

# STRUCTURAL DISCRIMINATION HAS HELD WOMEN BACK. INDIA MUST ADDRESS IT - EDITORIALS - HINDUSTAN TIMES

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Issues Related to Poverty, Inclusion, Employment & Sustainable Development

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Equality at the workplace is a distant dream for women, with a World Economic Forum (WEF) report saying that the gap will be closed only by 2276, a good two centuries from now. While demands for equality at the workplace have become more vocal, the gap is actually growing despite women doing well in politics, health and education.

While the Nordic countries, as always, have been successful in closing the gap faster, India's rank has slipped from 108th to 112th over the last year. Women's participation in the workforce is just 28% in India. Had there been gender equality, India would have added \$700 billion to the GDP, according to a McKinsey Global Institute study. Many things keep Indian women out of the workplace, from inherent patriarchy, safety concerns, prevalent stereotypes and the difficulty in gaining a foothold in male-dominated jobs. They are not given equal opportunities in education; they are often the primary caregivers for children and the elderly at home; they have far less mobility than men; and there is a serious issue of safety in public places.

India must address this. This will require a comprehensive approach, and include measures such as eliminating harassment and discrimination at the workplace; making hours more flexible; equipping women with skills in fields like technology; pushing the private sector to create a level playing field in the workplace; and making it easier for women to access finances for self-employment. While cultural norms are changing and gender equality is widely accepted in principle, there is a long way to go in translating it into practice. The alarming figures on parity at workplace must serve as a wake-up call that the issue of equality needs a far more concerted push.

**END**

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