



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** Including more women in science and applied technologies is critical for the advancement of society. Discuss.

15 Mar, 2021 GS Paper 2 Social Justice

### Approach

- Start the answer by mentioning the status of gender equality in India.
- Discuss the status of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) fields.
- Suggest some measures to improve women's participation in STEM fields.
- Conclude Suitably.

### Introduction

Since independence, successive governments in India have taken many steps in bringing gender empowerment. However, various developmental indices like Global Gender Gap Index 2020 where India ranks in 112<sup>th</sup> place, reflect that still, a lot needs to be done in this regard.

One such area of improvement is increasing gender participation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields.

### Body

#### Status of Women in STEM Fields

- About 43% of STEM graduates in India may be women, which is the highest in the world, but women's share in STEM jobs in India is a mere 14%.
- Most of the women STEM graduates in India either pursue another career or do not work at all. Women across the world face the 'leaky pipeline' problem in STEM fields.
  - Women leave the workforce, due to the absence of supportive institutional structures during pregnancy, safety issues in fieldwork and the workplace.
- The STEM field is so perpetuated with gender stereotypes. It has a very strong male-dominated culture. Further, there is a lack of role models for girls and women.
- Not just societal norms but issues related to poor education and healthcare access are responsible for a lesser number of women in these fields.

### Way Forward

- **Leveraging Digital India:** With the launch of Digital India, there has been a dramatic rise in terms of increased access to the internet across the country.
  - Thus, digital India provides an opportunity to impart education in the STEM field to women.
- **Replicating ISRO Model:** The role of women engineers in the launch of the Indian Space Research Organisation's second moon mission, Chandrayaan-2 shows that how social shackles pertaining to women are loosening.

- Thus, there is a need for emulating ISRO's model in STEM fields.
- **Bringing Behavioral Change:** Subdued gender participation emanates from social-economic issues, which can be treated by bringing behavioral change.
- For this, the contributions of women in the STEM sector should be highlighted in textbooks.
- This may motivate the next generation of girls to be leaders in the STEM sector.

## Conclusion

A recent research report by McKinsey said that narrowing the gender gap in STEM can lead to an increase of \$12-28 trillion in the global economy. Thus, India should look at Gender equality as an essential facet of the development perspective.

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