

## **1. Problems in Villages amid COVID-19 Outbreak**

**Prelims Syllabus:** Governance

**Mains Syllabus:** GS-II Issues relating to Development and Management of Social Sector or Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

### **Why in News?**

- With the influx of thousands of migrant labourers into their villages, the houses in villages, which are often one or two-room dwellings with an average seven family members to accommodate, are some of the worst places where one can hope to contain the deadly disease.

### **Highlights:**

- Along with the absence of running water within households, the possibility of common points in village arenas becoming hotspots for this deadly contagion becomes manifold. Only a few States have been able to involve gram panchayats very effectively in this situation.
- For example, community kitchens are run by local bodies in Kerala, where home delivery of cooked food is spiking as the situation demands.

### **Suggestions for Gram Panchayats:**

- ✓ Panchayats can work exactly in three areas:
- ✓ Awareness generation,
- ✓ Setting up isolation conditions, and
- ✓ Streamlining social security measures announced by the Central and State Governments.
- A model needs to be established, with concrete standard operating procedures and best practices that can be replicated throughout rural India.
- Organisations such as Professional Assistance For Development Action (PRADAN) have been trying to influence gram panchayats in many States to coordinate with the administration to use the resources of panchayats. This should be done more.
- Even with the harvesting of wheat almost over in States such as Madhya Pradesh; people are still out in the fields, but once they are done with their work it is the panchayat that can do the work effectively to confine people within their homes with adequate awareness generation.

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- Community policing with the active engagement of panchayats, by collaborating with women's collectives, is a potential area where a people-led movement can be kick-started in a short time span.
  - Despite the financial packages being rolled out to avert panic about basic food requirements, many will be left out as documentation is core to availing these social-service provisioning schemes. Without gram panchayats, it is not possible to deploy any system to adequately take prompt actions to include the excluded.

