

General Studies-2; Topic: Development processes and the development industry —the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

Gender Sensitisation and Social Change

1) Introduction

- Gender inequality is a long-term problem in our society and female are discriminated in many ways in the social context of India, although legally women have equal right.
- Thus, there is a great need to sensitize the society on gender issues so that there would be no discrimination on the basis of gender.
- Women empowerment through gender sensitization is one of the key criteria to unlock the potential of women.

2) Why Gender Sensitisation

- Women are discriminated not only in the womb and childhood, but also in every walk of life.
- The challenges and limitations women face in their day to day life restrain them to comprehend their potential for personal growth and freedom to live a better and respectable life.
- Ensuring gender equality is one of the first steps towards an inclusive and safer society.
- Gender sensitization would help in removing many perceptions we have about being a male or female.
- Gender sensitisation and wider societal changes are needed to end sex crimes

3) Concerns / Challenges

- The root cause of gender discrimination is the patriarchal mind set prevalent in the Indian society.
- Though this mind set is changing with urbanization and education, still there is long way to go for a permanent change in the scenario.
- The 2017 National Crime Records Bureau data said a total of 3.59 lakh cases of crimes against women were reported, a 6% rise compared to 2016.
- For every rape reported, there are many which go unrecorded as patriarchal mindsets remain unchanged.
- The criminal laws and judicial system permit under-age convicts to get away with lenient punishment
- Centuries of social conditioning and rigid gender constructs have led to an unequal balance of power between men and women, which results in discrimination and violence against the latter.
- Men are more likely to perpetrate violence if they have low education, a history of child maltreatment, exposure to domestic violence against their mothers and harmful use of alcohol.

4) Government Initiatives

- Government of India is implementing various programs/schemes and legislations to address various forms of gender discrimination.
- NCERT has developed syllabus and textbooks across the subjects to promote gender sensitization in the school curriculum.
- **Legislations to prevent exploitation/ harassment of women**
 - a. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009
 - b. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013
 - c. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

- d. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013
- e. The Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017
- f. 73rd - 74th Amendment of the Constitution mandating 33% reservation for women in the local governance.
- **Schemes/ programmes**
 - a. Beti Bacho Beti Padhao (BBBP) to improve the Child Sex Ratio and enabling education for the girl children.
 - b. Swadhar Greh Scheme to provide relief and rehabilitation to destitute women and women in distress.
 - c. Ujjawala a Comprehensive Scheme for prevention of trafficking and rescue.
 - d. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) to provide loan to poor women to promote their socio-economic development.
 - e. 'One Stop Centre' to provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence.
 - f. 'Mahila Police Volunteers' in which MPVs act as a link between police and community

5) Way Forward

- Society plays a key role in creating a safer environment for women
- Raising gender-sensitive children will lead to creating a safer society.
- After the Nirbhaya incident, the UN Human Rights chief had called rape and violence against women in India a "national problem" which would need "national solutions".
- Better policing, fast-track courts, quick sentencing are the need of the hour as each can serve as a deterrent.
- What should be included in every curriculum is gender sensitisation, right from school.
- Public places must be made safer for all.
- Boys and girls should be raised right in an atmosphere of freedom and a culture of mutual respect.
- Self-esteem, right to privacy and gender sensitivity are issues that have to be integrated within the psyche of the children as they grow.
- Changes in school and college syllabi to educate young people on the social values of equality and respect for women's autonomy is needed.
- Promote egalitarian gender norms as part of life skills and comprehensive sexuality education curricula taught to young people.