

Statement of India  
Fifth Session of Committee on Social Development  
(28<sup>th</sup> November-30<sup>th</sup> November 2018)

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**Agenda Item No.2**

**Strategies for leaving no one behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

At the outset, let me congratulate the Chair for your assumption of the chairmanship of this important Committee Session.

We note the documents prepared by UNESCAP on this agenda item i.e. 'Strategies for advancing women's economic empowerment in the context of the SDGs' and 'leaving no one behind: supporting vulnerable groups in the context of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development'.

Government of India has a robust framework of laws and policies and has initiated schematic interventions to for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment; facilitate women in distress to have access to justice; to empower women through various initiatives.

A **draft National Policy for Women** has been prepared, which delineates the framework across sectors for achieving gender equality. It has taken into consideration multi-stakeholder feedback. Over 15,000 crowd-sourced ideas have been considered as part of the policy formulation process.

The recent **Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017** has extended mandatory paid Maternity Leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, making it the third longest in the world. Commissioning and adoptive mothers are also entitled to 12-week Maternity Leave, provided the age of the child is less than 3 months. It also provides for mandatory crèche facility at organisations having 50 or more employees.

**Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013** includes new offences like acid attack, sexual harassment, voyeurism and stalking etc. included in IPC. Heavy penalty for grave offences like rape, gangrape, life changing injury have also been included. Also, free of cost & priority treatment should be provided to women victims of rape/acid attack etc.

To ensure safety and security of women at workplaces, the Government of India is working towards the effective implementation of the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013**.

**Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005** is civil in nature and defines domestic violence to include all acts of omission and commission that causes injury to a woman's physical, sexual or mental health. The Act provides relief to women in the form of protection orders, residence orders, monetary relief, custody and compensation orders.

The government has extended the **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** (value the girl child, enable her education) programme to all the districts of the country. It is a comprehensive programme to address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of empowerment of women over a life-cycle continuum. Through this programme, the Government of India stands committed to bringing gender balance in child sex ratio and increasing value of girls by creating an enabling environment for them to enjoy their rights.

The POSHAN Abhiyan - **National Nutrition Mission (NNM)** has been set up with a three year budget of Rs.9046.17 crore commencing from 2017-18. Over 10 crore beneficiaries are covered under the Mission. The NNM is a comprehensive approach towards raising nutrition level in the country on a war footing. It targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia among young children, adolescent girls and women, and low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3%, and 2% per annum respectively. The Mission targets to bring down stunting among children, in 0-6 years age group, from 38.4% (NFHS-4) to 25% by 2022.

**Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme** has been started to provide an interface for rural women to approach the government for availing their entitlements and for empowering them through training and capacity building. Convergent support is being proposed for equal access to healthcare, quality education, career and vocational guidance, employment, health and safety, social security and digital literacy at Gram Panchayats level in selected districts/blocks across the country. As a truly innovative programme, over 300,000 student volunteers are being sent out, to the most backwards districts in the country to ensure government schemes can be accessed by rural women.

Government of India had set up a dedicated and non-lapsable fund called **Nirbhaya Fund** in 2013, for the implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security for women in the country. MWCD is the nodal authority for appraisal of the schemes/ proposals received under Nirbhaya Fund.

Under the Nirbhaya Fund an amount of Rs. 3600 Crores has been allocated upto 2018-19. However, after thorough restructuring of the way the Fund was being deployed, approximately Rs 6312.46 Crores have been appraised so far for a number of different projects across the country. Over the next few years the utilization of this deployment will bring enormous changes in the safety aspect of women.

**One Stop Centres (OSC)** have been set up across the country to provide a single-window of services to women facing violence. They provide medical, police and legal aid, psycho-social counselling and temporary shelter to women. 232 OSCs are functional across 33 States/UTs. They have assisted almost 1.7 lakh women. 181 women helpline provides emergency and non-emergency response to women in distress. Helpline informs about legal, police, psychological and other options available for distressed women. Women Helplines have been set up in 31 States/UTs and have assisted more than 18.6 lakh women.

Government of India has taken up the training of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in panchayats to empower them to govern their villages effectively and develop into grassroots change makers. First phase of the training (2017-18) trained 18,578 EWRs covering 414 Districts across 14 States of India. The second phase (started in Sept, 2018) is to train 13,950 EWRs covering 310 Districts across 19 States. The programme aims at improving the leadership qualities and managements skills of EWRs for better implementation of various schemes, impart knowledge on important legislations and monitor asset creation and public works.

The government is committed to ensuring the empowerment of each and every citizen of India, and for this **financial inclusion** is a must. Until two years ago, opening a bank account was considered a tedious task, however, the government has enabled banking services for the unbanked, 32 crore accounts have been opened under the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana**. As per March 2018 figures, 16.42 crore accounts holders are women- more than half of the total beneficiaries. Women's share of total savings accounts increased from 28% in 2014 to 40% in 2017 (according to data from top 40 banks and RRBs). A sizeable and rapid growth in financial inclusion of women, a cherished goal for decades.

Under the **Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojna (PMMY)**, our government has provided credit to small entrepreneurs without the need for collateral or a guarantor. 13.37 crore loans have been extended amounting to Rs. 632383.46 Cr as on 03.08.2018. 9.81 crore loans have been provided to women entrepreneurs i.e. 75% of the total loans.

**Gender Budgeting** is a powerful tool for achieving gender mainstreaming so as to ensure that the benefits of development reach women as much as men. GB is not simply an accounting exercise but an ongoing process of engendering budgets at the levels of planning, policy/ programme formulation, budgeting, implementation, review, and audit. By maintaining a gender perspective at all stages of planning and budgeting, GB aims at targeting and meeting women's priorities effectively.

A Gender Budget Charter was issued in 2007 that mandated the formation of Gender Budgeting Cells (GBCs) and laid down guidelines for composition and functions of GBCs. As an institutional mechanism for gender mainstreaming, GBCs function with the objective of influencing and initiating a change in the Ministry/Department's policies, programmes in a way to promote gender equality and ensure that public resources through the Ministry budget are allocated and managed accordingly. Currently, 57 Ministries/Departments have set up Gender Budgeting Cells.

India's commitment to the principles contained in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has resulted in enactment of a comprehensive legislation namely, The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. It guarantees various rights and entitlements for empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities; it mandates the Government to take measures to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy their rights equally with others; it clearly prevents any kind of discrimination on the ground of disability and assures reasonable accommodation; its important features include - recognition of 21 types of disabilities; right to free education upto age of 18 years; 4% reservation in Government jobs for persons with disabilities and 5% reservation in Government/Government aided higher educational institutions for students with disabilities; framing of accessibility standards and ensuring accessibility of public buildings, transportation and ICT in prescribed time-frame; promoting rehabilitation, social security, recreation, and sporting activities to create an inclusive society; strong grievance redressal mechanism; broad-based policy making bodies at National, Provincial and District levels with participation of various stakeholders including persons with disabilities; creation of a National and Provincial Fund; designation of special courts to try offences against persons with disabilities; and provision of penalties for offences committed against persons with disabilities.

Against the background of a strong legal framework, several important initiatives have been taken. As part of preventive measures, various health programmes are in place which control blindness and deafness by screening all children upto 18 years of age; it also includes pre-natal check-up of expectant mothers; corrective surgeries and are also undertaken as part of early intervention methods - 1409 cochlear implant surgeries were supported by the Government to overcome deafness.

Financial support is given to Provincial Governments and non-governmental organisations to promote special education, vocational training, rehabilitation, accessibility, aids and appliances etc. Scholarships are also provided to students with disabilities from class IX to M.Phil/Ph.D levels, including professional and technical courses both within and outside the country.

In order to achieve economic empowerment, a National Action Plan has been launched in 2015 to achieve a target of skilling 2.5 million persons with disabilities by 2022. Loan assistance is provided at concessional rate of interest for promoting self-employment to persons with disabilities.

An IT backed web portal project called "Unique Disability Identity" has been launched to identify every person with disability to create a national data containing crucial information on disability, education, employment status and their needs. Persons with Disabilities can apply online and also find information on National and Provincial Government schemes at one place.

Our new disability rights legislation of 2016 also mandates Government to take measures to ensure that women and children with disabilities enjoy their rights equally with others; to provide appropriate information regarding reproductive and family planning; screening of all children atleast once a year to identify all risk cases besides providing for pre-natal, peri-natal, post-natal care of mother and child to prevent disability; prohibits any medical procedure leading termination of pregnancy without consent of woman with disability; penal provisions for sexual abuse, violence and exploitation of women and children with disability. With a view to boost education of children with disabilities, the Government provides 30-50% reservation in various scholarship schemes for girls with disabilities; there is also provision for 5% reservation in all poverty alleviation and various developmental schemes with priority to women with disabilities.

Some of the important challenges include: early identification and prevention of disability; changing mindset of general population about the rights and abilities of persons with disabilities; making persons with disabilities aware of their rights and abilities; improving their skills and economic capacity; increasing the quality and quantity of rehabilitation professionals; more governmental investment in disability sector; and reorganising social protection measures.

Indian Government is hopeful of overcoming these challenges in near future by taking various steps and working in coordination with various stakeholders and adopting a multi-sectoral approach. Incheon Strategy and Sustainable Development Goals are being pursued to achieve a vibrant, equitable and inclusive society.

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Bangkok, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2018