



# CURRENT AFFAIRS



Argasia Education PVT. Ltd. (GST NO.-09AAPCAI478E1ZH)  
Address: Basement C59 Noida, opposite to Priyagold Building gate, Sector 02,  
Pocket I, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, 201301, CONTACT NO:-8448440231

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## WOMEN AND CLIMATE CHANGE

*This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the Topic details "Women and Climate Change". The Topic "Women and Climate Change" has relevance in the Environment section of the UPSC CSE exam.*

### **For Mains:**

*GS 3: Environment*

*Impact of Climate Change on Women?*

*Gender-Specific Challenges Women Encounter During Natural Disasters?*

*Path Forward to Foster Women-Led Climate Action?*

### **Why in the news:**

In recent years, climate change has manifested its impact worldwide, with the most pronounced effects observed in low-income and emerging countries. These regions are particularly susceptible to the detrimental consequences of climate change, and within them, women face heightened vulnerability due to their reliance on natural resources and labour-intensive occupations.

### **Climate Change Impact**

#### **Frequent Floods and Droughts**

- **Escalating Flooding Events:** Flooding is on the rise due to climate change, with a notable increase in the frequency and intensity of abnormally heavy precipitation events since the early 20th century.
- **Increasing Drought Incidents:** Drought conditions are becoming more common, posing significant challenges.

#### **Food Security**

- **Climate's Influence on Food Supply:** The production of food is highly dependent on climate and weather conditions, presenting challenges for farmers and researchers.
- **Challenges to Food Security:** Coping with higher temperatures, drought, water stress, diseases, and extreme weather events presents formidable obstacles to food security.

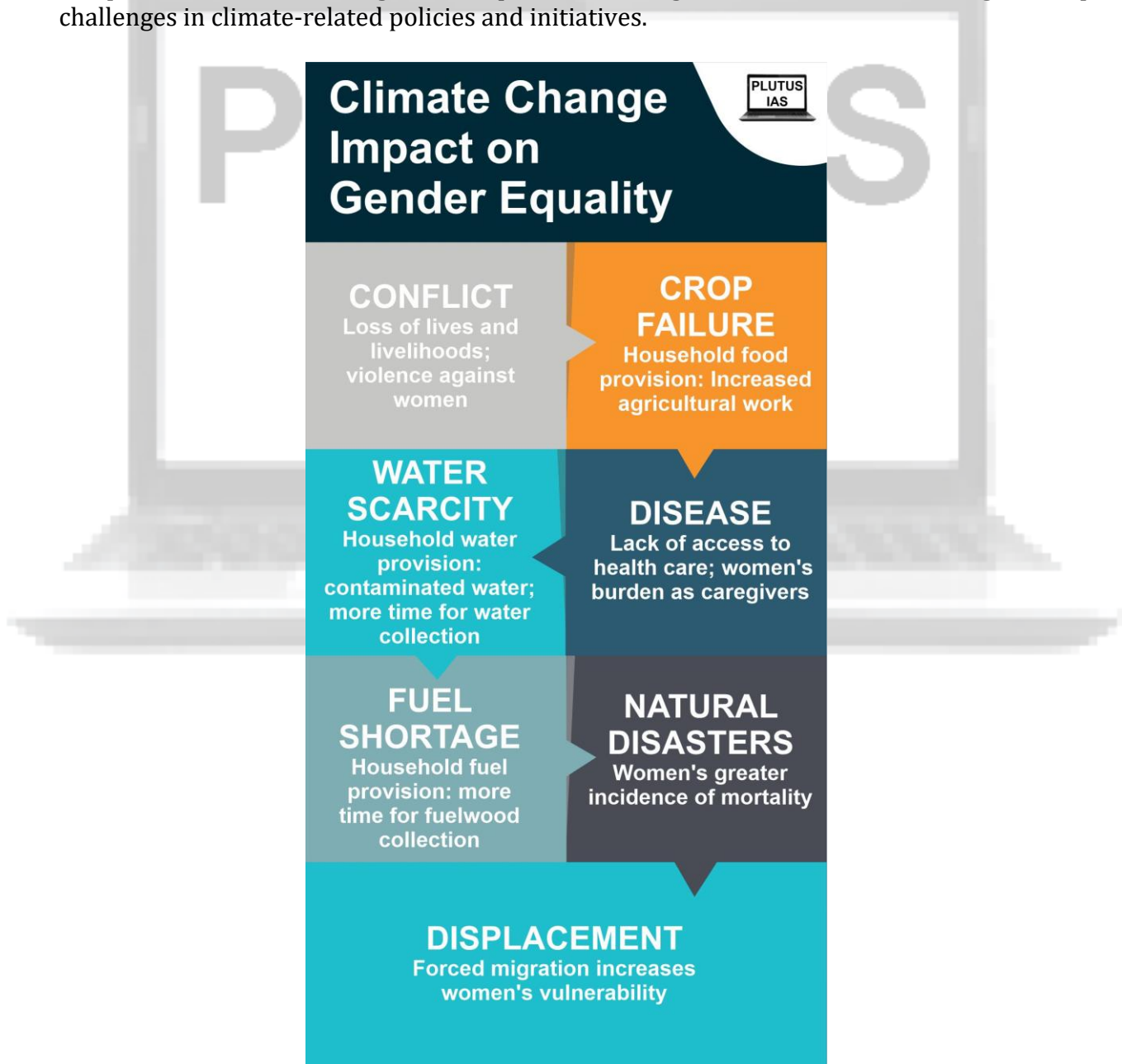
#### **Human Health**

- **Current Effects on Human Health:** Climate change is already impacting human health, with changes in weather and climate patterns putting lives at risk.

- **Health Risks:** Heat is one of the deadliest weather phenomena, and dry conditions lead to more wildfires, which bring various health risks. Increased flooding can also lead to the spread of waterborne diseases, injuries, and chemical hazards.

### Impact of Climate Change on Women

- **Gendered Consequences:** The effects of the climate crisis are not uniform and disproportionately affect women globally, placing their health, safety, and overall well-being at significant risk.
- **Heightened Vulnerability:** Women and girls, in particular, bear the brunt of climate change, exacerbating pre-existing gender inequalities and introducing distinct challenges to their livelihoods, health, and safety.
- **UN Recognition (2009):** In 2009, the United Nations underscored the heightened vulnerability of women and their disproportionate susceptibility to the adverse impacts of climate change compared to men. This recognition emphasizes the urgent need to address these gender-specific challenges in climate-related policies and initiatives.



### **Vulnerability Due to Labor-Intensive Work:**

- Women in low-income and developing countries, particularly impoverished regions, rely heavily on natural resources and engage in labor-intensive occupations for their livelihoods.
- Many women, especially in South Asian and sub-Saharan African nations, are involved in climate-vulnerable sectors like farming.

### **Higher Likelihood of Living in Poverty:**

- Women are more likely to live in poverty than men, and this socioeconomic disparity is just one of several factors that render them more susceptible to the impacts of climate change.

### **Increased Responsibility:**

- Women from low-income households assume greater responsibility for procuring food, water, and other essential unpaid domestic work.
- The climate crisis exacerbates this by requiring more time and effort to access necessities. Rural women are often responsible for ensuring their families have access to clean water, adequate cooking fuel, and nutritious food, which often necessitates long daily journeys.

### **Underpaid and Overworked:**

- A significant proportion of working women in southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, over 60%, are employed in agriculture, where they frequently face being underpaid and overworked.
- Despite being the backbone of the food production system, women own only a small fraction of the land used for farming.

### **Lack of Education and Technical Knowledge:**

- Women constitute a substantial portion of the agricultural workforce in emerging countries, yet they often lack access to quality inputs and possess limited education and technical knowledge.
- Climate change adversely affects agricultural productivity, particularly in regions like South Asia and Africa, where heat stress is a significant concern. Consequently, women engaged in agriculture are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

## **Gender-Specific Challenges Women Encounter During Natural Disasters**

### **Increased Displacement of Women and Girls:**

- Women, especially those from vulnerable communities, confront unique challenges after natural disasters.
- According to a UN study, a significant majority (80%) of those displaced by climate-related disasters are women and girls, leading to increased displacement and disruption of their lives.

### **Heightened Vulnerability to Exploitation:**

- Displaced women are particularly susceptible to discrimination and exploitation. For instance, following the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, the UNFPA observed that women were more exposed to trafficking and exploitation, illustrating the increased risks they face during and after disasters.

In addition to the above-mentioned challenges, there are several other gender-specific issues that women in low-income countries contend with during natural disasters, including:

- **Separation from Social Networks:** Disasters can result in the separation of women from their social support networks, making them more isolated and less resilient in the face of adversity.
- **Higher Risk of Gender-Based Violence:** Women face a greater risk of experiencing gender-based violence in the chaotic aftermath of natural disasters, further compromising their safety and well-being.

- **Reduced Access to Employment, Education, and Essential Health Services:** Disasters disrupt access to employment and education, limiting economic opportunities for women. Additionally, access to vital health services, such as sexual and reproductive healthcare and psychosocial support, may decrease, adversely affecting their overall health and welfare during a crisis.

### **Path Forward to Foster Women-Led Climate Action:**

#### **Investment in Women's Education and Training:**

- Investing in their education, training, and access to resources is imperative to empower women in climate action. Equipping women with knowledge and skills in sustainable agriculture, water management, and clean energy generation can mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on livelihoods.
- Initiatives like the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India, which educates women farmers on adapting to shifting climate patterns, exemplify the positive impact of such investments.

#### **Gender Parity in Policy Decision Making:**

- Ensuring women's active participation in climate policy decision-making processes at all levels is critical to effective climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- Given that women are disproportionately affected by climate change achieving gender parity in decision-making bodies is essential.
- Initiatives like the Gender and Climate Change Development Programme in South Asia, aimed at amplifying women's voices in policymaking, provide a model for enhancing gender diversity in leadership roles.

**SOURCE:**

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/emerging-countries-need-women-led-climate-action/article67270844.ece>

#### **Q.1 Consider the following statements regarding the impact of climate change on women:**

1. Women in low-income countries are more vulnerable to climate change due to their dependence on natural resources and labour-intensive work.
2. Women in urban areas are more vulnerable to climate change than those in rural areas.

#### **Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**ANSWER: A**

**Q.2 Discuss the gender-specific challenges that women in low-income countries face in the context of climate change. How can policies and initiatives be designed to empower women as key actors in climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies?**

**Q.3 Write an essay: "Women Empowerment, a key to Climate Resilience".**

**Rishabh**

# LAÏCITÉ AND FRENCH SECULARISM

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Laïcité and French Secularism". The topic "Laïcité and French Secularism" has relevance in the "Polity and Governance" section of the UPSC CSE exam.

## **For Prelims:**

What is Laïcité?

## **For Mains:**

GS2: Polity and Governance

Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries

## **Why in the news?**

The French government recently banned wearing the abaya in state-run schools, citing violations of the Laïcité principle, the French Concept of Secularism.

## **Laïcité: French Concept of secularism**

- Coined in the 19th century, **Laïcité denotes the formal separation of the State and Church.**
- It advocates **removing religious values from the public sphere and replacing them with secular values like liberty, equality, and fraternity.**
- The core objective is to **foster tolerance and assimilation**, confining religion to the private sphere.
- The state plays a crucial role in upholding Laïcité in governance and public affairs.

## **Historical Roots of Laïcité**

- Laïcité emerged following the **French Revolution in 1789.**
- It took concrete shape through **The Law of 1905**, establishing state-run secular schools during the Third Republic.
- The law guarantees freedom of conscience and worship unless it conflicts with public order.
- Although publicly funded Catholic schools exist in France, but most students attend free, secular public schools.

## **Demographic Shifts and Challenges**

- Due to France's homogeneity, Laïcité faced limited issues during most of the 20th century.
- In the 1950s and 1960s, decolonisation in North Africa led to an influx of immigrants, mainly from Muslim countries. These demographic changes resulted in occasional tensions.
- Over the years, global and domestic events, such as 9/11, the rise of anti-immigration parties like the National Front, and attacks like Charlie Hebdo and Nice, increased anti-Muslim sentiments.
- The **Stasi Commission's** recommendation led to a 2004 law **banning "ostentatious" religious symbols in public spaces.**
- In 2011, **face-covering veils were prohibited.** These decisions shifted the focus towards Muslim practices.
- In 2020, following a teacher's beheading, **homeschooling was banned for children over three years old**, and Muslim leaders were asked to agree to a "charter of republic values."
- Until now, the **Abayas remained a grey area**, as they were considered fashionable garments tied to Arab culture.

## COMPARING INDIAN AND FRENCH SECULARISM



Aspect	Indian Secularism	French Secularism
<b>Definition of Secularism</b>	Respects all religions, promoting harmony and equality	Religion strictly separated from the public sphere
<b>Religious Symbols</b>	Allows religious attire and symbols in public spaces	Bans certain religious symbols in public institutions
<b>State Funding for Religion</b>	Provides financial support to all religious institutions	Does not fund or support any religious practices
<b>Approach to Religious Conflicts</b>	Resolves conflicts through dialogue and legal means	Often leads to legal restrictions and bans on religious practices
<b>Cultural and Religious Diversity</b>	Embraces and celebrates cultural and religious diversity	Emphasises assimilation and faces challenges with multiculturalism

### Way Forward:

- Promote education about Secularism to emphasise tolerance and equality.
- Ensure Secularism accommodates diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.
- Encourage respectful dialogue among different groups.
- Provide clear guidelines to prevent misuse of secularism laws.
- Uphold individual rights while maintaining a secular public sphere.
- Implement Secularism without discrimination against any group.
- Adapt policies for a multicultural population.
- Encourage balanced public discourse on secularism issues.
- Regularly assess and adjust secularism policies to align with evolving societal values and needs.

By embracing these principles, societies can foster Secularism that respects individual freedoms, promotes social harmony, and accommodates the rich diversity of beliefs and cultures.

Sources:

[Understanding Laïcité, the French principle of Secularism – The Hindu](#)

### Q1. With reference to Laïcité, consider the following statements:

1. Laïcité, an American Principle of Secularism, denotes a strict separation of the State and Church.
2. The Concept of laïcité, or Secularism, arose after the American Revolution 1776.
3. It guarantees freedom of thought and religion unless it disrupts public order.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only

(d) None

**Answer: (c)**

**Q2. Consider the following:**

1. Indian Secularism respects all religions, promoting harmony and equality.
2. French Secularism embraces and celebrates cultural and religious diversity.
3. Indian Secularism does not fund or support any religious practices.

**How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?**

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

**Answer: (a)**

**Q3. Discuss the Concept of Laïcité in France and its implications on religious freedom and cultural diversity. Compare and contrast the principles of Secularism in India and France.**

**Gaurav Nikumbh**

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