Toolkit for Gender Responsive Urban Mobility & Public Spaces

Why in news?

The World Bank has launched a "Toolkit on Enabling Gender Responsive Urban Mobility and Public Spaces in India" on making public transport better for Indian women.

What is the need for the toolkit?

- **Importance of cities** - Cities are engines of growth, job-creation, and innovations.
- Cities are economic powerhouses and innovation hubs with large markets that can attract investments, knowledge, skilled personnel.
- They can lead to innovations thereby generating economic opportunities.
- **Need for the toolkit** - Lack of consideration for diverse population needs in urban planning and design has constrained women's access to socioeconomic opportunities.
- Historically, cities across the world have been designed to fit the needs of able-bodied men rather than that of women, girls, sexual and gender minorities, and people with disabilities (PWDs).
- Indian cities need gender-responsive urban mobility and public spaces so that benefits of city-led economic growth can be more equitably distributed.

What are the major concerns of women regarding the public transport?

- Urban mobility systems are not catered to the unique needs of women.
- Since the burden of care work (mostly unpaid) lies disproportionately on women, they often need to plan their travel in detail than men.
- **Effect on education** - Distance from home impacts women's choice of colleges and other educational institutions.
- **Effect on employment** - Lack of viable urban transport is a major challenge for women to access better employment opportunities.
- **Lack of safety and perception of safety**– Lack of good street lighting, no reliable last mile transport, and high waiting time at remote bus stops are some of the challenges in this regard.
- **Higher costs of travelling** - Women have to stitch together various short commutes (trip chaining) which increases travel costs.
- Women often make decisions to use certain kinds of more expensive routes or forms of transport on account of them being perceived to be more safe.
- **Pink tax** - All these factors amount together as a pink tax that specifically burden women and prevent them from making optimal decisions for themselves.

India's female labour force participation rate is among the lowest in the world,

standing at just 30% in 2019-20.

What is the toolkit about?

- **Bridging the knowledge gaps** - The toolkit intends to bridge the knowledge gaps between policy making and program implementation for gender-responsive urban mobility and public space in India.
- **Inculcating best practices** - It brings together 50 case studies of best practices and efforts from across the world, along with a special inculcation of the Indian context.
- The World Bank suggests a four-pillared approach to help address prevailing issues in urban transport for women.
- **Integrating a gender lens** - The toolkit emphasises on the importance of integrating a gender lens in transport policies and infrastructure that can help make urban transport safer for women.
- **Reflecting the concerns of women in development plans -** For this to happen, there must be more women in key institutions in charge of decision making.
- **Building gender sensitivity** - Awareness among service providers must be given through mandatory programmes and community action.
- **Investing in better infrastructure and services** -Women-friendly design with a focus on adequate lighting, SOS buttons, and well-maintained washrooms are the need of the hour.

References

1. The Indian Express | Making urban transport better for Indian women
2. World Bank | Toolkit for Enabling Gender Responsive Urban Mobility

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