

Over 3% budgetary allocations needed for health sector: NRHM

New Delhi, Feb 09: Pitching for more funds for health, the International Advisory Panel for the health ministry's flagship National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) on Saturday said more than 3% of the total budgetary allocations needed to be earmarked for the sector.

"For a long time public health was relatively ignored in India. But the country has seen a lot of progress over the last couple of years," Head of the Panel Jeffrey Sachs told reporters.

The need to invest more in budget resources is now the need of the hour in India, he said after the biannual review meeting of the NRHM.

Observing that investments in health have tremendous economic returns, he said traditionally investment in health has been around 1% of the national income in this country, but now it needs to be increased to more than 3%.

Union Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss said that though undernutrition was still a challenge in the country, there was a need to concentrate on problems of overnutrition which result in cardiovascular diseases.

Child mortality and infant mortality rates have also declined in the country but they can be reduced still more, he added.

Apart from this, the review meeting discussed the process of health structure reforms, human resources required at different levels and new training in public health, decentralisation and local management.

The minister further observed that North Indian states fared very badly as far as health sector reforms were concerned while major progress had been made by the North-Eastern states.

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