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# WORLD ANTHROPOLOGY CONGRESS-2023

BHUBANESWAR, INDIA | 9-14 AUGUST 2023

o6BG - BIO-CONSTITUTION, GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

o6BG - 3. HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

## SYMPOSIUMS: EMERGING CHALLENGES IN PUBLIC HEALTH, NUTRITION AND WATER RESOURCES IN INDIA: COPING STRATEGIES AND POTENTIAL RESPONSES

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### ABSTRACT

In this session we will examine emerging challenges related to public health, nutrition, and water resources. Simultaneously we will explore coping strategies and possible responses to overcome the challenges. We wish to investigate the challenges arising out of changing socio-political dynamics in three different domains: public health, nutrition, and water resources. In the field of public health, we will focus on the age at marriage and age at menarche among underprivileged populations as a marker of nutritional status and adequate development. By studying age at menarche, we can have a better understanding of not only nutritional status and factors like obesity but also broader patterns of development and their impact on socio-economic inequality. The second issue will be dealt by focusing on the changing patterns of nutrition and its biological impact on rural and marginalized populations. These include measures like BMI among the adults and stunting, wasting and undernutrition among children, which can help us assess the impact of development on different segments of the population. We hope to offer some insight into how nutritional status of a population is determined by factors such as class, caste, income, gender, and place of residence. We wish to use nutritional status as a proxy for the impact of socio-economic development on different sections of society. Finally, with the third lens, we will examine the emerging patterns of water consumption in urban areas. Access to water for drinking and other purposes is universally regarded as a basic need but this promise remains, at best, unevenly realized. In this regard we will study questions related to the shifting perceptions of quality and quantity of water and how urban residents are beginning to conceptualize the linkage between water and citizenship on the one hand and water and health on the other.

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Overall, through these three different vantage points we wish to deepen our understanding of how public interest is being understood and defined not only by policy makers but by citizens and residents of different areas in the country. As the processes of democratization deepened and expand in the country, is public interest being defined in more inclusive ways by the citizens? What insights do these three themes offer in terms of increasing citizen participation in not only defining but implementing policies and practices aimed at furthering public interest? These questions are of vital importance as the state-society boundaries and dynamics continue to shift especially in relation to policies that are promoting privatization and a retreat of the state from some of its core responsibilities, such as ensuring adequate nutrition, health care and provision of safe and adequate drinking water for all. In sum, through the papers in this session we wish to contribute to the ongoing debates about the discourses around public interest and its shifting content and contours considering changing political-economic realities.

**Keywords:** Health, Nutrition, BMI, Water resource, public health policy

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