

HEALTH DIGEST

Fortnightly E-Publication

EXCLUSIVE NEWS

SOCHARA SILVER JUBILEE

Marathwada's dry story

is featured on 'Down To Earth', an environment and science website, relates to us the severity of the drought being experienced in Maharashtra. Discuss about How poor policies pushed the region into one of its worst droughts ever?

The previous severe drought witnessed by the region in 1972 only resulted in shortage of food grain and ground water was available at six meters; today's drought's severity in 2016 is evident from the fact that bore wells even at 244 meters have dried up.



Village women in Latur district walk over two km at least twice a day to fetch water. On the way, they have to climb a hillock. (Photographs: Nidhi Jamwal)

Harangul villagers stand in the dried-up stream they have deepened. They have over-excavated the stream bed that may cause more problems. A petition has been filed in Bombay High Court against such unscientific river rejuvenation works being carried out in Maharashtra.



This issue of Health Digest highlights environment and climate change, an important determinant of health that has become a primary issue for discussion on various media platforms, from discussion forums and blogs to newspaper articles and television shows. Environment and climate change is and as it should be, on everyone's mind.

[Millets and Goitre, April 22, 2016 by Dwiji](#)
[– by Dr. Adithya Pradyumna, MBBS, MPH \(London\), PGDip \(Environment\)](#)
[editing assistance: Dwiji Guru.](#)

The arguments presented regarding millets being goitrogenic, typically rely both on population level survey studies of goitre and on lab based biochemical studies. There are two stages to the argument:



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Insure farmers against climate change



'Insure farmers against climate change' published in The Hindu, highlights the need and ways in which we can enable our farmers to become resilient to climate and its impacts; change in agricultural policy being one of them.

How India's agricultural policy has made us structurally vulnerable to climate change? Farmers tried everything to adapt — growing a mix of dry crops during the kharif season, while interspersing the winter rabi wheat with cash crops like chickpea and mustard. They invested heavily in borewells, tractors, threshers and seeds and fertilizers through formal and informal credit.

It is not just air; even noise pollution is high in Bengaluru

'It is not just air, even noise pollution is high in Bengaluru' published in The Hindu raises awareness about another form of environmental pollution that most often remains ignored and unaddressed — 'Noise pollution' is rising and is of particular relevance in urban cities like Bengaluru.

Air pollution levels monitored by the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) during 2015–16 show that the respirable suspended particulate matter (RSPM) values exceeded

It is no surprise that residential areas are beating industrial ones in pollution levels.

Nitin Sheshadri, a resident of Koramangala

the national ambient air quality standards (60 µg/m³) in the range of 20 to 215 per cent.

The RSPM levels near two hospitals in the city — Victoria and the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health Hospital in NIMHANS — had also exceeded the desired levels by 66 and 88 per cent, respectively.

Discarded medicines are bitter pills for environment

Karnataka is said to generate a whopping 82 tonnes of biomedical waste each day that includes expired, spurious and substandard drugs, and pills, syringes and syrups. According to the Biomedical Rules 2016, expired or discarded medicines, which include pharmaceutical waste such as antibiotics, cytotoxic drugs and 'contaminated' items (glass or plastic ampoules, among other things) have to be returned to the manufacturer or supplier for incineration or sent to a common biomedical waste treatment facility. But in reality, they are dumped in drains and water bodies. Discarded medicines that do make it to a scientific disposal facility reach one of three centres in Bengaluru (Kanakapura Road, Hosakote, Dobbaspet), where they are incinerated. B. Ramanath Rai, Minister for Forest, Environment and Ecology, said three more centres will come up in Kolar, Chikkaballapur and Bengaluru Rural.

Discarded medicines are bitter pills for environment' published in The Hindu highlights the need for awareness and action on ways in which medicines and drugs are discarded and are increasingly polluting our waterbodies.



Bring the missing midwives back

The Hindu has also published an articles related to the significance of investing in our healthcare workforce and building capacity of particular cadres of healthcare workers. For example, bringing Midwives back and including them in professional health care services.

The natural birth process is generally safe for both mothers and babies. However, to try natural labour while certain risk factors and medical conditions are present may be dangerous. When medically indicated, caesarean sections save lives. On the other hand, unnecessary caesareans carry with them the risks of major surgery and premature births, without any commensurate health benefits to the mother.

Staff cut likely to impact HIV programme in Karnataka

The Hindu has also published articles that the impacts that staff cuts can have on national health programmes that include the HIV prevention services.

Patients visiting the 86 Integrated Counselling and Testing Centres (ICTCs), where the 172 contractual employees were posted, will now have to depend on the services of counsellors from neighbouring ICTCs. This is likely to increase the patient dropout rate. These centres

were integrated with the National Health Mission in October 2009 after the National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) discontinued funding for the centres. They have now been left in the lurch as the NHM funding (which was only for salary component) for the centres has not been approved this year.

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