

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1216**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 09.02.2024

**IMPROVEMENT IN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

1216. SHRI NATARAJAN P.R.:

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

- (a) the details of the initiatives taken by the Government to improve economic and political empowerment and the safety and security of women in the country;
- (b) whether the rural women have suffered more from economic and political divide and if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to improve the political and financial condition of women in the country;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to work on time-use survey reports to bridge the divide between men and women in the country and if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether the Government has any plan to reduce the current domestic burden on women to incentivize them to increase economic participation in the country; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
(SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI)

(a) to (e): Gender justice is an important commitment of the Government as enshrined in the Constitution of India. In order to promote a gender just society and increased representation of women in various domains, several steps have been taken by the Government over the years to improve economic and political empowerment and the safety and security of women. These include enactment of criminal laws and special laws like 'the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005', 'the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961', 'the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006'; 'the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986'; 'the Sexual Harassment of Women (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013', 'the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956', 'the Commission of Sati Prevention Act, 1987', 'the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012', 'the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, etc.

Besides, the Government gives utmost priority to the safety, security and empowerment of women across the country. The Government has adopted multi-pronged approach to address the issue of women on a life-cycle continuum basis for

their educational, social, economic and political empowerment so that they become equal partners in fast paced and sustainable national development.

In the past few years, a number of initiatives have been taken for holistic development and empowerment of women in the country.

The initiatives like Samagra Shiksha, Scholarship schemes, Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojna, Swachh Vidyalaya Mission, etc. ensure that schools are girl-friendly especially for vulnerable sections of society and have adequate facilities in place to fulfil their special requirements.

Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education is administering 'National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology' (NMEICT) Scheme, SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), SWAYAM PRABHA, National Digital Library (NDL), Virtual Lab, e-Yantra, NEAT (National Education Alliance for Technology) etc. to ensure quality education through e-learning to students across the country. Under the Pradhan Mantri Vidya Lakshmi Karyakram, Vidya Lakshmi Portal (VLP) has been launched by the Government to ensure that students avail education loans easily through single window system of banks. All Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have been on-boarded on the Portal.

Multiple initiatives in the past years for increasing participation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) have been undertaken. Vigyan Jyoti was launched in 2020 to balance low representation of girls in different streams of Science and Technology from 9th to 12th standards. The Overseas Fellowship Scheme started in 2017-18, provides opportunities to Indian Women Scientist and Technologists to undertake international collaborative research in STEM. Several women scientists have played significant roles in India's maiden Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), or Mangalyaan, including building and testing the scientific instruments at the Space Application Centre.

Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) Scheme focuses on woman ownership of houses and it has been decided that the allotment of house shall be made in the name of the woman or jointly in the name of the husband and wife, except in the case of a widower/ unmarried/ separated person/ transgender.

National Agriculture Market or e-NAM, an online trading platform for agricultural commodities is helping women overcome or compensate the barriers they face in accessing markets. National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) is playing a significant role to uplift women cooperatives as large number of women are engaged and involved in cooperatives dealing with activities related to food grain processing, plantation crops, oilseeds processing, fisheries, dairy & livestock, spinning mills, handloom and power loom weaving, Integrated Cooperative Development Projects, etc.

Construction of over 11.60 crore toilets under 'Swachh Bharat Mission', clean cooking gas connections to 10.14 crore women below poverty line under 'Ujjawala Yojana' and connecting over 14.21 crores out of 19.26 crores rural household with tap

drinking water connections under 'Jal Jeevan Mission' have transformed the lives of women by reducing the drudgery and care burden.

Further, "Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras" are established so as to reduce out of pocket expenses in healthcare. The objective is to bring down the healthcare budget of every citizen of India through providing Quality generic Medicines at Affordable Prices. Over 10,000 Kendras are functional across the country.

In order to enhance the employability of female workers, the Government is providing training to them through a network of Women Industrial Training institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes. A number of enabling provisions have been incorporated in Labour Codes viz. the Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 and the Code on Social Security, 2020 for creating congenial work environment for women workers. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA) mandates that at least one third of the jobs generated under the scheme (MGNREGS) should be given to women.

To ensure economic independence of women through skill development and vocational training, the Government has introduced Skill India Mission. The National Skill Development Policy focuses on inclusive skill development, with the objective of increased women participation for better economic productivity.

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; flexible training delivery mechanisms such as mobile training units, flexible afternoon batches along with on local need-based training to accommodate women; and ensuring safe and gender sensitive training environment, employment of women trainers, equity in remuneration, and complaint redressal mechanism.

The Government of India has launched the 'Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan' (PMGDISHA) to usher in digital literacy in rural India by covering 6 Crore rural households (one person per household). The Scheme aims to bridge the digital divide, specifically targeting the rural population including marginalized sections of society like SC/ST, minorities, persons falling below poverty line, women and differently abled.

Under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), nearly 9.98 crore women are connected with around 90 lakh women's self-help groups that are transforming rural socio-economic landscape in several innovative and socially and ecologically responsible ways, also availing governmental support including through collateral free loans.

India is promoting greater roles for girls in the armed forces. Government has also made enabling provisions for allowing women's participation in non-conventional sectors such as fighter pilots in Indian Air Force, Commandos, Central Police Forces, admissions in Sainik Schools, entry of Girls in NDA etc. The Government has taken multiple initiatives to increase female participation in the civil aviation sector with the

creation of women aviation professionals through a special focus on young schoolgirls, especially from low-income families. Today, country has 10% more women pilots than the global average. Globally, according to the International Society of Women Airline Pilots, around 5 per cent of pilots are women. In India, the share of women pilots is significantly higher.

There are schemes like Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana and Stand-Up India, Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) have been launched for helping women set up their own enterprises. To economically empower women, 81% of loans of sizes from rupees ten lakh to rupees one crore under 'Stand-Up India' have been made available to women by the Government.

Under one of the largest financial inclusion programmes in the world, PM Jan Dhan Yojana has benefited more than 28 crore women, mostly in rural areas to open their own bank accounts. For securing the future of the girl child, the government launched a savings scheme called 'Sukanya Samridhi Account' etc.

With special attention towards entrepreneurship, Government of India has played a key role in the facilitation and disbursement of a large number of loans to small women-led enterprises ensuring that women become a vital force in the country's burgeoning start-up ecosystem supported under the Start-up India.

In order to bring women in the mainstream of political leadership at the grass root level, Government has reserved at least 33% of the seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for women through the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment to the Constitution. Today, there are more than 14.50 lakh Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in PRIs, which is approximately 46% of the total elected representatives. The Government is providing training to the EWRs from time to time to build on their capacity with a view to empowering women to participate effectively in the governance processes.

The greatest leap forward for women empowerment and representation of women in the highest political offices in the country has been the notification by Government of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 (Constitution One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023 on 28 September, 2023, for reservation of one-third of seats for women in the House of People (Lok Sabha) and in the State Legislative Assemblies including Legislative Assembly of NCT of Delhi.

The Ministry implements the Umbrella Scheme named as 'Mission Shakti' during the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission period with effect from the financial year 2022-23, is aimed at strengthening interventions for women safety, security and empowerment. It seeks to realise the Government's commitment for "women-led development" by addressing issues affecting women on a life-cycle continuum basis and by making them equal partners in nation-building through convergence and citizen-ownership. It seeks to focus on proposing strategies for improving convergence across Ministries/ Departments and at different levels of governance. It also seeks to promote greater participation and support of Panchayats and other local level governance bodies, apart from strengthening digital infrastructure support, last mile tracking and Jan Sahabhagita. Mission Shakti has two sub-schemes - 'Sambal' and 'Samarthya'.

In the “Sambal” sub-scheme, which is for safety and security of women and has the components of One Stop Centres (OSCs), Women Helpline (WHL), Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) and a new component of Nari Adalat.

In the “Samarthya” sub scheme, which is for empowerment of women and has the components of Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), Ujjwala, Swadhar Greh (renamed as Shakti Sadan) and Working Women Hostel (renamed as Sakhi Niwas), National Creche Scheme (renamed as Palna) and a new component of Gap Funding for Economic Empowerment i.e. Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW) with the aim to facilitate inter-sectoral convergence of schemes and programs meant for women at the Central, State/ UT and District levels for creating an environment in which women are able to realize their full potential. The support under the HEW provides for guiding, linking and hand holding women to various institutional and schematic set ups for their empowerment and development including access to healthcare, quality education, career and vocational counseling/ training, financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, backward and forward linkages, health and safety for workers, social security and digital literacy at districts/ Blocks/ Gram Panchayats level across the country.

The Anganwadi Services under Mission Poshan 2.0 is a universal scheme under which pregnant women and lactating mothers are eligible for the services including the Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP). For partial compensation of wages and for promoting health seeking behavior among pregnant women and lactating mothers, Government has implemented Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) which aims to promote appropriate practice, care and institutional service utilization during pregnancy, delivery and lactation by providing cash incentives in Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode to pregnant and lactating mothers. Benefits have been extended to around 3.29 crore women through this scheme. Also, Palna, a sub-scheme is implemented in all States/ UTs to provide day care facilities and protection to children. The services of childcare have been extended through Anganwadi cum Crèche (AWCC) by way of converting all standalone creches into Anganwadi-cum-creches (AWCCs) to enable more mothers to work and the care givers to participate in the workforce.

In 2017, the Maternity Benefit Act was amended to increase paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks for the first two children which provides for paid maternity leave to women workers and creche facility in establishments having fifty or more employees within prescribed distance. Depending upon the nature of work assigned to a woman, the Section 5(5) of the Act also provides for work from home for woman after availing of the maternity benefit for such period and on such conditions as the employer and the woman may mutually agree.

As per the Time Use Survey (TUS) (January – December 2019) conducted by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, in both rural and urban India, about 80% females are involved in unpaid domestic services for household members devoting about 5 hours per day compared to about 20% males with about 1 hour and 30 minutes per day.

The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women inter-alia aims at changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women. It provides policy directions to ensure women's perspectives which are included in designing and implementing macro-economic and social policies by institutionalizing their participation in such processes. The policy aims to recognise women as producers and workers in the formal and informal sectors (including homebased workers) and appropriate policies relating to employment and her working conditions are accordingly drawn up.

As per Periodic Labour Force Survey, conducted by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the female labour force participation rate (usual status, age 15 years and above) has consistently increased from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 37.0% in 2022-23 as shown in the table below:

Survey Period	Female Labour Force Participation Rate (%) (usual status, age 15 years and above)
2017-18	23.3
2018-19	24.5
2019-20	30.0
2020-21	32.5
2021-22	32.8
2022-23	37.0

This significant jump of 13.7% in the female labour force participation rate is an outcome of the decisive agenda set by the Government for ensuring women's empowerment through policy initiatives aimed at their long-term socio-economic development to improve women's participation in the labour force and quality of their employment in the country.

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