SUMMARY
ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN HEALTH
MODULE 2

We have learnt the following points.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HEALTHCARE SERVICES

Public healthcare services
The public health care service is a chain of health centres and hospitals run by the government.

They are linked together so that they cover both rural and urban areas and can also provide treatment to all kinds of problems- from common illness to special services.

The resources needed to run these services are obtained from the money that we, the public pay to the government as taxes.

The most important aspects of the public health system s that it is meant to provide quality health care services either free or at a low cost, so that even poor can seek treatment.

Another important function of public health is to take action to prevent the spread of diseases such as TB, malaria, jaundice, cholera, diarrhea, chikungunya, etc.

According to our Constitution, it is the primary duty of the government to ensure the welfare of the people and provide health care facilities to all.

PRIVATE HEALTH FACILITIES
There are hospitals and nursing homes that are privately owned. A large number of doctors run their own private clinics.

In the rural areas, one finds Registered Medical Practitioners (RMPs), Urban areas have a large number of doctors, many of them providing specialised services.

There are many laboratories that do tests and offer special facilities such as X-ray, ultrasound, etc.

There are also shops from where we buy medicines.

In private facilities, patients have to pay a lot of money for every service that they use.

In fact now there are large companies that run hospitals and some are engaged in manufacturing and selling medicines.

These are concentrated in urban areas. The cost of these services is rather high. Many people cannot afford them or have to borrow money when there is an illness in the family.
Some private services encourage incorrect practices to earn more.

Is adequate healthcare available to all?

The answer is no.

Barely 20 per cent of the population can afford all the medicines that they require during an illness.

It was reported in a study that 40 per cent of people who are admitted to a hospital for some illness or injury have to borrow money or sell some of their possessions to pay for the expenses.

The poor are not provided basic necessities like drinking water, adequate housing, clean surroundings, etc. And therefore, are more likely to fall ill.

Women's health concerns are considered to be less important than the health of men in the family.

Many tribal areas have few health centres and they do not run properly. Even private health services are not available.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?
It is the responsibility of the government to provide quality healthcare services to all its citizens, especially the poor and the disadvantaged.

However, health is as much dependent on basic amenities and social conditions of the people, as it is on healthcare services.

THE KERALA EXPERIENCE
In 1996, the Kerala government made some major changes in the state.
40 % of the entire state budget was given to panchayats.

This made it possible for a village to make sure that proper planning was done for water, food, women's development and education.

This meant that water supply schemes were checked, and working of schools and anganwadis was ensured and specific problems of the village were taken up.

Health centres were also improved. All of this helped to improve the situation.

THE COSTA RICAN APPROACH
Costa Rica is considered to be one of the healthiest countries in Central America. Several years ago, Costa Rica took a very important decision and decided not to have an army.

This helped the Costa Rican government to spend the money that the army would have used, on health, education and other basic needs of the people.

The Costa Rican government provides basic services and amenities to all Costa Ricans.

For example, drinking water, sanitation, nutrition and housing health and education are considered very important.