

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. *181
TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.08.2025

SOCIAL WELFARE INITIATIVES FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED FEMALES

*181. SHRI GOVINDBHAI LALJIBHAI DHOLAKIA

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

- (a) whether the Central and State Governments have jointly implemented any welfare programme to assist the visually impaired girls and women who face several challenges due to lack of social welfare initiatives;
- (b) if so, the State-wise details thereof; and
- (c) whether the Ministry, in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs and State Governments, propose to make it mandatory for women police officers to regularly visit the homes of visually impaired women to ensure their safety from physical assault?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI ANNPURNA DEVI)

- (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

**STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) TO (C) OF THE RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NUMBER 181 FOR ANSWER ON 06.08.2025 RAISED BY SHRI
GOVINDBHAI LALJIBHAI DHOLAKIA REGARDING 'SOCIAL WELFARE INITIATIVES
FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED FEMALES'**

(a) and (b): There are a number of legislations/ schemes/ initiatives by various Ministries/ Departments of the Central Government for the social, educational and economic empowerment of women including visually impaired females in the country.

The major legislative initiatives of Government of India in this regard include legislations such as "the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016", "the National Food Security Act, 2013", "the Maternity Benefit Act 1961", "the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005", "The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961", "The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act 2013" "Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita", "Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita", "Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam", etc.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development during the 15th Finance Commission period, with effect from the financial year 2022-23, implements Centrally Sponsored Schemes in the country for the welfare of women and children, which are placed under three verticals, viz. (1) Mission Shakti, for safety, protection and empowerment of women; (2) Saksham Anganwadi & Poshan 2.0 for improving nutrition & health indicators in the country; and (3) Mission Vatsalya, for protection and welfare of children in difficult circumstances. The details of the scheme under Mission Shakti are as follows:

(i) Mission Shakti: The 'Mission Shakti' aims at strengthening interventions for safety, security and empowerment of women. It comprises of two verticals 'Sambal' and 'Samarthya'. The "Sambal" vertical is for safety and security of women and it's key component include, One Stop Centres (OSCs) which is an institution located at district level offering under one roof immediate help to women in distress such as temporary shelter, medical & police assistance, counselling and legal support. As on date, 843 OSCs are operational. The OSCs have assisted 11.94 lakh women till 30.06.2025. The Women Helpline (WHL) 181 component provides toll-free 24-hours telecom service to women seeking support and information. Women Helplines have handled over 2.30 crore calls and assisted over 88.24 lakh women till 31.05.2025. The Beti Bachao Beti Padhao component is mainly for interventions at grassroots level for bringing a positive shift in the mind-set towards valuing the girl child.

The "Samarthya" vertical is for the empowerment of women. The Ministry implements the component of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) across the country since 01.01.2017, under which Rs. 5,000/- is provided in Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode for first child and Rs. 6,000/- for second child if the child is a girl, to the eligible women beneficiaries. The incentive aims to promote health-seeking behaviour and partial compensation for wage loss, as well as for positive behavioural change towards valuing the girl child. Shakti Sadan is an Integrated Relief and Rehabilitation Home for women in distressful situations including trafficked women. It aims to create a safe and enabling environment for the women in such difficult situations to enable them to overcome the adverse circumstances. Sakhi Niwas (Working Women Hostel) aims to promote availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women in urban, semi-urban and even rural areas where employment opportunity for women exists. The SANKALP: Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW) serves as a vehicle to bridge the information and knowledge gap regarding schemes and facilities available for women.

Section 4 and 24 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 have provisions for economic development of all the Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) including women and children. Section 37 of the said Act provides 5% reservation in allotment of agriculture land and housing as well as in all poverty alleviation and developmental schemes for persons with benchmark disabilities (PwBDs) (disability of 40% or more) with priority to women with benchmark disabilities. Section 32 of the said Act provides for reservation of not less than 5% seats in Government/ Government aided higher educational institutions for PwBD. The Government provides for 4% reservation in Government jobs for all disabilities which includes 1% reservation in Govt. jobs for the visually impaired.

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) has the following major provisions/ schemes to encourage the persons with disabilities including the blind girls and women:

(I) The Department is implementing Scheme of 'Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/ Fitting of Aids/ Appliances (ADIP)'.

(II) An umbrella Scheme titled 'Scholarships for Students with Disabilities (Divyangjan) (including the blind girls) in the country is being implemented. During the last three years, a total of 96,572 students with disabilities have been benefitted.

(III) The National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (Divyangjan) (NIEPVD), has been set up at Dehradun which specializes in visual disabilities. The institute encourages visually impaired children to get school education. The Institute has established 13 new Braille presses across the country during 2014-2023 as well as modernized 12 existing Braille presses to benefit visually impaired students including visually impaired girls. The Government reviews these Braille presses from time to time.

(IV) Since 2014, the Institute is implementing the "Project on Financial Support for Development of Accessible Learning Materials" under the Scheme for Implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 (SIPDA) Scheme in order to provide free of cost learning materials in accessible formats (Braille, Large and epub) to school going children with visual impairment across the country.

Under the Accessible India Campaign (AIC), work has been done by the Central Government in three areas i.e. Built-Up Environment, Transportation Sector and ICT Ecosystem (Websites) to create a universal barrier-free environment. 13 various different departments have created sector specific accessibility standards/guidelines.

The DEPwD has organized 8 Divya Kala Shakti and 11 Divya Kala Melas to provide opportunities to the disabled people to showcase their talent and to promote the sale of the products made by them.

(V) Under Deendayal Divyangjan Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS) grant-in-aid is provided to the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for running Special Schools

for the Disabled Children. During the last three years 1,00,836 PwDs have been benefitted.

(VI) Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) implements 'National Action Plan (NAP) for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)' which was launched in March, 2015.

(VII) National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation (NDFDC) channelizes concessional loans for the socio-economic empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) including Visual impaired persons through "Divyangjan Swavlamban Yojna" (DSY) and "Vishesh Microfinance Yojna" (VMY) throughout the country.

(VIII) Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) is running 167 institutions across the country for visually impaired students.

(IX) The Department has, inter-alia, honored visual impaired persons who have made remarkable achievements, by presenting them with National Awards for Persons with Disabilities.

(X) All children with disabilities, including visually impaired girls, are encouraged by the Department to participate in various sports activities.

(XI) Under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, 3 Blindness Control programmes are there namely: National Trachoma Control Program -1963, National Program for Control of Blindness- 1976 and National Program for Control of Blindness & Visual Impairment-2017.

For the safety and security of women and children, including the visually impaired females, several Projects/ Schemes under Nirbhaya Fund have been implemented/ being implemented across the country. These include Emergency Response Support System (ERSS)-112, Setting-up/ Strengthening Women Help Desk (WHDs) in police stations, Cyber Crime Prevention against Women & Children (CCPWC), under which a national cyber-crime reporting portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) has been established, Cyber forensic and related facilities in State Forensic Science Laboratories (SFSLs), One Stop Centers, Universalisation of Women Helpline (WHL)-181, State-wise Vehicle Tracking Platform (VTP), Training of Investigating Officers (IOs)/ Prosecution Officers (POs)/ Medical Officers (MOs) in Forensic Evidence collection, Setting up Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) to dispose of cases pending trial under rape and POCSO Act, Setting-up/ Strengthening Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTU), Safe City Project in 8 major cities etc.

In addition, the following schemes/ programmes also assist the visually impaired females directly or indirectly:

(i) National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), which is a social security programme for senior citizens, widows, disabled persons and bereaved families on

death of primary bread winners belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) households in rural as well as urban areas.

(ii) Atal Pension Yojana (APY) which provides a universal social security system for all Indians, especially the poor, under privileged and workers in the unorganized sector between 18-40 years of age having a saving bank account in a bank or post office.

(iii) Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) and Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) have been launched in May 2015 across the country. PMSBY is an accidental insurance scheme offering accidental death and disability cover at a premium of Rs 20 per annum to all individual bank/ Post Office account holders in the age group of 18 to 70 years. The risk coverage under PMSBY is of Rs 2 lakhs in case of accidental death or permanent total disability and Rs 1 lakh for permanent partial disability due to accident. PMJJBY is a life insurance scheme offering life insurance cover for death due to any reason at a premium of Rs 436 per annum. All individuals bank/ Post Office account holders in the age group of 18 to 50 years are entitled to join the scheme.

(iv) Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) helped a large number of citizens belonging to Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households and Priority Household (PHH) beneficiaries during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Government has decided to continue the scheme by providing free food grains to about 81.35 crore beneficiaries for a period of next five years with effect from 1st January, 2024. The scheme has a vast rural outreach, and majorly benefitting women, particularly widows, elderly women, rural women and persons with disabilities including visually impaired females.

(v) In order to reduce drudgery and enhance the ease of living for the women particularly in the rural areas, under the Swachh Bharat Mission more than 11 crore toilets have been constructed.

(vi) Clean cooking fuel has been provided to nearly 10.3 crore households through Ujjawala Yojana.

(vii) Access to safe and potable tap water connection to nearly 15 crore households through Jal Jeevan Mission.

(viii) Prime Minister Awaas Yojana Gramin (PMAY-G) and Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana Urban (PMAY-U) aim to provide 'Housing for All' through provision of pucca house with basic amenities to all houseless families and households living in kutcha and dilapidated house in rural areas and the housing requirement of Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) including slum dwellers in the urban areas.

(ix) Under Ayushman Bharat, the Government is providing free of cost treatment through over 1200 medical packages to over 55 crore citizens, predominantly enhancing access to health benefits to poor women in urban, rural and remote areas. Out of these, over 141 medical packages are exclusively designed for addressing medical needs of women. Seven types of screening (TB, Hypertension, Diabetes, Oral Cancer, Breast Cancer, Cervical Cancer and Cataract) are provided under the scheme, which have benefitted crores of women. There are over 150,000 Health and

Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs), also referred to as Ayushman Arogya Mandir, in both urban and rural areas, bring health care closer to the community. Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PMJAY) is the world's largest public funded health assurance scheme, with special focus on poor and disadvantaged women. The scheme has provided 7 crore treatments. Women account for approximately 49% of the total Ayushman cards created and approximately 48% of total authorized hospital admissions. e-Sanjeevani, the world's largest telemedicine initiative includes 57% women.

(x) There are over 16,000 Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJK) functional across the country. The PMBJK besides providing affordable medicines and medical devices, including about 40 women specific items also have provision for sale of Sanitary Napkins named 'Suvidha Sanitary Napkins' at extremely affordable price of Rupee 1 per pad. Over 62 crore such napkins have been sold through the Jan Aushadhi Kendras. The Government has also made sanitary napkins 100% exempt from tax and to make it affordable and easily accessible.

(xi) Stand-Up India and MUDRA Yojna facilitate bank loans and entrepreneurial activities and have majorly benefitted women entrepreneurs.

(xii) Schemes such as Start-up India, Pradhan Mantri Street Vendors AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) provides employment/ self-employment and credit facilities. Majority of the beneficiaries under these schemes are women.

(xiii) The RBI has issued guidelines to enhance accessibility in banking services, including the provision of assistive technologies and accessible ATM machines.

(xiv) In order to provide relief and support to victims of acid attack including women and girls, who survive with various kinds of grievous injuries including visual impairment, an additional financial assistance of Rs. 1.00 lakh (over and above the amount provided under the Victim Compensation Scheme) to the victim of acid attacks is provided irrespective of date of attack under the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund. On this, Ministry of Home Affairs has issued guidelines dated 09.11.2016 to State Governments/ UT Administrations.

(c): The Ministry of Home Affairs has been issuing advisories to States/ UTs from time to time with a view to help the States/ UTs to effectively deal with crimes against women, which are available at www.mha.gov.in. These advisories inter-alia consist directions on vigorous & effective implementation of law and various directions of Hon'ble Courts, Committees, mandatory registration of FIR, action against erring officials, and capacity & skill augmentation.
