Link Between Domestic Violence and Climate Change

Why in news?

A new study published in JAMA Psychiatry has found that the environmental risks of climate change are worsening social hazards, such as domestic violence.

What is the study about?

- The study examined the "*association of ambient temperature*" with the "*prevalence of intimate partner violence*" (IPV) in India, Nepal and Pakistan.
- **Intimate partner violence** – Also called as domestic violence, IPV refers to behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes *physical, sexual or psychological harm.*
- It covers violence by both current and former spouses and partners.

Types of IPV

- **Sexual abuse-** It is the situation where the respondent is ever forced into unwanted sex or sexual acts by the husband or partner.
- **Physical abuse-** It is done by hurting or attempting to hurt someone by punching, kicking, slapping, hitting etc.,
- **Emotional abuse-** It is caused where someone was insulted, humiliated, or threatened by the husband or partner.
- **Psychological abuse-** It is an act of terrorizing the person, playing mind games with them, or threatening to harm them or their loved ones.
- **Financial abuse-** It is an act preventing an intimate partner from working, studying, or taking other steps to become financially independent.
- **Stalking-** It is a pattern of behaviour intended to harass, annoy, frighten, or harm the person.
- **Online abuse-** It is done using email, social media, dating apps, and other digital platforms to harass, abuse, stalk, threaten, bully, or manipulate an intimate partner.

What are the findings of the report?

- Increase in temperature is connected to rise in domestic violence against women, with *India expected to experience the largest increase.*
- A 1 °C increase in the annual mean temperature is associated with a 4.5% increase in IPV prevalence.
- In India, the trend was observed in both urban and rural areas but was more prominent in lower-income households.
- Online hate speech also rose by 22% when temperatures inched from 42ºC to 45ºC.

Do high temperatures fuel the risk of gender-based violence?

- Globally, women and girls are *14 times more likely* to be harmed during a disaster, per a 2019 analysis.
- Changes in temperature and precipitation increase the likelihood of assault, murder, riots, even civil war; a global analysis found a 13.2% rise in intergroup conflicts.
- The *6th Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)* pointed out that women, girls and LGBTQI people are at increased risk of domestic violence, harassment, sexual violence and trafficking during and after extreme weather events.
- Climate crisis also fans *economic distress -* extreme heat affects crop outcomes, or the livelihood of migrant workers takes a hit.
- Rising temperatures might result in India experiencing a 23.5% rise in domestic violence cases by 2090.
- ***Uttar Pradesh*** recorded highest domestic violence cases among the States during the pandemic.

What are the causes of Domestic Violence?

- **Cultural factors**- It is because historically, many cultures have granted men a sense of ownership towards women, as custodians of women's sexuality and the family's honour.
- **Social factors**-It is due to under representation of women in media, politics, Judiciary etc.,
- **Legal factors**- Low intervention of police and other law enforcement agencies. Economic factors: Lower economic status is linked to a greater risk of intimate partner violence.
- **Environmental factors-** It is due to growing up in an abusive environment and having witnessed or experienced domestic abuse. This phenomenon is known as the cycle of abuse.
- **Substance use**: Frequently using substances such as drugs and alcohol can make someone more likely to be a violent or aggressive partner.

How are climate change domestic violence interlinked?

- **Temperature-aggression theory**- When temperature increases it causes discomfort, frustration and impulsivity, hence increases interpersonal conflict and IPV.
- **Routine activity theory-** The temperature change does not cause discomfort. Instead, the disruption in people's daily activities due to changes in ambient temperature catalyses violence.
- **Post disaster Setting-** Loss of property, disability, minimised social contact, changing migration patterns, access to household resources, loss of economic output etc.,
- This would create "shake household environment" and impact mental well-being.
- **Negative coping Mechanisms-** Men gets addicted to alcohol or substance use when household face water scarcity, economic problems.

- **Increase in violence-** Changes in temperature and precipitation increase the likelihood of assault, murder, riots, even civil war.
- **Economic hardships-** Squeezing working hours, impact on the income of daily wage earners, affect agriculture productivity, impacts the migrant workers.

Violence has been witnessed in Sundarbans due to family fragmentation, stress, a loss of livelihoods and support networks and disruption of social norms.

What lies ahead?

- In patriarchal societies that face climate stress, there is a need to prepare for social disasters accompanying the natural disasters.
- Gender sensitisation in climate action and disaster management responses can be brought by strengthening IPV infrastructures, building financial resilience and support systems.
- Greater involvement of women in climate action an emphasis on gender mainstreaming in the policymaking process is the need of the hour.

Gujarat has launched the world's first heat insurance scheme which offers a small pay out to women to compensate for lost income when temperatures differ.

References

1. The Hindu| Study by JAMA network
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3. UNFCCC| Climate Change

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