Q.1) Who are Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)? Highlight their key features and challenges. Discuss the steps taken by the government for their development and suggest a way forward. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

India identifies **75 communities** as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), first recognised by the **Dhebar Commission (1960)** for their extreme marginalisation. Their distinct needs demand targeted policies, as general tribal schemes often bypass them.

Body

Key Features of PVTGs (As identified by Dhebar Commission)

1. **Pre-agricultural Level of Technology:** PVTGs often rely on hunting-gathering or rudimentary shifting cultivation.
   Example: The **Cholanaikkan tribe in Kerala** still practice forest foraging and live in rock shelters.
2. **Low Literacy and Education Levels:** Educational attainment among PVTGs remains dismal, especially among girls.
   Example: **Sahariyas** of Madhya Pradesh have female literacy below **15%**.
3. **Stagnant or Declining Population:** Poor health services, isolation, and inbreeding contribute to population stagnation.
   Example: **The Birhor tribe** in Jharkhand had a negative growth rate in past censuses.
4. **Economic Backwardness and Isolation:** Minimal participation in markets, land alienation, and weak access to welfare.
   Example: **Baigas** in Chhattisgarh were displaced due to wildlife conservation without adequate rehabilitation.

Key Challenges Faced by PVTGs

1. **Displacement and Habitat Loss:** Development projects, mining, and forest laws have uprooted many communities.
   Example: The **Kharia tribe** in Odisha was displaced due to iron ore mining.
2. **Malnutrition and Poor Health Access:** PVTGs face high malnutrition and mortality due to remote locations and inadequate services.
   Example: In 2023, over **30 deaths** were reported among **Baigas** in **MP** due to hunger-related issues.
3. **Low Political Representation:** PVTGs are underrepresented in local governance and decision-making bodies.
   Example: Few PVTG members hold positions in Panchayats or forest committees.
4. **Lack of Reliable Data:** Many PVTGs are not properly enumerated, limiting targeted policy design.
   Example: Inconsistencies exist in the population estimates of groups like the **Sentinelese**.

5. **Cultural Erosion:** Exposure to mainstream society threatens traditional knowledge and languages.
   Example: **Great Andamanese language** groups have almost disappeared.

Government Initiatives for PVTG Development

1. **PVTG Development Mission (2023):** Launched under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for targeted saturation of housing, health, education, and livelihoods.
2. **PM Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN):** Aims to reach habitations of PVTGs with basic amenities like road, telecom, housing, water, health, and education services.
3. **Forest Rights Act, 2006:** Recognises individual and community rights over forest resources.
4. **Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana:** Aims at ensuring integrated development with focus on livelihood, education, and health.

Way Forward

1. **Dedicated PVTG Cadre in Welfare Departments:** As recommended by the National Advisory Council, a specialised unit should monitor and deliver customised schemes in PVTG areas.
2. **In-situ Infrastructure and Service Delivery:** As emphasised by **NITI Aayog,** mobile education, healthcare, and nutrition services should be provided within their natural habitat.
3. **Revival of Traditional Knowledge and Livelihoods:** Focused programmes should preserve indigenous practices in medicine, agriculture, and crafts through cultural documentation and promotion.
4. **Periodic PVTG-Specific Census and Surveys:** Disaggregated data collection on health, education, and socio-economic conditions must inform policy design and monitoring.

Conclusion

The plight of PVTGs reflects the limits of **one-size-fits-all development**. Upholding their dignity and survival demands tailored, community-led efforts in the spirit of Article 46, which mandates special care for weaker sections.

Q.2) "Development and welfare schemes for the vulnerable, by their nature, are discriminatory in approach." Do you agree? Give reasons. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

Development and welfare schemes often target specific vulnerable groups, which may seem discriminatory. However, such targeted interventions are essential to **ensure equitable access to opportunities** and address deep-rooted historical and structural disadvantages.

Body

Why Development Schemes Appear Discriminatory

1. **Non-universal Nature:** schemes are often designed with strict eligibility criteria based on caste, gender, income, or region.
   Example: Post-Matric Scholarship for SCs excludes other groups despite similar needs.
2. **Targeted Beneficiary Focus:** many schemes reserve benefits for certain social groups, leaving others outside the ambit.
   Example: **Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission** is specifically for tribals, excluding other poor groups.
3. **Affirmative Action Based on Identity:** policies like reservations are designed around social identity rather than individual merit.
   Example: **10% EWS reservation** is based purely on economic criteria, unlike identity-based quotas for SCs and STs.
4. **Perception of Unfair Resource Allocation:** preferential treatment may lead to resentment in competitive environments.
   Example: Some economically backward students from general categories feel excluded from pre-matric scholarships.

Why Targeted Schemes are Justified and Necessary

1. **Correcting Historical Injustices:** they help redress centuries of marginalisation and social exclusion.
   Example: **Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana** seeks to bridge development gaps for Scheduled Tribes in remote regions.
2. **Promoting Social Inclusion:** they ensure the participation of vulnerable groups in public life and development.
   Example: **National Fellowship for SC** students promotes higher education among underrepresented communities.
3. **Enhancing Human Capabilities:** schemes improve access to basic services like housing, nutrition, and healthcare.
   Example: **National Health Mission** aims to reduce disparities in health indicators among rural and tribal populations.
4. **National Development through Empowerment:** harnessing the potential of the marginalised boosts inclusive growth.
   Example: **National Urban Livelihoods Mission** trains urban poor, especially women and SC/ST, for job opportunities.

Way Forward

1. **Data-Driven Targeting:** use socio-economic and caste census data to identify true beneficiaries irrespective of caste or religion.
2. **Sunset Clause for Benefits:** as recommended by the **2nd ARC**, introduce time-bound support with periodic review to avoid permanent entitlements.
3. **Geographic Targeting Over Identity:** focus on backward districts and deprived blocks regardless of caste or religion.

4. **Sensitisation and Awareness Campaigns:** educate the public on the rationale behind affirmative action to reduce resentment and promote solidarity.

Conclusion

Though welfare schemes may seem discriminatory, they uphold the spirit of equality in **Article 15(4).** In a deeply unequal society, targeted development is not exclusion—it is essential to ensure fair opportunity and inclusive growth.

Q.3) The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 remains only a legal document without intense sensitisation of government functionaries and citizens regarding disability. Comment. (150 words, 10 marks)

Introduction

According to **Census 2011**, over **2.21%** of India's population lives with disabilities. The **RPwD Act, 2016** was a step forward, but inadequate sensitisation has limited its transformation from law into lived reality.

Body

Key Provisions of the RPwD Act, 2016

1. **Expanded Definition of Disability:** recognizes **21 conditions** including mental illness, blood disorders, and multiple disabilities.
2. **Reservation in Education and Jobs:** provides **4% reservation in government jobs** and **5% in higher education**.
3. **Rights-Based Approach:** ensures equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, and protection from exploitation.
4. **Grievance Redressal and Penalties:** creates central and state-level commissioners to monitor implementation and ensure compliance.

Why the Act Remains Under-Implemented

1. **Low Awareness Among Officials:** training modules on disability rights are absent in many bureaucratic or institutional settings.
   Example: A **2022 NCPEDP report** found that over **70%** of government officers hadn't undergone any disability sensitisation training.
2. **Social Stigma and Public Apathy:** disability continues to be seen as a charity issue rather than a rights issue.
   Example: Despite having ramps, **polling booths in 2024** remained inaccessible in several states due to negligence.
3. **Infrastructure Inaccessibility:** public buildings and digital platforms remain largely non-compliant with accessibility standards.
   Example: Only **3% of government websites** were fully accessible per the **2023 report** by Digital Empowerment Foundation.

4. **Lack of Budgetary Prioritisation:** implementation funds are scattered and underutilised, leading to ineffective delivery.
   Example: The 2022-23 audit of **Accessible India Campaign** found less than **50% fund** utilisation in target cities.
5. **Tokenism in Inclusion:** inclusion lacks depth and continuity, failing to translate into meaningful participation.
   Example: Only **0.5% of total government recruits** were persons with disabilities despite the **4% quota**.

Way Forward

1. **Sensitisation Training:** integrate disability awareness into mandatory **induction and in-service training** for government officials.
2. **Community Awareness Drives:** conduct sustained national and local campaigns to foster **rights-based understanding** of disability.
3. **Strict Monitoring and Accountability:** strengthen **disability audits**, reporting mechanisms, and enforcement by state commissioners.
4. **Inclusive Budgeting:** ring-fence funding for disability schemes and incentivise universal design in infrastructure and services.

Conclusion

To realise the **UNCRPD's goals** and constitutional values of dignity and equality **(Article 46)**, sensitisation must accompany legislation. A humane, inclusive society demands both legal entitlements and social transformation.

Q.4) MGNREGA has supported vulnerable rural communities, but it still struggles with issues *like poor implementation, lack of funds, and low transparency. Critically assess its performance and suggest how it can be improved. (250 words, 15 marks)*

Introduction

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act **(MGNREGA), 2005**, aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least **100 days** of guaranteed wage employment per year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do **unskilled manual work**.

Body

Major Features of MGNREGA
1. **Legal Entitlement:** guarantees **100 days** of wage employment annually as a **right-based approach** to rural livelihood security.
2. **Demand-Driven Scheme:** employment must be provided within **15 days** of demand; else, the worker is entitled to an unemployment allowance.
3. **Inclusive Coverage:** applies to all rural households willing to do **manual work**, irrespective of caste or gender.

4. **Women Empowerment Provision:** mandates at least **one-third of beneficiaries** to be women workers.
5. **Decentralised Implementation:** execution through **Gram Panchayats** ensures local planning, social audit, and transparency.

Key Achievements of MGNREGA
1. **Rural Livelihood Security:** has provided employment to millions during agrarian distress and crises like **COVID-19**.
   *Example: Over **7 crore households** availed work under MGNREGA in 2020–21 (Ministry of Rural Development).*
2. **Women's Participation:** enhanced female workforce participation, offering financial independence and decision-making power.
   *Example: Women account for over **50% of MGNREGA** workers annually (MoRD data, 2023).*
3. **Asset Creation:** contributed to water conservation, irrigation, and rural connectivity through community-based works.
   *Example: Over **40 lakh water-related assets** created between 2014–22 (MGNREGA MIS Reports).*
4. **Social Inclusion:** provided jobs to marginalized groups including SCs, STs, and landless laborers.
   *Example: In FY 2022–23, SC/STs contributed to nearly **38%** of total person-days.*

Major Challenges in Implementation
1. **Delayed Wage Payments:** chronic delays violate the Act's mandate and discourage participation.
   *Example: In 2022–23, nearly **45% of wage payments** were delayed beyond 15 days (NREGA Sangharsh Morcha).*
2. **Fund Shortages:** frequent fund constraints lead to stalled projects and unmet demand for work.
   *Example: **CAG Report (2020)** flagged instances of mid-year fund exhaustion in states like Bihar and WB.*
3. **Corruption and Ghost Beneficiaries:** weak monitoring and false job entries result in fund leakage.
   *Example: **CAG audit** revealed fake job cards and duplication in multiple districts.*
4. **Lack of Technical Capacity:** poor planning, monitoring, and lack of trained staff affect quality of assets.
   *Example: Accountability Initiative reports show only **21% of technical posts** filled in many blocks.*
5. **Digital Divide and MIS Dependence:** Aadhaar-seeding and app-based attendance create exclusion errors.
   *Example: Use of NMMS App led to exclusion and protests in **Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu**.*

Way Forward
1. **Ensure Timely Fund Allocation:** decentralise fund release and enhance budget predictability to avoid payment delays.
2. **Improve Monitoring and Social Audits:** strengthen social audits with community involvement and third-party verification.

3. **Strengthen Technical Support:** recruit trained personnel at block and panchayat levels to plan and supervise durable assets.
4. **Committee Recommendations:** adopt suggestions from the **Standing committee on rural development (2013)** like enhancing convergence with other schemes and real-time MIS tracking for transparency.

Conclusion

MGNREGA remains vital for rural resilience and poverty reduction. Strengthening it aligns with **Article 41 of the DPSP**, which mandates the State to ensure the right to work and public assistance for the vulnerable.

Q.5) The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) plays a crucial role in safeguarding child rights in India. Critically assess its mandate, functioning, and limitations in ensuring justice and welfare for children. (250 words, 15 marks)

Introduction

The NCPCR, established under the **Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005**, aims to ensure that all laws, policies, and administrative mechanisms align with the rights and best interests of children as per the **Constitution** and **UNCRC**.

Body

Mandate and Key Functions of NCPCR

- **Policy Review:** examines and reviews existing laws, policies, and programmes related to child rights.
- **Monitoring Implementation:** oversees compliance of child-related laws, including the Right to Education Act, 2009 and Juvenile Justice Act, 2015.
- **Inquiry and Complaints:** inquires into violations of child rights either on its own or based on complaints.
- **Research and Awareness:** undertakes research and spreads awareness on child rights and protection mechanisms.
- **Advisory Role:** advises central and state governments on effective implementation of child rights.

Achievements and Positive Interventions

1. **Monitoring RTE Act Implementation:** regularly inspects schools and monitors RTE compliance, including issues of dropout, infrastructure, and discrimination.
   Example: NCPCR reports led to identification of out-of-school children in several states like Bihar and Rajasthan.
2. **Rescue and Rehabilitation Efforts:** coordinated with state authorities and **Child Welfare Committees (CWCs)** in child labour and trafficking cases.

Example: 10,000+ children rescued from hazardous work environments in 2021–22 through joint operations.

3. **COVID-19 Response:** tracked children orphaned during the pandemic and coordinated with authorities to ensure their care and protection.
   Example: Bal Swaraj Portal was launched to track such children. As of February 2022, over **1.53 lakh children** were registered on the portal.

4. **Combating Online Exploitation:** initiated awareness campaigns and coordinated with agencies to prevent child pornography and online abuse.
   Example: Collaborated with Interpol and NCRB on cybercrime awareness programs for schools.

Limitations and Challenges

1. **Limited Powers:** lacks enforcement authority and must depend on other agencies for implementation of recommendations.
2. **Understaffing and Budget Constraints:** inadequate resources and personnel hamper timely investigation and monitoring.
3. **Inconsistent State Commission Coordination:** weak coordination between NCPCR and State Commissions leads to fragmented responses.
4. **Overcentralization:** most activities are Delhi-centric with limited outreach in remote rural areas.
5. **Delay in Disposal of Cases:** case backlog and administrative delays limit its responsiveness to urgent child rights violations.

Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Statutory Powers:** grant quasi-judicial powers for enforcement of decisions and penal action in grave violations.
2. **Enhance Funding and Infrastructure:** ensure adequate staffing, field officers, and budget for independent inquiries and outreach.
3. **Improve Federal Coordination:** build real-time coordination mechanisms with **State Commissions** for effective case resolution.
4. **Leverage Technology:** expand digital complaint portals, helplines, and monitoring dashboards for faster action and transparency.
5. **Committee Recommendations:** implement recommendations of the **Justice Verma Committee and Mehta Committee** on strengthening child protection frameworks.

Conclusion

NCPCR plays a vital role in child welfare, but institutional strengthening is essential to realize **Article 39(e) and (f)** of the Constitution, which mandate protection of children's health, development, and opportunities in dignity and freedom.