



General Studies-1; Topic: Women related issues

Gender Budgeting

Introduction

- Women's empowerment can be defined as promoting their sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices, and their right to influence social change.
- Without political representation being assured for them, schemes championing women's empowerment appear to be a vote-catching strategy.

Gender-responsive budgeting

- Gender-responsive budgeting was adopted in India in 2005, and since then, there have been steady budgetary allocations for various programmes specific to women.
- These women-related programmes are now an essential part of every budget document.
- Gender budgeting has emerged as a popular way for governments across the world to empower women and improve gender equality.

Rising importance to women's Empowerment

- An analysis shows that one of the major reasons for the close attention being given to women is due to their rising importance as voters.
- There has been a steady and sharp decline in the gender bias in voting over time across all the states.
- The sex ratio of voters has increased significantly.
- women voters vote differently from men and have a remarkable effect on election outcomes.

Concerns / Challenges

- The Women's Reservation Bill — envisaging 33% quota for women in the Lok Sabha and in all Legislative Assemblies — is still stuck despite being introduced in Parliament 13 years ago.

- It underlines the reluctance of political parties to accommodate women in politics.
- India is at the 149th spot on a list of 193 countries ranked according to percentage of women legislators elected to the national Parliament.
- Several pro-women schemes introduced by the government do not include their political empowerment, rather women are compelled to remain consumers and not initiators or decision-makers.
- The pandemic has witnessed an unequal impact on women not only in terms of securing food and nutrition, employment and livelihood opportunities, increased burden of unpaid work but also increased incidence of violence.

Shortcomings in the Recent Budget

- Under the Nirbhaya Fund (scheme for safety of women), the safety aspect does not include interventions to address domestic abuse such as shelter homes and legal aid.
- In the face of increased violence, the direly needed women's helpline and 'one-stop centre' are missing from the current Budget.
- Budget documents also reveal a cut in the funds allocated for the Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD).
- Under Swachh Bharat, aspects like public toilets that are important for women venturing out of their homes are missing.
- These could have been rectified and achieved if women had more representatives of their own in Parliament.

Way Forward

- The 'role of women is the key to the progress' of the nation, and hence, providing them with accessible healthcare and education is a must in order to empower them and give them a larger role in the economy.
- If women are included in the political policy-making process, their recommendations may help their own empowerment.