



Sanskriti IAS



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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

7th Mar 2026

TOPICS:-

- 1. Rights, justice, action for India's women farmers**
(GS Paper I - Society)
- 2. Policy must catch up with breast cancer burden**
(GS Paper I - Society)
- 3. Recognising invisible labour of care is a national priority**
(GS Paper I - Society)

DELHI CENTRE:
636, Mukherjee Nagar
New Delhi-110009

PRAYAGRAJ CENTRE:
1/1/8A, Stanley Rd,
Maharana Pratap Chauraha,
Civil Lines, Prayagraj, UP - 211002

9555-124-124
sanskritiias.com

1. RIGHTS, JUSTICE, ACTION FOR INDIA'S WOMEN FARMERS

(GS Paper I - Society)

This editorial 'Rights, justice, action for India's women farmers' was published in **The Hindu** on 7th Mar 2026, highlights how **women farmers remain excluded** from legal recognition, food entitlements and productive resources despite carrying a **growing share** of agricultural responsibility.

Legal recognition without real ownership

- **Equal inheritance rights** for daughters have not produced matching gains on the ground, as land and property in most rural households remain registered in men's names.
- **Social norms**, patrilineal inheritance practices, low legal awareness and administrative hurdles keep women's names off land records.
- Women who manage farm operations and negotiate with dealers and labourers often still lack the **legal standing** that land titles confer.
- Without formal recognition as farmers, women face systematic barriers in accessing **institutional credit**, crop insurance, irrigation schemes, extension services and climate-resilient technologies.

Feminisation of agriculture without security

- Male migration has accelerated the **feminisation of agriculture**, with women taking on cultivation, risk management and household food provisioning.
- In practice, expanded roles have not brought matching support, because heavy workloads, poor access to **drudgery-reducing technologies** and weak care systems intensify pressure on women.
- Resource-poor women, especially during peak agricultural seasons, face severe health stress, **micronutrient deficiency** and persistent anaemia.
- The result is a stark nutritional contradiction: women who help feed the nation often cannot secure a **diverse diet** for themselves and their children.

Food security architecture and delivery gaps

- India has built a significant right-to-food framework anchored in the **National Food Security Act**, with subsidised cereals, supplementary nutrition and maternal entitlements.

- Several States have also added local foods, millets and **fortified staples**, yet gains in women's nutrition remain uneven.
- Public Distribution System transfers remain largely **cereal-centric**, with inadequate integration of pulses, millets and other nutrient-dense foods.
- Frontline overload, weak programme literacy and **digital exclusion** limit women's ability to fully claim and control benefits.
- Many women farmers therefore remain only partial beneficiaries of a system meant to secure their **right to food**.

Need for gender-transformative reform

- Bridging the gap between law and lived reality requires **gender-transformative approaches** that address structural inequalities, not piecemeal welfare design.
- Women's visibility in **law, data and policy** must improve through granular, gender-disaggregated records.
- Agricultural policy should adopt a broader definition of **farmer**, delinking identity from land ownership and recognising the activities women actually perform.
- Secure rights over land, water, credit and other productive resources are essential to strengthen women's agency in agri-food systems.

Land, nutrition and agency as the core agenda

- Stronger implementation of **equal inheritance**, joint spousal titles, incentives for registration in women's names and gender-sensitive revenue processes is necessary.
- Women's participation in the management of **common lands** and water resources, along with collective platforms, can enhance bargaining power.
- Public procurement and farm support should promote pulses, fruits and vegetables grown by small and **women farmers**, and distribute them through public channels, Anganwadis and school meals.
- Community-led models such as kitchen gardens, women's seed banks and local food planning can reinforce **nutrition-sensitive agriculture**.
- Better access to technologies and extension services can reduce drudgery, improve decision-making and enable women to drive **climate-resilient** and biodiversity-rich farming.

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Why women farmers matter for agrarian resilience

- **Strengthen household food security:** Women farmers sustain **food security**, as they manage crops and India's **PDS-linked** household consumption together.
- **Improve nutritional outcomes:** Greater support to **women cultivators** can improve diets, as **NFHS-5** still records 57% anaemia among women aged 15-49.
- **Boost climate resilience:** Women's role in **seed selection** and mixed farming supports adaptation, as smallholder agriculture remains central to climate-risk management.
- **Support rural livelihoods:** Recognising **women farmers** strengthens incomes, as women operated 11.72% of India's total operated agricultural area in **Agriculture Census 2015-16**.
- **Reduce hidden agrarian distress:** Better access to **credit and insurance** can lower vulnerability, as women cultivators often work without matching ownership or formal support.
- **Promote sustainable farming:** Women often sustain **low-input farming**, as SHG-led **community nutrition gardens** in Madhya Pradesh show links between cultivation and nutrition.
- **Advance inclusive development:** Securing rights for **women farmers** deepens equity and productivity, as women's land ownership and decision-making still remain uneven in **NFHS-5**.

2. POLICY MUST CATCH UP WITH BREAST CANCER BURDEN

(GS Paper I - Society)

This editorial 'Policy must catch up with breast cancer burden' was published in **The Indian Express** on 7th Mar 2026, highlights how India's rising **breast cancer burden** is outpacing screening, diagnosis and treatment capacity.

Rising disease burden

- A **Lancet Oncology** analysis using **Global Burden of Disease** data shows breast cancer incidence in India has more than doubled over three decades.

- It is now the most commonly diagnosed **cancer** among Indian women.
- Age-standardised incidence rose from **13 per 1 lakh** women in 1990 to **29.4 per 1 lakh** in 2023.
- Mortality also increased sharply from **8.9 to 15.5 per 1 lakh**, a **74% increase**, signalling a mounting public health challenge.

Why the burden is rising

- Advances in surgery and therapies have improved survival prospects when the disease is **detected early**.
- In high-income countries, widespread **screening** and public awareness have helped stabilise mortality rates.
- India faces the harder task of reproducing those gains in a vast, diverse and **resource-constrained** health system.
- Cases have risen with economic growth, changing lifestyles and reproductive patterns, especially in **urban areas** and among women aged **20–54**.
- Delayed childbirth, lifestyle change and rising metabolic risks such as **high blood sugar** and **obesity** have contributed to this shift.

Early detection remains weak

- Early detection remains patchy, with **mammography** rates strikingly low.
- **NFHS-5** and **LASI Wave 1** show only **1.3%** of women aged 45 years and above have undergone a mammography.
- Many women seek medical attention only after the disease has progressed **considerably**.

Policy response and public health strategy

- Screening must reach women across villages and cities, while awareness campaigns must confront **stigma** and delayed care-seeking.
- **Diagnostic** and treatment services need rapid expansion alongside screening.
- Experts favour a more **targeted approach**, identifying high-risk women through family history and reproductive factors.
- Although the national **cancer registry** covers only about **10–15%** of the population, expanding digital health infrastructure creates scope for a risk-adapted model.
- India's success in **polio eradication** and **Covid vaccination** shows it can execute large, decentralised public health programmes effectively.

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Need for a continuum-of-care approach

- **Start with awareness and outreach:** Policy must expand **public awareness**, as **Ayushman Arogya Mandirs** already support community-level screening and mobilisation.
- **Enable early risk identification:** Health systems should identify **high-risk women** early, as **NP-NCD** screening already targets women aged 30 and above.
- **Strengthen screening pathways:** Screening must move beyond isolated campaigns, as the 2025 **Special NCD Screening Campaign** aimed at universal 30-plus coverage.
- **Improve diagnostic capacity:** Suspected cases need faster **diagnostic confirmation**, as **NCD clinics** and chemotherapy day-care centres remain critical referral links.
- **Ensure affordable treatment access:** Policy must link screening to **timely treatment**, as **PM-JAY** covers secondary and tertiary cancer care up to ₹5 lakh per family.
- **Build referral and follow-up systems:** Patients need seamless **referral chains**, as **CPHC-NCD** design already links screening with higher-level hospitals.
- **Integrate long-term support:** Breast cancer policy should include **survivorship care**, as the **National Cancer Grid** works to standardise evidence-based cancer management.

3. RECOGNISING INVISIBLE LABOUR OF CARE IS A NATIONAL PRIORITY

(GS Paper I - Society)

This editorial ‘**Recognising invisible labour of care is a national priority**’ was published in **The Indian Express** on 7th Mar 2026, highlights how **recognising, valuing and strengthening unpaid care work** is essential for women-led development and inclusive growth.

Care work as the hidden social foundation

- Behind women’s visible achievements lies the **care economy**, much of it unmeasured yet central to families, communities and the nation.

- The mother, wife and daughter performing daily care work sustain homes and social resilience without proportional **recognition**.
- The editorial treats unpaid **care labour** not as a private matter but as a foundational pillar of inclusive growth.

Women-led development and civilisational framing

- The piece places women at the forefront of India's transformation, from **fighter pilots** to grassroots leaders shaping an inclusive future.
- It links this vision to India's civilisational legacy, citing **Savitribai Phule**, **Ahilyabai Holkar** and the idea of **shakti**.
- Under this approach, women are presented not merely as beneficiaries but as **drivers of development**, reflected in policy and governance priorities.

Policy support for the care economy

- India's **Female Labour Force Participation Rate** is said to have risen from **23.3%** in 2017-18 to **41.7%** in 2023-24.
- **Budget 2026-27** is presented as marking major investment in the care ecosystem, with the **Gender Budget** crossing Rs 5 lakh crore for the first time.
- The editorial notes plans to skill **1.5 lakh caregivers**, expand working women's hostels, upgrade **anganwadi** centres and strengthen health-nutrition convergence.
- Legal reforms such as the **Code on Social Security** and the **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code** are cited as supporting facilities and worker welfare.

Why care investment is now urgent

- Rapid urbanisation, migration and the rise of **nuclear families** are weakening traditional support systems.
- This makes accessible, affordable and quality **childcare** and family services an urgent national need.
- Investment in the care economy is linked to higher **women's workforce participation**, stronger child development, support for the elderly and dignified employment.
- Sustainable growth, in this view, requires strong **social foundations**, with care work treated as one such core foundation.

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Challenges in translating recognition into real support

- **Recognition without redistribution:** Mere praise for **care work** is insufficient, as India's **FLFPR** rose to 41.7% even while unpaid care stayed feminised.
- **Weak childcare infrastructure:** Limited access to **creches** reduces paid work options, even though **Palna** is expanding Anganwadi-cum-crèche support.
- **Persistent informality in care services:** Much of the **care economy** remains informal, though the **Code on Social Security, 2020** provides for crèche-related support.
- **Urban-rural service gaps:** Access to quality **care facilities** remains uneven, even as **Sakhi Niwas** targets safe accommodation across urban, semi-urban and rural areas.
- **Low public investment baseline:** Ambitious policy intent must overcome weak **care infrastructure**, though **Budget 2026-27** expanded support under women-focused schemes.
- **Social norms remain unchanged:** Deep-rooted **gender roles** still treat care as women's duty, even when policy now frames women as growth drivers.
- **Implementation will decide outcomes:** Women-led development will remain incomplete unless **budgets, institutions and services** convert schemes like **Palna** into everyday support.