



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Building An Inclusive Society Through SMILE

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Why in News?

The **SMILE scheme** (Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise), launched in 2021, aims to provide comprehensive rehabilitation and welfare for **transgender persons** and individuals engaged in begging. The scheme is in line with the vision of **Viksit Bharat** and focuses on advancing the welfare of these marginalized communities.

Key Components of the SMILE Scheme

The SMILE scheme comprises two sub-schemes:

1. **Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation for the Welfare of Transgender Persons**
2. **Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of Beggars**

These sub-schemes offer rehabilitation, medical facilities, skill development, and education support. They aim to help **transgender persons** and **beggars** lead lives of dignity and self-sufficiency.

Provisions Under the Scheme:

- **Shelter Homes:** The scheme supports the use of existing shelters for transgender persons, or in the absence of them, the creation of new ones.
- **Educational Support:** Scholarships are available for transgender students from **Class 9 to post-graduate level**.
- **Medical Facilities:** Includes comprehensive health services under **Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (PM-JAY)** and supports **gender-reaffirmation surgeries**.
- **Skill Development:** Includes provisions for **PM-DAKSH** skill development schemes for livelihood opportunities.
- **Housing Support (Garima Greh):** Provides food, shelter, recreational facilities, medical support, and skill development for transgender persons and beggars.

The scheme is implemented with the help of **State/UT Governments, Urban Local Bodies, voluntary organizations, and community-based organizations**.

Challenges Faced by Transgenders

1. **Social Exclusion:** Transgender individuals face isolation, leading to mental health issues and substance abuse.
2. **Discrimination:**
 - **Violence:** They are often subjected to violence, including **physical abuse** and **hate crimes**.

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- **Employment:** Transgender persons frequently encounter **employment discrimination**, resulting in economic instability.
 - **Education:** Discrimination in educational institutions hinders their access to quality education and career opportunities.
1. **Family Rejection:** Many transgender persons are **disowned by their families**, further exacerbating their vulnerabilities.
 2. **Healthcare Barriers:** Transgender individuals face **discrimination by healthcare providers**, deterring them from seeking necessary treatments, including **gender-affirming procedures**.

Key Legal Framework

1. **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019:** It aims to protect the rights of transgender persons but has gaps, such as no provision for **self-determination of gender**.
2. **NALSA Judgment (2014):** This landmark judgment recognizes **transgender persons** as a third gender and mandates their rights to education, healthcare, and employment.
3. **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020:** Provides detailed provisions for transgender rights and welfare.

Existing Initiatives for Transgender Welfare

1. **Ayushman Bharat TG Plus Card:** Offers health benefits, including **gender-reassignment surgeries**.
2. **Swachh Bharat Mission:** Includes **dedicated toilets for transgender persons**.
3. **National Portal for Transgender Persons:** Provides information and solutions related to transgender welfare.
4. **National Council for Transgender Persons:** A government body that addresses transgender rights and issues.

Future Steps for Uplifting Transgender Persons

1. **Transgender-Inclusive Policies:** Legal and law enforcement systems must be **sensitized** to transgender issues.
2. **Addressing Social Concerns:** **Legal aid**, **supportive education**, and **social entitlements** must be provided.
3. **Health Care Reforms:** Separate policies for **transgender-inclusive healthcare** should be communicated to both private and public healthcare institutions.
4. **Financial Security:** **Liberal credit facilities** and **financial assistance** should be made available for **entrepreneurial ventures** by transgender persons, modeled on **SHG-Bank Linkage Programs**.
5. **Transgender Prisoners:** A **gender-fluid approach** must be implemented for **transgender prisoners**, considering their unique needs, as advocated by the **Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)**.

The SMILE scheme plays a crucial role in integrating marginalized communities, especially transgender persons, into mainstream society. However, for complete upliftment, there needs to be a **comprehensive policy** addressing their legal rights, healthcare needs, and socio-economic inclusion. **Transgender-inclusive policies** at all levels of government, alongside **greater awareness** and societal acceptance, are essential for building a truly **inclusive society**.