

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2226
TO BE ANSWERED ON 19.03.2025

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

2226 SHRI IRANNA KADADI:
DR. MEDHA VISHRAM KULKARNI:
SHRI BABUBHAI JESANGBHAI DESAI:

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

- (a) the initiatives undertaken by Government to promote greater participation of women in local governance and political leadership roles;
- (b) the details of the new policies formulated to support women candidates in elections at the grassroots level, ensuring equal representation in decision-making bodies; and
- (c) the steps taken by Government to focus on key areas of policy and development concerning women and children, along with the steps taken to ensure accountability and further progress in these domains?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c): The Government of India has adopted a “whole-of-government” and “whole-of-society” approach to address issues on a life-cycle continuum basis for the holistic empowerment of women from all sections of the society, and this includes political empowerment of women. Through various policies, the Government of India is promoting greater participation of women in local governance and political leadership roles.

In 2023, Parliament of India passed the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, “Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam”, marking a historic milestone in its national journey to foster equitable representation of women in public life at all levels of the federal structure. This landmark legislation rotationally reserves one-third of all seats for women in the Lower House of Parliament, Lok Sabha, and in all federal State Legislative Assemblies, including Legislative Assembly of National Capital Territory of Delhi, thus institutionalizing representation of women in politics at the highest levels of public decision-making.

This recent landmark is built on the foundation of more than three decades of honing women’s leadership affirmative action at grassroots level by reserving one-third (33 percent) of the seats in in the rural and urban bodies of local governance, i.e., Panchayati Raj Institutions

(PRIs) and Municipal bodies, through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992). Keeping with decentralized federal structure, over two-third states (21 states / and 2 UTs with PRIs) have made provisions of 50% reservation for women in their Panchayati Raj Institutions. As a result, today, out of approximately 31 lakh elected representatives in local governments, nearly half (46 percent), comprising 14.5 lakh, are women - a scale of representation unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

The Government has launched the “Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan”, a comprehensive and targeted capacity-building initiative aimed at strengthening Women Elected Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions across the nation. It focuses on sharpening their leadership acumen, enhancing their decision-making capabilities, and reinforcing their role in grassroots governance. The Government has prepared specialized training modules designed specifically for capacity building of Women Elected Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Recognizing the on-ground challenges faced by women duty bearers and women leaders contesting elections, a comprehensive “Primer on Law Addressing Gender Based Violence and Harmful Practices” for Panchayat Elected Representatives has also been prepared.

Recently, the Government has launched Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats Initiative with an aim to establish at least one Model Gram Panchayat in each District in the country that is both women and girl friendly, reinforcing the commitment to gender equality and sustainable rural development.

The Government also aims to engage 1 lakh youth, including young women, in politics without political affiliations and provide them a national platform to make their ideas for Viksit Bharat, a reality.

Further, there are a number of schemes being implemented by various Ministries and Departments of the Government of India for holistic educational, economic, social, political empowerment of women. The Government is moving with a saturation approach through saturation of essential services for the poor and marginalised such as affordable housing, incentivizing women’s property ownership, and universal health coverage, linkages to formal credit, insurance and banking services, as well as financial support to pregnant women and lactating mothers to rest and recover after childbirth, tracking nutrition and well-being of children and mothers, amongst others.

Envisioning Self Help Groups as vehicles of change, today 10 crore women are transforming the rural landscape economically, and taking greater leadership at grassroots level.
