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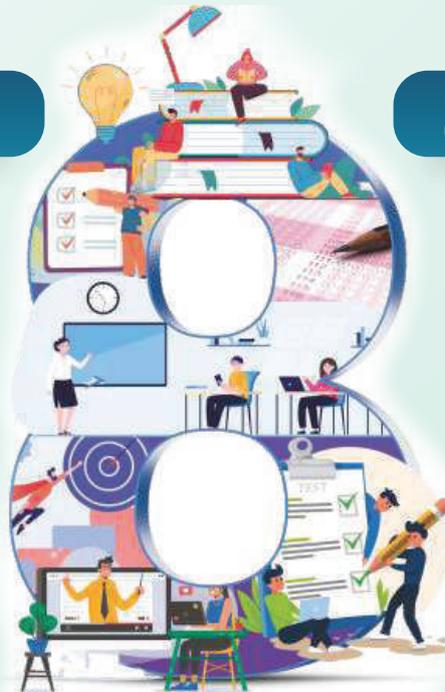
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PREFACE

This is our **75th edition of Yojana Gist** and **66th edition of Kurukshetra Gist**, released for the month of May 2021. It is increasingly finding a place in the questions of both UPSC Prelims and Mains and therefore, we've come up with this initiative to equip you with knowledge that'll help you in your preparation for the CSE.

Every issue deals with a single topic comprehensively sharing views from a wide spectrum ranging from academicians to policy makers to scholars. The magazine is essential to build an in-depth understanding of various socio-economic issues.

From the exam point of view, however, not all articles are important. Some go into scholarly depths and others discuss agendas that are not relevant for your preparation. Added to this is the difficulty of going through a large volume of information, facts and analysis to finally extract their essence that may be useful for the exam.

We are not discouraging from reading the magazine itself. So, do not take this as a document which you take read, remember and reproduce in the examination. Its only purpose is to equip you with the right understanding. But, if you do not have enough time to go through the magazines, you can rely on the content provided here for it sums up the most essential points from all the articles.

You need not put hours and hours in reading and making its notes in pages. We believe, a smart study, rather than hard study, can improve your preparation levels.

Think, learn, practice and keep improving!

You know that's your success mantra 🙏

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

1. ARE WE ON A CLIFF?

Introduction

- The world is facing gloomy times in midst of the pandemic, conflicts, and natural calamities. Recently, we witnessed the horrors caused by nature in Chamoli district, the ground of the famed Chipko movement in Uttarakhand. Nature's warning is evident with visible cracks in its erstwhile harmonious relationship with humanity.
- The wave of industrial revolution marked a major turning point in earth's ecology and humans' relationship with the environment.
- The agricultural revolution which grew five thousand years ago provided food and stability to society.
- The first industrial revolution that took place 250 years ago was primarily with coal and steam; the second with electricity and oil; the third with computers and its accessories; and now the fourth is a fusion of technologies in the physical, digital and technological worlds.
- During the 20th century, with the detonation of the atomic bomb, humanity entered a new era where we gained the power to destroy ourselves, without the wisdom to ensure that we must avoid doing so.

The future of peace and harmony in the 21st century is likely to be directly linked to issues concerning five key realities of life today:

- (1) Ecology, global warming, and climate change;
- (2) Nuclear weapons, the emerging technology of warfare and the continuing arms race among nation-states;
- (3) Geopolitics and nationalism;
- (4) Religious extremism; and
- (5) Poverty and inequality.

Causes of serious disturbances in the ecosystem:

- Widespread industrialisation,
- The proliferation of factories,
- Destruction of forests for the construction of roads,
- Blocking of rivers for building massive dams, and power stations, and
- The movement of vehicles and migration of people

In the context of climate change and global warming, experts predict that it is likely to cause many catastrophes including the displacement of billions of people around the globe.

Today, both nature and world peace are under threat, and coupled with geopolitics all this have put humanity on a cliff and we do not know how to retrieve the present dangerous situation away from its self-destructive ways.

This needs to be appreciated in a threefold perspective:

- Nature;
- Science; and
- Wisdom

Nature

Today there is a credible threat to human survival from global warming and climate change with the potential to damage the lives and habitats of billions of people in different parts of the world.

Five events of the recent times need to be particularly referred to:

- Bushfires in Brazil and Australia of 2019;
- Extinction of species;
- Outbreak of pandemic SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) in Hong Kong in 2002-03;
- Coronavirus pandemic; and
- Forest fires in California alongside the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

It may be mentioned that a large number of species have already become extinct. To recount, the species we lost just in 2019; three bird species, two frogs, a shark, a famous snail and one of the world's largest freshwater fish were among those declared extinct in 2019

Forest fire was not simply the issue of forest management but climate change. Earlier, the US had withdrawn itself from the Climate Change Accord.

Later, President Biden has reversed the decision and has also promised to spend \$2 trillion over four years to escalate the use of clean energy and ultimately phase out the burning of oil, gas, and coal.

Science

The information and communications revolution are fast-paced and lead to the globalisation of products, cultural values, and information and is integrating markets and trade. But what becomes of environment and nature in such a scenario, remains a matter of great concern.

Technology, being value-neutral, has accelerated the pace of the downward journey. Climate change and global warming are posing serious problems.

We have to reject the general line of dealings in the market in the world for the sake of the long-term interests of the human race.

Wisdom

At the present juncture, if we do not make use of our cumulative wisdom, nature will be harmed and succeeding generations will blame us for our failure. We have to keep the Vedic precept of “This earth is our mother and we are its sons” in our minds.

The Path Forward

- The covid pandemic has not only highlighted the lack of basic healthcare for people but also the damage to the ecology. The world post-Covid would be a different one.
- There is an imperative requirement to contemplate and work towards building an ecological civilisation that would outline the ways of living in harmony with nature.
- Let us move towards creating a world where everyone has an opportunity for education and is conscious of saving the environment and defeating future pandemics.
- If science, spirituality, and wisdom go hand in hand, one can create a better world on this earth. Mahatma Gandhi said: “Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need but not for every man’s greed”. All these are possible when we do it together.

Conclusion

We have to move towards building an ecological civilisation and descending from the present cliff of uncertainty towards peaceful living and inclusive development and respect for nature.

2. THE PANDEMIC & GLOBAL SYNERGY

Despite being a biological domain-related concern in its purest nature and a pandemic characterised by global health emergency, the scope of the Covid-19 pandemic was remarkably distinguishable in other aspects of human life ranging from socio-cultural, economic, and political level.

Role of Nation States During Pandemic

- Nation-states as being the fundamental sovereign unit saw their role significantly increased. Nowhere is it more palpable than in the realm of generation, availability and distribution of the various vaccines.
- Since, nation-states are the basic sovereign fundamental units responsible for responding to such challenges, the response in the field of vaccine development have followed the nationalist lines albeit it also cuts across the national boundaries as witnessed in the various collaborative international efforts to develop the vaccine.

India's vaccine diplomacy

- India's vaccine diplomacy provides the scope to reflect its cultural values imbued with democratic ethos, cooperation, humanity, development and compassion coupled with the vision of India as a responsible global player deserving the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) permanent membership.
- India assumes a significant position in the global supply chain of the vaccine due to its time-tested production capabilities and being the world's largest producer of vaccines.
- The launch of India's vaccine outreach initiative known as "Vaccine Maitri" (i.e., Vaccine Friendship) demonstrates India's concern to bring down the curve of the pandemic as a powerful booster to economic recovery prospect.
- Besides, India assumes a significant position in the global supply chain of the vaccine due to its time-tested production capabilities and being the world's largest producer of vaccines.

Significance of India's vaccine diplomacy

- The nature of action of the developed countries shows their propensity to reserve doses much beyond the need of their population on the other hand the situation of the developing countries, is messy because majority of people in the developing and poor countries could remain unprotected if they cannot afford to pay for the vaccine.
- The nobility of India's moves stands upon her commitment to share her mastery in inventing the Sanjeevani with all fellow countries not only those situated in South Asia but also to different countries of the Middle East to Africa and beyond.

- It is undoubtedly a great achievement so far as the domain of our foreign policy and soft power are concerned and would definitely leverage our prestige and facilitate our mobility to higher position of power.

What is Soft Power?

- As per Joseph Nye, “Sometimes we can get the outcomes we want without tangible threats or payoffs”.
- A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries - admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness - want to follow it.

Vaccine diplomacy: is India winning the soft power game?

- India emerged out as a soft power in the world during the pandemic. India is the most favoured country in terms of the potential to become a regional and a global superpower.
- While the current superpower, the US has been hoarding the vaccines and other richer countries buying more vaccines than they need, India emerged out as a country that still keeps humanity above all the factors.
- Vaccine diplomacy bends towards the soft power perspective that rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others. The sources of soft power of a country rest primarily on three resources:
 1. Its culture (in places where it is attractive to others),
 2. Its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and
 3. Its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)
- India's vaccine diplomacy provides a great fusion of three sources as mentioned above.
- It provides India with the scope to reflect its cultural values imbued with democratic ethos, cooperation, humanity, development and compassion coupled with the vision of India as a responsible global player deserving the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) permanent membership.
- India has supplied vaccines to nations including Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, the UAE, Brazil, Morocco, Bahrain, Oman, Egypt, Algeria, Kuwait, and South Africa.
- Indian vaccines have reached Afghanistan and also it is reaching the shores of CARICOM countries in the Caribbean, Pacific Island States, Nicaragua etc.
- India's ubiquitous vaccine delivery programme to the rest of the world is situated within the framework of Vaccine Maitri which is quite synonymous with the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine of India.

Conclusion:

- Diplomacy is all about astute conduct of international relations with other countries based on certain parameters of connectedness and cooperation.
- It is worth noting that India's first supply of vaccine dosage went to Bhutan and Maldives, these two countries being India's closest ally in the South Asian region.
- Bhutan happens to be the only nation within the SAARC to be not co-opted by the Chinese BRI tentacles.
- India should follow a preferential and prudential line of judgement when it comes to vaccine distribution. Being generous is a great virtue but generosity should be backed by judicious calculation.

3. SUSTAINABLE HEALTH**Introduction:**

Health is a primary right, a human rights issue really. Eating lesser and moving more could be used as a population-based intervention to reduce diabetes & heart diseases.

The only way to improve health without an economic or security crisis is to take the more sensible and sustainable route towards it - education, advocacy, self-regulation. It's not about losing weight, it's about doing it the right way, the sustainable way.

Story of Cuba:

- The only country to have lost weight collectively (average of all adults) in modern history was Cuba.
- In early 90s, in early 90s, the Soviet Union had collapsed and the average consumption of calories by Cubans fell from 3000-3200 to about 2400.
- The embargo from the US led to food and fuel shortage and even the public transport buses stopped running.
- Castro declared it as a periodo especial (special period) that included food rationing, promotion of small-scale gardening and distribution of more than a million Chinese made cycles.
- Not surprisingly, people lost weight and national averages for Diabetes and heart disease dropped.
- The phenomenon even made it to the British Medical Journal (BMJ), highlighting how eating lesser and moving more could be used as a population-based intervention.
- In other words, the only way to improve health without an economic or security crisis is to take the more sensible and sustainable route towards it - education, advocacy, self-regulation.

Health as per Yoga and Ayurveda

- Health is not just about the absence of disease, but rather the presence of youthful enthusiasm and an ability to learn at every stage in life that encourages one to be on a path of happiness and fulfilment.
- The Upanishads describe sukha, or happiness, as a state where all our senses – sight, smell, touch, sound and taste – are all aligned with one another. Dukha, on the other hand, is a state where the senses are not aligned and is, naturally, the lack of happiness.
- Each of us has experienced this: the body in one place, the mind in another and the senses distraught. This lack of alignment is what the modern world calls 'stress'.
- In Ayurvedic terms, 'health' can be translated as swasthya, a state where the swa (the self), is stha (centred). In other words, health is synonymous with the state of being centred, with all senses aligned.
- Mahatma Gandhi described it as a confluence of thought, speech and action, and no conflict between them.
- Yoga, for one, guides us to health on the path of shanti, or peace, and the yoga texts teach us that swasthya is step one to both inner and outer peace.

Did you know

- *The world today is fatter than what it was just 10 years ago and yet the dangers of hunger loom over us just as much as they did years ago.*
- *Globally, we are facing what is called as, the double burden of malnourishment. On the one hand is a population that eats so much that they could die because of the excesses and on the other hand is a population that doesn't have access to 3 square meals a day.*

Metabolic Health Over Weight Loss

- Not everyone who is overweight or obese is unhealthy or prone to diseases. Their chances of getting any of the NCDs are just about 20%.
- When they lose weight quickly, they are no longer metabolically healthy obese (MHO).
- Now, they have a 150% higher chance of getting diabetes, cancer, heart disease, hormonal imbalance, mental health issues, etc. They are now metabolically unhealthy obese (MUHO).

- The only way to improve health without an economic or security crisis is to take the more sensible and sustainable route towards it – education, advocacy, self-regulation.
- It's not about losing weight, it's about doing it the right way, the sustainable way.

Need for a shift from weight loss to metabolic health.

- The things that really matter when it comes to our well-being, are usually the ones we can't measure on a weighing scale or on a scale of any kind.
- Do we sleep well in the night, do we wake up feeling fresh, do our energy levels stay good through the day, do we suffer from acidity, bloating and indigestion, do we get sweet cravings post meals, are we able to stay active and comply to exercise plans and do we have painful PMS and periods, etc.
- In scientific terminology, the above parameters are surrogate measures of metabolic health. They give an indication of how well your hormones are behaving, how is your heart health, how diverse is your gut bacteria, are your blood sugars well regulated, and so much more.
- In other words, they are markers of your susceptibility to non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, cancer, PCOD, thyroid conditions, heart health, mental health issues, etc.
- NCDs account for almost 75% of early deaths worldwide.
- We all also now know the role comorbidities play in severity of Covid-19 symptoms.
- One of the biggest reasons for deteriorating public health, even when diet trends proliferate, is the single-minded focus on losing weight at the cost of metabolic health.
- Health is not just about the absence of disease, but rather the presence of youthful enthusiasm and an ability to learn at every stage in life. The narrative of what accounts for good health therefore must shift from weight loss to metabolic health.

SIGNIFICANCE OF LOCAL FOODS

- Local food is climate resilient. It blends into the local food systems and grows in a manner that allows for other crops and the surrounding ecosystem of fruits, flowers, insects, bees, etc., to flourish.
- Its nutrient rich and by default a culture fit for the population of that land. It makes economic sense too, as it allows small farmers to grow local food without heavy investments (and unpredictable returns) into biotechnology, modified seeds and even labour.
- All in all, it helps keep the people, their land and their forest in a good shape.

4. Smart Agriculture

Agritech is defined here as technologies and tools that improve yield, efficiency and profitability by leveraging Internet of things, big data, artificial intelligence, machine learning, drones, and sensors in agricultural processes to track, monitor, automate and analyse.

Issues with Indian agriculture:

- Agriculture and allied sectors are the primary source of livelihood for nearly 55 per cent of India's population (Census 2011) but accounted only for approximately 17.8 per cent of the country's Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2019-20.
- The yields on cereal crops are about 50 per cent lower in India, than in countries such as the United States or China, and speak to the numerous structural barriers that continue to persist in the sector.
- With agricultural output being utilised as important input for various industries, including retail and e-commerce, the importance of agriculture and improving yields becomes all the more pressing.
- The average size of farm holdings in the country is just over 1 hectare, with small and marginal farmers holding nearly 86 per cent of the total.
- Small holders find it particularly difficult to invest in expensive technologies and other inputs that would improve efficiency.
- Additionally, the existence of a large number of intermediaries across the value chain, challenges in access to credit and technology, limited sales channels, and lack of digital infrastructure have inhibited agricultural potential.

Solution

- An important solution lies in the rapid adoption of aggrotech, defined here as technologies and tools that improve yield, efficiency and profitability by leveraging Internet of things, big data, artificial intelligence, machine learning, drones, and sensors in agricultural processes to track, monitor, automate and analyse.
- The rationale behind the use of such emerging technologies is to minimise the impact of the unknowns of agriculture. For instance, weather, soil and climatic conditions are important factors in agricultural production
- Using predictive technologies to detect erratic weather, sensors to map the specific type of climate and soil in an area, and machine learning algorithms that determine the appropriate crops based on this data, can substantially improve the quality and quantity of yield.
- In the dairy and livestock vertical, the use of sensors to monitor the health and nutrition of cattle and drones to track herds can improve efficiency and traceability.

Measures taken by government

- The Central as well as various state governments have undertaken numerous initiatives to enable and support the integration of smart technologies in agriculture. A few of these initiatives have been outlined.
- Central Govt - Soil Health Cards (2015-2017): crop-specific recommendations for fertilizers and nutrients, every two years. Soil Health Card Mobile App (2017): captures GIS coordinates while registering sample details to indicate location of sample
- Madhya Pradesh - Set up the UN-ICRISAT agency to assist with climate smart agriculture solutions.
- Uttar Pradesh - Bill and Melinda gates Foundation and TATA Trusts collaborated with the State government to set up an Indian Agriculture Incubation Network at IIT Kanpur
- Recognising the growing necessity in the country for the integration of such solutions, agritech start-ups have been driving innovation towards bridging the various gaps that persist along the value chain.
- Acting as the link between farmers, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers, these startups have been improving market linkages, while disrupting traditional agricultural systems with innovative and affordable solutions.
- There are over 500 agritech start-ups in the country that have been driving innovation towards bridging the various gaps that persist along the value chain. These start-ups have been improving market linkages, while disrupting traditional agricultural systems with innovative and affordable solutions.

Issues and challenges

- Even as the various stakeholders are driving smart agriculture in India, certain fundamental issues must still be addressed to effectively bring about this digital revolution. These include:
- The issuing of blanket solutions as opposed to localised recommendations which are sensitive to geographical, socio-cultural, and demographic requirements,
- the fragmented and unorganised structure of agriculture that involves multiple levels of intermediaries,
- the hesitation of small holders to undertake technologies that would not be commercially viable and cost-efficient.
- Additionally, even with the launch of initiatives such as Digital India, the adoption and penetration of technology is a slow process that diminishes investor interest.
- The lack of synergy between the various advisories and their disconnect from on-ground situations also perpetuate low uptake of smart technologies.

Conclusion:

- The process of unleashing the true potential of agritech in the country would involve developing a synergistic relationship between the various stakeholders in the process.
- Also improving the regulatory environment will ease accessibility of startups and other companies to create a robust ecosystem.

5. E-waste Management

Introduction:

- As of today, some 95% of e-waste is managed by the informal sector which operates under inferior working conditions and relies on crude techniques for dismantling and recycling.
- Electronic waste (e-waste) i.e., waste arising from end-of-life electronic products, such as computers and mobile phones, is one of the fastest growing waste streams in the world today.
- The world dumped a record 53.6 million ton (Mt) of e-waste in 2019, recycling only 17.4% of it.

E waste India

- India has an e-waste management policy in place since 2011, with its scope expanded in 2016 and 2018. Yet, the pace of its implementation has not been satisfactory.
- Less than five percent of the waste is treated through formal recycling facilities, leaving the rest to be handled by the informal sector with very little enforcement of environmental and occupational safety norms.

E-waste value chain

- E-waste management is a complicated process given the multitude of actors that are involved in the process.
- To critically assess each in the different stages of processing, it is important to understand the e-waste value chain.
- The process involves four stages - generation, collection, segregation and treatment/disposal.
- E-waste is generated when the first user of the product concludes on its useful life with no intention of reuse and disposes it off by donating or selling.
- This e-waste can be managed either formally through collection or disposal in waste bins or informally through developed e-waste management infrastructure or even without it.

Modes of E-waste Collection:

Formal	Waste bin	Informal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-waste is collected by designated organisations, producers, Government retailer take-back, and producer take-back. This e-waste is then taken to a specialised treatment facility, which recovers the valuable materials and manages the toxic substances in an environmentally controlled manner. Residuals are incinerated or safely landfilled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The disposer resorts to openly dumping the product in a waste bin along with other household wastes. E-waste ends up being incinerated or landfilled as other domestic waste. As a result, besides losing the resource value it harms the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are established network of individual waste dealers or companies who collect and trade the e-waste through various channels wherein possible metal recycling may occur at the destination. In others, the e-waste may be picked door-to-door and sold to an informal dealer who may repair, refurbish, or sell again to a backyard recycler. Irrespective of how the e-waste is disposed of in the two processes, it still runs the risk of not being aptly treated to secure the disposal in an environmentally sound manner.

India's regulatory ecosystem:

- Indian electronics sector boomed in the last decade, picking up from US\$ 11.5 billion in 2004-05 to US\$ 32 billion in 2009-10.
- Increased production and penetration of imported electronics items led to an accelerated e-waste generation that necessitated regulatory control over the sector.
- Besides, because of the high cost of recycling e-waste (companies have to pay for disposal of broken equipment), many companies in developed nations opted for the

less expensive option, i.e., to ship their e-waste overseas to dump in developing nations.

- This prompted many awareness raising campaigns by non-government organisations (NGOs) and greater attention from multilateral institutions leading to introducing general waste management regulations in 2008 by Government calling for responsible e-waste management.
- To streamline e-waste management, Government notified Electronic Waste (Management and Handling) Rules 2011, that introduced Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), whereby producers were required to collect and recycle electronic items.
- By shifting the burden of waste management onto manufacturers, the EPR framework, in theory, created incentives for more environment-friendly product designs.
- Since manufacturers were incurring the disposal cost, their designs would incorporate less toxic and easily recyclable materials, thereby reducing input material requirement.

Shortcomings of EPR framework in India

- EPR regulations in India were not quantified through collection or recycling targets.
- In the absence of targets, and in a relatively lax regulatory environment, producers had little incentive to ensure the collection of their used products. As a result, e-waste generated in India had climbed to 1.9 Mt in 2015.
- Therefore, the e-waste rules were amended in 2016 to include collection targets and implementing a Deposit Refund System (DRS) by the producer.
- In a DRS, an upfront deposit is charged to the consumer at the time of purchase of the product, and the deposit is refunded when the product is safely returned to the producer.
- The 2018 amendment made provision for the registration of Producer Responsibility Organizations (PROs).
- PROs in India offer comprehensive compliance services, from negotiating the most cost-effective regional collection and recycling contracts with different recyclers to helping producers meet outreach and awareness raising requirements.

Current scenario and issues in e-waste recycling

- Despite the e-waste management policies being in place since 2011 in India, their implementation has been sluggish.
- As of today, some 95% of e-waste is managed by the informal sector which operates under inferior working conditions and relies on crude techniques for dismantling and recycling.

- Policy changes have tried repeatedly to formalise the sector, but issues of implementation persist on the ground.
- First is the issue of price competencies. Unlike formal recyclers, informal recyclers have lesser operating costs, no overheads, or other administrative necessities. They hence can offer better price to the aggregators for material, especially high value electronics with precious metals content.
- Second issue is that the informal network is well-established and rests on social capital ties that PROs have yet to establish and are hence insulated from reaching the viable number of aggregators.
- Another important issue is the lack of sufficient metal processing infrastructure. As a result, true value of extraction is never realised. If these materials are domestically isolated, it can lead to greater metals security and resource efficiency in the country.
- On the demand side, the major constraint is the awareness level of the consumers both in terms of consumption pattern and disposal pattern. With the enhancement in the standard of living, modern societies have become resource-intensive in their consumption. This has upended the demand for electronic items while considerably bringing down the life cycle of electronic products.
- Coupled with planned obsolescence by the producers, inadequate repair options or awareness about deposit refund policies, consumers tend to dispose of electronic goods along with other household waste, thus leading to issues of segregation of products entering the informal market.

Stakeholder Analysis

- The Government remains a great catalyst in the entire process. Its role can be discounted to that of a facilitator and a regulator in a self-propelled market.
- It is important that consumers responsibly consume the product for its useful life and then weigh between the chances of repair or disposal with utmost consciousness towards the environment.
- On the supply side, e-waste can be reduced when producers design electronic products that are safer, and more durable, repairable and recyclable.
- Manufacturers must reuse the recyclable materials and not mine rare elements unnecessarily to meet new production.

Recommendations

- The issue of E-waste brings us to the crossroads of Malthusian versus Cornucopian views.
- Cornucopian view holds that the resources are plenty and the ability to adapt and adopt designs will compensate for any shortage in a particular resource in the future. The eminent danger that mining of such vast resources of rare, toxic and precious

metals pose; and their likely harmful effect on environment and human health puts a big question mark on the efficacies of these industrial practices.

- The Neo-Malthusian school propounds for sustainable development and encourages recycling.
- The electronics sector will have to adapt operations to one, reduce virgin material usage and second, build technologies around greater extraction and recycling capabilities.
- Process designs should be revolutionized to find alternatives to existing practices to not unsustainably extract rare earth resources.
- It is pertinent to reduce environmental impacts throughout company operations, from materials and energy used to make commodities right through to global take-back programs for old products.
- Incentivising such take back programs, introducing deposit refund systems and trading credits or discounts for the exchange value of products by sector conglomerates will induce a natural ecosystem of waste collection and disposal.
- Further, optimising the E-waste recycling chain requires strict monitoring, enforcement and tracking, realization of economies of scale and global cooperation. Failing to address any of these elements will result in suboptimal resource efficiency while posing a risk to the environment.
- Enforcement of EPR targets and comprehensive monitoring of formal recycling flows and processes is a critical first step to avoid leakage of valuable materials to an uncontrolled informal sector.
- This monitoring will lead to the creation of a level playing field where all the stakeholders shall be held accountable for their actions during the process of collection, dismantling, processing, extraction, and recycling.
- Thus, a stepwise approach is essential for optimizing the recycling chain during all stages of the process rather than only at the beginning or the end as the current policy advocates.
- Further, people should be made aware of the trade-offs between sustainability and consumerism through both industry campaigns and media networks. This can also be approached through environmental justice analysis. In India, public awareness of e-waste hazards and recycling is low.

Conclusion

- The size and complexity of the e-waste problem is growing at a much quicker rate than the efficacy of our strategies to contain it. This trend is not likely to reverse soon. One of the viable options to solve the problem is to reduce the generation of waste drastically.
- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, initiated an e-waste awareness program under Digital India Mission in 2016 along with

industry associations, to create awareness among the public about the hazards of e-waste recycling by the unorganized sector and to educate them about alternate methods of disposing of their e-waste.

- Immense potential is there in augmenting e-waste recycling in the country. Since India is highly deficient in precious mineral resources, there is a need for a well-designed, robust and regulated e-waste recovery regime that would generate jobs and wealth.
- Sustainable business solutions and proactive people's participation can guide the time-bound achievement of EPR targets and breathe a second life for digital debris.

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SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE RURAL GROWTH

1: Drivers of Inclusive Rural Growth

Five trillion-dollar economy goal:

- Currently, India is the fifth-largest economy in the world having a net worth of 2.94 trillion dollars and the Government has set a goal to become a five trillion-dollar economy by 2025.
- To achieve this, India has set a target of one trillion dollars from agriculture, three trillion dollars from services and one trillion dollars from the manufacturing sector.

Significance of rural area in meeting the target:

- The rural economy of India which generates about half of the national income and more than two-thirds of the total employment (NITI Aayog, 2017), will play a decisive role in meeting the five billion economy target.
- The agriculture and allied sectors, India being a mostly rural-based economy, have contributed 17.8 per cent to the total gross value added of the country during 2020-21.
- More than half of the value-added in the manufacturing sector is contributed by rural areas.
- The rural markets with a significant share in the national income of India can induce a push-up to the national economy by generating demand for goods and services.
- Hence the growth, income and consumption patterns of rural India hold the key to boost demand, revive the economy, and sustain economic growth at the national level.

Agriculture – The Fulcrum of Rural Economy

- These sectors are the mainstay of rural economy as they drive demand for other sectors including retail, FMCG, and e-commerce. Besides, agriculture directly steers consumption and demand in seed, fertilisers and chemicals, agricultural machinery and implements, energy and transport sectors.
- It is anticipated that the sector will grow to Rs. 88.2 lakh crore by 2023 at a CAGR of 12.2%.
- Hence, the Government has launched various forward-looking policies and initiatives that aim at doubling the income of farmers by 2022.
- Expected growth in agriculture sector shall stimulate demand for processing services, packaging, transportation and for finance, retail and other services.

- Untapped potential exists for public and private sector to contribute across the agricultural value chains, mainly in four areas of activities – market linkage and farm to fork connections, logistics and supply chain, agroprocessing, and R&D.
- The government sponsored e-NAM has removed barriers of licensing, movement and storage by providing online trading facilities to farmer. So far, over 1000 major whole sale agriculture markets across 18 States and three UTs have been integrated to develop the concept of 'one nation, one market' for agriculture produce.
- A massive campaign is underway to aggregate small, marginal and landless farmers into Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) to enhance economic strength and market linkages.
- Besides increasing income, FPOs will facilitate farmers with access to improved technology, credit, better inputs at affordable cost and more markets. FPOs can also trade through eNAM from their collection centre without bringing the produce to APMC.
- Recently, eNAM has introduced a warehouse-based trading module that allows trading based on electronic-Negotiable Warehouse Receipts.
- Expansion of online marketing facilities required matching infrastructural support at the ground level. Hence, Government created a dedicated Agri-market Infrastructure Fund with a corpus of Rs. 2,000 crores for development and upgradation of marketing infrastructure.
- Government created a dedicated Agri-market Infrastructure Fund for development and upgradation of marketing infrastructure at 10,000 Gramin Agricultural Markets and 585 APMCs.
- Recently introduced new farm laws are intended to help small and marginal farmers (86 percent of total farmers) who do not have means to bargain for their produce to get a better price.
- The specific law on Agri-market allows farmers to sell their produce outside APMC mandis 'to buyers of their choice Farmers will be able to get better prices through competition and cost-cutting on transportation.
- The new law on contract farming gives freedom to individual farmers to enter into a contract with agri-business companies or retailer-chains on pre-agreed prices of their produce. Such contracts will help small and marginal farmers as the new law transfers the risk of market unpredictability from the farmer to the sponsor.
- Another law removes some of the major agri-commodities from the list of essential commodities, thereby attracting private/foreign direct investment into the agriculture sector.
- Government has recently made MSP (Minimum Support Scheme) scheme more comprehensive and remunerative by assuring at least 50 percent margin over and above the production cost.

Industries and Enterprises – Wheels of Rural Growth

- Consistent and intensive efforts to improve infrastructural facilities in rural areas have now yielded desired results. Better road connectivity, high-speed internet facility, adequate power supply, plenty of local resources, availability of skilled and un-skilled workers, and improved credit facilities, have transformed rural areas into a favourite destination for setting up new enterprises.
- On the other hand, industrial/entrepreneurial activities in rural areas, boost rural economy by providing job opportunities to local people.
- Among various industrial activities, agro-processing/food processing is a sunrise sector, especially in rural areas.
- The Ministry of Food Processing Industries is making all efforts to encourage investments across the value chain.
- PM Kisan SAMPADA (Scheme for Agro-Marine Processing and Development of Agro-Processing Clusters) Yojana' was launched in 2017. It aims to create modern infrastructure with efficient supply chain management from farm gate to retail outlet, and link farmers to consumers in the domestic and overseas markets.
- 'SAMPADA' scheme is supporting creation of mega food parks and agro-processing clusters, especially in rural areas, to address the need of small and micro food processing enterprises by providing plug and play facilities.
- To arrest postharvest losses, financial assistance is being provided for setting up integrated cold chain from the farm gate to the consumer.
- A novel 'One District One Product' scheme is designed to promote value chain and infrastructure development for the specialised indigenous product (food or otherwise) of a district so that it gets state/national exposure.

Micro, Small and Medium enterprises (MSMEs) and government's efforts:

- Micro, Small and Medium enterprises (MSMEs) are regarded as the growth accelerators of the Indian economy, and more so for the rural economy as more than half of the MSMEs operate in rural India.
- MSMEs contribute about 30 percent in the national GDP, contribute about 40 percent to the overall exports and employ nearly 110 million people across the country.
- Recently, as a step towards ease of doing business, Government revised financial norms for classification of MSME units. It introduced a simple, online registration scheme for MSMEs, which is based on self-certification. Named as Udyam' registration, it offers a host of benefits to MSMEs.
- Payment for invoices is assured within 45 days, otherwise buyer is liable to pay compound interest;

- Government departments and public sector companies are mandated to procure 25 percent of their requirement from registered MSMEs o Concession in electricity bills is provided to registered MSMEs
- During ongoing pandemic, a subordinate debt scheme is launched that provides a debt facility of up to 15 percent of the promoter contribution or Rs. 75. lakh, whichever is lower.
- A novel initiative called Funds of Fund scheme is launched with a corpus of Rs. 10,000 crores for providing financial relief and funding to MSMEs with growth potential and viability.
- During ongoing pandemic, Prime Minister launched a special CHAMPIONS portal for making the smaller units big by helping and hand-holding them. World bank has also recently allocated about Rs. 5,600 crores for emergency funding to the MSME sector.
- Ministry of MSME is also implementing a 'Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries' (SFURTI) to promote cluster of small-scale industries.
- SFURTI scheme is providing support for new products, design intervention and improved packaging, and also the improvement of marketing infrastructure. Traditional artisans are being equipped with improved skills and capabilities through training and exposure visits.
- Govt has established 18 MSME Technology Centres to develop and promote new appropriate technologies, and their transfer to rural artisans for enhancing their income.
- During current pandemic period, these Technology Centres could develop and manufacture various components/products related to COVID-19, shared with MSMEs for domestic/indigenous production.

FMCG- Gamechanger of Rural Economy

- Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) sector is the fourth largest sector in India employing over three million people.
- This sector primarily consists of three segments – household and personal care (50%), food and beverage (31%) and healthcare (19%).
- Growing awareness, easier access, changing lifestyles and enhancing income have been the key growth drivers for FMCG sector. However, in the last few years, the FMCG market has grown at a faster pace in rural India compared to its urban counterpart.
- Therefore, the FMCG products account for nearly 50 percent of the rural spending.
- Major FMCG companies in private sector are eyeing rural markets with launch of new product series especially suited to the likes of rural consumers. FMCG companies are also focussing on strengthening their e-commerce engagement mainly to attract business from rural youth.

- On the other hand, Government has made some policy interventions to push up sectoral growth, especially in rural areas. These Initiatives includes:
 - 100 percent approval of FDI in multi-brand retail
 - Lower tax regime for FMCG products
 - Transformation of the logistics and warehousing facilities
 - Expansion of infrastructural facilities for better retail management.
- Consumer durables is another major sector influencing rural markets and rural economy. This sector is broadly divided into two major categories – Brown Goods (TV, PC, laptops, digital cameras, etc.) and White Goods (AC, washing machines, microwaves, etc.).
- Easy access to finance, easy EMI schemes and buy now-pay later schemes have also contributed to demand in the consumer durables sector
- Schemes such as Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), RuPay Cards, Kisan Credit Cards and the ambitious Jan Dhan scheme have improved the financial inclusion set-up in rural areas. Improved banking services in rural areas have directly promoted and escalated rural entrepreneurship to push up rural economy.
- Availability of electricity, easy access to finance, easy EMI schemes and buy now-pay later schemes have contributed to the demand of consumer durables in rural areas.

Conclusion:

- India's rural regions are increasingly becoming key economic drivers for the national economy and necessary attention towards it is mandatory to realize the target of a five billion economy by 2025.
- However, a vast potential of opportunities that lies in the rural markets have not been completely explored.
- There is much scope and hope that the rural economy of India will drive Indian economy towards a five trillion dollar plus economy by the year 2025.

2: Inclusive, Equitable and Quality Education

Introduction:

- Access to quality education that has equity and inclusion at its core becomes crucial in Indian context considering the unique nature of its society divided by caste, religion, and language.
- The caste system has created layers in the society where one is considered superior to other on the basis of his/her birth in a dominant caste. This has resulted in a significant percentage of population falling into socio-economic disadvantageous group (SEDGs).
- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act 2016 defines inclusive education as a system of education wherein students with and without disabilities learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities.
- The Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) also seeks to —ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all|| by 2030.
- After independence, education was identified as a vital tool for an equitable and just society. From a literacy rate of 18 percent in 1951, we have moved up to 73 percent as of 2011.
- Currently, the school education system in India is the largest in the world with around 15 lakh schools, 94 lakh teachers and 25 crores students.

Previous Policies and Commissions:

- Based on the reports of The Kothari Education Commission (1964–1966), Gol formulated first National Policy on Education in 1968. It promoted adoption of broadly uniform educational structure in all parts of the country, i.e., 10+2+3 pattern.
- The Second National Policy on Education (NPE) was adopted in 1986. This new policy called for special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunity.
- The National Education Policy, 2020 is the third in the series of National Education Policies (1968 and 1986 modified in 1992) in India.

The RTE Act

- The most significant event came in the year 2002 with 86th amendment in the Constitution of India wherein article 21 A was inserted to ensure that every child has a right to fulltime elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain norms and standards.

- This subsequently resulted in passage of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 which gave a legal mandate to provide free and compulsory elementary education to every child in the age group of 6-14 years.
- In the year 2002 with 86th amendment in the Constitution of India wherein article 21 A was inserted to ensure that every child has a right to fulltime elementary education.
- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 gave a legal mandate to provide free and compulsory elementary education to every child in the age group of 6-14 years.
- India became one of the 135 countries who have made education a fundamental right for every child.
- The RTE Act has many provisions for ensuring quality, equity, and inclusion in education system such as notification of weaker and disadvantaged group by the appropriate Government and reservation of 25 percent seats in private unaided schools for them
- It focused on improvement in learning outcomes and Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), non-discriminatory learning environment and holistic development of child.

Success of RTE: Status

- UDISE 2018-19 data on GER for boys and girls of SCs and STs points towards the fact that inclusiveness has been achieved at the elementary level. However, at secondary and senior secondary level the enrolment ratio needs more focus and improvement.
- Low transition rate from elementary to secondary level, high drop-out rate at secondary level and low learning levels of students are challenging factors.

Challenges:

The major challenges that have to be addressed includes:

- The low transition rate from elementary to secondary level;
- High drop-out rate at the secondary level (17.9 percent as per USISE 2018-19 {provisional}); and
- Low learning levels of students

Steps Taken and Recommendations:

- As envisaged in National Education Policy 2020, the purpose of the education system is to develop good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper and creative imagination.

- Ensuring equality of treatment and outcome has always been a focal point of all the policies/schemes/programmes/Act etc. These constant efforts since independence have yielded positive outcomes.
- As per UDISE 2018-19 (Provisional), the GER for boys and girls of SCs is 104.9 and 107 respectively and for ST boys and girls is 106.6 and 105 respectively at elementary level which is more than the GER of all categories, however, at secondary and senior secondary level the enrolment ratio needs more focus and improvement.
- There are some crucial areas where the initiatives have been taken in the recent years or are required to be taken in future. These are:

1. Emphasis on Early Years of learning:

- Over 85 percent of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6, indicating the critical importance of appropriate care and stimulation of the brain in the early years in order to ensure healthy brain development and growth.
- Strong investment in early education can enable young children to participate and flourish in the educational system throughout their lives.

Initiatives being taken:

- NCERT is preparing a National Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Children Education.
- To ensure the universal acquisition of foundational skill by all children by grade III, a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy is being set up by the Ministry of Education.

2. Focus on Learning Outcome:

- Although RTE Act in Section 29 (2) talks about the all-round development of child, learning through activities. However, in practical, rote learning was promoted.
- The rules to the RTE Act were amended in February, 2017 and for the first time, the class wise, subject wise Learning Outcomes were delineated till Class VIII.
- There is the need to avoid measures that tend to promote rote learning and promote measures that lay greater emphasis on improved learning outcomes.

Initiatives being taken:

- A National Achievement Survey (NAS) based on learning outcomes to assess the competencies of children is being conducted.
- The learning outcomes framework developed by the NCERT has been adopted by all States and UTs.

- Such change in approach will bring much-desired improvement at the ground level in terms of pedagogy, assessment, and teachers' capacity.

3. Reforms in Teacher Education:

- Given the critical role played by a teacher in the educational sector of any country, there is a need to focus on reforms in teacher education.
- Rapid and unplanned growth of Teacher Education Institutions across the country has affected the quality of teacher education programmes adversely.

Initiatives being taken:

- The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) setup in 1995. However, it could not achieve its objective of stimulating the development of the teacher education system.
- NCTE confined itself only to regulatory work related to granting permission to teacher education institutes and was negligent towards the following of norms, standards and quality of these institutions.
- NEP 2020 took the cognizance of this fact and recommended various measures to improve this sector.

4. Building Capacities of Teachers:

- The pre-service teacher education programme and continuous professional development of in-service teachers becomes crucial and one of the most important aspect of the system.
- In India, many teachers lack professional qualifications as mandated by the NCTE.

Initiatives being taken:

- The RTE Act, 2009 was amended in 2017 to ensure that all in-service elementary teachers acquire the minimum qualifications prescribed under the Act.
- To ensure continuous professional development of teachers, an integrated Teacher Training Programme called NISHTHA (National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement) has been launched.
- However, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, this programme was transformed to the needs of teaching and learning during the pandemic and made 100 percent online. NISHTHA Online for elementary teachers was launched in October, 2020 on DIKSHA Platform of NCERT.

5. Revamping Assessments:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The exam centric assessment system has promoted rote learning rather than higher-order thinking skills or critical thinking. Hence there is an urgent need to revamp the assessment framework in the educational sector. The assessment should be aligned with the learning outcomes and based on assessing competencies. • As envisioned in NEP 2020, the assessment will have to be more regular and formative, more competency-based, to promote learning and development among students, and tests higher-order skills, such as analysis, critical thinking, and conceptual clarity. 	<p>Initiatives taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NEP 2020 envisions a transformation in assessment pattern by making board exams a low-key affair and introducing an Artificial Intelligence based holistic progress card (HPC). • This holistic progress card (HPC) will be a 360-degree, multidimensional report that reflects in great detail the progress as well as the uniqueness of each learner in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. • It will also help the teacher and student, and the entire schooling system, continuously revise teaching-learning processes to optimise learning and development for all students.
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6. Holistic education:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim of education is not limited to cognitive capacities or academic excellence only but also to ensure that social, ethical, and emotional capacities are improved. 	<p>Initiatives taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To achieve these objectives, the government is trying to ensure that the education is more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry driven, discovery-oriented, learner-centred, discussion-based, flexible, and, at the same time enjoyable.
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7. Equity and Inclusion at all Levels:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender Parity Index is now 1 which shows equal participation of girls. • Access to quality education that has equity and inclusion at its core becomes crucial in the Indian context considering the unique nature of its society divided by caste, religion, and language and a significant percentage of the population falling into Socio-Economic Disadvantageous Group (SEDGs). • Hence it becomes extremely important to have equity and inclusion principles as the focal point of all policy and reforms. 	<p>Initiatives being taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision for textbooks, uniforms, self-defence training for girls, KGBV residential school for girls. • The assistive devices for Children with Special Needs (CWSN).
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Conclusion:

- The NEP 2020 envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower.
- Providing universal access to quality education is the key to India's continued ascent, and leadership on the global stage in terms of economic growth, social justice and equality, national integration, and cultural preservation.

3: Women, Youth and Rural Transformation

Introduction:

- In India, women and youth constitute a major share of population. It is urgently needed to mobilise this vast human resource, if the country has to progress in all spheres.
- Women play important roles in the rural economy as farmers, wage earners and entrepreneurs and also bear responsibility for the well-being of the members of their families. Thus, women are key agents for rural growth and development in India. Women from indigenous and grassroots communities are often also custodians of traditional knowledge, which is the key to their communities' livelihoods, resilience and culture.
- The youth being enthusiastic, vibrant, innovative and dynamic in nature, is the most important section of the population. Youth shows strong passion, motivation and willpower which also make them the most valuable human resource for fostering the economic, cultural and political development of a nation.

Status of Rural Women:

- Rural women in India are less literate than rural men. According to the 2011 census, the population of rural women who are literate are 58.8 percent.
- Women work for longer hours than men and contribute substantially to family income. However, they are not perceived as productive workers.
- In rural areas, very few women have ownership over land or productive assets. This proves to be a roadblock in institutional credit.
- The majority of the agricultural labourers are women and they are mainly assigned manual labour.

Status of Youth:

- The total youth population increased from 168 million in 1971 to 423 million in 2011. The share of the youth population in the total population is expected to be 34.33 percent by 2020.
- In 2013, about 225 million youth, or 20 percent of all youth in the developing world, are "idle - not in education, employment or training".
- In 2012, 56.6 percent of India's rural youth in the age group 15-29 years derived their livelihood from agriculture, forestry, or fishing.

- According to a recent ILO estimate, female employment in agriculture was 57 percent in 2018, compared to 19 percent female employment in industry and 24 percent in services.
- Young women farmers' experiences are lost between the two categories of rural youth and women. Even in the substantial body of work focused on women farmers in India, the generational aspects of women farmers are often under-researched.

Role of Women in Rural Growth:

Agriculture:	Animal Husbandry	Allied Sectors	Small Scale Industries:	Other Job Opportunities:
Women are mainly involved in harvesting, drying, threshing, winnowing and storage of field. According to a recent International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimate, female employment in agriculture was 57 per cent in 2018, compared to 19 percent female employment in industry and 24 percent in services.	In animal husbandry, women have played multiple roles. In livestock management, 90 percent of indoor jobs like milking, feeding, cleaning, etc. are done by women.	Sericulture, handloom and textile industries in the rural economy especially in the north-eastern region, has huge potentiality for women employment generation. Some rural communities have basic skills and the local market for such products.	Women in rural economy are directly or indirectly involved in the processing of Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) particularly in small-scale enterprises. Women constituted almost 51 percent of the total employed in forest-based small-scale industries.	Women constitute a major share of the workforce in sectors such as education, insurance agent, company representative, NGO workers, Anganwadi workers, etc.

When women are economically and socially empowered, they become a potent force for change. They could play a catalytic role towards the achievement of transformational economic, environmental and social changes required for sustainable development. Hence, women are key agents for rural growth and development in India.

Role of Youth in Rural Growth:

The youth can play a critical role in the rural economy in the following ways:

- Youth, who are well-educated and possess efficient knowledge of how to implement agricultural activities, assist in the development of agricultural activities.
- Educated and adequately skilled youth can provide the necessary workforce for these small-scale industries.
- Young people are innovative and creative in problem-solving and in finding solutions and can lead to economic development as well as the social development of their communities and society.

Challenges for Women and Youth:

- Rural women are still facing a lot of challenges of unequal access to productive resources; limited access to services of education, extension, credit and social protection; widespread inequalities in rural labour markets, combined with the heavy burden of unpaid care work in households and communities and limited participation, voice and influence in rural organisations.
- Rural youth have challenges of limited access to productive and gainful employment in the agricultural sector; limited access to skill development and education; exclusion from institutions that provide access to financial services, such as credit, savings and insurance and lack of curricula tailored to the labour market's needs.
- Apart from these, rural women and youth often face major health problems, including malnutrition, malaria and other diseases.

Recommendations:

- The role of women and youth in bringing growth and development in rural areas is immense, and hence measures promoting their efficient and fullest participation need to be implemented.
- Rural women must be continuously empowered through various skill development training and greater opportunities to acquire education.
- Promoting and ensuring gender equality, and empowering rural women through decent work and productive employment not only contributes to inclusive and sustainable economic growth but also enhances the effectiveness of poverty reduction and food security initiatives.
- A country's ability and potential for growth is determined by the size of its youth population. This section of the population needs to be harnessed, motivated, skilled and streamlined properly to bring rapid progress to the country.
- Youth being a demographic dividend, education and skilling are key factors to the full and effective participation of youth in the processes of social, economic and political development. Skills amongst the rural masses lead to the economic growth and development of the country.

Conclusion

Rural growth and development are vital for the overall progress of the country. The women and youth contribute in bringing about improvements in the infrastructural facilities and promote empowerment opportunities. In this way, if rural India will shine the whole country will have immense contributions nationally, regionally and also globally in this century.

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