

## Community Information on Healthcare Services in India

**Vision:** All information regarding healthcare services in India is available in easily accessible forms catering to the needs of different user groups.

**Mission:** To make information regarding healthcare services in India freely available to all through different communication channels irrespective of language, literacy, location, asset ownership or any other barriers.

**Background:** During our work in the field we often face the difficulty of knowing the closest healthcare facilities available in an area – the nature of the facility (Government or Private), the types of treatment available (systems of medicines and the specialisations available), the kind of infrastructure and facilities available, the staff profile, the cost of treatment (free or paid), and so on. We face the same trouble whether we are searching for a hospital in case of an emergency, or looking for the nearest blood bank or pharmacy, or trying to locate the nearest Ayurvedic professional or hospital, or finding the nearest HIV/ AIDS counselling and testing centre.

**Solution:** The data-sets available with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare at the Centre as well as in the states can be used to build a GIS based map of healthcare services in India with all the above information linked to it. The data on the map should be searchable through a user-friendly interface by locating on map or by using the name of place (including localities within villages, towns or cities) or by using the pin-code. The user-interface linked to the data should be available on the world wide web (internet), through interactive-voice-response (IVR) for telephones, and SMS facility and applications (apps) for mobile phones.

Once the data-sets available in the Department of Health and Family Welfare are linked to the map/app, the data-sets can be expanded to include private recognised facilities and practitioners (including Ayurveda, Homeopathy, Siddha, Unnani, etc.). More information such as contact numbers, route map, costs of consultation and common procedures, and so on can be subsequently added to allow users to make informed choices. In due course of time, users should be able to add healthcare facilities (including private) which will be included in the data after due verification. The health information in each area can also be integrated into the system for use by people who want to know the health situation in their area, or for organisations to use in planning their work. Ultimately the system should become the central information store-house for any health-services user in the country to visit before making healthcare related decisions. It should also be available through a single website/ URL and mobile app and single telephone number across the country Eg. 107 (available in the local language of each state/ region + Hindi + English). Private website content developers should be allowed to use the data in the server to customise it for their clientele, provided it is given unconditionally and free of cost with due credits to the owners.

**Potential uses:** The uses are manifold. In addition to providing reliable information for seekers of healthcare, it would also empower the community in monitoring if the infrastructure/ services/ staff mentioned in the database are actually present on the ground. This would aid immensely in improving the availability of healthcare in addition to improving accountability in the healthcare system of India.