

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1118
TO BE ANSWERED ON 31.07.2024

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN THE BACKWARD REGIONS

1118. SHRI ADITYA PRASAD:

Will the Minister of Women and Child Development be pleased to state:

- (a) the details of the initiatives taken by Government to empower women in the backward regions across the country, particularly in the State of Jharkhand, which shows the pace of development in these regions; and
- (b) whether Government has to face any obstacles in implementing women empowerment initiatives, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI ANNPURNA DEVI)

(a) & (b) The Government gives utmost priority to the safety, security and empowerment of women across the country including backward regions. The Government has adopted multi-pronged approach on a life-cycle continuum basis to address the issue of women for their educational, social, economic and political empowerment so that they lead the process of development of India.

In the past few years, a number of initiatives have been taken for holistic development and empowerment of women in the country including the State of Jharkhand.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has been implementing the Umbrella Scheme named as 'Mission Shakti' during the 15th Finance Commission period with effect from the financial year 2022-23. It is aimed at strengthening interventions for women safety, security and empowerment. It seeks to realise the Government's commitment for "women-led development" by addressing issues affecting women on a life-cycle continuum basis. It focuses on strategies for improving convergence across Ministries/ Departments and at different levels of governance. It also seeks to promote greater participation and support of Panchayats and other local level governance bodies, apart from strengthening digital infrastructure support, last mile tracking and Jan Sahabhagita. Mission Shakti has two sub-schemes - 'Sambal' and 'Samarthya'.

The “Sambal” sub-scheme is for safety and security of women. It has the components of One Stop Centres (OSCs), Women Helpline (WHL), Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) and a new component of Nari Adalat.

The “Samarthya” sub scheme is for empowerment of women. It has the components of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), Shakti Sadan, Sakhi Niwas, Palna and a new component of Gap Funding for Economic Empowerment i.e. SANKALP:Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW) to facilitate inter-sectoral convergence of schemes and programs meant for women at the Central, State/ UT and District levels for creating an environment in which women are able to realize their full potential. The support under the HEW provides for guiding, linking and hand holding women to various institutional and schematic set ups for their empowerment and development including access to healthcare, quality education, career and vocational counseling/ training, financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, backward and forward linkages, health and safety for workers, social security and digital literacy.

The Anganwadi Services under Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 is a universal, no-entry barriers scheme under which pregnant women and lactating mothers are eligible for the services including the Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP). Government has also implemented the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) which aims to provide cash incentive through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode to Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers (PW&LM) for partial compensation for the wage loss so that the woman can take adequate rest before and after delivery and to improve health seeking behaviour. The scheme also seeks to promote positive behavioural change towards girl child by providing additional cash incentive for the second child, if that is a girl child. Benefits have been extended to over 3.44 crore women through this scheme. Also, Palna, a sub-scheme is implemented in all States/ UTs to provide day care facilities and protection to children. The services of childcare have been extended through Anganwadi cum Crèche (AWCC) by way of enabling more and more mothers to work and the care givers to participate in the workforce.

The Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) has been subsumed under Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 w.e.f. 01.04.2022. The targeted beneficiaries under this scheme are girls in the age group of 14 – 18 years in the Aspirational Districts and all North Eastern States.

Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) aims to target the development of 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in order to saturate PVTG households and habitations with basic facilities such as safe housing, clean drinking water and sanitation, improved access to education, health and nutrition, road and telecom connectivity, and sustainable livelihood opportunities. Under the PM-JANMAN Scheme, Ministry of Women and Child Development has sanctioned 916 new AWCs in PVTG habitations by way of convergence with Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0.

In 2017, the Maternity Benefit Act was amended to increase paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks for the first two children. This Act also provides for paid maternity leave

to women workers and crèche facility within prescribed distance in all establishments having fifty or more employees. Depending upon the nature of work assigned to a woman, Section 5(5) of the Act also provides for work from home for woman after availing the maternity benefit for such period and on such conditions as the employer and the woman may mutually agree.

Besides, multiple initiatives for increasing participation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) have also been undertaken. Vigyan Jyoti was launched in 2020 to balance low representation of girls in different streams of Science and Technology from 9th to 12th standards. The Overseas Fellowship Scheme started in 2017-18. It provides opportunities to Indian Women Scientist and Technologists to undertake international collaborative research in STEM. Several women scientists have played significant roles in India's maiden Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), or Mangalyaan, including building and testing the scientific instruments at the Space Application Centre.

Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education is administering 'National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology' (NMEICT) Scheme, SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), SWAYAM PRABHA, National Digital Library (NDL), Virtual Lab, e-Yantra, NEAT (National Education Alliance for Technology) etc. to ensure quality education through e-learning to students across the country. Under the Pradhan Mantri Vidya Lakshmi Karyakram, Vidya Lakshmi Portal (VLP) has been launched by the Government to ensure that students avail education loans easily through single window system of banks. All Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have been on-boarded on the Portal.

Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) Scheme focuses on woman ownership of houses and it has been decided that the allotment of house shall be made in the name of the woman or jointly in the name of the husband and wife, except in the case of a widower/ unmarried/ separated person/ transgender.

Construction of over 12.21 crore toilets under 'Swachh Bharat Mission', clean cooking gas connections to 10.33 crore women below poverty line under 'Ujjawala Yojana' and connecting over 14.99 crores rural household with tap drinking water connections under 'Jal Jeevan Mission' have transformed the lives of women by reducing the drudgery and care burden.

In order to enhance the employability of female workers, the Government is providing training to them through a network of Women Industrial Training institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes. A number of enabling provisions have been incorporated in Labour Codes viz. the Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 and the Code on Social Security, 2020 for creating congenial work environment for women workers. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA) mandates that at least one third of the jobs generated under the scheme (MGNREGS) should be given to women.

Under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), nearly 10.18 crore women are connected with around 91.57 lakh women's self-help groups that are transforming rural socio-economic landscape in several innovative and socially and ecologically responsible ways, also availing governmental support including through collateral free loans.

To ensure economic independence of women through skill development and vocational training, the Government has introduced Skill India Mission. The National Skill Development Policy focuses on inclusive skill development, with the objective of increased women participation for better economic productivity.

Government has also set up the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana across the country. Emphasis has been laid on creating additional infrastructure both for training and apprenticeship for women; flexible training delivery mechanisms such as mobile training units, flexible afternoon batches along with on local need-based training to accommodate women; and ensuring safe and gender sensitive training environment, employment of women trainers, equity in remuneration, and complaint redressal mechanism.

National Agriculture Market or e-NAM, an online trading platform for agricultural commodities is helping women overcome or compensate the barriers they face in accessing markets. National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) is playing a significant role to uplift women cooperatives as large number of women are engaged and involved in cooperatives dealing with activities related to food grain processing, plantation crops, oilseeds processing, fisheries, dairy & livestock, spinning mills, handloom and power loom weaving, Integrated Cooperative Development Projects, etc. Other schemes include Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), Samagra Shiksha, Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojna, Swachh Vidyalaya Mission, Swachh Bharat Mission, etc. In order to enhance the employability of female workers, the Government is providing training to them through a network of Women Industrial Training institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes. To ensure economic independence of women through skill development and vocational training, the Government has also introduced Skill India Mission.

India is promoting greater roles for girls in the armed forces. Government has also enabled provisions to allow women's participation in non-conventional sectors such as fighter pilots in Indian Air Force, Commandos, Central Police Forces, admissions in Sainik Schools, entry of Girls in NDA etc. The Government has also taken initiatives to increase female participation in the civil aviation sector with the creation of women aviation professionals through a special focus on young schoolgirls, especially from low-income families. Globally, according to the International Society of Women Airline Pilots, around 5 per cent of pilots are women. In India, the share of women pilots is significantly higher.

There are schemes like Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana and Stand-Up India, Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) which have been launched for helping women set up their own enterprises. To economically empower women, 84% of loans of sizes from rupees ten lakh to rupees one crore under 'Stand-Up India' have been made available to women by the Government.

With special attention towards entrepreneurship, Government of India has played a key role in the facilitation and disbursement of a large number of loans to small women-led enterprises ensuring that women become a vital force in the country's burgeoning start-up ecosystem supported under the Start-up India.

In order to bring women in the mainstream of political leadership at the grass root level, Government has reserved at least 33% of the seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for women through the 73rd amendment to the Constitution. Today, there are more than 14.50 lakh Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in PRIs, which is approximately 46% of the total elected representatives. Government is providing training to the EWRs from time to time to build on their capacity with a view to empowering women to participate effectively in the governance processes.

The greatest leap forward for women empowerment and representation of women in the highest political offices in the country has been the notification by Government of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 (Constitution One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023 on 28th September, 2023, for reservation of one-third of seats for women in the House of People (Lok Sabha) and in the State Legislative Assemblies including Legislative Assembly of NCT of Delhi.
