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PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

235 EAST 43RD STREET • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017

TEL: (212) 490-9660 • FAX: (212) 490-9656

EMAIL: india@un.int • indiaun@prodigy.net

No. PMI/NY/9(iii)/2015

11th September, 2015

The Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations presents its compliments to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and has the honour to refer to the United Nations Note Verbale No. UNW/2015/009 dated 29th July, 2015 seeking information relating to the implementation of the agreed conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls for the preparation of the requested report.

In this regard information on the following three key areas of focus of the agreed conclusions is enclosed:

- Strengthening implementation of legal and policy framework and accountability;
- Addressing structural and underlying causes and risk factors so as to prevent violence against women and girls;
- Strengthening multisectoral services, programmes and responses to violence against women and girls;

The Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) the assurances of its highest consideration.

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)
220 East 42nd Street, 17th Floor,
New York, NY 10017.

[Kind attention of: Ms. Kalliopi Mingeirou, Ms. Tania Farha
e-mail: kalliopi.mingeirou@unwomen.org, tania.farha@unwomen.org

Copy to

Ms. Patricia Codazzi, Fax: (+1-646) 781-4693)
e-mail: patricia.codazzi@unwomen.org

✓ Copy for information to

The Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, New York

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WOM-104/007

**Follow-up Action the Economic and Social Council Resolution
2015/6, on Future organization and methods of work of the
Commission on the Status of Women**

**Implementation of the Agreed Conclusions on the Elimination
and Prevention of All Forms of Violence against Women and
Girls**



सत्यमेव जयते

ACTION

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न्यूयॉर्क

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**Follow-up Action the Economic and Social Council Resolution
2015/6, on Future organization and methods of work of the
Commission on the Status of Women**

**Implementation of the Agreed Conclusions on the Elimination
and Prevention of All Forms of Violence against Women and
Girls**

Implementation of measures taken in response to the four key areas of focus of the agreed conclusions since March 2013:

(i) **Strengthening Implementation of legal and policy frameworks and accountability**

- i. The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India has taken measures under a comprehensive international legal and policy framework to address violence against women, including through the enactment of legislation. A number of legislations have been put in place for the protection of women. While certain provisions contained in the Indian Penal Code provide for punishment for various offences against women, there are special legislations to address specific offences.
1. In consonance with the recommendations made by the Verma Committee, in order to prevent violence against women, comprehensive amendments were introduced in the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr. PC.) and the Indian Evidence Act through the **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013**. The amendments sought to make provisions relating to violence against women more stringent. The key features are as follows:
 - (i) New provisions has been added making acid attack a non- bailable criminal offence with punishment of imprisonment which shall not be less than ten years but extendable to life imprisonment, making an offence to assault or use of criminal force to women with intent to disrobe with punishment of imprisonment not less than three years which may be extend to seven years, making voyeurism an offence with punishment of imprisonment not less than three years which may be extend to seven years, making stalking an offence with punishment of imprisonment to three years to five years, definition of rape (375) has been widened to include non-penetrative sex as well and increasing penalties for gang rape with rigorous imprisonment for not less than 20 years and may be extended to life with fine.
 - (ii) Through **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013**, a responsibility has been cast on all hospitals public, private run by the Central Government or State Government to provide first aid or medical treatment, free of cost to victims of any offence under Section 326, 375 ad 376 (acid attack and rape) by inserting the new section 357 C in the Cr.PC. Under IPC, new Section 166 B has been added with a provision for punishment with imprisonment for a hospital, public or private who contravenes the provision of 357 C of the Cr.PC.
2. Government has also enacted **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013** that seeks to provide a safe and secure

environment to women at the workplace. The Act covers all women, irrespective of their age or employment status and protect them against sexual harassment at all workplaces both in public and private sector, whether organized or unorganized. The domestic workers has also included under the ambit of the Act. The law provides for a mechanism in the form of Internal and Local Complaints Committee to provide redressal in cases of sexual harassment. It also casts a duty on employers to sensitize employees by carrying out various awareness generation programmes and workshops.

3. The Government has enacted **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005** to protect women from domestic violence. The Act provides relief to women in the form of protection orders, residence orders, monetary relief and compensation orders. It also provides for an inbuilt mechanism to facilitate the entire system of access to justice. It identifies specific functionaries such as the Protection Officers and Services Providers whose primary duty is to assist women in accessing reliefs provided under the law. Breach of a Protection Order is punishable with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine which may extend to twenty thousand rupees, or with both.
 4. **Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986** enacted with the specific objective of prohibiting the indecent representation of women through advertisement, publication, writing, and painting or in any other manner. It prohibits such representation in any form in any advertisement, publication etc and also prohibits selling, distribution, circulation of any books, pamphlets, and such other material containing indecent representation of women. It further prescribes punishment of either description for a term extending to two years and fine extending to two thousand rupees on first conviction for all offences under the Act.
 5. The Government of India has enacted the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA)** repealing the Child Marriage Restraint Act (CMRA) of 1929 in order to prohibit child marriages rather than only restraining them. All States/UTs have been requested to frame Rules under the Act and to appoint Child Marriage Prohibition Officers. So far **29** States/UTs have framed Rules under the Act and **19** have appointed CMPOs.
 6. **The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 (ITPA)** is the premier legislation for prevention of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation.
 7. **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012**, which has come into effect from 14th November 2012, is a special law to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation. It provides precise definitions for different forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative and non-penetrative sexual assault, sexual harassment.
- ii. **Policy Frameworks and other Measures and Interventions**
1. **Victim Compensation Scheme**

- (i) For providing compensation to women affected with crime, amendment in Code of Criminal Procedure has been made which states that every State Government in co-ordination with the Central Government is required to prepare a scheme for providing funds for the purpose of compensation to the women victim or dependents who have suffered loss or injury as a result of the crime and who require rehabilitation. So far 22 states and 7 UTs have formulated the Victim Compensation Scheme.
- (ii) The victim or his dependents may make an application to the State or the District Legal Services Authority for award compensation where the offender is not traced or identified, but the victim is identified, and where no trial takes place.
- (iii) The State or the District Legal Services Authority, as the case may be, to alleviate the suffering of the victim, may order for immediate first-aid facility or medical benefits to be made available free of cost on the certificate of the police officer not below the rank of the officer in charge of the police station or a Magistrate of the area concerned.
- (iv) The Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1986 provides for relief for atrocity victims which varies from an amount of Rs 50,000 to 5 lakhs depending upon the nature of offence. This also includes compensation of Rs 1.2 lakhs to women victims of sexual exploitation belonging to SC/ST.
- (v) The Govt. of India has set up a dedicated fund namely Nirbhaya Fund for women safety and security. Under this fund, the Ministry of Home Affairs had proposed creation of a Corpus Fund with initial grant of Rs.200 crores for supporting the States/UT for Victim Compensation Scheme. The Scheme known as Central Victim Compensation Fund (CVCf) is based on a proactive attitude of the States and their willingness to move forward and meet the objective of compensating victims of crimes/violence against women and children.

2. Acid Attack

The issue of acid attack on women has been taken on priority basis by the Government of India and several steps have been taken to prevent the incidents of acid attack and provide treatment and compensation to the victims. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 has incorporated the specific provisions on acid attack as an offence and also provided punitive measures to deal with non-compliance on cases of non-registration of crime and non-treatment to victims of several offences. Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India had issued an advisory "Measures to be taken to prevent acid attack on people and for treatment and rehabilitation of survivors" on 30th August, 2013 to all States/UTs with the objective of regulating sale of acids and minimize the easy availability of acids.

The whole objective of providing stringent punishment provisions in the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 is to increase the deterrent value against the perpetrators of the crimes. Hence, the States/UTs have been asked to take proactive measures to expedite investigation, trial of the acid attack cases and bring them under the definite time frame.

In the event of crime already been committed; the primary response of the administration should be focused on providing timely full and free treatment to the victims of the acid attack and the States must ensure that the victim be provided the same. Following decision were taken on treatment and compensation of acid attack:

- (i) No acid attack victim will be denied treatment by any hospital, public or private under pretext and any erring hospital/clinic violating the legislative provisions should be dealt with sternly
- (ii) The administrative machinery of the States/UTs will ensure treatment of acid attack victims
- (iii) Full and free treatment to be provided to the acid attack victims
- (iv) Minimum compensation of Rs. 3 lakh must be provided to acid attack victim under Victim Compensation Scheme
- (v) Section 326A of IPC provides for minimum 10 years imprisonment for the offence of causing hurt by acid attack, extendable to life, and with fine. The fine shall be just and reasonable to meet the medical expenses of the treatment of the victim.

In the States/Union Territories, where rules to regulate sale of acid and other corrosive substances are not operational, until such rules are framed and made operational, the States and Union Territories shall ensure the compliance of the following directions:

- (i) Over the counter, sale of acid is completely prohibited unless the seller maintains a log/register recording the sale of acid which will contain the details of the person(s) to whom acid(s) is/are sold and the quantity sold. The log/register shall contain the address of the person to whom it is sold.
- (ii) All sellers shall sell acid only after the buyer has shown: a) a photo ID issued by the Government which also has the address of the person. b) specifies the reason/purpose for procuring acid.
- (iii) All stocks of acid must be declared by the seller with the concerned Sub- Divisional Magistrate (SDM) within 15 days.
- (iv) No acid shall be sold to any person who is below 18 years of age.

3. Trafficking

Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India sanctioned a Comprehensive Scheme "Strengthening law enforcement response in India against Trafficking in Persons through Training and Capacity Building. Wherein it was proposed to establish 330 Anti Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs) throughout the country and impart training to 10,000 police officers through Training of Trainers (TOTs) component. In 2010-2011, Ministry of Home Affairs released funds of Rs. 8.72 crores to all the State Governments for establishment of 115 Anti Human Trafficking Units and further funds to the tune of Rs. 8.338 crores was released in 2011-2012 for establishment of 110 more AHTUs. In 2014, an amount of Rs. 3.41 crores has been released to for establishment for 45 AHTUs for different States.

To enhance the capacity building of law enforcement agencies and generate awareness among them, various Training of Trainers (TOT) workshops on "Combating Trafficking in Human Beings for

Police officers and for Prosecutors at Regional level, State Level and District Level were held throughout the country.

In order to train and sensitize the trial court judicial officers, Judicial Colloquium on human trafficking are being held throughout the country at the High Court Level. The aim is to sensitize the judicial officers about the various issues concerning human trafficking and to ensure speedy court process.

Web Portal on Anti Human Trafficking titled www.stophumantrafficking-mha.nic.in was developed on 20th February, 2014. The Portal is a vital IT tool for Sharing of information across all stakeholders, States/UTs and civil society organizations for effective implementation of Anti-Human trafficking measures more so relating to its criminal aspect and promoting best practice in this area. The portal acts as one stop information repository on issues relating to trafficking. It provides an important link to National Portal on Missing Children, 'Track Child' which is operational in many States.

Facebook page on Anti Human Trafficking: Facebook page has recently been set up on "Anti-Human Trafficking by Ministry of Home Affairs", another IT tool for interactive session and for live actionable tips for the Nodal Officers (Anti Human Trafficking Units) of all States/UTs, other stakeholders and civil society.

Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India 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 scheme has been conceived primarily for the purpose of preventing trafficking on the one hand and rescue and rehabilitation of victims on the other. The objective of the scheme is:

- 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/seminars 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.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India has been supporting both Government organizations and Non Governmental organizations to set-up and run protection and Rehabilitation homes under a comprehensive scheme 'Ujjawala'. Capacity to rehabilitate above

8000 women and children has been created. This is in addition to the capacity created by State/Provincial Governments. Annually about 10,000 women availed the facility during the last 2 years.

4. Maintaining Database of Criminals Having History Of Sexual Crimes

The Delhi Police is maintaining the record of criminals involved in rape, molestations and eve-teasing in Delhi. The States are requested to maintain similar databases on criminals having history of sexual crimes to aid the investigation and verification. The States should immediately implement the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS) project, which has a module on database of offenders.

5. Gender Budgeting

In order to effectively monitor gender equality, the Government introduced the **Gender Budget Statement** as part of the Union Budget in 2005-06. This was a powerful entry point in terms of the plausible institutionalization of Gender Budgeting in the country. Herein the Gender Budgetary allocations are reflected in a two-way classified Gender Budgeting Statement. The first part of the Statement, Part A includes Schemes with 100% allocation for women while Part B of the Statement includes Schemes/Programmes with 30 to 99% allocation for women. The Statement has emerged as an important tool for reporting allocations for women and provides an indication of the funds flowing to them. The number of Ministries reflecting their schemes and programmes in the Gender Budget Statement has increased from 9 in 2005-06 to 30 in 2013-14.

The most important milestone towards institutionalizing the Gender Budgeting process in India has been the formation of **Gender Budgeting Cells (GBCs)** in various Ministries and Departments. Till date, Gender Budgeting Cells have been set up in 57 Ministries which serve as focal points for coordinating Gender Budgeting initiatives, both intra and inter ministerial. The participation of these Gender Budgeting Cells in all policy-making and programming processes are crucial in translating the gender mainstreaming mandate into practical reality.

To address gender concerns right at the planning stage of all Government projects and programmes, the Expenditure Finance Committee Memorandum of the Ministry of Finance has been engendered.

6. New Initiatives

a. Gender Champions

Gender Champions are envisaged as responsible leaders who will facilitate an enabling environment within their schools/colleges/academic institutions where girls are treated with dignity and respect. They will strengthen the potential of young girls and boys to advocate for gender equality and monitor progress towards gender justice. The broad mandate of Gender Champions is to provide an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to understanding the social and cultural constructs of gender that shape the experiences of women and men in society. The aim is to make young boys and girls gender sensitive and create positive social norms that value the girls and their rights.

Gender Champion Clubs are envisaged in educational institutions. These clubs can organize focused group discussions, debates, poster competitions, thematic plays, workshops etc., identifying gaps in school/college's activities vis-à-vis gender, and make recommendations on how to address these gaps. The Gender Champions Club can organize school's annual function or college fest on the theme of gender equality and women's empowerment and encourage students to sign up and express their support for gender justice and equality. They can organize exposure visits to various public service institutions at the village, block, district and city level (public health centers, hospitals, post offices, banks, police stations, block office, SDM/DM office to facilitate knowledge about gender issues as they affect diverse populations. These Gender Champions shall be identified by a Screening Committee formed by the Principal/Head of Institution. It is also envisaged that a formal training programme shall be organized to equip and empower the Gender Champions. At the end of each quarter, Gender Champions shall submit a report to the nodal teachers, on the implementation of activities related to gender equity.

On the basis of the quarterly progress reports, Gender Champions will be assessed according to his/her level of proficiency and accomplishment. These quarterly reports will be assessed at the end of his/her tenure to measure his/her performance. The Gender Champions will be awarded with a certificate of appreciation from the Head of the Institution for his/her committed efforts towards promoting gender equality. University Grants Commission (UGC) has also directed universities and colleges to implement the Gender Champion guidelines.

b. Special Mahila Police Officers/ Volunteers

A gender responsive police service requires specific training, increased presence of female personnel within the police force and community outreach to integrate gender issues into policies, protocols and operational procedures. In order to promote these objectives and increase focused community outreach, Government of India envisages engagement/ nomination of Special Mahila Police Officers/volunteers in all States and UTs. Special Mahila Police Officer/volunteer is an honorary police position devolved upon any woman from the community committed to protection, safety, value and education of girls and women.

Special Mahila Police Officers/volunteers serves as a public-police interface in order to fight crime against women. The broad mandate of a Special Mahila Police Officer/volunteer is to report incidences of violence against women such as domestic violence, child marriage, dowry harassment and violence faced by women in public spaces. Special Mahila Police Officers/volunteers will act as a role model for the community and be an example of empowered woman by her own conduct.

Special Mahila Police Officers/volunteers could be any woman who is socially and voluntarily committed towards empowerment of women and girls, willing to raise her voice against gender based violence and supports the police in creating a gender just society free from violence.

During the course of her work, Special Mahila Police Officers/volunteers shall undertake the following activities:

- Being friendly and approachable to women and girls, so that they may approach her for help/ advice at times of need.
- Spread awareness about Police Helpline 100, Women's Helpline 181 along with other helpline numbers, educate women and girls about its services.
- Spread awareness about activities undertaken and facilitate access of aggrieved women to One Stop Centers (OSC).
- Confidence building among women, families and peer groups to approach the Local Police, Women Helpline and One Stop Center in times of need.
- To immediately inform the police personnel about any unpleasant behavior or instances against women and girls.
- Provide suggestions and feedback to the local administration and police about improving access to services as well as that of information.

7. Advisory on Crime against Women

The Government of India is deeply concerned with the trends and ground situation and would therefore re-emphasize that urgent action should be taken on the following:-

- i. For improving general awareness on legislations, mechanisms in place for safety and protection of women, the concerned department of the State Government must, inter- alia, take following steps:
 - Create awareness through print and electronic media;
 - Develop a community monitoring system to check cases of violence, abuse and exploitation and take necessary steps to curb the same;
 - Involving the Community at large in creating and spreading such awareness; and
 - Organize legal literacy and legal awareness camps.
- ii. Ensure proper supervisions at appropriate level of cases of crime against women from the recording of FIR to the disposal of the case by the competent court.
- iii. Help-line numbers of the crime against women cells - should be exhibited prominently in

hospitals/schools/colleges premises, and in other suitable places.

- iv. Set up exclusive 'Crime Against Women and Children' desk in each police station and the Special Women police cells in the police stations and all women police thana as needed.
- v. The Health department of the State Govts., should set up 'Rape Crisis Centres' (RCCs) and specialized 'Sexual Assault Treatment Units' (SATUs), at appropriate places.
- vi. Rape Crisis Centres (RCCs) set up by the Health Deptt. could assist rape victims and provide appropriate level of coordination between the police and health department facilities for medical examination to establish forensic evidence, SAT Units and medical facilities to treat after effects of sexual assault. Hence, these RCCs could act as an interface between the victims and other agencies involved.
- vii. The administration should also focus on rehabilitation of the victims and provide all required support. Counseling is required for victim as well as her family to overcome the trauma of the crime. The police should consider empanelling professional counselors.
- viii. For improving the safety conditions on road, the concerned departments of the State Government must take suitable steps to:
 - Increase the no. of beat constables, especially on the sensitive roads;
 - Increase the number of police help booth/kiosks, especially in remote and lonely stretches;
 - Increase police patrolling, especially during the night;
 - Increase the number of women police officers in the mobile police vans;
 - Set-up telephone booths for easy access to police;
 - Install people friendly street lights on all roads, lonely stretches and alleys; and
 - Ensure street lights are properly and efficiently working on all roads, lonely stretches and alleys.
- ix. Special steps to be taken for security of women working in night shifts of call centers.
- x. Crime prone areas should be identified and a mechanism be put in place to monitor infractions in schools/colleges for ensuring safety and security of female students. Women police officers in adequate number fully equipped with policing infrastructure may be posted in such areas.

- xi. Action should be taken at the State level to set up of Fast Track Courts and Family Courts.
- xii. Dowry related cases must be adjudicated expeditiously to avoid further harassment of the women.
- xiii. Appointment Dowry Prohibition Officers and notify the Rules under the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.
- xiv. All police stations may be advised to display the name and other details of Protection Officers of the area appointed under the Domestic Violence Act, 2005.
- xv. Police personnel should be trained adequately in special laws dealing with atrocities against women. Enforcement aspect should be emphasized adequately so as to streamline it.

ii. Addressing Structural and underlying causes and risk factors so as to prevent violence against women and girls

In spite of various protective and empowering legal provisions, incidences of violence, harassment, torture, directed at women remain rampant in our society. It emerges from the recognition of the fact that women affected of violence face tremendous physical, emotional and psychological trauma which often re-victimizes them or makes it difficult for the women to continue legal processes. Government of India has been implementing schematic interventions to prevent violence against women and respond to the victims of violence.

1. One Stop Centres and Women Helpline

The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India has introduced a scheme for setting up One Stop Centres to provide a combination of organized intervention and operate in a women-friendly environment. These centres will provide a range of services under one roof including medical aid, police assistance, legal aid/case management, psychosocial counseling, and temporary support services to women affected by violence. One Stop Centre will be established across the country in phased manner. In the first phase, One (1) One Stop Centre in every State/UT will be established. The scheme is being implemented since 1st April 2015. The OSCs would be established either in existing accommodation or in constructed accommodation within two kilometres of a hospital.

Similarly, the scheme of Universalisation of Women Helpline is exclusively designed to support women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces, including in the family, community, workplace etc. The Women Helpline (Helpline) will provide 24 hour emergency response to all women affected by violence both in public and private sphere.

2. Compulsory registration of FIR

An Advisory of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India states that a police officer is duty bound to register a case on the basis of such information disclosing a cognizable offence. It has been made clear that when it becomes apparent that even if the offence has been committed outside the jurisdiction of the police station, zero FIR would still be registered and the FIR would be then transferred to the appropriate police station. Since the legislative intent is to ensure that every cognizable offence is promptly investigated in accordance with law, hence there is no discretion or option left with the police to register or not to register an FIR once information of a cognizable offence has been provided.

The court was quite perturbed about the burking of crime registration and has concluded that non-registration of crime leads to dilution of rule of law and thus leads to definite lawlessness in the society, which is detrimental to the society as a whole. It has hence called for action against erring officers who do not register an FIR if information received by him/her discloses the commission of a cognizable offence. It may be mentioned that Section 166 A of Cr. P.C. prescribes a penalty of imprisonment up to two years and also a fine for non-registration of a FIR.

3. Increasing the number of women in the police forces

More and more women are participating in the development initiatives both in the public and private sectors of the economy, and the ratio of women in the work force is increasing correspondingly in both the urban and rural areas of the country. The presence of women in all leadership positions from the Panchayats to the Parliament is increasing in visible numbers. It is imperative that equal opportunity for women in the police force becomes a consistent reality. It is a necessary ingredient for good governance.

The role of police assumes great importance, for a woman affected with violence, police is the primary contact who needs to be sensitive towards issues of women rights and gender justice. Further women working as police officers could be of great help and support to such women. They could tell her the intimate details of violence perpetuated on them without any inhibition which they may show while dealing with a male police personnel. The situation warrants for larger representation of women in police force along with increased number of women police station across the country in order to ensure immediate and easy approach to the criminal justice system.

In the urban areas, the increase in representation of women in police will ensure a sense of safety in the public spaces which are frequently used by women on account of their varied activities outside their homes. Recruitment of women in the police forces will inevitably lead to the improvement of the image of the police forces and make the police station a gender sensitive place for grievance redressal and a catalyst for an improved community.

Accordingly, all the State Governments/UTs Administrations were requested to take steps in order to achieve 33% female participation within police force so as to take care of cases of gender based violence with compassion. Some States have already extended 33% reservation to women in

police services.

iii. Strengthening multisectoral services, programmes and responses to violence against women and girls

The Government of India have been advising the State Governments from time to time regarding the steps that need to be taken to afford a greater measure of protection to the women and in particular to prevent incidence of crimes against them.

These advisories, inter-alia, include gender sensitization of the police personnel, adopting appropriate measures for swift and salutary punishment to public servants found guilty of custodial violence against women, minimizing delays in investigations of murder, rape and torture of women and improving its quality, setting up a 'crime against women cell' in districts where they do not exist, providing adequate counseling centers and shelter homes for women who have been victimized, setting up of special women courts, and improving the effectiveness of schemes developed for the welfare and rehabilitation of women who are victimized with greater emphasis on income generation to make the women more independent and self-reliant. The Government of India is also focusing on multi-sectoral programmes to address violence against women and girls.

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme

The Child Sex Ratio (CSR), an indicator of gender discrimination towards girl child, stands at 918 girls per 1000 boys in the age group of 0-6 years, much lower than the figure of 927 in 2001 Census.

Declining CSR reflects pre-birth discrimination manifested through gender biased sex selection and post birth discrimination against girls (in terms of health care, nutrition and education opportunities). Prevalent social constructs that discriminate against girls on the one hand, and the availability and misuse of diagnostic tools that enable sex determination on the other has posed serious challenge to survival, protection and empowerment of girl child.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) was launched by Prime Minister on 22nd January, 2015 at Panipat, Haryana. Sukanya Samridhi Yojna was also launched on the same day as a special deposit scheme for the girl child with the aim to secure a bright future and welfare of the girl child in India. BBBP addresses the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and related issues of disempowerment of women over a life-cycle continuum. BBBP programme is a tri-ministerial effort of Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health & Family Welfare and Human Resource Development. The key elements of the scheme include enforcement of Pre-Conception & Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC&PNDT) Act, awareness and advocacy campaign and multi-sectoral action in select 100 districts (low on CSR) in the first phase. There is a strong

emphasis on mindset change through training, sensitization, awareness raising and community mobilization on ground.

2. Swachh Bharat Mission

The Swachh Bharat Mission is one of its kind Cleanliness drive launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. Mission's objectives are to eliminate of open defecation, eradication of manual scavenging, to effect behavioral change regarding healthy sanitation practices, Generate awareness about sanitation and its linkage with public health. Under the Mission, Swachh Vidlaya i.e. 'Clean India: Clean Schools' was also launched. A key feature of the campaign is to ensure that every school in India has a set of functioning and well maintained water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. It was stated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, that all schools in the country should have toilets with separate toilets for girls. Only then our daughters will not be compelled to leave schools midway.

Girls are particularly vulnerable to dropping out of school, partly because many are reluctant to continue their education when toilets and washing facilities are not private, not safe or simply not available. When schools have appropriate, gender-separated facilities, an obstacle to attendance is removed. Thus having gender segregated toilets in schools particularly matters for girls. Gender norms and physiology make privacy more important for girls than boys, and biological realities mean that girls need adequate sanitary facilities at school to manage menstruation. Basic facilities that provide for good hygiene and privacy, along with sensitive health promotion assist girls to stay in school and complete their education.

3. Free Legal Services

The National Legal Services Authority through the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee, State and District Legal Services Authorities, High Court Legal Services Committees and Taluka Legal Services Committees have been providing legal aid to woman of all walks of life. This ensures gender equality and empowerment of women through legal aid programmes. All women are entitled to get free legal services under Section 12 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. The free legal services include:

A. Court related services

- i. Rendering of any service in the conduct of any case or other legal proceedings before any court/authority/tribunal and giving advice on any legal matter.
- ii. Providing Advocate in legal proceedings;
- iii. Obtaining and supply of certified copies of orders and other documents in legal proceedings;
- iv. Preparation of appeal, paper book including printing and translation of documents in legal proceedings.

- v. Expenses on account of payment of court fee, process fees and all other charges payable or incurred in connection with any legal proceedings and other miscellaneous charges

Up to March, 2015, more than 13.64 lakh women have been benefited through free legal aid and advice.

B. Legal Awareness

Legal awareness/literacy is aimed at demystifying the laws. The Legal Services Authorities have been carrying out legal literacy programmes in schools, colleges and communities. Women are also being made aware in the legal literacy programmes about their legal rights namely right to property, right to maintenance, right to education, right to be treated equally in employment, labour laws, gender sensitisation etc. This brings empowerment of women.

On account of their inherent inconveniences, the villagers find it difficult to approach the legal services institutions. Legal services to villagers need not necessarily be court-annexed because the problems of villagers may be simple in nature like the application for a BPL card, registration under the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, application for ration cards, getting payments for the work done under the MGNREGA or even making application for or renewal of cards and other documents. The disputes between the local people are also of simple nature like boundary disputes, overhanging branches, diversion of water canals etc. Their problems with the government officials also may not be complex. They may not even prefer to go to court for settlement of their grievances. The NALSA through the District Legal Services Authorities has been establishing Village Legal Care and Support Centres in villages. These Centres are manned by the Para-Legal Volunteers (PLVs) and Legal Aid Panel Lawyers. The PLVs and lawyers resolve the problems of the villagers. As the Village Legal Care Support Centres are in the villages and the PLVs from the community itself, women do not find any difficulty to approach these Centres. This empowers the women to get their problems resolved.

Another area of NALSA's attention is sexual harassment faced by women at work places and other forms of sexual violence against women. Legal services institutions are taking pro-active steps for rendering legal services to women in such cases. Special legal literacy classes aimed at empowerment of women through legal awareness are being organised. In such classes efforts are being made by the legal services institutions to ascertain the expectations of women from the legal services institutions. This ensures transparency and good governance in the legal aid system.

3.1 Social Justice Litigation

NALSA has filed Social Justice Litigation before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India for protection of fundamental rights of the abandoned and destitute women/widows in Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh. Hon'ble Supreme Court of India has issued the following directions in the matter:

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1. A team of doctors from the Civil Hospital, Vrindavan/Mathura shall visit the four government run Shelter Homes, at least twice a week from 10.00 a.m to 12.00 noon to examine the ailing inmates. However, in case of an emergency, on being informed, the Chief Medical Officer shall ensure that the patient is attended by a doctor from the Hospital without any undue delay;
 2. The Officer In-charge of the Sanitation/Health Department of the Vrindavan Municipal Corporation shall ensure that rooms/halls housing the widows and toilets in the said Shelter Homes are cleaned daily and fumigated regularly;
 3. As suggested by the State of U.P., a team comprising the District Probation Officer and District Social Welfare Officer shall be constituted forthwith to ensure that proper food and drinking water is supplied to the inmates of the said Shelter Homes. The said team shall also explore the possibility of having a common mess for the inmates at each of the Shelter Homes;
 4. In the event of death of any destitute woman in the city of Vrindavan, the Chief Medical Officer of the Civil Hospital shall ensure that last rites of the deceased are performed properly at the State's expense as per her religion/customs.
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