



How to create more jobs in rural areas?

Description

Theme:

- Due to COVID-19 pandemic, many people who are living in urban areas lost their jobs and went back to rural areas. Now, many people are on the verge of slipping into poverty due to the lack of jobs in rural areas. So, once again the issue of employment opportunities in rural areas is highlighted.

The present situation:

- Approximately 70% of the workforce is living in rural India.
- As most of the employment opportunities are concentrated in urban areas, people are migrating from villages to cities for livelihoods, which is resulting in more population density in urban areas. This is causing slums, poor living conditions, higher rents & cost of living.
- In March 2020, the unemployment rate in India was 8.4%. But in May 2020, it has increased to 27% because of COVID-19 pandemic.
- At present agriculture sector is helping the Indian economy, whereas many other industries are struggling.
- People who are living in rural areas are utilizing Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) for livelihood. In 2020, this scheme is utilized so much due to the reverse migration from cities to rural areas.

Ways to create more jobs in rural areas:

- Agriculture is one of the main sectors that are helping in the revival of the Indian economy. But there is so much more potential in the agriculture sector that is yet to be tapped. By improving the infrastructure and building post-harvest storage & processing units, and improving transportation facilities to distribute and sell the produce can create a large number of employment opportunities. Raising farmers' income is very important to boost the agricultural sector. For that, Minimum Support Price should be increased. Taking steps

to boost Agri exports can also create number of jobs.

- Encouraging non-farming activities, such as dairy farming, fisheries etc. can create ample opportunities.
- In the past few years, the service sector has become the most important sector for the economy surpassing agriculture sector. Utilizing this opportunity and establishing service industry such as IT services companies, media offices etc in rural areas can result in a large number of employment opportunities.
- Encouraging work from home facilities & part-time jobs can enable many rural women to take up jobs, who are otherwise could not work due to lack of efficient transport facilities, household responsibilities & childcare etc.
- Approximately 51% of MSMEs are in rural India. Strengthening them and providing the necessary tools & technologies to MSMEs can create multiple job opportunities.
- Encouraging entrepreneurship among rural youth and imparting them with adequate skills can make wonders in improving the rural economy.
- At present, many startups are working to help in marketing non-farm activities such as handicrafts, handlooms etc. Special incentives to startups that are generating employment opportunities in rural India will be helpful.
- Setting up labour-intensive industries, agro-based industries, Solar plants and other clean energy industries can create many jobs and also helps in transforming towards sustainable development.
- Skill development programs help rural people to get jobs that require professional skills.
- Azim Premji Foundation suggested increasing MGNREGA workdays from 100 to 200 to compensate for the lack of employment opportunities in rural areas. This is very much needed at this pandemic time, where many people are on the verge of slipping into poverty.
- Establishing advanced healthcare facilities in rural India is very much needed. With this, everyone will have access to healthcare facilities. This will also create many jobs in rural areas.
- For any industry to thrive, transportation facilities & the required infrastructure is very important. Developing infrastructure can help the rural economy to a great extent.

Steps taken by Indian government:

- In May 2020, the Indian government has launched “Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan” to revive the Indian economy, which was badly hit during COVID-19 pandemic. In this package, fund to agricultural infrastructure was also mentioned, which is very helpful for the rural economy. Collateral-free loans to MSME sector are also promised. As 51% of MSME sector is in rural India, these loans will be very helpful to prevent further job losses.
- “Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme” (MGNREGA), which guarantees 100 days of employment to rural people is a boon for the rural economy. This is very helpful especially in the COVID-19 pandemic situation when many people lost their jobs and returned to villages.
- “Skill Training of Rural Youth” (STRY) program as part of the “Skill India” initiative is helping rural youth in learning the necessary skills to get employed.

Conclusion:

COVID-19 pandemic forced many people to return to villages. So, there is a need to create plenty of job opportunities in rural India as soon as possible. Jobs creation in rural areas is also an important step in preparing for future pandemics because it can prevent severe damage to the economy. Strengthening the agricultural sector, encouraging non-farm activities, establishing service sector companies, clean energy industries in rural areas can create plenty of job opportunities.

Photo by [Trinity Kubasek](#) from [Pexels](#)

References:

- S.Mahendra Dev's article – "Pallepattulakedi upadhi barosa?" in Eenadu newspaper dated 14th August 2020.

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