

Women Empowerment

Why in News?

International Women's Day is celebrated around the world on 8th March.

What is the theme of International Women's Day 2025?

- **International Women's Day** - It is celebrated around the world on 8th March to recognize their achievements across national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, economic or political boundaries.

Officially recognized by the United Nations in 1977, International Women's Day first emerged from the activities of labour movements at the turn of the twentieth century in North America and across Europe.

- **Theme** - "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment."
- This year's theme calls for action to unlock equal rights, power and opportunities for all and an inclusive future where no one is left behind.
- **Significance of 2025** - It marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which is the most progressive and widely endorsed blueprint for women's and girls' rights worldwide.

The Beijing Declaration was a resolution adopted by the UN at the end of the Fourth World Conference on Women on 15 September 1995.

What are the constitutional provisions for women empowerment?

Constitutional Provisions for Women Empowerment

Preamble

- **Equality** - It provides for equal status and of opportunity for all.

Fundamental Rights

- **Article 14** - Equality before the law
- **Article 15** - It prohibits discrimination based on sex.
- **Article 16** - Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment

Directive Principles of State Policies

- **Article 39** - Equal pay for equal work for men and women
- **Article 42** - To make provision for maternity relief

Fundamental Duties

- **Article 51A** - Renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

Panchayat Raj and Municipality

• **Article 243D&T** - 1/3rd of seats in local bodies are reserved for women aimed at political empowerment.

What are the international treaties India signed for women empowerment?

- **UDHR** - Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that all humans are “born free and equal in dignity and rights”.
- **ICCPR** - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights.
- **CEDAW** - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) is often described as an international bill of rights for women.
- **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)** - It was adopted to promulgate a set of principles concerning the equality of men and women.
- **United Nations Convention Against Corruption (2003)** - It encourages States parties to 'promote meaningful participation of women and girls in anti-corruption activities.
- **Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development** - SDG 5 aims at achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls

What are the government schemes for women educational upliftment?

- **Education** - India has undertaken several initiatives to ensure that girls have equal access to quality education from primary schooling to higher education.
- **Gender parity in education** - It has improved significantly, with female enrolment surpassing male enrolment in recent years.

Educational Initiatives for Women

- **Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009** - It ensures schools are within reach for all children.
- **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** - It focuses on improving the child sex ratio and promoting girls' education.
- **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan** - It supports school infrastructure and girl-friendly facilities.
- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** - It prioritizes gender equity and inclusion in education.
- **Eklavya Model Residential Schools** - It promotes quality education for tribal girls.

STEM Initiatives

- **Vigyan Jyoti (2020)** promotes STEM education for girls in underrepresented areas.
- **Overseas Fellowship Scheme** supports women scientists in global research opportunities.
- National Digital Library, SWAYAM, and SWAYAM PRABHA ensure access to online learning.

Achievements

- **Female Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)** has overtaken Male GER since 2017-18.
- **Female enrolment in higher education:** 2.07 crore (2021-22), which is nearly 50% of the total number 4.33 crore.
- **The female to 100 male faculty ratio** has also improved to 77 in 2021-22 from 63 in 2014-15.
- **Women in STEM:** 42.57% (41.9 lakh) of total STEM enrolment.
- Over 10 lakh girl students benefitted under various scholarships for STEM fields.



What are the skill development initiatives for women?

- **Skill India Mission** - Under the mission, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) delivers skill, re-skill and up-skill training to all the sections of the society including women.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)** - To increase the participation of women under PMKVY, conveyance cost and expenditure towards boarding & lodging facilities are provided.
- **Women Industrial Training Institutes** - There are 19 National Skill Training Institutes (NSTI) and more than 300 ITIs exclusively for women.
- Government of India approved 30% reservation of seats for women candidates in all ITIs (Govt. & Private) in all courses.

What are the initiative for women health and nutrition promotion?

- **Access to healthcare services** - It is crucial for improving the well-being of women and reducing gender-based health disparities.
- The government has introduced several policies to ensure maternal and child health, nutrition, and medical support for women across all sections of society.

Health and Nutrition initiatives for women

- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** Provides cash incentives to pregnant and lactating mothers, with Rs. 17,362 crore disbursed to 3.81 crore women, as of January 2025.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission** provided potable tap water to 15.4 crore households, reducing health risks.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission** led to the construction of 11.8 crore toilets, improving sanitation and hygiene.
- **Poshan Abhiyaan:** Strengthens maternal and child nutrition programs
- **Ujjwala Yojana** - Over 10.3 crore clean cooking gas connections distributed under the scheme.

Achievements

- Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) reduced from 130 (2014-16) to 97 (2018-20) per lakh live births.
- Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) decreased from 43 (2015) to 32 (2020).
- Life expectancy for women increased to 71.4 years (2016-20), expected to reach 74.7 years by 2031-36.

What are the initiatives for economic empowerment?

- **Female workforce** - Women's participation in the workforce is a key driver of economic growth.
- The government has launched multiple initiatives to promote financial independence, entrepreneurship, and employment opportunities for women.

Women Initiatives of Financial Inclusion

- **PM Jan Dhan Yojana:** Over 30.46 crore accounts (55% belonging to women) opened.
- **Stand-Up India Scheme:** 84% of loans under Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 1 crore sanctioned to women entrepreneurs.
- **MUDRA Scheme:** 69% of microloans given to women-led enterprises.
- **Self-Help Groups under NRLM:** 10 crore (100 million) women connected to 9 million SHGs.
- **Bank Sakhis Model:** 6,094 women banking correspondents processed transactions worth \$40 million in 2020.



Employment and Entrepreneurship Initiatives

- **Mahila Coir Yojana** - It is an exclusive training programme aimed at the skill development of women artisans engaged in the coir industry.
- **Mahila Samridhi Yojana** - It is a Micro Finance scheme for women with a rebate in interest.
- **Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP)** - It hosts information and services relevant to women entrepreneurs.
- **Stand-Up India (SUI)** - It facilitates financing SC/ST and/or Women Entrepreneurs through Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI).
- 10% of funds in the Small Industries Development Bank of India reserved for women-led startups.
- **Women in Armed Forces** - Entry into NDA, combat roles, and Sainik Schools.
- **Civil Aviation** - India has over 15% women pilots, higher than the global average of 5%.
- **Working Women's Hostels (Sakhi Niwas)** - 523 hostels benefiting 26,306 women.

What are the Digital and Technological initiatives?

- **Digital skills** - In the digital era, access to technology and digital literacy are crucial for women's socio-economic progress.
- The government has been proactive in ensuring women are part of the digital revolution through various initiatives.

Digital India Initiatives

- **PMGDISHA** (Prime Minister's Digital Saksharta Abhiyan): 60 million rural citizens trained in digital literacy.
- **Common Service Centres (CSCs)**: 67,000 women entrepreneurs running digital service centers.
- **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)**: Bridging healthcare accessibility through digital solutions.
- **SANKALP Hubs** for Women Empowerment: Functioning in 742 districts across 35 States/UTs
- **Digital banking** and Aadhaar-linked services ensure financial security for women.
- **Government e-marketplaces** encourage female entrepreneurship and online businesses.



What are the initiatives for safety and protection?

- **Ensuring women's safety** - It is a top priority for the Indian government.
- Several legislative measures, dedicated funds, and fast-track courts have been established to curb crimes against women and provide legal and institutional support.

Key Legal Frameworks

- **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018**: Enhanced penalties for crimes against women.
- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005**.
- **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013**.
- **POCSO Act, 2012**: Strengthened laws against child abuse.
- **Ban on Triple Talaq (2019)**: Criminalizing instant divorce practices.
- **Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961**: Penalizes dowry-related offenses.
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006**: Protects minors from forced marriages.

Nirbhaya Fund Projects (Rs. 11,298 crore allocated)

- **One Stop Centres (OSCs)**: 802 centers functional, assisting over 1 million women.
- **Emergency Response Support System (ERSS - 112)**: 38.34 crore calls handled.
- **Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs)**: 750 operational courts, 408 exclusively for POCSO cases.
- **Cyber Crime Helpline (1930)** and cyber forensic labs for digital safety.
- **Safe City Projects**: Implemented in 8 cities to enhance women's safety.
- 14,658 Women Help Desks in Police Stations, 13,743 headed by women.

Institutional and Legislative Reforms

- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**: Strengthens provisions for gender justice.
- Enhanced punishment for sexual offenses and trafficking.
- Witness protection and digital evidence admissibility improved.
- **Women's representation in CAPFs**: 33% reservation in select forces.
- **Nari Adalat**: Piloted in 50 Gram Panchayats each in Assam and J&K, now expanding.

What lies ahead?

- India has made remarkable progress in women's empowerment through comprehensive policies, targeted schemes, and legal frameworks.
- From economic participation to safety, digital inclusion to education, the government's initiatives have led to significant improvements in women's lives.
- On this International Women's Day, it is crucial to reaffirm the commitment to building an inclusive, gender-equal society where women play a central role in shaping the nation's future.
- Sustained efforts in policy-making, community engagement, and digital inclusion will ensure that women continue to drive India's growth story in the years to come.

Reference

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