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Women and Work 2023

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Introduction:

In 2023, India was the fastest growing major economy due to increased employment opportunities and productivity. India's dedication to gender equality highlighted the important advancements in women-led development. Although female labour force participation has been historically low, there has been recent improvement, with rural participation rising from 36.6% to 41.5% and urban from 23.8% to 25.4%. During India's G20 presidency, emphasis was placed on gender perspectives, advocating for women to be seen as active participants in the economy instead of just recipients of welfare efforts. This perspective has also helped highlight the potential of Nari Shakti initiatives to spearhead transformative measures across economic sectors and establish an equitable and inclusive groundwork for key emerging sectors. The report places these trends in the larger political and economic context, pointing out challenges and opportunities and promoting ongoing investments in women empowerment to drive overall social and economic advancement.

Key Findings:

- **Employment Data:** The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for those aged 15 and above rose from 55.2% to 57.9%, and the Workforce Participation Rate (WFPR) increased from 52.9% to 56%, with significant gains in female employment, especially in rural areas. The survey highlighted that rural women's workforce participation increased from 26% to 49% in the first five years of marriage and from 45% to 51% in the first five years post-childbirth, mainly in family or agricultural self-employment. Moreover, Unemployment rates dropped by 22% in India, yet urban female unemployment remains high at 7.5%.
- **Gender Gap in MSMEs:** UDYAM portal data shows that women own 20% of MSMEs and hold nearly 25% of MSME jobs, while DPIIT reports that 46% of over 86,000 recognized startups have at least one woman director. Despite recognition, women entrepreneurs face myriad problems in starting and expanding their businesses. A LEAD study of 856 entrepreneurs revealed longer credit approval time for women and indicated that traditional gender roles might deter women from seeking formal credit.
- **Government Schemes:** The Government of India has been promoting women's economic participation through various initiatives. The PMEGP and PMMY provided subsidies and loans to women entrepreneurs, with 38.3% of PMEGP projects and 48% of PMMY loans going to women in 2022-23, while the WEE project saw a 24.6% rise in women entrepreneurs. The National Rural Livelihoods Mission organized 100 million households into self-help groups, benefiting many women farmers, while the Start-up

Village Entrepreneurship Programme fostered rural entrepreneurship with significant funding.

- **Women in STEM:** Globally, women make up less than 30% of STEM researchers, and in India, they constitute about 43.2% of STEM students, with lower representation in engineering (28.7%) and technology (29.3%). Despite increases in female enrolment in higher education, women remain underrepresented in technical courses and leadership roles in STEM, with only 16.6% female faculty in Indian universities, 29% in tech industry jobs, and significant gender pay gaps. Digital divides and socio-cultural barriers impact women's access to education and employment, and while efforts to improve gender equality in technical and vocational training are ongoing, challenges remain in achieving greater female participation and representation.
- **Gender Inclusive Climate Action:** India, ranked 12th globally for climate risk to women farmers, has implemented gender-focused climate initiatives to address these impacts. The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) and Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) have provided over 10 crore water and cooking gas connections, respectively, reducing women's vulnerability to climate risks and improving daily life. Additionally, MGNREGA, a rural employment program, supports climate resilience through carbon sequestration and natural resource management, with a large part of its budget focused on climate-proofing.
- **Women Security:** In India, gender-based violence is severe, with 26,574 cases reported in 2023, mainly in northern states like Uttar Pradesh, and a 3.9% rise in related crimes from 2021 to 2022 according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). Climate change exacerbates violence against women, with rising temperatures increasing domestic violence and water scarcity heightening sexual violence risks. India has expanded Anganwadi Centres to include creches for working mothers and is improving elderly care, with the older population expected to reach 20.8% by 2050. Poshan 2.0 tackles malnutrition, but hunger remains a significant issue, with India ranked 111th globally.

Conclusion:

Overall, while there have been improvements in female labour force participation and reductions in youth unemployment, challenges such as job quality, formal employment opportunities, and persistent high unemployment rates among urban women remain. Addressing these issues requires continued focus on gender-responsive policies, investments in social protection, and targeted interventions to support women's economic empowerment and participation in the workforce. The report emphasizes the potential of women-led development initiatives to drive transformative measures across economic sectors and establish an equitable and inclusive framework for future growth.

Read More: <https://iwwage.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/IWWAGE-Trends-Report-2023-Jul.pdf>

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