

## **1. Involving Local Communities In Rural Schools**

### **Context:**

- Educating and imparting quality education to the rural masses to empower and make them equal partner in the development process is one the challenges India is still grappling with even after 72 years of Independence.

### **Background:**

- It's still an unfinished and humongous task to achieve 100% literacy in rural masses especially among women, SCs/STs and marginalized sections of the society.
- The challenge is how to Drastically Improve **Female Literacy which is still 58%** while literacy rate in **SCs is 62%** and only **56% STs** are literate in rural areas.
- But the bigger challenge is how to ensure **access and equity in education** entitlement of the rural masses and simultaneously improve the quality of education in rural areas.

### **Quality of Education:**

- India has made remarkable gains in achieving higher literacy among the rural masses in the last few decades, but **the poor quality of education**, drop out from the school and **shortage of higher and technical educational institutions** in rural areas are some of the most pressing challenges before the governments and policy makers.
- **In public perception government schools are now synonymous to poor quality of education.** Due to this widespread perception substantial numbers of parents in rural areas too are not sending their children to the government school.
- The conditions of rural high schools and colleges are not better either. It is **certainly affecting the employability of young people from rural areas** as employability is directly related to the educational outcomes.
- On the other hand, **India may also miss the 'demographic dividend' benefits** if it fails to improve the rural education as majority of workforce will come from the rural areas.

### **Finding Creative Solutions:**

- One **Important Solution is to Involve the Local Communities in Rural Areas** as the most crucial stakeholder in educating the rural masses with quality education.
- Their active participation and engagement in the process of improving the quality of education in rural areas is a necessary condition for educating and preparing the rural masses for the Future Challenge.

### **Decentralization of School Management:**

- The role of local bodies and self-help groups becomes most crucial in reviving and improving the quality of education in rural areas of the country.
- The local bodies are representative bodies of the rural communities, the self-help groups are grassroots initiatives by the local communities to work together and help each other for creating opportunities and opening the avenues for the financial betterment of the member families.
- **Both can Mobilize Local Communities to take the Ownership of the local schools/colleges** and motivate its members to contribute physically and financially in expansion and maintenance of the school infrastructure on regular basis.

### **Self Help Groups in Education:**

- The central and state governments are incorporating and actively promoting SHGs in **Many Development Programmes Like NRLM scheme, financial inclusion and in Service Delivery.**
- These SHGs can be used in management and governance of rural schools on pilot basis **after giving proper training and capacity Building Programmes.** It will ensure local participation and monitoring in school management.
- **SHGs know local problems and issues and can offer local solutions to Rural Schools.** Another area where SHGs can play an important role is managing the mid-day meal in rural schools.
- These will **reduce corruption in the scheme and** reduce the wastage of precious time of a teacher in overseeing the preparation of the mid-day meals in rural schools.
- Similarly, SHGs can play important role in dealing with rampant problem of teacher's absenteeism in rural school. **Teachers should be accountable to the school management committee managed by a SHG.**

### **Conclusion:**

- Thus the involving of the local communities in rural schools will increase Transparency and accountability in the system as well as brings the quality education to the rural masses.