

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 138
TO BE ANSWERED ON 12.03.2025

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND PROTECTION

138. SHRI BABUBHAI JESANGBHAI DESAI:

Will the Minister of WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) the measures taken by Government on current assessment of the effectiveness of laws such as Domestic Violence Act and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the details thereof; and
- (b) the number of One Stop Centres (OSCs) set up to assist women affected by violence and the services provided by them, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI SAVITRI THAKUR)

(a) and (b) A Statement is laid on the table of the House.

**STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) AND (B) OF RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 138 TO BE ANSWERED ON 12.03.2025 REGARDING
“GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND PROTECTION” ASKED BY SHRI BABUBHAI
JESANGBHAI DESAI**

(a) and (b): “Police” and “Public Order” are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The responsibility to maintain law and order, protection of life and property of the citizens including investigation and prosecution in crimes against women and children rests with the respective State Governments and they are competent to deal with it. Section 8 of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005 mandates the States/UTs to appoint such number of Protection Officers in each district as it may consider necessary and also to notify the area or areas within which a Protection Officer shall exercise the powers and perform the duties conferred. It is the duty of the Protection Officer to report the cases of domestic violence to the Magistrate upon receipt of complaints and to assist the Magistrate in the discharge of his functions. However, Conviction of an accused person is done by the competent court after careful consideration of factual positions, evidence and all related legal aspects as per the provisions of law. The PWDVA provides to women remedies such as protection order, residence order etc. under it.

Nevertheless, the Central Government gives highest priority to ensuring safety and security of women and has undertaken various legislative and schematic interventions in this regard. These include legislations such as “The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018” (now under Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita), “The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2006”, “The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961”, The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act 2013. Besides these legal provisions there are multiple schemes and projects implemented by the Government which include One Stop Centres (OSCs); Universalisation of Women Helplines (WHL), Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) which is a pan-India single number (112)/ mobile app based system for emergencies; capacity building in community through awareness programmes, setting up/ strengthening of Women Help Desks (WHDs) at Police Stations etc.

One Stop Centre (OSC) scheme, which is fully funded by the central government is being implemented across the country since 1st April, 2015. It provides integrated support and assistance under one roof to women affected by violence and those in distress, both in private and public spaces. It also provides an integrated range of services including medical aid, legal aid and advice, temporary shelter, police assistance, psycho-social counselling to needy women. 802 OSCs are operational across the country and over 10.80 lakh women have been assisted upto 31st January, 2025.

Under Nirbhaya Fund, Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) has also undertaken several initiatives, which, inter-alia include training and skill development programs for Investigation Officers, Prosecution Officers and Medical Officers. BPR&D has also prepared Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for “Women Help Desk at Police Stations” to ensure their smooth functioning by focusing on four critical components, viz. infrastructure, training, human resource development and response mechanism. A book titled “Women’s Safety and Security- a Handbook for First Responders and Investigators in the Police” has also been prepared for the purpose of prevention and investigation of crime against women with specific reference to the crime of sexual assault, which includes

investigation, victim compensation and rehabilitation. Emphasis has been laid upon inculcating appropriate behavioural and attitudinal skills in the police force for prevention and detection of crimes against women and children and for proper interaction with the victims of crime. Webinars on women safety with sensitivity, gender sensitization of police personnel etc. have also been organized by BPR&D.

To ensure that the Police Stations are more women friendly and approachable, as they would be the first and single point of contact for any woman walking into a police station 14,658 Women Help Desks (WHDs) have been set up, of which 13,743 are headed by women police officers. To provide help and support to needy women and women in distress, Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112) has been established in all 36 States and UTs for various emergencies, with computer aided dispatch of field/ police resources. Since its launch, over 43 crore calls have been handled so far. In addition to ERSS, a fully functional dedicated Women helpline (WHL-181) is operational in 35 States/ UTs except West Bengal. The WHL has also been integrated with ERSS. So far, Women Helplines have handled over 2.10 crore calls and assisted over 84.43 lakh women.

To ensure that justice is delivered to unfortunate women and young girls who are victims of heinous sexual offences, Government has been providing financial assistance to States/ UTs for setting up Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) since 2019. As of January 2025, a total of 745 FTSCs, including 404 exclusive POCSO (e-POCSO) Courts, are operational in 30 States/UTs, having disposed of more than 3,06,000 cases of rape, and offences under POCSO Act across the country.

Recognizing the need for psycho-social counseling to women affected by violence and those in distress, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has engaged the services of National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) for providing basic and advanced training under the project named "Stree Manoraksha" to the staff of One Stop Centres (OSCs) across the country on handling psycho-social and mental health care needs to support to such women. The Ministry also undertakes awareness exercise for safety and security of women and children from time to time. Further, the Government, through institutions like the National Commission for Women (NCW), National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and their counterparts in States have been spreading awareness through seminars, workshops, audio- visual, print and electronic media etc. to sensitize the people about the safety and security of women and children and also about various provisions of law. In addition, Ministry of Women and Child Development and Ministry of Home Affairs have issued advisories to States/ UTs from time to time on various issues pertaining to safety and security of women and children.

The Ministry has launched the 'Mission Shakti Portal' with all functional features on January 22, 2025. This portal aims to enhance accessibility of various government services for women, establish quality mechanisms for rescue, protection, and rehabilitation, and build the capacity of functionaries and duty holders under various schemes and legislations.

Furthermore, a National dashboard has been developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) for monitoring calls across all States/UTs implementing the Women Helpline. This dashboard enables real-time monitoring of calls received and women assisted. Through this

system, the Central Government will be able to maintain centralized data on violence faced by women across India, categorized by types of cases, including instances of domestic violence.

The Government also accords highest priority for ensuring safety and security of children and has undertaken various specific interventions in this regard. To safeguard children against sexual abuse and sexual harassment, Government has enacted Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. The act defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years. The Act was further amended in 2019 to introduce more stringent punishment including death penalty for committing sexual crimes on children, with a view to deter the perpetrators & prevent such crimes.

Further the POCSO Rules, 2020 were also notified by the Ministry to protect the children from exploitation/violence and sexual exploitation. Rule 3 of the POCSO Rules,2020 provides that any institution housing children or coming in regular contact with children including schools, creches, sports academies or any other facility for children must ensure police verification and background check on periodic basis, of every staff, teaching or non-teaching, regular or contractual, or any other person being an employee of such Institution coming in contact with the child. Such Institution shall also ensure that periodic training is organized for sensitizing them on child safety and protection.

Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) from the financial year 2023-2024, has also introduced a centrally funded scheme namely “Scheme for Care and Support to Victims under Sections 4 & 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012” from NIRBHAYA Fund to address the challenges faced by the minor pregnant girl child victims for implementation by the State/UT Governments. The main objectives of this Scheme are:

- i. To provide integrated support and assistance to minor pregnant girl child victims under one roof;
- ii. To facilitate their immediate, emergency and non-emergency access to a range of services for long term rehabilitation in terms of:
 - access to education,
 - police assistance,
 - medical (also comprising maternity, neo-natal and infant care),
 - psychological, mental health counselling,
 - legal support,
 - non-institutional care support, place of stay in Child Care Institutions/Aftercare facilities, and
 - health insurance cover for the girl child victim and her new-born baby under one roof to enable access to justice to such victimized girls.
