

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 640
TO BE ANSWERED ON 04.02.2026

GENDER ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

640. SMT. PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI:

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

- (a) Whether the Government has taken cognisance of the World Inequality Report 2026 findings on gender inequality in India.
- (b) India-specific data on gender wage gap, women's wealth share, property ownership, and high-income representation.
- (c) Whether policies addressing structural barriers - unpaid care work, workplace discrimination, inheritance inequities - are being strengthened.
- (d) Measures ensuring equal pay enforcement with penalties.
- (e) Programs promoting women's property ownership, entrepreneurship, and financial inclusion with targets: and
- (f) Timeline for closing gender economic inequality gaps?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI ANNPURNA DEVI)

(a) to (f): World Inequality Report 2026 has been released by a non-government entity called World Inequality Lab, which claims to highlight persistence of unprecedented global inequality across multiple dimensions, including income, wealth, gender, climate responsibility, and geography. The report claims that inequality is multi-dimensional and mutually reinforcing, where disparities in income and wealth interact with gender gaps, regional imbalances, and unequal climate burdens. To address these challenges, the report mentions a range of policy responses which it claims will foster more equitable and sustainable societies.

The Government continues to implement a multi-pronged strategy to strengthen women's economic participation, earnings, entrepreneurship, skilling, financial inclusion and social

protection. The Government has enacted the **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976**, which provides for payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers for the same work or work of similar nature without any discrimination and also prohibits discrimination against women while making recruitment for the same work or work of similar nature, or in any condition of service subsequent to recruitment, such as promotion, training or transfer. Moreover, the **Minimum Wages Act, 1948** provides for payment of minimum wages, and the **Payment of Wages Act, 1936** ensures timely payment of wages to both male and female workers.

Further, for supporting women across various economic sectors, **Maternity Benefit Act, 1961**, as amended by the **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017**, inter alia, provides for paid maternity leave to women workers. The Act also provides for crèche facilities in establishments having fifty or more employees. The duration of paid maternity leave has been increased from twelve weeks to twenty-six weeks, of which not more than eight weeks shall precede the date of expected delivery. Depending upon the nature of work assigned to a woman, the Act also provides for work from home for such period and on such conditions as may be mutually agreed upon by the employer and the woman.

To address unpaid care responsibilities, the Ministry of Women and Child Development implements the Palna Scheme under Mission Shakti (since 1 April 2022), providing day-care and crèche services for children aged 6 months to 6 years, irrespective of mothers' employment status. Integrated childcare services are delivered through Anganwadi-cum-Crèches (AWCCs) in convergence with Saksham Anganwadi and Mission Poshan 2.0; as on 31.12.2025, 2,820 AWCCs are functional across the country.

To ensure economic independence of women through skill development and vocational training, the Government has also introduced Skill India Mission. 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. Similarly, Government implements the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) to provide digital literacy to rural population. These schemes have also helped women and girls in gaining necessary skills required for jobs and entrepreneurship.

Deendayal Antyodaya Yojna - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), under which approximately 90 lakhs women self-help groups having nearly 10 crore members are changing the rural landscape for employment/ self-employment. Similarly, National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM) is for urban areas. Besides, there are schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), Stand-up India, Start-up India, Pradhan Mantri Street Vendors AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), for providing employment/ self-employment and credit facilities. Majority of the beneficiaries under these schemes are women.

Closing gender economic inequality gaps is a multi-dimensional and long-term process. The Government is pursuing a sustained approach through legal reforms, targeted schemes, gender-responsive budgeting and continuous monitoring through official surveys and administrative data, with recent national data indicating consistent improvement in key indicators such as female labour force participation, employment and property ownership.
