

# Women Empowerment

## [UPSC Notes]

### What is Women Empowerment?

The freedom or the liberty to make decisions about themselves, their health, career, education, and, more importantly, their life and choice is known as women's empowerment. Women's empowerment means that women should be treated equally to men in social, economic, and political fields. It is essential for the overall development of a country. Empowering women also helps them to feel more confident as it enhances their decision-making power.

### Women Empowerment Issues in India

To write a scoring Essay on Women Empowerment in the UPSC exam, candidates must go through India's major women empowerment issues.

#### Demographic imbalance

- Female Foeticide- Though abortion is legal still, this legality is widely used for sex-selective abortions.
- Female Infanticide.
- Maternal Mortality Rate- This is the result of absolute neglect on our part with reference to health and lack of health education.
- Infant Mortality Rate- This is due to neglect of girl children; from every 15 infant deaths, 14 are girls.
- Death because of Dowry issues and domestic violence.
- Teenage pregnancy.
- Skewed sex ratio.

#### Health Problems

India has issues related to basic health amenities because the resources and infrastructure are limited, and within that, the situation is worse for marginalized people.

Health problems remain a very important issue for India as a whole, and when it comes to women, in particular, the situation is even more difficult. For example, even if a woman is killed, it is not taken seriously. Because of a certain kind of conditioning, the culture of silence predominates among women.

#### Neglect of female education

It is not only related to enrollment but also to the way female education is perceived. Women are not enrolled equally as men. Even when they are enrolled, there is a very high dropout rate because even if there is a certain kind

of problem at home, it is a girl child that has to stay back. There is also a lack of infrastructure supporting girls' needs in schools, causing dropout rates, like no separate toilets for girls.

### **Insufficient economic and political partnership**

While there is a lot of emphasis on education these days, it is still a matter of concern due to the lower participation of women in the workforce. For example, if one has to quit the job in a couple, it is invariably the woman who has to quit because it is considered unmanly for a man to stay at home. In any case, if the man stays back, it is considered as going against Indian culture. The same is the case with political participation, where we see very few women. People are still not willing to concede to the reservation that has taken place at the panchayat level.

### **Violence**

It includes not only physical violence but also emotional and psychological violence.

The understanding of violence is changing, and it is now more comprehensive. Example: At present, verbal abuse is also violence.

There are various acts of violence, including harassment, dowry death, rape, murder, wife battering, infanticide, eve teasing, forced prostitution, trafficking, stalking, acid attacks, etc.

## **Challenges and Prospects to Women Empowerment**

The challenges to women's empowerment are:

- Due to the patriarchy in the later Vedic period, the status of women started to decline due to the emergence of a new socio-cultural system.
- According to the World Economic Forum, the Global Gender Gap Report 2021, India has declined on the political empowerment index by 13.5% points, and there has been a decline in the number of women ministers, from 23.1% in 2019 to 9.1% in 2021.
- According to the National Family Health Survey 5, 23.3% of girls were married before the legal age.
- Women's safety, which is rape, and issues of marital rape.

Prospects:

- The change of legislation in isolation will never be able to stop child marriage unless there is a socio-behavioral change among the parents and community. There is also a need to strengthen families by providing appropriate livelihood opportunities.
- The Delhi government argued in favor of retaining the marital rape exception.
- The constitutional rights provided under articles 15, 16, 23, 39, 42, and 51(A) also help in empowering women.

## **Government Initiative for Women Empowerment in India**

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao - A campaign to generate awareness and improve the efficiency of welfare services intended for girls in India. It aims to address the issues of decline in child sex ratio image.
2. Janani Suraksha Yojana - It was launched to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality.
3. Anemia Mukht Bharat - It aims to make an anemia-free India.
4. Poshan Abhiyan - It is a Government of India flagship program to improve nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.
5. Mahila E Haat - It is a direct online marketing platform to support women entrepreneurs, self-help groups(SHG), and non-government organizations(NGO) to showcase products made and services rendered by them.
6. The Swadhar scheme- Was launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2002 to rehabilitate women in difficult circumstances.

## Women Empowerment in Panchayati Raj Institutions

Women will be given one-third of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in each panchayat. In addition, one-third of the number of chairperson seats must be reserved for women.

The economic survey for 2017-18 states that there are 13.72 lakh elected women representatives in PRIs. This constitutes about 44.2% of the total number of elected representatives.

## Women Empowerment and Gender Equality

Due to gender inequality, reverse migration, and job loss for men, rural jobs have shifted from women to men, as men are given higher priority for work in our society. Gender roles dictate a position of submission to women. Hence, power gaps still exist between men and women in our economic, political, and corporate systems. The SDG gender index says that despite the higher number of women in Parliament, their influence is limited.

## Types of Women Empowerment

1. There is social inequality in which the resources in a given society are distributed unevenly, typically through the norms of allocation. It is needed to remove the social inequality as it is against the idea of meritocracy to empower women.
2. It is seen that some jobs, like the beauty industry, air hostesses, nursing, teaching, etc., have been meant for women. As they are female-dominated, they are paid less as they have less bargaining power. To change this mindset in society, women have to be empowered economically.
3. Although there are provisions for women's empowerment in the political sphere, they are unable to achieve the purpose.

## Self-Help Groups and Women Empowerment

Self Help Groups (SHGs), are small groups of people facing similar problems and the members of a group help each other to solve their problems. Self Help groups play a major role in empowering women as Self Help groups are important:

- To promote income-generating activities.
- For removal of poverty.
- To generate employment.
- To raise the status of women in society.

## Women Empowerment- Latest Updates

- The world is not on track to achieving gender equality by 2030. The Human Development Reports Gender Inequality Index shows that overall progress in gender inequality has declined in recent years. For instance, it would take about 250 years to close the gender gap in economic opportunity based on current trends.
- India has fallen to 28th position in the World Economic Forum's global gender gap report 2021 and is now one of the worst performers in South Asia, trailing behind neighbors Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar; it is now ranked 140th among 156 countries.
- The report estimates it will take South Asia 195.4 years to close the gender gap, while Western Europe will take 52.1 years.