



General Studies-1; Topic: Role of women and women's organization

Gender Responsive Urban Mobility

Introduction

- Recently the **World Bank** launched a "**Toolkit on Enabling Gender Responsive Urban Mobility and Public Spaces in India**" with the aim of suggesting ways to make public transport in Indian cities more inclusive.

Present Status

- Studies show that women, especially those from lower socio-economic groups, are among the biggest users of public transport in Indian cities.
- Women have unique mobility patterns, often travelling shorter distances, using multiple modes of transport, and travelling with dependents, during "off-peak hours".
- Currently, urban mobility systems are not catered to these unique needs of women.
- This can make travel inconvenient, unsafe, and also more expensive for them.

Impact of lack of reliable public transport

- Studies have shown that lack of safe, inexpensive and reliable public transport has a profound **impact on women's ability to access education and employment opportunities.**
- Lack of viable urban transport is frequently cited as a **major impediment for women to access better employment opportunities.**
- India's female labour force participation rate is among the lowest in the world.
- Studies have also shown how distance from home impacts women's choice of colleges and other educational institutions.

Concerns / Challenges

- Lack of safety and also the lack of a perception of safety are a major impediment for women when it comes to accessing public transport.

- Dearth of good street lighting, no reliable last mile transport, and high waiting time at remote bus stops are some of the challenges.
- Here a vicious cycle is created — unsafe transport leads to fewer women travelling out which in turn leads to fewer women out in public spaces which actually make these spaces even more unsafe.
- Since the burden of care work lies disproportionately on women, they often need to plan their travel far more meticulously than men.
- This means longer waiting times and delays have a deleterious effect on them.

Way Forward

- There has to be greater effort made to understand the on-ground situation with a gender lens.
- Any new transport policy or infrastructure development must be preceded by an honest evaluation of issues concerning women.
- **Policies and development plans must reflect the concerns of women.**
- **Inculcating a gender lens in public transport planning and development** means involving and giving authority to more women stakeholders.
- **Building gender sensitivity and awareness** among service providers through mandatory programmes and community action.
- Investment has to be made in better infrastructure and services with a focus on women-friendly design.
- Creation of wide obstruction-free footpaths, street lighting, clear signages, introduction of short bus routes, and subsidising public transport for women.