Ireland's Help to Native Americans

What is the issue?

- Native American communities in the U.S. are usually the hard hit at times of a disease outbreak.
- For COVID-19, Ireland has offered aid to them. Here is how and why.

How vulnerable are the Native Americans?

- A study was conducted by various US government agencies in 2009 following the H1N1 flu outbreak.
- The reports suggested that death rates were higher among Native Americans in the country.
- Almost a decade later, now, Native American communities have found themselves hit hard by the onslaught of coronavirus infections.
- Native Americans in Navajo Nation, spread across the states of Utah, Arizona and New Mexico in the U.S., have been particularly affected.
- The reasons include -
    i. high rates of poverty
    ii. high risk pre-existing health conditions of diabetes, heart diseases and asthma that many suffer from in Native Americans communities
    iii. little access to adequate healthcare
- These are the very reasons that made them more susceptible to H1N1 flu too.
- In addition, there are also various other social-cultural factors.
- Many households do not have access to running water, making sanitation a challenge.
- Due to socio-cultural factors, many generations in Native American families live together in cramped quarters.
- This makes isolation and social distancing difficult if not impossible during the times of COVID-19.
- Notably, the US is among the countries with the highest numbers of COVID-19 infections.
- The government and healthcare system is struggling to contain the outbreak.
- So, vulnerable communities face harsher circumstances in an already challenging environment.

What is Ireland's aid now?

- Institutions offering medical and public health services in federally-recognised Native American communities have been consistently underfunded.
- The health-related challenges have exacerbated due to COVID-19 for the communities.
- However, help arrived for the Native American communities from an unexpected source - Ireland.
- A crowd-funding campaign on GoFundMe had been set up in the U.S. to help Native Americans.
- This was unexpectedly flooded with donations in early May 2020, from people in Ireland and those with Irish surnames.
- The GoFundMe campaign collected approximately $3.9 million in two weeks since it was set up.

Why Ireland?

- To recount, Native Americans had offered aid to Ireland during the Great Famine that occurred between 1845 to 1849.
- The famine altered Ireland's cultural, demographic and political landscape.
- Large sums of money were donated to Ireland, from people around the world.
- These included from places like Calcutta to Native American tribes in the United States.
- In 1847, Native American Choctaws had donated approximately $150, which would be equivalent to approximately $5,000 today.
- The Native Americans had themselves experienced starvation some 16 years prior to that.
- They had been forcefully displaced by settlers from their native lands, an occurrence that came to be known as the Trail of Tears.
- The humanitarian gesture of the Native Americans towards Ireland's people was thus rooted in an understanding of their own pain and suffering.
- In the comments section of the GoFundMe campaign now, people said they were making donations in commemoration of this aid.
- About 173 years later, Ireland's people are repaying the generosity of the Native Americans.

Source: Indian Express



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering