



Mains Practice Question

Q. Indigenous people are one of the most vulnerable sections facing climate change, however, they can act as change agents, towards mitigating and adapting to climate change. Discuss. (250 words)

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Approach

- Briefly defining Indigenous people, highlight their vulnerability/problems face due to Climate Change.
- Highlight how they can act as change agent in mitigation as well as adaptation efforts with example.
- In conclusion, highlight some challenges for becoming a change agent and some measures to overcome them.

Introduction

Indigenous peoples, who have been long inhabiting an area, are among the first to face the direct consequences of climate change, due to their dependence upon, and close relationship, with the environment and its resources. Climate change exacerbates the difficulties already faced by indigenous communities including political and economic marginalization, loss of land and resources, human rights violations, discrimination and unemployment. For example, in the high altitude regions of the Himalayas, glacial melts affect hundreds of millions of rural dwellers who depend on the seasonal flow of water.

Body

Indigenous People as Agents of Change

- Indigenous peoples are vital to, and active in, the many ecosystems that inhabit their lands and territories and may therefore help enhance the resilience of these ecosystems, for example, at many places in India forest's pristine core area have been conserved in the form of sacred groves by tribals.
- In addition, indigenous people interpret and react to the impacts of climate change in creative ways, drawing on traditional knowledge and other technologies to find solutions which may help society at large to cope with impending changes. This is because of their relationship with nature i.e. Man in harmony with Environment.
- Place-based knowledge rooted in local culture, Indigenous Knowledge (IK), is useful in determining impacts of climate change, especially at the local level where scientific models often fail. This, IK plays a crucial part in the rolling-out of new environmental programs because these programs have a higher participation rate and are more effective when indigenous peoples have a say in how the programs themselves are shaped. Thus, including this knowledge in climate change research would lead to further improvements in not only the REDD+ program, but also in the myriad environmental programs that have emerged and will continue to emerge throughout the new millennium.
- Taking governance issues to indigenous people, those who are most exposed to climate issues, would build community resilience and increase local sustainability.

Conclusion

Despite such known potential of indigenous people's vulnerability and role in helping mitigate & adapt climate change, there are challenges that hinder such like non-recognition of rights in conservation efforts (their role in UNFCCC remains marginal), incursion of their already given rights like case of Forest Rights Act, negative fallout of development like displacement due to industries etc. All these need to be addressed so that they can become active partners in conservation efforts.

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