



## Why gender justice is crucial for achieving India's climate targets?

Paper:II, III

**Topic: Indian economy, Gender justice, SDG, Climate Change Mitigation, Climate Targets.**

*Relevance and use of the article in UPSC prelims and mains examination: Dear aspirants, Climate change issues combined with the social agenda features good material for UPSC to ask questions. Previously questions were being asked from these combined issues in 2014 and 2015. Now in this article India, European Union, and other major economies ratifying the Paris climate change agreement, the agreement is set to come into force. However, if India, which is one of the world's largest greenhouse emitters, truly wants to meet the targets of the agreement, it will have to incorporate radical and immediate changes in the energy sector.*

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### Introduction:

- **Climate Targets For India:**
- At present, India accounts for about 4.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The country is now committed to generating forty percent of its electricity from non-fossil sources by 2030, which includes 175 GW renewable energy capacity by 2022.
- Before the Paris Climate agreement, India also ratified the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Ending poverty in all forms, hunger and food insecurity remain on top of India's national priorities. This presents India with the dual challenges of cutting its reliance on coal while reducing poverty drastically.

### Energy needs in India:

- Research has long held that access to energy is imperative for poverty alleviation, and improving livelihood opportunities in developing countries. It is an enabler in addition to being a human right. For India, with an estimated thirty three percent of the world's poorest 1.2 billion people, reducing energy poverty is likely to remain the number one concern. Essentially, this also means that India will have to be the first country to make an economic transition without fossil fuels.
- While the link between energy access and poverty is well recognised, India's energy policies have remained gender-blind. However, now they must also acknowledge that providing access to clean, affordable energy is an auxiliary for women's empowerment — and that is equally important for inclusive sustainable development and climate mitigation.

### Interlinkages between energy, gender, and poverty.

- The interlinkages between energy, gender, and poverty are crucial because women and girls make up a disproportionate number of the world's poor; and women are also predominantly responsible for fulfilling the energy needs of the household.
- Research suggests that men and women play distinctly gendered roles with varying degrees of involvement in the production, distribution, and utilisation of energy in households and the market.
- This tends to leave women time-poor and disproportionately exposed to the health risks associated with some forms of energy production. For instance, when traditional cooking stoves cause indoor air pollution in insufficiently ventilated kitchens. Further, climatic stresses on land and water resources is increasing the burden on many women, forcing them to travel even longer distances — exacerbating time poverty.



### **Why this linkage is Important.**

- The interlinkages between energy, gender, and poverty are crucial because women and girls make up a disproportionate number of the world's poor..
- Still, India's energy development planning does not sufficiently address the gender dimensions in access, management, and control of energy sources. This has been attributed to lack of awareness, traditional treatment of gender inequality as an isolated concern, and uncertainties over how to integrate gender in the technically-driven energy sector.

### **Technology Infusion:**

- Several technology-driven initiatives have been developed in India to provide renewable, efficient energy options by including women in the design, production, and distribution processes.
- It has been observed that when new energy options reduce the time and effort put by women, and encourage training, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities — the energy transition is accompanied by a larger social transition.
- In this way, the integration of gender and energy not only helps reduce energy poverty, but also helps empower women economically while reducing time poverty.

### **Some extra concerns:**

- India has demonstrated the ambition and capacity to reach an extremely bold renewable energy target.
- The emerging renewable energy sector in India is likely to present a massive job creation opportunity. It is in these growing solar energy and wind energy sectors that women's equal participation must be accommodated and institutionalised.
- Existing research on the energy-gender-poverty nexus in the country has focused on women mostly as end users of solar and biomass technologies.
- However, if India really has a shot at achieving the climate targets and meeting the energy requirements for growth, women must be equipped with skills to join the renewable energy market as entrepreneurs, facilitators, designers, and innovators.
- women's access to technology and employment in this sector have been restricted due to societal norms and lack of purchasing power; and their employment can only yield maximum benefit when accompanied by more decision-making powers, gender-sensitive policies, infrastructure, and accessible public services.
- Lastly, it is clear that lack of monetary resources may prove to be a major impediment to India achieving its climate targets and the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, climate change financing that is targeted at the energy sector must always consider the broader, intermeshed developmental goals of gender equality, poverty eradication and sustainable development.

### **Conclusion:**

- It has been stated that for climate policies to be truly just and transformational, they have to be people-centric. So far, international processes have done little to replace the existing gender hierarchies. Perhaps it is time to move beyond the traditional narrative of climate justice and view climate change mitigation and adaptation as crucial gender issues. Moving forward from Paris, while India aims to put people first in climate change action, it must ensure that it's women are not left behind.



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Link: [www.oxfam.ca/sites/default/files/imce/gender-justice-why-equality-matters.pdf](http://www.oxfam.ca/sites/default/files/imce/gender-justice-why-equality-matters.pdf)

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