How to assess health and ill health

We often say that one looks healthier than someone else. Healthiness shows up in happiness. But we often use 'measures' for health.

When selecting young men/women for police or army, parameters such as height, weight, chest circumference etc are used. We also use several tests (eyes, blood, urine etc) to test assess health of an individual.

We can talk of ill health in similar ways. We relate ill health to illnesses—cough, fever, diarrhea, TB, polio, drunkenness etc. At the level of community we use similar words. For instance, we say there are more people having fever this year than the last year, or fewer people with diarrhea or no case of AIDS in this village. Or more infants dying in this village as compared to other village.

Some examples of how we discuss health and ill health in the village:

- This year we have more/fewer fevers in the village.
- How many TB patients in the village?
- Mother and Child deaths in the village in last year.
- Number of underweight babies in the village.
- Number of teenage girls giving birth to babies.
- Number of smokers and alcoholics in village.
- Mental attributes-are people happy, number of suicides etc.

You can make our own checklist based on our situation and needs. A comparison tells us if our village has better health than the last year or the next village.

Think about:

- Why people have to take loan for getting treatment in hospitals?
- Why women feel hesitant to talk about their health problems with male doctors?
- Why people keep on waiting for days and months for seeking treatment?