Issues with Dimming Women Workforce

What is the issue?

Reaching gender parity in the workforce would have a bigger impact in India and promotes socio-cultural change.

What is the estimate of working women population in India?

- In India women constitute 48.5% of the population where the labour force participation rate for women is one of the lowest in the world.
- Despite educational gains, the labour force participation rate for women in 2017 was 28.5% (compared to 82% for men).
- In 2011-2012, 17.9% of the total employment in India was in regular wage and salaried positions, and in urban areas the gender gap for this employment narrowed.
- Of the 11.7 million urban working women in 2011-2012, almost 43% were in regular wage and salaried positions (up from 28.5% in 1993–1994).
- Young women are moving into non-traditional professional jobs, for example in communications.
- The gender pay gap is shrinking in India women earn 62% of what their male colleagues earn for performing the same work.

What are constraints faced by women workforce?

- Given that the Indian society continues to be highly conservative and patriarchal, getting women to step out of their house and outside the boundary of their village continues to be a challenge.
- There is a popular invalidated theory in India that women stop working once the family grows prosperous.
- But the key reason for increasing large scale joblessness of women in India is due to marginal, low paying and insecure jobs in the market.
- Apart from this the work environment is not so favourable to women, there is a lack of regulatory framework and in its implementation to oversee women safety at workplace and facilities like crèches, feeding rooms are not available to women workforce.

What will be the impact of women in the workforce?

- **Economic Development -** India’s Labour Force Will Soon Become the Largest in the World by 2027 the working-age population in India will be almost 20% (18.6%) of the entire global labour force.
- Reaching gender parity would have a bigger impact in India than in any other region in the world.
- Increasing women’s labour force participation by 10 percentage points could add $700 billion to India’s GDP by 2025 (or a 1.4% increase).

- **Financial Independence -** Even small amounts earned by the women, mostly working part-time, can at once give them a sense of feeling liberated, as they can take decisions on making small expenditure without depending on their husbands for money and approval.
- In most cases, women spend their earnings to pay small expenses such as getting an LPG cylinder refilled, buy things for their children and even pay their school or tuition fees.
- Spending on self is very low on their priority, financial independence also boosts self-esteem and confidence of these women.
- **Socio-cultural transformation -** There are other benefits from getting women out of their homes to a place where they will share with other co-workers.
- By which the village gradually learns accept as normal for women, even the ones who keep their faces veiled, to step out of their home to work.
- It would help greater integration in villages where caste and religious divisions run deep when women from diverse backgrounds work together.
- The quality of conversations that these women hold undergoes a change.

What measures are needed to increase women workforce?

- A multitude of non-policy factors undoubtedly influences female labour force participation, such as cultural expectations and the type of industry in which a country specializes.
- The government could work with religious leaders and social workers to create cultural campaigns to increase the women workforce.
- If maternity leave makes women less attractive to employers, this can at least be partially balanced by the provision of paternity leave.
- Once both women and men have the right to take time off after the birth of their child, women are less of a risk in the eyes of employers.
- Thus persistent interventions by government agencies and civil society, and particularly individuals who run skill training centres, can double up women workforce.

Source: Business Line

