



Urban Poverty

This editorial is based on [“Welfare of the urban poor cannot be an afterthought in economic growth plans”](#) which was published in The Indian Express on 08/07/2022. It talks about urban poverty and short to medium term solutions.

For Prelims: Urbanisation, Inflation, Forced eviction, Urban planning, National Food Security Act, Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), Minimum Wages Act, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation

For Mains: Reasons Behind Urban Poverty and Solutions, Government Initiatives for Improving Conditions of Urban Poor

India has been among the fastest growing economies in the world for close to two decades. In this economic development of India, its cities have a major role to play. [Cities are India's economic powerhouses](#) and a magnet for a large rural population seeking a better life.

With **development of the manufacturing and services sector, the population pressure on cities has escalated**. According to a survey by the [UN State of the World Population report](#) in 2007, **by 2030, 40.76% of India's population is expected to reside in urban areas**.

Urban poverty is a form of poverty that is particularly visible in megacities, characterised by **poor living circumstances and income**, as well as a **lack of essential utilities for a decent standard of life**.

[Urban poverty](#) in India is unique, particularly in the way that it follows certain patterns of growth. **Though the proportion of urban poor has reportedly declined over the past decades, the numbers keep adding up.**

Let us understand the extent of Urban Poverty in India and related challenges.

What are the Reasons Behind Urban Poverty?

- **Large Scale of Rural-Urban Migration:**
 - The urban poor is largely the overflow of the **rural poor who migrate to urban areas in search of alternative employment and livelihood.**
 - **Lack of infrastructure in rural areas (push factor), rapid Industrialisation in urban areas (pull factor)** leading to migration due to asymmetrical development.
- **Lack of Skills:**
 - Most of the poor are not able to participate in the emerging employment opportunities in different sectors of the urban economy as they do not have the necessary knowledge and

skills to do so.

- It has **led to generations of unskilled or semi-skilled people** who find it **difficult to find decent paying jobs.**

▪ **Indebtedness:**

- **Unemployment or underemployment** and the casual and intermittent nature of work in urban areas lead to indebtedness, that in turn, **reinforces poverty.**
 - **Unemployment** refers to the economic situation in which an individual who is actively searching for employment is unable to find work.
 - **Underemployment** is a situation where there is a mismatch between the employment opportunities and the skills and education level of the employees.

▪ **Inflation:**

- A **steep rise in the price of food grains** and **other essential goods** further **intensifies the hardship and deprivation of lower-income groups in urban areas.**

What are the Challenges faced by Urban Poor?

▪ **Overcrowding:**

- Millions of people migrate to the cities to take up informal jobs such as domestic help, driving cars for middle-class people, taxi driving, construction site work, etc.
 - This **creates overcrowding in the already packed urban infrastructure.**

▪ **Water and Sanitation:**

- The **COVID-19 pandemic** has revealed the poor sanitation standards of slum areas. Washing hands and observing physical distancing was impossible to follow in slums.
 - **Nearly 21.8 percent of slum households in Delhi depend on shared water sources such as public taps.**

▪ **Health Care:**

- The low income of these communities means that **standard medical help is often unaffordable.**
 - Therefore, on occasions **when it rains or the neighbourhood is flooded**, their settlements become **breeding grounds for various parasites and infections and the cycle repeats itself.**

▪ **Education:**

- For children living in slums, a host of issues affect their education.
 - Even if some children of slum households get enrolled in a school, **they have to drop out to support their family financially and are deprived of education.**

▪ **Risk of Forceful Eviction:**

- **Lack of affordable housing leaves the people address-less on paper.** They settle wherever they can, but as more people join, a whole community of undocumented settlers emerges that creates a risk of forceful eviction.
 - **Forced eviction** is defined as the **permanent or temporary removal against the will** of individuals, families and/or communities **from the homes and/or land which they occupy.**

How can the Condition of Urban Poor be Improved?

▪ **Proper Social Security:**

- **Most relief funds and benefits do not reach slum dwellers**, mainly because these **settlements are not officially recognised by the government.**
 - An **absence of proper social security measures for informal workers** has come to the fore and has a **huge impact on urban poverty.** Thus, **new approaches to urban planning and effective governance** are the need of the hour.
 - A **mirror scheme of MNREGA** can be initiated in Urban areas as well for providing **employment benefit to Urban slum population.**

▪ **Better Access to Basic Amenities:**

- Providing Basic amenities such as Clean Water, Sanitation and Electricity to the slum areas should be at priority.
 - Along with rehabilitating and upgrading slums, there is a need to establish **identity markers based on the National Food Security Act List** as well as record the

deprived households without access who may have been left out of this list.

- **Community Connect Campaigns:**
 - Special Community Connect Campaigns to **ensure access to social welfare schemes should be started.**
 - Such campaigns should cover schemes related to **LPG connection, bank accounts, life and accident insurance and [Employees State Insurance facilities](#), and healthcare programmes like [Ayushman Bharat and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana \(PMJAY\)](#).**
 - Through a **participatory identification of the poor by a community connect process**, it should be **possible to delete the non-entitled beneficiaries of NFSA as well.**
- **Basti-level Self-Help Groups:**
 - Complete coverage of deprived households in urban areas by **SHGs** should be attempted in a **mission mode.**
 - This process should be **accompanied by access to credit for diversification of livelihoods.**
 - **Loans for street vendors under [Svanidhi Scheme](#) is a good step in that direction.**
 - Creating **basti-level women's collectives** will address several difficult challenges.
- **Migration Support Centres:**
 - The arrival process of migrants to cities in search of work has to be made less traumatic. For this **Migration Support Centres** can be established.
 - The expansion of rental housing and property titles to settlers who fulfil the basic requirements will ease access to credit.
 - **Support for the destitute and the homeless must be made a priority.**
- **Enforcing Minimum Wages:**
 - Workers engaged in the unorganised sector do not have the benefit of several laws such as the **[Minimum Wages Act](#) or the [Factories Act](#).**
 - Labour contractors very often disburse lower than the minimum wages. There is a need to **enforce uniform minimum wages throughout the country's unorganised sector as well.**

What are the Recent Government Initiatives for Improving Conditions of Urban Poor?

- [Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana](#)
- [Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation](#)
- [Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana \(National Urban Livelihoods Mission\)](#)
- [Jal Jeevan Mission Urban](#)
- [Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan \(Self-Reliant India\)](#)
- [PM- Awas Yojana- Urban.](#)

Drishti Mains Question

The urban poor is largely the overflow of the rural poor who migrate to urban areas, Discuss the solutions to improve standard of living of Urban poor.

UPSC Civil Services Exam, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. With reference to the provisions made under the National Food Security Act, 2013, consider the following statements: (2018)

1. The families coming under the category of 'below poverty line (BPL)' only are eligible to receive

subsidised food grains.

2. The eldest woman in a household, of age 18 years or above, shall be the head of the household for the purpose of issuance of a ration card.
3. Pregnant women and lactating mothers are entitled to a 'take-home ration' of 1600 calories per day during pregnancy and for six months thereafter.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 3 only

Ans: (b)

Exp:

- Issue of food security has been addressed by the Government through the Public Distribution System and the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). The National Food Security Act (NFSA) enacted on July 5, 2013 marked a shift in the approach to food security from welfare to rights based approach.
- **Salient features of National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013**
 - Upto 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population will be covered under TPDS with uniform entitlement of 5 kg per person per month.
 - Pregnant women, lactating mothers and children in the age group of 6 months to 14 years will be entitled to meals as per prescribed nutritional norms under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) Schemes. Higher nutritional norms have been prescribed for malnourished children upto 6 years of age.
 - Pregnant women and lactating mothers will also be entitled to receive maternity benefits of not less than `6,000.
 - Prior to implementation of the NFSA, there were mainly three types of ration cards issued by State Governments such as Above Poverty Line (APL), Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antyodaya (AAY) ration cards distinguished by different colours opted by the concerned state Government. According to NFSA 2013, APL and BPL groups have been re-classified into two categories - Non-Priority and Priority. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
 - Eldest woman of the household of age 18 years or above is to be the head of the household for the purpose of issuing ration cards. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**