

ASHA Workers Honoured By WHO

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In news- The WHO has recognised India's 10.4 lakh ASHA workers as 'Global Health Leaders' for their efforts in connecting the community to the government's health programmes.

About Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers-

- ASHA workers are volunteers from within the community who are trained to provide information and aid people in accessing benefits of various healthcare schemes of the government.
- They act as a bridge connecting marginalised communities with facilities such as primary health centres, sub-centres and district hospitals.
- The role of these community health volunteers **under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) was first established in 2005.**
- They are primarily married, widowed, or divorced women **between the ages of 25 and 45 years**, must have good communication and leadership skills and should be literate with formal education up to Class 8.
- The aim is to have one ASHA for every 1,000 persons or per habitation in hilly, tribal or other sparsely populated areas.
- In urban areas ASHA must be a woman resident of the – “slum/vulnerable clusters” and belong to that particular vulnerable group which have been identified by City/District Health Society for selection of ASHA.
- If there are women with Class XII who are interested and willing they should be given preference since they could later gain admission to ANM/GNM schools as a career progression path.
- The educational and age criteria can be relaxed if no suitable woman with this qualification is available in the area and among that particular vulnerable group.
- There are around 10.4 lakh ASHA workers across the

country, with the largest workforces in states with high populations – **Uttar Pradesh (1.63 lakh), Bihar (89,437), and Madhya Pradesh (77,531).**

- Goa is the only state with no such workers, as per the latest National Health Mission data available from September 2019.

Their activities-

- ASHA workers go door-to-door in their designated areas creating awareness about basic nutrition, hygiene practices, and the health services available.
- They focus primarily on ensuring that women undergo ante-natal check-up, maintain nutrition during pregnancy, deliver at a healthcare facility, and provide post-birth training on breast-feeding and complementary nutrition of children. \
- They also counsel women about contraceptives and sexually transmitted infections.
- They are also tasked with ensuring and motivating children to get immunised.
- They also provide medicines daily to TB patients under directly observed treatment of the national programme.
- They are tasked with screening for infections like malaria during the season.
- They also provide basic medicines and therapies to people under their jurisdiction such as oral rehydration solution, chloroquine for malaria, iron folic acid tablets to prevent anaemia, and contraceptive pills.
- They are tasked with informing their respective primary health centre about any births or deaths in their designated areas.

Since they are considered “volunteers”, governments are not obligated to pay them a salary. Their income depends on incentives under various schemes that are provided when they ensure an institutional delivery or when they get a child immunised etc...They will get a minimum of Rs.2000/- per month

as incentives for routine activities.