

Inequality Kills: Oxfam Report 2022

The Oxfam report titled “Inequality Kills” was released in January 2022. The report highlighted a stark income divide worsened by the Covid pandemic, globally and in India. The report was released ahead of the World Economic Forum’s Davos Agenda and stated that the income of 84 percent of households in the country declined in 2021.

In this article, we shall discuss at length the Inequality Kills Report’s summary and the observations made. It is also an important topic from the IAS Exam perspective and aspirants must carefully analyse the information in the article, as questions based on the same may be asked in the final UPSC civil services examination.

Inequality Kills Report 2022: Highlights

The key finding of the report are given below for the convenience of the aspirants. Go through the points for a better understanding of the report.

- **Economic Violence:** When structural policy decisions are made in favour of the wealthiest and most powerful individuals, economic violence of a certain kind is committed. The most impacted groups include the poorest individuals, women, girls, and racialized groups.
 - **Gender-Based Violence:** Economic sexism and patriarchy are the core causes of gender-based violence. Sex-selective abortions are examples of gender based violence.
 - **Hunger Caused By Poverty:** Poverty in its extreme forms results in hunger, killing many people as a result, and it is faced by billions of ordinary people all over the world each day.
 - **Healthcare Access Disparities:** Access to high-quality healthcare is a human right, yet it is far too frequently viewed as a privilege for the wealthy.
 - **Inequality of Climate Change Crisis:** The climate catastrophe is being fueled by the carbon emissions of the wealthiest individuals, whose average carbon dioxide emissions are estimated to be 8,000 times greater than those of the world’s poorest 1 billion.
- **Magnitude of Growing Inequities:**
 - Our world is being torn apart by growing racial, gender and economic inequality as well as international inequality.
 - At least one person dies as a result of inequality every four seconds.
 - Covid-19 has reduced the incomes of 99% of the world’s population.

- Since the pandemic started, the wealth of the top 10 wealthiest people in the world has doubled.
- **Vaccine Discrimination:** Although wealthy nations may support the vaccine monopoly and stockpile vaccines to protect their populations, by doing so they expose their own citizens to the risk of the mutations that vaccine apartheid is causing. The idea of “vaccine apartheid” emphasises how historically oppressed peoples are impacted by inequitable vaccination programmes.

Oxfam Report On Indian Situation

- **Growing Inequalities:**
 - The report claims that although 84% of households in the nation saw their incomes decrease in 2021, the number of billionaires in India increased from 102 to 142.
 - In India, there are 39% more billionaires in 2021 than there were in 2020, with more billionaires than France, Sweden and Switzerland combined.
 - Just after China and the US, India has the third-highest number of billionaires in the world.
 - The wealth of Indian billionaires surged from Rs 23.14 lakh crore to Rs 53.16 lakh crore during the pandemic.
- **Reduced Social Security Spending:**
 - The budgetary allocation for social security schemes declined from 1.5% of the total Union budget to 0.6%.
 - Even after raising funding during the early stages of the pandemic, budgets for 2021–22 were significantly lowered.
 - According to a percentage calculated from the 2011 Census, the priority list of households under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) has been frozen in terms of absolute numbers.
 - Population growth totaling around 10 crore eligible beneficiaries has been excluded during the past 11 years.
 - As a result, only about 12% of those who are legally eligible, including children from “priority households” that already exist, can receive subsidies on food.
- **Increase In Number Of Poor:**
 - It is predicted that by 2020, more than 4.6 crore Indians will live in abject poverty.

- The United Nations estimates that this represents over half of the world's new poor.
- Furthermore, only 6% of the national wealth in the same year belonged to the bottom 50% of the population.
- Also, India now has more unemployed people than before.
- **Unequal Federalism:** Despite the federal organisation of the nation, the Center continued to hold a disproportionate amount of financial resources. Despite not being equipped to handle the crisis with its insufficient human and financial resources, the management of the pandemic was left to the states.
- **Rising Fiscal Deficit:** Lowering corporate taxes from 30% to 22% in order to attract investment last year (2020) resulted in a loss of Rs 1.5 lakh crore, which contributed to raising India's fiscal deficit.
- **Gender Inequality:**
 - With 1.3 crores fewer women working than in 2019, women collectively lost Rs 59.11 lakh crore in earnings in 2020.
 - The pandemic has set gender parity back from 99 years to now 135 years.
- **Inequality in Salaries and Allowances:**
 - For nearly 15 years, the monthly amount of social security pensions for the aged, the disabled, and widows has been locked at Rs 200 to 300.
 - The incomes and pensions of the decision-makers, on the other hand, have increased.
 - The cost to the exchequer of the increase for one crore central government employees and pensioners is greater than the total budget for 3.3 crore beneficiaries' social security pensions.
- **Healthcare:**
 - As the Covid pandemic ravaged India, the nation's healthcare budget fell 10% from RE (Revised Estimates) of 2020-21.
 - India has an average Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) of 62.67%, compared to a global average of 18.12%.
 - Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) in private hospitals is over six times greater than in public hospitals for inpatient care and two to three times higher for outpatient care, according to data from the National Sample Survey (NSS) (2017-18).
- **Unequal Access to Education:**

- The pandemic has also resulted in the emergence of a generation of kids who have forgotten what formal schooling is.
- Many youngsters from low-income families have already entered the workforce.
- The budget for education has been reduced by 6% over this time.
- Spending less money and relying more on online education is equivalent to institutionalising widespread, multifaceted poverty.

Way Forward As Per the Report

- Change the rules and the balance of power in society and the economy: This involves repealing sexist regulations, such as those that forbid over 3 billion women from having access to the same range of employment opportunities as males.
- Universal, high-quality healthcare that is publicly funded and delivered must be the pandemic's lasting legacy.
- To combat inequality, bring extreme wealth back into the real economy: The profits obtained by the super-rich during this pandemic time should be immediately taxed by all countries.
 - E.g. The Covid-19 wealth gains of the top 10 men richest would yield \$812 billion in revenue if a 99% one-time windfall tax were applied.
- Redirecting taxed money from the rich, on future investments and lifesaving initiatives: In order to save lives and invest in our future, all governments must make investments in powerful, evidence-based policies.
 - E.g. These funds may be used to produce enough vaccinations to protect everyone on the planet, cover funding shortages in climate change initiatives, provide universal health and social protection, and combat gender-based violence in over 80 nations.
- Change the rules and the balance of power in society and the economy.