



GREEN JOBS AND GENDER DISPARITY - GS III MAINS

Q. Transitioning to a green economy is not only an economic imperative but a crucial step towards building a socially equitable and inclusive future for women. (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *Green jobs and the problem of gender disparity*

What's in the news?

- The transition to low-carbon development has the potential to add about 35 million green jobs in India by 2047.

Key takeaways:

- The International Labour Organization defines green jobs as “decent jobs that contribute to preservation or restoration of the environment”.
- Many of these span across sectors, such as manufacturing, construction, renewable energy, energy efficiency and automobiles, which traditionally saw a lower representation of women.
- Increasing women’s representation in green jobs will lead to benefits such as boosting a low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economy.

Green Jobs:

- The International Labour Organization defines green jobs as “decent jobs that contribute to preservation or restoration of the environment”.

India and Green Jobs:

- India has the potential to create up to 35 million green jobs by 2047 across traditional and emerging sectors, including renewable energy, waste management, electric vehicles, green construction and sustainable textiles, according to ‘The ‘Gearing Up the Workforce for a Green Economy’ report by Skill Council for Green Jobs (SCGJ).

Women's Underrepresentation in Renewable Energy:

- Despite India’s remarkable 250% increase in renewable energy capacity from 2015 to 2021, women make up only 11% of the workforce in the solar rooftop industry.
- The challenge lies in integrating women into the rapidly growing green economy, where stereotypes and social norms continue to dictate occupational choices.

Reasons for Women's Lower Representation in Green Sector:

1. Men in Lead:

- Globally, men are likely to transition to green jobs faster than women.



2. Occupational Concentration:

- The Annual Survey of Industries 2019-20 shows that women workers are mostly concentrated in industries such as apparel, textile, leather, food, and tobacco.
- The historical gender divide persists in green jobs, with women underrepresented in sectors such as manufacturing, construction, renewable energy, and automobiles.

3. Training Disparities:

- A 2023 study by the Skill Council for Green Jobs reveals that 85% of green skills training is directed towards men.

4. Social Norms:

- Restricting their participation in such training, perpetuating the underrepresentation of women in emerging green sectors.

5. STEM Graduates and Sectoral Representation:

- While 42.7% of STEM graduates in India are women, their representation drops to 30.8% in key sectors for the green transition.

6. Disparities in Leadership Positions:

- The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions perpetuates gender disparities, impacting decision-making processes.

Opportunities in Green Sector:

1. Address Gender Biases in the Labour Market:

- Increased representation of women in green jobs serves as a potent antidote to deeply ingrained gender biases in the labour market.

2. Enhanced Economic Opportunities:

- Engaging in sectors like renewable energy and energy efficiency allows women to access high-growth industries, fostering economic growth and personal financial stability.

3. Contributing to Long-Term Gender Empowerment:

- By breaking into sectors with historical gender imbalances, women pave the way for future generations, encouraging young girls to aspire to careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

4. Promoting Environmental Stewardship:

- Women's participation in green jobs aligns with their historically recognized role as stewards of the environment.
- With a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of social and ecological systems, women can bring unique insights to the development and implementation of sustainable practices within green industries.



Measures Needs to be Taken:

1. Address the Gaps in Data:

- There is limited data to understand the landscape of women's work for green jobs in India.
- Mapping emerging areas for green growth and collecting sex-disaggregated data on green jobs could be the starting point to improve women's participation.

2. Assess Impact:

- There is need to build evidence on the present and future impact of low-carbon transitions on women workers and entrepreneurs while considering the hidden and invisible roles played by women across different sectors and geographies.

3. Incorporate Gender Analysis:

- Conducting gender analysis, collecting gender statistics on green jobs through periodic labour force surveys and mobilising additional resources to emphasise and encourage women's role in the green transition.

4. Supporting Women Entrepreneurs:

- Gender-focused financial policies and products catering to the requirements of women entrepreneurs can spur their ability to enter the green transition market.
- Collateral-free lending, financial literacy training and building supportive networks are crucial steps to unlock their potential.

5. Leadership:

- Bringing in more women into leadership positions to incorporate gender-specific needs in low-carbon development strategies can promote women's integration in green jobs.

WAY FORWARD:

- The global transition towards a sustainable future is expected to drive significant growth in the green jobs sector. As environmental concerns become more prominent, demand for green skills and expertise is expected to rise.
- A gender-just transition demands a multi-pronged strategy that focuses on employment, social protection, reduces the burden of care work, and enables skill development.
- Partnerships across government, private sector and other stakeholders are necessary to leverage the benefits of innovation, technology and finance for women entrepreneurs and workers.