

## General Studies-1; Topic– Role of women and women’s organization, Social empowerment

### Gender Equality in India

#### 1) Introduction

- Gender Equality is central to inclusive economic growth and is critical for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Pink is the colour of the Economic Survey 2017-18, signifying the support and promotion of the growing movement to target and end violence against women and to promote women's rights.

#### 2) Why Gender Equality?

- To enable women to participate fully in society and contribute to the health and prosperity of the society.
- It is estimated that India can potentially boost its GDP by \$700 billion by 2025, by raising female labour-force participation rate.
- Gender equality contributes to growth by raising the female-to-male ratio of labor-force participation, increasing women’s work hours, and having more women working in higher-productivity sectors.
- Equality at work goes hand in hand with gender equality in society.
- Economically empowered women boost demand, have healthier and better-educated children, and raise human development levels.
- Enabling her to lead a life of dignity.
- Preventing their socio-economic exploitation and lowers domestic violence.
- Enhancing a woman’s control over household decision-making.

#### 3) Gender Inequality

- Women remain subject to traditional attitudes that define their primary role as being in the home.
- Women often lack access to the financing needed to start or expand a business.
- Globally, the value of women’s unpaid work performed is three times higher than that of men, whereas in the Asia-Pacific region, it is four times higher.
- Unconscious bias in the workplace.
- Though they comprise almost 40 percent of agricultural labour, they control only 9 percent of land in India.
- More than 50 percent of women have no valuable assets to their name.
- India has a lower share of women’s contribution to the GDP than the global average.
- Women face great physical insecurity.
- Crimes against women such as rapes, dowry deaths, and honour killings.
- A culturally ingrained parental preference for sons — emanating from their importance as caregivers for parents in old age.

#### 4) Concerns / Challenges

- Stereotypical thinking and Patriarchal mindset is the biggest challenge.
- Declining child sex ratio (CSR), the practice of gender-biased sex selection, and child marriage.
- Domestic violence against women is also high.
- Women being exposed to violence by their partners.

- Judicial remedies or police reforms, though absolutely necessary, are mostly curative, rather than being preventive.
- Benefits like maternity leave or related facilities will not be accessible to her in the informal sector.

### 5) Potential Areas of Focus

- The private sector and business community will be crucial in helping bridge the gap between skills and jobs and enable access to decent work for women.
- Vocational and technical training, life skills and financial literacy programmes for women to help them develop marketable skills and better decision-making abilities.
- Companies can also invest in women entrepreneurs through microfinance, and bring their goods and services into supply chains.
- Enhancing women's access to the internet and ICT can create a market of connected women who can be linked to business opportunities.
- Increasing representation of women in the public spheres is important.
- Female leaders serve as role models and raise educational and career aspirations for adolescent girls and their parents.
- Attitudinal shift is essential for women to be considered as equal within their homes and in broader society.
- Educating Indian children from an early age about the importance of gender equality.

### 6) Way Forward

- More flexible workplace policies, affordable childcare and expanded skills training, particularly in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).
- Investment in infrastructure and transportation can reap dividends by connecting more women to productive work opportunities.
- Address women's under-representation in business leadership circles.
- Changing social attitudes about gender roles.
- Dismantling several barriers, like women should prioritise childcare over their careers.
- There are views that "when a mother works for pay, the children suffer". Government, business, the media, and individual communities need to work together to change such views.
- Improve women's access to digital technology, which can open countless economic (and social) doors—including into finance.
- Asia-Pacific countries could come together to provide more financing for gender-equality initiatives, and to encourage more gender-based investment and budgeting.

### 7) Conclusion

- Now is the time to accelerate progress toward gender parity, and to women's power to deliver growth and improve social well-being.