



Mission Antyodaya and Rural Upliftment

This editorial is based on [“‘Mission Antyodaya’ Should not Fall by the Wayside”](#) which was published in The Hindu on 27/04/2022. It talks about the significance of Mission Antyodaya and the challenges to the upliftment of rural India.

For Prelims: Articles 243, Mission Antyodaya, District Planning committee (DPC), State Finance Commission (SFC), Eleventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution, SocioEconomic and Caste Census (SECC), Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs), MGNREGA, National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).

For Mains: Gram Panchayats - Challenges, Mission Antyodaya - Analysis, Challenges to India’s Fiscal Federalism, Issues related to the upliftment of rural India.

The Indian Constitution mandates local governments to prepare and implement plans for **‘economic development and social justice’** ([Articles 243G and 243W](#)).

Several complementary institutions and measures such as the **Gram Sabha** to facilitate people’s participation, the [District Planning committee \(DPC\)](#) to prepare bottom up and spatial development plans, and the [State Finance Commission \(SFC\)](#) to ensure vertical and horizontal equity were introduced to promote this goal.

Given the right momentum, the **‘Mission Antyodaya’** project of the Government of India launched in 2017-18 bears great promise to revive the objectives of these great democratic reforms. The [Ministry of Panchayati Raj \(MoPR\)](#) and the [Ministry of Rural Development](#) act as the nodal agents to take the mission forward.

What is Mission Antyodaya?

- **Mission Antyodaya** is a mission mode project envisaged by the Ministry of Rural Development. It is a convergence framework for measurable effective outcomes on **parameters that transform lives and livelihoods**.
- The main objective of Mission Antyodaya is to **ensure optimum use of resources** through the convergence of various schemes that address multiple deprivations of poverty, making **gram panchayat the hub of a development plan**.
 - This planning process is supported by an annual survey that helps to assess the various development gaps at the gram panchayat level, by collecting data regarding the 29 subjects (health & nutrition, social security, good governance, water management etc.) assigned to panchayats by the [Eleventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution](#).

What led to the Launch of Mission Antyodaya?

- The traditional poverty line linked to the calorie-income measure, religiously pursued by the **Planning Commission** proved inane and **failed to serve as a purposive policy tool**.
- The stats brought into the public domain by the [SocioEconomic and Caste Census \(SECC\) 2011](#) were **'demanding' remedial intervention**. It revealed that:
 - 8.88 crore households are deprived and poor from the perspective of **multi-dimensional deprivations such as shelterlessness, landlessness**, households headed by single women, SC/ST household or disabled member in the family
 - 90% of rural households have **no salaried jobs**
 - 53.7 million households are **landless**
 - 6.89 million **female-headed households** have **no adult member** to support
 - 49% suffer from **multiple deprivations**
 - 51.4% derive sustenance from **manual casual labour**
 - 23.73 million are with **no room or only one room to live**
- Paradoxically, this happened in **a country that spends more than ₹3 trillion every year for the rural poor** from the Central and State Budgets and bank-credit linked self-help programmes.

What Challenges Exist in the Rural Upliftment?

Gaps in Gram Panchayats

- The 'Mission Antyodaya' survey in 2019-20 for the first time collected data that shed light on the **infrastructural gaps from 2.67 lakh gram panchayats**, comprising 6.48 lakh villages with 1.03 million population.
- The maximum score values assigned in the survey add up to 100 and are presented in class intervals of 10.
 - While **no State in India falls in the top score bracket of 90 to 100**, 1,484 gram panchayats fall in the bottom bracket.
 - Even in the score range of 80 to 90, **10 States and all Union Territories do not appear**.
- The total number of gram panchayats for all the 18 States that have reported adds up only to **260, constituting only 0.10% of the total 2,67,466 gram panchayats** in the country.
 - Kerala tops the chart (with a score range 70-80) but **accounts for only 34.69% of total gram panchayats of the State**.
 - The corresponding all-India average is as low as 1.09%.
 - Even for Gujarat which comes next to Kerala, **gram panchayats in this bracket are only 11.28%**.

Poor Performance of Gram Panchayats in Composite Index of MA

- Although **only 15 gram panchayats** (of the total reported) in the country **fall in the bottom range below 10 scores**, more than a fifth of gram panchayats in India are **below the 40 range**.
 - Only the gram panchayats in Kerala are above this in contrast to the rest of the States.
 - The gap report and the composite index show in unmistakable terms that building **'economic development and social justice' remains a distant goal** even after 30 years of the decentralisation reforms and nearly 75 years into Independence.

Missing Link between GPDPs and MA Surveys

- The missing link or connection between the [Gram Panchayat Development Plans \(GPDPs\)](#) prepared and the gaps emerging from the Mission Antyodaya (MA) Survey findings has **hindered the process of preparing comprehensive GPDP**.
 - As per the MoPR guidelines, the findings and the gap report assessments from **MA Survey should serve as the baseline for the preparation of GPDP**; but this is **not taking place**.
- Each Panchayat is mandatorily required to link the activities taken up in the GPDP with the gaps identified in the MA Survey, but the **gaps identified in MA Survey are not addressed in majority of the GPDPs**.
 - Even those GPs that completed MA Survey have **not incorporated Gap Reports in the final GPDP**.

What can be the Way Forward?

- **Integration of Resources:** The scope to reduce the growing rural-urban disparities is tremendous. Given the **'saturation approach'** (100% targets on select items) of the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**, the possibilities of realising universal primary health care, literacy, drinking water supply and the like are also immense.
 - What is required now is a serious effort to converge the resources - the [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act](#), the [National Rural Livelihood Mission](#), [National Social Assistance Programme](#), [Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana](#), etc.
- **Role of Gram Sabha and Leaders:** Gram Sabha is a forum for people's participation in grassroot level governance. It provides opportunity to the rural people to get involved in the development programmes of their village and make the administration transparent.
 - It is the responsibility of the elected functionaries, frontline workers, and local citizens to see that the Gram Sabha functions as per the rules and expectations.
 - Gandhi ji once said **"The Greater the Power of the Panchayats, the better for the People"**.
 - The facilitators appointed shall also **ensure community mobilisation including vulnerable sections like SC/ST/Women**.
 - The village organisations/SHGs may be supported to present before the Gram Sabha a **poverty reduction plan, which, after deliberation, can be incorporated in the GPDP**.
- **Deployment of Fiscal Resources:** The failure to deploy the data to [India's fiscal federalism](#), particularly to **improve the transfer system and horizontal equity** in the delivery of public goods in India at the sub-State level, is one of the major setbacks.
 - The constitutional goal of planning and implementing economic development and social justice can be achieved only through **strong policy interventions and adequate supply of finances to the grassroot levels**.
 - The policy history of India has been witness to the phenomenon of announcing big projects and failing to take them to their logical consequence.
 - However, there is no need to repeat history, rather lessons need to be taken and improvements need to be made.

Drishti Mains Question

"Mission Antyodaya is a promising initiative for rural upliftment, given the right momentum is provided in terms of stronger policy interventions, allocation of sufficient resources and stringent implementation". Discuss.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. Which one of the following authorities makes recommendation to the Governor of a State as to the principles for determining the taxes and duties which may be appropriated by the Panchayats in that particular State? (2010)

- (a) District Planning Committees
- (b) State Finance Commission
- (c) Finance Ministry of that State
- (d) Panchayati Raj Ministry of that State

Ans: (b)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2016)

1. The minimum age prescribed for any person to be a member of Panchayat is 25 years.
2. A Panchayat reconstituted after premature dissolution continues only for the remainder period.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (b)

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