

UPSCprep Free Daily Answer Writing Initiative

Subject: GS 2

Syllabus: Social Justice

Questions

Q1. With more than 60% of India still residing in the villages, panchayats hold the key in delivering goods and services. Discuss the benefits and challenges involved in panchayats as a public service delivery vehicle.

(250 words)

15

Q2. Institutes created for the betterment of vulnerable sections are themselves in need of betterment. Discuss?

(250 words)

15

Model Structures

Q1. With more than 60% of India still residing in the villages, panchayats hold the key in delivering goods and services. Discuss the benefits and challenges involved in panchayats as a public service delivery vehicle. (250 Words)

15

Introduction

- Panchayats as a medium to deliver goods and services signed Mysuru Declaration on service delivery. A resolution was passed to design a common minimum service delivery programme by panchayats pan India. OR
- Panchayati Raj Institutions were granted constitutional status as the third tier of India's federal democracy through the 73rd Amendment Act.

Main Body

Panchayati raj institutions are designed in such a way that many positive features help in effective service delivery. Some of them are-

- It fosters social inclusion which finds resonance in the constitution's mandatory reservation for women and other marginalized communities
- Inclusion of these sections mean policy design and implementation from their perspective. Like in the case of health and education, women panchayat members take an active role in accessible education and better steps for vaccine delivery.
- Gram Sabhas ensure participatory democracy by direct participation of people. This guarantees that the voice of all sections of the society is heard and policy making is inclusive.
- The strategy of top down approach has largely neglected the third tier of government. Its place was taken by bottom-up approach when Gram Panchayats were given constitutional status. It ensures effective implementation of schemes.
- Social audits, timely elections, regular meetings etc ensure accountability and responsibility of elected representatives.

But even after 30 years of panchayati raj, there are many challenges which affect timely delivery of services. Some of them are-

- Financial crunch is a major obstacle due to lack of fiscal decentralization which impedes many developmental works.
- Due to inequity in power and awareness, elite capture of resources devolved to local bodies is frequent.
- Lack of data analysis and domain expertise in lower level planning results in structural issues which further restricts impact of planning.
- Ineffective reservation provisions due to proxy representation by other empowered people. Panch-Pati syndrome is quite widespread in reserved seats for women.
- Poor devolution of functions and lack of skilled functionaries results in power concentration with states which further makes panchayats ineffective.

Way Forward

- Activity Mapping: The 2nd ARC had recommended that there should be a clear-cut demarcation of functions of each tier of the government.

- Ensuring Principle of Subsidiarity: According to the 2nd ARC, the principle of subsidiarity should be followed while deciding on the implementation machinery for any programme, i.e. central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level
- Ensuring Fiscal Federalism: As functionality also depends on finances, fiscal autonomy accompanied by fiscal accountability can provide a long term solution to the problems faced by local bodies.
- Effective Auditing: Audit committees may be constituted by the State Governments at the district level to exercise oversight of the integrity of financial information, adequacy of internal controls, compliance with the applicable laws and ethical conduct of all persons involved in local bodies.
 - In this pursuit, the initiative of the Meghalaya government to make social auditing mandatory is worth emulating by other states.
- Convergence of Various Government Programmes: There is a need for convergence of various development programs of the Centre and state governments. In this context, Mission Antyodaya is a step in the right direction.

Conclusion

- The rising voice of people for bottom-up approaches needs to be addressed by novel methods like activity mapping which helps find areas which need to be worked upon. This is practiced in few states like Kerala and the impact in local governance is visible.

Q2. Institutes created for the betterment of vulnerable sections are themselves in need of betterment. Discuss? (250 Words) **15**

Introduction:

- Vulnerable groups are those groups of people who are not resilient and lack stability in leading a comfortable life, even by the slightest disturbance their stability can be disturbed.

- In the Indian context old age people, physically disabled, sexual minorities, women, lower caste, and class groups for vulnerable sections of society.

Main Body:

Institutes working for the betterment of vulnerable sections:

- National Commission for Scheduled Castes.
- National Commission for Backward Classes.
- National Commission for Safai Karamcharis.
- National Commission for Scheduled Tribes – NCST.
- The Rehabilitation Council of India.
- The Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities
- The National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities.
- National Commission for Women
- National Commission for Protection of Child Rights.
- National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.
- National Human Rights Commission

Reasons for failure:

- **Failure in execution:** The mandate is inclusive to a large extent but the bodies fail to implement the provisions using the existing mechanisms.
 - The recent incidents of Kathua and reports of NCRB (National Crime Record Bureau) highlighting increased violence by 300% depict the failure of the National Commission for Women.
- **Dilution of principles:** Successive legislation and judgments have weakened provisions of the institutions.
 - The amendment to Forest Act 2006 has impacted the working of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes and affected their livelihood and community rights.
- **Non-comprehensive mandates:** The mandate of institutions and citizen charter designed for it is non-inclusive.

- For example, the failure to include intersex provisions in National Commission for Transgender Persons has side lined a large chunk of its benefits.
- **Toothless tigers:** Many courts have commented on these bodies as “toothless tigers” as they lack the investigation and power to punish the deviants. They are dependent on courts for writs.
- **Lack of funding avenues:** Poor finances of the institutions lead to poor performance. They are dependent on the central government for their operations.

Measure to improve the functioning:

- **Adoption of zero-tolerance policy:** This has to be adopted against deviants by the bodies to ensure deterrence.
- **Making institutions responsive and accountable:** The institutions can be subjected to social audits annually and adopt ICT tools in line with the PRAGATI portal.
- **Decentralization:** Active involvement of local bodies and citizens makes the commissions more citizen-centric and transparent.
- **Process reforms:** The redesigning of citizen charters, gaining penal provisions, and integration with related ministries and commissions can shift institutions' focus towards result orientation.

Conclusion:

- Attitudinal problems, red-tapism, and lack of accountability have pulled down the functioning of the institutions meant for vulnerable sections.
 - As they are directed towards weaker sections it is important for their success in ensuring egalitarian society and achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Ensure inclusivity and equality).
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