



International Seminar on

Twenty-five years of
National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) in India:
Lessons learnt and way forward

Date: October 18-19, 2019
Venue: New Delhi



International Institute for Population Sciences

(Deemed University)
An Autonomous Organization of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare,
Government of India
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The first report of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-1) in India was published in 1994 and thus marking a silver jubilee of this important landmark in the development of demographic and health data in the country. Since then India has successfully completed four rounds of NFHS (1992-93, 1998-99, 2005-06 and 2015-16). Currently, the fifth round of NFHS is underway. The survey aims to strengthen India's demographic and health database by providing reliable information as well as by strengthening the survey research capabilities of Indian institutions. Undoubtedly, various rounds of NFHS led to data revolution in India by releasing micro-data in user-friendly formats. NFHS surveys are also the first to conduct clinical, anthropometric, and biochemical (CAB) measurements in population representative households in India. Considering the novel objectives various rounds of NFHS considered to achieve, it is important to have a critical look at its major achievements, areas of improvements and way forward.

There has been a large number of scientific papers written using NFHS and the survey has also made important contributions for policy and programme interventions in India. At the same time, availability of various NFHS rounds provide unique opportunities to adopt innovative methodologies to bring out better conclusions and policy prescriptions. There are also several challenges such as data quality, measurement issues, comparability of estimates over time, etc. All these issues are to be examined in detail for evolving better survey research tools in future.

India is currently facing major changes in terms of demographic and health fronts with wider implications for the society and family. As NFHS is the one of the main source of health data in the country, the survey needs to adapt to the emerging challenges in the coming years. Given the long journey and the wide scope of NFHS and the transformations that India has undergone in past three decades, there is a need to systematically understand the lesson learnt from the four rounds of NFHS surveys and the future perspectives. Moreover, the NFHS surveys over the various rounds introduced a number of novel ways to carry out household surveys in developing countries like India. One such innovation is the use of Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). There is, thus, a need to debate the utility of such and other similar innovations in survey research in developing countries like India. This seminar intends to discuss various aspects of survey research, methodology and future perspectives.

Interested scholars may submit papers to any of the following four major themes of a seminar.

1. **Critical appraisal of data quality in NFHS surveys:** Such large-scale surveys often face challenges in terms of several non-sampling errors arising due to shifting of age and year of birth across the reference boundaries, interviewers' characteristics, interviewers' fatigue, length of the survey instruments, time taken to complete interviews, number of sensitive questions, presence of others at the time of interview, involvement of large number of survey organization with varied capacities etc. The debate on the quality of data are often merely intuitive and not based on thorough empirical scrutiny. It is important that a scientific approach is adopted to understand and measure the possible errors and appropriate lessons are learned.

Innovations in survey implementation: There had been several innovations in NFHS surveys over the last four rounds including but not limited to the use of Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI), collection of blood samples for measuring various bio-markers, combining data from household surveys with that of CAB measurements, measurement of height and weight, testing of edible salt, etc. It is the right time to debate how these innovations have helped improve the availability and quality of survey data in India. There is also a need to debate other methods of data collection, measurements, CAB measurements, etc. that can be tested and implemented in future surveys for producing better quality data with shorter turn-around time. Moreover, with the rapid changes taking place both in demographic and health fronts in India, appropriate changes are necessary in survey implementation, information gathered as well as on making the survey more locally sensitive.

2. **New ways of analysis of NFHS data:** Despite the fact that NFHS surveys are cross-sectional in nature, the various rounds of NFHS provide unique opportunity to adopt innovative methods to unravel various demographic and health puzzles facing India. We encourage papers which are innovative either in methods or in approaches to reduce or remove biases that arise due to the use of existing methods or approaches. The papers submitted to this theme should make important contribution to the existing literature in the areas of population, health, and development. However, papers dealing with one round of NFHS with a specific hypothesis may not be preferred.

3. **Policy relevance of NFHS surveys:** The NFHS surveys are primarily meant for policy formulation and monitoring and evaluation of the existing population and health policies and programmes in India. Since its inception, NFHS surveys have led to major shifts in various policies and programmes particularly those related to maternal and child health, child nutrition, HIV/AIDS, etc. However, with rapid demographic and socio-economic transformations taking place in India, new challenges and issues are emerging. The papers submitted to this theme should address how NFHS and similar surveys be more responsive to the emerging issues and help in evidence-based policy formulation. Papers that explicitly focus on the policy relevance of NFHS are welcome for this session.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION

We invite you to submit extended abstracts (two-three A-4 size pages) of original research papers or full papers by June 15 2019. Please submit your extended abstract/full paper to nfhs_seminar2019@iips.net.

IMPORTANT DATES

Last Date of Receiving Abstracts/ Full Paper	June 15, 2019
Communication on the Acceptance	June 30, 2019
Submission of Full Paper	September 30, 2019
Date of Seminar	October 18-19, 2019

The organizers will take care of travel, accommodation and other local hospitality for presenting authors of the selected papers.

Organizing committee

Prof. K.S. James

Prof. S.K. Singh

Prof. Chander Sekhar

Dr. Abhishek Singh

Dr. Dipti Govil