

## General Studies-1; Topic: Poverty and developmental issues; Social empowerment

### World Social Protection Report 2017-19

#### 1) Introduction

- The International Labour Organisation (ILO) released the World Social Protection Report 2017-2019.
- 4 billion people worldwide are left without social protection: ILO.
- The ILO report looks at specific aspects of social protection, providing global and regional findings.

#### 2) Social Protection

- According to ILO, Social protection is a human right and is defined as the set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability throughout the life cycle.
- Social protection includes benefits for children and families, maternity, unemployment, employment injury, sickness, old age, disability, survivors, as well as health protection.
- Thus, social protection policies are vital elements of national development strategies.

#### 3) Key Findings

- Less than half (45.2%) have guaranteed access to only one social protection benefit in the risks such as ill health, unemployment, occupational injuries, disability, and old age.
- More than half the population in rural areas are not covered by universal health programmes, as compared to less than a quarter in urban locations.
- About 29% of the population enjoy comprehensive social protection.
- Around 1.3 billion children that is two thirds of children globally are not covered and most of them live in Africa and Asia.
- Only 1.1 per cent of GDP is spent on child and family benefits for children aged 0-14.
- Cash transfers for children have expanded in low and middle-income countries over the past decades. However, coverage and benefit levels still remain insufficient.
- Social protection coverage for working people is still limited. Only 41.1 per cent of mothers with newborns receive a maternity benefit and 83 million new mothers remain uncovered.
- 27.8 per cent of persons with severe disabilities worldwide receive a disability benefit.
- Right to health is not a reality yet in many parts of the world, especially in rural areas where 56 per cent of the population lacks health coverage, compared to 22 per cent in urban areas.
- Long-term health care still excludes more than 48 per cent of the world's population, with women disproportionately affected.
- The commitment for social protection is woefully inadequate given the magnitude of the challenge.
- Persistent unemployment, underemployment and the prevalence of informal employment.

#### 4) Need for Social Protection

- Universal social protection contributes to eradicating poverty.
- Reducing inequality.
- Promoting economic growth.
- Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Promoting social justice and realizing the human right to social security for all.
- Fostering productivity and human development.
- Children can realize their full potential and enjoy an adequate standard of living.

### 5) India's social protection challenge

- India is almost a global outlier when it comes to spending on social protection.
- As a proportion of its GDP, India spends less than many poorer African countries on social protection.
- In terms of both pension and insurance coverage, India's record so far has been dismal compared with other emerging markets.
- Lack of reliable public health services and the absence of health insurance compel the poor to spend heavily on private medical care.
- Share of out-of-pocket expenditure in total health spending in India is among the highest in the world which hampers India's efforts to reduce poverty.
- Faulty targeting (high inclusion and exclusion errors), corruption and ineffectiveness.
- There has been little analysis of the effectiveness of the programmes, and little attempt at evidence-backed reforms.

### 6) Way Forward

- Public investment in social security is critical to eradicate poverty, boost economic growth, and reduce inequality.
- Increase of public expenditure on social protection especially in Africa, Asia and the Arab States.
- Universal health coverage, providing effective access to at least essential health care is key to achieving the SDGs
- Need for a national minimum security package for unorganised sector workers
- Programmes for self-employment of the poor are to be implemented by providing financial support and technical assistance.
- Increasing India's narrow tax base can give more fiscal space to make the much needed social expenditures, particularly in health.
- States should get more flexibility in formulating poverty alleviation schemes according to regional specifications.