EDITORIAL: INDIAN EXPRESS

GENERAL STUDIES 3: DISASTER MANAGEMENT   **DATE:** 22.03.2025
TOPIC: COVID IMPACT

Five years on, five lessons from Covid lockdowns

Reflections on Five Years Since the Covid-19 Pandemic

- **Five-Year Mark**: March 2025 marks **five years** since the **Covid-19 pandemic** began.

- **Pandemic Impact**: Covid-19 caused **global lockdowns**, overwhelmed hospitals, and led to significant economic and social loss.

- **Key Question**: Have we learned enough to handle future crises, such as pandemics, natural disasters, or economic shocks?

The Need for Global Cooperation

- **Global Crises**: Many crises, like pandemics and natural disasters, are **global** and require coordinated responses.

- **Weakening Global Systems**: Political disruptions have **weakened** global institutions, such as the **WHO** and surveillance programs.

- **Positive Developments**: Global **biomedical collaboration** is increasing, and initiatives like **India's genomic dataset** promote **international health research**.

Local Solutions for Local Problems

- **Tailored Solutions**: Global solutions must be adapted to **local conditions**.

- **Vaccine Nationalism**: Countries prioritized their own needs over global access to vaccines, but **India**'s local production helped it manage better.

- **Public Health Measures**: Social distancing worked in some areas but was difficult in densely populated regions like **Dharavi** in Mumbai.

- **Targeted Interventions**: Public health responses must be **location-specific**, such as distributing **masks and medical resources** where needed most.

Building Disaster Preparedness Systems

- **Preparedness is Key**: Effective disaster response starts with **planning and preparedness**.

- **Public Distribution System**: India's food distribution system helped prevent **starvation** during the lockdown.

- **Emergency Transfers**: Issues with **cash transfers** during lockdown highlighted gaps in government databases, leaving out informal workers.

- **Health System Weaknesses**: The **oxygen shortage** during the second Covid wave could have been avoided with better **inventory management** and a **centralized database**.

The Role of Data in Governance

- **Importance of Data**: Accurate data is crucial for managing crises effectively.

- **Data Gaps**: The absence of data on **migrant workers** and **census figures** worsened the crisis response.

- **Data-Driven Governance**: Information should be used to inform **policy decisions** rather than suppressed or ignored.

Trust in Government During Crises

- **Public Trust**: Trust in the government is crucial for **effective enforcement** of emergency measures.

- **Government Support**: Surveys showed high public support for the lockdown due to trust in the government's decision-making.

- **Maintaining Trust**: Governments must ensure **transparency**, **fairness**, and **inclusivity** to maintain public trust during future crises.

Conclusion

- **Applying Lessons**: The world has learned important lessons from Covid-19, which can help in handling future crises.

- **Key Actions**: Strengthening **global cooperation**, tailoring **local solutions**, investing in **preparedness**, embracing **data-driven governance**, and fostering **public trust** are essential.

- **Future Crises**: The next crisis may not be a pandemic but could be an **economic collapse**, **climate disaster**, or **geopolitical conflict**, highlighting the need for **vigilance**, **planning**, and **unity** in response.

Source: https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/five-years-on-five-lessons-from-covid-lockdowns-9899201/