Slum Clusters in Flood Prone Areas

Mains: *GS1 - Population and associated issues | Urbanization*

Why in News?

According to a 2024 Moody's report, more than 158 million slum-dwellers in India live in vulnerable settlements in floodplains, with most of them concentrated in the Ganga river delta.

What is the condition of slum clusters in flood prone areas?

- **Slum clusters** – It refers to *a group of informal settlements within cities* that have inadequate housing
- This combined with poor hygiene make living conditions miserable.

> *According to **UN-Habitat**, a slum household is characterized by a lack of one or more of the following - durable housing, sufficient living space, access to improved water, access to improved sanitation, and security of tenure.*

- **Overcrowded spaces** – Slums are with many people crammed into very small living spaces.
- **Inadequate housing** – Housing in slums is built on land that the occupant does not have a legal claim to and without any urban planning or adherence to zoning regulations.
- **Social conditions** – These areas are often subjected to many social indicators are on a downward slide
    - **For example**, crime and unemployment are on the rise.
- Most also do not have easy access to schools, hospitals or public places for the community to gather.
- **Informal setups** – In in such urban areas are typically tin-sheet, tent or tarp housing, with rent paid to owners through land contractors
- **Poor living conditions** - These settlements lack basic municipal services such as water, sanitation, waste collection, storm drainage, street lighting, paved sidewalks and roads for emergency access.
- Many slums have been unserviced and unrecognised for long periods, over 20 years in some cities.

What are the causes for slum formation?

- **Cheaper settlements –** These flood prone areas are available for migrant workers and informal settlements as they are cheaper.
- These localities are not preferred by large builders for gated communities or IT parks,
- **Inefficient planning systems** – People are coming to cities far faster than the planning process can incorporate them.
- Often, they find their own land and build a shack before the government has a chance to learn of their existence.
- **Urbanization** – The people migrate from rural areas to the cities and natural population growth continues to occur.
- Today, more than half the world's population resides in urban areas.

- **Bad governance** – Governments often fail to recognise the rights of the urban poor and incorporate them into urban planning, thereby contributing to the growth of slums.
- **The attitude of a government** - Government providing urban services to poor people without taking policy measures to restrict slums, will further attract urbanisation and cause the slums to grow.
- **People preference** - People settle in floodplains for various reasons include access to jobs, social vulnerability, and financial constraints.
    - **For instance**, where regions like Europe, subsidised flood insurance premiums in high risk areas promotes the desirability of floodplain areas like beachfronts and water views.

What are the problems associated?

- **Flood risk** – The people living here often subjected to floods in rainy seasons or cloudburst like disastrous situations.
    - India has the world's largest number of slum dwellers living in floodplains with most of them concentrated in the naturally flood-prone delta of the Ganga river.

- **Indirect consequences** - Inequities in access to resources and loss of jobs and access to services are among the indirect consequences of floods.
- **Social vulnerability** - Exposed populations vulnerability was found to depend on socioeconomic factors like education level and institutional factors like flood insurance.
- **Encroachment risks** - Poor people are forced to live in the most dangerous areas because safer or better-located places are taken by wealthier communities, and the basic services they need are lacking or failing, making them even more at risk.
- **Challenges to mitigate slum formation** -

- **Improper management strategies** – Vulnerable communities often being overlooked merely by looking at the population level instead of vulnerability level in preparing management plans.
- Informal settlements in such urban areas are typically tin-sheet, tent or tarp housing, with rent paid to owners through land contractors.
- **lack of comprehensive data** – Data on vulnerable communities who have flood

exposure risk is inadequate to make holistic policy making.

What are the measures can be taken?

- **Bridging data gaps** – It is done by analysing satellite images of informal settlements or slum dwellings in 129 low- and middle-income countries and comparing them with large-scale flood maps.
- **Slum upgrading –** It is an integrated approach that aims to turn around downward trends in an area.

Slum upgrading *is about putting into motion the economic, social, institutional and community activities that are needed to turn an area around.*

- **Aligning with targets** – Nations to act on flood vulnerability risk for poorer populations as the 2030 deadline for the United Nations' Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) nears.
- **Collaboration efforts** – The government to collaborate with communities instead of banking only on traditional disaster preparedness for better planning.

Quick facts
• **2024 Moody's report -** more than 2.3 billion people are exposed to flooding every year worldwide. • **In India -** more than 600 million people are at risk of coastal or inland flooding. • **Global distribution** - The largest concentrations and largest numbers of such people are in **South Asian countries**. • Where northern India leads in absolute numbers, followed by Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.

Reference

1. The Hindu| Slum Clusters in Flood Prone Areas
2. Citiesalliance| what are slums?

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