India's Commitment to Women's Safety

Initiatives leading towards a big change

(Ministry of Women and Child Development)

29th March, 2025

Summary:

- *India has implemented legal reforms, taken financial initiatives (Nirbhaya Fund), and launched Women helpline (181) to enhance women's security.*
- *Multipronged approach to promote women's rights, legal actions against sexual offenses, domestic violence, dowry, child marriage, workplace harassment, and human trafficking to ensure safety and security of women.*
- *One Stop Centres (OSCs), Women Helpline 181, Emergency Response Support System (112), SHe-Box, and Women Help Desks provide legal, medical, and psychological assistance to women.*
- *Domestic violence and Gender Based Violence impact mental health; Project Stree Manoraksha by NIMHANS provides trauma-informed care at OSCs.*

Introduction

Women are making a place for themselves in the world. Now, they are not confined to the four walls of a home but are at the forefront of every sector of society, proving their strength, talent, and leadership in fields ranging from business and politics to science and sports. However, true empowerment can only be achieved when women feel safe and secure in every aspect of life. The Government of India has taken remarkable strides to ensure the safety and security of women across the nation. Through legislative reforms, dedicated helplines, and financial support, a multi-faceted approach is being implemented to create a safer environment for women.

Nirbhaya Fund

Ministry of Women and Child Development is actively working towards safety and security of women at every place. Looking at the rising cases of crimes against women in past, the Ministry has established a special fund known as Nirbhaya Fund for financing safety projects across country.

Under the fund, a total amount of **Rs 7712.85 crore has been allocated up to the financial year 2024-25**, with **Rs 5846.08 crore utilised** which is nearly 76% of the total allocation. This fund supports various projects and schemes such as **One Stop Centres (OSCs), Emergency Response Support System (ERSS-112), Women Helpline (WHL-181), Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs), Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs), Women Help Desks (WHDs), Cyber Forensic cum Training Labs, Safe City Projects, Rail and Road Transport Safety Initiatives, and the Central Victim Compensation Fund (CVCF)** to enhance women's safety and security.

Government Initiatives for Women Safety

One Stop Centres (OSCs): Established under the Nirbhaya Fund, OSCs provide integrated support to women affected by violence. These centres offer medical assistance, legal aid, psychological counselling, and temporary shelter, all under one roof, facilitating a coordinated response to various forms of violence against women. According to the Ministry of Women and Child Development statistics, there are currently 812 operational OSCs across the country. and they have assisted over 10.80 lakh women since inception (01.04.2015) till 31st January 2025.

24x7 Women Helpline (181): Women Helpline 181 provides 24/7 emergency and support services for women facing violence in both public and private spaces. Launched on December 3, 2018, under the Universalization of Women Helpline Scheme, it offers referrals to police, hospitals, legal aid, and One Stop Centres (OSC) while also informing women about government schemes. Funded under the Nirbhaya Fund, it ensures continuous support until a survivor's issue is resolved. Sakhi Dashboard updates and regular feedback collection help track cases effectively.
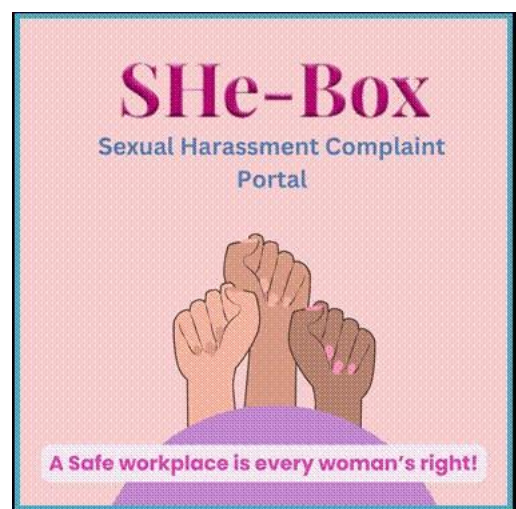

Emergency Response Support System (ERSS - 112): The Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) is an integrated emergency service launched by the Government of India with a single emergency number – 112 to handle all types of emergencies. Citizens can seek help through calls, SMS, email, SOS signals, or the ERSS web portal. The '112 India' mobile app enables users to send alert messages with location data and make emergency calls for quick assistance. Each State/UT capital has a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) to coordinate rescue efforts with police, fire, and health services. ERSS also provides real-time tracking of emergency vehicles to ensure timely support. This system unifies all existing emergency numbers, including 100 (Police), 101 (Fire), 108 (Ambulance), and 181 (Women & Child Care), under 112 for seamless response.

SHe-Box Portal: Launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Sexual Harassment Electronic Box (SHe-Box) is an initiative by the Government of India to provide a single-window platform for women to register workplace sexual harassment complaints. It is accessible to all women, regardless of their work sector (organized/unorganized, public/private).

Once a complaint is filed on, SHe-Box, it is automatically forwarded to the appropriate authority for necessary action. This platform ensures swift redressal and accountability for workplace harassment cases.

Women Help Desks (WHDs) in Police Stations: Supported by the Nirbhaya Fund, WHDs are established in police stations to make law enforcement more accessible and responsive to women's issues. To ensure that the Police Stations are more women friendly and approachable, as they would be the first and single point of contact for any woman walking into a police station, 14,658 Women Help Desks (WHDs) have been set up, of which 13,743 are headed by women police officers.

Other Important Initiatives for Women Safety

- 01 Safe City Project
- 02 Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences (ITSSO)
- 03 National Database on Sexual Offenders
- 04 Mission Shakti
- 05 Cyber Crime Reporting Portal
- 06 Meri Saheli Initiative
- 07 Mahila Police Volunteers
- 08 Special Women Police Cells

Safe City Project: Aims to create a safe, secure and empowering environment for women in public places, to enable them to pursue all opportunities without the threat of gender-based violence and/or harassment. It has been approved in 8 cities: Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, and Lucknow.

Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences (ITSSO): An online analytical tool launched to monitor and track timely completion of police investigations in sexual assault cases.

National Database of Sexual Offenders: Launched to identify repeat offenders and receive alerts on sex offenders, as also in the investigation.

Mission Shakti: A scheme in mission mode aimed at strengthening interventions for women safety, security and empowerment. It 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.

Cyber Crime Reporting Portal: This portal facilitates victims/ complainants to report cyber crime complaints online. It caters all types of cyber crime complaints including complaints pertaining to online Child Pornography (CP), Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) or sexually explicit content.

Meri Saheli Initiative: Indian Railways has launched "Meri Saheli" initiative for focused action on security of women across all zones with an objective to provide safety and security to lady passengers travelling by trains for their entire journey from starting station to destination station.

Mahila Police Volunteers: The Ministry of Women and Child Development, in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs, has introduced Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs) in States/UTs. MPVs serve as a bridge between the police and the community, assisting women in distress.

Special Women Police Cells: Special cells in police station exclusively for exclusive crimes against women.

Psychosocial Support & Awareness

Violence, especially Domestic Violence (DV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), can lead to depression, anxiety, PTSD, panic disorders, and suicide risk. In India, women can seek help through government initiatives for physical and sexual violence but mental and psychological help is equally important. There is a need for these services to be sensitive to the psychological needs of women facing violence and to be able to provide culturally informed and effective interventions that are context-specific.

Project Stree Manoraksha, launched by NIMHANS and supported by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, aims to strengthen trauma-informed mental health care in One Stop Centres (OSCs). It focuses on training counsellors and staff, including caseworkers, administrators, paralegal and paramedical staff, and security personnel. This initiative ensures that women facing gender-based violence receive empathetic, evidence-based mental health care and counselling when they seek help at OSCs.
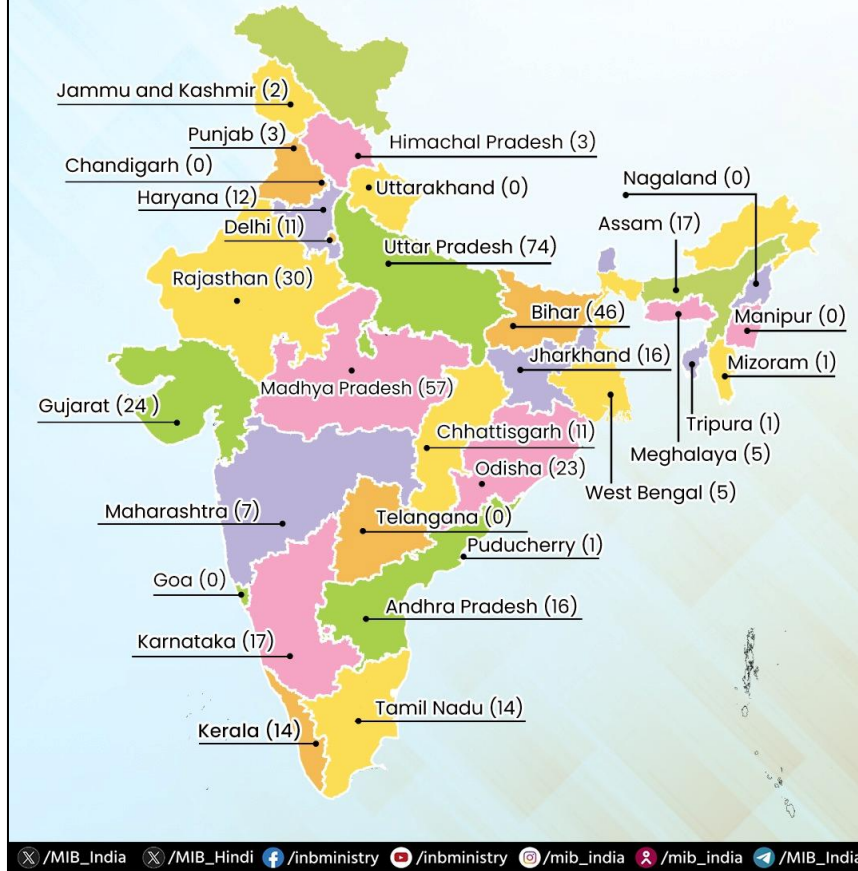
Legal Provisions to Safeguard Women Security

To address crimes against women, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) regularly compiles data, enabling a data-driven focused approach to tackling safety concerns. Additionally, the government has implemented a number of crucial laws to safeguard women's physical and mental security.

These laws include:

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023: It introduced stringent penalties for sexual offenses, including the death penalty for the rape of girls below 18 years of age. It also increased minimum sentences for rape and expanded the definition of sexual offenses to ensure more comprehensive protection for women and children. Since October 2019, the Central Government has been running a centrally sponsored scheme to set up Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs), including exclusive POCSO Courts. These courts aim to quickly handle pending cases related to rape and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.
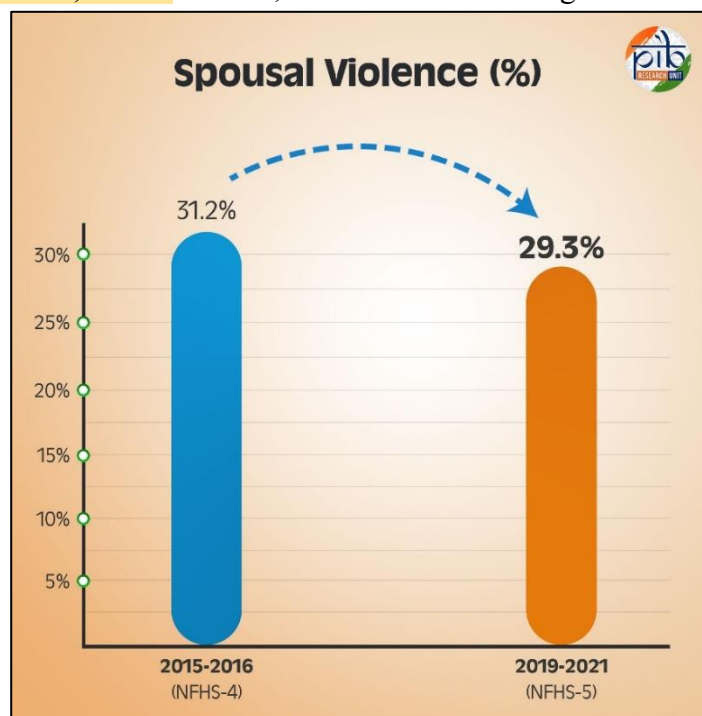
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India

State/UT-wise details of number of functional Fast Track Special Courts exclusive POCSO

Jammu and Kashmir (2)
Punjab (3)
Himachal Pradesh (3)
Chandigarh (0)
Uttarakhand (0)
Nagaland (0)
Haryana (12)
Assam (17)
Delhi (11)
Uttar Pradesh (74)
Manipur (0)
Rajasthan (30)
Bihar (46)
Jharkhand (16)
Mizoram (1)
Gujarat (24)
Madhya Pradesh (57)
Tripura (1)
Chhattisgarh (11)
Meghalaya (5)
Odisha (23)
West Bengal (5)
Maharashtra (7)
Telangana (0)
Puducherry (1)
Goa (0)
Andhra Pradesh (16)
Karnataka (17)
Tamil Nadu (14)
Kerala (14)

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Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005: In India, domestic violence is governed by the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA), 2005. Section 3 defines it as any act that harms a woman's physical or mental health or endangers her safety, including harassment for unlawful demands. The Act applies to women in shared households related by blood, marriage, adoption, or marriage-like relationships.

The NFHS-5 (2019-2021) report shows spousal violence among married women (18-49 years) declined from 31.2% (2015-16) to 29.3%.

Spousal Violence (%)

31.2%

29.3%

30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%

2015-2016 (NFHS-4)

2019-2021 (NFHS-5)

Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961: Dowry refers to any valuable items, such as cash, property, or jewellery, given by the bride's or groom's family as a condition of marriage. It is illegal under the Dowry Prohibition Act, which penalizes giving, taking, or demanding dowry. Harassment related to dowry is also punishable under laws like the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act. If a woman dies under unnatural circumstances within seven years of marriage due to dowry harassment, it is considered dowry death, with severe legal consequences. Authorities such as Dowry Prohibition Officers, police, and NGOs handle complaints, and awareness programs aim to discourage dowry practices.

Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956: This Act focuses on preventing human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of individuals for commercial purposes. It provides for the rescue and rehabilitation of victims and prescribes penalties for those involved in trafficking offenses, aiming to combat organized exploitation.

Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006: The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA) was enacted to prevent child marriages and punish those involved. Section 16 empowers State Governments to appoint Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs) to enforce the Act. CMPOs work to prevent child marriages, collect evidence for prosecution, counsel communities, raise awareness, and sensitize the public on its harmful effects. These officers' function under State Governments and UT Administrations, which are responsible for implementing the Act.

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013: The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 applies to all women, regardless of age, job type, or work sector. It mandates employers to create an Internal Committee (IC) in workplaces with over 10 employees, while the Appropriate Government sets up Local Committees (LCs) for smaller organizations or cases against employers. The Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) oversees implementation and awareness. To centralize complaint data, MWCD launched SHe-Box, a portal for reporting and tracking cases. The portal went live on October 19, 2024, receiving 9 complaints so far. Inquiries under the Act must be completed within 90 days.

Conclusion

The Government of India has taken significant steps to enhance women's safety and security through legal measures, financial allocations, and support services. While these efforts provide physical and legal protection, a greater focus on psychological well-being is necessary. Initiatives like Project Stree Manoraksha aim to fill this gap by offering trauma-informed mental health care. A multi-pronged

approach integrating law enforcement, helplines, rehabilitation, and mental health support is crucial for creating a safer and more empowering environment for women.

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