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## Covid hotspot Mumbai spent poorly on health in last 3 years, NGO report says

The report by Praja Foundation says that of the BMC's estimated capital expenditure spend of Rs 2,189 crore over three years, it actually spent just 39.97% or Rs 875 crore.

[MANASI PHADKE](#) 22 September, 2020 8:09 pm IST



*A medic collects a nasal sample from a resident via Rapid Antigen kit for Covid-19 test, at Borivali in Mumbai on 6 September 2020 (representative image) | PTI*

**Mumbai:** The city of Mumbai, a Covid-19 hotspot, which is **struggling to contain** the spread of the pandemic, has had a dismal track record in using funds allocated for public health infrastructure in the last three years and has also been faced with a severe shortage of healthcare personnel, found a report by a Mumbai-based NGO.

According to the **report** published Tuesday by Praja Foundation, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) estimated a capital expenditure spend of Rs 2,189 crore in the public health sector over three years from 2016-17 to 2018-19. However, of this, the civic body actually spent just 39.97 per cent, or Rs 875 crore.

Capital expenditure refers to the money spent on acquiring, creating, upgrading and maintaining physical assets, and is the parameter to look out for to gauge the expenses on infrastructure.

Of the three years, the capital expenditure was the lowest in 2016-17, just 27 per cent, or Rs 242 crore, of the estimated Rs 901 crore. In 2017-18, it was 53 per cent or Rs 294 crore of the budget estimate of Rs 556 crore and in 2018-19, it was 46 per cent or Rs 339 crore of the estimated Rs 732 crore.

The revenue expenditure — which refers to the amount spent on salaries, pensions, administrative expenses, interest and others — was a robust 82 per cent over the three years at Rs 6,932 crore of the Rs 8,464 crore estimated in the BMC's health department budget and the budget of its hospitals over the three years.

Nitai Mehta, trustee of Praja Foundation, said: "One of the major problems that has been highlighted during the pandemic is pressure on the public health infrastructure. Inadequate health infrastructure, lack of health personnel and poor budget utilisations spell disaster for tackling any disease that affects the people of the city.

"This is an exceptional crisis, but there has to be a basic minimum preparedness. For instance, look at the number of dispensaries available per capita, we are way off the required figure," he added.

As of Monday, Mumbai recorded 1,86,150 Covid-positive cases, according to the civic body's data. Of these, 26,735 are active cases.

ThePrint reached a BMC official for a comment, but he remained unavailable until the time of publishing this report.

## ‘62% shortage in medical staff in municipal hospitals’

According to the analysis by the Praja Foundation, Mumbai needs 829 dispensaries, while it currently has just 198 public dispensaries.

The NGO has relied on the norms laid down under the National Health Mission of one dispensary per 15,000 population while assessing Mumbai’s requirement.

The city is way behind this target as it now has one dispensary per 60,000 population, the data by Praja showed.

The NGO’s report further noted that not a single of Mumbai’s 24 administrative wards meets the norm of one dispensary per 15,000 population, while only seven wards, none of which are in Mumbai’s suburbs, have one dispensary per 50,000 population.

The NGO also found that there are large-scale vacancies in the public health sector.

In 2019, 30 per cent of the sanctioned posts in BMC’s dispensaries and municipal hospitals were vacant. In municipal hospitals, there was a 62 per cent shortage in medical staff, 44 per cent in paramedical staff and 13 per cent in nursing staff.

“This shows that while government health institutions have been the forerunners in battling Covid, the current situation has led to overburdening on public health institutions, which for so long has not been strengthened with the capacity to tackle such crises,” Mehta said.

## ‘Public representatives more interested in renaming hospitals’

The Praja report stated that corporators, who were in the BMC’s public health committee, had asked 105 questions to the administration on various issues of public health in 2019-20. However, of these, most questions, a total of 17, were about naming or renaming hospitals, healthcare centres and cemeteries.

In comparison, the corporators asked 16 questions on health services, 15 on human resources and 10 on infrastructure. Not a single question was raised on diseases such as diabetes, typhoid and tuberculosis, or even on health reform policies.

Link:- <https://theprint.in/health/covid-hotspot-mumbai-spent-poorly-on-health-in-last-3-years-ngo-report-says/508399/>