Women led Climate Action

Why in news?

Emerging countries need women-led climate action as they are more vulnerable to climate change because of their dependence on natural resource and labour-intensive work.

Why there is a need of women led climate action?

- **Foster SDG-** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has said that gender equality and environmental goals are mutually reinforcing that will accelerate the SDGs achievement.
- **Global challenge-** Its impact is one that has profound consequences for humans and has emerged as one of the biggest global challenges in recent decades.
- **Loss of work hours**- As per International Labour Organization (ILO) study in 2019, around 2.2 % of total working hours worldwide will be lost to high temperatures, a productivity loss equivalent to 80 million full time jobs in 2030.
- **Women at disadvantage**- United Nations highlighted that across genders, women are considered to be highly vulnerable and disproportionately affected by climate change than men.

Why it is felt more in low-income countries?

- Women across the world face severe risks to their health, safety, and quality of life.
- **Dependence-** Women in developing and less developed countries are more vulnerable to climate change because of their dependence on natural resources and labour-intensive work.
- **Poverty-** Women are more likely to live in poverty than men, one of the variables that makes them more susceptible to the effects of climate change.
- **Responsibility-** It is because women from low-income households are more at risk because they are more responsible for food, water, and other homely unpaid work.
- **Regional divide**- Due to the climate crisis, more time and effort are needed to obtain basic necessities.
- Rural women often shoulder the burden of ensuring access to clean water, adequate cooking fuel, and nutritious food for their families.
- **Health risk-** Women may be at increased risk for health and safety because they must travel long distances every day to collect water and fuel.
- **Inadequate rainfall**- *Turkana County* is one of the most arid areas of Kenya.
- Women not only struggle to collect enough water, but when food is scarce, they eat less than men.
- **Climate vulnerable jobs**- Women in low-income countries engage in climate-vulnerable occupations such as farming and other labour-intensive work.

According to the ILO, over 60% of working women in southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are still in agriculture, where they are often underpaid and overworked.

- **Low asset**- Despite being the backbone of the food production system, women own only about 10% of the land used for farming.
- **Climate refugees**- A McAllister (2023) study has highlighted how there could be 1.2 billion climate refugees by 2050.

What are the Gender-specific issues?

Climate change is a "threat multiplier", meaning it escalates social, political and economic tensions in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

- **Climate disasters-** According to a UN study, 80% of those displaced by climate-related disasters are women and girls.
- **Women inequality**- According to estimates, 130 million people could be pushed into poverty by 2050 due to climate change risks, natural disasters, and food inflation.
- **Stereotypes-** Women, especially those from vulnerable communities, face particular difficulties during and after natural disasters as they are more susceptible to prejudice and exploitation.

Nepal Earthquake- In 2015, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) found women were more exposed to trafficking and exploitation.

- Separation from social networks,
- Higher risk of gender-based violence, and
- Decreased access- In employment and education
- Decreased access to health- Sexual and reproductive health care and psychosocial support.

- **Impact on health-**Research indicates that extreme heat increases *incidence of stillbirth*.
- Climate change is increasing the spread of vector-borne illnesses such as malaria, dengue fever, and Zika virus, which are linked to *worse maternal and neonatal outcomes.*
- **Feminisation of agriculture-** Women make up a disproportionately large portion of the agricultural workforce in emerging countries.
- **Extreme weather**- Heat stress affects workers a lot in this sector, especially in South Asia and Africa.
- **Unequal access-** Women engaged in agriculture do not have access to quality inputs and possess low education and technical knowledge.

What lies ahead?

- There is a need for *investments* in women's education, training, and access to resources for increased resilience against vulnerability.
- *Sustainable practices* reduce the negative impacts of climate change on people's living standards.
    - In India, the *Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)* teaches women farmers how to respond to shifting climate patterns to support themselves better financially.
- Women's *participation in climate policy decision-making* at all levels is crucial for effective climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies as well as getting decent employment.

Gender and Climate Change Development Programme is a program in South Asia which aims to increase women's influence in policymaking by providing them with a stronger voice.

References

1. The Hindu- Emerging countries need women led climate action
2. UN Women- Gender Inequality and Climate Change

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