

JANUARY 2021

KURUKSHETRA SUMMARY

AN INITIATIVE BY THE PRAYAS INDIA

THE PRAYAS IAS





Summary of Kurukshetra

January 2021

Theme: Perspectives of Rural Development

Contents

Adopting a Holistic Approach towards Rural Development	2
Education in Rural India: Schemes for Women and Youth.....	4
Recent Farm Bills and Benefits to Farmers	9
Panchayati Raj System towards Changing Rural India	11
Livestock: Key for doubling Farmers' income	15
Importance of Infrastructure in Rural Development.....	18



Adopting a Holistic Approach towards Rural Development

Introduction

- Since ancient times, the Indian rural ecosystem has been an agrarian economy which has been predominantly dependent on Agri and allied activities. The rural workforce has always been dependent on agriculture as its primary source of income.
- But now, a shift in the recent few years has been witnessed, as the rural youth have started engaging themselves in various sectors which are not directly aligned to the agriculture sector.
- The youth have become aspirational and want to bring about rapid changes in the rural strata of the society and hence they must be provided with the futuristic 21st century skill sets.
- It is rightly said that, “The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow”, but an entrepreneurial innovative youth force equipped with the right skills and empowered by a supportive innovation ecosystem shapes the “tomorrow”.
- It is well known that to achieve disruptive growth a sustainable plan is of utmost importance.
- The global economy is galloping towards growth by leveraging emerging technologies like 3D printing, robotics, IoT and sensor technologies, augmented and virtual reality that are becoming advanced yet affordable, accessible and available.
- Automation of mundane tasks leading to higher productivity and technology driven growth will soon become key enablers which will inevitably change the way we interact, communicate, transact and reach global markets.
- The time thus has come to focus on building sustainable technology driven plans and approaches to drive the Indian economy to leapfrog towards the 5 trillion-dollar economy goal.

Factors contributing to create a sustainable approach

Delivering Quality Education

- The need for technology driven practical education has been stated in the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The NEP strives to make us realize the importance of experiential learning and also emphasizes on the importance of developing relevant skillsets for an agile world that we live in today.



- The demographic dividend is on our side and we must focus on building experiential model of learning for the school kids.
- One such programme that has created waves in the country is the Atal Tinkering Labs launched by the Atal innovation mission, NITI Aayog. These are state of the art labs created in schools where children are introduced to new emerging technology toolkits.
- Better education will drive towards building better equipped budding entrepreneurs and better job seekers thus contributing to the ecosystem.

Developing Youth as Change Makers

- The focus of this decade is to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 and this can be achieved by enabling the youth of the country to be at the front and centre of the solutions that are being created.
- The vastness of the country along with challenges that we face today in the local regions should be harnessed to find local change makers and they should be provided with opportunities to solve and even fail.
- The institutional structures formed for developing the youth change makers must provide the young innovators with an equitable opportunity that currently exist with the urban youth via incubators/ accelerators and encourage them to try without the fear of fail to achieve sustainable results.
- This way they will become agents of change and drive the economy. There has to be a focused approach in spreading the solutions created by the local youth to the community leaders thus igniting more minds and making them drive the needed change.
- One such effort is being done by the Atal Innovation Mission of NITI Aayog by establishing Atal Community Innovation Centres in the underserved/ unserved regions of the country.
- A similar effort is to be carried out by creating a rural community youth fellowship program focusing on harnessing the talent of a young innovator and creating a viable solution to a local SDG challenge.
 - It is also imperative that this fellowship program is strongly supported by a Public Private Partnership (PPP) network.

Digital Push and Transformation of the Agrarian Economy



- With the advent of new technologies like the AI and block chain, the entrepreneurs can solve the farming woes of the country.
- These technologies will not only provide inputs on the growing patterns of the crops but also provide farmers with the knowledge of domestic and global demands of the market.
- The Startups can provide the farmers with quality seeds, technology driven irrigation and precision agriculture mechanisms, water conservation, and demand forecast based market opportunities in the pre-harvesting phase.
 - They can support the farmers by providing them with technology driven solutions for quick harvesting and with proper storage facilities.
 - The startups can provide the farmers a direct market linkage or may decide to become the buyer of the farm product.
 - The startup and the farmers can also enter into an agreement to make value-added product from the farm product and sell the product in the market together
- All the above opportunities exist for startups to and create a real change in the agrarian economy.

Conclusion

- It is appropriate here to applaud the efforts taken by the local civil society organisations/ NGO's which are helping in the formation of local Farmer Producer Organisation (FPOs).
 - These FPO's also can work with the startups in all the above mentioned activities
 - The FPO provide the farmer with an added opportunity of creating a bigger value adding network and driving an integrated approach towards creating a vibrant rural economy.
 - All these efforts stated shall not only be beneficial for the holistic development of the rural economy today but also will have a sustainable future for an AatmaNirbhar Bharat that can serve the world.

Education in Rural India: Schemes for Women and Youth

- About 70 percent of people in India belong to the rural areas. Persons aged 15-29 years, who are considered as the youth, accounted for 27.4 percent of rural males, 27 percent of rural females, 28.2 percent of urban males and 27.8 percent of urban females in 2017-18.



- According to the PLFS Survey, unemployment rate in India was 5.8 percent in 2018-19. For educated (highest level of education secondary and above) persons of age 15 years and above, unemployment rate in India was 11 percent and 11.2 percent in rural areas and 10.8 percent in urban areas.
- Incomplete and poor quality education translates into a workforce that is unable to find remunerative work, and survives on low paid, unstable jobs.

Schemes for rural education

Samagra Shiksha Scheme

- It was launched in 2018-19 and it envisages the ‘school’ as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels and subsumes the three erstwhile centrally sponsored schemes – Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).
- Bridging gender and social category gaps at all levels of school education is one of the major objectives of the scheme.
- Under Samagra Shiksha various interventions have been targeted to promote education which include opening of schools in the neighbourhood as defined by the state, provision of free text books, up to Class VIII, uniforms to all girls and SC, ST, BPL boys up to class VIII, provision of gender segregated toilets in all schools, teacher’s sensitization programmes to promote girls’ participation, construction of residential quarters for teachers in remote/ hilly areas/ in areas with difficult terrain.
- There is a provision for twinning of schools under which well-functioning private or government schools in urban or semi-urban areas are linked with schools located in rural areas for interaction and exchange of experience.
- Further, for promoting the merit/ capacity of students, including those in rural areas, meritorious students belonging to the economically weaker sections can avail the benefit of scholarship under National Means-cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme.

Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas

- It’s main objective is to provide good quality modern education including a strong component of inculcation of values, awareness of the environment, adventure activities and physical education.



- The Navodaya Vidyalaya Scheme envisages opening of one JNV in each district of the country.

Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)

- EMRS were introduced in 1997-98 to provide quality upper primary, secondary and senior secondary level education to ST students in remote areas to enable them to access the best opportunities in education and to bring them at par with the general population.

Mid-Day Meal Scheme

- It has been one of the most successful programs for keeping young children from disadvantaged sections like poor, dalits, tribals, girls and children of labour work force in school.
- As per NSS 71st round, 70 percent children studying in class I to VIII in Government and aided schools, Special Training Centers and madrasas and maqtabs supported under Samagra Shiksha, get nutritious mid-day meals in rural areas.

Kasturbha Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas

- These are residential schools from class Vi to XII for girls belonging to disadvantaged groups such as SC, ST, OBC, Minority and Below Poverty Line, under the Samagra Shiksha scheme.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao

- This scheme works to develop an enabling environment for girl child education.
- It addresses the issues relating to declining Child Sex Ratio and aims to change the mindset of people so as to make them appreciate the value of girl child.
- It is a tri-ministerial, convergent effort of the Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health and Family Welfare and Human Resource Development.
- The specific objectives of the scheme are
 - Prevent gender biased sex selective elimination
 - Ensure survival and protection of the girl child



- Ensure education and participation of the girl child through coordinated and convergent efforts.

Empowering the Rural Women- Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme

- It was approved in 2017 as a centrally sponsored scheme under Ministry of Women and Child Development to empower rural women through community participation.
- It aims to facilitate inter-sectoral convergence of schemes and programmes meant for women both at the Central and State/UT level.

Adult Literacy Programmes

Saakshar Bharat Programme

- It was operational till March 2018 and it went beyond the 3 R's (i.e. Reading, Writing and Arithmetic); for it also sought to create awareness of social disparities and a person's deprivation on the means for its amelioration and general well being.
- It was formulated in 2009 with the objective of achieving 80 percent literacy level at national level, by focusing on adult women literacy seeking to reduce the gap between male and female literacy to not more than 10 %.
- It has four broader objectives:
 - Imparting functional literacy and numeracy to non-literates
 - Acquiring equivalency to formal educational system
 - Imparting relevant skill development programme
 - Promoting a learning society by providing opportunities for continuing education.

Padhna Likha Abhiyan

- It has been rolled out to replace Sakshar Bharat Scheme.
- It focuses on achieving 100 percent literacy by 2030. Under this scheme massive literacy projects will be launched in the tribal and forests areas, prisons, slums, etc. with technology as a facilitator.
- It will focus on the basic literacy component in a four-month cycle among adults.



Skills Training in Higher Education

- The National Education Policy 2020 envisages that school curricula and pedagogy will aim for holistic development of learners by equipping them with key 21st century skills and reduction in curricular content to enhance essential learning and critical thinking.
- The policy emphasizes integration between vocational and academic streams in all schools and higher education institutions in a phased manner.

Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills (SHREYAS)

- It aims to cover 50 lakh students by 2022 by providing on the job work exposure and stipend.
- SHREYAS is a programme conceived for students in degree courses, primarily non-technical, with a view to introduce employable skills into their learning, promote apprenticeship as integral to education and also amalgamate employment facilitating efforts of the Government into the education system so that clear pathways towards employment opportunities are available to students during and after their graduation.

National Apprenticeship Training Scheme

- It provides skill training to fresh graduates, diploma holders in engineering and technology and Plus 2 vocational passouts, which rural youth can take advantage of.
- In order to integrate vocational education with regular education which would be particularly advantageous for rural youth, the government has proposed to integrate apprenticeship embedded degree programmes to give impetus to vocational training.
- Accordingly University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued Apprenticeship/ Internship embedded degree programme guidelines.

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana

- Its objective is to provide skilling to one crore people under Short Term Training and Recognition of Prior Learning across the country for four years i.e.. 2016-2020.



- Under this scheme, post placement support of Rs. 1500/- per month per trainee is applicable for special groups including women for 2-3 months post training depending on placement within or outside the district of the domicile.

Conclusion

- The current public expenditure on education in India has been around 4.43 % of GDP and around 10 percent of the total government spending towards education.
- The National Education Policy 2020 states that the Centre and states will work together to increase the public investment in education sector to reach 6 percent of GDP at the earliest.
- Within this gigantic exercise, we need to especially track the path that rural women and rural youth have walked in their wake to better understand how these programmes have helped shape their lives, to what extent these have successfully equipped them with the necessary skills and what more needs to be done to further empower them.

Recent Farm Bills and Benefits to Farmers

- On June 2020 the Government promulgated three ordinances on farmers' produce trade and commerce; farmer agreement of price assurance and farm services; and essential commodity.
- Subsequently the three Bill, i.e., The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 and the Essential Commodity (Amendment) Bill, 2020 were passed by the Parliament on 20 September 2020 to replace the ordinances.

The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020

- This Act provides for the freedom to sell and buy farm produce at any place in the country, promote e-commerce and allows setting up of an electronic platform.



- It also offers the opportunity to the Government to intervene to regulate the system, if the new system fails to work satisfactorily.
- It legalizes all the transactions which were earlier put under the regulations and restriction by the APMCs. The direct purchase from the farmers at their farm as provided in the FPTC Act, 2020 will be empowering him to decide the price of produce.

The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020.

- It will facilitate an assured price to the farmers for his produce as mutually agreed between farmers and sponsor before the commencement of production operations, and the technologies, services and inputs on mutually agreed terms and conditions for the production of desired quality produce.
- The sponsor's role is limited to buy the produce at pre-decided price as agreed in advance and supplying the quality inputs and services to farmers as per the contract. The sponsor neither permitted to lease in the land of the farmers, nor he/she can erect any assets permanent in nature on farmers' land or modifying it or acquiring the ownership rights.
- The physical boundaries of the farmers will remain intact so is his ownership rights. The farmers will be the sole custodian of all production operations as well.

The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020

- The ECA has been modified for agriculture and food stuffs. The supply in the commodities enlisted in ECA such as cereals, edible oils and oils can only be regulated under extraordinary circumstances like war, famine, extraordinary price rise and natural calamities.
- The transparent criterion has been laid down on imposing or regulating stock limits. This has inbuilt predictability in the Government's action by price trigger rather than mere perception as used to happen in the past.
- The Government can intervene in the market for price control under the amended act as well.
- The commodities like fertilisers and seeds, which are of much interest to farmers, have not been touched by the modifications.



- The modifications/ amendments in ECA will encourage the big investment in creating much needed infrastructure like warehouses, cold storages, pack houses, and logistics.

Conclusion

- The States have to take these proactively and the Centre should provide matching grants, if needed for creating alternative mechanism.
- While the e-NAM and other initiatives will move on, most likely with the positive impact in long run, the immediate action should be creating the awareness amongst farmers about the positives of the amendments with some live examples and records of advantages based on the real learnings of the farmers themselves rather than annualized or derived data of the surveys and reports for the reasons unknown to many.

Panchayati Raj System towards Changing Rural India

History

- Just prior to India's independence, Bihar was the first to adopt the Panchayati Raj System in 1947 which was a similar system of local self government started by Lord Ripon in British era.
- In the post independence phase, the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee was appointed by the Government in January 1957 to examine the work of the Community Development Programme (1952) and the National Extension Service (1953) to suggest measures to improve their work.
 - The formal organization and structure of Panchayati Raj was firstly recommended by Balwant Rai committee.
 - It recommended the establishment of the scheme of 'democratic decentralization' which ultimately came to be known as Panchayati Raj.
 - It recommended 3-tier system at village, block and district level and it also recommended direct election of village level panchayat.
 - On October 2, 1959, Rajasthan (Nagaur district) became the first state to introduce the panchayat system in India.
- In 1977, Ashok Mehta Committee on Panchayati Raj was appointed and in 1978 it submitted its report.



- Its key recommendations included two tier system of panchayat, regular social audit, representation of political parties at all levels of panchayat elections, provisions for regular election, reservation to SCs/STs in panchayats and a minister for panchayati raj in state council of ministers.
- In 1985, G.VK. Rao Committee was appointed and it recommended for the first time, for the constitutional status of PRIs and suggested for constitutional provisions to ensure regular, free and fair elections to the Panchayati Raj Bodies.
 - A legislation was introduced in the Lok Sabha by then PM Shri Rajiv Gandhi led Government in 1989 to constitutionalise PRIs, but the bill was not passed in Rajya Sabha.
 - The then PM VP Singh led government also brought a bill, but fall of government resulted in lapse of the bill.
 - Subsequently PM P V Narshima Rao led government introduced a bill for providing constitutional backing to PRIs in 1991. This bill was eventually known as the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 and came into force on 24th April, 1993.

Key Elements of 73rd Amendment Act 1992

- A new part IX to the constitution was added under the 73rd Amendment enacted in 1992.
- The Article 243G of the Constitution intended to empower the Gram Panchayats (GPs) by enabling the State Governments to devolve powers and authority in respect of all 29 subjects listed in the 11th Schedule for local planning and implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice.
- Organisation of Gram Sabhas
 - Creation of a three tier Panchayati Raj Structure at the District (Zila), Block and Village levels
 - Most of these posts at three levels to be filled by direct elections
 - Minimum age for contesting elections to the PRIs is 21 years
 - Only the post of Chairman at the District and Block levels should be filled by indirect election
 - Provision for reservation of seats for SCs and STs in Panchayats, in proportion to their population and for women in Panchayats up to one-third seats
 - State Election Commission to be set up in each State to conduct elections to PRIs
 - The tenure of PRIs is five years, if dissolved earlier fresh elections to be held within six months
 - Creation of a State Finance Commission in each state every five years.



The 3-tier structure of Panchayati Raj

Gram Panchayat

- The civic functions relating to sanitation, cleaning of public roads, minor irrigation, public toilets and lavatories, primary health care, vaccination, supply of drinking water, constructing public wells, rural electrification, social health, primary and adult education, etc. are obligatory functions of village panchayats.
- Functions like preparation of annual development plan of panchayat area, annual budget, relief in natural calamities, removal of encroachment on public lands and implementation and monitoring of poverty alleviation programmes were expected to be performed by panchayats.

Panchayat Samiti

- This is the second tier which provides a link between Gram Panchayat and Zila Parishad.
- The strength of a Panchayat Samiti also depends on the population in a Samiti area. In Panchayat Samiti, some members are directly elected.
- Sarpanchs of Gram Panchayats are ex-officio members of Panchayat Samiti.
- Some functions are entrusted to them like agriculture, land improvement, watershed development, social and farm forestry, technical and vocational education, etc.

Zila Parishad

- It is the uppermost tier of the PRIs. It has some directly elected members whose number differs from State to State as it is also based on population.
- Chairpersons of Panchayat Samitis are ex-officio members of Zila Parishads. Members of Parliament, Legislative Assemblies and Councils belonging to the districts are also nominated members of Zila Parishads.
- It prepares district plans and integrates Samiti plans into district plans for submission to the State Government. It looks after development work in entire district.

Implementation of the Legislation

- **Devolution of Funds, Function and Functionaries to PRIs**



- In terms of devolving function, functionary and finance, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Karnataka have performed better than other states
- However, most of the states have made substantial progress in devolution of funds, functions and functionaries to PRIs.
- Another critical aspect of legislation following the 73rd amendment was insertion of a clause under the article 280 (3) (bb) of the constitution that the Union Finance Commission would recommend measures to supplementing the resources of the Panchayats in the state on the basis of the recommendation of Finance Commission.

- **Rising Financial Devolution to PRIs**

- Beginning with the 10th Finance Commission (1995-2000), it recommended Rs. 100 per capita grants to the rural population as per 1971 Census to PRIs, though it did not have terms of reference for local bodies.
- The 11th Finance Commission (2000-2005) recommended the grant of Rs. 8,000 crore for Panchayats
- The 12th Finance Commission (2005-2010) had recommended Rs. 20,000 crore grants for the PRIs.
- The actual release of grants during the 13th Finance commission (2010-15) was Rs. 58,256 crore.
- The grants of fourteenth finance commission (2015-20) had been to the tune of 1,80,237 crore for the Gram Panchayats in 26 states.
- For the period FY 2020-21 the 15th Finance commission has awarded a grant of Rs. 60,750 crore for Rural Local Bodies in 28 states which has been the highest annual Finance commission allocation for the RLBs so far.

Conclusion

- On April 24 (National Panchayati Raj Day), 2020 e-GramSwaraj Portal and mobile application and Swamitya scheme were launched.
 - The e-GramSwaraj helps prepare and execute Gram Panchayat Development Plans. The portal will ensure real time monitoring and accountability.
 - The Swamitva scheme helps to map rural inhabited lands using drones and latest survey methods. It will ensure streamlined planning, revenue collection and provide clarity over property rights in rural areas.



- Since getting Constitutional status in 1992, PRIs have played a critical role in the development process of the villages.
- With the government relying more and more on PRIs for implementation of mega development programmes, PRIs have cemented their position in the rural governance structure.

Livestock: Key for doubling Farmers' income

- India's livestock sector is one of the largest in the world. As per the 20th Livestock census, India is the owner of about 512.05 million livestock population.
- In 2010-11, livestock generated outputs worth Rs. 2075 billion which comprised 4 percent of the GDP and 26 percent of the agricultural GDP.

Challenges in Livestock Sector

- Large population of low-producing cattle (non-descript) is a big challenge, therefore genetic upgradation for improving annual milk yield of these non-descript animals is required.
- Breeding strategies with almost negligible pedigree record are the major hurdles of breed upgradation and animal selection for better productivity.
- Availability of pedigreed Bulls of indigenous cow.
- Infertility in Bovines
- Inadequate coverage of artificial insemination services along with qualified technical man power, particularly in rural and hilly areas.
- Chronic shortage of feed along with quality of fodder is major obstacle for enhancing animal productivity, the country remains deficit in dry fodder by 10 percent, in green fodder by 35 percent and in concentrate feed by 33 percent.
- Escalating price of feed ingredient like maize.
- Diversion of animal feed and fodder ingredients for industrial and human use.
- Inadequate disease control programmes including deficiency of vaccines of major diseases like FMD, Brucellosis, HS, BQ, PPR, infertility, parasitism and emerging diseases like IBR and Blue Tongue.



- Low interest of youth in animal husbandry because of low market place and lack of knowledge in the area of value addition of livestock products.
- Lack of proper policy and awareness resulted in reduced participation of rural mass in commercial animal husbandry practices.
- Poor policies for investment in livestock sector has been another obstacle. Only 5% of the total money has been invested in livestock and this window requires more funding to pace the momentum of animal husbandry.
- Low milk price with increased feed cost.
- Non-availability of chilling facility of milk in rural areas.
- Inadequate availability of credit
- Poor access to organized market.
- Limited animal insurance coverage
- Stray cattle menace.

Way Ahead

- Enhancing the unit production of milk, meat and egg with better feeding, breeding and management practices.
- Availability of affordable and quality feed and fodder through out the year
- Use of sex sorted semen for getting female animals.
- Artificial insemination using semen from pedigreed bulls.
- Effective and regular health coverage including timely vaccination.
- Diagnosis of sub-clinical forms of diseases particularly sub-clinical mastitis to reduce the unit cost of animal production and health.
- Integrated farming system along with implementation of biotechnology and its tool in animal production system.
- Commercialisation of super ovulation and oestrus synchronization practices in small animals.
- Value addition of animal products and their effective marketing.
- Proper marketing of milk along with establishment of Panchagavya units in rural areas.
- Extensive establishment of Biogas units and commercialization of organic farming system.



- Integration of animal husbandry with fisheries.
- Establishment of cooperative units and ease in marketing and getting proper value of animal products.
- Introduction of incentive for farmers for animal husbandry practices.
- Treatment of anoestrous and repeat breeders and reducing the inter-calving period.
- Encouraging the rearing of indigenous cow
- More emphasis on green fodder production
- Bridging the gap between the farmers and the market; farmers and the government; and farmers-market and the government and private-cooperate involvement
- Strengthening of veterinary extension services
- Execution of livestock related schemes run by central/state government for the benefit of farmers
- Ensuring marketing of animal products at the best profitable rate
- Fast, ease and prompt financial assistance from cooperative society/ banks to livestock farmers
- Promotion of sustainable dairy farming system that allow proper and efficient use age of the resources, without being over exploited.
- Attraction of rural youth and women in animal husbandry enterprises.
- Strengthening of veterinary and para-veterinary infrastructure
- Greenhouse gas management.

Conclusion

- Doubling of farmers' income can only be possible if animal husbandry is integrated into agriculture and allied sectors with salient policies and their effective as well as timed implementation.
- Livestock sector requires adequate funding and its upgradation. There is a need to strengthen animal husbandry practices with more involvement of youth and private units for funding.
- It is the time to achieve more conception and reducing the age of puberty; have strategies for the diagnosis of subclinical diseases and wider coverage of vaccination system.
- The artificial insemination coverage should increase and use of sex sorted semen for high producing female animals may be ensured.
- Along with this, value addition to animal products is highly essential to get higher price compared to non-value added products.



- The integration of animal husbandry with agriculture will definitely help to accomplish the objectives of doubling the farmer's income by 2022.

Importance of Infrastructure in Rural Development

- Infrastructure is the backbone of any country. It plays a very important role in supporting nation's economic growth and the same is the case with India.
- When we talk about rural infrastructure in the country, then it is crucial for agriculture, agro-industries and poverty alleviation in the rural areas.
- Rural infrastructure provides essential production conditions which is required for social and economic growth and for promoting the quality of life in rural areas.

Roads in Rural India

- Though rural roads had been constructed under various different schemes but till the year 2000 there was not a single national policy to construct only rural roads especially with all-weather roads for the unconnected habitations.
- It was the first time since independence, on 25 December 2000, the Government of India had launched the Pradhan Mantri Grameen Sadak Yojana with the aim to provide all weather access to eligible unconnected habitations.
 - It is a 100 percent centrally sponsored scheme which cover only rural areas, and urban roads are excluded from the preview of this programme.
- According to latest figures made available by the State Government as part of the PMGSY programme, about 1.67 lakh Unconnected Habitations are eligible for coverage under the programme. This involves construction of about 3.71 lakh km of roads for New Connectivity and 3.68 lakh km under upgradation.
- The physical progress made under the PMGSY is really commendable. Phase I and II had made very good progress while Phase-III is lagging behind and this may be due to the COVID-19 pandemic where most of the construction activities has been stopped for longer duration.



Energy

- **Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana**

- It was launched in 2015 with two components:
 - To separate agriculture and non agriculture feeders facilitating judicious rostering of supply to agricultural and non-agricultural consumers in rural areas
 - Strengthening and augmentation of sub transmission and distribution infrastructure in rural areas, including metering of distribution transformers/ feeders/ consumers end
- Rural electrification for completion of the target laid down under Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana for 12th and 13th Plans by subsuming RGGVY in DDUGY.

- **LPG Connections to Poor Households**

- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana was launched in 2016 to provide clean cooking fuel to poor households, especially in the rural areas to provide 5 crore to 8 crore deposit free LPG connections to the women of poor households.
 - It increases the usage of LPG and helped in reducing health disorders, air pollution and deforestation.

- **Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (Saubhagya)**

- It was launched in 2017. Under this scheme free electricity connections to all households (both APL and poor families) in rural areas and poor families in urban areas will be provided.
- Rural Electrification Corporation has been designated as nodal agency for the Saubhagya Scheme to
 - Provide last mile connectivity and electricity connections to all un-electrified households in rural areas and
 - To provide Solar Photo Voltaic based standalone system for un-electrified households located in remote and inaccessible villages/ habitations where grid extension is not feasible or cost effective.

- **PM-KUSUM**

- It has the objective of increasing farmers' income, providing reliable source for irrigation and de-diesalise the farm sector, removing farmers' dependence on diesel and kerosene and linking pump sets to solar energy.
- In addition, a scheme to enable farmers to set up solar power generation capacity on their fallow/ barren lands and to sell it to the grid would be operationalized.



Social and Commercial Infrastructure

- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin)**

- It was initiated in 2016 to provide pucca houses to all rural homeless and those households living in kutcha and dilapidated houses.
- In addition to rural housing the Government of India has also aimed at providing a dignified life to the beneficiaries by providing basic amenities such as improved sanitation, piped drinking water, electricity and gas connection, etc.
- The Scheme provides assistance for construction of 2.95 crore pucca houses for eligible rural households by March 2022 in phases.

Water and Sanitation

- **Jal Jeevan Mission (Har Ghar Jal)**

- Jal Jeevan Mission is aiming to provide piped water supply to all households. It was launched in 2019.
- It envisioned to provide safe and adequate drinking water through individual tap connections by 2024 to all households in rural India.
- The programme also implements source sustainability measures as mandatory elements, such as recharge and reuse through grey water management, water conservation, rain water harvesting.
- It will be based on a community approach to water and will include extensive information, Education and communication as a key component of the mission.

- **Swachh Bharat mission (Grameen)**

- Under the mission, all villages, Gram Panchayats, Districts, States and Union Territories in India declared themselves “open defecation free” (ODF) by 2nd October 2019 by constructing over 100 million toilets in rural India.
- To ensure that the open defecation free behaviour is sustained, no one is left behind and that solid and liquid waste management facilities are accessible, the mission is moving towards the next Phase-II of SBMG, i.e. ODF Plus.



- It will reinforce ODF behaviours and focus on providing interventions for the safe management of solid and liquid waste in villages.

Communication

- **BharatNet**

- It is the world's largest rural broadband network project which is to provide broadband connectivity to all the 2.5 lakh Gram panchayats across India.

Conclusion

- The infrastructure schemes for the rural areas have improved the lives of the rural people in different ways and helped in reducing the poverty.
- People are connected to the nearest city centres and the district headquarters by road and also connected by electronic communication.
- By providing tap water to the households and rural road connectivity and housing, there is a visible improvement in the health indicators and school enrolment.
- Infrastructure has brought social and economic change among the rural households and empowered them to live their lives with dignity and safety with improved living standards.