

# POLICY TO PROMOTE WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Women - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

The principle of gender equality is enshrined within the Constitution of India which guarantees gender equality and empowers the State to formulate affirmative action in favour of women.

The Government of India has taken various steps to ensure empowerment of women through their social, educational, economic and political uplifting through various schematic interventions. While the schemes implemented by the Government like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban & Rural), the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), Pradhan Mantri Vay Vandana Yojana (PMVVY) and Scheme for Adolescent Girls (SAG) support women and girls to be socially secure, the initiatives like Samagra Shiksha, Scheme of National Overseas Scholarship, 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 fulfill their special requirements.

Further, the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 prioritises gender equity and envisions ensuring equitable access to quality education to all students, with a special emphasis on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs).

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. To ensure economic independence of women through skill development and vocational training, the Government has also 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. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Kendras lay emphasis on creating additional infrastructure both for training and apprenticeship for women; flexible training delivery mechanisms, flexible afternoon batches 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. There are schemes like Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana and Stand Up India, Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), for helping the women to set up their own enterprise. Under the Swachh Vidyalaya Mission, it was ensured that all schools have at least one functional toilet for girls. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojna (PMUY) aims to safeguard the health of women by providing them with clean cooking fuel and also from drudgery of collecting firewood.

Further, in order to encourage employment of women, a number of enabling provisions have been incorporated in the recently enacted 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. Stand Up India scheme promotes entrepreneurship amongst women. 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. 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 etc. The Government also implements the scheme of

Working Women Hostels for providing safe accommodation to working women.

Though, "Police and Public Order are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India and responsibility to maintain law and order, protection of life and property of the citizens including investigation and prosecution of crime against women and children rests primarily with the respective State Governments, the Central Government gives high priority to ensuring safety and security of women and has undertaken various legislative and schematic interventions in this regard. These include legislations such as "The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018, "The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, "The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, "The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2006, "The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, etc. The schemes/ projects include One Stop Centres (OSCs), Universalisation of Women Helplines (WHL), Mahila Police Volunteers (MPV), Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) which is a pan-India single number (112)/ mobile app based system for emergencies, a cyber-crime reporting portal to report obscene content and assistance to States/ UTs for strengthening cyber forensic capabilities, safe city projects in 8 cities (Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai), training and skill development programs for Investigation Officers (IOs), Prosecution Officers (POs) and Medical Officers (MOs), distribution of Sexual Assault Evidence Collection (SAEC) Kits to States/ UTs, establishment of state of the art DNA laboratory at CFSL, Chandigarh, assistance to 24 States/ UTs to strengthen Forensic Science Laboratories, assistance to States/ UTs for their respective victim compensation schemes under Central Victim Compensation Fund (CVCF), setting up of Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) for speedy disposal of cases of rape and cases under POCSO Act, setting up/ strengthening of Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) in all districts of the country, setting up/ strengthening of Women Help Desks (WHDs) at Police Stations, Integrated Emergency Response Management System (IERMS) at 983 railway stations, Video Surveillance System at Konkan Railway Stations, scheme for customization, deployment and management of State-wise vehicle tracking platform, etc.

In addition, the Government of India has decided to implement the Umbrella Scheme for Safety, Security and Empowerment of Women as an integrated women empowerment program under the name '**Mission Shakti**', for addressing the issues of women on a life-cycle continuum basis and for making them equal partners in nation-building through convergence at different levels of governance and a participative approach.

This information was given by the Union Minister for Women and Child Development, Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani, in a written reply in Rajya Sabha today.

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