

# Steps taken to ensure equal access to education for women

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The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 focuses on 'Equitable and Inclusive Education' which reverberates the idea that no child should be left behind in terms of educational opportunity because of their background and socio-cultural identities. It has taken into account the concerns of the Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) which includes female individuals. In addition, NEP prescribes to approach gender as a cross-cutting priority to achieve gender equality in education with the partnership of states and local community organizations. Further, NEP aims at bridging the social category gaps in access, participation, and learning outcomes, including providing greater access to women.

Under Samagra Shiksha, an integrated scheme for school education, various interventions have been targeted for providing quality education to girls like free uniform and text-books to girls up to class VIII, appointment of additional teachers including women teacher, stipend to CWSN girls from class I to class XII, separate toilets for girls, teachers sensitization programmes to promote girls participation, gender-sensitive teaching-learning materials including text books etc. In addition, to reduce gender gaps at all levels of school education, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas, which are residential schools from class VI to XII for girls belonging to disadvantaged groups such as SC, ST, OBC, Minority and Below Poverty Line (BPL), are sanctioned in Educationally Backward Blocks.

To promote higher education among the students across the nation including women, Ministry of Education (MoE) has taken various measures, such as fee reductions, establishment of more institutes, scholarships, priority access to national level scholarships to aid students with poor financial backgrounds to pursue their education. Further, MoE offers various scholarship schemes for providing financial assistance to support women's higher education. The details of these scholarship schemes may be accessed at [https://www.education.gov.in/parl\\_ques](https://www.education.gov.in/parl_ques).

With a view to improve female enrolment in the Undergraduate Programmes in Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and National Institutes of Technology (NITs), supernumerary seats were created which increased the female enrolment from less than 10% to more than 20%.

Apart from this, University Grants Commission (UGC) is implementing the scheme of "Development of Women's Studies in Indian Universities and Colleges". This scheme provides funds for setting up Women Studies Centers (WSCs) in universities and colleges, focusing on teaching, research, curriculum development, training and outreach activities. The objectives of the scheme are to provide financial support in advancing Women's Studies through teaching, research and practical work.

Further, NEP recommends integrating skill education programmes into mainstream education in all education institutions in a phased manner. Under the Skill Education component of 'Samagra Shiksha', financial assistance is provided to States/UTs for giving exposure to Skill Education to students of Grades VI to VIII and introduction of Skill courses from Grades IX to XII, which are aligned with National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF). Employability Skill module has been included in the curriculum of Job Rolls which includes Communication Skills, Self-Management Skills, Information and Communication Technology Skills, Entrepreneurship Skills, and Green Skills.

IIT-Madras has undertaken "Vidya Shakti" scheme which aims at enhancing conceptual and foundational learning skills of children from rural areas to enhance enrolment (including women) in STEM branches in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs).

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) offers fellowships to promote research in basic and applied sciences among women through programs under Women in Science and Engineering-Knowledge Involvement & Research Advancement through Nurturing (WISE-KIRAN) and Science and Engineering Research Board- Promoting Opportunities for Women in Exploratory Research (SERB-POWER) Fellowship scheme to identify and reward outstanding women researchers and innovators working in various Science & Technology program in Indian academic institutions and R&D laboratories.

The Department of Biotechnology runs a special program 'The Biotechnology Career Advancement and Re-orientation Programme (BioCARE)' with a vision to promote and support women in science.

Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL), Ministry of Education has developed Guidelines on School Safety and Security of children studying in Government, Government-aided and Private Schools. These safety guidelines envisage constitution of anti-bullying committees, parent teacher associations, school management committees, safety walk and complaint boxes etc., as preventive measures for ensuring safety and security of children in schools. Further, these guidelines have provisions to conduct awareness and sensitization program on various provisions including POCSO Act for girls in schools, preparation and dissemination of e-modules on sexual abuse and violence, parenting, nutrition, safety of girl child, etc., and integration of prevention of violence against young children in routine health delivery.

The information was given by the Minister of State for Education, Shri Jayant Chaudhary in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha today.

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**MV/AK**

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