

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4074
ANSWERED ON 25.03.2025

WOMEN SARPANCHES

4074. MS IQRA CHOUDHARY:

Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

- (a) the steps taken by the Government to eradicate the practice of proxy sarpanch or sarpanch pati in the country, specifically in the State of Uttar Pradesh;
- (b) the steps taken by the Government to conduct sensitisation drives and ensure that female sarpanchs' are empowered to perform their role;
- (c) the details of sensitisation drives and capacity-building programs conducted in the country, specifically in the State of Uttar Pradesh;
- (d) whether the use of community radio to spread awareness of such issues has been successful and if such community radios are used in Uttar Pradesh; and
- (e) the details of the number of women sarpanches, State/UT-wise including Uttar Pradesh?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR PANCHAYATI RAJ

(SHRI S.P. SINGH BAGHEL)

(a) Since 'Panchayats' fall under the jurisdiction of State Governments, complaints regarding male interference in the responsibilities of Women Elected Representatives (WERs) are forwarded to the respective State Governments for grievance redressal. Additionally, the Ministry has issued advisories to State and Union Territory Governments to prevent such interference and uphold the autonomy of WERs in Panchayati Raj governance.

On the directive of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj established an Advisory Committee in September 2023 to address the issue of Women Pradhans being represented by male family members and related concerns. The Committee submitted its report in February 2025, along with recommendations that have been accepted by the Government of India.

The Advisory Committee recommended that State Governments take necessary measures to eliminate proxy leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The committee has submitted its report in February 2025.

The Government of Uttar Pradesh has informed that following steps have been taken:

- i. As per Government order of 2006, Principal Secretary had instructed to prevent unauthorized practice of male relative presiding over meetings in place of female panchayat officer bearers.
- ii. As per Government order of 1998 & 2012, Principal Secretary had issued guidelines that relatives of elected female office bearers shall not enter their offices and not participate in meetings.
- iii. The Allahabad High Court directed Uttar Pradesh government to provide training to village heads, particularly women to empower them and discourage the 'Pradhan Pati' culture.

(b) & (c) The Ministry is implementing the Centrally Sponsored Scheme Revamped Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA) from the financial year 2022-23 in States and Union Territories including Uttar Pradesh. The primary objective is to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) by providing training to Elected Representatives (ERs), including Women Sarpanches, functionaries, and other stakeholders. This initiative aims to enhance their governance capabilities and leadership skills, enabling Panchayats to function effectively. Additionally, the Ministry actively engages with Women Elected Representatives (WERs) through workshops, conferences, committees, and expert groups focused on women's empowerment and leadership. Insights from these interactions, along with recommendations from expert groups, inform the advisories issued by the Ministry to State Governments periodically.

Furthermore, the Ministry has partnered with Transform Rural India (TRI) as a Knowledge Partner to develop a comprehensive training module for the capacity building of Women Elected Representatives (WERs). This initiative is designed to strengthen their leadership and managerial skills, ensuring more effective governance at the grassroots level.

To promote gender-inclusive governance, the Ministry has also initiated efforts to transform selected Gram Panchayats into Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats (MWFPGs) under Theme 9 of the Localized Sustainable Development Goals (LSGs). States and Union Territories have identified one Gram Panchayat per district for this transformation. In collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as a Knowledge Partner, the Ministry is developing training modules and training a cadre of Master Trainers. This effort aims to build the capacity of grassroots-level Elected Representatives (ERs) and Panchayati Raj Functionaries (PRFs) to foster women-friendly governance and empower female leadership in rural governance structures. Also, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj undertakes sustained efforts to raise awareness, sensitize and empower women Sarpanches to function independently through a multi-pronged media and IEC strategy. Extensive coverage is ensured across print, digital, and social media platforms, highlighting women's leadership in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Audio-visual films on best practices and achievements of the women Sarpanches are widely disseminated through social media to inspire grassroots leadership. Intensive and regular social media campaigns promote

best practices and key interventions, while audio-visual content, including a special film titled “Asli Pradhan Kaun?”, also disseminated on OTT platforms, has significantly amplified outreach. Also, various workshops/ seminars on occasions of specific women’s day and women issues such as women-friendly Panchayats have been organised to give platforms to them to share their stories of challenges and successes both at regional, national and International level.

Government of Uttar Pradesh has informed that State Panchayati Raj Department conducted a two-day training program on leadership skills, communication skills, and gender equality for women sarpanches of the state in three phases. Out of 75 districts, the training has been completed in 69 districts. This training program focuses on empowering women leaders in local governance by providing training on various aspects, including legal knowledge and digital literacy, to ensure they can serve their communities effectively.

(d) Ministry of Panchayati Raj has entrusted the Community Radio Association (CRA) to conduct and broadcast programmes series 'Jan Jan Tak Jankari' on initiatives of the Ministry and create awareness on issues related to practice of proxy-Sarpanch or Sarpanch Pati through 15 community radio stations in **Bihar, Karnataka and Maharashtra on pilot basis**. In addition to the Sarpanch Pati issue, other nine episodes covered issues that included mobilization of own sources of revenue by the PRIs, sustainable development goals in the areas of water, infrastructure, health, women and child development, good governance etc. However, Government of Uttar Pradesh has informed that specific community radio is not being used.

(e) The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has maintained record of Elected Representatives and Women Elected Representatives including Women Sarpanches. The State-wise number of elected representatives and women elected representatives (WERs) in Panchayati Raj Institutes has been placed at annexure.

Annexure

State-wise Elected Representatives and Women elected representatives (WERs) in Panchayati Raj Institutes.

Sl. No	Name of the States/ UTs	No. of ERs	No. of WERs
1	Andhra Pradesh	156050	78025
2	Arunachal Pradesh	9383	3658
3	Assam	At present, no Panchayat exists. Tenure of Panchayat bodies have ended. Election is due since December, 2023, but delayed	
4	Bihar	136573	71046
5	Chhattisgarh	170465	93392
6	Goa	1555	571
7	Gujarat	144080	71988
8	Haryana	70035	29499
9	Himachal Pradesh	28723	14398
10	Jharkhand	59638	30757
11	Karnataka	At present, no Panchayat exists. Tenure of BP and DP bodies have ended. Election was due in February, 2021 but delayed	
12	Kerala	18372	9630
13	Madhya Pradesh	392981	196490
14	Maharashtra	Elections for GPs in Maharashtra are to be scheduled on different dates as per their respective tenure of Five year.	At present, no Block Panchayat (BP) and District Panchayat (DP) Panchayat exists. Tenure of BP and DP bodies have ended. Election was due in January/February, 2022 but delayed. -

15	Manipur	At present, no Panchayat exists. Tenure of Panchayat bodies has ended. Election was due in September, 2022 but delayed.	
16	Meghalaya	Does not cover under Part IX	
17	Mizoram	Does not cover under Part IX	
18	Nagaland	Does not cover under Part IX	
19	Odisha	107487	56627
20	Punjab	GP Election has been conducted but details of ERs are yet to be finalised	BP and DP Election is pending
21	Rajasthan	126271	64802
22	Sikkim	1153	580
23	Tamil Nadu	At present, no Panchayat exists. Tenure of Panchayat bodies ended. Election was due in December, 2024	
24	Telangana	At present, no Panchayat exists. Tenure of Panchayat bodies ended. Gram Panchayat (GP) Election is due in January and BP and DP in May, 2024 but delayed	
25	Tripura	6909	3126
26	Uttar Pradesh	913417	304538
27	Uttarakhand	At present, no Panchayat exists. Tenure of Panchayat bodies ended. Election was due in 2024	
28	West Bengal	59229	30458
29	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	858	306
30	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	147	47
31	Jammu and Kashmir	At present, no Panchayat exists. Tenure of Panchayat bodies ended. Election was due in December, 2023 but delayed	
32	Ladakh	At present, no Panchayat exists. Tenure of Panchayat bodies ended. Election was due in December, 2023 but delayed	

33	Lakshadweep	At present, no Panchayat exists. Tenure of Panchayat bodies ended. Election was due in December, 2022 but delayed
34	Puducherry	At present, no Panchayat exists. Tenure of Panchayat bodies ended. Election was due but delayed since 2011

Source: Data as available on the website of the States/UTs or as provided by them to MoPR
