

1. What are the key challenges faced by women in workspace? Discuss. What measures should be taken to make workspace more equitable and safer for women?

Approach:

Question is asking you to discuss so you have to discuss in detail and cover all dimensions comprehensively.

Introduction:

It will take 257 years to reach gender equality in economic participation and opportunity, according to the WEF's 2020 global gender gap report. In fact, the report shows that while other metrics of gender equality have improved (education attainment and health are close to parity, for example), the economic participation and opportunity metric has regressed to 57.8%.

Body:

THE KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN WORKSPACE

- **Disproportionate earnings:** As of today, women earn \$0.81 for every \$1 a man makes, resulting in far lower take-home income and associated financial security. In India too, the fight for equal wages continues. The Labour Bureau in India has found that in rural areas in the agricultural sector, the daily wage for men is ₹264.05 and ₹205.32 for women. In non-agricultural sectors, the average daily wage rate for men is ₹271.17, while for women it is ₹205.90.
- **Lack of community and support:** The old adage "It's lonely at the top" can certainly be true for the women who do make it to senior roles within their organizations.
- **Shortage of professional opportunities:** 42% of women in the workplace say they've experienced gender-based discrimination, including being passed up for important assignments, experiencing repeated, small slights, and being treated as though they weren't competent. This makes women almost twice as likely to experience these grievances compared to men (22%).
- **Representation of Women:** Women continue to remain underrepresented at every level, starting from entry level jobs to C-suite roles. What's interesting to see is that the number of women and men leaving their companies is almost the same. Therefore, attrition can't be blamed for this inequality and misogyny.
- **Unemployment Penalty:** During child rearing years, the unemployment penalty for women is longer. What this means is that when women take longer leaves, they have a much harder time to get rehired.

- **Increased risk of workplace harassment:** Women are far more likely to experience sexual harassment in the workplace, whether they are in a position of power or not.

MEASURES THAT SHOULD BE TAKEN TO MAKE WORKSPACE MORE EQUITABLE AND SAFER FOR WOMEN

There are plenty of steps that can and must be taken to improve gender equality in the workplace. These includes:

- **Put an end to salary secrecy:** Increased transparency around salaries and remuneration is one definitive step any organization can make.
- **Dismantle the glass ceiling:** Lack of female representation in senior, high-paying positions only seeks to reinforce the gender pay gap. As such, this must be addressed head-on within each organization.
- **Remove barriers for flexible working:** Lack of flexibility, or stigma, related to varied working hours can be a barrier to progression for many female workers, as women tend to take on more active parenting duties.
- **Women make up about half the global population;** representing a huge pool of talent, resources, and potential innovation. Hiring, training and investing in women makes good business sense, as well as being morally imperative.

Conclusion:

Gender inequality can be an entrenched issue in the office. It reveals itself in pay grade differences, lack of representation at senior level, and sometimes incredibly minimal intervention against gross misconduct. Reaching gender equality requires radical action in organizations. The world talks about progression and creating an environment where all people are treated equally. But, why does it stop when it comes to women? While there are men who have come forward to support women in all their endeavours, why is the word “feminism” branded with so much hatred and contempt? It’s time we shatter toxic masculinity and make people understand that feminism’s goal is to reduce gender gaps and achieve political, economic, personal, and social gender equality.

2. Certain political parties have floated the idea of giving remuneration to women homemakers. What are your views on this? Discuss.

Approach:

Question is straight forward in its approach students are expected to express their views about the idea of remuneration to women by the political parties by giving a detailed explanation with examples as well.

Introduction:

The expanding role of freebies in Indian Politics in the last decade has become an intriguing question in the Indian political economy. Freebies have become a strategy to woo voters lately. The Election Commission, earlier 2019, has revealed an analytical emphasis on the distribution of freebies and attractions to voters by almost all the political parties. Recent announcement by a political party of giving remuneration to homemakers is an election freebie promise but it has a larger perspective through ideological and economic aspects as well.

Body:

Remuneration to homemakers has been advocated by feminist groups from a long time. It involves paying homemaker against the work done in home such as cooking, looking after the elderly, washing clothes etc. so as to bring them in parity with those working outside home and giving recognition to their efforts as well. In these times where societies are largely patriarchal efforts of homemakers usually go unnoticed and is not considered work at all.

Idea of giving remuneration to homemakers is a drastic step towards change in following ways-

- One extremely significant dimension that has gone largely ignored in the purview of the measurement of economic activity – is household unpaid work by women. This is the flip side of women's low labour force participation, which is among the lowest in the world in India. Women who are not in the workforce are not sitting at home enjoying leisure time – they're engaged in child and parent care, cooking, cleaning and performing other household chores. The fact that women's household work is unpaid and therefore goes unrecorded as part of the GDP understates women's contribution to the economy. According to research by the International Monetary Fund, raising women's participation in the labour force to the same level as men can boost India's GDP by 27 percent. One way to do this is by giving homemakers, the majority of whom are women, a salary.
- As a matter of public policy, schemes targeted at economically vulnerable households can and should be fine-tuned by recording the value of women's work. Finally, as a matter of macroeconomics, capturing women's unpaid labour would give a truer picture of GDP and, therefore, a more realistic assessment of the size of the economy and of economic growth.

- This will help shatter the stereotypical image of Indian women who are portrayed as domestic and social parasites living on their husbands' earnings and contributing nothing.
- A large number of women live with domestic violence and cruelty because they are economically dependent on others, mainly their husbands. Time-use data from 2019 gathered by the National Sample Survey Organisation revealed that only about a quarter of men and boys above six years engaged in unpaid household chores, compared to over four-fifths of women paying remuneration to homemakers will ensure their financial independence to a large extent and is thus an inclusionary measure as well.
- Supreme court also advocated that value of the work of homemaker must be at par with the office going individual and fixing remuneration and recognising the value of the labour of homemaker is the acceptance of the idea that these activities contribute to the economic condition of the family in a real way.
- Once recognised as work, this arena of unpaid domestic labour that is dominated almost entirely by women can become one where women can demand some degree of parity in terms of the time and energy expended on it.
- It moves us towards a more holistic understanding of labour: Labour isn't purely tied to the exchange value of a service on the market, and recognises an extremely intimate form of labour that has proved essential to keeping the unit of the family intact and functional

However there are some challenges as well which are as follows-

- Paying home-makers would disincentivize even the educated women to stay indoors and receive some sort of salary. This would impact the overall LFPR of women which is already low.
- In rural areas, where patriarchal mindset exists women would serve as proxies to their husbands. The amount they would receive would directly be spent by their husbands leaving them disempowered (financially).
- Identifying the beneficiaries would be a herculean task for the government, as too much of arbitrariness exists.
- It would burden the already curtailed fiscal space of the state governments which are currently reeling under the high fiscal deficit in the post-Covid scenario and would therefore have far-reaching impact on the state-exchequer.

Conclusion:

Needless to say, women constitute almost half the population and their needs and issues have to be addressed. A homemaker doesn't need any favours. She is already contributing to the economy. A salary for her work at home would be a tool towards her empowerment, give her a life of dignity. Idea of remuneration isn't new it needs a serious thought on part of policy makers to bring equality in the society which has been marred by discrimination from quite a long time now.

3. Why is it important to have more women in politics? What will be achieved by greater participation of women in matters of politics and governance? Put forward your views with the help of suitable arguments.

Approach

The candidate needs to bring out the importance of having more women in politics in the first part of answer while in the second part, the candidate needs to put forward his/her views regarding the positive effects of greater participation of women in politics and governance.

Introduction

Despite women constituting half the world's population, they account for less than a quarter of the membership of national parliaments globally. Such descriptive or numerical under-representation can have consequences for substantive representation of women's interests as well as overall societal interests, which clearly highlights the importance of women's participation in politics.

Body

Importance of having more women in politics –

1. In the Beijing Platform for Action, stemming from the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995, the prioritization of women's leadership was considered vastly important. Two decades later, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underscored the need and urgency to achieve gender parity in leadership through SDG Target 5.5.
2. The full and active participation of women in legislatures, equal to men, is not just a goal in itself, but central to building and sustaining democracies. The equal presence of women, their leadership and their perspective in parliaments is essential to ensure greater responsiveness to citizens' needs.
3. For political institutions to be democratically legitimate and responsive to all citizens, they must be inclusive of the plurality of groups that exist within the population. This requires greater representation of women in national parliaments and broader diversity.
4. People's interests and priorities are often shaped by their respective social, economic and ethnic differences. Female legislators belonging to various backgrounds can therefore bring a wide array of issues to the table.
5. Furthermore, any democratic system benefits from having people from diverse backgrounds and life experiences represented in its political institutions. It enables us to draw on the full array of capacity and skills in the population in shaping policies for the advancement of all.

The meaningful participation of women in national, local, and community leadership roles has become an important focus on global development policy. In this regard,

following can be some of the achievements through greater participation of women in matters of politics and governance –

- Women's political participation results in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and a more sustainable future.
- Research has shown that women in government tend to work in more collaborative and bipartisan ways and employ a more democratic leadership style compared to men's more autocratic style. Women are also more effective at building coalitions and reaching consensus.
- Women's participation in politics helps advance gender equality and affects both the range of policy issues that get considered and the types of solutions that are proposed. There is also strong evidence that as more women are elected to office, there is a corollary increase in policy making that emphasizes quality of life and reflects the priorities of families, women, and ethnic and racial minorities.
- For example, in Norway, a direct causal relationship between the presence of women in municipal councils and childcare coverage was found.
- Women's parliamentary presence could also have a role model effect. A 2012 study conducted in India explained that the increased proportion of women village leaders had closed the "aspiration gap" between girls and boys by nearly 25 percentage points and had eventually erased or reversed the gender gap in educational outcomes.
- Further, in many instances, greater political participation by women does result in policy choices more attuned to women's needs and concerns. Moreover, having more women in elected office has been shown to lead to broader societal benefits such as better infant mortality rates, better education outcomes in urban areas and lower corruption.
- For example, research on panchayats (local councils) in India discovered that the number of drinking water projects in areas with women-led councils was 62 per cent higher than in those with men-led councils.
- Moreover, not every woman elected to parliament or another legislative body will place women's issues or rights at the forefront of her own agenda. Clearly, women's representation is not the only factor, but it is a critical factor for the development of inclusive, responsive, and transparent democracies.

Measures to Empower Women –

- Creating a gender-responsive policy environment.
- Support women's leadership development programmes.
- Enact legislated candidate quotas and reserved seats.
- Create enabling environment for voluntary party quotas.

Conclusion

The positive impact of women in politics and governance is undeniable where the world can't afford wasting a precious resource through the dramatic underrepresentation of women in leadership positions which clearly brings out the need for male and female legislators to work together in order to solve the myriad of problems in the world to meet worldwide development goals and build strong, sustainable democracies.



4. Discuss the role of women self help groups in uplifting the rural economy.

Approach

Candidates are expected first to write about self help group. And then highlight the role of Self help group in uplifting the rural economy.

Introduction

The origin of SHGs in India can be traced back to the establishment of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in 1972. Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are informal associations of people who choose to come together to find ways to improve their living conditions. It can be defined as self governed, peer controlled information group of people with similar socio-economic background and having a desire to collectively perform common purpose.

Body

Role of self help group in uplifting the rural economy:

- **Financial Inclusion:** Priority Sector Lending norms and assurance of returns incentivize banks to lend to SHGs. The SHG-Bank linkage programme pioneered by NABARD has made access to credit easier and reduced the dependence on traditional money lenders and other non-institutional sources.
- **Alternate source of employment:** It eases dependency on agriculture by providing support in setting up micro-enterprises e.g. personalised business ventures like tailoring, grocery, and tool repair shops. For example Kudumbashree in Kerala has helped in providing skill training and poverty eradication of women.
- **Banking literacy:** It encourages and motivates its members to save and act as a conduit for formal banking services to reach them.
- **Credit availability:** Bank credits are not easily accessible to individual poor, but by forming a SHG, there are make better prospects for bank credits. (often without collateral). Under the SHG-Bank linkage programme, many SHGs have become institutions of micro-credit.
- **The need to solve problems at the ground level:** India is a country that has diverse culture, traditions, historical backgrounds, etc. Therefore, it is difficult for the government to solve the socio-economic problems by itself. Thus, bringing together the people who face similar problems may be a game-changer for the Indian economy.
- **Rural poverty:** SHGs have become a vehicle to lift people from below poverty line, generate awareness about welfare and developmental schemes of government, monitor its implementation etc. For example SHGs like SEWA, Lizzat papad promotes entrepreneurial culture among women.
- **Positive correlation between SHGs and poverty** can be inferred from the fact that southern states with high number of SHGs (71%) have average poverty rate at 9% as against nation's average of 21%.

- Need based service enhance economy: Commercial Banks and NABARD in collaboration with the State Government continuously innovated and designed new financial products for these groups. For example Community managed resource centre (CMRC) under MAVIM was launched to provide financial and livelihood services to SHGs. CMRC is self-sustaining and provides need-based services.
- Easier access to government schemes: The government schemes are mostly meant for the marginalised sections of the society. The inclusion and identification of these people are highly difficult. If they are grouped together, it is easier for the government to identify those who are in need of assistance quickly and efficiently. It also prevents the exploitation and corruption of the government at the ground level.

Challenges faced by SHG:

- There are about 1.2 lakh branches of banks in rural areas as opposed to 6 lakh villages in the country. There is a need to expand banking amenities further.
- Patriarchal mindset, primitive thinking and social obligations discourages women from participating in SHGs thus limiting their economic avenues.

Measures to Make SHGs Effective:

- Extension of Self-Help Groups to Urban/Peri-Urban Areas efforts should be made to increase income generation abilities of the urban poor as there has been a rapid rise in urbanisation and many people remain financially excluded.
- Need to establish a separate SHG monitoring cell in every state. The cell should have direct links with district and block level monitoring system. The cell should collect both quantitative and qualitative information.

Conclusion

SHG approach is an enabling, empowering, and bottom-up approach for rural development that has provided considerable economic and non-economic externalities to low-income households in developing countries. SHG approach is being hailed as a sustainable tool to combat poverty, combining a for-profit approach that is self-sustaining, and a poverty alleviation focus that empowers low-income households.

5. What is your notion of true women empowerment? Explain with the help of suitable examples.

Approach- Candidate is required to define women empowerment by the empirical observation and elaborate further with suitable examples of empowered women around us in day to day life.

Introduction

Women's empowerment can be defined to promoting women's sense of self-worth, their ability to determine their own choices, and their right to influence social change for themselves and others.

Body

What is women empowerment?

- It is closely aligned with female empowerment – a fundamental human right that's also key to achieving a more peaceful, prosperous world.
- Gender equality is a basic human right, and it is also fundamental to having a peaceful, prosperous world.
- But girls and women continue to face significant challenges all around the world. Women are typically underrepresented in power and decision-making roles. They receive unequal pay for equal work, and they often face legal and other barriers that affect their opportunities at work.
- In the India, girls and women are often seen as less valuable than boys. Instead of being sent to school, they are often made to do domestic work at home or are married off for a dowry before they are adults. As many as 12 million underage girls are married every year.

Why is it important to empower girl or women?

- Empowering women is essential to the health and social development of families, communities and countries.
- A key part of this empowerment is through education. Girls who are educated can pursue meaningful work and contribute to their country's economy later in life. They are also four times less likely to get married young when they have eight years of education, meaning that they and their families are healthier.
- The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status is a highly important end in itself.
- The full participation and partnership of both women and men is required in productive and reproductive life, including shared responsibilities for the care and nurturing of children and maintenance of the household.
- In all parts of the world, women are facing threats to their lives, health and well-being as a result of being overburdened with work and of their lack of power and influence.
- In most regions of the world, women receive less formal education than men, and at the same time, women's own knowledge, abilities and coping

mechanisms often go unrecognized. The power relations that impede women's attainment of healthy and fulfilling lives operate at many levels of society, from the most personal to the highly public.

What are some examples?

- Popularly known as the 'padwoman of India', Maya Vishwakarma calls herself the 'standing example' of the dire repercussions caused to the girls and women. Born to a family of agricultural labourers in a village in Narsinghpur district of Madhya Pradesh, Maya did not have access to sanitary napkins until she was 26. This caused her to face many health issues later in life, thus triggering her ambition to remedy the situation. At the age of 36, she quit her job and started the Sukarma Foundation in 2016, to create awareness around menstruation, promote the importance of using sanitary napkins and busting the stigma and myths around it. The foundation also manufactures affordable sanitary napkins which are given to the women in the remotest areas of the country.
- Almost 200 kilometres from Pune, the town of Mhaswad in Satara district of Maharashtra has a unique bank that provides loans as low as Rs 15 to rural women! The Mann Deshi Bank, established by Mumbai-based Chetna Sinha in 1997, provides financial aid to rural women, making them truly empowered. So far, the bank and its eight branches have empowered more than 3,00,000 women through 140 field facilitators.
- In 2017, a Mumbai-based non-profit organization, 'SheSays' led by Trisha Shetty, began a campaign, #LahuKaLagaan, which called to abolish tax on sanitary napkins. As the campaign went viral across the country, other organisations picked up the cause. Eventually, in 2018, the 12 per cent tax on sanitary napkins was scrapped by the government.
- Dr Rani Bang in Naxal-hit district of Gadchiroli in Maharashtra is working relentlessly for last thirty five years to provide basic healthcare to tribal women who face complications in pregnancy. A gold medalist from John Hopkins university, she chose to serve and empower fellow women and make them independent when it comes to health.

Conclusion

Women empowerment is multifaceted. Empowerment starts from home, by dividing responsibilities, by taking important decisions together, by making women financially more literate, by respecting their choices of employment and by listening to the unheard desires. Giving them a new voice, showing them a right path and providing her a right platform to express her fully so that she can realise her deep true self is the real empowerment. As a society we have to travel a long road to empowerment but we have to start from ourselves first.