Disaster Resilience - An Inherent part of Community Culture

What is the issue?

With the expansion of Panchayati Raj systems and Gram sabhas becoming more vibrant, it is imperative to make disaster resilience an inherent part of community culture.

What is the role of PRIs?

> *The Panchayati Raj was first adopted by Nagaur in Rajasthan on October 2, 1959.*

- In the system of local self-governance people in the villages participate in the decision-making process.
- It aids in the decentralisation of power.
- PRIs are considered as the backbone of democracy.
- It gives political education to the people and creates a new consciousness among them.
- **The People's Plan Campaign** aims to ensure the preparation of Gram Panchayat Development Plans for economic development and social justice.

How PRIs performed in the recent Covid times?

- PRIs through their **bottom up approach** helped reduce Covid 19 risks, responded swiftly and thus helped people recover quickly**.**
- It provided essential leadership at the local level**.**
- They performed both regulatory and welfare functions.
    - During nationwide lockdown, PRIs set up containment zones, arranged transport and provisioned food for e incoming migrants.
- Effective implementation of welfare schemes like MGNREGA and NRLM quickened the pace of recovery while ensuring support to the vulnerable population.
- Gram sabhas provide a platform to build consensus and make resolutions in the community's interest such as adherence to Covid norms.
- They organised **community-based surveillance systems** involving

village elders, youth and SHGs to keep a strict vigil in quarantine centres and monitor symptoms in households.
- The role of PRIs in mobilising citizens for COVID-19 vaccination is commendable.

How to strengthen the PRIs for effective disaster management?

The Yokohama strategy emphasises on disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness rather than disaster response alone to reduce vulnerability.

- It is crucial to include disaster management chapters in Panchayat Raj Acts to ensure citizen-centric mapping and planning of resources.
- Regular location-specific training programmes for the community can be conducted.
- Platforms can be organised for sharing best practices that will strengthen individual and institutional capacities.
- Since community is usually the first responder in case of a disaster, **community-based disaster management plans** can be formulated where traditional wisdom of local communities can complement modern practices.
- Financial contributions from the community should be encouraged through the establishment of **community disaster funds** in all gram panchayats.

Source: The Hindu

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