

Protecting Women's Livelihoods in Times of Pandemic: Temporary Basic Income and the Road to Gender Equality

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In News: Recently, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its latest report named “Protecting Women’s Livelihoods in Times of Pandemic: Temporary Basic Income and the Road to Gender Equality” has proposed a Temporary Basic Income (TBI) for poor women in developing countries.

Background

- Women face persistent structural challenges to decent jobs and economic independence. Now their livelihoods are even more vulnerable because of the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- This vulnerability is due in part to a system of gender inequality that imposes unpaid care and domestic work on women through socially constructed gender norms, and that deprives women of effective universal protection systems.

How can we cushion the adverse effects during the COVID-19 crisis while paving the way for structural transformation?

- This policy brief, part of UNDP’s Development Future Series, examines the most at-risk elements of women’s income-generation capacity, presents the possibilities and estimated costs of a temporary basic income (TBI) for women’s economic security across the developing world, and discusses options for long-term commitments

of economic protection and gender equality.

Important Points

- On an average, women spend 2.4 more hours per day than men on unpaid care and domestic work. Among people who participate in the paid economy, women spend an average of four hours more per day than men on paid and unpaid work combined.
- Beyond complex gendered norms, some of the economic vulnerability imposed on women also comes from policy and political decisions that have persistently deprived them of compensation in the form of equal pay, paid maternity leave, universal health, unemployment and care benefits.
- Only one in ten countries and territories, however, have policies addressing women's economic security needs, according to the Covid-19 Global Gender Response Tracker. Covid-19 Global Gender Response Tracker is an initiative of UNDP and UN Women which shows that social protection and jobs response to the pandemic has largely overlooked women's needs.

Major Proposals

Reform Labour Market

- Response include anti-discrimination laws and affirmative action initiatives.
 - Horizontal segregation can be broadly defined as the concentration of men and women in different kinds of jobs.
 - Vertical segregation denotes the situation whereby opportunities for career progression for a particular gender within a company or sector are limited.

Temporary Basic Income

- A monthly investment of 0.07-0.31% of a developing countries' Gross Domestic Product (GDP) could provide reliable financial security to 613 million working-aged women living in poverty.
- The benefits of such a meaningful investment could not only help women and their families absorb the shock of the pandemic, but also empower women to make independent decisions about money, livelihoods and life choices.

Policies Favouring Women

- A set of policies should be aimed at recognising the needs of all workers, men and women, to reconcile their household obligations with paid work and allow for a more even distribution of care and domestic work by institutionally acknowledging it as a shared responsibility.