

Assam Records Lowest Life Expectancy in India, Experts Advocate for Health Education Reforms



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Assam has emerged as the state with the lowest life expectancy in India, averaging just 66 years, according to recent data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5). This figure not only falls below the national average of approximately 69 years but also trails behind other Northeastern states, with neighboring Nagaland boasting a life expectancy exceeding 75 years.

Health experts attribute Assam's lagging life expectancy to a combination of factors, including air pollution, poor dietary habits, high blood pressure, smoking, and environmental hazards. Dr. Rahul Mehra, UNESCO Chair Representative for Global Health and Education, emphasized the urgency of integrating health education into school curricula to address these issues from an early age. He highlighted that 68% of children aged 6 months to 5 years and 66% of women in Assam suffer from anemia, underscoring the need for preventive measures.

In terms of health system performance, Assam has shown some progress. The NITI Aayog's "Healthy States, Progressive India" report recognized Assam as one of the most improved states in health, noting a 4.8-point increase in its health index score. However, the state still faces significant challenges in achieving better health outcomes.

Financial constraints further complicate the situation. The NITI Aayog's Fiscal Health Index (FHI) for the financial year 2023 assessed the fiscal health of eighteen major Indian states, excluding Northeastern states like Assam. This exclusion highlights the need for more comprehensive data to address the unique challenges faced by these regions.

Experts advocate for a multifaceted approach to improve health outcomes in Assam. Recommendations include implementing health education in schools, promoting awareness about nutrition and hygiene, and addressing environmental issues such as air pollution. Dr. Mehra also suggested practical measures like the use of air purifiers and continued mask usage to mitigate pollution-related health risks.

Addressing these health challenges is crucial for enhancing the quality of life in Assam and aligning the state's health indicators with national and regional standards.

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