



EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

GENERAL STUDIES 2: SOCIAL JUSTICE

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TOPIC: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The Beijing India Report as milestone and opportunity

1. Context: School Dropouts and Gendered Impact of Climate Change

- **Climate change and migration** are increasingly pushing **rural girls out of school**, especially in vulnerable states like **Chhattisgarh**.
- These trends threaten to undo progress made toward **gender equality** and **education access for girls**, particularly in communities that once held hope for brighter futures.

2. The Beijing Declaration: Progress and Persistent Gaps

- India has made **notable legislative progress** in the 30 years since the **1995 Beijing Declaration**:
 - Enactment of the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005)**.
 - Implementation of the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (POSH) Act (2013)**.
- However, **poor enforcement and social barriers** continue to weaken the **real-world impact** of these laws.
- The **gap between law and lived experience** remains wide, especially for rural women.

3. Linking Gender Inequality and Climate Change

- **Gender and climate issues are deeply interconnected**, particularly in rural and tribal regions.
- Despite this, India's **Beijing+30 Report lacks a strong climate lens**, missing the chance to advocate gender-climate integrated policies.
- Women in vulnerable areas are facing **compound challenges** that need joint policy attention.

4. Climate Change's Direct Impact on Rural Women

- Rural women suffer from:
 - **Lack of land ownership**, resources, and **decision-making power**.
 - Direct exposure to **climate shocks** like droughts and heatwaves.
- These effects lead to:



- **Malnutrition, fertility issues, and menstrual health problems.**
- Increased **distress migration**, especially among **non-farm families**.
- **Income loss up to 33%**, further deepening poverty and dependence.

5. Poor Gender Representation in Climate Policies

- Data shows **serious gaps in inclusivity**:
 - Only **6% of climate policies mention women**.
 - Merely **1% refer to the poor**, and **6% to farmers**, despite their vulnerability.
- Women bear the brunt of climate-related burdens:
 - Increased **unpaid care work** (e.g., water collection, fuel gathering).
 - Average rural Indian woman works **over 8 hours daily**, 71% of which is **unpaid**.
 - By **2050**, unpaid care work could rise to **8.3 hours per day** without intervention.

6. Health and Gender-Based Violence Concerns

- Climate stress contributes to **worsening health indicators**:
 - Over **50% of pregnant women** in India are anaemic.
 - Food insecurity makes women **1.6 times more likely** to suffer from anaemia.
- Such vulnerabilities also increase exposure to **trafficking, early marriage, and domestic abuse**, especially during post-disaster migration.

7. Women as Key Agents in Climate Adaptation

- **Rural and tribal women** possess **traditional ecological knowledge**, making them essential for:
 - **Sustainable agriculture**.
 - Preserving **climate-resilient seeds** and farming practices.
 - Leading **first-response actions** during disasters.
- **Indigenous women** focus on:
 - **Forest-based livelihoods**.
 - **Community safety** in resource-conflict zones.



- Managing the effects of **climate-linked migration**.

8. Urgent Need for Climate-Gender Integration in Plans

- Both **national and state-level climate action plans** must include **gender-specific measures**.
- Tools like **climate budgeting** must undergo **gender audits** to ensure genuine action and **avoid greenwashing**.
- **Rural women should be given platforms to:**
 - Participate in **climate-related decision-making**.
 - Access **financial, legal, and support services** for climate adaptation.

9. Promoting Women's Leadership and Data-Driven Research

- Women must be **included in climate planning meetings** at community levels.
- Leadership should be promoted in **green entrepreneurship, climate projects, and policy-making**.
- There is an urgent need for:
 - **Better data and gender indicators**.
 - **Research** to understand the **gender-climate nexus**.
 - Policies that address **intersectional vulnerabilities** (caste, class, region).

10. Economic and Livelihood Interventions

- Women require **support in non-farm employment**, including:
 - **Disaster preparedness training**.
 - **Anti-trafficking protections**.
 - **Skill development** for green and climate-resilient jobs.
- Closing the **gender gap in agriculture** alone can:
 - Increase food production by **20%–30%**.
 - Feed an **additional 100–150 million people**.

11. Role of Private Sector and Cross-Sector Collaboration

- **Green funds** should specifically support **women-led climate startups and eco-friendly innovations**.



- The **private sector** must:
 - Promote **gender-inclusive technologies**.
 - Fund **resilience-building tools** for poor women and communities.
- A **multi-stakeholder partnership** involving:
 - **Governments, NGOs, businesses, and international agencies** is essential to drive inclusive and climate-resilient development.

12. Conclusion: Gender-Responsive Climate Action Is Non-Negotiable

- Climate change is **not gender-neutral** — it deepens **existing inequalities**, especially in rural India.
- Ministerial reports and policy visions must reflect this **intersectional reality**.
- The path forward lies in:
 - **Empowering women as climate leaders.**
 - **Fixing data gaps and budgeting flaws.**
 - Ensuring that **rural girls and women** are seen not as victims, but as **solution-makers**.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-beijing-india-report-as-milestone-and-opportunity/article69440504.ece>