



Release of the First Round of Research Findings | Analysis of Parliament Questions on Population & Health

World Population Day, 11 July 2015

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The world population crossed the 5 billion mark on 11 July in 1989. This day, since then, is being observed as the World Population Day.

IAPPD organized comprehensive desk research is under way, analyzing the quantum and trends of the Parliament questions raised by the elected leaders on the population, health and associated issues, particularly for the years 2013/14 and 2014/15. The initial findings of this research are being released to mark this year's World Population Day.

**Indian Association of
Parliamentarians on
Population &
Development**

**1/6, Sri Institutional Area,
Khel Gao'n Road,
New Delhi – 110049**

Telephone: 11-41656661, 41656668,
41656676

Fax: 00-91-11-41656660

Email: iappd@airtelmail.in

Web: www.iappd.org

Questions raised during “Question Hour” in the Parliament are reflective of concerns of elected representatives. IAPPD has been conducting desk research on the Parliament Questions pertaining to Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) to analyze the quantum and trends to understand the policy focus and commitment of the elected leaders on health and population issues. The initial results of the comparative analysis of Parliament Questions on health and population, for the year 2013/14 - the last year of the UPA government and the year 2014/15 - the first year of the NDA government, are being released on the eve of this year’s World Population Day i.e. 11th July, 2015.

Each year, the IAPPD observes the World Population Day through a variety of advocacy and campaign activities. While this year the technical board of the body decided to use this opportunity in collecting evidence, through research, for reflecting on the substantive issues of population and health being discussed and debated on the floors of both the houses of the parliament. While the current research is underway and is expected to be published by mid-August, the initial findings and major results are being released on this World Population Day.

A total of 721 and 672 questions were raised by MPs in the Lok Sabha during 2013-14 and 2014-15 respectively while 672 and 826 questions were raised by the MPs in the Rajya Sabha from the MoHFW during the same period of time (Table 1) indicating a decline in number of Parliament Questions in Lok Sabha and increase in Rajya Sabha.

Table 1: Number of Parliament Questions for MoHFW

Categories	Lok Sabha				Rajya Sabha			
	2013-14		2014-15		2013-14		2014-15	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Health Infrastructure	403	55.9	363	54.0	375	55.8	405	49.0
Population Related Issues	29	4.0	30	4.5	45	6.7	55	6.7
Health Policies/Programmes	99	13.7	89	13.2	81	12.1	102	12.3
Budgets/Grants/Assistance	21	2.9	16	2.4	39	5.8	43	5.2
Health Status	155	21.5	136	20.2	120	17.9	200	24.2
Others	14	1.9	38	5.7	12	1.8	21	2.5
Total	721	100.0	672	100.0	672	100.0	826	100.0

Table 2: Political Party wise Number of Questions Per MP for MoHFW

S.No.	Party	2013-14			2014-15		
		Lok Sabha	Rajya Sabha	Total	Lok Sabha	Rajya Sabha	Total
1	DMK	1.9	7.4	3.5		8.3	8.3
2	NCP	1.6	4.3	2.8	3.0	4.8	3.9
3	SS	1.9	5.3	2.8	1.9	11.7	3.3
4	CPI(M)	1.6	2.9	2.1	1.2	5.1	3.2
5	SP	0.9	2.8	1.4	1.4	3.6	3.1
6	BJD	2.3	2.1	2.2	1.1	8.1	2.9
7	JDU	1.4	3.8	2.1	0.5	3.1	2.7
8	INC	1.0	2.4	1.4	1.5	3.1	2.5
9	Others	1.6	1.1	1.4	1.9	3.6	2.3
10	AIADMK	3.7	3.4	3.6	1.4	4.7	2.1
11	IND	0.4	3.3	1.7	1.0	2.6	2.1
12	TDP	0.0	4.2	1.9	1.4	3.8	2.1
13	BJP	1.6	3.5	2.1	1.2	2.5	1.4
14	NOM		0.5	0.8		0.7	0.7

Analysis of questions raised by different political parties in the two houses reveals that the regional parties like DMK, NCP, Shiv Sena, CPI (M), SP, BJD and JDU were more active in asking health and population related questions in both the houses as compared to the two national parties; INC and BJP. INC was more active compared to the BJP in this regards during the two years under study. Further, the opposition party is far more active in asking questions than the ruling party, e.g. INC asked more questions in both houses during 2014-15 while BJP asked more questions in 2013-14 when they were in opposition.

Although population stabilization is a major challenge for India, only a small proportion of the questions (only 4-6 per cent during 2013-14 and 2014-15 in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) were related to this important national concern of growing population that negates the development and growth in India as a whole. Of the total questions raised, more than half were related to the health infrastructure which included medicines and drugs, medical institutions, health care facilities, health care manpower, research and development etc. Health status such as morbidity, polio, HIV/AIDS etc. formed another one-fifth of the total questions. Population related issues such as population growth; population stabilization etc. were thrust of only a small number of the parliament questions.

There were also questions related to HIV/AIDS. The question ranged from the demographic distribution of HIV/AIDS patients across section of the society to the discrimination faced by these patients. The MPs raised questions with regard to accessibility of treatment facilities especially with respect to the Third-Line Treatment and RTA; the initiatives (programmes and policies) of the government and NACO for curbing the AIDS case. Due to the stigma and prejudice associated with the Virus, the MPs sought response of the government concerning protection of their rights, especially right to health, creating awareness and their rehabilitation and passage of HIV/AIDS bill that would enable their inclusion in the main stream.

With the improving relations with the United States as well as with other developed countries, MPs also sought detailed information about the nature of the US assistance given to India in field of Mother and Child Health care. Questions were raised on the RCH facilities including immunization programs in the new state of Telangana so that the new state is not at disadvantageous level due to its recent origin. During the winter session of Rajya Sabha 2014-2015, questions related to sterilization were in fore-front mainly because of the Bilaspur Sterilization Tragedy. The percentage of sterilization especially that of women as birth control measures, its effectiveness and its implications for women health, incentives given to ASHA workers on promoting sterilization as birth control measures etc. were the type of issues raised by the MPs. There were also questions such as the total number of deaths due to sterilization annually, conducting sterilization procedure without appropriate and adequate facilities in sterilization camps, government's initiative to probe Bilaspur sterilization case, steps to curb illegal sterilization camps and compensation given due to death caused by the sterilization.

The miniscule population related issues that were raised in the Parliament during 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 were largely related to the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH), population stabilization and HIV/AIDS. Unfortunately, the questions on the national program, policies and budget, which should be their major role, were accorded the lower priority in both the defined periods.

The Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IAPPD) is a UN-ECOSOC empaneled national level autonomous Non-Profit Promotional Organization established in 1978 under Societies/Trusts Registration Act by a select group of parliamentarians from both the houses (Rajya Sabha & Lok Sabha) of the Parliament irrespective of their party-affiliations. With the support of the Japanese parliamentarians, through Tokyo based APDA (The Asian Population and Development Association) and UNFPA, the IAPPD was constituted with a goal of involving the Elected Representatives (ERs) in moderating the pace of population growth for a dynamic and sustained social and economic development.

For any technical and research based information:
Dr. Abhay Kumar, Member, Technical Board, IAPPD
+91-9711404064/abhayjnu@gmail.com

For general inquiry about the IAPPD:
Mr. Manmohan Sharma, Executive Secretary, IAPPD
On the given landline numbers or +91-9810030308
