

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2745
ANSWERED ON-19.12.2023

WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN PRIS

2745. DR. (PROF.) KIRIT PREMJBHAI SOLANKI:

Will the Minister of **PANCHAYATI RAJ** be pleased to state:

- (a) the specific measures that the Government has implemented to increase the number of women actively participating in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) beyond the mandated reservation of seats;
- (b) the manner in which the Government is addressing the challenges of women's tokenistic representation in PRIs;
- (c) whether the Government has established a comprehensive framework for evaluating the performance of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), encompassing various aspects of their functioning; and
- (d) if so, the specific parameters and criteria used to assess the effectiveness and success of PRIs?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR PANCHAYATI RAJ

(SHRI KAPIL MORESHWAR PATIL)

(a) and (b) Panchayat, being "Local Government", is a State Subject and part of the State List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. Accordingly, Panchayats are set up and operate through the respective State Panchayati Raj Acts. The measures to increase the number of women actively participating in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) or to address the challenges of women's tokenistic representation in PRIs, comes within the purview of State Governments. Article 243D of the Constitution of India provides not less than one-third reservation for women in PRIs. However, 21 States and 2 Union Territories have gone even further and have made provisions, in their respective State Panchayati Raj Acts/Rules, for 50% reservation for women in PRIs.

Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been encouraging increased involvement of women in the functioning of Panchayats through active participation in the Gram Sabha meetings for preparation of Gram Panchayat Development Plans and various schemes being implemented by the Panchayats. The Ministry has been engaging with the elected women representatives (EWRs) through a series of workshops, conferences, committees and expert groups on the issues of women empowerment and women leadership. Based on the experiences of best

practices gained from the interaction during these workshops and interaction as well as recommendations given by various committees and expert groups, the Ministry has been issuing advisories to States, from time to time, and also focusing on developing the capacity of EWRs of Panchayats to enable them to function effectively in Gram Panchayats and properly discharging their leadership roles. This Ministry has also issued advisories to States to facilitate holding of separate Ward Sabha and Mahila Sabha meetings prior to Gram Sabha meetings. Further, advisories have been issued to States for enhancing the presence and participation of women in Gram Sabha and Panchayat meetings, allocation of Panchayat funds for women centric activities, combating the evil of women trafficking, female foeticide, child marriage etc.

(c) and (d) The performance of the Panchayats depends on the extent of powers and resources devolved to them by the States. Ministry of Panchayati Raj has intensively engaged States for devolution of powers to the Panchayats. Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), financial support have been provided to the States/ Union Territories for various activities relating to strengthening of Panchayats including capacity building of PRIs. Similarly, by successive Finance Commissions, more funds have been provided to the States for distribution among PRIs as under:-

1. Tenth Finance Commission (1995-2000): Rs.4380.93 crore
2. Eleventh Finance Commission (2000-2005): Rs.8000.00 crore
3. Twelfth Finance Commission (2005-2010): Rs. 20,000.00 crore
4. Thirteenth Finance Commission (2010-15): Rs.65160.71crore
5. Fourteenth Finance Commission (2015-2020): Rs.2,00,292.20 crore
6. Fifteenth Finance Commission (2020-2026): Rs.2,97,555.00 crore

For the proper functioning of the PRIs, sufficient manpower has to be provided by the States and Union Territories as the matter comes within their purview. Ministry of Panchayati Raj has been advising States/ Union Territories in this regard from time to time.

To strengthen functioning of PRIs across the country, this Ministry has launched eGramSwaraj (<https://egramswaraj.gov.in>), a user friendly web-based portal, which aims to bring in better transparency in the decentralised planning, progress reporting, financial management, work-based accounting and details of assets created. Further, for ensuring timely audit of Panchayat accounts i.e. receipts and expenditures of Gram Panchayats, this Ministry has rolled out an online application – AuditOnline (<https://auditonline.gov.in>). This application not only facilitates the auditing of Panchayat accounts but also provides for maintaining of audit records. This application streamlines the process for audit inquiries, draft local audit reports, draft audit paras etc. and thus ensures proper maintenance of accounts by Panchayats to improve transparency and accountability.
