of India in the G20 Troika, both are developing countries which will further highlight and reinforce the challenges facing the Global South.

### 3rd G20 Health Working Group (HWG)

The Covid pandemic was not restricted to one country only but affected the whole world, so there is a need to work collectively to combat diseases. During the pandemic, all the countries came together and overpowered the disease. The threat of the pandemic is far from over and the current need is to integrate the surveillance system of countries under the ‘[One Health](#)’ framework and strengthen it. India's G20 is propagating the theme “One Earth, One Family, One Future” which emphasises working together for a better future.

- Climate change increases the risk of emerging infectious diseases jumping from animals to humans and therefore, there is a need to prepare for all the health emergencies. Effective pandemic prevention, preparedness and response can be facilitated through continuous interventions in the health sector at the regional, national and global levels. The HWG meeting proposed the launch of a climate change and health hub to work on the interface of climate change and its impact on health.

- Antimicrobial resistance is another threat to humankind and is being perceived as another pandemic if appropriate measures are not taken. The whole world has to come together and promote judicious use of antimicrobials and also research on antimicrobials is needed. Research on antimicrobials is a costly affair and countries need to pull together resources for it.
- India's G20 Health Priorities also included strengthening cooperation in the pharmaceutical sector with a focus on availability and accessibility to safe, effective, quality affordable medical countermeasures -VTD (Vaccines, Therapeutics and Diagnostics).
- The HWG also focussed on promoting digital solutions and innovations to aid universal health coverage. Digital technologies can play an important role in achieving Universal Health Coverage and combating health emergencies. Digital health enables UHC through access to health care services by people regardless of their location and socioeconomic status through initiatives like telemedicine and mobile applications. It also facilitates UHC through the seamless exchange of health information amongst providers, systems, patients, etc. Digital health is a proven pathway to achieving Universal Health Coverage.

### **Vaccine Production in India**

India's capabilities in the manufacturing of vaccines came to the fore during the [Covid-19](#) pandemic. The world became witness to India's vaccine manufacturing prowess as India provided equitable access to resilient supply chains and logistics.

- India was certified polio-free in 2014.
- India has already been a dominant force in vaccines for diseases like measles, Bacillus-Calmette Guerin (BCG) and DPT (Diphtheria, Tetanus and Typhoid).
- During the pandemic, adhering to the core Indian philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, India supplied low-cost and high-quality vaccines to more than 100 countries.

G20 is a platform to share knowledge with other countries so that they can manufacture cost-effective vaccines in their own countries.

### **India - Pharmacy of the World**

India supplies low-cost and affordable generic drugs to millions of people across the globe. Indian pharmaceutical firms have been successful not only in meeting their domestic needs but also in achieving a leading position in the global pharmaceuticals landscape.

### **Medical Tourism in India**

Medical tourism can be a driver of 'One Health' initiatives, especially among G20 countries with India at the centre.

- Over the past decade, India has gained a reputation for providing high-quality medical service at low costs to medical tourists travelling across the globe.
- India has the best possible hospitals, the best equipment and the best experts to take care of high-end diseases, the treatment cost of which is very high in other countries.
- People are exploring medical treatment options in India and are coming not only from developing countries but also from developed nations of the world.

