

Government to focus on making India anemia-free: Union Health Secretary

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The inaugural ceremony of the IAAH 11th World Congress on Adolescent Health, 'Investing in Adolescent Health – the Future is Now', was held on 26 October 2017 in New Delhi

Inaugurating the IAAH 11th World Congress on Adolescent Health, Preeti Sudan, Secretary Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on said, "The government was in the process of putting in place dedicated, preventive and promotive strategies in schools to make India anemia-free. Over 50% adolescents and women in India are anemic. We need to consolidate clinical and public health initiatives for the well-being of adolescents. Various programmes being run by different Ministries for adolescents need to be integrated for better outcomes."

"India has some pathbreaking legislations on HIV and Mental Health and had a comprehensive National Health Programme for Adolescents – Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK) launched in 2014 across 230 districts", she added.

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Dr. Vinod Paul, Member, NITI Aayog, said "anemia was a bigger challenge though we often speak of non-communicable diseases which need to be dealt with urgency."

Pointing out that youth was India's future, he said if India had to benefit from the demographic dividend, it was important to invest in adolescent health. Talking about the challenges, he said there was a dearth of quality data on adolescents and implementing the ambitious adolescent health programme on the ground was equally tough.

Professor Susan Sawyer, President, International Association for Adolescent Health said, “It was for the first time that there was a strategy in place for women, children and adolescents. Adolescence is a critical time in the growth of an individual, and now was the time to invest in them.”

“India with over 253 million adolescents was significantly investing in adolescents, children, and women, adding that this was the largest meeting of the IAAH with representation from all regions of the world”, she added.

Dr. Sunil Mehra, Executive Director, MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child said that there was a strong contingent of young people at the World Congress who can guide us to draft our future policies. He said the participants would learn and share problems, challenges, actions and resources during the deliberations.