

## **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**

