



India Role In African Recovery

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This article is based on “Towards a ‘healthy’ India-Africa partnership” which was published in The Hindu Business line on 01/02/2021. It talks about India-Africa cooperation to combat devastation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

With regular high-level visits, increasing diplomatic footprint, diversified engagement across sectors, and a vibrant diaspora, the India-Africa relationship has picked up momentum in the recent past.

However, on the economic front, Africa has been deeply affected by the pandemic due to reduced trade and other markets causing a supply-and-demand shock. This disruption may cause a setback to the years of progress made in India-Africa relations.

Therefore, in the light of India’s stakes in Africa, India should reach out to African nations in a variety of ways to help them deal with the Covid devastation.

Areas of Cooperation

- **Social Infrastructure:** Already, the India-Africa social infrastructure (education, health, skills) cooperation is multidimensional, comprehensive, and involves national, state, and subnational actors working toward augmenting African institutional and individual capacities.
- **Common Geo-Political Interests:** India and Africa have common interests on international issues; UN reforms, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping, cybersecurity, and energy security.
- **Economic Cooperation:** India’s economic engagement with Africa is substantive. In the last decade and a half, trade between India and Africa has multiplied and diversified—bilateral trade of \$63.3 billion in 2018-19 made India the third-largest trading partner for the continent.

- **Support in Fight Against Covid-19:** Under the e-ITEC initiative, India has shared Covid-19 management strategies, training webinars exclusively to train healthcare professionals from Africa by Indian health experts.
India is also sending consignments of essential medicines, including hydroxychloroquine (HCQ) and paracetamol, to many African countries in addition to doctors and paramedics.
- **Combating Neo-Colonialism:** China has a longer and deeper association in the continent, but it is facing a backlash over the pandemic worldwide.
 - China has gained a reputation as an economic colonizer—exploiting the need for capital by under-developed economies to hand over big infrastructure projects to China.
 - Therefore, Chinese investment is seen as neo-colonial as it focuses on money, political influence, hard-infrastructure projects, and resource extraction.
 - On the other hand, India's approach focuses on building local capacities and an equal partnership with Africans and not merely with African elites concerned.
 - In this context, though Africa has been actively engaged with China, it wants India to act as a balancer and net security provider.

Way Forward

- **Vaccine Diplomacy:** As the “pharmacy of the world,” a priority area of collaboration would be to ensure direct participation in Covid-19 relief and equitable vaccine access efforts followed by a plan for comprehensive strengthening of Africa's health systems.
- **Economic Convergence:** The Free Trade Agreement has been negotiated within Africa. It's a matter of time for it to be implemented and will be a game-changer.
 - In this context, creating a market for 1.3 billion people in Africa would provide Indian manufacturers with economies of scale and scope to compete internationally.
 - It could also lead to generations of employment, facilitate skill and technology transfers, and help bridge the existing knowledge gap.
- **India Becoming Voice of Africa:** India can also take the lead in initiating and pushing for more multilateral efforts by stakeholders like the WHO or the UN to do more for African recovery.
India and Africa should plan to expand their multi-faceted partnership by jointly combating the Covid and focusing on their strengths to address global challenges -- climate change, extremism, counter-terrorism, transnational crimes, and maritime security.

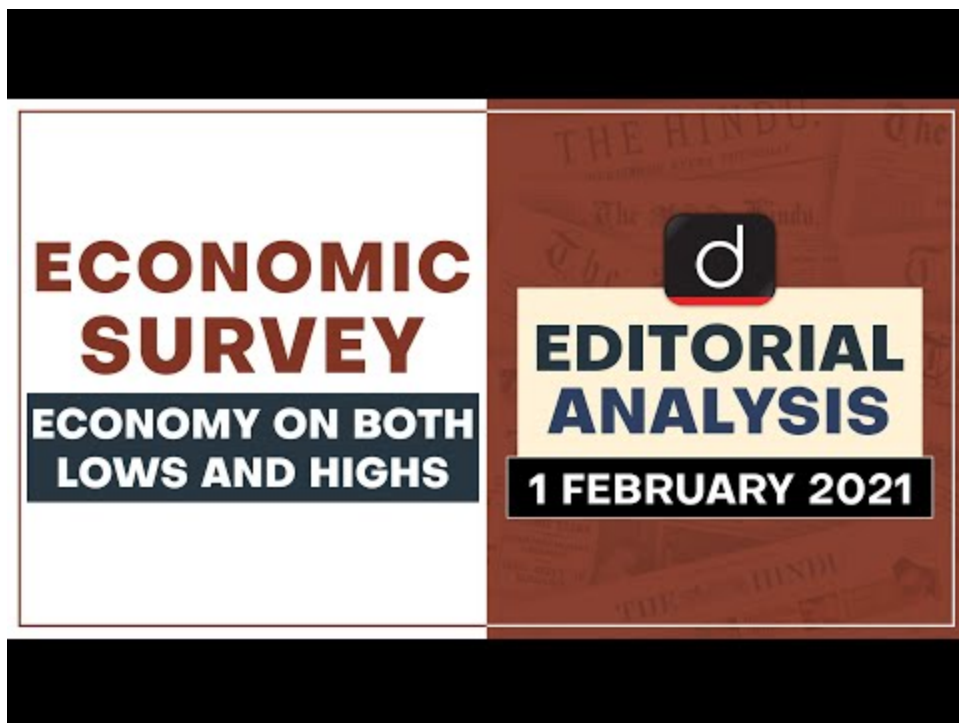
Conclusion

While it can be argued that the Covid-19 crisis has had serious implications for India and the country has huge domestic obligations to deal with, partnering with Africa at this critical juncture in our shared reality will add immense value to the rich historicity of India-Africa

solidarity.

Drishti Mains Question

Partnering with Africa to combat the devastation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic will add immense value to India-Africa solidarity's rich historicity. Discuss.



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This editorial is based on "Growth with inequality: On Economic Survey 2021" published in The Hindu on February, 1st 2020. Now watch this on our Youtube channel.
