Society & Social Justice · GS - II

Has digital illiteracy, particularly in rural areas, coupled with lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) accessibility hindered socio-economic development? Examine with justification.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2021	GS - II	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

Answer Hint

Digital divide, rural connectivity, digital literacy, BharatNet, Digital India, online education, telemedicine, digital payments, e-governance, gender divide, affordability, digital skills, inclusive digital infrastructure.

Model Answer

Introduction

Digital technologies support education, healthcare, financial inclusion and public-service delivery. However, inadequate connectivity and digital illiteracy, particularly in rural areas, can prevent citizens from benefiting from these opportunities.

How They Hinder Development

- **Education:** Poor connectivity and limited digital skills restrict access to online learning and educational resources.
- **Healthcare:** Limited access to telemedicine and digital health information can delay consultations in remote areas.
- **Economic opportunities:** Farmers, artisans and small enterprises may struggle to access online markets, digital payments and government support.

- **Financial inclusion:** Inadequate digital literacy increases vulnerability to online fraud and can discourage digital transactions.
- **Governance:** Citizens may face difficulties accessing online certificates, welfare applications and public grievance systems.
- **Social inequality:** Women, older people, persons with disabilities and disadvantaged communities may face additional barriers.

Measures to Address the Divide

- Expand affordable broadband and reliable last-mile connectivity through initiatives such as BharatNet.
- Strengthen digital literacy through community centres, schools and local-language training.
- Improve device affordability, electricity access and accessible digital design.
- Provide assisted service delivery for citizens unable to use digital platforms independently.
- Strengthen cybersecurity awareness, grievance redressal and digital consumer protection.

Conclusion

Digital illiteracy and poor ICT access can reinforce existing socio-economic inequalities. Inclusive infrastructure, accessible services and practical digital education are essential to ensure that technological progress benefits rural communities equitably.

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