Mains Practice Question

Q. Discuss the challenges and potential solutions to address urban poverty in India, taking into account the socio-economic factors and policy interventions. (150 words)

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Approach:

- **Introduction**: Provide a brief overview about Urban Poverty.
- **Body:** Discuss the major challenges faced by people because of urban poverty and suggest some policy measures to address this issue.
- **Conclusion:** Conclude your answer with a forward-looking approach.

Introduction:

Urban poverty remains a critical challenge in India, as rapid urbanization and socio-economic disparities continue to affect the well-being of marginalized populations. It is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that affects millions of people in India. Urban poverty in India is over 25%; some 81 million people live in urban areas on incomes that are below the poverty line.

Body:

Some of the major challenges faced by the urban poor are:

- **Lack of Access to Basic Services:** The rapid growth of urban areas strains existing infrastructure, resulting in inadequate access to basic services such as water, sanitation, healthcare, education, and social security.
- **Informal Employment:** Urban poor often work in the informal sector, which offers low wages, job insecurity, exploitation, and no legal protection. This vulnerability deepens the cycle of poverty and limits opportunities for upward mobility.
- **Gender Inequality:** Urban poverty hits women the hardest. They suffer from discrimination, limited job options, and unequal access to resources and services. Women in cities are more likely to experience gender-based violence, harassment, and societal biases, which worsen their poverty and inequality.
- **Vulnerability to Shocks and Marginalization:** Urban poor face economic shocks, environmental hazards, social exclusion, and violence. They live in overcrowded and underserviced slums, often located in peripheral areas or near hazardous sites, which leads to spatial inequality and marginalization. Discrimination and stigma from mainstream society further compound their challenges.

Some of the potential solutions to address urban poverty in India are:

- **Comprehensive Urban Planning**: Implementing integrated urban planning strategies that prioritize inclusive growth, provision of basic services, and affordable housing for the urban poor.
- **Enhancing Livelihood Opportunities:** Promoting skill development programs, vocational training, and entrepreneurship initiatives to generate sustainable livelihood options for the urban poor in the informal sector.

- **Mahatma Gandhi National Urban Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):** Implementing urban variants of MGNREGA to create employment opportunities and improve urban infrastructure.
  - Rajasthan has launched urban employment guarantee scheme to provide economic support to poor and needy families in cities through 100 days of on-demand work per year.
- **Social Protection and Welfare Measures:** Expanding social protection programs such as pensions, healthcare schemes, and unemployment benefits to cover the urban poor, ensuring their access to essential services and financial support.
- **Slum Upgradation and Affordable Housing:** Investing in slum upgradation projects, promoting affordable housing schemes, and implementing resettlement plans to improve living conditions and reduce the prevalence of slums.
  - **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY):** Expanding the scope of PMAY to ensure affordable housing for all, with special provisions for the urban poor.
- **Gender-Sensitive Policies:** Enforcing and implementing policies that empower women, ensuring equal access to resources, and promoting their participation in decision-making processes.

Conclusion:

Addressing urban poverty in India requires an integrated approach that combines comprehensive urban planning, livelihood enhancement, social protection measures, slum upgradation, healthcare and education improvements, and gender-sensitive policies. By implementing these strategies and policy interventions, India can make significant progress in reducing urban poverty and fostering inclusive and sustainable urban development.

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