

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3663
TO BE ANSWERED ON 21.03.2025

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

3663. SMT. PRATIMA MONDAL:

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

- (a) whether any initiatives have been taken to increase women's representation in leadership roles across Government, Corporate and Political spheres and if so, the details thereof; and
- (b) the details of the steps taken by the Government to address malnutrition among women and children particularly in rural and tribal areas, through schemes like POSHAN Abhiyaan?

ANSWER

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

(a): The Government of India has adopted a “whole-of-government” and “whole-of-society” approach to address issues on a life-cycle continuum basis for the holistic empowerment of women from all sections of the society, and this includes political empowerment of women. Through various policies, the Government of India is promoting greater participation of women in local governance and political leadership roles.

In 2023, Parliament of India passed the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, “Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam”, marking a historic milestone in its national journey to foster equitable representation of women in public life at all levels of the federal structure. This landmark legislation rotationally reserves one-third of all seats for women in the Lower House of Parliament, Lok Sabha, and in all federal State Legislative Assemblies, including Legislative Assembly of National Capital Territory of Delhi, thus institutionalizing representation of women in politics at the highest levels of public decision-making.

This recent landmark is built on the foundation of more than three decades of honing women's leadership affirmative action at grassroots level by reserving one-third (33 percent) of the seats in in the rural and urban bodies of local governance, i.e., Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Municipal bodies, through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992). Keeping with decentralized federal structure, over two-third states (21 states / and 2 UTs with PRIs) have made provisions of 50% reservation for women in their Panchayati Raj Institutions. As a result, today, out of approximately 31 lakh elected representatives in local governments, nearly half (46 percent), comprising 14.5 lakh, are women - a scale of representation unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

The Government has launched the "Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan", a comprehensive and targeted capacity-building initiative aimed at strengthening Women Elected Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions across the nation. It focuses on sharpening their leadership acumen, enhancing their decision-making capabilities, and reinforcing their role in grassroots governance. The Government has prepared specialized training modules designed specifically for capacity building of Women Elected Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Recognizing the on-ground challenges faced by women duty bearers and women leaders contesting elections, a comprehensive "Primer on Law Addressing Gender Based Violence and Harmful Practices" for Panchayat Elected Representatives has also been prepared.

Recently, the Government has launched Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats Initiative with an aim to establish at least one Model Gram Panchayat in each District in the country that is both women and girl friendly, reinforcing the commitment to gender equality and sustainable rural development.

The Government has made enabling provisions in the Companies Act, 2013, mandating companies to have at least one woman Director. As a result, today, nearly 11.6 Lakh Women Directors are associated with Public and Private companies.

Recognizing the transformative potential of start-ups, the Government has introduced several initiatives to support and nurture entrepreneurship, including women's entrepreneurship. More than 73,000 start-ups, representing nearly half of the 1,57,066 start-ups supported by the government under the Start-up India Initiative, have at least one-woman director, underscoring the crucial role women play in driving innovation and economic growth.

(b): During the 15th Finance Commission cycle, 2 lakh Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) located in Government buildings @ 40,000 AWCs per year have been approved for strengthening and upgradation as Saksham Anganwadis for improved nutrition delivery and for Early Childhood Care and Education under Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0.

Under Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, the issue of malnutrition involving dimensions of food, health, water, sanitation and education of women and children, including in rural and tribal areas, is being addressed through a multi-sectoral

approach by establishing cross cutting convergence amongst 18 Ministries/ Departments.

A new strategy has been made for reduction in malnutrition and for improved health, wellness and immunity through activities like community engagement, outreach, behavioral change, and advocacy. It focuses on Maternal Nutrition, Infant and Young Child Feeding Norms, treatment of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM)/ Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) and wellness through AYUSH practices to reduce prevalence of wasting, stunting, and being underweight.

Supplementary Nutrition is provided to Children (6 months to 6 years), Pregnant Women, Lactating Mothers and Adolescent Girls to beat the intergenerational cycle of malnutrition by adopting a life cycle approach in accordance with the revised nutrition norms of January 2023, which are based on the principles of diet diversity that provides for quality protein, healthy fats and micronutrients rather than old norms that were largely calorie-specific.

Fortified rice is being supplied to AWCs to meet the requirement of micro-nutrients and to control anaemia among women and children. Greater emphasis is being laid on the use of millets at least once a week for preparation of Hot Cooked Meal and Take Home ration at Anganwadi centers.

Ministry of Women & Child Development and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare have jointly released the protocol for Community Management of Malnutrition (CMAM) to prevent and treat severely acute malnutrition in children and for reducing associated morbidity and mortality including the children in rural and tribal areas.

States and UTs regularly conduct and report sensitisation activities under Jan Andolans during Poshan Maahs and Poshan Pakhwadas celebrated in the months of September and March-April respectively. Community Based Events (CBEs) have served as a significant strategy in changing nutritional practices and all Anganwadi workers are mandated to conduct two Community Based Events every month.

The 'Poshan Tracker' application was rolled out on 1st March, 2021 to facilitate monitoring and tracking of infrastructure and service delivery at Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) and beneficiaries on defined indicators. With "Poshan Tracker", real time data on malnutrition indicators is available every month. As compared to NFHS (sample size of approx 6.1 lakh households and survey done after every 5 or 6 years only), Poshan Tracker consistently measures approx. 8.5 crore children, including in rural and tribal areas, approximately each month revealing the real time nutritional status of beneficiaries.
