



Revamping Rural Areas

This editorial is based on [“Getting real on rural uplift”](#) which was published in the Hindu on 07/02/2023. It talks about the ways to improve the lives and livelihoods of the deprived in the real rural context.

For Prelims: UNDP-MPI Report 2022, Rural economy, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana, National Rural Livelihood Mission, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana

For Mains: Significance and Efficiency of various schemes launched for the development of rural India.

In the [UNDP Multidimensional Poverty Index, 2022](#), it is stated that during the last 15 years, rural housing, education, primary health, bank accounts, women's collectives, teleconnection, technology, job creation, skills training, social assistance, and rural roads have contributed to India being able to lift 415 million people out of multidimensional poverty. **Rural areas saw the fastest reduction in the Multidimensional Poverty Index** as the deprivations in sanitation, cooking fuel and housing fell the most from 2015-16 to 2019-21.

The challenge of eliminating poverty for the 228.9 million individuals living in poverty in 2019-21 remains significant, especially as the number has increased since the data was collected.

India is predominantly a rural country with two third population and **70% workforce residing in rural areas**. [Rural economy](#) constitutes **46% of national income**. Thus, growth and development of rural economy and population are a key to overall growth and inclusive development of the country.

What are the Issues with Rural Development in India?

- **Poverty:**
 - A significant portion of the rural population in India lives below the [poverty line](#) and lacks access to basic necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare.
- **Lack of Infrastructure:**
 - Rural areas in India lack proper roads, electricity, and communication facilities, hindering economic development.
- **Agriculture Issues:**
 - The majority of the rural population is **dependent on agriculture, which is facing challenges** such as soil degradation, declining productivity, and a lack of modern technology.
- **Education:**
 - The rural areas have a **low literacy rate and a shortage of educational institutions** and qualified teachers, which limits educational opportunities.

- **Healthcare:**
 - Rural areas have a **shortage of healthcare facilities** and trained medical professionals, leading to inadequate healthcare services.
- **Gender Inequality:**
 - Women and girls in rural areas **face gender-based discrimination and are often denied equal opportunities** for education and employment.
- **Environmental Degradation:**
 - Unsustainable agricultural practices and rapid industrialization have led to environmental degradation and loss of natural resources in rural areas.
- **Rural Inflation:**
 - Rural India is feeling the effects of inflation more acutely than urban areas, with higher inflation rates for essential goods such as cereals.
- **Limited Financial Autonomy:**
 - **Gram Panchayats**, which are rural councils, have limited financial autonomy and are restricted by the state government in setting tax rates and revenue bases, reducing their ability to borrow and develop.

What are the Related Initiatives?

- [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act \(MGNREGA\)](#)
- [Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana](#)
- [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act](#)
- [National Rural Livelihood Mission](#)
- [Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana](#)

What should be the Way Forward?

- **Empowering Self-Help Groups:**
 - Women in [self-help groups](#) offer **unprecedented social capital, providing opportunity for human development, credit access, enterprise,** and sustainable poverty reduction through diversified livelihoods.
 - Their working together with the **3.3 million elected leaders of the local government, 43% of whom are also women,** will be transformational if funds, functions and functionaries from the 29 sectors assigned to panchayats as per the [Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution](#) is transferred to them by State Legislatures.
- **Providing Skill Sets:**
 - To take responsibility for the 29 sectors, local governments will **require skill sets that facilitate better governance outcomes** at the cutting edge for citizens.
 - For effectiveness, human resources, technology, hand-holding and partnerships must all be thrust areas.
 - The possible pathways could be Community cadres like the [ASHA Community Health Worker](#) and the Community Resource Persons of the Livelihood Mission.
 - **The Sumit Bose Committee's recommendations** can be guiding principles which was constituted to look into the issues of rural development in India and make recommendations for improvement.
 - **Some of its recommendations** are Decentralization of planning and implementation of rural development programs, Strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institutions, Focus on Agricultural and Allied Activities, Improving Rural Infrastructure etc.
- **Utilising MGNREGS:**
 - It is time MGNREGS is seen as a **decentralised resource for poverty reduction, mitigating [global warming](#),** and aiding human well-being.
 - To address rural distress, **MGNREGS can be utilized by providing guaranteed employment to rural workers,** thereby ensuring a steady source of income.

- In times of severe distress, **MGNREGS can be ramped up to provide additional employment and support to affected communities.**
- Several studies have established its efficacy in water conservation, basic infrastructure, and income from animal resources through convergence.
- **Other Examples:**
 - In Rajasthan MGNREGA is being used in selected villages in Rajasthan to address water security issues.
 - Maharashtra's water works.
 - Bihar's Hariyali Mission
 - Telangana's Plant Nursery in every gram panchayat and thrust on afforestation; segregation sheds, soak pits, percolation tanks, sports ground, crematorium, rural haats in many States
 - Chhattisgarh's MGNREGS use for Forest Rights Act beneficiaries.
 - Sikkim transformed through MGNREGS in spring-shed development to provide drinking water, animal sheds for dairy and for high value organic farming.

Drishti Mains Question

What measures can be taken to enhance the development of rural areas and improve the standard of living for rural communities?

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. The Multi-dimensional Poverty Index developed by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative with UNDP support covers which of the following? (2012)

1. Deprivation of education, health, assets and services at household level
2. Purchasing power parity at national level
3. Extent of budget deficit and GDP growth rate at national level

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) reflects the deprivations that a poor person faces simultaneously with respect to education, health and living standards, as reflected in the following table. Hence, statement 1 is correct.

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Components of MPI			
Dimensions of Poverty	Indicator	Deprived if living in the household where	Weight
Health	Nutrition	An adult under 70 years of age or a child is undernourished.	1/6
	Child Mortality	Any child has died in the family in the five-year period preceding the survey.	1/6
Education	Years of Schooling	No household member aged 10 years or older has completed six years of schooling.	1/6
	School Attendance	Any school-aged child is not attending school up to the age at which he/she would complete class 8.	1/6
Standard of Living	Cooking Fuel	The household cooks with dung, wood, charcoal or coal.	1/18
	Sanitation	The household's sanitation facility is not improved (according to SDG guidelines) or it is improved but shared with other households.	1/18
	Drinking Water	The household does not have access to improved drinking water (according to SDG guidelines) or safe drinking water is at least a 30-minute walk from home, round trip.	1/18
	Electricity	The household has no electricity.	1/18
	Housing	Housing materials for at least one of roof, walls and floor are inadequate: the floor is of natural materials and/or the roof and/or walls are of natural or rudimentary materials.	1/18
	Assets	The household does not own more than one of these assets: radio, TV, telephone, computer, animal cart, bicycle, motorbike or refrigerator, and does not own a car or truck.	1/18

▪ Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.

Mains

Q. Despite Consistent experience of high growth, India still goes with the lowest indicators of human development. Examine the issues that make balanced and inclusive development elusive. **(2016)**

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