

From Margins to Mainstream

How SMILE Is Transforming Lives Across India

Posted On: 20 APR 2026 10:53AM by PIB Delhi

Key Takeaways

- For 2021-2026, ₹390 crore was allotted by the government for the SMILE scheme.
- 31,055 individuals identified and 9,935 rehabilitated under the beggary sub-scheme as on March 2026, reflecting on-ground implementation at scale.
- 21 Garima Grehs are currently operational across 17 states, with 3 more sanctioned in August 2025.
- ₹5 lakh health coverage per year for every transgender person under Ayushman Bharat TG Plus — covering gender-affirming care, hormone therapy, and sex reassignment surgery at empanelled hospitals.

What is SMILE? A Bridge to Belonging

India is a country of a billion stories — and a government committed to ensuring that every one of them is heard. The most important are the stories of communities that have long remained at the margins of opportunity. Two groups prominent among them are transgender persons, navigating a world not always designed with their needs in mind; and individuals engaged in begging, whose circumstances often reflect a lack of support and opportunity.



These communities are defined by the immense potential that can be unlocked through the right support and intervention.

India already has a strong ecosystem of welfare programmes — for health, housing, education, and livelihoods. What was missing was a dedicated bridge - one that could connect marginalised communities to these existing opportunities while addressing the barriers they face, such as lack of documentation, limited awareness, and restricted access.

SMILE — Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise scheme —serves as that bridge. Launched on 12th February 2022 by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment[1], it is India's first unified national framework designed to support these communities at every stage: from identification and rescue, through access to healthcare and education, to counselling, skill development and long-term economic independence.

The Investment Behind the Intent

The SMILE scheme has a total outlay of ₹365 crore for the period 2021–22 to 2025–26, with ₹265 crore allocated for transgender welfare and ₹100 crore for beggary rehabilitation[2]. Allocations rise progressively each year, reflecting the government's commitment to scaling up both sub-schemes.

Year	Transgender Welfare (₹ Cr)	Beggary Rehabilitation (₹ Cr)	Total (₹ Cr)
2021–22	25	10	35.00
2022–23	46.31	15	61.31
2023–24	52.91	30	82.91
2024–25	63.90	33	96.90
2025–26	76.88	37	113.88
TOTAL	265	125	390

Standing With India's Transgender Community



India has made significant strides in addressing the historical marginalisation of the transgender community through comprehensive legal protections, welfare schemes, and digital accessibility. This shift reflects growing awareness and efforts to promote inclusivity and equality in Indian society.

Recognising that this community deserves protection and support from the state, the Government of India enacted the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, which prohibits discrimination and guarantees access to education, employment, healthcare, and other public services. The SMILE sub-scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of Transgender Persons, is a key government initiative operationalised to align with the Act[3].

Key Components:[4]

Scholarships for Transgender Students

The scheme offers financial assistance to transgender students from Class IX through post-graduation (including secondary, higher secondary, undergraduate, postgraduate, and recognized technical/vocational courses under UGC, AICTE, or NCVT).

Eligibility requires a valid Transgender Certificate from the National Portal, full-time enrollment in a recognized institution (including approved distance/correspondence programs), and no receipt of other Central/State scholarships. It covers one academic year per class/level only (no repeated years).

Skill Development and Livelihood

PM-DAKSH (Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi Yojana) is a national skill development scheme providing vocational training and livelihood support to marginalized communities, including SCs, OBCs, EBCs, Safai Karamcharis, and transgender persons, to boost employability and income.

Training aligns with industry needs via National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Sector Skill Councils, with entrepreneurship programs delivered by IIE and NIESBUD. It integrates with the PM-DAKSH IT platform and National Portal for Transgender Persons for transparent monitoring. On a pilot basis, 18 Entrepreneurship Development Programmes have been launched nationwide to train 1,800 transgender persons in business planning, market assessment, regulatory compliance, financial access, and linkages to incubation centers/banks.

Composite Medical Health

A comprehensive health package is provided in convergence with PM-JAY (Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana / Ayushman Bharat), covering general healthcare as well as gender-reaffirmation procedures through empanelled hospitals.

Ayushman Bharat TG Plus: Healthcare Without Barriers

Under the SMILE framework, a dedicated health insurance scheme for transgender persons—via an MoU between the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the National Health Authority—provides ₹5 lakh annual cashless coverage per beneficiary at any empanelled public or private hospital nationwide.

It covers transition-related care (hormone therapy, Sex Reassignment Surgery, post-operative care, psychological counselling for gender dysphoria) along with general treatment. Eligibility requires a Transgender Certificate from the National Portal, after which beneficiaries receive an Ayushman Transgender Health Card. Empanelled hospitals must have dedicated medical cells, unisex restrooms,

and strict non-discrimination policies.

Garima Greh (Shelter Homes)

Piloted in 2021, Garima Greh shelter homes provide safe, dignified accommodation to transgender persons who face homelessness as a result of family rejection or social stigma. Each home offers food, medical care, recreational facilities, and on-site skill-building support, and is run by Community Based Organisations (CBOs) with financial assistance from the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (DoSJE).

Transgender Protection Cells

Each State must establish a dedicated Transgender Protection Cell to monitor offences against transgender persons and ensure prompt registration, investigation, and prosecution of such cases. These cells act as the key enforcement mechanism for the rights under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, translating legal provisions into effective on-ground redressal.

National Portal and Helpline

The National Portal for Transgender Persons (transgender.dosje.gov.in) serves as the single digital gateway for issuing Transgender Certificates and Identity Cards, which are essential for accessing the SMILE scheme and other government entitlements.

All SMILE-funded Garima Grehs have been geotagged for monitoring and accountability[5].



Legislative and Policy Backbone: Other key central government interventions for transgender persons in India⁶:

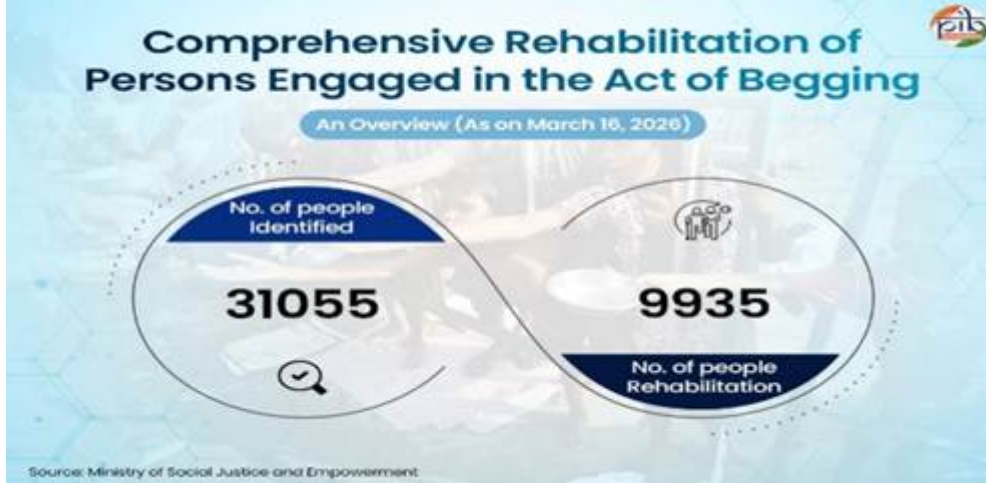
- Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019: The foundational legislation that legally recognises transgender identity, prohibits discrimination across education, employment, healthcare and public services, and mandates government welfare obligations — with violations punishable by up to 2 years imprisonment.
- Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020: Operationalises the Act by mandating Transgender Protection Cells (set up in 20 States/UTs) and Transgender Welfare Boards (set up in 25 States/UTs) to monitor offences, protect rights, and facilitate access to schemes.
- National Council for Transgender Persons: A statutory body constituted that advises the Central Government on policies and legislation, monitors welfare scheme implementation, coordinates across departments, and redresses grievances of transgender persons.
- PM-DAKSH: National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC) skill development programme extended to transgender persons, offering vocational training with a monthly stipend of ₹1,000 for eligible trainees with 80%+ attendance.

Legislative and Policy Backbone: Other key central government interventions for transgender persons in India[6]:

- Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019: The foundational legislation that legally recognises transgender identity, prohibits discrimination across education, employment, healthcare and public services, and mandates government welfare obligations — with violations punishable by up to 2 years imprisonment.
- Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020: Operationalises the Act by mandating Transgender Protection Cells (set up in 20 States/UTs) and Transgender Welfare Boards (set up in 25 States/UTs) to monitor offences, protect rights, and facilitate access to schemes.
- National Council for Transgender Persons: A statutory body constituted that advises the Central Government on policies and legislation, monitors welfare scheme implementation, coordinates across departments, and redresses grievances of transgender persons.
- PM-DAKSH: National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC) skill development programme extended to transgender persons, offering vocational training with a monthly stipend of ₹1,000 for eligible trainees with 80%+ attendance.

Beyond Begging: The Road to Rehabilitation

The SMILE sub-scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of Persons Engaged in the Act of Begging, is aimed at achieving the Government's objective of Bhiksha Vritti Mukta Bharat (Begging-Free India) through comprehensive rehabilitation measures.



How Does the Scheme Work?

The scheme is run at multiple levels — Implementing Authorities (IAs) namely District Administration/ Urban Local Bodies/ Municipal Corporations and other agencies working in the field of beggary prevention. This ensures that help reaches people where they are, in a way that suits local needs.

What Does the Scheme Do?

- **Survey & Identification:** First, local teams go out and identify people engaged in begging in their area.
- **Mobilisation & Counselling:** Then, mobilisation of the identified persons engaged in begging with spot counselling and training to people who are doing the mobilisation. Crucial support comes from police, volunteers, other agencies.
- **Shelter & Care:** People are rescued and brought to shelter homes, where they receive food, safety, and basic care.
- **Skill Development:** They are then offered skill training — in carpentry, tailoring, cooking, gardening, security work, sanitation, and even e-rickshaw driving — so they can earn a living. Self-Help Groups are formed, and people are connected to banks so they can access financial support and start their own small work.
- **Convergence & Rehabilitation:** For those who need more specialised care — such as the elderly or those recovering from addiction — the scheme connects them to Old Age Homes, De-addiction Centres, and other government programmes. Even after rehabilitation, the scheme follows up to make sure people are doing well and do not slip back. Provisions are also there for individual counselling, group therapy, re-educative sessions, and family classes.

Rehabilitation of Beggars

A Glance At State/UTs

(As on March 2026)



S. No.	States/UTs	Survey/ Identification Total	Rescue and Rehabilitation Total	Wage Employment	Self-Employment
1	Andhra Pradesh	2569	653	400	50
2	Arunachal Pradesh	140	99	80	0
3	Assam	1840	605	116	263
4	Bihar	476	375	198	62
5	Chandigarh (UT)	499	352	198	20
6	Delhi NCT	3318	372	186	50
7	Gujarat	1141	453	195	75
8	Himachal Pradesh	27	1	1	0
9	J & K	1143	510	166	8
10	Karnataka	875	88	40	26
11	Kerala	674	178	93	20
12	Madhya Pradesh	1772	1291	357	208
13	Maharashtra	1601	1025	244	80
14	Manipur	64	0	0	0
15	Mizoram	16	0	0	0
16	Nagaland	107	22	22	0
17	Odisha	784	288	78	100
18	Puducherry	485	178	8	73
19	Punjab	128	6	6	0
20	Rajasthan	79	0	0	0
21	Tamil Nadu	9145	1590	357	298
22	Telangana	580	53	53	0
23	Uttar Pradesh	3592	1716	1223	223
Total		31055	9855	4021	1556

Source : Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment

The SMILE Beggary sub-scheme is currently operational in 181 selected cities across the country[7].Details of rehabilitation centres and shelter homes are collected, registered and monitored through the SMILE-Beggary National Portal.

Stories of Rescue and Rehabilitation

The SMILE scheme measures its progress in the number of cities covered, individuals identified, and persons rehabilitated. But behind every number is a journey — from the streets to self-sufficiency, from despair to dignity. Jyoti and Sunil are two such journeys.

SUNIL MAHAVAR,



- lost his vegetable trading business in **Indore** to severe substance addiction, which began at a **wedding in 2012**.
- On **12 March 2024**, **PRAWES**, an implementing organisation under the **SMILE scheme**, found him on a pavement in **Chimanbagh, Indore** — malnourished, addicted, and carrying an undiagnosed fractured shoulder.
- Recovery combined Ayurvedic de-addiction, **20 counselling** sessions, and daily yoga, meditation, art, music, and sport.
- After an **18-day** sewing machine operator training at the rehabilitation centre, he was hired by **Trends Apparel Pvt. Ltd.**
- Sunil left with a **Samagra ID**, a bank account, and a steady income — rebuilt from a footpath up.

Source: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

THIMMAMMA



Thimmamma, a domestic worker from Mysore, lost her husband when her daughter was just 12 years old. Left as the sole provider, she faced considerable financial challenges, including arranging her daughter's marriage independently.

Subsequently, when her daughter returned home due to a misunderstanding with her son-in-law, the situation placed immense emotional strain on Thimmamma.

This distress manifested in unusual behavior, including wandering the streets at night despite her daughter's repeated efforts to keep her indoors.

On 23rd September 2024, Thimmamma was found wandering and begging in the Kumbarakoppalu area by the police, who brought her to Metagahalli Police Station and later admitted her to the Deepashri Rehabilitation Centre.

At the time of admission, she was experiencing lower back and leg pain and required the assistance of a walker. The centre promptly provided her with necessary medical care and counselling support.

During her stay, the staff identified her family connections and successfully contacted her daughter, Kaveramma. Following this, her daughter visited the centre and took Thimmamma back home.

The Deepashri Rehabilitation Centre formally facilitated her reunion with her family and duly informed the local police authorities of the same.

Source: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

The Road Ahead

SMILE represents a decisive shift in how India approaches the welfare of its most marginalised citizens — not through isolated schemes targeting single problems, but through a converged architecture that addresses identity, health, education, livelihood, and shelter in one coherent framework. The logic is deliberate: because exclusion is multi-dimensional, the response must be too.

What distinguishes SMILE from earlier welfare efforts is its insistence on structural change. Each component is designed not merely to provide relief, but to build the conditions under which relief is no longer necessary. The goal, ultimately, is not dependency on a scheme but full participation in society.

That ambition is reflected in the scheme's steadily expanding budget, its growing network of implementation partners, and the increasing number of lives it is reaching year on year. SMILE is, in the truest sense of its name, a programme built on the belief that dignity is not a privilege to be granted selectively — it is a condition that belongs to every person, without exception.

References:

Press Information Bureau:

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2226198®=3&lang=1>

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?NoteId=156087&ModuleId=3®=3&lang=2>

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?NoteId=154411&ModuleId=3®=3&lang=1>

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1797968®=3&lang=2>

<https://www.pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1806161®=3&lang=2>

<https://www.pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1854141®=3&lang=2>

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment:

https://sansad.in/getFile/annex/270/AU1412_hQNZgG.pdf?source=pqars

<https://grants-msje.gov.in/display-smile-guidelines>

[https://sansad.in/getFile/loksabhaquestions/annex/185/AU4151_fq0zUf.pdf?source=pqals#:~:text=\(b\):%20At%20present%2C%2018,supported%20by%20DOSJE%20is%20429.](https://sansad.in/getFile/loksabhaquestions/annex/185/AU4151_fq0zUf.pdf?source=pqals#:~:text=(b):%20At%20present%2C%2018,supported%20by%20DOSJE%20is%20429.)

<https://transgender.dosje.gov.in/Applicant/Registration/DisplayForm4>

https://transgender.dosje.gov.in/docs/Other%20Welfare%20Measures_SMILE%20Guidelines.pdf

PRS India:

<https://prsindia.org/billtrack/the-transgender-persons-protection-of-rights-bill-2019>

See In PDF

PIB Research

(Release ID: 2253621) Visitor Counter : 747

Read this release in: Bengali , Bengali-TR , Urdu , हिन्दी , Gujarati