

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT
RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO -127
ANSWERED ON – 11/02/2026

STANDARDIZED DEFINITION OF BEGGING

127. SHRI SATNAM SINGH SANDHU

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether there is a prescribed method or criteria to classify/recognise/identify beggars and define begging or not, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) if not, whether the Central Government plans to standardise the definition of 'begging' under national law, considering the varying approaches of different States;
- (c) total number of beggars in the country;
- (d) whether Government has implemented any special rehabilitation model; and
- (e) what monitoring mechanism ensures that anti-begging drives are humane and aligned with social reintegration rather than penalisation, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT

(DR. VIRENDRA KUMAR)

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

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) TO (E) IN RESPECT OF RAJYA SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 127 FOR REPLY ON 11.02.2026 REGARDING “STANDARDIZED DEFINITION OF BEGGING”

(a) & (b) As per SMILE Beggary scheme guidelines, a comprehensive physical survey using a uniform survey format i.e. questionnaire is conducted for identification of persons engaged in the act of begging by Municipal Corporations/Social Welfare Departments of the State or any other agency as designated by the State/UT. The begging definition as per scheme guidelines is as under:

The term ‘**Begging**’, in general, refers to an act where a person solicits material help using words or gestures. Begging includes the following:

- Soliciting or receiving alms in public spaces, including under pretences like performing or selling items.
- Entering private premises for the purpose of soliciting alms.
- Displaying wounds, deformities, or illnesses for obtaining alms.
- Wandering in public spaces without visible means of subsistence.
- Allowing oneself to be used as an exhibit to solicit alms’.

(c): According to the Census 2011, the total number of beggars in India is 4,13,670 (including 2,21,673 males and 1,91,997 females).

(d): Yes. The Government is implementing SMILE (Support for Marginalised Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise) scheme “Comprehensive Rehabilitation of Persons Engaged in the Act of Begging” to rehabilitate and reintegrate persons engaged in begging into the society, using the following rehabilitation model-

- **Survey and Identification:** Implementing agencies conduct surveys to identify persons engaged in begging.
- **Mobilisation:** Outreach efforts are undertaken to encourage identified persons to avail shelter and rehabilitation services.
- **Provision of Basic Services:** Existing government shelter homes, including those under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM), are utilised to provide food, clothing, hygiene, medical aid, counselling and education.
- **Sustainable Settlement:** Vocational training and skill development are provided to facilitate employment or self-employment for long-term reintegration and sustainable livelihoods.

(e): Humane implementation is ensured to the persons engaged in begging by providing safe and comfortable stay in shelter homes with food, clothing, hygiene, medical care and counseling. Through guideline-based procedures it is ensured that actions remain rehabilitative rather than penal.

For effective implementation and monitoring, Ministry has framed scheme guidelines with a focus on coordinated efforts with Centre/State Governments/Districts/Urban Local Bodies and other organisations like Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) working for welfare of persons engaged in the act of begging.

At the Ministry level, a National Online Portal (www.smile-b.dosje.gov.in) for the scheme has been developed for real-time monitoring of the scheme's implementation. The portal acts as a repository for all data and information related to the scheme and ensures that the scheme is being implemented with a focus on welfare and rehabilitation measures which are aligned with social reintegration of the beneficiaries.
