

Women Empowerment

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Abstract

Women empowerment is all about allowing and equipping women to make life determining choices across different issues in the country. Government of India has also enacted various schemes, rules and regulation within the constitutional frame work to improve female participation .Hearing the independent women's voice helping women to ensure that their voice are heard as given rise to #Metoo campaign. Womenempowerment is essential for the development of society and provides them freedom to breathe and live, care and loves their lives on their own .So we can say women empowerment is an essential tool to get the goal of development.

KEYWORDS:- Women Empowerment, BBBP, OSC, STEP, Nirbhaya fund, MPVs

The right to equality is one of the chief guarantees of the constitution of India. Article 14 guarantees equality before law and equal protection of law to all persons within the territory of India. Article 15 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, or any of them. But this article does not prevent the state from making special provisions for women, children or any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens, including the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. Article 16 guarantees equality of opportunity in the matters of public employment and prevents the state from discriminating against anyone in matters of employment on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, place of residence or any of them.¹

“Yatranaryastupujyanteramantetatradevatah.

yatraitastunapujyantesarvastatraphalahkriyah”²

This verse of the Manusmriti declares that “Women must be honoured and adorned” and means that God make their adobe in the household in which women are treated with respect and where they are not shown respect, no sacred rite bears any fruit.

Women empowerment is the empowerment of women which helps them to take their own decisions by breaking all personal limitations of the society and family. It is to bring equality in the society for both male and female in all areas. Women empowerment is very necessary to make the bright future of the family, society and country. Women need fresh and more capable environment so that they can take their own right decisions in every area whether for themselves, family, society or country.

¹<http://www.legalservicesindia.com/article/1061/Reasonable-Classification-under-article-14.html>

²<https://taksu.wordpress.com/2010/07/09/%E2%80%9Ctri-dewa-bawa%E2%80%9D/>

In order to make the country fully developed country, women empowerment is an essential tool to get the goal of development.

The Department of Women and Child Development in India³ sees all the issues related to the women and children. The Department came into existence as a separate Ministry with effect from 30th January 2006, with the aim of “Empowered women living with dignity and contributing as equal partners in development in an environment free from violence and discrimination and, well nurtured children with full opportunities for growth and development in a safe and protective environment”⁴. Earlier since 1985, it was a Department under the Ministry of Human Resources Development.

The ministry formulates plans, policies, and programmes, enacts and amends legislations; guides and co-ordinates the efforts of governmental and non – governmental organizations working in the field of the women and child development. Also, the ministry also plays a vital role in implementing innovative programmes for women and children. These programmes cover training for employment and income generation, gender sensitization, awareness generation and welfare and support services. The initiatives like # Time’s up and # Metoo have helped the silent victims around the world to raise their voice against violence, discrimination and harassment. The countries around the world including India have been emphasizing on the and striving for empowerment of women. Women empowerment helps women to take their own decisions by breaking all personal limitations of the society and family.

The Ministry launched various women empowerment schemes. They are as follows:

BETI BACHAO BETI PADHAO (BBBP)

BetiBachaoBetiPadhao was launched by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 22nd January 2015 at Panipat, Haryana. It addresses the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) ie, number of girls per 1000 boys between 0-6 years of age has been on a decline over the decades. The decline in the CSR is a major indicator of women dis empowerment.⁵ It is a tri-ministerial effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development. It has been the target of fraudsters in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Bihar and Delhi.

The Overall Goal of the BetiBachao, BetiPadhao (BBBP) Scheme is to celebrate the Girl Child and enable her Education. The objectives of the Scheme are as under:

- Prevent gender biased sex selective elimination
- Ensure survival & protection of the girl child
- Ensure education of the girl child

The scheme also helps women to move beyond their homes and communities to assume larger responsibilities and claim their rights. It also creates awareness about importance of protecting girl child.

³<http://www.wcd.nic.in/>

⁴<https://aspirantforum.com/2017/09/21/women-empowerment-schemes-in-india/>

⁵<http://www.wcd.nic.in/bbbp-schemes>

ONE STOP CENTRES (OSC)

The One Stop Centres are intended to support women affected by violence, in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace. The OSC will support all women including girls below 18 years of age affected by violence, irrespective of caste, class, religion, region, sexual orientation or marital status. For girls below 18 years of age, institutions and authorities established under Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 will be linked with the OSC. Aggrieved women facing any kind of violence due to attempted sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, trafficking, honour related crimes, acid attacks or witch-hunting who have reached out or been referred to the OSC will be provided with specialized services.

This Scheme of One Stop Centre for Women is implemented since 1st April 2015 with total project cost of Rs. 18.58 is funded under Nirbhaya fund. In the first phase, one OSC was to be established in all states/UT and was approved from 36 locations out of which only 33 got sanctioned and only 15 became operational till 30th May, 2016. The scheme has already been revised for setting up One Stop Centre in 150 additional locations in second phase, in addition to the already proposed 36 centres in first phase. The government has now proposed for establishing 660 centres.⁶

Objectives of OSC

- To provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces under one roof.
- To facilitate immediate, emergency and non-emergency access to a range of services including medical, legal, psychological and counselling support under one roof to fight against any forms of violence against women.⁷

Aggrieved women facing any kind of violence due to attempted sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, trafficking, honour related crimes, acid attacks or witch-hunting who have reached out or been referred to the OSC centre will be provided with specialized services. The OSC shall facilitate access to the following services:

Emergency Response and Rescue Services

OSC will provide rescue and referral services to the women affected by violence. For this, linkages will be developed with existing mechanisms such as National Health Mission (NHM), 108 service, police (PCR Van) so that the woman affected by violence can either be rescued from the location and referred to the nearest medical facility (Public/ Private) or shelter home.

Medical assistance

Women affected by violence would be referred to the nearest Hospital for medical aid/examination which would be undertaken as per the guidelines and protocols developed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

⁶<http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1564-one-stop-centres-osc.html>

⁷https://trainex.org/osc2012/pdf/2012_osc_agenda_30dec2011.pdf

Assistance to women in lodging FIR/NCR/DIR

The OSC will facilitate the lodging of FIR/NCR/DIR

Psycho-social support/ counselling

A skilled counsellor providing psycho-social counselling services would be available on call. This counselling process will give women confidence and support to address violence or to seek justice for the violence perpetuated. Counsellors shall follow a prescribed code of ethics, guidelines and protocols in providing counselling services.

Legal aid and counselling

To facilitate access to justice for women affected by violence, legal aid and counselling would be provided at OSC through empanelled Lawyers or National/State/District Legal Service Authority

Shelter

The one stop centres shall provide temporary shelter facility to aggrieved women. Women affected by violence along with their children (girls of all age and boys upto 8 years of age) can avail temporary shelter at the one stop centres for a maximum period of 5 days. For long term shelter requirements, arrangements will be made with swadhar/ short stay homes

Video conferencing facility

The one stop centres will provide video conferencing facility through Skype, Google conferencing etc. through this facility the aggrieved women can record her statement for police/ courts from one stop centre using audio-video electronic means as prescribed under code of civil procedure and code of criminal procedure.

SUPPORT TO TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN (STEP)

STEP was launched by the Government of India in 1969 in the Central Sector called the Short Stay Homes for Women & Girls to protect and rehabilitate those women and girls who are facing social and moral danger due to family problems mental strains, social ostracism, exploitation or other causes. The services extended in these Homes include medical care; case work services; occupational therapy; education- cum- vocational training and recreational facilities.⁸

The Scheme is intended to benefit women who are in the age group of 16 years and above across the country. The grant under the Scheme is given to an institution/ organisation including NGOs directly and not the States/ Union Territories.

The assistance under STEP Scheme will be available in any sector for imparting skills related to employability and entrepreneurship, including but not limited to the Agriculture, Horticulture, Food Processing, Handlooms, Tailoring, Stitching, Embroidery, Zarietc, Handicrafts, Computer and IT enable services along with soft skills and skills for the work place such as spoken English, Gems and Jewellery, Travel and Tourism, Hospitality.

⁸http://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/Revised%20schemeof%20STEP_0.pdf

The STEP Programme is a 100% Central Sector Scheme. Under this scheme, Training is provided to poor and marginalized women in traditional trades which are largely in the informal sector. The Programme of STEP advocates the objective of extending training for up-gradation of skills and employment for women through a variety of action-oriented projects. STEP Program has been introduced to address occupational aspirations of poor women who do not have the opportunity of formal skill training.

The objectives of this scheme are as below:

- To provide skills that give employability to women.
- To provide competencies and skills that enable women to become self-employed/entrepreneurs.
- To upgrade the skills of poor and marginalized women.
- To provide employment to them on a sustainable basis.

The primary objective of the scheme is to assist those organizations which have deeper involvement and commitment for women based on harnessing local talents of women for their economic empowerment. Under this scheme a maximum of 90% of the project cost will be funded by the Government of India and the remaining 10 % will have to be borne by the implementing agency for its own sources.⁹

SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)

This is a Central sector scheme for providing holistic and integrated services to women in difficult circumstances such as destitute widows, women prisoners released from jail and without family support, women survivors of natural disasters; trafficked women/girls rescued from brothels or other places or victims of sexual crime, mentally challenged women who are without any support etc. The package of services made available include provision for food, clothing, shelter, health care, counselling and legal support, social and economic rehabilitation through education, awareness generation, skill upgradation.¹⁰

The scheme is implemented through voluntary organisations including Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare, Boards, State Women's Development Corporation, urban bodies etc., provided they have the required experience and expertise in the rehabilitation of such women. The scheme also supports a helpline for women in distress, counselling centre, training centre and medical centre. At present, 34 Swadhar centres are functioning in the State. The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing the SwadharGreh Scheme which targets the women victims of difficult circumstances who are in need of institutional support for rehabilitation so that they could lead their life with dignity. The Scheme envisages providing shelter, food, clothing and health as well as economic and social security for these women.

As per guidelines of the SwadharGreh Scheme, to seek financial assistance the agency should meet following requirements:

- The agency should be either recognized by State/UT under existing law or should be well known with the experience or working in the field for at least 3

⁹<http://wcd.nic.in/schemes/support-training-and-employment-programme-women-step>

¹⁰<http://wcd.nic.in/schemes/swadhar-greh-scheme-women-difficult-circumstances>

years and its work should be reported satisfactory by the State Govt./UT Administration concerned.

- It should ordinarily have been engaged in the field of women's welfare/social welfare for a minimum period of two years
- Its financial position should be sound
- It should have facilities, resources, experience and personnel to undertake the management of such project
- It should run SwadharGreh on a no-profit basis and
- It should have facilities like computers, internet connection etc at SwadharGreh.¹¹

The State Governments/UT Administration invite applications from eligible organizations and the proposals which fulfil the norms are placed before a Project Sanctioning Committee (PSC) chaired by Secretary (WCD) of the State/UT concerned and comprising representatives from the Finance and Labour Department of the State/UT in addition to any other representative as the State Government/UT administration may decide. The State Governments/UT Administrations assess the number of new projects required in the State/UT and communicate to the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, along with the justification by 30th September of every year. Subject to availability of resources, the central Government communicates number of projects those can be approved and make necessary provision in the budget of subsequent financial year. SwadharGreh is a DBT compliant scheme. Gazette Notification has been issued and the same has been forwarded to the State Governments/UT Administrations with the request to furnish the data of beneficiaries.¹²

UJJAWALA: A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation is an organized crime that violates basic human rights. India has emerged as a source, destination and transit for both in-country and cross border trafficking. The problem of trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation is especially challenging due to its myriad complexities and variation. Poverty, low status of women, lack of a protective environment etc. are some of the causes for trafficking.¹³

A multi sectorial approach is needed which will undertake preventive measures to arrest trafficking especially in vulnerable areas and sections of population; and tenable rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of the trafficked victims. Keeping the above issues and gaps in mind the Ministry has formulated a Central Scheme "Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of Trafficking for Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-Integration of Victims of Trafficking for Commercial Sexual Exploitation-Ujjawala". The new scheme has been conceived primarily for the purpose of preventing trafficking on the one hand and rescue and rehabilitation of victims on the other

¹¹<http://mahilaehaat-rmk.gov.in/en/about-e-haat/>

¹²<https://aspirantforum.com/2017/09/21/women-empowerment-schemes-in-india/>

¹³<http://www.wcd.nic.in/schemes/ujjawala-comprehensive-scheme-prevention-trafficking-and-rescue-rehabilitation-and-re>

OBJECTIVE OF THE SCHEME

- To prevent trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation through social mobilization and involvement of local communities, awareness generation programmes, generate public discourse through workshops/seminar and such events and any other innovative activity.
- To facilitate rescue of victims from the place of their exploitation and place them in safe custody.
- To provide rehabilitation services both immediate and long-term to the victims by providing basic amenities/needs such as shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment including counselling, legal aid and guidance and vocational training.
- To facilitate reintegration of the victims into the family and society at large
- To facilitate repatriation of cross-border victims to their country of origin.

TARGET GROUP/BENEFICIARIES

- Women and children who are vulnerable to trafficking for commercial sexual Exploitation.
- Women and children who are victims of trafficking for commercial sexual Exploitation.

IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

The implementing agencies can be the Social Welfare/Women and Child Welfare Department of State Government, Women's Development Corporations, Women's Development Centres, Urban Local Bodies, reputed Public/Private Trust or Voluntary Organizations. The organization must have adequate experience in the field of trafficking, social defence, dealing with women and children in need of care and protection, children in conflict with law, etc

ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS

The implementing organizations must fulfil the following eligibility conditions:

1. The agency should be registered under law and must have a properly Constituted Managing Body with its powers, duties and responsibilities clearly defined and laid down in its Constitution;
2. The organization must not work for the profit of any individual or body of Individuals;
3. It should ordinarily have three years' experience after its registration;
4. Its financial position should be sound;
5. It should have facilities, resources, experience and personnel to initiate the scheme for which assistance is sought;
6. Voluntary organisations should be registered with the NGO PS portal of NITIAayog.

SCHEME FOR WORKING WOMEN HOSTEL

With the progressive change in the socio-economic fabric of the country more and more women are leaving their homes in search of employment in big cities as well

as urban and rural industrial clusters. One of the main difficulties faced by such women is lack of safe and conveniently located accommodation. The Government of India being concerned about the difficulties faced by such working women, introduced a scheme in 1972-73 of grant-in-aid for construction of new/ expansion of existing buildings for providing hostel facilities to working women in cities, smaller towns and also in rural areas where employment opportunities for women exist. Based on an evaluation, the existing scheme has been revised to promote availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women who need to live away from their families due to professional commitments.

Objectives

- To promote availability of safe and conveniently located accommodation for working women, with day care facility for their children, wherever possible, in urban, semi urban, or even rural areas where employment opportunity for women exist.
- The scheme is assisting projects for construction of new hostel buildings to all working women without any distinction with respect to caste, religion, marital status etc
- Children of working women, up to the age of 18 years for girls and up to the age of 5 years for boys may be accommodated in such hostels with their mother

Following categories of working women and their children are being covered under this Scheme:

(i) Working women, who may be single, widowed, divorced, separated, married but whose husband or immediate family does not reside in the same city/area. Preference may be given to women from disadvantaged sections of the society. There should be also provision for reservation of seats for physically challenged beneficiaries.

(ii) Women who are under training for job provided the total training period does not exceed one year. This is only on the condition that there is vacancy available after accommodating working women. The number of women under training for job should not exceed 30% of the total capacity.

(iii) Girls up to the age of 18 years and boys up to the age of 5 years, accompanying working mothers will be provided accommodation, with their mothers. Working mothers may also avail of the services of the Day Care Centre, as provided under the scheme.

Working Women are entitled to hostel facilities provided their gross income does not exceed Rs. 50,000/- consolidated (gross) per month in metropolitan cities, or Rs 35,000/- consolidated (gross) per month, in any other place. When the income of any working woman already residing in a hostel exceeds the prescribed limits, she will be required to vacate the hostel within a period of six months of crossing the income ceiling.

The implementing organisation charges from the inmates of the working women's hostel reasonable rent not exceeding 15% of their total emoluments/ gross salary in the case of single bed rooms, 10% in case of the double bed rooms and 7 ½ % in the case of the dormitories. Fees charged from the children in the Day Care Centre should

not be more than 5% of the emoluments of their mother, or the actual expenditure whichever is less. The rent for women under training for job shall not exceed the rent to be charged from the working women. The rent for such trainees may be charged from the institution organization sponsoring the training or from the woman herself. The rent does not include use of the mess and other facilities like washing machines for which user charges should be collected. As far as practicable; women with children are accommodated in single/ double bed rooms instead of dormitory. No working woman is allowed to stay in a hostel, assisted under this scheme for more than three years. In exceptional circumstances, the District Administration may, for reasons to be recorded in writing, allow working women to stay in a hostel, beyond the three-year period, subject to the condition that the period of extension, shall not exceed six months at one time, and that the total stay of the woman, with extensions, shall not exceed five years.

“NARI SHAKTI PURUSKAR”

Every Year, Ministry of Women & Child Development celebrates International Women Day on 8th March. The significance of the International Women’s Day lies in our re-affirmation of improve the condition of women, especially those at the margins of our society and empower them to take rightful place in society. Ministry of Women and Child Development has revised the guidelines for Women Awards for conferring on eminent women, organisations and institutions. These awards will be called “Nari Shakti Purus Kars”. Now, from the year 2016, 20 Nari Shakti Puruskars shall be conferred every year. The awards will be conferred on 8th March on International Women’s Day (IWD). The Award in each category shall carry a Certificate and a cash amount. The award would be given to eminent or outstanding Institutions or organizations and individuals. With the institution of these awards all the earlier women awards given by the Ministry of Women & Child Development ceased to exist.

“Nari Shakti Puruskars”¹⁴ would be conferred on eminent women and institutions rendering distinguished service to the cause of women especially belonging to the vulnerable and marginalized sections of the society. The recipients would be drawn from institutions and individuals.

The name of award winners and description of awards are given below:

1. Rani Rudramma Devi Award for Best Panchayat /Village Community
2. Mata Jijabai Award for Best Urban Local body for providing services and facilities to women
3. Kannagi Devi Award for Best State which has appreciably improved Child Sex Ratio (CSR)
4. Rani Gaidinliu Zeliang Award for Best Civil Society Organization (CSO) doing outstanding work for the welfare and well-being of women
5. Devi Ahilyabai Holkar Award for Best Private Sector Organization/Public Sector Undertaking in promoting the well-being and welfare of women
6. Rani Lakshmi Bai Award for Best Institution for Research & Development in the field of women empowerment¹⁵

¹⁴<https://nari.punjabkesari.in/nari/news/nomination-for-women-poweraward2018-870595>

¹⁵<http://mahilaahaat-rmk.gov.in/en/about-e-haa>

MAHILA SHAKTI KENDRAS

Government of India has approved a new scheme namely, Mahila Shakti Kendra for implementation during 2017-18 upto 2019-20 to empower rural women through community participation and to create an environment in which they realize their full potential. It will provide an interface for rural women to approach the government for availing their entitlements also empowering them through training and capacity building.

Community engagement through College Student Volunteers is envisioned in 115 most backward districts as part of the MSK Block level initiatives. Student volunteers will play an instrumental role in awareness generation regarding various important government schemes/ programmes as well as social issue and association with NSS/NCC cadre students will also be an option.

The scheme at the block level will provide an opportunity to Student Volunteers to participate in the development process by bringing change in their own communities and ensuring that women are not left behind and are equal partners in India's progress. In the first year (2017-18), Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK) will be set up in 50 backward districts out of 115 backward districts covering 400 blocks in 50 most backward districts (maximum 8 blocks per district) are to be covered under block level initiative. In the second year (2018-19), remaining 65 districts will be taken up along with the 50 districts from previous year. In the third year, activities will be taken up in all 115 backward districts covering 920 blocks (i.e. 8 blocks per district) for six months. At the end of second year, the scheme will be evaluated to decide expansion/continuation of the scheme.

New District Level Centre for Women (DLCW) has also been envisaged for 640 districts to be covered in phased manner. These centres will serve as a link between village, block and state level in facilitating women centric schemes and also give foothold for BBBP scheme at the district level. During the current FY (2017-18), 220 DLCWs will be set-up which will be manned by 03 staff in each selected district under the guidance of DC/DM. Please see the list of districts to be taken up during FY 2017-18. At the state level technical support on issues related to women is being provided through State Resource Centre for Women (SRCW) functional under the respective State Government /UT Administration. SRCWs are meant to facilitate implementation of all women centric schemes and programmes of the government, including the district and block level component of MSK Scheme.

NIRBHAYA FUND

Violence and abuse against women and girls are frequent on streets, in public transportation and in other public places. Such occurrences restrict women's right to mobility, discouraging their freedom to walk freely and move in public spaces of their choice. Such violence also limits their access to essential services and adversely impact their health and wellbeing. In this context, and following the tragedy of December 2012, the Government has set up a dedicated fund – Nirbhaya Fund – which can be utilized for projects specifically designed to improve the safety and security of women. It is a non-lapsable corpus fund, being administered by Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.

As per the guidelines issued by Ministry of Finance dt 25.03.2015, the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) is the nodal Ministry to appraise/recommend proposals and schemes to be funded under Nirbhaya Fund. MWCD further has the responsibility to review and monitor the progress of sanctioned schemes in conjunction with the line Ministries/Departments.

The proposed projects under the Nirbhaya Fund should have the following

- Direct impact on safety and security concerns of women
- Optimum use of existing infrastructure
- Innovative use of technology
- No duplication of existing government schemes/programmes Provision for real time intervention as far as possible. E.g. in case of CCTVs for women's safety, there should be real-time monitoring of footage and quick response, rather than just a recording of events for evidence after the incident has occurred
- Strict privacy and confidentiality of women's identity and information. E.g. placement of CCTVs to not compromise women's privacy, protection of video data collected etc.
- Defined role of all stakeholders¹⁶

MAHILA POLICE VOLUNTEERS (MPVs)

Gender-Based Violence (GBV), faced by women both in public and private spaces, including domestic violence, sexual assault, rape, voyeurism, stalking etc is a major threat to women equality and empowerment. A gender responsive police service requires specific training, increased presence of female personnel and community outreach to integrate gender issues into policies, protocols and operational procedures.

In recent years, various legislations regarding GBV have been enacted viz., 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, 2005 and provide an opportunity to women facing violence to take recourse to the law. According to the latest National Crime Records Bureau data, during the year 2014, 3,37,922 incidences of crime against women (both under Indian Penal Code and other laws) were reported as against the 3,09,546 cases reported during 2013. The Role of Police is pivotal in ensuring the safety and security of citizens in general and women. To increase the visibility of women in the police force, Home Ministry has carried forward the initiative to give 33% reservation to women in police force by implementing it in UTs and propagating in the States. There has been an increasing emphasis on the gender sensitivity of police force through training programmes, performance appraisal and women police stations to tackle crime against women. A recent advisory dated 12th May 2015 by the Home Ministry stresses on the need for sensitivity in handling women's issues.

However, it is a matter of common knowledge that women who are victim of violence or harassment may not find it easy to approach the police or other authorities for getting help or support. It would, therefore, be desirable to provide an effective alternative for getting help and support. In order to promote these objectives and

¹⁶<http://www.wcd.nic.in/acts/nirbhaya-fund-guidelines>

increase focused community outreach, Government of India envisages engagement/nomination of Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs) in all States and UTs who will act as a link between police and the community and facilitate women in distress. This will be implemented in a phased manner.

The objectives of the scheme are

- An MPV will serve as a public-police interface in order to fight crime against women. The broad mandate of MPVs is to report incidences of violence against women such as domestic violence, child marriage, dowry harassment and violence faced by women in public spaces. She will act as a role model for the community.
- An MPV is an honorary position.

In the first phase, the scheme will be implemented on a pilot basis in all States and UTs. In the first phase, two districts from every state and one district from every UT shall be chosen on the basis of the following criteria: -

i. Child Sex Ratio (CSR)

ii. Crime against Women

The final selection of the district/districts would be the responsibility of the concerned State/UT.

MAHILA E-Haat

Mahila E-Haat is an initiative for meeting aspirations and needs of women entrepreneurs. This start up at RashtriyaMahilaKosh website leverages technology for showcasing products made/manufactured/sold by women entrepreneurs. They can even showcase their services reflecting their creative potential. This unique e-platform will strengthen the socio-economic empowerment of women. With the launch of the site itself more than 125000 women are likely to benefit. It is expected to result in a paradigm shift enabling women to exercise control over their finances by leveraging technology. The main goal of Mahila E-Haat is to support 'Make in India' through online marketing platform. The Ministry of Women & Child Development launched "Mahila E-Haat" a bilingual portal on 7th March, 2016.¹⁷ This is a unique direct online marketing platform leveraging technology for supporting women entrepreneurs/SHGs/ NGOs for showcasing the products / services which are made/manufactured/ undertaken by them. It is an initiative for meeting aspirations and needs of women. This was done keeping in mind that technology is a critical component for business efficiency and to make it available to the majority of Indian women entrepreneurs / SHGs / NGOs.

This unique e- platform will strengthen the socio-economic empowerment of women. The platform facilitates direct contact between the vendors and buyers, as by displaying their contact number, address as also the basic cost of products/ services. The platform showcases over 2000 products/services across 18 categories viz., Clothing (Men, Women & Children), Bags, Fashion Accessories /Jewellery, Decorative and gift items, Home Décor, Carpets / Rugs /Foot mats, Baskets, Linen/ Cushion Covers, Boxes, Pottery, Grocery & Staples / Organic, Natural Products, File

¹⁷<http://mahilaehaat-rmk.gov.in/en/>

Folders, Industrial Products, Educational Aids, Soft Toys, Miscellaneous. Mahila E-haat received the SKOCH GOLD Award on 09th Sep 2016 and was also awarded 'SKOCH Order-of-Merit' Award, as it was adjudged as one of the "Top 100 Projects in India" for the year 2016.¹⁸

Women empowerment is not only doing charity for education of women who are below the poverty line but also taking care of them as any other individual. It is essential for the development of a society and provides them the freedom to breathe and live, care and love their lives on their own.

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