Life Expectancy - World Health Statistics Overview 2019

Why in news?

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently released the World Health Statistics Overview 2019.

What are the highlights?

- For men and women combined, average life-expectancy has increased by 5½ years since the turn of the century.
- It has increased from 66.5 years in 2000 to 72 years in 2016.
- On the other hand, "healthy" life expectancy (number of years lived in full health) increased from 58.5 years in 2000 to 63.3 years in 2016.
- In 2019, more than 141 million children will be born - 73 million boys and 68 million girls.
- Based on recent mortality risks the boys will live, on average, 69.8 years and the girls 74.2 years, which is a difference of 4.4 years.
- Likewise, life expectancy at age 60 years is also greater for women (21.9 years) than men (19.0 years).
- Overall, women outlive men everywhere.
- Whether it's homicide, road accidents, suicide, cardiovascular disease, men are doing worse than women.
- Global suicide mortality rates were 75% higher in men than in women in 2016.
- Death rates from road injury are more than twice as high in men as in women from age 15.
- Mortality rates due to homicide are 4 times higher in men than in women.

- **Country-wise discrepancy** - There is 18.1-year gap in life expectancy between poorest and richest countries.
- The report also indicates that the life expectancy gap is narrowest where women lack access to health services.
- Maternal deaths contribute "more than any other cause" to reducing female life expectancy.
- Here too, the risk of maternal death is hugely different between high-income and low-income countries.

- Notably, one in 41 women dies from a maternal cause in a low-income country.
- In contrast, only one in 3,300 women die from a maternal cause in a high-income setting.
- In more than 90% of low-income countries, there are fewer than 4 nursing and midwifery personnel per 1000 people.

What are the possible reasons?

- The report attributes the discrepancy between men and women to differing attitudes to healthcare between them.
- E.g. in countries with generalised HIV epidemics, men are less likely than women to take an HIV test
- Hence men are less likely to access antiretroviral therapy and more likely to die of AIDS-related illnesses than women.
- The same principle applies for tuberculosis sufferers, with male patients less likely to seek care than women.
- So men are much more likely to die from preventable and treatable non-communicable diseases.

Source: Indian Express

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