Overview
The Harvard School of Public Health India Health Partnership is a groundbreaking initiative building on 60 years of collaboration with institutional partners in India, and leverages our shared legacy of research, policy, and advocacy to improve the health of the people of India. The Partnership brings together all HSPH initiatives focused on India within an innovative and enduring enterprise that facilitates collaboration between HSPH and Indian institutions, faculty and students, and engages others across Harvard and India in efforts to advance public health. The Partnership is at the vanguard of models for global partnerships to improve the public health of communities around the world.

Background: The Paradox of Public Health in India
India has undergone enormous development in recent years. For more than a decade, it has experienced record-breaking economic growth accompanied by significant reductions in poverty. Between 2000 and 2013, infant mortality rates fell from 64 to 45 per 1000 live births, the maternal mortality ratio decreased from 390 to 200 per 100,000 live births, and life expectancy increased from 61 to 65 years.

Despite this progress, India faces persistent and daunting public health challenges and is unlikely to fulfill many of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. According to the World Bank, non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, and chronic respiratory diseases account for 62% of the disease burden in India. Child malnutrition remains alarmingly high (50% higher than in sub-Saharan Africa) despite significant public investment over decades. Health disparities exist within and across India’s numerous states and in both urban and rural communities, and poor health is strongly associated with social and economic disparities and gender discrimination. Despite government financed health insurance programs that are increasing coverage, private out-of-pocket payments for health in India account for two-thirds of total household spending, creating physical, social, and financial burdens that fall most heavily on India’s poor.

A History of Partnerships in India
Since the 1950s, HSPH has collaborated with Indian governmental agencies, academic institutions and local organizations in research, educational, and action programs to improve India’s health. Diverse partners include The Public Health Foundation of India, St. John’s Medical University and St. John’s Research Institute, India’s International Institute for Population Studies, The Sri Chitra Tirunal Institute, The Tata Institute of Social Sciences, The Translational Health and Science Technology Institute, The Centre for Health Research and Development, and development agencies active in India including USAID, the World Bank, the U.K. Department for International Development. Partnerships with action groups drive strategic change in humanitarian relief, gender, hospital reform, child protection, media and communications.

Today, HSPH faculty and research associates from nearly every department are working with Indian partners across the subcontinent to address areas critical to India’s public health. HSPH and partners work to reform the country’s health system, study the impact of urbanization, improve childbirth safety, improve maternal and child nutrition, address the risks and costs of non-communicable diseases, improve HIV/AIDS communications, investigate the impact of aging on Indians, conduct research to prevent type 2 diabetes, and improve education and health among Indian girls in rural areas.

The HSPH–India Health Partnership
The HSPH-India Health Partnership improves health in India through joint public health research, teaching, and policy and action initiatives as well as by strengthening public health leadership. The Partnership enhances and accelerates the impact of collaborations with India by making new knowledge and results more widely known by increasing outreach and dissemination. It creates a sustainable capacity for shared learning and leverages resources at HSPH, Harvard, and in India, in order to:

- Increase public awareness of progress and discovery in public health
- Strengthen and expand diverse HSPH-India collaborations
- Develop new and innovative research and educational initiatives that achieve health and health equity
- Build the capacity of the next generation of public health leaders in India, and
- Enhance policy to improve health across India

Conclusion
On rare occasions, opportunities present themselves for exponential change. The HSPH-India Health Partnership is at just such a crossroad. Our sustained collaboration with Indian partners for over half a century and the current rapid changes in health systems and policies position us to jointly test, evaluate and disseminate strategies that can be applied globally. We must proceed urgently. Good health is paramount to productivity, and both are central to a strong economy. India’s rapid growth can be leveraged for greater impact with strong public health leadership. HSPH is proud to strengthen our collaboration with our Indian partners to improve the health of the people of India, and we look forward to new successes with the greatest anticipation.

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India Health Partnership

The HSPH-India Health Partnership supports and strengthens collaborative exchange between HSPH and Indian institutions, faculties and students while engaging others in India and across Harvard in efforts to advance public health. Specific objectives are:

- Strengthen strategic vision and direction for collaborations between Indian partners and HSPH;
- Facilitate new and existing partnerships and collaborations;
- Enable learning and capacity development across diverse HSPH-India collaborations, leveraging current efforts in a time and cost-efficient manner; and
- Provide communications outreach to increase impact of HSPH-India activities.

Partnership Activities

Annual Partners Symposia to address urgent public health challenges, facilitate global exchange of ideas, and share best practices. Meet alternately in India and Boston with students, investigators, and industry representatives.

Technical Meetings with Stakeholders in India and Boston to review current research, generate policy recommendations, leverage additional resources, and produce briefings and new proposals.

Student Programs and Exchanges to stimulate careers among India’s next generation of public health leaders.
- Winter field course in India for HSPH graduate students
- Summer research internships in Boston for Indian graduate students.
- Scholarship and Fellowships for Indian public health professionals in DrPH and MPH degree programs

Dean’s Innovation Incubator Pilot Projects to identify high risk/high impact research through competitive grants for early career investigators.

Partnership Web Portal to facilitate access to information, engage interested groups, post research and training initiatives, and support networking among HSPH and Indian partners.

Communications to disseminate discoveries and innovations.

Landmark relationship with India’s Ministry of Health and Family Welfare expands quality education of public health practitioners

1. Strengthening Public Health Education in India
Unmet demand for quality public health education is growing. HSPH assists Indian schools of public health by:

- Creating new masters of public health (MPH) degree programs at leading medical institutions in Jodhpur, Puducherry and Raipur;
- Providing online courses such as Biostatistics and Epidemiology through HarvardX, and assisting Indian faculty to develop advanced courses in India.

2. Leadership Development in Indian States
States in India command most government health resources and have potential to transform health system through leading-edge policies and strategies. HSPH and Indian partners increase capacity of senior health leaders and advisors by:

- Preparing a cohort of state-level advisors with advanced knowledge and skills to support health reform;
- Strategically engaging state ministers in the program’s leadership and strategy development.
- Disseminating health system innovations.

3. Strengthen Health Systems Performance
Access to health care is expanding rapidly in India, and systems underperform in terms of quality, effectiveness and equity. HSPH helps health care organizations with innovations including:

- Applying state of the art methods and metrics to improve hospital quality, and expanding primary care to vulnerable populations.

Applied Research Priorities in India

The Partnership expands the impact of HSPH’s 60-year history of applied research collaborations in India.

Maternal and Child Health Implementing and testing childbirth safety programs to reduce deaths and improve health of mothers and infants, including checklists; examining effectiveness of nutritional supplements; and encouraging positive communications about vaccinations.

Tobacco Control Leading tobacco cessation and prevention programs and preventing disease associated with tobacco use, starting with the “India Learning Network” campaign to promote tobacco-free workplaces, quit lines, school-based models, internet smoking cessation programs.

Health Care Communication Translating knowledge about individual and public health to influence practices and policies, including using social media and mobile phone apps.

Nutrition Supporting more Indian graduate students to dedicate careers on reducing the public health burden of nutritional diseases.

Healthy Aging Examining social, economic and health challenges faced by an aging Indian population, such as studying the role of nutrition and lifestyle on cardiovascular disease.

Fighting Diabetes Preventing the growing epidemic of Type 2 diabetes through healthy diet options and reducing other risk factors.

Rural Education Researching educational opportunities for adolescents, particularly girls, as a way to improve health and welfare.

Urbanization Examining the impact of growing urbanization on health of India’s people.

Health Care Financing Getting more health for the money in public programs.