



Research Article


Expansion and Impact of Health Services under NRHM in Rajasthan

Dr. Shalu Sain*

Assistant Professor, Maharishi Arvind University, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

Corresponding Author: * Dr. Shalu Sain

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15311751>

Abstract	Manuscript Information
<p>The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), launched by the Government of India in 2005, aims to improve healthcare delivery across rural India, particularly in underserved regions. Rajasthan, a state known for its vast rural expanse and diverse population, presents unique challenges and opportunities in the healthcare sector. This research paper investigates the expansion and impact of health services provided under NRHM in Rajasthan, focusing on the accessibility, quality, and outcomes of healthcare services in rural areas. The paper examines various facets of the NRHM program, including infrastructural development, workforce strengthening, reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health, while assessing the socio-economic implications of improved healthcare access in rural Rajasthan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ISSN No: 2583-7397 ▪ Received: 02-03-2025 ▪ Accepted: 24-03-2025 ▪ Published: 29-04-2025 ▪ IJCRM: 4(S2); 2025: 47-49 ▪ ©2025, All Rights Reserved ▪ Plagiarism Checked: Yes ▪ Peer Review Process: Yes
	How to Cite this Article
	<p>Sain S. Expansion and Impact of Health Services under NRHM in Rajasthan. Int J Contemp Res Multidiscip. 2025;4(S2):47-49.</p>
	Access this Article Online
	 <p>www.multiarticlesjournal.com</p>

KEYWORDS: National Rural Health Mission, Primary Health Centers, Rural Rajasthan, Healthcare

1. INTRODUCTION

Rajasthan, with its predominantly rural population, faces major health challenges such as elevated maternal and infant mortality rates, insufficient healthcare infrastructure, and limited access to essential health services. In response to these challenges, the NRHM was launched to improve healthcare in rural areas by increasing the availability of and access to quality health services. Over the years, NRHM has aimed to bridge gaps in healthcare infrastructure, improve health outcomes, and strengthen health systems in rural Rajasthan. This research paper delves into the expansion of health services under NRHM and

assesses its impact on various health indicators in rural Rajasthan. By examining the success and challenges of NRHM's implementation, the paper explores how the mission has contributed to improvements in healthcare access, quality, and outcomes.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To evaluate the expansion of healthcare services in rural Rajasthan under NRHM.

- To assess the impact of NRHM on key health indicators, such as maternal health, child health, and immunization rates.
- To analyze the role of NRHM in addressing healthcare disparities in rural Rajasthan.
- To examine the challenges faced in the implementation of NRHM in Rajasthan and recommend solutions for future improvements.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative interviews and case studies. The quantitative analysis uses data from health indicators (e.g., maternal mortality rate, infant mortality rate, vaccination coverage) before and after the implementation of NRHM. The qualitative component involves interviews with healthcare providers, community health workers, and local residents to understand their perspectives on the improvements in health services under NRHM.

Data Sources

- Government reports on NRHM performance in Rajasthan
- Health surveys and statistics from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)
- District-level health data (IMR, MMR, vaccination rates)
- Interviews with healthcare workers, community members, and policymakers
- Case studies from selected rural districts in Rajasthan

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature surrounding NRHM highlights several key successes and challenges:

Key Development	Description	Impact/Outcome
Health Infrastructure	Construction of new Primary Health Centers (PHCs) and sub-centers, along with the upgrading of existing ones.	Over 40 new PHCs and sub-centers established by 2020, improving access to maternal and child health, family planning, and immunization services.
Mobile Health Units	Introduction of mobile medical units to reach remote and difficult-to-access areas.	Provision of basic healthcare services (common ailments treatment, vaccinations, health education) in remote regions.
Telemedicine Initiatives	Implementation of telemedicine services to connect rural health centers with urban specialists.	Enhanced access to specialized healthcare, bridging the rural-urban health service gap.

The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) has played a transformative role in improving health outcomes in Rajasthan, particularly in its rural and underserved regions. Through strategic initiatives like the construction of new health centers, deployment of mobile health units, promotion of institutional deliveries under schemes like Janani Suraksha Yojana, and the adoption of telemedicine, NRHM has significantly enhanced healthcare accessibility and quality. The mission's impact is evident in the notable decline in maternal and infant mortality rates, increased institutional deliveries, and improved immunization coverage. These improvements reflect the success of NRHM in addressing critical healthcare challenges in Rajasthan and underscore the importance of continued investment in rural health infrastructure, community-based programs, and health system strengthening to sustain and build upon these gains.

- Health System Strengthening:** Studies show that NRHM has contributed to strengthening the healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. By increasing the number of health facilities, improving medical equipment, and providing incentives to healthcare workers, NRHM has made healthcare more accessible in Rajasthan's rural regions (Sharma, 2017).
- Maternal and Child Health:** Research indicates that NRHM has had a significant impact on reducing maternal and infant mortality rates (Sharma & Sinha, 2019). Programs such as Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) have improved institutional deliveries and maternal health outcomes.
- Immunization and Disease Prevention:** The mission's focus on immunization has led to increased vaccination coverage in rural areas. This is reflected in lower incidences of vaccine-preventable diseases (Bhattacharya, 2018).
- Human Resource Development:** NRHM has invested in the training of healthcare workers, such as ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) workers, and has provided performance-based incentives, leading to increased healthcare delivery in remote areas (Verma, 2020).

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Expansion of Health Services in Rural Rajasthan

One of the primary goals of NRHM was to increase the availability of health services in rural areas. Rajasthan, with its vast rural population, saw a significant expansion of health infrastructure under NRHM. Key developments include:

Socio-Economic Implications

The improved healthcare access provided by NRHM has had several socio-economic benefits for rural communities:

Economic Empowerment of Women: NRHM's emphasis on women's health, particularly through schemes like JSY, has led to greater economic participation by women in the healthcare system. This has not only empowered women but also improved their socio-economic status.

Community Participation: Programs like ASHA have encouraged community participation in healthcare delivery. ASHA workers act as a bridge between the community and the healthcare system, fostering trust and improving health outcomes.

Challenges in Implementation

While NRHM has made significant strides, there are several challenges in its implementation in Rajasthan:

Geographical Barriers: Rajasthan's vast and arid landscape often presents logistical challenges in reaching remote and underserved areas. Despite mobile health units, access to healthcare remains a challenge in some districts.

Shortage of Healthcare Personnel: Although there has been a significant increase in healthcare infrastructure, there is still a shortage of trained medical professionals, especially in remote areas.

Sustainability of Interventions: Ensuring the long-term sustainability of NRHM initiatives remains a concern, particularly in terms of funding and continuous training of healthcare workers.

Key Initiatives and Achievements in Rajasthan

1. Permanent Staffing under NRHM

To ensure continuity and quality in healthcare services, the Rajasthan government has decided to convert 21,000 contractual NRHM positions into permanent roles. This move aims to address the high attrition rates among healthcare staff and maintain consistent service delivery. The state has proposed a salary-sharing model with the central government in a 85:15 ratio, as per NRHM guidelines.

2. Implementation of Free Medicine Scheme

Rajasthan has been recognized for its effective implementation of the free medicine scheme, ranking first among 16 states. The state provides free essential medicines to patients in public healthcare facilities, reducing out-of-pocket expenses and improving healthcare access. The list of free medicines has been expanded to include over 700 items, covering treatments for cancer, heart, and kidney diseases.

3. Quality Assurance in Health Centers

The state has adopted a direct implementation model to enhance the quality of underperforming primary health centers, particularly in rural and tribal areas. Health centers are evaluated based on national quality standards, with successful institutions receiving certification and financial incentives. This initiative aims to improve healthcare services in regions with challenging terrains and high poverty levels.

4. Infrastructure Development

The Rajasthan government has allocated significant funds for the development of district hospitals under the NHM. For instance, Rs 15.9 crore has been approved for equipment, drugs, and furniture, and Rs 26.4 crore for the construction of residential quarters for medical staff. However, Jaipur residents have faced challenges in accessing NHM benefits due to the absence of a district hospital in the city. Plans are underway to convert Sanganer's satellite hospital into a district hospital to address this issue.

5. Oral Health Program

The National Oral Health Program (NOHP) has been implemented across all districts in Rajasthan. The program includes regular dental camps, OPD services, and awareness

campaigns on oral hygiene. In the 2023-24 period (up to December), over 1.27 million individuals benefited from these services, highlighting the program's reach and impact.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The NRHM has played a crucial role in improving healthcare delivery in rural Rajasthan. The expansion of health infrastructure, increased access to maternal and child health services, and the focus on disease prevention have contributed to notable improvements in health outcomes. However, challenges such as geographical barriers, healthcare personnel shortages, and the sustainability of programs need to be addressed.

Recommendations for improving the effectiveness of NRHM in Rajasthan include:

1. Expanding telemedicine initiatives to remote areas.
2. Increasing the recruitment and retention of healthcare personnel in underserved areas.
3. Strengthening community health worker programs to enhance outreach and community engagement.

By addressing these challenges, Rajasthan can continue to build on the successes of NRHM and further improve health outcomes for its rural population.

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About the Corresponding Author



Dr. Shalu Sain is an Assistant Professor at Maharishi Arvind University in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. With a strong academic background and dedication to higher education, she has contributed significantly to teaching and research in her field. Dr. Sain is committed to fostering academic excellence and actively engages in scholarly activities that promote innovation and learning.