Covid-19: Impact on Women

What is the issue?

- Covid-19 pandemic is exposing and exploiting inequalities of all kinds, including gender inequality.
- In the long term, its impact on women's health, rights and freedoms could harm us all.

How the pandemic affects women?

- Women are already suffering the deadly impact of lockdowns.
- These essential restrictions increase the risk of violence towards women trapped with abusive partners.
- Recent weeks have seen a global surge in domestic violence.
- The support services for women at risk also face cuts and closures.
- The threat to women's rights and freedoms posed by COVID-19 goes far beyond physical violence.
- The deep economic downturn accompanying the pandemic is likely to have a female face.

What are the actions taken?

- These negative impacts on women led to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) to appeal for peace in homes around the world.
- Since then, over 143 governments have committed to supporting women and girls at risk of violence during the pandemic.
- Every country can take action by,
    1. Moving services online,
    2. Expanding domestic violence shelters, and
    3. Increasing the support to frontline organisations.
- The **Spotlight Initiative** is working with governments in more than 25 countries on these and similar measures.
- [Spotlight Initiative is a partnership between the UN and the European Union.]

What is the inequality that women face?

- Women comprise just one in every 10 political leaders worldwide.
- They are disproportionately represented in poorly paid jobs without benefits,

as domestic workers, casual labourers, street vendors, etc.,

- The International Labour Organization estimates that nearly 200 million jobs will be lost in the next 3 months alone.
- As women are losing their paid employment, they face a huge increase in care work due to school closures, overwhelmed health systems, etc.,
- This will **delay their return to the paid labour force**.
- Many girls have had their **education cut short**.

What could be done?

- Women in pandemic-related **decision-making** will prevent worst-case scenarios like second spike in infections, labour shortages, etc.
- **Basic social protections** should be given to women in insecure jobs.
- Measures to stimulate the economy, like cash transfers, credits, loans and bailouts, must be targeted at women.
- Women's **unpaid domestic work** at home must be **included** in economic metrics and decision-making.
- With women's interests and rights front, getting through this pandemic will be faster.

Source: The Hindu

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