Impact of Demographic Transition on Women's Life

Why in news?

The theme of 2023 World Population Day '*Unleashing the power of gender equality: Uplifting the voices of women and girls to unlock our world's infinite possibilities'* speaks about women empowerment and gender equity.

What is demographic transition?

- Demographic transition is defined as the *change in patterns of birth rates and death rates* as a city, a country, or a continent transitions through increased industrialization or the industrial revolution.
- **Status of demographic transition -** As per the Sample Registration System (SRS) Bulletin of Registrar General of India, life expectancy is *69 years.*

Indicator	SRS 2014	SRS 2019	SRS 2020
Total Fertility Rate	2.3	2.1	2.0
Infant Mortality Rate	39	30	28
Under 5 Mortality Rate	45	35	32
Maternal Mortality Rate	130	103	97

Terms

- **Life Expectancy -** It refers to the number of years a person can expect to live.
- **Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) -** It is the probability of the infant dying between birth and one year of age as against 1000 live births.
- **Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) -** It is measured as the number of maternal deaths that occur for every 100,000 live births.

What good has the demographic transition made for women?

- **Low active mothering**- With increase in educational attainment of women and decrease in TFR leads to smaller proportion of women's life in active mothering role.
- **Successful family planning initiatives-** The aim is to provide an increasingly comprehensive package of reproductive health services to every potential beneficiary.
- Focus is on the provision of modern short and long-acting reversible contraceptives, permanent methods, information, counselling, and services, including emergency contraception.
- **Improvement in social indicators-** Since the beginning, of 2000 India has cut the number of child marriages by half. Teen pregnancies have dramatically decreased.
- **Holistic improvement-** Access to vital services, including health, education, and

nutrition is also increased.

What are the major issues faced by women?

- **Son-meta preference-** Social norms, patrilocal kinship patterns combined with lack of financial security reinforce preference for sons.
- The India Human Development Survey (IHDS) found that 85% of women respondents expected to rely on their sons for old age support, while only 11% expected support from their daughters.
- **Sex-selective abortion**- With fewer children, giving birth to a son is reduced and hence sex-selective abortion and neglect of sick daughters is on rise.
- **Early motherhood**- It is due to early marriage and childbearing.
- The lower TFR does not translate into higher labour force participation for women, it is due to the gap in the childcare demand which leads to unskilled work.
- **Widowhood-** Women generally marry men who are older and are more likely to outlive their husbands.
- The 2011 Census shows that while only 18% of men above age 65 are widowed, about 55% of the women are widowed.
- Lack of access to savings and property results in dependence on children, mainly sons, bringing the vicious cycle of son preference to full circle.
- **Lack of physical autonomy-** As per National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), just 10% of women in India are independently able to take decisions about their own health.
- Moreover 11% of women believe that marital violence is acceptable if a woman refuses to have sex with her husband.

SDG 5 - It is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

What lies ahead?

Harnessing Gender Dividend

- **Developing social infrastructure** - Improvement in the childcare access will result in women empowerment.
- Making crèche employment as an acceptable form under MGNREGA scheme would enhance childcare access.
- **Improving women's labour force participation-** This can be enhanced with safe and affordable childcare, this would break the vicious cycle of gendered disadvantage.

> *Raising the women's labour force participation by 10 % points might account for more than 70% of the potential GDP growth opportunity.*

- **Women Empowerment-** Achieving gender parity in the workforce is the most effective way to improve output and income growth.
- **Investments -** Gender equality can be ensured by making investments in a woman's

life at every stage, from childbirth to adolescence to maturity.

Women's Reproductive Autonomy

- **Right to reproductive choice-** This is vital for both mother and the baby, this would reduce unwanted pregnancies.
- **Expand contraceptive band-** This would reduce the detrimental effects of unspaced pregnancies.
- Improve the new-born's health as well as reduce the major effects on maternal mortality, morbidity, and health-care expenditure.
- **Focus on gender equality-** It helps shift the focus away from the notion of 'population stabilisation' to 'population dynamics' based on reproductive choices people make**.**
- **Gender Budgeting-** Formulate legislations and policies to empower and assert women's rights, requires investment from childbirth to old age of women.

References

1. The Hindu| Demographic transition
2. The Hindu| Reproductive autonomy
3. PIB| SRS report

