



## EDITORIAL COMMENT

### Data Science & Analytics and Policy Makers

Using data to understand and measure the effectiveness of public policies by policy makers is not new. In the initial days it was merely statistical analysis using observational data, but later, more scientific methodologies like experiments and micro-simulations were adopted. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), the first version of which was released in 1968, has been widely used by many.

With advent of sophisticated database technologies and computing power, there has been a drastic change in the way data is captured, stored and analysed. This also resulted in the emergence of new programming techniques using the mathematical/statistical modellings. Programming languages like R and Python, which are known for their vast libraries of statistical and mathematical models, have made it easy to use information without getting too much into the technicalities of it.

Since the government has a huge amount of data available - structured and unstructured - data science & analytics techniques will be of immense help for evidence-based decision making. This will help provide hidden insights and also be used to predict some of the future outcomes.

## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW



**Shri. Jawaid Akhtar, IAS**  
Additional Chief Secretary  
Health and Family Welfare  
Department  
Government of Karnataka

**Q:** Typically Public Health systems at the state level operate in a constrained environment. COVID-19 has added to this situation. How do you think data analytics can be optimised in the state public health system during such times?

**A:** Public health system faces technological, financial and HR related constraints. The COVID-19 situation has definitely put an extra burden on an already stressed public health system. While the existing vacancies were causing stress, requirement of additional manpower worsened the situation. Private health system witnessed high attrition weakening the capacity to handle the calamity. In such a scenario, data analysis has helped in optimising the use of human and material resources. It helps in effective utilisation of HR with better technology, minimises human errors and allows for a judicious allocation of resources. While the use of data analytics is useful in normal situations it is unavoidable in a contingency situation.

**Q:** While there is considerable knowledge and skill sets in the Health and Family Welfare department at the State and District levels the challenges of leveraging data to enhance public health centres with good quality data is often hampered. Could you elaborate on this?

**A:** The government systems have a tendency to work in a routine manner without taking up situational analysis for course correction. Though, the government systems have superabundant data, its collection, analysis and use is far from satisfactory. Collection of data at lower levels is hampered by

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lack of trained manpower, overload on the system, lack of skills at the grass root level etc. The quality of data collection at the grass route level being deficient, the data analysis gives fallacious results making its leveraging impractical. There is a need to collect data in a scientific way with the help of skilled hands so that it could be analysed and leveraged for system improvement.

**Q:** *We as PAC-CODR are partnering with the Department of Health, Government of Karnataka. How do you think this collaboration should go forward using the strengths of evidence-based research and data analytics?*

**A:** The partnering with PAC-CODR will help in better data analytics and evidence-based research. This will be helpful in drawing better conclusions and their utilisation.

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## UPDATES

- November 4, 2020: Subsequent to the meeting with Mr. Rajeev Chawla, ACS, eGovernance letters were sent to the Secretaries of Department of Women & Child Development, Department of Primary & Secondary Education and Health & Family Welfare Department to set up a Task Force to assist CODR to understand the problem areas and data sets that are currently available with them.
- November 13, 2020: A meeting was held between CODR and IIIT-B to introduce the new Head-CODR. Prof. Srinath Srinivasa and Prof. Sridhar Mandya participated from IIIT. Among other items, the progress made on the data integration project, work space allocation at IIIT-B and resource allocation from IIIT-B for the data integration projects were also discussed
- December 14, 2020: The first set of SDG reports for SDG1, 8, 10, 2, 3, 4 & 5 were submitted to the Planning, Programme Monitoring & Statistics (PPMS) Department, Government of Karnataka.