

Daily Editorial Analysis 3 July 2025

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Integrating Compassion, Prioritising Palliative Care

Context

- In India, **millions of individuals endure unnecessary physical and emotional suffering**, often in the final stages of life, **due to limited access to palliative care**.
- **Despite its essential role in alleviating pain** and enhancing the quality of life for patients with terminal or chronic conditions, **palliative care remains critically underfunded and underutilised**.
- **As India's burden of non-communicable diseases rises and health-care systems are increasingly strained**, integrating palliative care into mainstream health policy and practice has become **not only necessary but urgent**.

The Significance of Palliative Care

- Palliative care is a **specialised medical approach** that addresses the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of individuals facing serious illnesses.
- Unlike curative treatments that aim to eradicate disease, **palliative care focuses on improving patient comfort, reducing suffering, and ensuring dignity at every stage of illness**, including at the end of life.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), **around 40 million people worldwide require palliative care annually**, with 78% residing in low- and middle-income countries.
- However, **only 14% of those in need receive such support**.
- In India, where between **seven to ten million people require palliative care each year**, only 1%-2% actually have access to it, a stark indicator of the system's limitations.

Systemic Challenges in India

- **Implementation Challenges**
 - The **growing incidence of non-communicable diseases** such as cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory conditions **further accentuates the demand for palliative care**.
 - However, **India's health-care infrastructure faces multiple challenges** in meeting this need.
 - While the **National Health Policy of 2017 acknowledged the importance of palliative care**, **actual implementation has remained patchy and uneven**, especially in rural and economically disadvantaged regions.
- **Lack of Trained Professionals.**

- Though **India boasts a doctor-population ratio of 1:834**, better than the WHO norm of 1:1000, the **number of medical professionals trained specifically in palliative care is disproportionately low.**
- Most medical practitioners receive **minimal training in pain management or end-of-life care**, resulting in inconsistent service delivery.
- **Funding Constraints**
 - Furthermore, **inadequate funding and infrastructural gaps** impede the expansion of palliative care services.
 - While palliative care has found limited inclusion in primary health care, **it remains largely absent from tertiary care systems.**
- **Public Awareness:** Misconceptions persist, and many patients seek palliative care only in the terminal stages of illness, by which time meaningful intervention is often no longer possible.

The Way Forward to Overcome These Challenges

- **Enhancing the Role of Medical Education and Allied Health Workers**
 - To bridge these systemic gaps, **a foundational shift in medical education is needed.**
 - **Integrating palliative care into the MBBS** curriculum would equip future doctors with both the clinical skills and the compassionate mindset necessary for delivering high-quality end-of-life care.
 - **Institutions such as the Indian Council of Medical Research** and the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences have initiated projects aimed at promoting pain and palliative care, indicating **slow but steady progress in this direction.**
 - **Additionally, task-shifting, the delegation of certain responsibilities to trained non-physician health workers**, offers a viable solution to India's shortage of palliative care specialists.
 - **With a sizable workforce comprising over 34 lakh registered nurses and 13 lakh allied health professionals**, India has the human resource potential to significantly expand access to palliative services.
 - **Targeted training and empowerment of this workforce can play a crucial role** in delivering holistic, community-based care.
- **Policy Reforms and Financial Accessibility**
 - For sustainable impact, **policymakers must prioritise long-term investments in palliative care infrastructure and training.**
 - Insurance schemes like **Ayushman Bharat should expand their coverage to include palliative services**, making them more financially accessible.
 - **Dedicated funding for public and private facilities** to build palliative care units is equally important.
 - **Partnerships with non-governmental organisations** and private institutions can accelerate the reach and quality of care.
 - **Learning from global best practices, such as the United States' well-funded and insurance-backed hospice care system**, India can design cost-effective models that ensure both dignity and efficiency, tailored to its socio-economic context.
- **The Need for Public Awareness**

- **Many people remain unaware that palliative care is not limited to end-of-life scenarios** but includes pain relief, psychological support, and enhanced quality of life at all stages of a serious illness.
- **Public education campaigns can help dispel myths**, encourage early intervention, and foster community support for patients and caregivers.

Conclusion

- The **integration of palliative care into India's health-care framework is no longer optional**, it is a moral, medical, and social imperative.
 - A **multi-pronged approach involving policy reforms, curriculum redesign**, task-shifting, infrastructure investment, and public education is **essential to ensuring equitable access to palliative care for all**.
 - **Such efforts will not only improve patient outcomes but also reduce the broader economic and emotional burdens** on families and the health-care system.
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Rephrasing Global Development Finance

Context

- **India's engagement with the Global South** has witnessed a **dynamic transformation** over the past decade.
- The **country has not only increased its financial commitment but has also diversified its modalities** of development cooperation.
- However, **the changing contours of global finance, worsened by a mounting debt crisis** in the Global South and shrinking traditional aid flows, **necessitate a strategic recalibration**.
- Within this evolving framework, **Triangular Cooperation (TrC) has emerged as a potent mechanism** to augment and redefine India's development outreach.

Rising Trends of India's Development Cooperation and Shifting Financial Realities

- **Rising Trends in Development Cooperation**
 - **India's development partnership** with the Global South **has grown both in scope and volume**.
 - Between **2010-11 and 2023-24**, India **nearly doubled its development outflows** from \$3 billion to \$7 billion.
 - **These flows have been channelled through a variety of modalities**, including capacity building programmes, technology transfer, and duty-free access to Indian markets.
 - However, **the cornerstone of this engagement has been the Lines of Credit (LoCs)** extended under the Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS).
 - **LoCs have allowed India to support infrastructure and development projects** in partner countries at concessional rates.

- **India borrowed from international capital markets and lent to partner nations** at softer terms, absorbing the difference through state subsidies.
- While effective in the past, **this model is facing headwinds in the current global context** of fiscal uncertainty and rising debt burdens.
- **Shifting Financial Realities and the Debt Conundrum**
 - The budgetary provisions for 2025-26 hint at a significant rethink.
 - The **Finance Ministry has raised concerns** about the continued viability of LoCs.
 - At multilateral forums such as the G-20, **India has voiced apprehension over the ballooning sovereign debt across the Global South**, signalling a cautious turn in its financial strategy.
 - This prudence is justified. **The global financial environment has become increasingly volatile, making capital market borrowing less predictable** and raising the risk of default among recipient countries.
 - Furthermore, **traditional sources of development finance**, especially Official Development Assistance (ODA), **are witnessing a dramatic decline**.
 - The **total ODA is projected to fall from \$214 billion in 2023 to \$97 billion**, a staggering 45% reduction.

India's Proposal Towards a Balanced Modality Framework and Emergence of Triangular Cooperation

- **India's Proposal Towards a Balanced Modality Framework**
 - In response, **India is advocating for a more balanced and nuanced engagement**
 - During the third Voice of Global South Summit (VoGS) in 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi proposed a **Global Development Compact (GDC)**.
 - GDC is an integrated framework that harmonises five key modalities: **capacity building, technology transfer, market access, grants, and concessional finance**.
 - This reflects **a strategic shift from over-reliance on LoCs toward a diversified model** rooted in long-term sustainability, mutual growth, and risk-sharing.
 - To strengthen this approach, **India is also focusing on forming wider and deeper partnerships**, particularly those that can operate effectively in third countries.
- **The Emergence of Triangular Cooperation (TrC)**
 - One of the most promising frameworks in this new paradigm is **Triangular Cooperation (TrC)**.
 - **This model brings together a traditional donor** from the Global North, a pivotal partner from the Global South (like India), and a recipient developing country.
 - The **purpose is to co-create development solutions that are context-specific**, cost-effective, and mutually beneficial.
 - **TrC offers a distinct advantage by pooling resources**, expertise, and best practices. While comprehensive data is still emerging, preliminary estimates suggest **TrC projects are valued between \$670 million and \$1.1 billion**.
 - **Countries like Brazil, Indonesia, Japan, and Germany have already built a portfolio of successful TrC engagements**, working collaboratively in regions such as Southeast Asia, Africa, and

India's Strategic Use of TrC

- India has actively embraced TrC as a vehicle for expanding its **development diplomacy**.
- A **landmark moment came in 2022 with the signing of a Joint Declaration of Intent with Germany**, aiming to implement TrC projects across Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
- **Projects are now underway in countries such as Cameroon, Ghana, Malawi, and Peru**, focusing on sectors like energy, education, and healthcare.
- These **initiatives showcase how infrastructure investment can create ripple effects** on social outcomes.
- **Improved energy grids, for instance, boost digital connectivity and access to online education and health services.**

Conclusion

- While **LoCs have historically underpinned its engagement, changing financial realities, sovereign debt pressures**, and a shifting aid landscape necessitate a strategic reset.
- The **Global Development Compact** and the embrace of **Triangular Cooperation represent forward-looking solutions.**
- By **leveraging its diplomatic capital, technical know-how, and a collaborative ethos, India is well positioned to co-create a resilient and equitable development architecture**, one that balances ambition with realism, and partnership with pragmatism.

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