Economic Development By Reducing The Burden Of Non-Communicable Diseases In India

Partha Sarathi Datta
Research Scholar, Biomedical Research Laboratory, Department of Anthropology, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal, India.

Abstract

The Indian economy is a developing mixed economy. It is the world’s seventh largest economy by GDP. India is growing faster than any other country (except China) globally. But, beside this, it faces significant challenges along with its opportunities for further growth in recent years. In India, the most common non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases etc. These NCDs are the major threat to public health and country’s economic growth & development. According to World Health organization (WHO), the leading modifiable risks factors associated with these NCDs are tobacco use, physical inactivity, overweight/obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, high blood glucose levels etc. In India, around 5.87 million deaths that account for 60% of all deaths occur due to NCDs. In South-East Asia Region of World Health Organization, more than two-third of total NCD related deaths has been shared by India only where cardiovascular diseases contribute to around 45% of all NCD deaths followed by chronic respiratory disease (22 %), cancers (12 %) and diabetes (3%).

In India, the prevalence of overweight and obesity increases in rapid pace in all sex and ages. The prevalence of uses of tobacco, which has been identified as a single largest risk factor for NCDs, is higher than the global prevalence of current tobacco uses. Beside this, among Indian population, per capita consumption of alcohol & sedentary lifestyle are increases day by day which are also responsible for this rapid increasing of NCDs in India. Thus, the household expenses for tackle these NCDs have been increasing since last two decades. In India, a large amount of people receive free treatment from Government state general hospitals where everything is given for free from diagnosis to medicine. The Government of India, expenses a lot
of revenue for healthcare mainly for NCDs, which may spend in other development projects. Therefore, to contribute in economic development, there are need an effective preventive strategy to reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases in India.

**Keywords:** Non-Communicable Disease, Economic Impact in India, Policy to overcome.

## INTRODUCTION

India, a country in South Asia, is the second-most populous country in the world. With over 1.3 billion people (more than 17% of world’s population); the economy of India is a developing mixed economy. In 2011, basis on a per capita income, India ranked 140th by nominal GDP. According to the experts, India is growing faster than any other country (except China) and it is also expected that India will be one of the world’s top three economic powers within the next 15 years. But, beside this, it faces significant challenges along with its opportunities for further growth in recent years.

### Non-Communicable Disease & Risk Factors

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) cause more deaths than all other causes combined globally. According to World Health organization (WHO), a total of 38 million deaths occurred due to NCDs out of 56 million total deaths worldwide. It is also expected that, this 38 million NCD related deaths will increase to 52 million by 2030 and most of these NCDs death will occurred in low and middle income countries. Since 2000, the number of NCD deaths has increased in every region in the world. WHO South-East Asia and Western Pacific Region are two regions, where NCD deaths have increased the most from 2000 to 2012.

There are various factors involved for rapid increasing of the NCDs in India. The most common non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, respiratory diseases including asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease etc. Thus these four NCDs are the major threat to public health, economic growth and country’s development. According to WHO, the leading
risks factors associated with these non-communicable diseases are tobacco use, physical inactivity, overweight & obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, high blood glucose levels etc.

**Burden of Non-Communicable Diseases in India**

In India, chronic non-communicable diseases have replaced communicable diseases at the most common cause of morbidity and mortality. According to the WHO global status report on Non-Communicable Diseases 2014, 60% of all deaths, that is around 5.87 million, occur due to NCDs in India and occurs mainly in mid and late adult ages. Rapid and unplanned urbanization, globalization, unhealthy and sedentary lifestyles are most common causes behind this. In South-East Asia Region of World Health Organization, more than two-third of total NCD related deaths has been shared by India only. Cardiovascular diseases contribute to around 45% of all NCD related deaths followed by chronic respiratory disease (22%), cancers (12%) and diabetes (3%).

According to the WHO global status report on Non-Communicable Diseases 2014, in India, the prevalence of tobacco smoking (23.6%) is higher than the global prevalence (22%). This report also revealed that, the prevalence of overweight and obesity are increasing rapidly in India among all sex and ages. As per WHO standards, in India, more than two-thirds of adolescents aged 11 to 17 years are physically inactive. Beside this, around 13% of adults are physically inactive nationwide. Hypertension is also common in Indian population. According to this report, the prevalence of hypertension has increased by 10% from 2010 to 2014, a span of 4 years in India.

Nearly one out of every ten person in India aged above 18 years has hyperglycemia also. Beside this, the report also estimated that the per capita consumption of alcohol in India is to be 5.2 liters which is significantly higher than the average consumption of alcohol in WHO South-East Asia Region.

In India, non-communicable diseases mainly cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancers are common even in rural areas and younger ages. A community based study from Kerala showed that the
prevalence of hypertension and diabetes are 36.2% and 20.6% respectively. This study also showed that the 45.2% men are consuming tobacco. In case of rural Kerala, 36.7% inhabitants are hypertensive. Now from southern to western part, a study conducted in rural Gujarat revealed that 52.7% men are smoking or chewing tobacco. But significantly, a study from northern Indian state Punjab showed that the 20% men are smokers. This study also recorded that, the prevalence of overweight and obesity is 28.6% and 12.8% respectively. Prevalence of hypertension is 40.1% and 31% of studied population are found with low levels of physical activity. Again, a study from West Bengal found that 58.7% people are engaged in sedentary work. This study also observed that urban females have high blood pressure (70.6%) than rural females (55.1%).

**Economic Impact of Non-Communicable Diseases in India**

Non-Communicable Diseases effects direct and indirectly on country’s economy and health systems as well as on the affected people and his or her family. NCDs are long term conditions that rob affected individuals of many productive years of their life. In India, from 1990 to 2010, the share of NCDs in total disease burden has increased from 31% to 45%. Health expenses incurred by households also increased from 31.6% in 1995-96 to 47.3% in 2004.

According to Popkin et al. (2001), Indian urban people and high income rural people are more prone to being overweight due to high intakes of dairy products and added sugar in their diet. For this reason, adult-onset diabetes is high in India. This study was aim to economically measure and project the costs of under nutrition and diet-related non-communicable diseases in 1995 and 2025 using WHO projections of diet-related non-communicable diseases mortality, body composition and dietary survey data, and national data sets of hospital costs for healthcare etc. This study shows that, in India, the costs of under nutrition will decline continuously but as because the non-communicable diseases are increasing in rapid pace, their costs projects almost similar economic costs of under nutrition and over nutrition by year 2025.
In 2007, Abegunde et al. estimates the burden of NCDs and the loss of economic output related with this NCDs mainly cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory diseases in 23 selected low and middle income countries where chronic diseases were responsible for half of the total disease burden in the year 2005. This study estimated that, an US$84 billion will be lost only for cardiovascular diseases and diabetes from those 23 countries between 2006 and 2015 if nothing is done to reduce the risk of chronic NCDs. Beside this, an estimated 24 million deaths and $8 billion will save over the next 10 years in those 23 countries, if they would able to reduce the chronic disease death rates by an additional 2% per year.

**Indian Healthcare System**

In India, both the central and state governments run the healthcare system for its people. State government offers healthcare services and health education, while technical services are administered by the central government. In India, each district headquarters have one or more government state general hospitals where everything is given for free. A large amount of people, mainly from low and middle income families have been taking these government facilities in healthcare from diagnosis to medicines.

In 2005, the Government of India was launched the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), in order to address lack of medical facilities in rural areas and to provide effective healthcare to rural people nationwide with special focus on some community development blocks which have weak healthcare infrastructure. Beside this, several urban healthcare programs are also run by state and central government in India. In 2013, The National Urban Health Mission (NUHM) was launched by the Government of India to provide quality healthcare to urban people. In India, the urban populations are growing rapidly.

As per census 2001, more than 28 crore people live in urban areas and this urban population has significantly increased to near 38 crore within 10 years according to census 2011. If this trend continues at
the present rate, a huge number of people will be in urban regions within next few years.

India has a vast healthcare system. Public and private, are two major types of healthcare delivery systems in India. According to the Indian constitution, the Government of India guarantees free healthcare for all its citizens. But, due to various causes there remain many differences in quality between public and private healthcare in India. Beside this, the scenario of healthcare in rural areas is vastly different from the sub-urban and urban areas throughout the country. Rural areas often suffer from various issues like hospital with Operation Theater, shortage of physician and other healthcare providers, lack of medicines, water and sanitation, roads etc.

According to National Sample Survey (NSS) 2014 data, 42% hospitalization cases were done in public hospitals and 58% in private. On the other hand, in urban areas cases were 32% in public and 68% in private. Therefore, NSS findings show a decline in hospitalization cases at the public hospitals in India.

Policy to Overcome

In India, the Government expenses huge revenue for healthcare mainly for NCDs. It may spend in other developmental sectors. On the other hand, in case of family level, the expenses for medication may uses in reduction of poverty which is directly involved to the economy of the country. Now, since hypertension, high blood glucose, abnormality in lipid profile and other related conditions starts at middle and late adult age in life, prevention should begin during early ages in life, when a modification in lifestyle can reduce the incidence of NCDs.

Therefore, there are need an effective preventive strategy and health awareness programs to improve the unhealthy life style of the residents of this country, so that we can contribute in economic development by reducing the non-communicable diseases in India in this 21st century.
References


