

CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

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'Police' and 'Public Order' are State subjects under the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The responsibility of maintaining law and order, protection of life and property of the citizens including women and children rest with the respective State Governments/ UT Administrations and the State Governments/ UT Administrations are competent to deal with such offences under the extant provisions of laws. However, Government of India gives utmost importance to preventing and controlling crimes against women and children and roll out necessary intervention through a host of measures which include amendments in criminal laws, developing Technological & infrastructural support, conducting training programmes for Police Personnel, financial assistance & issuing Advisories to States and UTs. These steps are given below:

- i. MHA has provided financial assistance to all States and UTs for setting up Women Help Desk (WHD) in each police station of States and UTs with the objective of making Police Stations more accessible and friendly to women.
- ii. Emergency Response Support System provides a pan-India, single internationally recognized number (112) based system for all emergencies, with computer aided dispatch of field resources to the location of distress.
- iii. Using technology to aid smart policing and safety management, Safe City Projects is under implementation in first Phase in 8 cities (Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow and Mumbai).
- iv. MHA has launched the “National Database on Sexual Offenders” (NDSO) to facilitate investigation and tracking of sexual offenders across the country by law enforcement agencies.
- v. MHA has launched an online analytic tool “Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences” for Police to facilitate them to monitor and track time-bound investigation in sexual assault cases in accordance with Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2018.
- vi. In order to improve investigation, MHA has taken steps to strengthen DNA analysis units in Central and State Forensic Science Laboratories. This includes setting up of State-of-the-Art DNA Analysis Unit in Central Forensic Science Laboratory, Chandigarh. Assistance has been provided to States and UTs to strengthen DNA forensic capacities in State Forensic Science Laboratories (FSLs) under the Nirbhaya fund.
- vii. MHA has notified guidelines for collection of forensic evidence in sexual assault cases and the standard composition in a sexual assault evidence collection kit.

- viii. To facilitate adequate capacity in manpower, training and skill building programs have been undertaken for Investigation Officers, Prosecution Officers and Medical Officers. So far, 35,377 Investigation Officers, Prosecutors and Medical Officers have been trained by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) and LNIN National Institute of Criminology and Forensic Sciences (now Delhi campus of the National Forensic Sciences University). Bureau of Police Research & Development has distributed 18,020 Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits to States/ UTs as orientation kit as part of training.
- ix. Three new Laws i.e., Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 (BNSS) and Bhartiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023 (BSA) have been implemented with effective from 1.7.2024. Major features of these laws relating to prevention, investigation and prosecution in the matter of crime against women and children are as follows:
- a. Offences against woman and child have been given precedence over all other offences. Offences against woman and child have been consolidated under Chapter-V of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, which is the first substantive chapter in BNS.
 - b. A new offence for having sexual intercourse on false promise of marriage, employment, promotion or by concealing identity, etc. has also been incorporated in BNS.
 - c. In BNS, the age differential for minor victims of gangrape has been done away with. Earlier different punishments were prescribed for gangrape on a girl below the age of 16 years and 12 years. This provision has been modified and now gangrape on a woman below the age of eighteen years is punishable with imprisonment of life or death.
 - d. In order to provide more protection to the victim and enforce transparency in investigation related to an offence of rape, the statement of the victim shall be recorded through audio video means by police.
 - e. For certain offences against women, statement of the victim is to be recorded, as far as practicable, by a woman Magistrate and in her absence a male Magistrate in the presence of a woman to ensure sensitivity and fairness, creating a supportive environment for victims.
 - f. Medical practitioners are mandated to send the medical report of a victim of rape to the investigating officer within 7 days.
 - g. A new offence for hiring, employing or engaging a child to commit an offence has been incorporated. Besides this, maximum punishment for buying child for purposes of prostitution, etc. has been increased to fourteen years, which was earlier only 10 years.
 - h. Section 143 of BNS imposes rigorous imprisonment of not less than 10 years, extendable to life imprisonment, and fine for trafficking a child (defined as anyone below 18 years) for the purpose of exploitation. "Beggary" has been introduced as a form of exploitation for trafficking and is punishable under section 143 of BNS, 2023. Further, Section 144(1) penalises sexual exploitation of the trafficked children with rigorous imprisonment of not less than 5 years, but which may extend to ten years and shall also be liable to fine.

The new laws provide for free first-aid or medical treatment to victims of crimes against women and children at all hospitals. This provision ensures immediate access to essential medical care, prioritizing the well-being and recovery of victims during challenging times.

MHA under Central Victim Compensation Fund (CVCF) released total Rs. 200 Crore in financial year 2016-17, as a onetime financial assistance to encourage States/UTs to effectively implement the Victim Compensation Schemes (VCS) notified by States/UTs under the provisions of section 357A of CrPC (396 of BNSS) and continue financial support to victims of various crimes especially sexual offences including rape, acid attacks, crime against children, human trafficking etc.

A Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the establishment of Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs), including exclusive POCSO (ePOCSO) Courts is being implemented by Department of Justice since 2019. These courts are dedicated to the time-bound trial and disposal of pending cases related to rape and crimes under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. As per the information received from the High Courts, as of 30.09.2025, 773 FTSCs including 400 exclusive POCSO (e-POCSO) Courts are functional in 29 States/UTs, which have disposed of 3,50,685 cases since the inception of the Scheme.

For support to women and children, victim of crime, Ministry of Women & Child Development has been implementing One Stop Centre (OSC) Scheme across the country. The objectives of the One Stop Centre Scheme are to provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces under one roof and facilitate immediate, emergency and non-emergency access to a range of services including police, medical, legal aid and counselling, psychological support to fight against any forms of violence against women. 864 OSCs are operational across the country and over 12.67 lakh women have been assisted upto 30th September, 2025.

The Universalisation of Women Helpline (WHL) Scheme is being implemented since 1st April, 2015 with the aim to provide an immediate and 24 hour 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. Women helpline is operational in 35 States/ UTs.

For providing outreach services to missing and needy children, the Ministry of Women and Child Development operates Child Helpline No. 1098, which is operational 24/7. Apart from this, Railway Child lines at major railway platforms are also being operated to provide assistance to any needy child.

Further, the Ministry of Women and Child Development also administers scheme “Samarthya” under Mission Shakti in which the component of Shakti Sadan is for relief and rehabilitation of women in difficult circumstances.

The Government, through institutions like the National Commission for Women (NCW) and its counterparts in States has been spreading awareness through seminars, workshops, audio-visual, print and electronic media etc. to sensitize the people about the safety and security of women and also about various provisions of the legislation and policies etc. In respect of the registered complaints, NCW takes up the matter with stakeholders especially the Police Authorities to ensure that the complaints are redressed and brought to logical conclusion.

The Ministry of Women & Child Development has launched the 'Mission Shakti Portal' with all functional features on January 22, 2025. This portal aims to enhance accessibility of various government services for women, establish quality mechanisms for rescue, protection, and rehabilitation, and build the capacity of functionaries and duty holders under various schemes and legislations.

In addition, Ministry of Women and Child Development and Ministry of Home Affairs have issued advisories to States/ UTs from time to time on various issues pertaining to safety and security of women and children.

This was stated by the Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs Shri Bandi Sanjay Kumar in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha.

RK/RR/PR/PS

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