Society & Social Justice · GS - I

COVID-19 pandemic accelerated class inequalities and poverty in India. Comment.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2020	GS - I	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Employment losses; informal workers; migrant distress; digital divide; health expenditure; unequal access to education; social protection; inclusive recovery

Model Answer

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and intensified India's existing socio-economic inequalities. Lockdowns, disruptions in economic activity and unequal access to healthcare disproportionately affected vulnerable households.

How inequalities widened

- **Employment and income:** Informal workers, daily-wage earners and small businesses faced severe livelihood losses, while many salaried professionals could work remotely.
- **Migrant distress:** Reverse migration exposed the insecurity of workers lacking portable social protection and affordable housing.
- **Digital divide:** Online education and remote work favoured households with reliable internet, devices and digital literacy.
- **Healthcare inequality:** Poorer families faced greater barriers to timely treatment and were more vulnerable to catastrophic medical expenditure.

- **Gender disparities:** Women experienced increased unpaid care responsibilities and disruptions to employment and education.
- **Nutrition and education:** School closures disrupted learning and access to school meals, particularly among disadvantaged children.
- **Wealth concentration:** Asset owners and firms with stronger financial resources were often better positioned to withstand economic disruptions than low-income households.

Measures and limitations

Food assistance, direct benefit transfers, employment programmes and emergency credit provided relief. However, gaps in coverage, digital access and informal-worker registration limited their effectiveness.

Conclusion

The pandemic demonstrated that economic shocks are not socially neutral. Universal social protection, stronger public healthcare, employment generation, portable benefits for migrants and improved digital access are necessary to build a more resilient and equitable society.

BECOME IAS
AI POWERED UPSC PREP