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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
AB PMJAY	Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana
AB-HWC	Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres
ABRY	Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana
ADMs	Additional District Magistrates
AFHC	Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics
AHTU	Anti-Human Trafficking Units
AISHE	All India Survey on Higher Education
ALIS	Arms License Issuance System
AMBP	Anemia Mukht Bharat Programme
AMSY	Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana
ANC	Antenatal Care
AP-SERP	Andhra Pradesh Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
ATFs	Addiction treatment facilities
AWC	Anganwadi Centre
AWCC	Anganwadi cum Crèches
BBBP	Beti Bachao Beti Padhao
BNS	Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita
BNSS	Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
BPR&D	Bureau of Police Research and Development
BSA	Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam
BSF	Border Security Force
CAC	Comprehensive Abortion Care
CARA	Central Adoption Resource Agency
CAW	Crime Against Women Cell
CCIs	Child Care Institutions
CCPWC	Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children
CCPWC	Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children
CCS	Central Civil Services
C-DAC	Centre for Development of Advanced Computing
CDTI	Central Detective Training Institute
CFSL	Central Forensic Science Laboratory
CHL	Child Helpline
CMAM	Community Management of Malnutrition
CP/RGR	Child Pornography/ Rape-Gangrape

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CPHC	Comprehensive Primary Health Care
CPLI	Community based Peer Led Interventions
CPS	Child Protection Services
CRP	Community Resource Persons
CSC	Common Service Centres
CURIE	Consolidation of University Research for Innovation and Excellence
CVCF	Central Victim Compensation Fund
CWCs	Child Welfare Committees
DBT	Direct Benefit Transfer
DCPU	District Child Protection Unit
DoEPWD	Department of Empowerment of Persons With Disabilities
DIN	Director Identification Number
DLSA	Delhi State Legal Services Authority
DMs	District Magistrates
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DPI	Digital Public Infrastructure
DST	Department of Science and Technology
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
EFC	Expenditure Finance Committee
EPFO	Employees' Provident Fund Organisation
ERSS	Emergency Response Support System
ESDP	Entrepreneurship Skill Development Programme
e-SHRAM	a National Database of the Unorganised Workers
FTSCs	Fast Track Special Courts
G2C	Government-to-Citizen
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GATI	Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GKRA	Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan
GMD	Growth Monitoring Devices
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HBNC	Home Based New-born Care
HBYC	Home-Based Care for Young Child Programme
HEW	Hubs for Empowerment of Women
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HMIS	Health Management Information System
HWA	Health and Wellness Ambassadors
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ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ICG	Indian Coast Guard
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEC	Information Education and Communication
IERMS	Integrated Emergency Response Management System
IGNWPS	Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme
IGNWPS	Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMD	Indian Meteorological Department
IMEs	Informal Micro Enterprises
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMI	Intensified Mission Indradhanush
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
IOs/ POs	Investigation Officers / Protection Officers
IPC	Indian Penal Code
IRCA	Integrated Rehabilitation Centers for Addicts
IRWA	Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
IVR	Interactive Voice Response
IT / ITES	Information Technology / Information Technology Enabled Services
JAM	Jan Dhan-Aadhar-Mobile
JCC	Joint Coordination Committee
JJ	Juvenile Justice
LEA	Law Enforcement Agencies
MCY	Mahila Coir Yojana
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MIS	Management Information System
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MOM	Mars Orbiter Mission
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MSME	Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
MTP	Medical Termination of Pregnancy
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NALSA	National Legal Services Authority
NAPCC	National Action Plan on Climate Change
NAPDDR	National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction
NCB	Narcotics Control Bureau
NCD	Non-Communicable Diseases

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NCMEC	National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children
NCORD	Narco Coordination Centre
NCPCR	National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
NCRB	National Crime Records Bureau
NCRP	National Cybercrime Reporting Portal
NCW	National Commission for Women
NDAL	National Database on Arms License
NDL	National Digital Library
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NDPS	Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substance
NDSO	National Database on Sexual Offenders
NEAT	National Education Alliance for Technology
NEP	National Education Policy
NER	North-Eastern Region
NFHS-5	National Family Health Survey
NHM	National Health Mission
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NIA	National Investigation Agency
NIMHANS	National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences
NIPCCD	National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development
NIS	National Immunization Schedule
NITI Aayog	National Institute for Transforming India
NMBA	Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan
NMEICT	National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology
NPCCHH	National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health
NPS	National Pension Scheme
NRI	Non- Resident Indian
NSAP	National Social Assistance Programme
NSO	National Statistical Office
NSP	National Scholarship Portal
OCI	Overseas Citizen of India
ODIC	Outreach and Drop In Centers
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSC	One Stop Centres
PAPs	Prospective Adoptive Parents
PBPB	Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi
PCMA	Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
Ph.D	Doctor of Philosophy
PHC	Primary Health Centres

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PHRA	Protection of Human Rights Act
PIP	Programme Implementation Plan
PM MUDRA	Micro-Units Development & Refinance Agency
PMEGP	Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme
PMGDISHA	Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan
PMGKY	Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana
PMGKY	Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana
PMMSY	PM Matsya Sampada Yojana
PMSMA	Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan
PMSMA	Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan
PMVVY	Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana
POCSO	Protection of Children from Sexual Offences
POSHAN	Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nourishment
PRIs	Panchayati Raj Institutions
PSBs	Public Sector Banks
PW&LMs	Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers
PwDs	Persons with Disabilities
PWDVA	Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
RBSK	Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram
RCH	Reproductive & Child Health
RCH	Reproductive & Child Health
RI	Resident Indian
RKSK	Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram
RMNCH+A	Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health
SAEC	Sexual Assault Evidence Collection
SAMVAD	Support, Advocacy & Mental Health Interventions for Children in Vulnerable Circumstances and Distress
SANKALP	Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion)
SAPCC	State Action Plan on Climate Change
SC	Scheduled Caste
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDG-NIF	Sustainable Development Goals – National Indicator Framework
SEDGs	Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups
SERB	Science and Engineering Research Board
SFDRR	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
SHC	Sub Health Centres
SHG	Self Help Groups
SIDBI	Small Industries Development Bank of India
SIM	Subscriber Identity Module

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SMS	Short message service
SNP	Supplementary Nutrition Programme
SoPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SPUNER	Special Police unit for North East Region
SPUWAC	Special Police Unit for Women & Children
SSB	Sashastra Seema Bal
ST	Scheduled Tribes
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SUMAN	Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan
SVANidhi	Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi
SWAYAM	Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds
TSP	Total Solution Provider
TSRTC	Telangana State Road Transport Corporation
U-DISE	Unified District Information System for Education
UNIFIL	United Nations Interim Force In Lebanon
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
UNISFA	United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei
UIP	Universal Immunization Programme
UPI	Unified Payments Interface
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USG	Ultrasound Sonography
UTs	Union Territories
VLEs	Women Village level Entrepreneurs
VTP	Vehicle Tracking Platform
WaSH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHDs	Women Help Desks
WHL	Women Help Line
WIDUSHI	Women's Instinct for Developing and Ushering in Scientific Heights & Innovation
WISE-IPR	Women in Science and Engineering- Intellectual Property Rights
WISE-KIRAN	Women in Science and Engineering-KIRAN
WOS	Women Scientists Scheme
WTP	Women Technology Parks

Section 1: Synthesis: Executive Summary

1. As a founding member of the United Nations, and a party to key international instruments protecting women's rights, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, amongst others, India reaffirms its commitment towards achieving gender equality and working towards addressing the 12 critical areas of concern stated in the Beijing Platform for Action, and aligned to the Agenda 2030 for Development.
2. India is guided by the vision of women-led development, where women live with dignity and contribute to India's growth story as equal partners, in an ecosystem that is free of violence and gender-based harassment. In the last five years, India has made a paradigm shift in its approach to address gender inequalities **from women's development to women-led development**, wherein women are not just passive beneficiaries of the development process but active architects who participate in the conceptualization, design and monitoring of the measures that shape our development trajectory towards a developed nation as India completes 100 years of independence in 2047. This paradigm shift is not only implemented internally but has gained global traction. Under its recent presidency in the G-20, India foregrounded gender in drafting the New Delhi Leader's Declaration, not only mainstreaming gender but also promoted dedicated discourse, building consensus to ensure a specific section on "Gender Equality and Empowering all women and girls," and introduced the Working Group on Women Empowerment.
3. The coronavirus pandemic exacerbated and highlighted the multifaceted challenges faced by women across the world in her lifecycle and across different spheres of life, such as the disproportionate care burden, barriers to safe mobility, gender-based violence, access to education, etc. However, this pandemic also provided an opportunity to the Government of India to reimagine an integrated approach towards achieving gender equality; tapping the inherent potential of "**Nari Shakti**". India has adopted multi-pronged approach to address the issues women face on a **life-cycle continuum** basis for their educational, social, economic and political empowerment. From mitigation of feminized poverty, to saturation of green, gender-responsive infrastructure solutions such as clean cooking fuels, tap water connections, and construction of toilets, India has foregrounded policies that reduce women's drudgery, provide social protection, and enable economic empowerment.
4. This report delves into details across each of the 12 critical areas of concern, expanding on India's last report of 2019, and drawing from the experiences of the past five years for forward looking strategies. The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India's Ministerial-level body working towards gender equality, has

prepared this report through a consultative process. Inputs from all stakeholders have been incorporated in the report.

5. Envisioning SHGs¹ as vehicles of change, nearly 100 million women have been connected with around 9 million women's self-help groups through the National Rural/Urban Livelihood Mission. Not only are SHGs transforming the rural landscape economically, they are taking greater leadership at grassroots level on issues and challenges concerning their communities and are instrumental towards achievement of developed India by 2047.
6. Another notable best practice of India is the integrated and convergent service infrastructure for addressing violence against women and girls through the dedicated non-lapsable fund called '**Nirbhaya Fund**'. With 44 projects across India worth USD 1.2 billion, India has strengthened the ecosystem for safety and security of women and girls with survivor-centric approach. A robust network of 770 One Stop Centres covering entire geography of the country have been created to provide integrated medical, legal, police, shelter, and psycho-social counselling support and assistance to women affected by violence and in distress, both in private and public spaces under one roof. Various helplines such as WHL, Child Helpline, and ERSS have been integrated to provide seamless timely assistance and information services to the needy women and girls.

¹ Self Help Groups of women are being promoted through financial inclusion by ensuring delivery of financial services, credit, savings, insurance and payments and remittance facilities, at an affordable cost.

Section 2: Report of past 5 years and new and emerging priorities of the future

Laws, policies and/or programmes in the past 5 years: achievements, challenges and setbacks

7. Embodying the principle of women-led development, India has passed several laws and bolstered policies in the past five years that foster women's agency, and foreground the rights of women across various domains.

Political Participation and Representation

8. The Beijing Platform for Action states that "Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved." India has institutionalised steps towards its holistic adoption and implementation.
9. Today, India is one of the only 18 states globally, with a woman helming the State.ⁱ In 2023, India passed the Constitution (One Hundred and sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, "Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam", to reserve one-third seats for women in the Lower House of Parliament, and in all federal State Legislative Assemblies marking a historic milestone in its national journey to foster women's equitable representation in public life at all levels of the federal structure.ⁱⁱ
10. This landmark achievement further consolidates affirmative action for honing women's leadership built on the foundation of reserving one-third (33 percent) of seats in rural and urban local bodies of governance, (Panchayati Raj Institutions and Municipal bodies)² more than three decades ago.

Women's Entrepreneurship and Women's Enterprises

11. Increasing women's workforce participation has been a priority of the Government and is instrumental to India's vision of becoming a developed economy by 2047. In the past 5 years, female labour force participation has consistently increased from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 37% in 2022-23, depicting a rising trend of 13.7 percentage points.ⁱⁱⁱ
12. One of the contributing factors has been the Government's dedicated focus towards fostering women's entrepreneurship, particularly enabling women from remote and disadvantaged sections of the society to participate in productive work. The Government has facilitated and disbursed a large number of loans to small women-led enterprises in the country's burgeoning start-up ecosystem under the Start-up India Initiative. 10% of the fund of 1.2 billion USD in the "Fund of Funds" operated by the

² Through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. Panchayati Raj Institutions of the States and Union Territories covered under Part IX of the Constitution of India.

- SIDBI has been reserved for women-led start-ups. To economically empower women, 84% of loans of sizes from a million to ten million INR under flagship scheme of 'Stand-Up India' have been made available to women. It promotes entrepreneurship amongst the sections of the population, including women, facing significant hurdles due to lack of advice/ mentorship as well as inadequate and delayed credit. Under the Government of India's flagship scheme, Prime Minister's Micro-Units Development & Refinance Agency (MUDRA), 69% loans sized up to one million rupees have been sanctioned to women-owned and operated enterprises. PM Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme facilitates collateral free working capital loans to approximately 6.5 million street vendors to help their businesses wherein more than 45% of beneficiaries are women, largely from marginalized sections of society.
13. The Udyam Registration Portal, launched in 2020, is an online, free of cost portal that does not require any documentation, and is a step towards Ease of Doing Business for MSMEs.^{iv} In 2022-23, Special drives for registration of women owned MSMEs on Udyam registration portal have been undertaken and more than 200,000 women owned MSMEs were registered. Women owned MSMEs constitute 20.5% of the MSMEs on the portal.^v Contribution of Women-owned Informal Micro Enterprises (IMEs) registered on Udyam Assist Platform is higher at 70.49% of the total IMEs.
 14. To benefit women entrepreneurs, the Public Procurement Policy was amended mandating Central Ministries/ Departments/ Undertakings to procure at least 3% of their annual procurement from women-owned micro and small enterprises. To support women entrepreneurs under Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro & Small Enterprises, two provisions have been introduced for women entrepreneurs in 2022, viz, 10% concession in annual Guarantee fees; and 10 % additional Guarantee coverage of up to 85%, as against the 75% for other entrepreneurs.^{vi}
 15. Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) is a major credit-linked subsidy programme aimed at generating self-employment opportunities through establishment of micro enterprises in the non-farm sector. For beneficiaries belonging to special categories including women, higher subsidy is given.
 16. Further, in a concerted effort to encourage women innovators to file patent applications and protect their inventions, Indian Patent Act provides for expedited examination, when at least one of the applicants is a female. Further, women entrepreneurs, who file for protection of their Intellectual Property in individual capacity, have to pay reduced fees as compared to other large entities. Patent filings by women has increased over 905% in the past 5 years.^{vii}
 17. Women lead about one-third of the start-ups incubated under the Atal Innovation Mission's Atal Incubation Centres, which foster innovation at universities, institutions and corporates among others.^{viii} A dedicated Women Entrepreneurship Platform by NITI Aayog provides mentoring, networking support and resources in regional languages to women entrepreneurs and women founded businesses.

18. The wave of Unicorns in India has soared to new heights as the country got its 100th Unicorn on 2nd May 2022. Today, 1 out of every 10 unicorns globally are in India. Among the 44 Indian start-ups that turned unicorns in 2021, four were led by women, higher than the two companies that achieved this feat in 2020. By 2025, the country is expected to have 250 unicorns.
19. In order to encourage employment of women, a number of enabling provisions have been incorporated in the Labour Codes viz. the Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 and the Code on Social Security, 2020 for creating congenial work environment for women workers.
20. India has in place the legislative framework since 1976 embodying the principle of 'equal pay for equal work', ensuring equality between the genders in the sphere of employment. Code on Wages, 2019 (subsuming the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976) expands that discrimination on the ground of sex in requirement or for promotion or any other condition of service is not permitted and any person doing so is liable for penal action.
21. The Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code, 2020, incorporates provisions to address the occupational safety, health, and welfare of workers including women workers. This enables women's active participation in non-traditional sectors. It emphasizes creating a secure and healthy working environment, considering the unique health considerations of women. The code includes provisions aimed at promoting the well-being of women, such as mandatory health checkups. Employers are required to facilitate free-of-cost health checkups on an annual basis for all workers.
22. The Industrial Relations Code, 2020 consolidates laws relating to industrial relations and has introduced the concept of fixed-term employment. It has set rules for the retrenchment of workers. The code emphasizes on fair representation of women in the Grievance Redressal Committee and mandates that representation should be proportionate to the number of women workers in relation to the total workers employed in the establishment.

Digital and Financial Inclusion for Women

23. Schemes such as Prime Minister Jan Dhan Yojna promoting financial inclusion, Stand-Up India and MUDRA Yojna facilitating bank loans and entrepreneurial activities, have resulted in positive outcomes for women which is reflected, among others, in the reduction in Gender Wage Gap that now stands at 13%, at par with many developed countries, as per latest ILO estimates.
24. Women are also the largest beneficiaries (287 million account holders are women, constituting 55%) under PM-JDY, one of the largest financial inclusion initiatives in the world which also provides access to direct benefits under various welfare schemes, credit and insurance services.

25. For encouraging families to practice planned investment in the education of the girl child, 'Sukanya Samriddhi Account,' a savings scheme with tax exemption, is instituted, securing the future of over 35 million girls, with savings worth over 2.3 billion USD.
26. The postal services of India are the most accessible, far reaching services providing last-mile delivery. Leveraging this network, within a short span of 5 years, India Post extended digital financial services to 78 million citizens, of which 44 % are women account holders. 98% of these women accounts were opened at doorstep, and 68% women accounts receive DBT.
27. In order to bridge the gender digital divide, specifically targeting the rural population including differently abled, India implements 'Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan' (PMGDISHA) covering 64.5 million rural households (one person per household). Of these, 35.8 million of those trained and 27.7 million of those certified are women, constituting 52% of the total enrolled persons and 54 % of the total certified beneficiaries.

Basic Services and Infrastructure

28. India is moving ahead with the concept of saturation, to ensure last mile delivery of all essential services, be it food and nutrition, health, quality infrastructure, education, skilling, amongst others. To reduce women's time poverty and care burden, India has implemented several programmes. It includes access to clean cooking fuel to 103 million households through Ujjawala yojana, safe and potable tap water connection for 117 million households through Jal Jeevan Mission, and through Swacch Bharat Abhiyan access to safe sanitation through the construction of 115 million toilets, in households, schools, communities and public spaces, thus ensuring that access to safe sanitation and burden of domestic chores do not become a barrier for women's mobility and development. This has consequently, also contributed to eliminating potential threats to their health and safety.
29. Ensuring women's safe and smooth mobility at all times be it day or night as well as in different modes of transportation has been a consistent priority of India. Technology facilitated safety response systems have been introduced in railways, roadways, highways, and cities in keeping with the requirements of women citizens to plug any gaps in existing infrastructure.

Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls

30. In order to ensure timely delivery of justice and penal action commensurate with the gravity of crime, India has enacted Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam on December 25th, 2023, which came into force on July 1st, 2024, replacing the colonial era codes on criminal jurisprudence. These ensure consolidation of offences against women and children,

use of inclusive language, expanded provisions for gang rape, survivor-centric provisions in recording of statements, penalization of intercourse with minors within marriage as well as intercourse on false promises (marriage, employment, promotion, etc.), witness protection, acknowledgement of digital records, increased punishment for crimes against women and children and increased institutional accountability to the victim. The approach in the criminal justice system has now moved from “penalising the criminals” to “providing justice to the survivors/ victims.”

31. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Amendment Act, 2019 includes cyber-crime and introduces more stringent punishment for those committing sexual crimes on children, with a view to deter perpetrators and prevent crimes against children.
32. The biggest pillar on which India’s efforts for women safety stands is the dedicated non-lapsable fund called 'Nirbhaya Fund.' This fund has been utilised for creating a complete ecosystem for women’s safety, from prevention of crime to investigation and prosecution of offenders. The details of projects/ initiatives under the fund have been enumerated in detail para 187 onwards.

Quality Education for Women and Girls

33. India recognizes that quality education plays an important role in holistic development and empowerment of women and girls. In this direction, several initiatives have been taken and the Government prioritises universal quality education. The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 prioritizes gender equity and envisions ensuring equitable access to quality education to all students, with a special emphasis on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs). To eliminate any disparity in access to education (including vocational education) for children from any gender or other socio-economically disadvantaged group, the Policy envisages the establishment of a ‘Gender-Inclusion Fund’. NEP provides for targeted interventions including free boarding and suitable sanitation and hygiene to promote girls’ attendance in schools. Teachers are trained for relevance of Gender Dimensions in Teaching and Learning Process to adopt learning activities that foster gender sensitive classroom environment. Under the Swachh Vidyalaya Mission (clean schools), it was ensured that all schools have at least one functional toilet for girls. As per UDISE+2021-22, 97.48% Government Schools have the facilities of separate Girls’ toilets and 98.2% Government Schools have the facilities of drinking water.³ Provision of 500 million affordable and quality sanitary napkins under Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana, Scheme for Promotion of Menstrual Hygiene, have also contributed towards behavioural changes resulting in increased enrolment of girls in educational institutions. Further, advisory has been issued to all States/ UTs to utilize funds earmarked for Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) and management of menstrual

³ Provisional inputs by DOSEL

waste under Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) Phase-II, 15th Finance Commission, at village level, for installation or maintenance of incinerators in schools having girls from classes VI to XII and for creating awareness on MHM among adolescent girls and in the society in general.

Action taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls

Women and girls in rural areas

34. The Government of India has undertaken several initiatives to eliminate barriers for women and girls living in rural areas, especially in remote and inaccessible regions who experience intersecting socio-economic challenges in access to information, services, and opportunities, and empower them politically, through devolution of powers to economic empowerment through linkages to finance, credit and insurance, to last mile delivery of services, such as universal healthcare, education and skilling, housing as well as bridging the digital gender divide.
35. Women SHGs are taking greater leadership in handling the issues and challenges concerning their communities and have demonstrated to be frontrunners at the grassroots level, such as during the covid pandemic. The Government has provided market linkages to rural women through Women SHGs at national and international platforms such as *Saras Aajevika Melas* (trade fairs).
36. Further, in the past 5 years, majority of the beneficiaries (57.14%) of the jobs created in rural India under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the largest rural employment and social protection scheme are women.
37. Increase in women's ownership of property contributes to augmented participation of women in household decision making,^{ix} mitigates vulnerabilities in housing/ shelter in case of violence and expands avenues for access to formal financial services (credit, banking, insurance). To promote women's property ownership, particularly for the poor women, under the Government's affordable Housing scheme, over 72% of 29 million houses constructed in rural India are either solely or jointly owned by women.
38. Digital literacy and financial inclusion of rural women have been elaborated above in paras 23-27.

Indigenous women and girls

39. India recognizes all population of the country to be indigenous, and not as settlers. However, there are certain SEDGs such as Scheduled Tribes (STs). The Government of India has taken numerous initiatives for empowering women and girls belonging to Scheduled Tribes.
40. To ensure saturation of all essential services, there has been specialized focus on last mile delivery to ST women for various schemes of the Government pertaining to

subsidized food grains, all-weather house, tap water connections, clean cooking fuel, and agricultural assistance to marginal farmers.

41. To foster universal education, various scholarship schemes are in place for girls belonging to disadvantaged sections, such as the Pre-Matric Scholarship for ST students studying in classes IX & X and the Post-Matric Scholarship for ST girls. For access to quality education and holistic development of children in remote areas, Eklavya Model Residential Schools have been established. For the academic year 2023-24, total enrolment is 1,23,841, out of which girls students are 62,828 (50.73%).
42. To facilitate access and financially support girls from disadvantaged sections pursuing higher studies globally, various scholarships and fellowships are provided, such as National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST students and the National Overseas Scholarship Scheme for ST students for pursuing higher studies in foreign institutions.
43. For economic empowerment of Scheduled Tribe Women, under Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana (AMSY), financial assistance at highly concessional interest rate is provided. In the past five years, financial assistance of 452.9 million USD (Rs.37.82 crore) to 5777 ST women beneficiaries has been provided.^x

Religious minority women and girls

44. There are numerous schemes for the education and skill development of women and girls from religious minorities. Ministry of Minority Affairs offers Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme, Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme, and Merit-cum-Means based Scholarship Schemes, all of which are onboarded on the centralized and updated online repository, National Scholarship Portal (NSP), of which a minimum of one-third seats are earmarked for girl students. Over 70 million Pre-Matric scholarships, majority (51.%) of which were for girls, as well as over 9.1 million Post Matric scholarships, of which 55% were for girls and 1.3 million Merit-cum-Means Scholarships (including 36% women/girls) were sanctioned.^{xi}
45. Nai Roshni scheme generates awareness about minority women's rights through leadership development capacity building programmes, imparting training on health, women's legal rights, digital and financial literacy, and advocacy for social change, benefitting over 435,000 women.
46. For easy access to information regarding educational loans and government scholarships, the Ministry of Finance launched the 'Vidya Lakshmi Portal Education Loan'. Through this portal, students can apply, view and track education loan applications. All Public Sector Banks (PSBs) have been on-boarded. The portal also provides linkages to National Scholarship Portal.^{xii}

Women and girls with disabilities

47. As a party to the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, India has integrated a gender -sensitive approach in holistic development and empowerment of

persons with disabilities whether in education, skilling or entrepreneurship. Further, definition of a person with disability is expanded to include acid attack survivors, who may be victims of gender-based violence, and are entitled to the services and relaxations rendered to persons with disabilities across employment, health and social protection schemes of the Government. Subsequent to the enactment of Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016, numerous initiatives have been taken. The Act, recognises explicit needs of Women with Disabilities and mandates the Government and local authorities to take measures to ensure that women and children with disabilities enjoy equal rights, including reproductive and medical autonomy. Revised Guidelines for providing financial assistance under the National fund for Persons with Disabilities have been released in 2023, to enable persons with disabilities to excel in various domains, including non-traditional fields.^{xiii} Further, India provides a bouquet of scholarship schemes for persons with disabilities, throughout the education pipeline, from schooling to higher education, and half of the scholarship slots are reserved for girl candidates in Pre-matric, Post-matric and Top Class Education scholarships while 30% slots are reserved for women in the National Overseas Scholarship.^{xiv} Through gender budgeting, women with disabilities are also included in several schematic interventions of the Government of India across sectors, including housing, healthcare, skilling and enterprise development, amongst others.

Women and girls living with HIV/AIDS

48. The Government recognizes that skewed patriarchal power relations along with taboos about sexuality have the potential to pejoratively impact women's informed decision-making pertaining to their reproductive agency, thus also putting them, especially young women, at higher risk of infection, as well as intersectional stigma for those infected. Addressing these social challenges and to disseminate the provisions of the HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017, the Handbook on Prevention and Management of Stigma and Discrimination Associated with HIV & AIDS has been released by the National AIDS Control Organization in 2022. The handbook also provides stigma and discrimination mitigation strategies for the workplace, health care, educational and community settings and the role of media and community leaders in addressing HIV-related stigma and discrimination, with the aim to expand socio-economic opportunities and representation for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

People with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions

49. Recognizing the right of self-perceived identity to transgender persons, a National Portal for Transgender Persons was launched in November 2020. The identity certificate issued through this Portal is a valid and recognized document for update of name and gender in AADHAR, educational certificates etc. A total of 16,463 transgender identity certificates have been issued through the portal.^{xv}

50. India also recognizes that transgender persons often face discrimination, violence and atrocities and hence they need special protection in society. To ensure their protection The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019 and subsequent Rules in 2020 were enacted. Penalty is prescribed under the law for violence, abuse of transgender persons, for restraining them from public places, removal from residence or for subjecting them to forced labour. The Act has provision of Transgender Protection Cell at State and District level and Transgender Welfare Board at State level has been established to provide dedicated and inclusive support to transgender persons. A guideline for model transgender welfare board has been circulated. Visibility of transgender as a gender identity has been institutionalised and promoted at centre and state levels. Furthermore, recognizing the lack of social support systems for many transgender persons, safe residential facility for transgender persons in need of care and protection called Garima Greh, have been launched in November 2020, which not only provide free shelter, food, medical care, but also free counselling, recreational facilities, and support for capacity-building and skill development so that the residents come out as confident, positive and independent. Till date, more than 400 transgender persons across 12 Garima Greh have been provided skill development trainings and have gained employment.
51. Additionally, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has allocated funds to National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation for conducting skill development of members of transgender community. Various States in India have adopted initiatives to develop and improve the quality of life of transgender persons, including launching of an umbrella scheme by the state of Odisha called *Sweekruti* to create an enabling environment to ensure equal opportunities, equity, social justice and empowerment of transgender persons, and introducing reservation of seats in educational institutions and public employment.
52. Science, Technology and Innovation Policy 2020 provides for inclusion of LGBTQ+ community into all conversations related to gender equity as well as promote their representation in science, technology and innovation.
53. To promote financial support to education for transgender persons, approximately 10,000 scholarships have been disbursed to transgender candidates amounting to approx. USD 420,000 (Rs 3.50 crore).
54. In 2023, the NHRC organized a One Day National Conference on “Gender and Sexuality: Stigma-Discrimination and Exclusions”.

Younger Women

55. Transport and escort facilities are provided to children living in access-less habitations with sparse population where opening of schools is unviable, to urban deprived children/ children without adult protection in urban areas where schools are not opened because of lack of availability of land and for the specially-abled and the disadvantaged /marginalized. Numerous strategies have also been adopted by the

states to ensure enrolment for hard-to-reach children such as opening of neighbourhood schools, hostel facility for primary and upper primary to senior secondary level etc.

56. Apart from numerous scholarship schemes for girls, ensuring a smooth pipeline from school to higher education /vocational training / employment, equipping them with tools for exercising independent agency, with an intersectional approach foregrounding support for young women from disadvantaged sections, India has a gamut of policies to promote holistic development of girls for their health, financial inclusion, sports, amongst others.
57. The Scheme for Adolescent Girls holistically addresses their health, nutritional and development needs. For encouraging familial investment into securing the future of the girl child, the government launched a savings scheme called '*Sukanya Samriddhi Account*' with tax exemption benefitting over 35 million girls, with savings worth over USD 2.3 billion.^{4xvi}
58. The Government of India has actively encouraged women in sports. Sports boosts confidence, contributes to girls' mental and physical health, as well as risk-taking abilities. The Government has organized Khelo India Women's League, conducted in 19 disciplines across the nation, and giving a platform to over half a lakh young women athletes. As a special initiative for encouraging women in sports, the Khelo India "Dus ka Dum" Sports competition was also launched on the occasion of International Women's Day in March 2023.

Older Women

59. To provide basic level of financial support to the destitute including widows, women senior citizens, and women with disabilities, the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) was launched. To provide senior citizens with a stable income source after retirement, Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana (PMVVY) is being implemented. National Pension Scheme (NPS) was also formulated with a view to provide old age income security in the country. NPS was extended to all citizens including the unorganized sector workers on a voluntary basis. This scheme is a pan India schemes and is available to women as well. Other pension schemes include Atal Pension Yojana where women constitute nearly half of the beneficiaries. Recognizing the special development needs for widows, a special home namely 'Krishna Kutir' has been established in Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh having capacity to cater to over 1000 widowed women. In 2021, taking note of the plight faced by the abandoned and destitute widows of Vrindavan, a meeting was organized by NHRC on the topic "Human Rights Issues of Widows residing in Shelter Homes in Mathura-Vrindavan and Varanasi". The

⁴ Under the scheme, a parent or legal guardian can open an account in the name of the girl child until she attains the age of 10 years. The account will be valid for 21 years from the date of opening of the account, after which it will mature and the money will be paid to the girl child in whose name the account had been opened. The scheme also offers higher returns. Tax exemption is one of the greatest advantages of this scheme

Commission organized a conference on “Integrating Women’s Development with Nation’s Development: Role of Stakeholders” in 2020, in collaboration with NALSAR, Hyderabad.

60. On 11 June 2024, NHRC released an Advisory on Protection of Human Rights of the Widows, which was aimed at recognising the difficulties faced by widows in India, including but not limited to social isolation, economic deprivation, lack of access to property and social welfare schemes, unemployment, and destitution. The advisory is aimed at providing support through rehabilitative schemes, skill development, and ensuring their overall well-being.

Over the past five years, how has the confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls?

61. Coronavirus pandemic has been the biggest global crisis in the past five years significantly hindering progress on gender equality and has seen intense short-term and long-term impact. Its multifaceted effects on exacerbating gender inequalities were felt in India as well. The pandemic shot to the forefront the unpaid care work undertaken by women at home, including domestic work, taking care of dependents, such as children, elderly and persons with disabilities. On the one hand, it exerted a huge pressure on working women as they need to handle two full time jobs – one at home and the other at office.^{xvii} On the other hand, due to the shrinking economic activities in the informal sector similar to the formal sector, there were huge job losses which adversely impacted the women by worsening their levels of stress, burnout and impairing mental health.^{xviii} Moreover, as the pandemic deepened, the economic and social stress coupled with restricted movement and social isolation measures, thus increasing the possibilities of gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence. Further, restrictions in women’s mobility coupled with potential increased surveillance at homes may have rendered various incidences of violence unreported. The pandemic also heightened gender barriers in access to education.
62. India has been at the forefront of global fight against the worst pandemic of the century. India’s vaccination programme was with a motto of “*Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam*”, i.e., the world is one family. India has not only protected its own citizens but has helped a large number of countries globally by supplying medicines and vaccine doses. These efforts have been hailed globally on multiple foras. India’s National Covid-19 Vaccination Programme, which is the world’s largest vaccination programme, began on 16 January 2021, has been able to administer more than 2.2 billion Covid vaccine doses across the country in the shortest possible time.^{xix} PwDs and their care givers were given priority in COVID-19 Vaccination.

63. The Government of India, recognizing the intersectional impact of the pandemic, on different sections of the population, and women from diverse sections, announced a special economic and comprehensive package relief package, Atmanirbhar Bharat, (Self-Reliant India), worth 240 billion USD (Rs. 20 lakh crore), equivalent to 10% of India's GDP, at the time,^{xx} with a dedicated and intersectional focus on the most marginalized - including labourers, MSMEs, insurance for frontline health workers, many of whom are women, increased subsidies for food grains, and cash transfers for the poor, vulnerable women, senior citizens, persons with disabilities and daily wage earners.
64. The Government's flagship DBT programmes were instrumental in directly transferring the amount to beneficiaries, thus mitigating potential corruption. Disbursed through existing programmes as National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) and Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, (PMGKY) (Prime Minister's Poor welfare scheme) , leveraging cashless and digital banking to transfer the relief package under PMJDY, the package had a vast rural outreach, and a targeted focus on women, particularly widows, elderly women, rural women and persons with disabilities.^{xxi} During the COVID 19 pandemic Government transferred a total of approximately 3.72 Billion USD (Rs. 31,000 Crore) in three tranches in the bank accounts of 206 million women beneficiaries.^{xxii}
65. Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) has been launched with effect from 1st October, 2020 as part of Atmanirbhar Bharat package 3.0 to incentivize employers for creation of new employment along with social security benefits and restoration of loss of employment during Covid-19 pandemic. This scheme being implemented through the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), seeks to reduce the financial burden of the employers and encourages them to hire more workers. Benefits have been provided to 4.6 million beneficiaries through 126,000 establishments.^{xxiii} Government also launched the Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyaan (GKRA) of 125 days on 20th June, 2020 to boost employment and livelihood opportunities for returnee migrant workers and similarly affected persons including youth in rural areas, in 116 selected districts across 6 States.^{xxiv}
66. The pandemic led to the innovations by women-led SHGs, leading to long-term income generation opportunities for women, such as leveraging technology for manufacturing of biodegradable masks, PPE kits, sanitary napkins and other essentials, community kitchens providing food delivery, waste management and treatment, and collectivization of farmers and producers, which are detailed in Section 3 (paras 113-115).
67. To enable reporting of gender based violence, particularly domestic violence, for women in distress who would have found it challenging to call, email or physically report such cases during the pandemic, the National Commission for Women (NCW) launched a special 24X7 WhatsApp helpline through which anyone could report the incidents.^{xxv} The NCW also took cognizance of the grievances relating to domestic

violence during the pandemic reported in social media^{xxvi} and coordinated with police and other authorities to provide assistance. All institutions of the Government of India providing assistance to women affected by violence or in distress, were fully operational during the pandemic, such as OSCs, WHL (181), ERSS (112), Child Helpline (1098). All the statutory officers under various Acts of the MWCD including Protection Officers under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (PWDVA) and Child Marriage Prohibition Officers, under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA) were available round the clock during the covid pandemic for assisting the needy and they also undertook sensitisation programs.^{xxvii}

68. Through advisories dated 28 March 2020 and 29 March 2020 issued by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), all State Governments and UT Administrations were requested to ensure that Child Welfare Police Officers (CWPO) regularly monitor any abandoned children found on the streets within respective police station jurisdictions and also to make arrangements for medical check-up of such children.^{xxviii} Keeping in view the need to addressing mental health concerns of persons with disabilities, during COVID 19, the DoEPWD launched a dedicated 24x7 toll free Mental Health Rehabilitation helpline (18005990019) service which was made available in 13 languages. Videos on COVID 19 related guidelines, instructions, manuals, etc. were developed involving experts in English and Hindi to provide information in accessible format for persons with hearing disabilities.
69. The Government introduced an umbrella scheme for safety, security and economic empowerment of women, namely, Mission Shakti in July 2022 that addresses the multi-faceted challenges faced by women. The insights gathered during covid pandemic have been suitably incorporated in the Guidelines. The scheme has components pertaining to facilitating women's workforce participation through provision of working women's hostels, crèche and day-care facilities, integrated access to information, and maternity benefits to partially compensate wage loss, as well as strengthening women's helplines, providing integrated support to survivors of violence and supporting the girl child.

Priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls through laws, policies and/ or programmes in the next 5 years

70. To achieve the vision of developed India by 2047, women-led development is a core priority of the Government of India in the next five years. One of the strategies for achieving this is fostering women's representation and participation across all spheres of life. Therefore, it follows that increasing women's workforce participation, including in non-conventional sectors, is a key priority of the Government of India in the next five years.
71. Through several enabling provisions, such as the three labour codes stated above, strengthening the implementation of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at

Workplace Act that covers both the formal and informal sectors, numerous interventions for enterprise development through SHGs and fostering women's entrepreneurship, India envisions women's greater participation in the economy in the next five years. Tapping the window of demographic dividend that India would benefit for the next few years, India plans to leverage quality education, training of women and girls to build a large workforce of women who are not only semi-skilled and skilled, but also highly skilled in niche areas such as STEM.

72. Bridging the digital gender gap is another priority area, particularly in rural areas. Saturation of existing interventions such as CSCs, and dedicated interventions to promote women's digital literacy emerge as another key priority area.
73. Further, central to increasing women's workforce participation is the investment in care economy. The Government aims to expand the existing and put in place new public care infrastructure and services to enable women to participate in the workforce, such as the expansion of affordable and quality childcare services, working women's hostels in urban areas and industrial hubs. Further, saturation of essential services, such as healthcare, education, electricity, transport, etc. that would enable women's mobility and reduce time poverty, are central for the next five years.
74. Further, for women to participate freely in the economy, India is committed to zero tolerance for all forms of violence against women and girls, and has in place, survivor-centric laws, and expansive network of government institutions and service providers. Increasing footprints of service providers and heightened awareness generation of prevention and reporting mechanisms among women and girls, along with attitudinal change towards pejorative gender social norms, also constitute a key national priority going forward.

Section 3: Detailed analysis of measures taken to advance gender equality across 12 critical areas of concern

Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

Critical areas of concern:

- A. Women and poverty
- F. Women and the economy
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

Measures to promote gender equality in the world of work

Strengthened and enforced laws and workplace policies, including pay parity and curbing Sexual Harassment

75. The Government of India has taken a multifaceted approach, encompassing gender-sensitive laws, policies and schematic interventions that contribute towards creating an enabling environment for fostering women's equal participation across formal and informal sectors as well as promoting women's entrepreneurship and self-employment. In order to encourage employment of women across a range of traditional and non-traditional sectors, a number of enabling provisions have been incorporated in the recently enacted Labour Codes viz. the Code on Wages Act, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 and the Code on Social Security, 2020 for creating congenial work environment for women workers.
76. India has in place the Equal Remuneration Act, for more than 4 decades, embodying the principle of 'equal pay for equal work', ensuring equality between men and women in the sphere of employment. Code on Wages, 2019, subsuming the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, expounds that discrimination on the ground of sex in requirement or for promotion or any other condition of service is not permitted and any person doing so is liable for penal action.
77. The Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code, 2020, incorporates provisions to address the occupational safety, health, and welfare of workers including women workers. This enables women's active participation in non-traditional sectors. It provides for creating a secure and healthy working environment, considering the health needs of women. The Code also prescribes that in cases where women are to be employed in "hazardous operations or dangerous processes", the safeguards prescribed by the appropriate government must be provided by the employer, prior to such employment. These safeguards shall prove beneficial as they would make women feel safer in their work environments and reduce the risks of serious physical injuries. The code includes provisions aimed at promoting the well-being of women, such as mandatory health check-ups free-of-cost by employers on annual basis.^{xxix}
78. The Industrial Relations Code, 2020 introduces the concept of fixed-term employment and sets rules for the retrenchment of workers. The code emphasizes on fair representation of women in the Grievance Redressal Committee and mandates that representation should be proportionate to the number of women workers in relation to the total workers employed in the establishment.
79. Additionally, India has enacted the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, which covers all employees as well as contractual workers under its umbrella, including domestic workers. It is one of the earliest legislations in the world that provides for prevention of sexual harassment of women at workplace in the informal sector. For its implementation, in the formal

sector the Act mandates organizations with more than 10 employees, irrespective of their gender, to set up an Internal Committee to report and for timely redressal of grievances. Further, each district is mandated to have a district-level Local Committee for women working in the unorganized sector and where the complaint is against the employer itself. Additionally, it provides for leave up to 90 days for the aggrieved government employee, during the pendency of inquiry under this Act and such leave shall not be debited against the leave account.

80. Every publicly listed company having either paid up share capital of Rupees 100 crore or more or a turnover of Rupees 300 crore or more, are required to have at least a woman director on its board under Section 149, Companies Act, 2013. The Securities and Exchange Board of India has mandated for top 1000 Indian companies by market capitalisation to have one-woman independent director on their Boards by 01.04.2020. As on 31st March 2024, 837,316 unique Women Directors [Unique DINs irrespective of number of companies in which DIN is associated] are associated with Active Indian Companies.

Fostering women's skill development and gender-responsive job creation

81. To ensure economic independence of women through skill development and vocational training, the Government has continued Skill India Mission, introduced in 2014, aligned to the National Skill Development Policy, designed with special focus on skilling of disadvantaged groups, Women, Transgender and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Emphasis has been laid on creating additional infrastructure both for training and apprenticeship for women; accommodation and travel support for trainees outside the district, conveyance cost for trainees within district to facilitate women's mobility, post-placement stipend for support during transitions and ensuring safe and gender sensitive training environment, employment of women trainers, equity in remuneration, and complaint redressal mechanism. Over 6.1 million women and transgender persons have been trained for the job market, constituting over 44% of the beneficiaries.
82. To strengthen institutional mechanisms for skill development and increased access to quality and market-relevant training for youth across the country, SANKALP (Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion) was implemented across the country from 2019-2024, with support from World Bank. Institutional strengthening, quality assurance, and inclusion of marginalized populations, including women from diverse sections, are the key pillars of the programme. Incorporating a Gender Action Plan, the programme has provided platforms to women artisans, including from remote areas such as the North-East Region through skill training, branding and market linkage.

Improved financial inclusion and access to credit, including for self-employed women

83. Women-owned business enterprises are playing a prominent role in society by generating employment opportunities in the country, bringing in demographic shifts and inspiring the next generation of women founders. To economically empower women entrepreneurs, particularly marginalized, 84% of loans of sizes from a million to ten million rupees under India's flagship scheme of 'Stand-Up India' have been made available to women by the Government. It promotes entrepreneurship amongst women and SC & ST. Till April 2024, nearly 200,000 women entrepreneurs have been provided capital with loans worth USD 5.2 billion.
84. The Government has played a key role in the facilitation and disbursement of a large number of loans to small women-led enterprises under the Start-up India Initiative. 10% of the fund of 1.2 billion USD in the Fund of Funds operated by the SIDBI has been reserved for women led start-ups. Further, Women Capacity Development Programme 'WING' is a unique Capacity Development Program for women-led startups, to identify and support both aspiring and established women entrepreneurs in their startup journeys.
85. Entrepreneurship Skill Development Programme (ESDP) promotes new enterprises, builds capacity of existing MSMEs. About 40% of the targeted beneficiaries are mandated to be from disadvantaged sections, including SC/ ST/ Women/ persons with disabilities, for whom no participation fee is charged.

Engagement or intention to engage in the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection

86. India is not a part of the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection.

Measures to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work

Inclusion of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work in National Statistics

87. The Government of India, in 2020, released the first pan-India time-use survey, conducted during January – December 2019. The findings reveal crucial patterns, both countrywide and across States, on how men, boys, women, and girls use their time on activities such as care work, employment, and learning. The key findings show that across all educational qualifications women, on average, spend 8 times the number of hours spent by men. It also revealed that the ratio of time spent in care work is lowest between non-literate women and men, and widens as women's education level increases. While both married women and men have a higher participation in unpaid care work, the gender gaps are wider for married individuals. Further, undertaking paid work significantly improves the gender balance in the distribution of unpaid work.^{xxx}

Expanded care services or made existing services more affordable

Childcare

88. Grounded in the perspective that childcare is a shared responsibility, India is taking significant steps towards building an intensive network of public care infrastructure for long and flexible hours spanning the entire workday, to enable women to participate in the workforce. Owing to increased migration from rural to urban areas, in search of employment or better life prospects, and increased number of nuclear families, Government is focusing on urban areas and industrial hubs, which are likely to lack the community support. Leveraged the vast networks of Anganwadi centres that was primarily created for nutritional and healthcare support to children below the age of 6 years, adolescent girls and pregnant women and lactating mothers, the Government is focusing on the expansion of Anganwadi-cum-Crèches (AWCCs) facilities, under Palna component of Mission Shakti⁵, to provide high-quality Crèche facilities for children aged between 6 months to 6 years, encompassing nutritional support, health and cognitive development, growth monitoring, immunization, and education. To ensure quality childcare infrastructure, the National Minimum Standards and Protocol for Crèches (Operation and Management) was released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2024.

Older persons and persons with disabilities

89. In the past five years, various guidelines have been issued to enable ease of mobility and accessible infrastructure, including in civil aviation, railways, port sector, buses, as well as community spaces such as sports complex and residential facilities, and services such as accessibility in ICT products and services, and accessible service delivery such as healthcare and education for older persons and PwDs. Creating sensitive infrastructure, institutions and services that are accessible, and enable vulnerable individuals to exercise independent mobility, contributes not only to dignified living for senior citizens and PwDs, but also reduces the care work at home.

90. Further, financial support through NSAP and various pension schemes mentioned in paras 59, 116-121, healthcare support in the form of universal health coverage and health and wellness centres under PM-JAY Ayushman Bharat, contribute towards mitigating the financial burden of care work that women face.

Strengthened family leave

91. In 2017, the Maternity Benefit Act was amended to increase paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks for the first two children, extended prenatal leave from 6 weeks to 8 weeks, as well as mandated the provision for crèche facility by any establishment

⁵ Refer para 227 onwards for details of Mission Shakti

employing fifty or more employees. The amendment to the Act also grants 12 weeks of maternity leave to women who lawfully adopt a child below three months of age and a commissioning mother. The Act also recognizes the emotional and physiological recovery for abortion, miscarriage and pregnancy related complications, entitles leave with full pay and an additional medical bonus. Building on this, the Code on Social Security, 2020 has the provisions for enhancement of paid maternity leave from 12 weeks to 26 weeks, provision for mandatory crèche facility in the establishments having 50 or more employees, and permitting women workers in the night shifts with adequate safety measures, etc. under OSH Code (refer para 79). Government has taken a decision to allow the employment of women in the above/ground mines including opencast workings between 7 pm and 6 am and in below ground working between 6 am and 7 pm in technical, supervisory and managerial work where continuous presence may not be required.^{xxxii}

92. India also provides financial support to new mothers to rest and recover after childbirth. This has ensured income security for women as well as promoted health-seeking behaviour and augmented institutional births to 95%.^{xxxiii} Till 2024, 34 million expectant mothers, with a total disbursement of more than 1.8 billion USD have received benefits through Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY).

Invested in time- and labour-saving infrastructure, such as public transport, electricity, water and sanitation, to reduce the burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women

93. To facilitate reduction in time poverty and care burden on women, India has implemented several programmes from providing access to clean cooking fuel to 103 million households, safe and potable tap water connection for 117 million households, and access to safe sanitation through the construction of 115 million toilets, in households, schools, communities and public spaces, thus ensuring that access to safe sanitation does not become a barrier for women's mobility and development. This has significantly reduced the time spent by women in undertaking unpaid domestic work, and also contributed to eliminating potential threats to their health and safety.
94. Ensuring women's safe and smooth mobility at all times of the day and night as well as in different modes of transportation has been a consistent priority of India, with technology facilitated safety response systems introduced in railways, roadways and highways, implementation of comprehensive and integrated safe cities projects in 8 metros. For instance, Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation has implemented a project which includes Women Lounges at stations, Gender Sensitization and women safety protocol training for ground staff, Mobile Police Patrol Vehicles, and Passenger information Display in Bus Stops, amongst other initiatives. Another initiative is Installation of Vehicle Tracking Platform that provides for a real-time tracking of passenger vehicles using geo-location, enabling speedy response in case of any mishap.

Engagement or intention to engage in the Global Alliance for Care

95. India is presently not a member of the Global Alliance for Care. A decision with regard to joining or engaging with the Alliance will be taken at an appropriate time.

Reducing the gender digital divide

96. As technological advancements continue and new innovations are embraced, the participation and inclusion of women become increasingly critical. Ensuring women's access to emerging technologies not only provides them with opportunities but also establishes platforms for voicing their concerns, identifying specific needs, and promoting access to essential services.^{xxxiii} As per NFHS-5, today, more than half of the women have a mobile phone that they themselves use.^{xxxiv} Women's cell phone usage is much higher in urban areas (69.4) compared to rural areas (46.6). On the other hand, gender gaps in access to the internet continue to be an area for improvement. To address the digital gender divide, numerous initiatives have been taken by the Government of India.
97. India's JAM TRINITY-Jan Dhan-Aadhar (unique identity number)-Mobile has transformed the lives of women from disadvantaged sections of the society by linking them with banking, financial services, as well as insurance. Women are the largest beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, one of the biggest financial inclusion initiatives in the world which also provides access to direct benefits under various welfare schemes, credit and insurance services. PM Jan Dhan Yojana has benefited more than 287 million (28.79 crore) women (55% of the total accounts in the name of women), mostly in rural areas to open their own bank accounts. JAM Trinity has propelled financial inclusion rate from 25% in 2008 to over 80% of adults in last 6 years, a journey shortened by up to 47 years thanks to DPs.^{xxxv}
98. India is committed to digital democracy and is already leading the way in digital financial transactions. Unified Payments Interface (UPI), developed in India, has transformed the system of routine transactions, completely digitalizing the field, with 87.35 billion transactions, growing 147% in terms of volume. This has transcended barriers of gender, urban-rural, rich and poor, and women are increasingly taking ownership of digital payments interface. Since the advent of the coronavirus pandemic, UPI has become popularised. More than 9.41 billion transactions valuing about INR 14.89 trillion were transacted in May 2023 alone. For the fiscal year 2022–23, the total value of UPI transaction was nearly 50 percent of India's nominal GDP.
99. The G20 TechEquity platform, (<https://techequity.g20empower.com/>), launched under India's G20 Presidency in 2023 by EMPOWER secretariat, is an aggregator of learning and skill enhancement opportunities, dedicated to empowering women with the digital skills and knowledge they need to thrive in today's technology driven world. Courses in over 120 Indian and international languages are available on the platform with special

accessibility features. It currently has 90+ courses from across G20 nations. Till now, 4,251 women have registered on the platform.

100. To provide Government-to-Citizen (G2C) e-Services within the reach of the citizen, over half a million (532,474) Common Service Centres (2.0) have been set up, thus creating the physical service delivery ICT infrastructure, and expanding the CSC network to all local governments (Gram Panchayats) to ensure access of information and technology to all citizens, particularly for rural women in close proximity to their areas. Over 400 services are being delivered through CSCs, including government services, financial services and services related to Aadhaar, various social welfare schemes, education, telemedicine, travel bookings, utility payments, etc. Of these, there are 62,137 CSCs operated and managed by Women Village level Entrepreneurs (VLEs). Data suggests that the centres run by women have better management and revenue sustainability than those operated by male counterparts. By leveraging CSCs, women VLEs are not only creating livelihood for themselves but also serving marginalized and underdeveloped communities in villages.⁶
101. NABARD, through its e-Shakti initiative, is digitising the SHGs to capture member-level financial data. The platform provides and tracks detailed information about SHGs' credit and transaction history, making it easier to grade the SHGs, build credit history for the members and enable greater access to bank linkage. The platform can track members and their access to entitlements as it collects data pertaining to MGNREGA and PMJDY, thus providing a more integrated MIS platform.
102. There is evidence of increased use of ICT tools at grassroots level. In the eastern State of Jharkhand, the 'Tablet Didi' initiative equips Community Resource Persons (CRPs) to capture financial records and data at the group level using a digital tablet interface. It is an effective mechanism for information dissemination, capacity building and communication - they are provided SIM cards with internet facilities that allow them to send information through SMS and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) to SHG members. The Andhra Pradesh Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) Mobile Book-keeping of SHG initiatives captures member-level data through its dedicated mobile and web interfaces on a real-time basis. This includes 'group-level accounts, transactions, operations and credit linkage as well as member-level data on basic demographics and inter-loaning but also member-level social and economic categorisation, savings and borrowings.
103. Additionally, India has taken numerous measures to promote gender responsive STEM education and digital learning, which are elaborated below in paras 159-170.

⁶ https://csc.gov.in/new_newsletter/images/Leaders_speak_Magazine.pdf

In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?

104. For promoting gender equality for inclusive development, Gender Budgeting in India is a fiscal strategy across various sectors. It demonstrates the Government's commitments towards gender equality through financial allocations. It is based on the premise that fiscal policies can affect growth, equity and the potential of human capital. No austerity or fiscal consolidation measures have been put in place in the past 5 years in India. However, the Government of India has proactively leveraged gender budgeting as a fiscal tool to ensure and map allocation of resources towards gender equality across diverse sectors. It has consistently been increasing in the past five years.

Business Correspondents/ Bank Sakhi model

105. The Bank Sakhi model, has been instrumental towards creation of a more gender-equal economy. In February 2020, 6,094 Bank Sakhis across 12 states collectively completed 748,454 transactions worth over 40 Million USD. As per the research by State Bank of India in 2022, it is estimated that Bank Sakhis could positively impact the financial inclusion of about 250 million women Jan Dhan small bank account holders, who are most often doubtful, hesitant, and low on basic financial understanding.

Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

Critical areas of concern:

- A. Women and poverty
- B. Education and training of women
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

Eradication of Poverty among women and girls

106. To mitigate the feminization of poverty, the Government of India has multi-faceted provisions embedded in its policies and schematic interventions, that are either directed towards reducing women's time poverty or contributing to the increase in women's property ownership.

Promoted poor women's access to decent work through targeted measures

107. The Ministry of Labour and Employment has launched e-SHRAM portal, a National Database of the Unorganised Workers in 2021 for registration of unorganised workers. The registration facility is available at the vast network of approximately half a million CSC centres across the country. Further, CSC organises awareness camps (including night camps) at various places for mobilisation of workers. Over half (52.8%) of 285.5 million workers registered on Portal are women.
108. A number of enabling provisions have been incorporated in the labour laws for equal opportunity and congenial work environment for women workers. These have been elaborated in para 93 above.
109. Further, in order to enhance the employability of female workers, the Government is providing training to them through a network of Women Industrial Training institutes, National Vocational Training Institutes and Regional Vocational Training Institutes. Details on labour laws and components on skill development, digital and financial inclusion of women are mentioned in paras 11-27.

Broadened access to land, housing, finance, technology and/or agricultural extension services

110. Under the Government's affordable Housing scheme, PM Awas Yojna, over 40 million houses have been constructed for the poorest of the poor in rural and urban areas. In order to ensure women's increased ownership of property, an enabling provision has been made that permits benefits to be availed only if the house is in the name of either woman or in the joint name.
111. Further, targeted schemes for building skills of women in specific sectors such as coirs and fisheries. Mahila Coir Yojana (MCY) aims at empowerment of women artisans in the coir sector by providing a stipendiary intensive two-month training. PM Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) was launched in 2020 as part of the COVID-19 Relief Package (*AatmaNirbhar Bharat* package) of the Government of India for implementation in 5 years from FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25 in all States/Union Territories.^{xxxvi}, wherein 60% of the Government financial assistance is provided to women.
112. The Krishi Sakhi (farmer's friend) Convergence Program of the Government provides for trained and certified para-extension women to reach out to farmers with improved agricultural practices as well as adaptation strategies to climate change. Approximately 30,000 Sakhis have already been trained.

Supported women's entrepreneurship, access to markets, and business development activities

113. In India's villages lie the next unicorns. The Self Help Group movement in India is very well networked. Envisioning SHGs as vehicles of change, nearly 100 million women have been connected with around 9 million women's self-help groups through the National Rural Livelihoods Mission as well as the National Urban Livelihoods Mission.

Not only are SHGs transforming the rural landscape economically, SHG women are taking greater leadership of issues and challenges concerning their communities and have demonstrated to be frontrunners at the grassroots level. SHGs are provided market linkages, capacity development in marketing, loans for modernizing manufacturing, amongst others.

114. Under the flagship, 'MUDRA' (Prime Minister's Micro-Units Development and Refinance Agency) scheme, 69% of the loans sized up to one million rupees have been sanctioned to women-owned and operated enterprises. Till 2024, approximately 480 million loans amounting to USD 3.47 billion were sanctioned to women entrepreneurs. Resultantly, women lead various income-generating small business enterprises in manufacturing, trading and activities allied to agriculture such as poultry, dairy, beekeeping, etc.
115. Schemes like Stand-Up India, facilitate loans from scheduled commercial banks for setting up Greenfield enterprises in trading, manufacturing and services sector. Start-Up India, amongst others, has promoted women's entrepreneurship. The same have been elaborated in paras 12-17 and 83-85.

Strengthened social protection programmes for women, including older women

116. In 2024, the Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare issued notification amending CCS Pension Rules, 2021, allowing female Government servants/ Pensioners to nominate her children for family pension in case of marital discord with husband, thus repealing patriarchal provisions and enabling women pensioners to exercise independent agency.
117. As stated in para 36, in the past 5 years, women have been the largest beneficiaries (57.14%) of the jobs created in rural India under MGNREGA, the largest rural employment and social protection scheme. Women in the informal sector are also provided maternity benefits as detailed in para 92, to mitigate financial losses and enable recovery of health.
118. Various initiatives are also taken to provide social security to women. Financial support to the destitute including widows, women senior citizens, and women with disabilities are provided under NSAP. The number of women beneficiaries under IGNWPS, under NSAP, for Financial Year 2022-23 are 6,735,826.
119. To provide senior citizens with a stable income source after retirement, PMVVY is being implemented. National Pension Scheme (NPS) provides old age income security in the country, and has been extended to all citizens, including women, and unorganized sector workers on a voluntary basis.
120. Other pension schemes include Atal Pension Yojana where women constitute nearly half of the beneficiaries. The scheme was launched to envisage a universal social security system for all Indians, with a focus on the poor and the underprivileged, and increase uptake of pensions amongst women. The old age income security is

increasingly prioritized by women as their enrolment under APY has shown a steady increase from 37% in 2016 to 46% in 2024.

121. Recognizing the special development needs for widows, a special home namely 'Krishna Kutir' has been established in Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh to provide free-of-cost service to 1000 widowed women.

Introduced/strengthened low-cost legal services for women living in poverty

122. Article 39A of the Constitution of India provides that the State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice on the basis of equal opportunity, and shall provide free legal aid to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disability. In light of these obligations, the Legal Services Authorities Act has been enacted which mandates free legal aid to vulnerable sections of society including women facing various forms of offences/ discrimination, workers in unorganized sectors, persons with neurodiversity, victims of drug abuse and senior citizens through the National/ State/ District Legal Services Authorities.
123. NALSA and NCW conduct Legal Awareness Programmes for raising awareness regarding laws and legal rights of women covering 2095 blocks/districts, in March 2023, through 2,942 camps, benefitting 161,800 women, under the project "Vidhaan Se Samadhan".
124. Nari Adalat has been launched for providing women with an alternate grievance redressal mechanism for resolving cases of petty nature (harassment, subversion, curtailment of rights or entitlements) faced by women at grassroots level. These women collectives have committed and socially respected women chosen for that purpose. The platform is being utilized for engaging with the public for awareness generation and getting feedback for improvement in the schemes and for effective public delivery of services.

Health outcomes for women and girls

125. The RMNCH+A under the NHM focuses on a rights-based women-centric approach. Priority interventions of each thematic area, i.e., family planning, maternal health, neonatal health, child and adolescent health include programmes and interventions that ensure linkages and holistic care.

Promoted women's access to health services through expansion of universal health coverage or public health services

126. AB PMJAY (Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana) is the world's largest public funded health assurance scheme, with special focus on poor and disadvantaged women, providing a health cover of USD 6,000 (INR 500,000) to 550 million needy and vulnerable population. The scheme has provided 70 million treatments worth USD 11.2 Billion.^{xxxvii} AB PM-JAY has ensured gender equity in access

- to healthcare services. Women account for approximately 49% of the total Ayushman cards created and approximately 48% of total authorized hospital admissions.^{xxxviii}
127. e-Sanjeevani, the world's largest telemedicine initiative, serving 241 million patients, including 57% women and 12% senior citizens has led to savings of USD 2.15 billion in out-of-pocket expenses.^{xxxix}
128. To reduce out of pocket expenses in healthcare, “Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras” are established across the country. The objective is to bring down the healthcare budget of every citizen of India through providing quality generic medicines at affordable prices through these centres. About 10,000 such centres are functional across the country.
129. India has created 150,000 Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs), now renamed as Ayushman Arogya Mandir, by upgrading the Sub Health Centres (SHCs) and rural and urban Primary Health Centres (PHCs), in both urban and rural areas, to bring health care closer to the community. These centres aim to provide Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC), by expanding and strengthening the existing Reproductive & Child Health (RCH) and Communicable Diseases services and by including services related to Non-Communicable Diseases (common NCDs such as, Hypertension, Diabetes and three common cancers of Oral, Breast and Cervix) and incrementally adding primary healthcare services for mental health, ENT, Ophthalmology, Oral health, Geriatric and Palliative care and Trauma care as well as health promotion and wellness activities like yoga.

Expanded specific health services, campaigns for women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health services, maternal health, mental health, HIV services, with focus on women and girls from marginalized communities

130. Maternal health remains one of the key priorities of the Government of India. We have consistently worked towards the elimination of Maternal Mortality and Infant Mortality. Remarkably, in the past decade, there has been a significant decline in MMR from 167 in 2011-13 to 97 in 2018-20.^{xl} India is on its way to achieve the target 3.1 of SDG 3 on reducing MMR. India, with the rate of IMR at 28 is on the path of achieving the targets for reducing infant mortality much ahead of the timeline.^{xli}
131. Under Ayushman Bharat, the Government is providing free of cost treatment through over 1200 medical packages to over 550 million citizens of India, predominantly enhancing access to health benefits to poor women in urban and rural remote areas. Out of these, over 141 medical packages are exclusively designed for addressing medical needs of women. Seven types of screening (TB, Hypertension, diabetes, Oral Cancer, Breast Cancer, Cervical Cancer and Cataract) are provided under the scheme, which have benefitted millions of women.
132. Launched in 2019, PM Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN) aims to provide assured, dignified, respectful and quality healthcare at no cost and zero tolerance for denial of services for every woman and newborn visiting the public health facility to

- end all preventable maternal and newborn deaths. Since its inception in 2019, a total of 41,010 facilities have been notified.
133. LaQshya scheme improves the quality of care in labour room and maternity operation theatres to ensure that pregnant women receive respectful and quality care during delivery and immediate post-partum.
 134. Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) provides a fixed day, free of cost, assured and quality antenatal care with diagnostics and USG on the 9th day of every month to all pregnant women, at designated health facilities by a physician/specialist. Extended-PMSMA has been launched to improve the tracking and follow up of individual high-risk pregnancy through additional days for PMSMA clinic. More than 50.5 million pregnant women have received ANC services and more than 6.5 million high risk pregnancy has been identified.^{xiii}
 135. For reduction of neonatal mortality, Home Based New-born Care (HBNC) scheme incentivizes Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) for making visits to all new-borns and their mothers according to specified schedule up to 42 days of life. As an extension of the Home-Based New-Born Care programme (HBNC) , Home-Based Care for Young Child Programme (HBYC) was rolled out to reduce diarrhoea, pneumonia, and under nutrition in children upto 15 months of age, thus supporting the overall growth and development of children, including girl child. Further, provision of quality child friendly services is ensured in public health facilities to reduce preventable new-born and child morbidity and mortality. So far, 86.7 million visits for HBYC and 71 million visits for HBNC were conducted in the past five years.
 136. Unsafe abortion is a significant yet preventable cause of maternal deaths. Though Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) has been legalised in India since 1971. However, the women in rural and remote regions of the country had challenges in accessing services due to various factors. Ensuring Comprehensive Abortion Care (CAC) services is now an integral component of the efforts made by the Government of India to bring down maternal mortality and morbidity in the country.
 137. Under-nutrition amongst women has been a major challenge that is being tackled in a focused and comprehensive manner. The National Nutrition Campaign has achieved nutritional outcomes for pregnant women and lactating mothers and adolescent girls by monitoring, leveraging technology, using a targeted approach and convergence to address their nutritional needs, including needs of highly vulnerable sections such as out-of-school adolescent girls. Notably, recognizing the nutritional deficiency in iron, under Anaemia Mukh Bharat (AMB), (India free from Anaemia), Iron and Folic Acid supplementation is provided to childbearing and menstruating women and children, especially from poor and tribal communities.
 138. To track the growth and well-being of over 101 million children, pregnant women and lactating mothers by 1.3 million Anganwadi centres located in all habitations across the country, an innovative digital application “POSHAN Tracker” has been developed. Through the POSHAN Tracker, India has effectively leveraged technology

for real-time identification of stunting, wasting, under-weight prevalence among children and last mile tracking of nutrition service delivery.

139. India is implementing the largest immunisation programme globally. Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI 5.0), the flagship immunization campaign concluded in 2023, conducted across all the districts in the country that included children up to 5 years of age (Previous campaigns included children up to 2 years of age). IMI 5.0 campaign covered all vaccines provided under the Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) as per the National Immunization Schedule (NIS). By 2023, over 3,469,705 children and 655,480 pregnant women were administered vaccine doses during the first 2 rounds of IMI 5.0 campaign across the country.^{xliii}
140. The Government has enacted the Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017. The Act protects the human rights of persons affected by the said virus and syndrome. The Act expressly prohibits discrimination against HIV-Positive persons or persons who are currently, or have in the past, lived, resided or cohabited with an HIV-Positive person. Sterilisation or abortion of an HIV positive pregnant woman without obtaining her informed consent has also been expressly prohibited under this legislation. The right to access mental healthcare and treatment from mental health services run or funded by Government has been recognized as a justiciable right, through the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017.
141. The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic (CCRAS), an autonomous organization under Ministry of AYUSH, has conducted 27 Research Projects related to women and girls' health.
142. The MWCD implements various schemes that foreground women's mental health. As indicated in paras 184-191, from information and emergency services for women through the national women's helpline, to integrated support, including psycho-social counselling and medical care for women in distress through the One Stop Centres, and integrated relief and rehabilitation homes for women in difficult circumstances, such as rehabilitation of survivors of trafficking through Shakti Sadans are being provided.
143. During the pandemic, in 2020, the MWCD in collaboration with National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru established Support, Advocacy & Mental Health Interventions for Children in Vulnerable Circumstances and Distress (SAMVAD), a national initiative & integrated resource for child protection, mental health, & psychosocial care, that provides training and capacity building and other forms of guidance and technical supports, to child protection functionaries who work in children's shelter home across the country. SAMVAD's training equips child protection functionaries with knowledge and skills in child interviewing and inquiry (embedded in contexts of risk and vulnerability), identification of and first level responses to common emotional, assistance at secondary and tertiary mental healthcare facilities. It has reached 5,419 child protection functionaries in 14 States and 2 Union Territories across 410 Districts.^{xliiv} The Ministry, through NIMHANS, has

also provided basic and advanced training under the project named 'Stree Manoraksha' to OSC staff including the psycho-social counsellors across the country on handling psycho-social and mental health care needs to support the women facing violence and women in distress.^{xlv}

Strengthened comprehensive sexuality education in schools and communities and addressing health needs of adolescent girls

144. To foster the growth, development and educational achievement of school going children, including girls, by promoting their health and wellbeing, School Health & Wellness Ambassador Initiative was launched. Under the programme, two teachers, preferably one male and one female, in every school are designated as "Health and Wellness Ambassadors" and are trained to transact health promotion and disease prevention information in the form of interesting activities for one hour every week. As on February 2022, 29 States/ UTs had initiated the training across 176 Districts. 159,000 (1.59 Lakh) HWAs have been trained and about 76,331 principals oriented under the Programme. Every month, an average of 8 million students are reached out to through this programme.
145. To improve the overall quality of life of children and provide comprehensive care to all the children, including girl child, RBSK provides screening of children from birth to 18 years of age for 4 Ds- Defects at birth, Diseases, Deficiencies and Development delays, spanning 32 common health conditions for early detection and free treatment and management, including surgeries at tertiary level.
146. The RKSK aims to counsel adolescent girls on matters of sexual and reproductive health at Adolescent Friendly Health Clinics (AFHC). Furthermore, 'Weekly Iron Folic Acid Supplementation Programme,' introduced under RKSK for school going adolescent boys and girls and out of school adolescent girls across the country, provides weekly supervision of iron folic acid supplementation, screening of target groups for anaemia, information and counselling for improving dietary intake, biannual helminthic control and convergence with key stakeholder ministries is conducted under this programme.
147. The 'Scheme for Promotion of Menstrual Hygiene' promotes menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls in the age group of 10-19 years. The objective is to increase awareness, access to and use of high-quality sanitary napkins by adolescent girls and ensure safe disposal of sanitary napkins in an environmentally friendly manner. In the past 5 years, 17.9 million adolescent girls received monthly sanitary napkins.

Education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented

148. In the last few years, India has made significant strides in addressing the gender gap across all levels of education with a dedicated policy focus on universal right to education. India collects disaggregated data based on gender and other categories, across all levels of education.

149. In Gender Parity Index (GPI), the ratio of women and girls in higher education stands at 1.01 in 2021-22. As per the latest AISHE Report 2021-22 on the status of higher education in India, out of the total enrolment of 43.3 million students, female enrolment has increased to 20.7 million, constituting nearly half the students in higher education. In STEM, across all levels, the total number of women is 4.19 million, comprising 42.57% approximately 43% of the total enrolment. Even in faculty, the female per 100 male faculty has also improved to 77 in 2021-22 from 63 in 2014-15.
150. The report shows a steady increasing trend in female enrolment over years. The female enrolment has been increased to 20.7 million in 2021-22 from 20.1 million in 2020-21 and 17.4 million in 2017-18, i.e. 18.7% increase in enrolment during 5 years. Since 2014-15, female enrolment has increased by around 5 million. There has been a marked increase in the presence of women and girls from marginalized sections of the society, such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women from North East Region, in higher education in the past five years. In 2014-15, female enrolment was 15,723,018. Female SC enrolment has increased to 3.1 million (2021-22) from 2.51 million (2017-18) i.e., 26.6% increase over 5 years. Female ST enrolment has increased to 1.3 million (2021-22) from 910 thousand (2017-18) i.e., 47.6% increase. There has been significant increase of 50.9% in enrolment of female SC students since 2014-15; the enrolment of female SC students has increased to 3.1 million in 2021-22 as compared to 2.1 million in 2014-15. The female enrolment in North East States is 607,000 in 2021-22, higher than the male enrolment of 595,000. The Female Ph.D. enrolment has doubled to 98,000 in 2021-22 from 48,000 in 2014-15.
151. The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 prioritizes gender equity and envisions ensuring equitable access to quality education to all students, with a special emphasis on Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs).
152. To eliminate any disparity in access to education (including vocational education) for children from any gender or other socio-economically disadvantaged group, the NEP envisages establishment of a 'Gender-Inclusion Fund'. The fund will be available to federal States to augment their capacity to implement priorities determined by the Central government critical for assisting female and transgender children. Teachers are trained for relevance of gender dimensions in teaching and learning process which helps teachers to use and adopt learning activities that foster gender sensitive classroom environment.
153. Details on skilling, including Skill India Mission, digital and financial literacy and skilling of women to set up enterprises are mentioned in paras 81-82, 96-103, 111 and the same may be referred to.
154. The students from marginalized sections are provided financial support (scholarships) through NSP. Till now, over 140 scholarship schemes of various Ministries/ departments/ States are onboarded on NSP. So far approx. 30 million

scholarships have been disbursed to women candidates amounting to approx. Rs. 16000 crore (USD 1.9 billion).

155. To ensure formal school education and skilling of school dropouts or those educated in minority community educational institutions like Madarasas, the Nai Manzil scheme has been set up. Women constitute more than half of the beneficiaries (50,700), with Muslim women constituting the majority.^{xlvi}
156. For access to quality education and holistic development of children in remote areas, Eklavya Model Residential Schools have been established to enable children belonging to Scheduled Tribes to avail opportunities in high and professional educational courses and get employment in various sectors. Total 105,463 students have been enrolled during the year 2021-22, out of which, majority (more than half) are girls (54,196).^{xlvii} Further, various scholarship schemes are in place for girls such as the Pre-Matric Scholarship for ST students studying in classes IX & X and the Post-Matric Scholarship for ST girls.
157. To facilitate access and financially support girls from disadvantaged sections pursuing higher studies globally, various scholarships and fellowships are provided, such as National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST students and the National Overseas Scholarship Scheme for ST students for pursuing higher studies in foreign institutions.
158. The schemes such as Sukanya Samridhi Yojana have incentivized families to financially invest into the girls' future. As a result, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of Girls in secondary education has increased from 75.51% in 2014-15 to 79.4% in 2021-22. Today, the GER of girls in primary and secondary education is almost at par with that of boys.

Promoting Women and Girls in Non-Traditional Sectors such as STEM

159. Multiple initiatives in the past five years have been undertaken for increasing participation of women in non-traditional sectors, particularly Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). As a result, the presence of girls/ women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in higher education in India is approximately 43%, which is higher than that of most developed countries.^{xlviii}
160. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) is creating various opportunities to support women in S & T fields through several programmes under a dedicated scheme 'Women in Science and Engineering-KIRAN (WISE-KIRAN)'. The programmes under WISE-KIRAN are designed in such a way that they address various challenges like break in career, relocation, working flexibility, sustaining the career, etc. faced by women in pursuing scientific careers. DST is committed to quality education, strengthening research infrastructure, capacity building and new opportunities through the WISE-KIRAN Scheme. Women participation in extramural R&D projects has increased significantly to 25% in 2019-20 from 13% in 2000-01. The schemes listed below are components of the WISE-KIRAN scheme.

161. The CURIE (Consolidation of University Research for Innovation and Excellence) Programme is developing research infrastructure in women universities and Women PG Colleges. The research facilities established through CURIE programme are providing quality education to thousands of girls, by fostering innovations in Artificial Intelligence, and setting up AI-friendly infrastructure to prepare skilled personnel for AI-based jobs. 10 Women Universities and 42 Women PG Colleges have been supported under the programme.
162. Vigyan Jyoti aims to encourage girls to pursue higher education and research in under-represented areas of STEM. It was launched in 2020 to foster representation of girls in different streams of Science and Technology in secondary and higher secondary education in schools (from 9th to 12th standards) benefiting over 80,000 girl students.
163. Women Scientists Scheme has supported more than 5000 women scientists who had taken break in their career. Under the scheme, the women scientists get opportunities to carry out research in basic and applied science and encouraged to conduct society-based research. After availing its projects, many women scientists secure permanent positions in academia and research.
164. Recently, several new women centric programmes have been started under WISE-KIRAN to provide opportunities to women. WISE Fellowship for Ph.D. (WISE-PhD) and WISE Post-Doctoral Fellowship (WISE-PDF) to carry out research in Basic and Applied Sciences. Another programme, WISE-SCOPE is encouraging women scientists to utilize their scientific knowledge for benefit of society. Further, WIDUSHI programme is supporting senior women scientists; on the other hand, WISE-IPR is creating self-employment opportunities. These programmes are helping hundreds of women scientists for advancing their scientific careers in different areas.
165. GATI (Gender Advancement for Transforming Institutions) Programme under WISE-KIRAN Scheme aims to sensitize and transform institutions for inclusion and a more gender-sensitive approach. An indigenous framework has been developed under GATI, which was adopted by 30 scientific institutions that participated in the pilot phase. It helped institutions analyse the status of women's participation at various levels including leadership. After completion of pilot phase, 12 institutions have been recognized as GATI Achievers.
166. Women Technology Parks (WTP), initiated in 2017-18 have been established as resource centers where all necessary support is made available to women on S&T-based training and capacity building. 46 WTP have started since 2017.
167. The Overseas Fellowship Scheme started in 2017-18, provides opportunities to Indian Women Scientist and Technologists to undertake international collaborative research in STEM. Several women scientists have played significant roles in India's maiden Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), or Mangalyaan, including building and testing the scientific instruments at the Space Application Centre.
168. SERB POWER Scheme, Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB)'s (Promoting Opportunities for Women in Exploratory Research), designed exclusively for women

scientists, launched in 2020, has funded 97 projects in Research grant, of which 42 Fellowships given to women. The proposed Budget outlay for Women centric programmes is around 96 million USD from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

169. Further, NEP, 2020 calls for investment in digital infrastructure, online teaching platforms and tools, virtual labs, digital repositories, online assessments, technology and pedagogy for online teaching-learning etc., with the promotion of multilingualism and the power of language in teaching and learning through innovative and experiential methods. It mentions that certain subjects, skills, and capacities should be learned by all students. These skills also include digital literacy, coding, and computational thinking which are promoted through various digital initiatives.
170. FutureSkills PRIME (Programme for Re-skilling/ Up-skilling of IT Manpower for Employability), a scheme by MEITY, aims at up-skilling/ re-skilling of IT professionals in 10 new/ emerging technologies namely Artificial Intelligence, Robotic Process Automation, Augmented/ Virtual Reality, Internet of Things, Big Data Analytics, Additive Manufacturing/ 3D Printing, Cloud Computing, Social & Mobile, Cyber Security, and Block-chain. A total of 1.5 million candidates have signed up out of which 41% candidates are women. Of the 0.6 million candidates enrolled in various courses, 0.27 million women candidates have completed their course(s) (41%).

What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?

171. The Government had provided various relief and incentives to the needy individuals and industry during covid-19 pandemic for closing gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, health, etc. the details of which may be referred to in paras 63-68.
172. To ensure quality education through e-learning to students across the country, schemes such as 'National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology' (NMEICT) Scheme, SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), SWAYAM PRABHA, National Digital Library (NDL), Virtual Lab, e-Yantra, NEAT (National Education Alliance for Technology) etc. are being administered by Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education^{xlix} These initiatives have been instrumental in promoting distance education and ensuring continuity in learning during the pandemic and thereafter.
173. A comprehensive initiative called PM e-VIDYA was initiated as part of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan' on 17th May, 2020, which unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education to enable multi-mode access to education. The initiative is available to all the students across all the states free of cost. The key components include DIKSHA the nation's digital infrastructure for providing quality e-content for school education in States/ UTs and QR coded Energized Textbooks for all

grades (one nation, one digital platform), use of Radio, Community Radio and CBSE Podcast- Shiksha Vani, special e-content for visually and hearing impaired developed on Digitally Accessible Information System (DAISY) and in sign language on NIOS website/ YouTube, amongst others.

174. The NCW issued guidelines relating to food, health, hygiene, shelter and safety for women migrant workers to address the essential needs of 'Internal Women Migrants in India during COVID-19 lockdown' in the form of an Advisory in April, 2020.

Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

Critical areas of concern:

- D. Violence against women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

Laws addressing Violence Against Women and Girls:

175. The Hon'ble Supreme Court declared that "each incident of sexual harassment of women at workplace results in violation of fundamental rights of 'Gender Equality' and the 'Right to Life and Liberty.'" Hence, to provide a safe and secure environment to women at the workplace, the Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Prevention, Protection and Redressal) Act, 2013 (the SH Act) was enacted the details of which may be referred to in para 79. The Act also casts a duty on employers to sensitise employees by carrying out various awareness generation programmes and workshops.
176. The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019 has been enacted to declare pronouncement of instantaneous and irrevocable triple talaq by a Muslim husband as void and illegal. It has been declared as a penal offence with imprisonment of up to three years and fine. The Act also provides for subsistence allowance and custody of the minor children to married Muslim women. With this Act equality between the spouses has been ensured and rights of married Muslim women have been protected.
177. National Investigation Agency (Amendment) Act, 2019 was notified in July 2019 to amend the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008 whereby Sections 370 and 370A of the IPC (these sections are now part of BNS) were added in NIA's schedule empowering the organization to deal with cases of human trafficking for investigation. It empowers the NIA to investigate a Scheduled Offence beyond India against the Indian citizens.
178. The Government of India, with an aim to modernize and improve the criminal justice system has enacted BNS, BNSS and BSA. The new laws provide for increased penalty and in certain cases, minimum punishment. The amendments include definition of Pornography; increased quantum of punishment from minimum 7 years to minimum

- 10 years, and minimum 20 years in case of child below 16 years, and increased quantum of minimum punishment from 10 years to minimum 20 years and in extreme cases, imprisonment for the remainder of natural life of that person.
179. The POCSO Amendment Act, 2019 of August, 2019, includes cyber-crime and introduces more stringent punishment for those committing sexual crimes on children, with a view to act as a deterrent for perpetrators & prevent such heinous crimes against children.
180. Further POCSO Rules, 2020 under Rule-6(7) provides that if the child is found to be pregnant, then the registered medical practitioner shall counsel the child, and her parents or guardians, or support person, regarding the various lawful options available to the child as per the MTP Act 1971 and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 (2 of 2016) (JJ Act).
181. The JJ Act, 2015 (as amended in 2021) is the primary legislation for ensuring the safety, security, dignity and well-being of children. The Act provides for protection of children in need of care and protection and those in conflict with law by catering to their basic needs through care, protection, development, treatment and social re-integration. It defines standards of care and protection to secure the best interest of child. Among others, the Amendment Act empowers the District Magistrate to function as the focal point for implementation of JJ Act, 2015 and decide the cases of adoption. The amendment also introduces eligibility conditions for appointment of the members of Child Welfare Committee. The JJ Rules and Adoption Regulations have also been promulgated under the Act. The Ministry has notified the JJ Amendment Act 2021, in September 2022 and Rules and Adoption Regulations, 2022, made thereunder. These include DM to be nodal officer at district level, quarterly review meetings, quality control, registration of Group Foster Care, introduction of sponsorship through institutions, companies or corporations either public or private; community or organization.
182. The biggest pillar on which all government efforts for women safety stands is the dedicated non-lapsable fund called 'Nirbhaya Fund'. The Fund started with just one or two projects a decade ago, and has now grown to 44 Projects, being implemented both nationwide and regionally, with an outlay of more than 1.2 billion USD. Many of the Nirbhaya projects will be briefly described later in this note. The projects appraised under Nirbhaya Fund are multi-dimensional and cover almost all spheres of safety and security of women and girls including behavioral change, sensitization and capacity building.
183. All the initiatives can broadly be divided into three spheres, one being assuring a safe and secure environment_in which a woman lives and works, the other is to support effective implementation of legislation, and finally, creating a wide enabling infrastructure to afford to women speedy justice and support in any crisis.

Safety and security

184. Emergency Response/ Helplines: The immediate first response that a woman in distress receives, its assuredness, speed, and effectiveness, can make the difference between a sense of confidence or perpetual fear in the minds of every woman. To precisely address this challenge, the Government has put in place an Emergency Response Support System (ERSS), a pan-India, single, internationally recognised number, i.e., 112, established for various emergencies, with computer aided dispatch of field resources to the location of distress. It has been operationalised in all 36 States and UTs of the country and since its launch in February 2019, ERSS has handled over 383 million (38.34 crore) calls by through its nation-wide Centres. The system has recorded pan-India response time of 19.92 (.10) minutes! This is no mean achievement. The 112 India mobile application has over 2.5 million (19.04 lakh) downloads since February 2019 from which over 576,000 (users are registered, of which 267,000 are women. The safety net is further being widened with ERSS being integrated with other emergency services like Disaster Helpline, Child Helpline, Road and Transport Helpline, Railway Helpline, Cyber Cell helpline, Women Helpline, CCTNS. No such comprehensive nation-wide system existed merely few years ago and it is the prime safety net which protects a woman 24/7, at all times and all locations, whether at home, at work or in any public place.
185. In addition to ERSS, there is fully functional dedicated Women Helpline (WHL) functional since April 2015 with the aim to provide emergency and non-emergency response to women affected by violence across the country by referral service. Under the scheme, a toll-free 24-hours telecom service through short code 181 is provided to women seeking support and information. It is operational in 35 States/ UTs. So far, WHL has handled over 15.3 million (1.53 crore) calls and assisted over 7.6 million (76.02 lakh) women till May 2024. The Government is in process of automating and integrating Women Helpline (181) with Emergency Response Support System (112) to obviate the problem of multiplicity of helpline numbers, and also further linking it with OSCs.
186. Safe public spaces: Another important aspect is to enable 'safety systems' in all public places where women work and live so that perpetrators are kept at bay. Keeping this 'mantra' in mind that Government is implementing Safe City Projects in 8 major cities (Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai). These are comprehensive and integrated projects developed by the Police and Municipal Corporations of the city, in keeping with the demands of women citizens to plug any gaps in existing infrastructure. With a total outlay of nearly 348 million USD under the Nirbhaya Fund.
187. The project adds many dimensions to safety of women and children, like the use of drones, installation of CCTV cameras with Facial Recognition or Automatic Number Plate Recognition to track and alert Police about criminals and criminal activity,

technology-enabled infrastructure like smart lighting systems which glow as soon as it gets dark to eliminate dark alleys and crime hot-spots from cities, and toilets for women. The Safe City projects are an ongoing project and are in various stages of implementation.

188. Approaching Police Stations, mostly staffed by male personnel, is often intimidating for a woman. Keeping this in mind, India has set up Women Help Desks (WHDs) in Police Stations in all States & UTs. The project approved in 2019 at a total outlay of about 19.6 million USD (Rs. 164 crores), is being implemented by the respective States/ UTs. WHDs focus on making the Police Stations more women friendly and approachable, being the first responder and single point of contact for any woman walking into a police station. Essentially, lady police officers especially trained to be sensitive towards women are being deployed at these help desks. There are 13,916 WHDs in Police Stations, out of which 12,797 are headed by women police officers. The desirable outcomes of the WHD envisaged are increased comfort for women to approach police station for counselling and reporting sexual crime, reduction in response time by the LEAs to react to crisis or to track and identify criminals.
189. The Sakhi-One Stop Centre (OSC) located at every district headquarter across the country are of the significant steps towards ensuring all the necessary support services, both in private and public spaces, under one roof including police, medical, legal aid and counselling, psychological support to women facing any kind of violence or in distress. Today 785 OSCs have been operationalised in 36 States/UTs and nearly 940,000 women have been assisted till June 2024. Many more OSCs will be set up in districts having bigger geographical area or where there is a need for such facility, by 2025-26. The scheme was approved at a total outlay of about 104 million USD (Rs. 867 crores). So far more than 102 million USD (Rs. 850 crores) has been released to various States/ UTs.
190. Shakti Sadans are another set of 'protection and rehabilitation homes' spread across the country that provide various services such as shelter, food, clothing and health as well as economic and social security, to women victims of unfortunate circumstances (destitute and victims of commercial sexual exploitation) so that they could lead their life with dignity. The Scheme includes widows and aged women as well. More than 416 such homes are functional across the country.
191. There are also regional initiatives for addressing gender based violence against marginalized women and girls. One such initiative is creation of a Special Police Unit for Women & Children (SPUWAC) and Special Police unit for North-East Region (SPUNER) by Delhi Police in its Crime Against Women Cell (CAW Cell) since February 2022 that includes facilities for counselling, mediation and gender sensitization including facilities for counselling of women from the North Eastern Region of the country residing in the capital city at a cost of 2.5 million USD. Delhi Police has also taken up a project for provision of Social Workers/ counsellors at the District and Sub-Divisional, Police Station level in Delhi at a cost of about 600,000 USD (Rs.5 Crore). The Professional

Counsellors/ Social workers give counselling support to the aggrieved women and their families. Under the project, 2566 long term counselling sessions and 15,456 short term counselling sessions have been organised.

Speedy Justice

192. The Government of India is guided by the central dictum of 'Justice delayed, is justice denied'. This guiding principle becomes even more pivotal when the victim is a woman as crimes against women are often violent and life-altering. The psychological wounds are many times far deeper than the physical. Keeping these in mind, the Government has taken a series of far reaching measures to enable fast, credible and efficient detection, investigation and prosecution of offenders. Some of the initiatives in this direction are indicated in the subsequent paragraphs.
193. The most visible initiative, which is also the clearest indicator of the Government's resolve to ensure that justice is delivered to unfortunate women and young girls who are victims of heinous sexual offences, is the Setting up Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs), started in 2019. So far, 790 Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) have been approved, out of which 755 including 410 exclusive POCSO (e-POCSO) courts are operational in 30 States/UTs, having disposed of more than 253,000 cases of rape, and offences under POCSO Act across the country. The Government is continuing with the scheme till 2026. The stupendous success of these courts can be seen from the fact that at the time of inception of this scheme, approximately 166,000 cases related to rape and under POCSO were pending and so far, the FTSCs have disposed of 253,000 cases, including new cases that took place in the intervening period.
194. MHA has approved setting-up of a state-of-the-art DNA Analysis facility at Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL), Chandigarh under the Nirbhaya Fund. The Laboratory contributes to addressing the gap of forensic DNA analysis of pending sexual assault cases in the country. The project has been completed at a cost of more than 5.2 million USD and a State-of-the-Art DNA analysis Centre has been inaugurated in December 2019. Under the project, 4 independent units fully equipped with modern DNA Profiling tools and techniques have been setup. Capacity of the Laboratory increased to handle 2,000 cases per annum for speedy disposal of cases relating to sexual assault and POCSO Act related cases.
195. An amount of about 30 million USD (Rs. 250 Crore) was approved under Nirbhaya Fund for strengthening DNA analysis cyber forensics and related facilities in 30 States. The objective of the project is to strengthen the DNA analysis and Cyber Forensic Facilities in federal states relating to cases of sexual assaults. A total of 22.2 million USD (INR 186 crore) has been provided for this project. The projects are in implementation stage and The DNA analysis facility has been established or upgraded at 30 States/ UTs.
196. Recognizing the important role played by Investigation Officers (IOs)/ Prosecution Officers (POs)/ Medical Officers (MOs) in sexual assault cases, the Government is

providing training to them in forensic evidence collection and examination. One important aspect of this project is procurement of Sexual Assault Evidence Collection (SAEC) kits, sensitising the officers towards victims of sexual assault and enable IOs/ POs to identify, document and collect physical and biological evidence at the scene of crime with great care and thoughtful approach so that the forensic report withstands judicial scrutiny. A total of more than 5.2 million USD has been provided till now. The kit has also been developed indigenously by CFSL under DFSs and is available on GeM portal with 50% less cost. So far, 31,399 Officials have been trained in handling forensic evidence and 18,020 SAEC Kits were distributed.

197. Further, MHA launched the “National Database on Sexual Offenders” (NDSO) in September, 2018 to facilitate investigation and tracking of sexual offenders across the country. The Ministry also launched an online analytic tool “Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences” to monitor and track time-bound investigation in sexual assault cases in accordance with Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018.
198. To provide much needed support at a time of crisis, the Government has instituted the Central Victim Compensation Fund (CVCF) as a grant of 24 million USD (Rs. 200 crores) from Nirbhaya Fund to States/ UTs to support and supplement the Victim Compensation schemes in respective States/ UTs. Over 4827 victims have been compensated through this scheme.

Combatting Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

199. The proliferation of internet and social media is changing the world in a big way. On the one hand, it is impacting the lives of citizens in a positive manner by bringing transparency, access to information, speedy delivery of services and reducing corruption, particularly for the poor and vulnerable. On the other, it has opened a whole new world where women face discrimination and cyber-attacks that reproduce or exacerbate pejorative gender social norms and menace of invasion of their private spaces. Trolling, digital threats and stalking, exposure to sexually explicit posts, fake/ objectionable digital content, hacking into private digital information, etc. are various modes by which women can be harassed by cybercriminals. To address the growing menace of gender-based cyber-violence, the Ministry of Home Affairs is implementing the Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) scheme with a total outlay of about USD 27 million. The Ministry has provided a grant to all States / UTs to set up cyber forensic-cum-training laboratories, hiring of cyber consultant and training/ capacity building to provide hands-on training to LEAs investigators, prosecutors, and judicial officers.
200. 33 States/ UTs have set up Cyber Forensic Training Laboratories. More than 24,624 Police personnel, Prosecutors, and Judicial Officers have been trained in handling cyber-crime related cases. A National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) was launched in September 2018, which allows citizens to report online content pertaining to Child Pornography/Child Sexual Abuse Material or

sexually explicit content such as Rape/Gang Rape Content. NCRP has more than 161 million (16.18 crore) visitors.

201. MoU has been signed in 2019 between the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), India and the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), USA regarding receiving tip-line report on online child pornography and child sexual exploitation contents from NCMEC. So far, more than 6.9 million (69.05 lakh) Cyber Tip-line reports have been shared with concerned States/ UTs. A toll-free number 1930 has also been made operational in all States / UTs for reporting of such incidents. In consultation with the stakeholders, a revamped portal has been launched in 2019 to enable citizens to report all types of cybercrimes with special focus on cybercrimes against women and children. Under the project, awareness generation and outreach programmes are being conducted on a regular basis.
202. A review of laws relating to cybercrimes has been analyzed by the NCW to foster the development of regulatory instruments, statutes, recommendations, guidelines, etc. pertaining to cyber security framework for women.
203. The Information Security Education and Awareness (ISEA) Project generates human resources in the area of Information Security and create general awareness on various aspects of cyber hygiene/cyber security among the masses. So far, 2,740 women candidates have been trained in various formal/short- term courses on Information Security. 23 awareness workshops Security have been organized exclusively for women candidates covering 2,354 participants.

Attitudinal Change, Engaging Men and Boys, Addressing GBV through Media

204. The Government has taken proactive measures towards societal attitudinal change towards the girl child that has aided a shift in patriarchal mind-set that perceived the girl child as a burden towards a perception of girls as valuable members of the family and the society. BBBP has played a key role in change of mind-set. Using multi-pronged multi-media strategy, including active engagement of fathers and men as allies, outreach to different strata of the society has been continually undertaken through the convergent flagship scheme.
205. It has made the following positive changes: Sex Ratio at Birth at National level has improved by 19 points from 918 (2014-15) to 937 (2020-21).ⁱ Enrolment of Girls in secondary education has increased from 75.51% in 2014-15 to 79.46% in 2020-21.ⁱⁱ Percentage of 1st Trimester ANC Registration has shown improvement from 61% in 2014-15 to 73.9% in 2020-21.ⁱⁱⁱ Percentage of Institutional Deliveries has also shown an improvement from 87% in 2014-15 to 94.8% in 2020-21.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ
206. Recognizing language as a fundamental force for positive cultural change, striving to cultivate an environment where diverse perspectives are acknowledged, valued, and empowered, the Government of India launched a Guide on Gender-Inclusive Communication, in November 2023, aimed at changing entrenched linguistic norms to

- promote and provide practical insights and strategies to overcome the deeply rooted biases present in language.
207. In August 2023, the Supreme Court released a Handbook on combatting Gender Stereotypes, for use in courts across the nation. The Handbook aims to ‘actively challenge and dispel harmful stereotypes on the basis of gender.’ It recognizes that stereotypes ‘inhibit the transformative project of the law and the Constitution’.
208. The Handbook on Prevention and Management of Stigma and Discrimination Associated with HIV & AIDS, 2022 detailed in para 48 also outlines the role of media and community leaders in addressing HIV-related stigma and discrimination, with the aim to expand socio-economic opportunities and representation for persons living with HIV/AIDS.
209. The NCW organized a workshop in 2022 on ‘Capacity Building and Sensitization Program for Media Personnel’ to carry out a focused attention on women-related issues and the portrayal of women in the media, the need for qualitative progression in media, a more sensitive approach towards reporting and an equal representation of men and women in the field. The workshop aimed at encouraging media stakeholders to dedicate more platforms for addressing women issues and stories of women empowerment and leadership and to conduct programs informing the public about women's rights and their available recourse in case such rights are violated.^{liv}
210. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 (IRWA) has been enacted to prohibit indecent representation of women in print media. Besides IRWA, indecent representation of women, both in print and electronic media, is regulated under various other Acts and Rules/ Guidelines, such as, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Cinematograph Act, 1952’ and ‘the Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 1983’ and the guidelines issued thereunder to check obscenity in films, ‘the Press Council Act, 1978’, ‘the Programme and Advertising Code’ prescribed under ‘the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994’; the Code for Self Regulation in Advertising of the Advertising Standards Council of India; the Content Certification Code by Broadcasting Content Complaints Council; the Self-Regulation Guidelines by News Broadcasters Association (NBA). The enactment of ‘the Information Technology Act, 2000’ also covers indecent representation of women in electronic media including digital/ online media (films and audio-visual programmes made available by online content providers and news and current affairs content on online platforms). The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 notified under the IT Act, specifies that the intermediaries shall inform the users of computer resource not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, update or share any information that is, inter alia, obscene, pornographic, paedophilic, harms minor in any way; or violates any law for the time being in force; etc. Additionally, India’s public service broadcaster, Doordarshan, has framed ‘Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Programming’ with UNICEF.

Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

Critical areas of concern:

- G. Women in power and decision-making
- H. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

Measures to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making

211. The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution of India, in Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Duties. Building on the constitutional provisions, several legislative interventions have also contributed towards promoting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Recognizing the barriers faced by women in access to and control over resources, knowledge, and finances and to provide economic, political and social opportunities, the Government has taken several affirmative actions, such as setting up special educational institutions and making provisions for reservation of seats for women in educational institutions as well as in public offices.
212. Today, India is one of the only 18 states globally, with a woman helming the State.^{lv} The Indian Parliament is a powerful agent of social change in the country. It is at the forefront promoting gender mainstreaming and incorporation of voices of youth and other sections in decision making, policy discussions, and other Business of the House. The Presiding Officer of the Houses of Parliament encourage meaningful participation of women and youth parliamentarians in a wide range of parliamentary work. While presiding over the legislative business, Speaker has provided the floor to members across the political spectra, especially women, young, and first-time members. The philosophy to accommodate varied perspectives and inclusion of interest of every section of the society has remained the very heart of our parliamentary heritage and democracy.^{lvi}
213. The 17th Lok Sabha witnessed the highest number of women ever in Parliament, with 78 women members of Parliament elected from all over the country. Women's representation in the Lok Sabha has increased from 12.2% in 2014 to 14% in 2019. Similarly, as on Jan 2024, out of 239 Members of Rajya Sabha, there are 31 women members, which is approximately 13 percent of the total members of Rajya Sabha.^{lvii} The recently concluded general elections to the House of the People saw huge representation of women, both as voters and as contestants.

214. In 2023, India passed the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, “Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam”, marking a historic milestone in its national journey to foster equitable women’s representation in public life at all levels of the federal structure. This landmark legislation rotationally reserves one-third of all seats for women in the Lower House of Parliament, Lok Sabha, and in all federal State Legislative Assemblies, including Legislative Assembly of National Capital Territory of Delhi, thus institutionalizing representation of women in politics at the highest levels of public decision-making.^{lviii}
215. This recent landmark is built on the foundation of more than three decades of honing women’s leadership affirmative action at grassroots level by reserving one-third (33 percent) of the seats in in the rural and urban local bodies of governance, (Panchayati Raj Institutions and Municipal bodies).⁷ Keeping with decentralized federal structure, over two-third states (70% or 21 states / and 2 UTs with PRIs) have made provisions of 50% reservation for women in their Panchayati Raj Institutions. As a result, today, out of 3.1 million elected representatives in local governments, nearly half (46 percent), comprising 1.45 million, are women^{lix} - a scale of representation unparalleled anywhere else in the world.^{lx} This ecosystem of gender-sensitive institutions at the grassroots level laid the ground for building a cadre of women holding elected public offices and a talent pipeline from Panchayats to the Parliament, creating Champions for Gender Equality.
216. Through the programme ‘She is a Change Maker,’ NCW imparts training to improve leadership skills of elected women representatives and active women politicians at all levels. So far, 5,583 women representatives of local governments and office bearers of political parties have been trained.

Current national women’s machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women)

217. The Ministry of Women and Child Development is the current national women’s machinery dedicated to the welfare and empowerment of women and girls. It is led by a cabinet level Minister. In the past five years (2019-2024), the Ministry had been ably led by Ms. Smriti Zubin Irani and now, after the general elections to the House of the People in June 2024, by Ms. Annpurna Devi as Cabinet Minister.

Evolution of the Ministry

218. The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, came into existence with effect from 30th January, 2006. Prior to this, from 1985 onwards, it was a Department under the erstwhile Ministry of Human Resources Development.^{lxi} The Ministry was constituted with the prime intention of addressing gaps in State action for

⁷ Through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. Panchayati Raj Institutions of the States and Union Territories covered under Part IX of the Constitution of India.

women and children for promoting inter-Ministerial and inter-sectoral convergence to create gender equitable and child-centered legislation, policies and programmes. The Ministry is guided by the vision that “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.” Its mission is to promote social and economic empowerment of women through cross-cutting policies and programmes, mainstreaming gender concerns, creating awareness about their rights and facilitating institutional and legislative support for enabling them realize their human rights and develop to their full potential and ensuring development, care and protection of children through cross-cutting policies and programmes, spreading awareness about their rights and facilitating access to learning, nutrition, institutional and legislative support for enabling them to grow and develop to their full potential.

219. The broad mandate of the Ministry is to enable holistic development of Women and Children. As the nodal Ministry for the advancement of women and children, the Ministry formulates plans, policies and programmes; enacts/ amends legislation, guides and coordinates the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organizations working in the field of Women and Child Development. The Ministry has 4 autonomous organizations viz.

- (i) National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD)
- (ii) National Commission for women (NCW)
- (iii) National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)
- (iv) Central Adoption Resource Agency (CARA)

Budgets

220. The Budget of the Ministry of Women and Child Development for the current financial year 2024-25 is 3.13 billion USD (Rs. 26,092.19) crores.^{lxii} The quantum of Gender Budget reported in GBS 2024-25 is 38.6% more than the Budget in 2023-24. The share of Gender Budget in the total Union Budget increased to 6.5% in 2024-25 from 5% in 2023-24.^{lxiii}

Current programmes undertaken by the Ministry of Women and Child Development

221. The prime objective of the Ministry of Women and Child Development is to address gaps in State action for women and children and to promote inter-ministerial and inter- sectoral convergence to create gender equitable and child centred legislation, policies and programmes. For effective implementation of various schemes and programmes of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, all major schemes of the Ministry have been organized under three umbrella schemes viz. Mission Poshan 2.0, Mission Vatsalya and Mission Shakti.^{lxiv} These programmes play a supplementary and complementary role to the other general developmental programmes in the sectors of health, education, skilling, rural development, etc. All these efforts are

directed to ensure that women are empowered both economically and socially and thus become equal partners in national development along with men.

Mission Shakti:

222. The Government of India has launched 'Mission Shakti' - an integrated women empowerment programme as umbrella scheme for the safety, security and empowerment of women for implementation during the 15th Finance Commission period 2021-22 to 2025-26. Aimed at strengthening interventions for women safety, security and empowerment, it seeks to realise the Government's commitment for "women-led development" by addressing issues affecting women on a life-cycle continuum basis and by making them equal partners in nation-building through convergence and citizen-ownership. The scheme seeks to make women economically empowered, exercising free choice over their minds and bodies in an atmosphere free from violence and threat. It also seeks to reduce the care burden on women and increase female labour force participation by promoting skill development, capacity building, financial literacy, access to micro-credit, etc.
223. 'Mission Shakti' has two sub-schemes - 'Sambal' and 'Samarthya'. While the "Sambal" sub-scheme is for safety and security of women, the "Samarthya" sub-scheme is for empowerment of women. The components of 'Sambal' sub-scheme consist of schemes of One Stop Centre (OSC) (para 189), Women Helpline (WHL) (para 184-185), Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) (refer para 204-205 for details) with a new component of Nari Adalats - women's collectives to promote and facilitate alternative dispute resolution and gender justice in society and within families.
224. The 'Samarthya' sub-scheme consists of five components. These include Shakti Sadan (para 191), shelter homes for women in need of rehabilitation and support and Working Women Hostels, which have day-care facilities, and Palna- Aanganwadi-Cum Creches, (refer para 88 for details), to enable women's workforce participation,^{lxv} Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), providing maternity benefits (refer para 92 for details), SANKALP (Supportive Action for Nurturing and Knowledge-Based Advancement, Last-Mile Delivery and Potential Realization of Women): HEW (Hub for Empowerment of Women), which functions as a PMU for all components of Mission Shakti and serves as a single window inter-sectoral convergence mechanism provided for all women to avail the benefits of Central and State Government schemes. The SANKALP: Hub for Empowerment of Women operates in 3 tiers in coordination with one another: National, State and District level, and till date, the national hub, state hubs in 34 states / UTs, and 712 districts are operational.

Mission Vatsalya Scheme

225. Mission Vatsalya scheme has been launched by the Ministry subsuming the ongoing Child Protection Services (CPS) Scheme for ensuring welfare, protection and constructive growth. Mission Vatsalya aims to foster a sensitive, supportive, and

synchronized ecosystem for children as they transit different ages and stages of their development. This is being done by strengthening the institutional framework of child welfare and protection committees and the Statutory and Service delivery structures in all districts of the country.

226. Mission Vatsalya provides preventive, statutory care and rehabilitation services to children who are in need of care and protection and those in conflict with law as defined under the JJ Act. It is a centrally sponsored scheme, providing financial support to state Government/ UT Administrations, for delivering services as mandated under the JJ Act and Rules made thereunder. The primary responsibility of execution of the Act, as such, lies with the States/ UTs. As on 31.03.2024, the scheme has supported 2,450 Child Care Institutions (CCIs) with 62,592 beneficiaries residing in these CCIs and the fund released during FY 2023-24 was 125.18 million USD (Rs.1341.68 Crores). Under Non-Institutional Care, Ministry has supported 1,21,861 beneficiaries during FY 2023-24. During the current FY 2024-25, PAB meeting to consider the financial proposals has been conducted and it has been decided to support the CCIs running during the previous year i.e. 2023-24, including the number of children under Institutional Care and also Non-Institutional Care under Mission Vatsalya Scheme (i.e. Sponsorship, Foster care and Aftercare) including children who are Orphans, children covered under PM CARES for Children Scheme, Children in Conflict with law, Child Labour, Child trafficking, Child marriage and POCSO victims.
227. Under Mission Vatsalya Scheme, Child Helpline is being run in coordination with State and District functionaries with integration with the Emergency Response Support System 112 (ERSS-112). Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) of Child Helpline has been issued by the Ministry. The SoP provides for Child Helpline (CHL) Unit at District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) to be made available round the clock and equipped with necessary facilities, manpower and software applications and dedicated connectivity to provide outreach service for children in crisis linking them to emergency and long-term care and rehabilitation services. States/ UTs as per the SoPs of Railways will continue in running of Child Help Desk/ Kiosk/ Booth at the selected Railway Stations and will also continue to run Child Help Desks at existing Bus Stands. All States/UTs implement the Child Helpline.
228. The PM CARES for Children Scheme was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on 29th May 2021 to support children who lost both parents or surviving parent or legal guardian or adoptive parents due to COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of the Scheme is to ensure comprehensive care and protection of Children in a sustained manner, and enable their wellbeing through health insurance, empower them through education and equip them for self-sufficient existence with financial support on reaching 23 years of age.

Mission POSHAN 2.0 and Saksham Aanganwadi

229. The Mission aims at developing India's human capital and integrates three existing schemes (Anganwadi Services, POSHAN Abhiyaan and Scheme for Adolescent Girls), adopting a lifecycle approach to malnutrition reduction. It shifts focus from earlier approach of only calorific sufficiency to a set of clearly defined strategies to achieve micronutrient sufficiency resulting in improved health, wellness and immunity. It focuses on infant and young child feeding practices (including breastfeeding and complementary nutrition), maternal and adolescent nutrition, treatment of malnourished children, and promotion of AYUSH practices. It promotes effective monitoring cum accountability mechanisms at varied levels. Through robust ICT based Governance Tool, Poshan Tracker, launched in 2021, the government undertakes real-time monitoring towards greater transparency through prompt supervision and management of services, thus reaching 102.6 million beneficiaries, through 1.3 million Anganwadi Centres, (covering 6.2 million pregnant women, 4.3 million lactating mothers and 89.1 million children aged 0-6 years, 2.2 million Adolescent Girls aged 14-18 years) across the least developed and most marginalized parts of the country (Aspirational Districts and North-East Region).

In the past five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors? (e.g. gender focal points in the Executive, Legislature or Judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits, consultations with women's organizations)

230. Through the tool of Gender Responsive Budgeting, India has, in the past five years, mainstreamed gender across a vast variety of unconventional sectors, such as Electronics and Information Technology, Home Affairs, new and Renewable Energy, MSMEs, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Rural Development, Urban Development, Housing, Drinking Water and Sanitation, Power, Civil Aviation. Details on GRB are mentioned in paras 275-284. Inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms for GRB are already well established.

231. Other efforts to mainstream gender equality such as the release of handbooks and publications by the executive and judiciary are stated in paras 206-208.

If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?

232. Protection of life and liberty of citizens is a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. This right also provides for living life with dignity. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India, is a statutory body established on 12 October, 1993 under "the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993" as amended by "the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2006".^{lxvi} Drawn from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the NHRC is an embodiment of India's international normative commitments to upholding human rights of every

individual. Section 2(1)(d) of the PHRA defines Human Rights as the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in India.^{lxvii} The Commission has always been at the forefront of protecting and promoting the human rights of women and girls in the country. In this regard, it has undertaken various steps to encourage the protection of women's rights, as well as for promoting gender equality.

233. The NHRC has a strong complaint redressal mechanism and is empowered to intervene in any instance of human rights violations, whether in court cases or within any other institution tasked with protecting or promoting human rights. Using the Online Complaint Management System of NHRC, individuals can file complaints from any location in any of the 22 languages listed in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Commission undertakes detailed investigation on each individual case before coming to a conclusion. In cases where a violation has taken place, due compensation is awarded to victims.
234. NHRC also takes suo-moto cognizance of media reports pertaining to violations of the human rights of all individuals, including women and girls and negligence in the prevention of such violation, by a public servant. The Commission has taken suo-moto cognizance of various cases wherein women were subjected to any form of violence, such as exclusion of married women from job opportunities in the IT/ ITES sector,^{lxviii} the traditional harmful practice of "Nata Pratha", wherein a woman or a girl is sold off by her family to a man who does not marry her, and the children born out of these unions face humiliation and ostracism from the society, amongst others. The Commission has organized numerous conferences, seminars, and open house discussions on issues relevant to the protection of women and girls' rights in India as well as spreads awareness through publications and media.
235. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has formulated the Guidelines for Eliminating Corporal Punishment in Schools, and constituted a Corporal Punishment Monitoring Cell to look into cases of corporal punishment.
236. The NCW is mandated to look into the complaints regarding deprivation of women's rights / non implementation of laws, received from all over the country. These complaints are received in writing or online through its website. Additionally NCW also takes suo-moto cognizance of incidents related to violation/ deprivation of women's rights. The complaints are taken up with appropriate authorities including police authorities to facilitate in providing adequate and expeditious relief to women ensuring suitable redressal of grievances. Further, the NCW looks into specific complaints pertaining to Indian women deserted by their NRI/ Overseas husbands. Through its 24X7 Helpline operational since 2021, it provides support to women in distress through referral.
237. The NCW has been regularly conducting inspections for women's institutions including Prison/ Custodial Homes and in Psychiatric Homes/ Mental Hospitals to

assess the welfare and living conditions of women in these institutions. The recommendations for improving the conditions of women in the institutions are sent to the concerned Ministries and Departments for necessary action.

238. NCW in collaboration with BPR&D is running 5-day intensive gender sensitisation programs for police officers across the country. 34 such programs have been organized at pan India level in association with Police Academies / CDTIs and approximately 1031 police officers have been trained till date. This project has further been extended till the year 2025 and Forensic Training Program for Police Personnel has been included in the scope in addition to gender sensitization with the intention to enhance their capabilities to deal with crimes against women more effectively.

Peaceful and inclusive societies

Critical areas of concern:

- E. Women and armed conflict
 - I. Human rights of women
 - L. The girl child

Build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies

239. India does not have any armed conflict zone. The disturbances created by terrorists and other armed groups are mainly related to law and order situations, that are handled as per extant provisions of law and as per standard protocol by Police.
240. India has a rich legacy of contribution to UN Peacekeeping operations and is one of the largest contributors of troops. India's women peacekeepers serve in both Chapter VI and Chapter VII missions including demanding and hazardous missions such as UNIFIL, MONUSCO, UNMISS and UNISFA. The women peacekeepers carry out all the duties that their male counterparts do, but their greatest value lies in community outreach, especially engaging with vulnerable populations such as women and children. Recently, an Indian Peacekeeper, Major Radhika Sen was conferred with the prestigious United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award for 2023. Another Indian officer, Major Babli Pannu was also one of the five officers shortlisted for the award.
241. Besides, India has carried out training for women peacekeepers from ASEAN countries in 2023. Spearheaded by the Indian Army's vision for gender neutrality and women empowerment, this initiative, themed on the UN framework, was organised under the stewardship of the Ministry of Defence. The same will be a regular feature in the coming times.
242. Today's Peace missions depend heavily on interaction with civilians, including civilian victims of conflict, to formulate their objectives and policies. These missions realized

two things early on: one, that women and children were disproportionately affected by conflicts, and two, that they were more amenable to communicating with female Peacekeepers than with their male counterparts. These missions also recognised that Women Peacekeepers conferred another significant advantage. In many conflict zones, women were marginalised in social development endeavors. Female Peacekeepers served as examples that motivated women to join mainstream developmental efforts, particularly in the security sector. India's Women Peacekeepers, part of the UN's first ever All Women's Formed Police Unit in Liberia in 2007 illustrated this, beyond doubt. When they finally left Liberia in 2016, President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson had herself thanked them for their role in inspiring Liberian women to join security sector institutions. President Johnson's observations were proved true in other missions as well, where the presence of Women Peacekeepers benefited the mission's social outreach and helped in mainstreaming women in developmental efforts.

243. Indian women have a rich legacy in Peacekeeping. Our Female Engagement Teams as well as individual officers such as Dr Kiran Bedi, UN's first Police Adviser, Major Suman Gawani and Major Radhika Sen, winners of the prestigious United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award, and Ms Shakti Devi, recipient of the International Female Police Peacekeeper Award, have made a mark for themselves. Today, our uniformed women are set to achieve greater glories in the realm of Peacekeeping. In January 2023, India has deployed an All Women's Platoon, specializing in Community Outreach and engagement tasks, in the conflict ridden region of Abyei, on the borders of Sudan and South Sudan. India's largest single deployment since Liberia, the platoon heralds the uniformed forces' endeavor to increase the presence of women in peacekeeping.

244. The Government has made enabling provision for increasing the representation of women in various professions that were earlier considered to be male domain. In respect of Armed forces several provisions such as granting permanent commission to women including in combat roles such as fighter pilots, allowing entry of women in National Defence Academy (NDA) [First Batch has been inducted in the course commenced in June 2022], admission of girls in Sainik (military) schools, etc. have been made. In Indian Air Force (IAF), women officers are inducted in all the branches and streams, including combat roles as fighter pilots. In addition to education, Law & Naval Constructor branch/ cadre, women Short Service Commission (SSC) officers have been made eligible for grant of Permanent Commission in the Naval Armament branch, at par with the male officers.^{lxix}

245. IAF for the first time has inducted women in other ranks as Agniveervayu under Agnipath Scheme. At present, 154 Women candidates are undergoing training. The Army, Navy and Airforce have taken several steps for increasing women's participation in Armed Forces. These include increased publicity on various media platforms including YouTube and other social media, conduct of motivational talks by women officers, undertaking visits to co-educational and girl's schools and colleges, etc.

246. The Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) stream has been opened up for women officers. The first woman officer has joined RPA squadron in March 2021. One-woman officer has been appointed as ADA, Moscow in June 2020.
247. The headcount of women in the Indian military has increased almost three-fold. In January 2020, the corps of Indian military police inducted the first batch of women military police.
248. There is 33% reservation for women in central armed police forces like CRPF and CISF. 71.4% States have also made provisions for the same.

Measures to address violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response

249. India has taken active measures to combat illicit arms trafficking, the production, use of and trafficking in illicit drugs, and combat trafficking in women and children.
250. The project for setting-up/ strengthening Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTU) in all districts of the country at cost of 13.56 million USD (Rs.113 crore) under Nirbhaya Fund was approved in 2019 and is under implementation by the Ministry of Home Affairs with aim to provide counselling and support to the victims of trafficking. As on date, 827 AHTUs are functional [807 in States/ UTs & 20 in Border Security Force (BSF) and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)]. BSF has rescued 103 victims since 2021 and SSB has rescued 396 victims and apprehended 94 traffickers since 2021. SSB has also established a dedicated helpline no. 1903. Training sessions are also organised by the States / UTs from time to time for police officials to handle trafficking cases. Several states have also organized public awareness seminars / conferences about human trafficking. Further, a Third Party Evaluation of the scheme observed that the project has positive outcomes in most of the states and the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) model has been particularly effective.
251. The Arms (Amendment) Act, 2019 regulates the sale and trade of arms. In addition to the limit of two guns being allowed under the latest amendments, individuals would be allowed to retain ancestral guns in a deactivated state. Additionally, for transparency and accountability, a portal is developed to house the National Database on Arms License (NDAL) and Arms License Issuance System (ALIS). It serves as a one stop platform to access information on arms licenses issued, license holders and the ammunition used.
252. There are heavy penalties for illicit arms trafficking, increased prison sentence for illicit trafficking of firearms and ammunition including smuggled firearms of foreign make or prohibited bore.^{lxx}
253. India has a zero tolerance policy against narcotics. The Government of India has adopted two pronged strategy to achieve the vision of “Nasha Mukta Bharat” to reduce the demand and supply of drugs. The drugs supply reduction initiatives include introduction of the Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) mechanism, to have effective coordination of actions among various Ministries, Departments, Central and States law

enforcement agencies dealing with narcotics, wherein a Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) has been constituted to monitor investigations on drugs, a special Task Force on Dark net and Crypto currency has been constituted to monitor suspicious transactions related to drugs on Darknet, to prevent smuggling along border areas various border guarding forces like BSF, SSB and Assam Rifles have been empowered under Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substance (NDPS) Act, 1985 to make interdiction of drugs, similar efforts have been made to mitigate the problem of drug trafficking through maritime route.

254. Since illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs and its abuse is a trans-national problem, India has entered into bilateral agreements with 27 countries, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with 16 countries and 02 Agreements on Security Cooperation for preventing illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals. Further, National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) is an umbrella scheme of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment under which financial assistance is provided to States/ UT Administrations for Preventive Education and Awareness Generation, Capacity Building, Skill development, vocational training and livelihood support to ex-drug addicts, Programmes for Drug Demand Reduction by States/ UTs and NGOs/ Voluntary Organizations for running and maintenance of Integrated Rehabilitation Centers for Addicts (IRCA), Community based Peer Led Interventions (CPLI) for early Drug Use Prevention among Adolescents, Outreach and Drop In Centers (ODIC) and Addiction treatment facilities (ATFs) in Government Hospitals.
255. India's Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA) in 372 most vulnerable districts has a massive community outreach programme, involving more than 8000 youth volunteers. Additionally, there is a National Toll-Free Helpline 14446 to provide tele-counseling to drug users and refer them to the nearest de-addiction center. There are awareness campaigns through various social media platforms by way of Audio Video messages of eminent personalities from the field of Politics, Bureaucracy, Sports, Films, Music etc. and also through Telecom Service Providers, FM Radios, Television Channels, etc.^{lxxi}

Rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls

256. Efforts at addressing discrimination against the girl child and the rights of the girl child are enumerated in the thematic sections above, with regard to girls' health (para 144-147), education and skill development (paras 33, 41, 44, 46-47, 55-58, 162), social attitudinal change with regard to gender social norms (para 204-205), poverty alleviation, amongst others. Hence, for the sake of brevity, the same is not repeated.

Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

Critical areas of concern:

- I. Human rights of women
- K. Women and the environment
- L. The girl child

257. One of the core tenets of India's ancient civilization is sustainability and living in harmony with nature. Traditional cultural practices encourage organic living, respecting the forests, rivers, and other natural resources, consumption of widely available and affordable fresh and organic food, as well as routine exercise for the body and mind through yoga, pranayama, and daily physical work. Women are often torch-bearers of this lifestyle, from generation to generation, as they are likely to be traditionally responsible for food and nutrition for the family/ household. Women farmers, rural women, women from tribal communities have been catalytic in practicing organic consumption and cooking fresh food, that is raw or not overly processed, manufacturing and packaging that is eco-friendly and sustainable, and mindful consumption of natural resources such as water, sunlight, crops, forests, etc.
258. The Government of India, encompassing these principles, introduced Mission Lifestyle for Environment (Mission LiFE) to the world at the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow. Mission LiFE recognises that Indian culture and living traditions are inherently sustainable. The importance of conserving our precious natural resources and living in harmony with nature are emphasised in our ancient scriptures. Mission LiFE seeks to channel the efforts of individuals and communities into a global mass movement of positive behavioural change. LiFE is an India-led global mass movement. It aims to nudge individuals and communities to practice a lifestyle that is synchronous with nature and does not harm it.
259. India has a strong institutional, legislative, and financial mechanism for disaster risk reduction at national, state, and local level. According to Third National Communication (TNC), submitted to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2023, women, especially those from lower economic backgrounds, face some of the most severe effects of climate change. It is now globally accepted that the climate crisis and its impacts are not 'gender-neutral'. UNICEF has also recognized that children face additional vulnerabilities due to their lower ability to regulate body temperature, making them more vulnerable to heat waves and high temperatures. Climate change may cause crop failures and rising prices, which in turn may lead to increased rates of malnutrition among children.
260. India recognizes the adverse impact of climate change on women and children and has taken several steps to mitigate the vulnerabilities. A National Programme on

Climate Change and Human Health (NPCCHH) has been launched by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) in 2019 with the goal to reduce morbidity, mortality, injuries and health vulnerabilities to climate variability and extreme weather events especially among vulnerable groups like women, children and marginalized communities. Various activities for increasing general awareness, capacity building of health care professionals and healthcare workers, strengthening health sector preparedness, collaborative partnership and steering research on climate sensitive health issues are the key objectives of the programme. The programme focuses on health sector response to climate sensitive diseases and health issues like air pollution, heat related illness, other extreme weather events and green and climate resilient healthcare facilities. The programme is implemented through the organizational framework of Nodal Officers at State and District Levels. Activities further have coverage at sub-district level for health facility and community level implementation. MoHFW has also prepared information education and communication (IEC) materials to increase awareness on extreme weather events. Besides, public health advisory on various climate related issues are issued by MoHFW from time to time to States/ UTs. MoHFW also exchanges relevant surveillance information with National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and India Meteorological Department (IMD) for review of preparedness and further action.

261. India implements the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), which is the overarching policy framework and comprises of National Missions in specific areas of solar energy, enhanced energy efficiency, water, agriculture, Himalayan ecosystem, sustainable habitat, health, green India and strategic knowledge on climate change. Further, 34 States/ UTs have prepared State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) consistent with the objectives of NAPCC.
262. The National Disaster Management Plan, 2019 outlines the country's strategy for achievement of targets set under Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction - SFDRR (2015 -2030) and build coherence with other international agreements such as SDGs and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (COP 21). At the state level, disaster management plans are prepared till the district, block, panchayat, and city level. India has also made progress in early warning dissemination and last mile communication. This has resulted in steep decline in mortality from some hazards such as cyclones and heatwaves. NCW has also held consultations to review "Women & Children in Disasters: Need for Policy."
263. Women, as consumers of menstrual hygiene products, are more likely to be routinely exposed to toxins in proximity to their bodies for prolonged durations. The inclusion of plastic coating in the sanitary pad's surface to prolong usage, and additional artificial fragrances, also contribute to toxic exposure for women and girls. The Government of India has proactively promoted community-based organizations, by supporting the manufacturing, brand development and sale of all natural, cotton sanitary pads manufactured by women-led SHGs. Moreover, the high and recurring

costs of sanitary napkins, may contribute to what is popularly known as the “pink tax.” This may deter women, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged, from changing pads in a timely manner. Taking cognizance of this, the Government of India has made sanitary napkins 100% exempt from tax and to make it affordable and easily accessible, the price of Sanitary Napkins sold through government sponsored Jan Aushadhi Suvidha Sanitary Napkins is extremely affordable at Rupee 1 i.e. nearly one pence per pad. Over 500 million such napkins have been sold through the Jan Aushadhi Kendras.

264. Open defecation has persisted as a common challenge across the globe for centuries, including in India. Research has proven that lack of access to toilets increases the vulnerability of women and girls to sexual violence, particularly at early hours of the morning or late at night, when women are likely to attend to nature’s call, with cases of violence being reported during open defecation. Further, at the household level, women are generally responsible for household water and sanitation management. Due to the traditional patriarchal nature of many communities, cleaning of toilets is looked upon as an “unclean” job, often done by the women of the household, or outsourced to a domestic worker, who is likely to belong to a socially disadvantaged section, operating with little resources and social protection.^{lxxii}
265. The Swachh Bharat Mission has brought a paradigm shift in these gendered social norms through attitudinal change, by encouraging each family member to equitably contribute in keeping the toilet premises clean. This has eliminated potential threats to women’s health and safety, and reduced their time poverty and care burden.
266. Further, the construction of community and public toilets has also helped addressing and mitigating the health impacts of marginalized groups, such as sanitation workers, ragpickers, informal sector workers, street vendors and others navigating urban areas. Notably, among these sections, women are often likely to withhold their defecation or urination for long periods, leading to build up of toxins and potential health implications like UTIs and others. Further, the absence of clean and functional toilets also exposed women to toxic wastes in unsafe public spaces. These concerns are addressed through the construction of functional toilets.
267. Women-led community-based organizations form the foundational drivers of social change in communities. The Government of India, recognizing this potential, has built capacities of Women SHGs on solid waste management and promoting circular economy. SHGs are provided training on waste segregation, including hazardous wastes, with proper protection. Many SHGs are also engaged in sanitation drives, including as drivers of heavy vehicles for solid waste disposal, where they are earning money.
268. This initiative (SBM) has also generated dignified livelihood opportunities for several women-led self-help groups (community based organizations), which have taken on the responsibility of operation & maintenance of community toilets, public toilets, and solid waste management in a sustainable and profitable manner. India also has piloted

models of liquid waste management in rural areas for natural fertilizers, thus increasing crop production.

269. Women in agriculture are at increased risk from a wide range of pesticides, which has myriad effects on the health of women. Within agricultural production, it is women, who are more likely to be engaged in microscopic and repetitive work such as spraying pesticides.
270. The Government of India, recognizing the transformative power of technology in the hands of rural women, has launched the intervention, named “*Drone didi*” to prevent women farmers and labourers’ exposure to pesticide / insecticide by providing drones at subsidized costs to women members of Self Help Groups and offering training to help them to become drone pilots.
271. Solar home lighting systems, lanterns, and street solutions offer safer and more reliable lighting options in remote and rural areas, reducing the need of traditional energy sources like kerosene lamps. Solar irrigation systems, financed under PM-KUSUM scheme, help increase women's engagement in farming. These technologies reduce the amount of human effort required for irrigation, reducing their drudgery and enabling less laborious distribution of women’s time and energy.
272. The schemes for clean cooking gas connections, tapped drinking water at the doorstep, construction of household toilets, and housing for all, have not only reduced the drudgery on women but also help improving their health status and empowerment. Thus, women-related challenges are being addressed in developmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes of Government of India.

Section 4: Implementation and monitoring of BPFA and SDGs / National institutions and processes

273. The coronavirus pandemic has not only exacerbated and highlighted the multifaceted challenges faced by women and girls across her lifecycle and across different spheres of her life, but has also highlighted the need for an integrated approach in monitoring progress on various indicators of human development to ensure that no one is left behind in the process of development. India has adopted multi-pronged approach to address the issue of women on a life-cycle continuum basis under the broad spectrum of women-led development. The Government is moving with a vision to ensure educational, social, economic and political empowerment of women and girls so that they become equal partners in fast paced and sustainable national development and contribute ably to the GDP.
274. The 'Mission Shakti' - an integrated women empowerment programme is umbrella scheme for the safety, security and empowerment of women for implementation during the 15th Finance Commission period 2021-22 to 2025-26.^{lxxiii} MWCD has issued detailed guidelines for the scheme.^{lxxiv} The schematic break up has been expounded above from paras 222-224. An amount of USD 2,518 million (Rs. 20,989 crore) for the scheme and USD 60 million (Rs. 500 crore) for Media) has been approved for the

purpose. The component of Hub for Empowerment of Women (HEW) set up at National, State and District levels is for critical gap funding for safety, wellbeing, empowerment and progress of women and girls (refer para 224). Through the HEWs, convergence with programmes, schemes and initiatives of other central Ministries and States/ UTs, as well as with the exhaustive health and nutrition (Anganwadi) infrastructure and local governments (PRIs) help achieve the objectives of Mission Shakti. Additionally, research and gender budgeting, a critical tool for mapping gender responsiveness of interventions across the Government, has also been included under the umbrella of Mission Shakti. Details of gender budgeting are expounded below. Further, monitoring of convergence of Government of India programmes, including the gender-responsiveness of programmes, with SDGs is done through the SDG National Indicator Framework (SDG-NIF), in synergy with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation and (National Institute for Transforming India) NITI Aayog. It is detailed in section 5.

Gender Budgeting

275. The Government is committed for promoting gender equality in all sectors and at all levels of governance. Financing for gender equality is central to mitigate gender inequalities and Gender Budgeting is a critical strategy in this endeavour. The Government has adopted Gender Budgeting as a strategy to incorporate a gender perspective in all stages of policymaking.
276. The Government has emphasised that Gender Budgeting includes gender sensitive formulation of legislation, policies, plans, programs, schemes, resource allocation, implementation, monitoring, audit and impact assessment of programs and schemes. In this regard, the Ministry has focused on (i) establishing institutional mechanisms and processes to undertake Gender Budgeting in all Ministries/Departments at the national and State/UT level and (ii) strengthening capacities and building expertise across levels of governance on undertaking Gender Budgeting.
277. Gender Budgeting was adopted by India in 2005 as a tool for mainstreaming gender in all government policies and programmes. It is recognized as an effective fiscal strategy to integrate a gender lens into the budgetary process and prioritise resources to make a positive contribution to gender equality.
278. The Gender Budget Statement is an important document to reflect the Government's commitment towards gender equality and women empowerment. Gender Budget Cells have been created in all Ministries/Departments to ensure that the programmes, policies and budgetary allocations of the Ministries/Departments are examined through the gender perspective.
279. From 2017-18 to 2024-25, the Government's spending under Gender budgeting has been increase by 233% as detailed below. Further, Budget estimate for Gender has been increased from 97,134 cr. (USD 11.66 billion) in 2013-14 to 3.09 lakh cr. (USD

37.08 billion) in 2024-25 which is 218% decadal increase. The share of gender budget as a proportion of the total expenditure budget has increased from 4.3% in 2022-23 to 5% in 2023-24.

280. As of 2024-25, 43 Central Ministries/ Departments/ UTs have undertaken gender budgeting. 38 Ministries/ Departments and 5 UTs reported in either Part A or Part B of the Gender Budget Statement and 22 Ministries/ Departments and 5 UTs reported in Part A (100% women specific schemes) whereas 31 Ministries/ Departments and 4 UTs reported in Part B (30-99% budgetary allocation for women). Gender Budgeting is also encouraged in local governments, through Gram Panchayat Development Plans. This reflects a 38.6% annual increase. ^{lxxv} Following table gives the gender budgeting allocations vis-à-vis total budget estimates of Government of India during 2019-20 to 2024-25:

<i>Item</i>	<i>2019-20</i>	<i>2020-21</i>	<i>2021-22</i>	<i>2022-23</i>	<i>2023-24</i>	<i>2024-25</i>
Gender Budget Allocation (Rs. Cr.)	1,36,934.10	1,43,461.72	1,53,326.28	1,71,006.47	2,23,219.75	3,09,690.10
Total Budget Estimates (Rs. Cr.)	27,86,349.45	30,42,230.09	34,83,235.63	39,44,908.67	45,03,097.45	47,65,768.39
Proportion of budget earmarked under gender budget	4.91	4.72	4.40	4.33	5.00	6.50

281. The Ministry of Women and Child Development as the nodal Ministry for implementation of Gender Budgeting, organizes regular sensitization and capacity building programmes for the officers of Ministries and Departments. Under Mission Shakti – an umbrella scheme for the safety, security and empowerment of women, Government of India’s vision is to ensure 100% coverage of gender budgeting in all central Ministries/Departments, as well as in the States/ UTs, rural and urban local bodies. The MWCD has a three-fold strategic framework to strengthen Gender Budgeting across levels of governance. This is strengthening institutional mechanisms and processes, building capacities of Government officials to mainstream gender in policies/programmes and strengthening the post-budget analysis to track expenditure and the impact on women’s lives.

282. The Survey of Gender Budgeting by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2016 recognized India (non-OECD partner country) as an early adopter of Gender Budgeting and usage of tools such as gender perspective in resource allocation, standard guidelines from central budget authorities on Gender Budgeting, training and capacity development.
283. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Survey of Gender Budgeting in G20 countries 2021 recognizes that in India, Gender Budgeting has been applied extensively at the state and local levels. The Gender Budget Statement and Budget Call Circular containing specific guidelines on gender objectives in India are recognized as advanced practices.
284. The Ministry has developed a handbook for Gender Budgeting to further strengthen the process of institutionalizing gender mechanisms across sectors and across all levels of governance. The Ministry also provides financial support to Government training institutions for capacity building of Government officials to enhance Gender Budgeting at the State/UT level. Additionally, 21 States/UTs have established designated State Nodal Centres for sustained capacity building efforts on Gender Budgeting.^{lxxvi}

[Stakeholders' contribution to the preparation of the present national report](#)

285. Due to the ongoing general elections in 2024, and the Model Code of Conduct preceding the elections, organization of multi-stakeholder consultations became challenging as it may come into conflict with the code of conduct. However, the MWCD organized inter-ministerial consultations and also held consultations with national human rights bodies and UN agencies. Inputs from all stakeholders have been incorporated in the preparation of the report.

[Action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women \(if a State party\), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.](#)

286. India has addressed the recommendations raised by the Committee on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, after the submission of its Fourth and Fifth combined periodic report. India has prepared its 6th and 7th CEDAW report, wherein it has accommodated the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee and is in the process to submit it this year.
287. India has also implemented the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) towards addressing discrimination against women. India attaches the highest priority to ensuring safety and security of women and is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and to ensuring their holistic empowerment. As stated above, the Constitution of India not only provides for equality, but also authorizes the State to take affirmative measures to promote gender equality. Keeping

the constitutional mandate in view, India has adopted a multi-pronged strategy to eradicate gender stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination against women. The measures aimed at bringing about attitudinal change span across the domains of law, education and training and include proactive measures in the form of administrative practices, schemes and programmes to overcome specific impediments to gender equality and provide enabling conditions for enjoyment of rights. Various laws and measures for safety and security of women have been enlisted in Section 3 above, under the thematic areas and are not reproduced for the sake of brevity.

Section 5: Gender disaggregated statistics

Gender statistics at the national level in the past 5 years and data disaggregations collected

288. The Government of India foregrounds a gender lens throughout the data collection process, and has consistently identified innovation and niche areas and sectors for data collection and comparability. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is the nodal Ministry for integrated development of the national statistical system in the country in tune with the global statistical practices and data dissemination standards. It is committed to enhancing data accessibility through use of cutting-edge technologies and the adoption of global best practices.^{lxxvii} Apart from the publication of quarterly and annual reports on the status of employment and labour force participation (Periodic Labour Force Survey),^{lxxviii} which is an intensive exercise that analyses patterns of labour force participation, with gender-disaggregated data, highlighting divergences in urban and rural areas, and in different regions across the country, it also collates secondary data of various Ministries/ Departments on different socio-economic indicators and release in the form of an annual publication titled 'Women and Men in India', latest being 2022),^{lxxix} furthering India's efforts towards data-driven policymaking. In 2019, for the first time, National Statistical Office (NSO) conducted the first pan-India Time Use Survey during January – December 2019 which has been detailed in para 87. The second Time Use Survey is being conducted by NSSO from January-December 2024. Other reports with gender-disaggregated data by the Government of India include Youth in India (2022),^{lxxx} Statistical Profile of Persons with Disabilities in India (2021)^{lxxxi}
289. MoHFW conducts an integrated survey namely National Family Health Survey (NFHS), which provides high quality, reliable and comparable data on population dynamics and health indicators as well as data on emerging issues in health and family welfare and associated domains, so as to assist the policy-makers and programme implementing agencies for setting the benchmarks. NFHS also provides evidence on the effectiveness of ongoing programmes, which are implemented by the Government.^{lxxxii} The latest NFHS-5 survey, has been conducted in around 637 thousand sample households from 707 districts of all States / UTs for the period 2019-

2021. The national report also provides gender-disaggregated data that address parameters across socio-economic, reproductive health, access to technology, land ownership, decision-making and others which has been discussed in Section 3.

290. Sample Registration Survey (SRS), conducted by the office of the Registrar General of India, capture progress and challenges on critical indicators such as IMR, MMR, TFR, and SRB. The UDISE, by the Department of School Education and Literacy, collects data annually, on education related parameters upto secondary level, including information disaggregated by gender, and socially and economically disadvantaged groups, such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, religious minorities, and Persons with Disabilities. The AISHE, conducted by the Department of Higher Education, maps the status of higher education in India, and, similar to the previous report, captures data disaggregated by gender and social categories, across all levels of higher education. In the field of public participation and representation, the Ministries of Panchayati Raj and Housing & Urban Affairs collect data on elected women representatives in rural and urban local governments and the Parliament Secretariat maps the proportion of women Parliamentarians, while the Election Commission of India maps voter registrations and turnout by gender. With regard to crimes against women and girls, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) compiles and publishes the data its annual publication "Crime in India." The report also contains data on different forms of gender-based violence and crimes committed against women and children, dissected through age-group, rural –urban, etc. The surveys / reports mentioned above, where relevant, provide data based on gender (including transgender persons), geographic location, rural/ urban status, marital status, age, education, income, and disability.

Strengthening national gender statistics in the next 5 years

291. The Government of India is in the process of strengthening convergence of data-driven governance across all Ministries and Departments. For instance, India is presently consolidating data and streamlining reporting mechanisms on sexual harassment at the workplace in formal and informal sectors, through a unified web-portal, that entails convergence of several ministries. Further, we are also in the process of developing an index for companies to measure their progress on gender parity within their organizations and in their businesses. A web-portal for capturing data under various components of Mission Shakti is also under development. Moreover, the Government is progressively linking data captured by various Ministries / Departments for various purposes through API, to maximise the use of data-driven governance across sectors.

Gender-specific indicators⁸ for monitoring progress on the SDGs

292. Committed to the Agenda 2030 for Development, the programmes and policies of the Government of India are designed with an aim for saturation and truly leaving no one behind. In this context, alignment with the 17 SDGs is integral to the service delivery and functions of the government across all levels – from national to state to local governments. Guidelines have been issued towards the localization of SDGs and their integration into the Gram Panchayat Development Plans.
293. NITI Aayog is the nodal agency mandated with the task of coordinating work on SDGs by adopting a synergistic approach, involving central ministries, States/ UTs, academia, think tanks and international organizations. MoSPI, in consultation with subject matter Ministries of the Government of India and other stakeholders, has developed a National Indicator Framework (NIF) for facilitating the monitoring of SDGs at the national level. Further, guided by the MoSPI's NIF, the NITI Aayog has developed the SDG India Index and Dashboard to monitor the progress of SDGs in the country through a unique measurable index. It provides an assessment of the performance of all States and UTs. The States and UTs are also ranked based on their overall performance across multiple goals. Performance is also monitored at the level of States/ UTs through State/ UT Indicator Framework.
294. Over the past 5 years, the national indicators have varied annually from 306 to 290.^{lxxxiii} In 2024, there are 290 indicators in the Framework. Of these, approximately 79 indicators are gender-specific. Gender-specific indicators span across the goals of about more than half, i.e., 11 out of the 17 SDGs.
295. These include No Poverty (SDG1), Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Health and Well-being (SDG 3), Quality Education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), Decent Work and Inclusive Economic Growth (SDG 8), Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11) and Peaceful and Inclusive Societies (SDG 16). The gender specific indicators span from collecting data on trafficking of women and girls, to sex ratio at birth, women's participation and representation and allocation of gender budgets, earnings of employees, disaggregated by sex.^{lxxxiv}

Section 6: Conclusion

296. As we inch closer towards the end of Decade of Action for Sustainable Development, gender equality takes the centre-stage in India's development policy, guided by the principle of women-led development. Gender responsiveness remains integral to India's efforts towards becoming a developed economy by 2047, the year that marks 100 years of independence. Aligned to the SDGs, and the 12 critical areas of concern in

⁸ The term 'gender-specific indicators' is used to refer to indicators that explicitly call for disaggregation by sex and/or refer to gender equality as the underlying objective. For example, SDG indicator 5.c.1 captures the percentage of countries with systems to track public allocations that are directed towards policies and programmes that promote gender equality—the underlying objective is the promotion of gender equality. The term is also used for indicators where women and girls are specified within the indicator as the targeted population (see UN Women. 2018. *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York).

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the Beijing Platform for Action, the Government of India, through this exhaustive exercise, aims to foster data-driven development, putting disaggregated data by gender, ability, age, social and geographical location, amongst others, at the core of policymaking. Drawing from the foundation laid by gender responsive budgeting, India aims to strengthen convergence and monitoring mechanisms to measure progress on gender equality across all levels of federal government.

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- 44. Adequate safety of employment of women in dangerous operation.—** Where the appropriate Government considers that the employment of women is dangerous for their health and safety, in an establishment or class of establishments or in any particular hazardous or dangerous processes in such establishment or class of establishments, due to the operation carried out therein, such Government may in the prescribed manner, require the employer to provide adequate safeguards prior to the employment of women for such operation.
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