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Q9

Critically examine whether growing population is the cause of poverty OR poverty is the mains cause of population increase in India.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · GS I · 12 marks · Women, Population and Urbanisation

Role of women and women's organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

Core demand of the question

- Critically examine whether growing population is the cause of poverty OR poverty is the mains cause of population increase in India
- Treat the link as two-way, use Indian evidence, and avoid a single slogan
- Keep the explanation within a 12-mark length

Revision summary

Extra people strain land and services when growth of jobs is slow.

Poverty, child mortality, and early marriage keep fertility high as household insurance.

Kerala shows social development can cut births without being the richest state.

Coercion without security fails as a population policy.

The link is two-way; poverty and gender are the main drivers of increase, and numbers then deepen scarcity.

Flow diagram

Poverty low female schooling -> High fertility

High fertility -> More claimants on land jobs

More claimants on land jobs -> Poverty low female schooling

Health literacy work -> Lower TFR

Lower TFR -> Easier poverty exit

Conclusion

- **Reject either-or:** poverty and gender inequality fuel births; extra births then crowd services.
- Way forward in policy is female schooling, child survival, decent work, and voluntary family planning, not blame of the poor for existing.

Growing population has made Indian poverty harder to clear, but poverty, child death, and women's lack of power have been the main engines of high fertility. Treat the pair as a loop, and break it with health and education rather than with a single cause.

Facts & figures

Demographic transition

Shift from high births and deaths to low births and deaths as health and schooling improve.

Kerala path

Early fertility decline linked to literacy, health services, and women's social indicators.

Emergency sterilisation, 1975-77

Coercive drive that discredited force and did not replace need for development-led change.

Replacement fertility

About 2.1 children per woman; several Indian states are at or below it while some lag.

Dependency burden

Share of children and elderly relative to working-age people, high when births stay high.

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