



Women-Led Economic Growth for Viksit Bharat 2047

For Prelims: [Female labor force participation](#), [Gender budgets](#), [Startup India](#), [Namo Drone Didi](#), [MUDRA loans](#)

For Mains: Women's Economic Empowerment and Development, Women's Active Participation in India's Economic Transformation, Key Issues Hindering Women Empowerment in India.

[Source: PIB](#)

Why in News?

India's growth story is shifting, with **women driving economic rise** through higher workforce participation, entrepreneurship, and access to finance. Empowering them is now central to the [vision of Viksit Bharat 2047](#).

How Women are Powering India's Economic Transformation?

- **Workforce Participation:** India's female workforce participation rose from 22% in 2017-18 to 40.3% in 2023-24, while unemployment fell from 5.6% to 3.2%.
 - Rural female employment grew by 96%, and urban by 43%, showing strong gains in opportunities for women.
 - Female graduate employability rose from 42% in 2013 to 47.53% in 2024, while women with postgraduate and above saw Worker Population Ratio (WPR) increase from 34.5% in 2017-18 to 40% in 2023-24.
 - In the past seven years, 1.56 crore women joined the formal workforce, while 16.69 crore women unorganized workers registered on e-Shram, gaining access to government welfare schemes.
- **Women Development to Women - Led Development:** [Gender budgets](#) rose 429% over a decade, from Rs 0.85 lakh crore (2013-14) to Rs 4.49 lakh crore (2025-26), signaling a shift to women-led development.
 - Programs like [Startup India](#) have boosted women's entrepreneurship, with 50% of [Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade \(DPIIT\)](#) startups having at least one woman director. Around two crore women are now **Lakhpati Didis**, supported by initiatives like [Namo Drone Didi](#).
 - **Women-led Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) nearly doubled from 1 crore (2010-11) to 1.92 crore (2023-24) and generating 89 lakh additional jobs for women (FY21-FY23).**
 - This marks a decisive move from development for women to development by women.
 - Financial inclusion schemes are pivotal, with **women receiving 68% of [MUDRA loans](#)** (worth Rs 14.72 lakh crore) and accounting for **44% of [PM SVANidhi](#) beneficiaries among street vendors.**

Why is Women-Led Development Significant?

- **Women as Leaders:** Shifts women from welfare recipients to agents of change.
- **Gender Equality:** Reduces stereotypes and generational inequality, which is crucial as **India ranked 131st out of 148 countries in the [Global Gender Gap Report 2025](#)**.
- **Economic Growth:** Bridging the gender gap in employment could potentially lead to a 30% increase in **India's [Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\)](#)**.
- **Inclusive Development:** Inclusion of **women boosts productivity, innovation, and decision-making**.
 - Empowering women gives them autonomy, access to opportunities, and influence over personal, professional, and societal decisions, driving meaningful economic and social change.

What are the Challenges to Women-Led Development in India?

- **Social and Safety Constraints:** Deep-rooted patriarchy limits decision-making and increases unpaid domestic work.
 - Early marriage, domestic responsibilities, and threats to **personal security** (as India records 51 cases of crime against women every hour). **curtail mobility, career progression**, and active participation in society.
- **Education and Skill Gaps:** Female literacy is **65.4% (2011 census)**, below the global average, restricting opportunities.
- **Underrepresentation in Governance & Leadership:** Women remain **underrepresented in political, corporate, and institutional decision-making**, reducing their influence on policies affecting them.
 - India's women's representation in the **Parliament remains well below the global average of 25%**.
- **Digital and Technological Exclusion:** Limited access to technology, internet, and digital literacy prevents women from participating fully in the modern economy.
- **Workforce Participation Barriers:** Women face **unequal pay, glass ceiling effects, occupational segregation, safety at workplace** and limited representation in formal and high-skilled sectors.

What Measures can India Adopt to Further Mainstream Women in Economic Growth?

- **Childcare & Care Economy:** Establish a **National Crèche Grid**, workplace crèches, professionalise care workers, and extend paid maternity leave to informal sectors to enable workforce retention.
- **Infrastructure & Digital Inclusion:** Mandate **gender-responsive budgeting** in sanitation, transport, water, housing. Embed **Digital Saksharta** and **PMGDISHA** into national infrastructure and rural internet projects to boost women's digital empowerment.
- **Representation & Governance:** Enforce gender quotas in boards, panchayats, MSME councils; build capacity in **gender budgeting**; link incentives to women's inclusion.
- **Decentralised Gender Planning:** Institutionalize **Gender Action Plans at the Gram Panchayat, block, and district levels**, incorporating input from Mahila Sabhas and SHG networks. Ensure these plans are co-created with women and integrated into annual development planning and financing.
- **Workplace Safety and Empowering Women's Mobility:** Create **women-friendly infrastructure with accessible spaces** and establish **Internal Complaint Committees (ICCs)** under the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013** to address harassment.
 - Foster a zero-tolerance culture and address cultural and structural violence through education, empowerment, and policy reforms for an equitable and safe environment.

Conclusion

Women are becoming the **backbone of India's economy**, driving change from rural enterprises to corporate leadership, as Jawaharlal Nehru once said, **"The status of a nation can be judged by the condition of its women,"** India is progressing toward **Viksit Bharat 2047, embodying Nari Shakti.**

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Critically examine the role of women-led enterprises and workforce participation in achieving Viksit Bharat 2047.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Mains

Q.1 "Empowering women is the key to control population growth". Discuss. (2019)

Q.2 Discuss the positive and negative effects of globalization on women in India? (2015)

Q.3 Male membership needs to be encouraged in order to make women's organizations free from gender bias. Comment. (2013)

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