



UN Women & the Global Gender Agenda

For Prelims: [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), [UN Women](#), [Food Insecurity](#), [Poverty](#), [UN General Assembly](#), [UN Security Council](#), [NFHS-5, 2019-21](#), [Equal Pay for Equal Work](#), [Paid Maternity Leave](#).

For Mains: Status of women rights, Challenges associated with women empowerment and way forward.

[Source: DTE](#)

Why in News?

On the eve of the **30th anniversary of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#)**, the **25th year of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)**, and its own **15th anniversary**, [UN Women](#) warned that **women's rights are facing a "historic and precarious moment"** due to **rising violence, deepening poverty, and increasing digital and political exclusion**.

What are the Key Issues Faced by Women as per UN Women?

- **Political Backlash & Lack of Representation:** In **2024**, nearly **1 in 4 countries** reported a **backlash against women's rights**, with women still holding only **64% of the legal rights** men have, and **51% of countries** restricting women from doing the **same jobs as men**.
 - Additionally, nearly **75% of lawmakers** are men, and only **4% of official development assistance** in **2021-2022** focused on **gender equality**.
- **Disproportionate Impact of Violence:** In **2023**, **85,000 women and girls** were **intentionally killed**, with **one killed every 10 minutes** by a **partner or close relative**.
 - Between **2020 and 2023**, **8 in 10 peace talks** and **7 in 10 mediation efforts** included **no women**, reflecting their continued exclusion from peace processes.
- **Economic Inequality:** Globally, **women earn 20% less** than men for **work of equal value** and perform **2.5 times more unpaid care work** than men.
- **Food and Education Insecurity:** **47.8 million more women than men** face **moderate/severe food insecurity**, despite women making up the majority of **small-scale farmers** who produce **1/3 of the world's food**.
 - **119 million girls** remain **out of school**, and **39% of young women** don't complete **upper secondary education**.
- **Climate Vulnerability:** By **2050**, [climate change](#) could drive **158 million more women and girls** into **extreme poverty**, even as **women make up only 28% of environment ministers** worldwide.
- **Poor Health Access:** Nearly **800 women die every day** from **preventable pregnancy-related causes**.

Challenges to Women's Empowerment in India

- **Low Female Labour Force Participation (FLFPR):** India's FLFPR rose from **23.3% (2017-18)** to **41.7% (2023-24)** but remains below the **global average (50%)** and **men's rate (77.2%)**, limited by **societal norms**, **care responsibilities**, and lack of **flexible jobs**.
- **Domestic Burden:** Women spend **236 minutes/day** on **unpaid domestic work** vs **24 minutes by men**, restricting access to **education**, **skills**, and **formal employment**.
- **Gender Pay Gap:** Women earn **29.4% less in urban** and **51.3% less in rural areas** than men.
 - **81% work in the informal sector**, lacking **job security** and **benefits**.
- **Digital Divide:** Only **54% of women** own a **mobile phone** vs **82% of men**, and just **33%** have used the **internet** vs **57% of men** (NFHS-5), limiting access to **education**, **jobs**, and **digital finance**.
- **Gender-Based Violence:** India reported **4.4 lakh crimes against women** in **2022**, and **29.3% of married women (18-49)** faced **spousal violence** ([NFHS-5, 2019-21](#)).

What is the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA)?

- **About:** The **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**, adopted during the **4th World Conference on Women** in Beijing, China, serves as a **landmark global framework for advancing the rights of women and girls**.
 - It outlines strategic objectives focused on **legal protection**, **access to essential services**, **youth engagement**, and **driving social transformation**.
 - **India is a signatory to BPfA.**
- **Areas for Action:** The declaration highlighted **12 critical areas requiring urgent attention** to achieve gender equality and outlined strategies to ensure **equal opportunities for everyone**. Key focus areas include:

Key Areas for Women's Advancement



- **Beijing+30 Action Agenda:** It marks the **30th anniversary (1995-2025)** of the BPfA to **review and appraise** its implementation. It focuses on **six key areas**:

Empowering Women for a Better Future



UN Women

- **Establishment & Mandate:** **UN Women**, established by the [UN General Assembly](#) in **July 2010**, is the **United Nations entity** dedicated to **gender equality** and the **empowerment of women**. Created as part of the **UN reform agenda**, it merged four pre-existing bodies:
 - Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW)
 - International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)
 - Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI)
 - United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).
- **Core Mission:**
 - **Governance & Leadership:** Ensuring **women participate equally** in **decision-making**.
 - **Economic Empowerment:** Securing **equal pay, decent work, and financial independence** for women.
 - **Ending Violence Against Women:** Eliminating all forms of **gender-based violence**.
 - **Peace & Humanitarian Action:** Increasing **women's role** in **conflict resolution, disaster response, and peacebuilding**.

UN Security Council Resolution on Women and Peace and Security (2000)

- **About:** Adopted **unanimously** on **31st October 2000**, the **Resolution** is a **landmark legal framework** that acknowledges the **disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls** and calls for their **protection from gender-based violence**, including **sexual violence**.
- **Key Pillars of Resolution:** It emphasizes **women's participation** in peacebuilding, **protection** from gender-based violence, **gender-sensitive conflict prevention**, and addressing the **specific needs of women and girls** in **relief and recovery efforts**.

What Solutions has UN Women Proposed to Address the Challenges Faced by Women?

- **Strengthen Commitment and Leadership:** Urges **renewed political will, gender-responsive systems**, elimination of **discriminatory laws**, and promotion of **women's leadership**, including in **climate action**.
- **Gender-Inclusive Peacebuilding:** Calls for greater **investment in conflict prevention, women's participation** in peace processes, and improved **reproductive healthcare**, especially in **conflict zones**.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Advocates for **equal pay for equal work**, **anti-discrimination laws**, and investment in **care infrastructure** to ease the **unpaid care burden** and generate **300 million jobs by 2035**.
- **Eradicate Poverty and Food Insecurity:** Stresses **social protection** (cash assistance, maternity leave, pensions) and policies to close **gender gaps in agriculture and wages**.
- **Expand Access to Education & Technology:** Recommends lowering **education costs**, offering **cash incentives**, ensuring **safe learning environments, digital access**, and **online safety**, backed by increased **public-private funding** for gender equality.

Conclusion

Despite global commitments like the **Beijing Declaration** and **UNSC Resolution 1325**, women face rising **backlash, violence**, and **exclusion**. To achieve **gender equality**, governments must enforce **legal reforms, economic empowerment, inclusive peacebuilding**, and **climate justice**. Stronger **political will, funding**, and **women's leadership** are crucial to **reversing regression** and ensuring **progress**.

Drishti Mains Question:

Examine the barriers to women's economic participation in India. How can policy interventions address these challenges?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Which of the following gives 'Global Gender Gap Index' ranking to the countries of the world? (2017)

- (a) World Economic Forum
- (b) UN Human Rights Council
- (c) UN Women
- (d) World Health Organization

Ans: (a)

Mains

Q. Distinguish between 'care economy' and 'monetized economy'. How can the care economy be brought into a monetized economy through women empowerment? (2023)

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

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

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

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