IUCN’s Gender-based Study

Why in News?

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has studied the effects of climate change and environmental degradation on gender-based violence.

What does the study reveal?

- This study shows that the damage humanity is inflicting on nature can fuel violence against women around the world.
- This study adds to the urgency of halting environmental degradation alongside action to stop gender-based violence in all its forms.
- It demonstrates that these two issues need to be addressed together.

What is the survival strategy followed?

- According to the study, girls in Ethiopia and South Sudan are being sold off in marriage during extreme droughts, in exchange for cattle.
- It is a survival strategy to get rid of a daughter to relieve the pressure on the family, or it’s a way to generate income.
- The rate of **child and forced marriages** increases in crisis situations.
- Growing resource scarcity also increases the risk that women and girls will be victims of violence.

What problems do women face due to water scarcity?

- With increasing drought and desertification in the global south, more and more water sources and wells are drying up.
- Women who go to fetch water are forced to walk farther for that water.
- Because of this, the risk of sexual assault also increases.
- The same risk applies to gathering firewood.
- So wells are being built in the villages directly, or nearby, and try through reforestation efforts to plant trees near settlements.
- In addition to practical measures, aid organizations have also called for changes to traditional gender roles.
- It’s also important that girls and women know who they can contact after an assault, and that they’re encouraged to do so.

What problems do women face due to scarcity of fish?

- Women living on many of Africa's coasts and lakes have also suffered as fish have become scarcer.
- Fishermen peddling their wares are now not only expecting money as payment - they're also demanding sex.
- According to the IUCN study, this practice is now so common in western Kenya that it has a name: the Jaboya system.
- To counteract this form of sexual exploitation, women have been given the opportunity to breed fish in ponds around Lake Victoria, Africa.
- This way, they can now set up their own business and sell fish without getting into violent situations.

What is the situation of the women farmers?

- In places where women are responsible for agriculture, a sudden natural disaster or extreme weather event can have a dramatic effect on their social and family standing.
- If harvests are threatened or wiped out altogether, it can lead to violence - often from within their own families.
- Diversifying their sources of income is the most important way to protect women.

How do traditional societal roles lead to death?

- When societies dictate certain behaviours and prohibit others to women, they can suffer terribly in extreme weather situations and during natural disasters.
- Women are also more likely to die as a result of flooding, because they rarely seek refuge in emergency shelters.
- Most women prefer to barricade themselves in their huts, where they're often simply washed away by the floods. Eg: Bangladesh shelters.
- But men also die because of these traditional societal roles, as men receive significantly less help than women in crisis situations.
- This is primarily related to the traditional view of masculinity.

How do environmental crimes lead to violence?

- Environmental crimes, such as poaching and illegal resource extraction, can also lead to gender-based violence.
- According to the IUCN study, threats and sexual violence such as rape are often used to target women environmental activists to undermine their status within the community.
- It is also done to prevent other women from working to preserve the

environment.

- Similar strategies are also used in industrialized nations, as women who work on environmental issues are threatened with rape on social media in order to intimidate and silence them.

Source: The Indian Express

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