

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1627
TO BE ANSWERED ON 11.02.2022

SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF GIRL CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS

1627. SHRI S. VENKATESAN:

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

- (a) Whether the Government has taken note of the reports of increasing sexual harassment of Girl children in schools;
- (b) If so, the special efforts made to check such atrocities; and
- (c) The steps taken to strengthen the complaint system to enable girls report such issues without fear?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (c): The Government accords highest priority for ensuring safety and security of children and has undertaken various interventions in this regard. To safeguard children against sexual abuse and sexual harassment, Government has enacted Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. The act defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years.

POCSO Act under section-12 provides punishment for committing sexual harassment which shall be with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to fine. The Act was further amended in 2019 to introduce more stringent punishment including death penalty for committing sexual crimes on children, with a view to deter the perpetrators & prevent such crimes against children.

Further the POCSO Rules, 2020 were also notified by the Ministry to protect the children from exploitation/violence and sexual exploitation. POCSO Rules under Rule-3 provides that any institution housing children or coming in regular contact with children including schools, creches, sports academies or any other facility for children must ensure a police verification and background check on periodic basis, of every staff, teaching or non-teaching, regular or contractual, or any other person being an employee of such Institution coming in contact with the child. Such Institution shall also ensure that periodic training is organized for sensitizing them on child safety and protection.

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has compiled different guidelines and formed a comprehensive manual titled "*Manual on Safety and Security of Children in Schools*". The manual is available on NCPCR's website at <https://ncpcr.gov.in>. Based on the manual various sensitization programmes for school authorities and staff have also been organized. Guidelines on cyber safety and security of children have been compiled by NCPCR. NCPCR conducted various workshops on salient features of POCSO Act / POCSO E-Box and Role of Emotional Intelligence in sensitization of teachers and students.

To ensure safety of girl children, following steps have been taken by Ministry of Education, Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL) to create awareness among children about Child Sexual Abuse:-

In the textbooks published by NCERT, the inner pages include a reference to POCSO e-box available at NCPCR@gov.in and number 1098-a national 24 hours toll free emergency phone service for children in distress.

School Safety Pledge: Ministry of Education has issued an advisory to all States and UTs to display School Safety Pledge, including important contact numbers, at a prominent place in the school to increase awareness about the redressal mechanism and ensure physical and psychological well-being of the children.

'KOMAL' - a short film on Good Touch and Bad Touch, commissioned by Ministry of Women and Child Development, has been circulated to States and UTs on 02.03.2020 for sensitization of children and institutions.

Internal Complaint Committee: As per the provision of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, Department of School Education and Literacy has requested all States & Union Territories, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Navodaya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Central Tibetan School Administration and Central Bureau of Secondary Education to constitute separate Grievance Redressal Committee and Internal Complaint Committee on 03.08.2020.

Self defence training to Girls: To empower girls to tackle risk of assault and for boosting their self confidence, under Samagra Shiksha, Self defence training is imparted to girls of class VI to XII belonging to Government Schools. Self Defence training for girls is an activity under Samagra Shiksha. Fund for this purpose is provided to schools for inculcating self-defence skills including life skill for self-protection and self-development among the girls. Self defence training is also being given in Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas.

NISHTHA: Under NISHTHA (National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement), a nation-wide integrated teacher training program for teachers under Samagra Shiksha, teachers have been oriented on counselling, provisions of POCSO Act, Juvenile Justice Act, School Safety guidelines, helpline and emergency numbers, drop-box for complaints, etc.

NEP 2020 focuses on the **safety and security** of school-going girls both inside and outside of the campus. The schools have to ensure harassment, discrimination, and domineer free campus before enlisting for yearly accreditation. This will increase the attendance number of girl children in the class. The policy will identify social mores and gender stereotypes that prevent girls from accessing education and causing regular dropouts.

Considering the cases relating to Child Sexual Abuse being reported in the media, an online complaint management system POCSO e-Box has been developed, which is for easy and direct reporting of sexual offences against children and timely action against the offenders under the POCSO Act, 2012.
