



Message

Dear Readers,

I am happy to share the first issue of the *News Brief* from Ashoka University's Science Policy Initiative (SPI). SPI was set up in 2019 to facilitate the framing of evidence based policies to address societal problems. Within a thriving culture for expression, research, practical support and thought leadership, Ashoka renders SPI the right environment for policy research and capability building.

SPI is governed by the overarching vision to complement the efforts of the scientific community in India as well as spur innovation and continuous learning into the knowledge ecosystem. It serves as a knowledge hub, initiating discussions on issues, societal problems, science and technology concerns, through stakeholders' consultations and dialogue; and defining the roadmap for future with the help of evidence-based white papers and policy briefs, recommendations and partnerships & collaborations.

This first issue provides a glimpse into our work since 2019. I am hopeful you will find this Brief useful for your work and interests you enough to contribute to Ashoka's efforts on Science & Technology Policy.

Stay well!

Best wishes,

L.S. Shashidhara

Professor and Dean of Research
Ashoka University

In focus: COVID-19

SARS-CoV-2 has unleashed massive destruction and misery across the world. India was not spared from its catastrophic impact either. The country has witnessed nearly 34 million positive cases and over 4.4 lakh deaths till date. One of the significant learnings from this pandemic has been to strengthen India's healthcare system. SPI has carried out a series of policy research and engagement activities stressing the need for India's preparedness to counter such unforeseen crises in the future.

Experts' policy dialogue



[Symposium on 'Evidence, decision-making and policy for COVID-19 in India' : November 9, 2020](#)

Perspectives in the Media

[How India can achieve its year-end COVID-19 vaccination target](#)

Anjali Taneja

July 14, 2021

[There is a need for suitable health metrics for effective policy making and evidence based research in public](#)

Ashoka University in partnership with the George Institute for Global Health organised a symposium on 'Evidence, decision-making and policy for COVID-19 in India'.

Attended by over 160 participants globally, the two-hour-long symposium engaged researchers, clinicians and policymakers in discussions of lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. Renowned policy experts and academicians were invited to discuss the role of research evidence in public health and the use of such evidence in driving policy.

The eminent speakers' panel consisted of *Dr. Tarun Bhatnagar* from ICMR - National Institute of Epidemiology; *Dr. Brian Wahl* from John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health; *Dr. Priscilla Rupali* from Christian Medical College and *Dr. Rajani Ved* who is Public Health Practitioner and Former Executive Director of National Health Systems Resource Center, MoHFW. The Co-Chairs of the symposium were Prof. Gautam Menon and Dr. Saumyadeep Bhaumik from Ashoka University and the George Institute for Global Health, respectively.

[health](#); L.S. Shashidhara
November 11, 2020

[Important to make policy rooted in evidence](#)
November 13, 2020

[Strengthening supply-chain networks during a pandemic: A consortia-driven approach is the right policy for India](#)
Anjali Taneja,
L.S.Shashidhara
May 15, 2020

[India must combat healthcare threats through research, education](#)
Anjali Taneja, A. Srivastava
April 11, 2020

White Papers, Policy Briefs @ SPI

[Building Sustainable Societies through Purpose-driven Universities: A Case Study from Ashoka University](#)

Anirban Chakraborty; Sumit Kumar; L.S.Shashidhara; Anjali Taneja
Sustainability, 13 (13), 2021

[Rare diseases in India: Time for Cure-Driven Policy Initiatives and Action](#)

Anjali Taneja; L.S.Shashidhara; Alok Bhattacharya
Current Science, 118 (10), 2020.

[Higher Education in India: Securing Quality, Inclusiveness, Innovation through Teachers](#)

Anjali Taneja; L.S.Shashidhara
HR Stream (A Journal from UGC, Human Resource Development Centre, KUD), 4 (10), 2019.

Featured Publication @ SPI

The Compendium on AI is an outcome of an interactive webinar organised by the University in 2020 with leading experts from academia, government and the industry. They were invited to discuss the deployment of AI across different verticals of the economy.

This Collection features some of these discussions in a larger perspective and is based on the insights of such experts who have contributed their thoughts and inputs governing AI's use in emerging fields such as healthcare, education, supply-chain-management as well as AI for social good. The Compendium underlines some of the

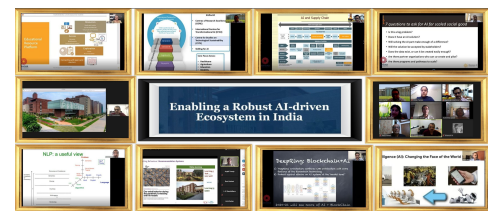


pressing issues concerning AI's deployment in these areas and a set of policy recommendations for a better future.

Experts' Discussions, Engagements @ SPI



Release of 'A Collection of Policy Briefs on Artificial Intelligence'
May 05, 2021



Webinar on 'Enabling a Robust AI-driven Ecosystem in India'
July 17, 2020



Policy Round-table with Experts on 'Landscaping Priority Areas for Blockchain: Cryptoeconomics, Capacity building, Scalability, Security'
January 24, 2020
(A detailed policy is being developed)



Food for Thought 🤔🤨

The second wave of COVID-19 hit India like a tsunami adding to the suffering and losses that were inflicted upon from the first wave. To counter the adverse impact of the pandemic, India has already initiated the world's largest vaccine inoculation drive nationwide. According to MoHFW (2021), till date >87 million COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered across the

country; 23 million + people have administered both the doses. However, the <18 age-group is still not covered under the existing vaccination drive, leaving that group susceptible and potential spreader of the virus. Going forward, vaccination might turn out to be a regular intervention with an increasing number of births in the country; the new-born will have to get vaccinated once they reach the eligible age-group. Does this call for ramping up the public health infrastructure and healthcare facilities in India to achieve the year-end vaccination target?

Maybe public private partnerships could be a solution to ensure last mile connectivity in vaccine distribution and administration in India. The country might also need better public health metrics and analysis in India for making informed policy decisions.

As the world navigates through the uncharted waters of COVID-19, we need to ask ourselves whether we have done enough to survive this pandemic! What is the guarantee that it will not reoccur in future? The world is already witnessing the worsening impacts of climate change. Are we sure we are prepared to face the next unforeseen catastrophe?

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For any feedback or suggestions, please write to us at:

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