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Poverty & Development Issue

Introduction

- Poverty:** According to the United Nations (UN), Poverty entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, as well as the lack of participation in decision-making.
- Development:** It means "improvement in a country's economic and social conditions". It refers to improvements in the way of managing an area's natural and human resources in order to create wealth and improve people's lives.

What is the issue?

There have been debates over whether the poverty has gone up during the recent years and the answer depends on whether one looks at the overall incidence of poverty in percentage terms or the absolute number of poor.

What is Poverty?

- According to the Suresh Tendulkar Report 2009, the concept of poverty is associated with socially perceived deprivation with respect to basic human needs.
- Poverty is a "relative" concept and it is essentially about how you are relative to those in your surrounding.
- Abject poverty or Absolute poverty refers to a state where a person is unable to meet the most basic needs such as eating the minimum amount of food to stay alive.

What is a poverty line?

- Poverty levels refer to some level of income or expenditure below which one can reasonably argue that someone is poorer than the rest of the society.

- It is a level of income or consumption expenditure that divides the population between the poor and non-poor.
- The poverty line suggested by the Tendulkar Committee was Rs 29 per day per person in urban areas and Rs 22 per day per person in rural areas.
- The purpose behind choosing a poverty line is two-fold.
 1. To accurately design policies for the poor
 2. To assess the success or failure of government policies over time.

Types of Poverty

- Absolute poverty:** It refers to a condition where a person does not have the minimum amount of income needed to meet the minimum requirements for one or more basic living needs over an extended period of time. It may be calculated in monetary terms, nutrition attainment or in terms of calorie intake. For example: Homeless people living on the streets, families that cannot afford to buy food to feed themselves and their children are examples of absolute poverty. Absolute poverty is usually based upon the idea of subsistence, i.e., people are said to be in absolute poverty if they do not have the resources to maintain basic human life.
- Relative poverty:** It occurs when people do not enjoy a certain minimum level of living standards in comparison with specific sections of society, as determined by the government (and enjoyed by the bulk of population). These vary from country to country. For example, in the UK relative poverty is defined as income 50% less than average incomes.

Multidimensional Poverty

- **Definition :** Poverty is often defined by one-dimensional measures - usually based on

income. But no single indicator can capture the multiple dimensions of poverty.

- ➔ **Multidimensional poverty includes:** It encompasses the various deprivations experienced by poor people in their daily lives - such as poor health, lack of education, inadequate living standards, disempowerment, poor quality of work, the threat of violence, and living in areas that are environmentally hazardous, among others.
- ➔ A multidimensional measure of poverty can incorporate a range of indicators that capture the complexity of this phenomena in order to inform policies aimed at reducing poverty and deprivation in a country.

Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2020

- ➔ It is released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI).
- ➔ MPI is based on the idea that poverty is not unidimensional rather it is multidimensional. The index shows the proportion of poor people and the average number of deprivations each poor person experiences at the same time.
- ➔ **Sustainable Development Goals :** The index emphasises on measuring and monitoring progress under the goals to reach 'zero poverty by 2030-Goal 1 of the sdgs'.
- ➔ **MPI significance:** It recognizes poverty from different dimensions compared to the conventional methodology that measures poverty only from the income or monetary terms. MPI uses three dimensions and ten indicators which are :
 - **Education:** Years of schooling and child enrollment (1/6 weightage each, total 2/6);
 - **Health:** Child mortality and nutrition (1/6 weightage each, total 2/6);
 - **Standard of living:** Electricity, flooring, drinking water, sanitation, cooking fuel and assets (1/18 weightage each, total 2/6).
- ➔ **Multidimensional poor:** A person is multidimensionally poor if she/he is deprived in one third or more (means 33% or more) of the weighted indicators (out of the ten indicators).

Those who are deprived in one half or more of the weighted indicators are considered living in extreme multidimensional poverty.

- ➔ **MPI and SDG:** Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, UNDP has closely aligned the MPI with the sdgs as MPI is one of the preeminent tools to understand the many forms of poverty experienced by those left behind.

Global Scenario:

- (a) 1.3 billion people are still living in multidimensional poverty. More than 80% are deprived in at least five of the ten indicators used to measure health, education and living standards in the global MPI.
- (b) The burden of multidimensional poverty disproportionately falls on children - half of multidimensionally poor people are children under age 18.
- (c) About 84.3% of multidimensionally poor people live in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- (d) **Indian Scenario:** India lifted as many as 270 million people out of multidimensional poverty between 2005-06 and 2015-16.
- (e) **Neighbourhood Scenario:** In China, 70 million people left multidimensional poverty between 2010 and 2014, while in Bangladesh, the numbers declined by 19 million between 2014 and 2019.
- (f) **Impact of Covid-19:** Covid-19 is having a profound impact on the development landscape. The study finds that on average, poverty levels will be set back 3 to 10 years due to Covid-19.

Covid-19 and Poverty

- ➔ **World Bank:** Many people who had barely escaped extreme poverty could be forced back into it by the convergence of COVID-19, conflict, and climate change.
- ➔ **Estimation:** It is estimated that 88 million to 115 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty, bringing the total to between 703 and 729 million.
- ➔ **Indian cities:** They are worst impacted due to COVID-19 pandemic-induced disruptions.

- **Urban poor:** City dwellers particularly the poor informal sector workers or urban poor have taken the maximum brunt of the pandemic.
- **Covid protocols:** Lockdowns, social distancing norms, shutting down of markets, factories and allied activities have paralyzed the work opportunities for these sections of urban populations.
- **Urban unemployment:** Which was in stress sharpened further during the initial weeks of pandemic. It paralysed the urban poor majority of which work in unorganized (informal) sectors of the economy with irregular salaries, no written job contracts, often get their jobs through job contractors and subcontractors with no social protection.

Impact of COVID-19 on poverty:

COVID-19 pandemic has brought economies to a standstill due to lockdowns and movement restrictions. Impact of this contracting economic activity is immense on the lives of those who are below the poverty line (BPL) as well as on the vulnerables, who can fall below BPL level. Reduced incomes and resultant poverty have pushed people into a humanitarian crisis with deprivation of food and healthcare. Urban jobs in informal sector have been lost due to lack of job security. Casual wage workers, weavers, artisans, rickshaw pullers, selfemployed persons have all faced loss of livelihoods. Migrants had returned to their villages in fear of the pandemic and also because employment opportunities in urban areas had reduced. This led to reduction of incomes of both urban households and rural households and therefore, rise in poverty levels. Rural households which were dependent on remittances from migrant workers now faced distress due to return of migrant workers. People and households have been pushed to BPL level of incomes. These include MSME employees, gig economy employees, domestic workers, sex workers, lower middle class households like that of teachers in private schools. Nutritional items of diet like milk, eggs, dal, vegetables, fruit, meat were forgone and only cereal based diet (rice and roti) began to be consumed in lesser quantities. Further, it

led to rise in child labour, to meet income and food needs of households. As pandemic spread to states with weak public health systems like Bihar, the poor also faced a health crisis due to lack of quality public health care and unaffordability of private health care. This further pushed them into poverty and exacerbated the hunger crisis.

The UN estimates that 40 crore people will fall into extreme poverty (less than \$1.9 per day) especially in South, South East and East Asia. Further due to lack of efficient public food distribution support, 25 crore people will face acute hunger globally. Ending of universal food support after lockdowns reduced food availability for new poor who lost their livelihoods. Only those with ration cards were able to access the rations. Preferring credit expansion over cash transfers did not aid economic recovery as demand had fallen drastically. In addition, it did not address the distress of households which lost income and livelihoods. Dilution of labour laws led to reduced protection to workers. Increased working hours (upto 12 hours), suspension of safeguards also weakened the bargaining power of workers and posed health risks.

Moreover, the economic impacts of COVID pandemic are not the same for the rich and poor. The following facts of the Oxfam report provide a glimpse of the sharp difference:

1. 1000 richest people in the world would regain their COVID-19 losses within just nine months. But it could take more than a decade for the world's poorest to recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic.
2. The increase in income of the top 100 billionaires since the March 2020 lockdown is enough to give each of the 138 million poorest Indians a cheque of Rs. 94045.
3. It will take up to 3 years for unskilled labor in India to earn what the richest earned in one second last year.

Policy makers have accepted this inequality as one of the impacts of economic growth. While they were happy with the reduction in absolute poverty (pre-COVID era), inequality kept on rising. Now, economists have agreed that the economic divide of new wealth between capital and labour is one-sided. While the wealthy are

getting wealthier, workers are continually being forced into poverty.

Poverty is no longer about food, hence there is a need for the government to strive to free up our food producers rather than keeping them as prisoners of policy. Policymaking should concentrate on what causes growth, not what causes poverty to decline. Policymakers consider food consumption as the ultimate criterion of poverty, however they should also focus on climate change mitigation, efficient use of water and energy. Eradication of poverty should aim at raising the living standards of people living BPL by providing them sanitation, housing, piped water, electricity, education, health, and jobs. Since poverty is a dynamic concept, it is not fair to define poverty in absolute terms, rather it must be defined in relative terms. Most European nations have a relative definition of poverty — that is, a fixed proportion of the median income. India should move towards that by the end of 2024, as India will likely be a \$5 trillion economy by that time. Our poverty line should also be constantly updated and made consistent with our income status today as a lower-middle income country. We need to grow from the traditional approach of 'roti, kapda and makan' to 'rozgar, swasthya and shiksha' in order to bring people out of poverty.

1. COVID-19 pandemic accelerated class inequalities and poverty in India. Comment.
(UPSC 2020)
2. "An essential condition to eradicate poverty is to liberate the poor from the process of deprivation." Substantiate this statement with suitable examples
(UPSC 2016)

Estimation of poverty

A credible measure of poverty can be a powerful instrument for focusing the attention of policy makers on the living conditions of the poor." In another words, it is easy to ignore the poor if they are statistically invisible. The measurement of poverty is thus necessary if it is to appear on the political and economic agenda. The objective for measuring poverty is in order to target interventions as one cannot help the poor without at least knowing who they are. This is the purpose of a poverty profile, which sets out the major facts on poverty (and, typically, inequality), and then examines the pattern of poverty, to see how it varies by geography (by region, urban/rural, mountain/

plain, etc.), by community characteristics (e.g. In communities with and without a school, etc.), and by household characteristics (e.g. By education of household head, by size of household). Another objective for measuring poverty is to be able to predict the effects of, and then evaluate, policies and programs designed to help the poor. Policies that look good on paper like new opportunities for microcredit for the poor, for instance may, in practice, not work as well as expected.

In India, identification of poor is done by the government based on information from Below Poverty Line (BPL) censuses, latest being the Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011 (SECC 2011). Poverty line is set at a level that enables an individual to purchase goods and services in quantities adequate to satisfy basic needs as per prevailing social norms. The basket itself may be referred to as the poverty line basket (PLB). A brief history of estimation of poverty line is as follows:

1. Dadabhai Naoroji in his book- Poverty and Un-British rule in India- was the first to estimate poverty in the second-half of 19th century. He concluded the base line in 1867-68 price which was based on the cost of a subsistence diet consisting of 'rice or flour, daal, mutton, vegetables, ghee, vegetable oil and salt' as the minimum wages one would need for survival.
2. In 1938 Indian National Congress session at Haripura, Subhash Chandra Bose set up the National Planning Committee (NPC) with Jawaharlal Nehru as the Chairman. The Committee decided that the irreducible minimum income should be between Rs. 15 and Rs. 25 per capita per month at pre-war prices.
3. The 1944 Bombay Plan proponents had suggested a poverty line of Rs.75 per capita per year. (The Bombay Plan was a set of proposals of a small group of influential business leaders in Bombay for the development of the post-independence economy of India.)
4. In 1962, Planning Commission Expert Group, formulated separate poverty lines for rural and urban areas- Rs.20 and Rs.25 per capita per year respectively.
5. Y.K.Alagh committee in 1979, decided that poverty should be measured precisely based on starvation. It recommended that people

- consuming less than 2,100 calories in urban areas or less than 2,400 calories in rural areas should be considered as poor.
6. In 1993, Lakdawala committee, constituted to review methodology for poverty estimation, suggested the continuation of calorie consumption as the basis of consumption expenditure. The committee also recommended the establishment of state specific poverty lines, which should be updated using the Consumer Price Index of Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) in urban areas and Consumer Price Index of Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL) in rural areas.
 7. In 2005, Suresh Tendulkar Committee was constituted by the Planning Commission. This committee recommended to shift away from the calorie-based model and made the poverty line broad based by considering monthly spending on education, health, electricity and transport. The official indicators of poverty in India are based on the Tendulkar Poverty Line. According to it, all India poverty line was INR 816 per capita per month in rural areas and INR 1000 per capita per month in urban areas in 2011-12. India witnessed an astonishing poverty decline between 2011-12 and 2016-17 (as per the Tendulkar poverty line of Rs 44 per person per day in 2017-18 prices, just 4.5 per cent of the population is below the poverty line).
 8. The Rangarajan Committee (2014) recommended separate consumption baskets for rural and urban areas which include food items that ensure recommended calorie, protein & fat intake and non-food items like clothing, education, health, housing and transport. The Committee once again de-links the rural and urban poverty lines. The recommended methodology of Rangarajan committee has raised the Tendulkar national rural poverty line from INR 816 per-capita per month at 2011-12 prices to INR 972 and the Tendulkar national urban poverty line from INR 1000 per capita per month at 2011-12 prices to INR 1407. These revisions lead to the total national poverty estimate in 2011-12 to rise from 21.9% under the Tendulkar line to 29.5%.
 9. The Arvind Panagariya task force suggested setting up of committee to identify people "Below Poverty Line (BPL)". The paper talks of considering either of the four approaches for calculation of poverty. First is continuation

of the Tendulkar poverty line. Second, switch to Rangarajan or other higher rural and urban poverty lines. Third, track bottom 30% of the population over time. And fourth, tracking the bottom 30% on specific components, such as housing, sanitation, electricity, nutritional intake, etc.

Facts & Figures

- In 2015, around 10 percent of the world population were living in extreme poverty (World Bank defines 'extreme poverty' as living on \$1.25 or less a day) and struggling to fulfil the most basic needs like health, education and access to water and sanitation.
- The global extreme poverty rate fell to 9.2 percent in 2017, from 10.1 percent in 2015. That is equivalent to 689 million people living on less than \$1.90 a day.
- In India, 21.9% of the population lived below the national poverty line in 2011. In 2018, almost 8% of the world's workers and their families lived on less than US \$1.90 per person per day (International Poverty Line).

Constitutional Provision for Poverty	
Fundamental Rights	➤ Article 16: There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.
	➤ Article 17: Abolition of Untouchability - Article 17 seeks to establish a new social order of equal socio-economic profile.
	➤ Article 21: Protection of Life and Personal Liberty - Article 21 is loaded with Poverty Jurisprudence. It includes, right to basic needs of the poor, their welfare and development.
	➤ Article 24: Prohibition of employment of children in factories, etc.
DPSP	➤ Article 39: The state shall direct its policy towards securing adequate means of livelihood to;
	➤ Man and woman;
	➤ Article 39 (a): Promotion of justice, equal opportunities, and free legal aid;
	➤ Article 41: Security of work, to education, and to public assistance in several cases;
	➤ Article 42: Security of just and humane conditions of work;
	➤ Article 45: Free and compulsory education to every child till the age of 14 years, etc.

SDG	<p>➤ SDG 1, one of the 17 sdgs established by the United Nations in 2015, calls for "no poverty". The official wording is: "to end poverty in all its forms, everywhere".</p>
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Urban Poverty

- **Urban poverty in India:** It is over 25%, some 81 million people live in urban areas on incomes that are below the poverty line. Although rural poverty remains higher than urban poverty, the gap is closing, i.e. Locus of poverty is shifting to urban areas.
- **Current situation:** Today, one in every six of India's urban households live in slums, a number forecast to rise exponentially over the coming years.
- **The Rangarajan committee (2012):** It estimated that the number of poor was 19% higher in rural areas and a whopping 41% more in urban areas than those of the previous estimates.
- **Number of poor :** The data suggest that the rate of urban poverty has been coming down. However, the absolute numbers of urban poor remain extremely large, at more than 76 million.

Reasons for shifting of poverty from rural to urban india

- **Push-Pull factors:** In India, the causes of urban poverty can be linked to the lack of infrastructure in rural areas (push factor), forcing inhabitants of these regions to seek out work in India's mega-cities (pull factor).
- **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.
- **Indebtedness:** Unemployment or underemployment and the casual and intermittent nature of work in urban areas lead to indebtedness, that in turn, reinforces poverty.
- **Inflation:** A steep rise in the price of food grains and other essential goods further intensifies the hardship and deprivation of lower-income groups.

- **Unequal distribution:** The unequal distribution of income and assets has also led to the persistence of poverty in urban India.
- **Unsatisfactory growth :** The overall growth of agriculture and industry have not been impressive. The gap between poor and rich has actually widened.
- **Asymmetrical development:** The green revolution exacerbated the disparities regionally and between large and small farmers. There was unwillingness and inability to redistribute land. The benefits of economic growth have largely not trickled down to the poor.

Way forward

- **Improving life in urban areas:** In order to control large-scale migrations from rural to urban areas, the current state of rural infrastructure must be addressed.
- **Increasing investment:** The government should increase its investment on urban poor in their education, skill building and health infrastructure.
- **Employment opportunities:** India should promote small and medium scale industries in urban areas, as well as promoting other income-generating opportunities. The urban poor should be provided skill building training and given opportunities for employment.
- **Better urban planning & slum rehabilitation:** More efforts are needed towards rehabilitating and upgrading slums with access to clean water, electricity, better jobs (via skills training), and the right to live in their homes.

Poverty in Rural India

- **National Development Plan:** As per the Eleventh National Development Plan of India more than 300 million people in India are poor. With great efforts, India has managed to reduce the number of poor from 55% in 1973 to about 27% (326 million poor) in 2004.
- **Recent estimates:** According to the recent estimates (2011-12), 216.5 million people in rural areas are poor. Still close to one third of the total population in India lives below the poverty line and the majority of poor lives in villages and rural India.

- **India's poorest state:** That is Chhattisgarh where 40% of the population lives below the poverty line.
- **Poorest population states:** 61% of poor population of India live in seven states i.e. Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Scheduled castes and tribes :** They are the worst sufferers of rural poverty.
- **Creating more and better jobs :** Future efforts will need to address job creation in more productive sectors, which has until now been lukewarm and has yielded few salaried jobs that offer stability and security.
- **Focusing on women and Scheduled Tribes:** Scheduled Tribes started with the highest poverty rates of all of India's social groups, and have progressed more slowly than the rest.
- **Improving human development outcomes for the poor:** Better health, sanitation and education will not only help raise the productivity of millions, they will also empower the people to meet their aspirations, and provide the country with new drivers of economic growth.

Causes of rural Poverty

1. **Agriculture factor:** In India, agriculture is largely reliant on monsoon which is unpredictable and can also get erratic. This often leads to insignificant yield or excess yield of a crop (which cannot be properly consumed).
2. **Shortage of irrigation facilities:** And recurring droughts add to the woes of farmers and they are hard pressed for money throughout the year.
3. **Credit issue:** Many take loans which they struggle to repay. Sometimes, the situation gets so bad that many farmers end up committing suicide.
4. **The effects of abject rural poverty :** They are such that many rural areas are devoid of even basic facilities like sanitation, infrastructure, communication, and education.
5. **Unwillingness :** To work, lack of education, alcohol and substance abuse, getting involved in anti-social activities, all lead to poverty in different ways.
6. **Population growth:** Another very crucial reason for widespread poverty is extreme population growth in rural areas and among poor families. Big families find it difficult to sustain economically and have to live off limited means.

Way forward:

- **Accelerating rural poverty reduction:** Rural India is not predominantly agricultural and shares many of the economic conditions of smaller urban areas. Capitalizing on the growing connectivity between rural and urban areas, and between the agriculture, industry and services sectors, has been effective in the past.
- **Family Problems:** Families that are poor have more stress because of their poverty, and the ordinary stresses of family life become even more intense in poor families.
- **Health, Illness, and Medical Care:** The poor are also more likely to have many kinds of health problems, including infant mortality, earlier adulthood mortality, and mental illness, and they are also more likely to receive inadequate medical care.
- **Education :** Lack of education to poor children in turn restricts them and their own children to poverty, once again helping to ensure a vicious cycle of continuing poverty across generations.
- **Housing and Homelessness:** Many poor families spend more than half their income on rent, and they tend to live in poor neighbourhoods that lack job opportunities, good schools, and other features of modern life that wealthier people take for granted.
- **Crime and Victimization:** Poor (and near poor) people account for the bulk of our street crime (homicide, robbery, burglary, etc.), and they also account for the bulk of victims of street crime.

Consequences of Poverty

- **Violence and crime rate:** The occurrence of violence and crime is geographically coincident. Due to unemployment and marginalization,

poor people often indulge in wrong practices such as prostitution, theft, and criminal activities such as chain snatching, etc.

- **Homelessness:** Poor people are usually homeless. They sleep on the roadsides at night. This makes the entire scenario very unsafe for women and children.
- **Stress :** Due to lack of money, poor people suffer from a lot of stress which leads to a reduction in the productivity of individuals, thereby making poor people poorer.
- **Child Labour:** Poverty forces poor people to send their children to work instead of sending them to schools. This is because the families fail to bear the burden of their child/children. Among the poor families, children start earning at an average age of 5 years only.
- **Terrorism:** Youngsters from poor families are usually targeted and involved in terrorist activities. These people are offered a huge amount of money instead of which they are assigned with a destructive task of terrorism.
- **Effect on economy:** Poverty is directly proportional to the success of the economy. The number of people living in poverty is reflective of how powerful the economy is.
- **High IMR:** High infant mortality rate due to inadequate money for medical facilities.
- **Child Marriage:** As minors are banned to marry, still it is practiced in many Indian regions. Young girls, who are still children, become mothers too early and many die at birth.
- **Malnutrition:** India is on top when it comes to malnutrition; more than 200 million people lack to get sufficient food, including 61 million children.

Poverty and Women in India

- **Oxfam report :** The burden of poverty weighs down heavier on girls and women in India than it does on the opposite sex. According to an Oxfam report, in the workplace, women still receive 34% less wages than their male counterparts for the same work.
- **Schooling of girl child :**
 - In India, girls belonging to families in the top 20% get nine years of education on

average, while girls from families in the bottom 20% get none at all.

- In addition, more than 23 million girls drop out of school annually because of a lack of toilets in school and proper menstrual hygiene management facilities.

- **Unpaid care work by women :** Women in India spend around five hours a day on unpaid care work while men devote a mere half an hour on average. This disproportionate burden of unpaid care work by women means they lose out on opportunities to participate in paid labour or are forced to undertake paid labour leading to their time poverty and loss in well-being.

Feminization of Poverty

- **Definition :** Poverty affects a greater number of women than men. Feminization of poverty is the phenomenon in which the total of poor women outnumbers the total population of poor men.
- **Women and access :** Women are segregated, have very limited access to education (for political, religious or social reasons) and are sometimes forbidden to work or restricted to tedious ones.
- **Women and family :** Being the cornerstone of the family, women can have a great impact not only on the household income, but also on the education of children (including sanitation), and avoiding early child deaths due to bad habits, sanitation or improper food or water.
- **Cause:** The feminization of poverty may be caused by changes in Family composition, Family organization, Inequality in the access to public services or in social protection.

Feminization of Poverty in India

The United Nations Development Programme defines 'feminization of poverty' as a condition wherein the change in poverty levels is biased against women or female-headed households. It refers to the process which leads the widening of gap between women and men caught in the cycle of poverty. India presents a staring example to this ongoing global process. Some indicators of feminization of poverty in India include:

1. India is ranked very low at 125 in the Gender Inequality Index 2015.
2. As per the Global Gender Gap report by World Economic Forum, India slipped 21 places on the index to 108.
3. Female labour force participation rate in India is a meagre 27%.
4. Current contribution of Indian women to the GDP is 17%, which is not only far below the global average 37%, but also less than that of China 41% and Sub Saharan Africa 39%.
5. Poor health statistics like MMR at 174 per 1 lakh live births.

All the above statistics point to the fact that women in India encounter discriminatory practices throughout their lifecycle. An unfavourable child sex ratio, high school dropout rates, low asset ownership, high levels of anaemia during adolescence and increasing incidence of violent crimes are reflective of this fact.

Poverty & Inequality

- The United Nations describes inequality as "the state of not being equal, especially in status, rights and opportunities".
- Inequality can be broadly classified in :
 - **Economic inequality:** Economic inequality is the unequal distribution of income and opportunity between individuals or different groups in society.
 - **Social inequality:** It occurs when resources in a given society are distributed unevenly based on norms of a society that creates specific patterns along lines of socially defined categories e.g. Religion, kinship, prestige, race, caste, ethnicity, gender etc. Have different access to resources of power, prestige and wealth depending on the norms of a society.

Dimensions of inequality in India.

- **Gender:** The Global Gender Gap Report, 2018, ranks India at 142 among 149 countries. Women comprise over 42 per cent of the agricultural labour force in the country, yet they own less than 2 percent of its farm land according to the India Human Development Survey (IHDS).

- **Caste:** Caste is a significant factor for determining access to resources like education, income, health valued by individuals. India's upper caste households earned nearly 47% more than the national average annual household income.
- **Religion:** Religious identities can cause prejudices which may lead to economic exclusion and other forms of discrimination which can impact jobs and livelihood opportunities.
- **Ethnicity:** Tribal communities in India have been identified as ethnic groups on the basis of their unique culture, language, dialect, geographical location, customs etc. The National Family Health Survey 2015-16 (NFHS-4) showed that 45.9% of ST population were in the lowest wealth bracket as compared to 26.6% of SC population, 18.3% of obcs, 9.7% of other castes.

Consequences of inequalities

- **Social conflict :** Inequalities tend to produce social conflict among the social groups e.g. Caste groups like Jaats, Maratha, Patels are demanding reservations but this demand is opposed by caste groups already claiming the benefits of reservations.
- **Ethnic movements:** Inequalities among ethnic groups have led to various ethnic movements demanding separate states or autonomous regions or even outright secession from India. North East has been rocked by numerous such ethnic movements e.g. By Nagas for greater Nagalim etc.
- **Religious inequality:** It tends to generate feelings of exclusion among religious minority groups. This reduces their participation in the mainstream.
- **Poor development indicators:** Like IMR, MMR, low per capita income, lower education and learning outcomes at schools, high rate of population growth can be traced to existing socio-economic inequalities.
- **High economic inequality :** It is detrimental to public healthcare and education. Upper and Middle classes do not have vested interest in well-functioning public healthcare and education as they have means to access private healthcare and education.

Measures To Deal With Inequalities

- ➔ **Constitutional Provision:** Articles 14, 15 and 16 form part of a scheme of the Constitutional Right to Equality. Article 15 and 16 are incidents of guarantees of Equality, and give effect to Article 14.
- ➔ **Women Empowerment:** For gender equality policies like affirmative action by -
 - Reserving seats in legislatures,
 - Increasing reservation at local self-government both at urban and village level to 50% in all states,
 - Strict implementation of the equal remuneration act, 1976 to remove wage gap,
 - Making education curriculum gender sensitive,
 - Raising awareness about women right,
 - Changing social norms through schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao etc.
- ➔ **Inclusion of Religious Minorities:** Religious minority groups need special attention through representation in government jobs, provision of institutional credit, improvement of their education access, protection of their human rights by empowering National commission for Minority, strengthening rule of law etc.
- ➔ **Progressive Taxes:** Additional public resources for public services by progressive taxes on wealth more and by increasing the effective taxation on corporations, more importantly broadening the tax base through better monitoring of financial transactions.
- ➔ **Economic Policies:** By ensuring universal access to public funded high quality services like Public health and education, social security benefits, employment guarantee schemes; inequality can be reduced to great extent.
- ➔ **Employment Generation:** The Labor-intensive manufacturing has the potential to absorb millions of people who are leaving farming while the service sector tends to benefit the urban middle class.

Poverty alleviation schemes since independence

The government's approach to poverty reduction was of three dimensions. The first one was a growth-oriented approach. It was based on the expectation that the effects of economic growth — rapid increase in gross domestic product and per capita income — would spread to all sections of society and will trickle down to the poor sections also. The second approach was initiated from the Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) and it has progressively enlarged since then. To specifically address the poor, policymakers started thinking that income and employment for the poor could be raised through the creation of additional assets and by means of work generation. This could be achieved through specific poverty alleviation programs. The third approach to address poverty was to provide minimum basic amenities to the people. India was among the pioneers in the world to envisage that through public expenditure on social consumption needs — provision of food grains at subsidized rates, education, health, water supply, and sanitation—people's living standards could be improved.

Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP) initiated in the early 1980s was one of the earliest poverty alleviation programmes. Various others have been launched since, like employment generation program, income support, employment guarantee (like MGNREGA), etc. To eradicate poverty. Schemes for providing utilities like housing, electricity etc. Have also been launched to ease the financial expenditure of the poor households. Some important poverty alleviation and employment generation programs include:

1. **Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and allied programmes:** The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) aimed at providing self-employment to the rural poor through acquisition of productive assets or appropriate skills which would generate additional income on a sustained basis to enable them to cross the poverty line.

2. **Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM):** Aimed at providing basic technical and entrepreneurial skills to the rural poor in the age group of 18 to 35 years to enable them to take up income generating activities.
3. **National Rural Employment Programme (NREP):** This program was launched in 1980 to create employment opportunities by building and maintaining community assets like *village roads, ponds, and wells, etc. The scheme was expected to generate additional gainful employment to the extent of 30 to 40 crore man-days per annum and to develop community assets.*
4. **Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP):** Launched on 15th August 1983, during the Sixth Five-Year Plan, RLEGP was to be limited only to the landless, with guaranteed employment of 100 days. The entire expenditure of this programme was financed by the Central Government.
5. **Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY):** The main objective of the programme is the generation of additional gainful employment for unemployed and underemployed persons, both men and women, in the rural areas through the creation of rural economic infrastructure, community and social assets with the aim of improving the quality of life of the rural poor.
6. **Rural Housing – Indira Awaas Yojana:** Indira Awas Yojana was started in 1985-86 to provide residential units free of cost to SC and ST and freed bonded labour. It aimed at creating 20 lakh housing units out of which 13 lakhs were in rural areas. This scheme also gave out loans to people at subsidized rates to make houses.
7. **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP):** It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with 100 per cent Central assistance provided to States/uts. The three components of the programme are (i) National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) in which old age pension of Rs.75 per month is provided to persons of 65 years and above who are destitutes. (ii) National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) and (iii) National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS) in which there is a provision for payment of Rs.500 per pregnancy to women belonging to poor households for pre-natal and post-natal maternity care upto the first two live births. This benefit is provided to eligible women of 19 years and above.
8. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Housing for All by 2022 Scheme to provide housing to rural and urban poor.
9. Indian government's latest schemes like Start-Up India and Stand Up India are about empowering people i.e. Making them self-sufficient, to earn their livelihood.
10. **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):** It guarantees 100 days of work a year to every rural household with an aim to enhance the livelihood security of people. It has generated more than 31 billion person-days of employment in the last 15 years, with the government spending over Rs 6.4 lakh crore in this period, on this demand-driven program. The programme mandates that at least 60 percent of the works undertaken must be related to land and water conservation. The creation of these productive assets boost rural incomes as the majority of villages are agrarian. Since 2006, more than 30 million water conservation-related assets have been created in the country's rural areas under MGNREGA. According to the government data, over 11 crore people worked under MGNREGS during the financial year 2020-21 alone (pandemic year). As part of the economic package during the Covid-19 pandemic, the government announced additional funding of Rs 40,000 crore for the MGNREGS over and above the budgetary allocation of 2020-21. The scheme has provided support in times of distress and individuals are not forced to migrate into cities. For instance, distress migration has stopped in Bandlapalli village in Andhra Pradesh's Ananthapuramu district and the village is drought-proof today.
11. **National Rural Livelihood Mission and Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana:** The schemes aim at creating effective and efficient institutional platforms to enable the rural poor to

increase their household income by means of sustainable livelihood enhancements and better access to financial services.

The earlier poverty alleviation programmes did not result in any radical changes in the ownership of assets, production processes and improvement of basic amenities to the needy. The incidence of poverty declined from 54.9 percent in 1973-74 to 36 percent in 1993-94. But the absolute number of poor did not decline much over this period of 20 years. There were 321 million poor in 1973-74 and 320 million in 1993-94. The IRDP has been successful in providing incremental income to the poor families, but in most cases, the incremental income has not been adequate to enable the beneficiaries to cross the poverty line on a sustained basis, mainly because of a low per family investment. In 1992-93, a review of the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) revealed that the per person employment generated was inadequate in terms of the requirement and did not provide enough income to the poor. Moreover, compared to the magnitude of poverty, the amount of resources allocated for these programs was not sufficient. Also, several groups of the poor that were formed under various poverty alleviation schemes have become defunct over time. The reasons for these include- improper selection of Groups; lack of homogeneity among the group members; and selection of non-viable economic activities which are mostly traditional and yield low income. Lack of institutional financial support, inadequate training, a nonprofessional approach and poor access to upgraded technological inputs have deprived beneficiaries from diversifying into high value addition activities.

Earlier, the poor were seen as passive beneficiaries of government development schemes and not as a partner, but later focus was on capacity building and making the poor as an active participant in the developmental process as it was realized that without their active participation, successful implementation of any program would not be possible. Even former Finance Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, had called for a rethinking on the development policy, saying that the trickle-down theory would not work in

eliminating poverty in India. He had said that for our development to be real, the poorest of our land must feel that they are a part of the narrative of rising India. In short, the earlier premise of 'rising tide will raise all boats' would not work as the poor do not even have a boat i.e., they do not even have the basic human capital to participate in the development process, let alone benefit from it.

12. Food for Work Program: The Food for Work Program began in 1977-78. Under this programme, the government-assisted poor people with tasks such as constructing kutch roads, clearing debris, and so on, in exchange for foodgrains. In 2001, the National Food for Work Programme was renamed after this programme. Our country's poverty problem, as well as unemployment and hunger, was addressed with the introduction of the food for work programme. The goal of the programme was to provide additional resources to 150 of the country's most backward districts, in addition to those available under the Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), in order to increase the generation of supplementary wage employment and food security in these districts by creating need-based economic, social, and community assets. The initiative was entirely funded by the government. Since then, the programme has been incorporated into the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which has taken effect in 200 districts across the country, including 150 NFFWP districts. Every rural household whose members volunteer to do unskilled manual labour receives a guarantee of 100 days of work under the Act. MGNREGA is now the most important right-based employment guarantee scheme in the country.

Ways to Tackle Malnutrition

What is the issue?

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 shows negligible gains in nutritional outcomes in under five children which needs urgent focus.

Project Sampoorna : Bongaigaon's Response to Malnutrition

Why in news?

Project Sampoorna which was successfully implemented in Bongaigaon district of Assam is a model that can be easily implemented anywhere in reducing child malnutrition

What is the project about?

- The Bongaigaon district has 2,416 malnourished children, 246 cases of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and 2,170 instances of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM).
- Project Sampoorna was launched to target the mothers of SAM/ MAM children with the tagline being 'Empowered Mothers, Healthy Children'.
- It was based on the success of the community-based COVID-19 management model (Project Mili Juli).
- Under this project, the mother of a healthy child of an Anganwadi Centre was paired with the target mother and they would be Buddy Mothers.
- They were given diet charts to indicate the daily food intake of their children and would have discussions on all Tuesdays at the AWC.
- Since the major hindrance to the project was patriarchy, the mothers were enrolled in Self Help Groups (shgs) under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM).
- Meanwhile, 100 millilitres of milk and an egg on alternate days for the children for the first 3 months were provided so that their mothers could stabilise themselves in the newly found jobs.

How was it interlinked with other programmes?

- Sampoorna is in accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and those set by the UN Secretary General António Guterres in the 2021 Food Systems Summit.
- It complements in achieving the 'Kuposhan mukt Bharat' (Malnutrition Free India) and the National Nutrition Mission - POSHAN Abhiyaan.

- It was during Poshan Maah (Nutrition Month) in September 2020 that 2,416 children were identified to be malnourished in the district of Bongaigaon.
- The National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 has documented the stunted, wasted, underweight and the number of anaemic women and children in the district.
- Project Saubhagya that was designed to reduce the maternal mortality rate and infant mortality rate of the district was utilized to endorse these figures.
- A real time data sheet is updated by field-level doctors as and when a high risk pregnancy is identified, which is then followed up till safe delivery.

What was the impact of the Project Sampoorna?

- After three months of Project Sampoorna, out of 246 SAM children, 11% continued to be SAM, 11.4% improved to MAM and 76.8% became normal.
- By September 2021, 92.3% SAM and 98.9% MAM children were normal.
- Children who had not improved were checked and treated by doctors under the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK).
- Project Sampoorna had prevented at least 1,200 children from becoming malnourished over the last year.
- The National Nutrition Mission and the State government recognised the project in the 'Innovation Category'.
- This model is successful in both women empowerment as well as tackling the malnutrition.

Combating Anemia

What is the issue?

- In an effort to combat the serious problem of anaemia due to malnutrition, Indian PM made an announcement to mandate rice fortification in all social safety net schemes by 2024.