

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4146
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.12.2024

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKFORCE

4146. SHRI BAIJAYANT PANDA

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

- (a) whether the Government has any specific targets to improve gender equality as reflected in the Gender Inequality Index (GII), if so, the details thereof;
- (b) the details of the specific initiatives implemented by the Government to encourage women to pursue advanced degrees and join the organised workforce; and
- (c) the details of the steps taken by the Government to overcome the barriers that limit women's participation in higher education and employment?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(SHRIMATI SAVITRI THAKUR)

(a) to (c) The Gender Inequality Index (GII) is released as a part of Human Development Report (HDR), which is published by the United Nations Development Programme. GII is calculated on the basis of indicators, viz., Maternal Mortality Ratio, Adolescent Birth Rate, Women's share of seats in parliament, Population with at least some secondary education, and Labour force participation rate. The Government of India has been working in collaboration with all State/UTs and different stakeholders to enhance the accessibility and quality of healthcare services for pregnant women and young children through various initiatives/schemes like Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK), Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN), Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), Labour room Quality Improvement initiatives (LaQshya) etc. HDR 2023-24 has ranked India at 108 out of 193 countries in GII 2022. In GII 2021, India was ranked at 122 out of 191 countries.

Government of India has given utmost priority to reduce disparity between men and women and by encouraging women to pursue higher education and join workforce. Some major initiatives taken by the Government for improving economic and educational empowerment of women to promote gender equality and to overcome barriers that limit women's participation in higher education and join the organized workforce are follows:

- Under the scheme '**Women in Science and Engineering-KIRAN (WISE-KIRAN)**', the Department of Science and Technology (DST) is creating various

opportunities to support women in Science & Technology fields through several programmes.

- The **CURIE (Consolidation of University Research for Innovation and Excellence) Programme** is developing research infrastructure in women universities and Women PG Colleges.
- **Vigyan Jyoti** was launched in 2020 to balance low representation of girls in different streams of Science and Technology from 9th to 12th standards benefiting over 80,000 girl students.
- **Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions (GATI) (2020)** initiative encourages transformational changes at institutional level towards achieving Gender Equality in the STEM area. In its pilot phase, 30 scientific institutions are working under GATI pilot towards achieving Gender Equality in STEM.
- **Women Technology Parks (2017-18)** have been established as resource centers where all necessary support is made available to women on Science & Technology based training, capacity building in various technologies.
- **WISE Fellowship** for Ph.D. (WISE-PhD) and **WISE Post-Doctoral Fellowship (WISE-PDF)** to carry out research in Basic and Applied Sciences, **WISE-SCOPE** to encourage women scientists to utilize their scientific knowledge for benefit of society, **WIDUSHI** programme to support senior women scientists and **WISE-IPR** programme for creating self-employment opportunities have also been started.
- **SERB POWER Scheme, Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB)'s Promoting Opportunities for Women in Exploratory Research (POWER)**, designed exclusively for women scientists, launched in 2020, has funded 97 projects in Research grant, of which 42 Fellowships given to women.
- The “**Development of Women’s Studies in Indian Universities and Colleges**” scheme by UGC provides funds for setting up Women Studies Centers (WSCs) in universities and colleges, focusing on teaching, research, curriculum development, trainings and outreach activities.
- Synergising the School Education and Higher Education, the IIT-Madras has undertaken “Vidya Shakti” scheme which aims at enhancing conceptual and foundational learning skills of children from rural areas to enhance enrolment (including women) in STEM branches in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs).
- **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)** has been initiated by Government, inter alia, for facilitation of self-employment. Under PMMY, collateral free loans upto Rs. 20 lakh are extended to micro/small business enterprises and to individuals to enable them to setup or expand their business activities. Majority of the beneficiaries under this yojana are women.
- **Stand Up India** scheme promotes entrepreneurship amongst women, SC and ST categories, i.e., those sections of the population understood to be facing significant hurdles due to lack of advice/ mentorship as well as inadequate and delayed credit. 84% of the loans sized Rs 10 lakh to Rs. 1 crore were made available to women.

- The **Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA)**, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme by Ministry of Education caters to needs of educationally unserved/ underserved areas and aimed at funding specific State government universities and colleges, including in the rural areas, so as to improve their quality by ensuring their conformity to prescribed norms and standards.
- The **Overseas Fellowship Scheme** started in 2017-18, provides opportunities to Indian Women to undertake international collaborative research in areas of their choice.
- The **Skill India Mission** aligned to the National Skill Development Policy, designed with special focus on skilling of disadvantaged groups, Women, Transgender and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).
- Labour laws have specific provisions relating to women workers besides all other rights. **The Maternity Benefit Act, as amended in 2017**, has enhanced paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks for two surviving children. It also has enabled provision of “Work from Home”, after availing of the maternity benefit by the woman, where the nature of work being assigned of such nature, for such period and on such conditions mutually agreed upon by the employer and the woman employee.
- The Government has also enacted the four Labour Codes, namely the **Code on Wages 2019; the Industrial Relations Code 2020; the Code on Social Security 2020**, and **the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code 2020**, which *inter alia*, promote participation of women in workforce in a dignified manner through a number of provisions; such as no discrimination on the ground of gender in matters relating to wages, recruitment and in the conditions of employment; Women are entitled to be employed in all establishments for all types of work even before 6 AM and beyond 7 PM subject to their consent and other adequate safety measures.
- **Sakhi Niwas** (Working Women’s Hostel) scheme provides safe and affordable housing for working women and thereby encourages more women to seek employment.
- **Palna**, the National Crèche Scheme, ensures that women take up gainful employment through providing a safe, secure and stimulating environment to the children.
- **Hubs for Empowerment of Women (HEW)** at National, State and District level have been approved under Mission Shakti. The support under HEW is available for guiding, linking and hand holding women to various institutional and schematic set-up for their empowerment and development including equal access to healthcare, quality education, career and vocational counselling/training, financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, backward and forward linkages, health and safety for workers, social security and digital literacy at various levels across the country.
