Women in the Renewable Sector

What is the issue?

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- Government has committed to installing 175 GW of renewable energy by 2022.
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- This provides an immense opportunity for employing women and reducing poverty in rural areas.
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What is the current state of women workforce in India?

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- More than 270 million Indians live in poverty (World Bank Report) and India also ranks very poorly on female labour force participation.
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- **Constraints -** Some estimates hold that India can increase its GDP by up to 60% by 2025 by enabling more women to participate in its workforce.
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- But social and cultural constraints can prevent this from becoming a reality.
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- Many women who work outside home still have primary household and parenting responsibilities that need to be balanced with their work life.
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- **Opportunity -** The government has committed to installing 175 GW of Renewable Energy (RE) by 2022.
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- This provides an immense opportunity for women and the rural poor.
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- Notably, as many as 3.3 lakh jobs are expected to be created in the wind and solar energy sectors alone.
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What is the situation in Renewable sector?

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- India’s RE industry presently has low participation of women, and even the few women engaged are mostly daily wage labourers.
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- Moreover, the working conditions on many sites are not always suitable for women as they are devoid of safety and support systems.
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- In the current situation, jobs requiring some skilling are completely closed for women as formal education and training largely continues to elude them.
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- One has to pass 12^{th} grade to get into technical training institutions and these institutions are largely concentrated in urban and semi-urban centres.
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- These are significant entry barriers for rural women workforce participation, and this hurdle only enhances with the burden of household responsibilities.
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- Consequently, there are very few women in production, facilities, and operations and maintenance roles in the RE sector.
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Why is RE sector significant for women empowerment?

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- A recent study has stated that some tweaks in the system might enable the RE sector to impact poverty by opening up opportunities for the poor.
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- Particularly with the growth of the decentralised RE and off-grid energy sector, there is significant potential to include local women in the workforce.
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- Hence, the government, enterprises, training institutes and civil society should work together to tap the potential of rural women for RE projects.
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- Importantly, for such interventions to be successful, it needs to be designed with women at the centre and not as an afterthought.
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What are the specifics needed?

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- Training institutes could reduce the bar on entry, allowing for less formally educated women to learn new skills and receive training.
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- Training should be customised to respect specific needs like location, hours of engagement, safety, sanitation and women specific needs.
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- Mobile training modules that can cater to small groups of women in remote areas can be developed.
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- Training institutes and civil society organisations should collaborate with enterprises to help trained women secure employment.
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- Such efforts will enable India’s transition to clean energy to also brighten the prospect of empowering our women and addressing poverty.
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Source: The Hindu

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