



Future Health Systems
Innovations for equity

Press Release

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Symposium on “Health care in the Sundarbans (India): Challenges and plan for a better future” organized by IIHMR and Liver Foundation (West Bengal)

A report titled “Health care in the Sundarbans (India): Challenges and plan for a better future” by IIHMR was launched at the Spring Club on 6 January (Tuesday) 2010. IIHMR are a member of the multi country research programme Future Health Systems. The report was released by eminent social worker Mr Tushar Kanjilal. The launch was followed by a presentation of the main findings from the report and an engaging discussion.

The event was attended by public health researchers from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHBSPH), USA, Center for Health & Population Research (ICDDR,B), Bangladesh and from several other countries including Uganda UK, China and Nigeria. Representatives from several agencies working in the Sundarbans area and from several hospitals and NGOs from the capital attended the event. A number of officials from the Department of Health & Family Welfare, West Bengal were also present.

The report highlights various important findings on health status and health care utilization in Sundarbans. For example they found:

- High rates of chronic disease like heart disease, asthma and arthritis
- Unexpectedly high prevalence of mental health problems
- Half of young children are chronically malnourished
- Women share a disproportionate burden of ill health

The report also presents a broad plan for innovative health service delivery in the Sundarban regions.

Principle author Dr Barun Kanjilal said, 'This report highlights the inadequacy and vulnerability of the existing health care system in the Indian part of the Sunderbans. The recent catastrophic impact of cyclone *Aila* has made the issues even more pressing. The team involved in development of report hopes that the findings and planning framework presented in the report will be discussed and used by the Department of Health & Family Welfare, the Government of West Bengal and other key stakeholders to draw a detailed master plan for the region.'

NOTES FOR EDITORS:

- IIHMR is based in Jaipur with a field office in Kolkata and has been working in teaching, training and research on health for over 25 years. For more information or to access the report see our website www.iihmr.org.
- Future Health Systems is funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). For more information see our website www.futurehealthsystems.org.
- For more information on the report or to arrange an interview with the authors please contact Ms Sneha Singh sneha@iihmr.org.