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1. Women's labour force participation has to be increased to unleash the potential of women in the country. Examine.

According to a recent Gender Gap report released by the World Bank, India ranks No. 136 amongst 140 countries with abysmal levels of female work force participation. According to data published by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), the female labour force participation rate (LFPR) is only 9.7% compared to 67.4% in the case of men. This sad fact does not enable India reap the benefits of its rich demographic dividend.

~~Here~~ To understand this phenomenon, it is pertinent to look into major reasons for low female ~~LFPR~~ LFPR. These are a few:

- Inferior Work conditions - lack of adequate safety mechanisms (prevention of sexual/physical harassment), ~~and~~ lack of efficient transport and protection against ^{violence}.
- Balancing Unpaid Household Labour - in Indian society women are expected to conform to traditional roles + care for the household whilst managing work. This leads to undue stress + pressure.
- Increased tertiary education enrollment rates but lack of employability skills.
- ~~Reasons~~ → Demand-supply Gap - the lack of employment opportunities has driven many to stay at home. In fact the overall all-India LFPR has been stagnant over the past few years (between 2020 + 2021 → it grew only a mere 3% according to PLFS data).

Solutions

- Flexible Work Options - The PM in a recent address mentioned the necessity to incorporate flexible work hours, so that women are enabled to pursue their careers. The Work from Home (WFH) mode, popularized by the pandemic is

being seen as a greater option for women to enter and sustain jobs. ~~as~~

→ Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Support Schemes -

Government intervention in this regard will enable more women, especially those from rural backgrounds develop their own businesses and enterprises. Vocational training will enable them to support themselves and their family. e.g. MUDRA scheme, Stree Shakti schemes are two existing examples.

→ Job Creation → government action in this regard will also be helpful to women who lack opportunities especially in the current economic climate. Existing examples include MGNREGA which has more female beneficiaries than male. In the corporate sector, incentives for companies

→ ~~to~~ to employ more female staff will pay off well.

An IMF blog noted that increasing gender diversity in the labour force will ultimately pay off. It also noted that the total GDP can be increased by an average of 35%.

In conclusion, India has rich human resources, especially in its female population whose potential should not be laid waste. Proper measures will not only empower our women but also take our country to greater heights.