

PARLIAMENTARY READINESS REVIEW

Identifying Strategic Areas to Advance Women's
Political Leadership



A study undertaken by Centre for Gender and Politics to identify strategic areas to advance women's political leadership in India

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

About the Review

This section explains objectives, scope and audiences, situating the review within the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam Act context and its implementation triggers. It summarises rationale, methods and limitations, outlines how findings were generated, and states how the review aims to inform parliamentarians, political parties, civil society and future research outputs.

02

Reccomendations

This section synthesises infrastructural, procedural and cultural reforms into an integrated roadmap: gender-sensitive facilities and accessibility standards; clear, gender-neutral procedures and predictable calendars; mandatory sensitisation, mentorship and leadership pathways; strengthened POSH and intersectional for implementation.

03

Key Findings

Key findings synthesise the review's evidence across infrastructure, procedure and culture, identifying critical gaps such as limited menstrual provisions, inaccessible facilities, gendered procedural language, unequal committee representation, low PoSH uptake, and exclusionary informal networks. This summary clearly links findings to readiness priorities and highlights where targeted interventions can drive change.

04

Discussion

The discussion analyses intersectionality, implementation risks and trade-offs, exploring how caste, class, disability and age shape women MPs' needs. It addresses potential resistance, budgetary and logistical constraints, and risks of tokenism, while outlining concrete monitoring frameworks required to achieve sustained inclusion and measurable progress.

05

Appendix

The appendix contains anonymized interview notes, RTI replies on infrastructure and PoSH, stakeholder questionnaires with raw anonymized responses, and methodological supplements.



ABOUT THE REVIEW

"This review is the first of its kind to integrate critical elements of the Lok Sabha's functioning within a single framework...the findings will be foundational for partnerships to drive the work on making India's parliament gender-inclusive and inform future research in this field."

The Indian Parliament plays two crucial roles: it is a reflection of Indian society, and on the other hand, it is one of the most influential bodies that shapes society. Over the last few elections, India has witnessed an increasing number of women campaigning and winning elections, a positive trend ready for even greater acceleration thanks to the landmark Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam Act. Given this crucial moment of growing women's presence, we were motivated at CGAP to review Parliament's gender inclusive practices and processes. We aim to identify opportunities to create a welcoming environment for women MPs and, by achieving greater gender equality within this powerful institution, to ultimately foster a more equitable society across India.

This review is the first of its kind to integrate critical elements of the Lok Sabha's functioning within a single framework. We anticipate that the findings will be foundational for partnerships to drive the work on making India's parliament gender-inclusive and inform future research in this field.

About the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam Act

The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam Act promises to reserve one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and all state assemblies for women, including proportional representation for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities. It specifies that this change will come into effect after a census is conducted and a subsequent delimitation of electoral constituencies is undertaken based on the latest population numbers. The next census is scheduled for March 1, 2027, and will be followed by delimitation. Regardless of the exact implementation date, the potential for more gender-responsive legislation and policymaking once women's representation significantly increases is immense. Concurrently, there is a critical necessity to ensure the full and effective participation of both incoming and existing women Members of Parliament (MPs) in their legislative duties.

About the review and recommendations

At CGAP, we believe that making Parliament a truly supportive and inclusive workplace for women MPs and staff will be a crucial determinant of their overall effectiveness as parliamentarians and will directly contribute to their ability to champion more gender-responsive laws and policies. We are therefore recommending key opportunities in Parliament's infrastructure, procedures, and culture to support this vital readiness.

- **Procedural Readiness:** Attendance and quorum rules, session timings that respect caregiving duties, balanced women's representation on committees, and formal integration of gender-sensitive priorities into the legislative agenda.
- **Infrastructural Readiness:** Inclusive and accessible washrooms, suitable childcare facilities, private rest areas, and the overall accessibility and safety of the parliamentary complex through a gender-inclusive lens
- **Cultural Readiness:** Mandatory gender-sensitisation training, robust mentorship and leadership pathways for women MPs, and the effectiveness of Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act mechanisms in fostering a respectful work environment.

Our team, including multidisciplinary researchers and policy professionals, initiated this pioneering effort through a targeted literature review, three information requests to the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs under the "Right to Information Act," and interviews with 11 experts, including a sitting Member of Parliament, policy professionals, and current and former parliamentary staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. INFRASTRUCTURE

In March 2025, the Supreme Court affirmed that breastfeeding is integral to a child's right to life and a mother's right to nurse in public and the workplace. The ruling brought to light the relationship between physical and social infrastructure and legislative inclusivity. In the context of the legislation on women's reservation, India's new Parliament Complex presents an opportunity to embed gender-sensitive design—but critical questions remain around access for women MPs (including those with special needs such as childcare, creches, persons with disabilities, etc.).

Through interviews, RTIs, and studying the literature available, we assessed key facilities, washrooms, sanitary-pad dispensers, breastfeeding rooms, creches, and gauges overall accessibility. With a workplace spread across 64500 square meters, like the Parliament, the design and placement of facilities critically shape women's participation in the Parliament. In this context, explained below three recommendations are to enhance inclusivity in the parliamentary precinct.

1. Increase the number of menstrual hygiene provisions: With an RTI¹, we found that only 3 menstrual hygiene provisions were available out of 63 toilets available for women. Responses from staff members and MPs we interviewed indicated that there were varied levels of information across women in the parliaments. Hence, awareness of menstrual hygiene provision is also an important area to work on.

Global Precedents:

- UK Parliament: On-site nursery for kids and dedicated breastfeeding spaces for MPs and staff²
- Sweden: Legal mandate under the Maternity Benefit Act requiring childcare facilities in all state buildings, along with universal childcare for kids.



INFRASTRUCTURE (Parliament Staff):

"Sanitary-pad dispensers and designated resting rooms for pregnant staff were built into the new complex; ambience and ergonomics drive productivity."

RECOMMENDATIONS

INFRASTRUCTURE (Woman Member of Parliament)

“There is a problem with the new design of the parliament in the sense that the women's toilet is directly facing the men's toilet, which is a bit inconvenient because it's both going in at the same time. So I think a lot of women who come from traditional backgrounds, et cetera, find that difficult. And so the design of the toilets in the new parliament building, I would say, is problematic.”



2. Undertaking a review of facilities for women at work

From another RTI response³, we found that it is highly likely that the Parliament does not have any official policies or guidelines regarding gender-sensitive infrastructure within the premises, and hence, we would recommend building such a framework to ensure facilities are available, functioning, and easily accessible to MPs during sessions and committee meetings.

3. Digital Infrastructure for Gender Inclusivity

We asked the Secretariat, ‘How does the Indian Parliament monitor and report on gender inclusivity in its processes, decisions, and legislative outcomes?, What role do data and reporting play in ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into Parliamentary practices?’ And, there was no response, as this was quoted to be outside the scope of Section 2(f) of the RTI Act, 2005. While it is possible that this already exists, given our previous work, we recommend an index for monitoring gender equality in the parliament.⁴

RECOMMENDATIONS

B. CULTURE

In this section, we reviewed norms, language, partnerships and training to answer how can the Parliament consciously create a culture that empowers women while also building allyship among all MPs to support them?

To summarise the recommendations, we identified both improving institutional processes to remove structural biases and investing in capacity-building for women MPs as well as other colleagues to foster a more inclusive, conducive environment.

1. Embed allyship training for male MPs within the gender and diversity sensitisation trainings conducted by the Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies (PRIDE)

- Context: We learned that discussions on gender within the Parliament might be getting wrongly equated with “special treatment” for women. An academic said, “They [MPs and Parliamentary Staff] see the word gender and they think it involves discrimination against men.” Moreover, numerous studies highlight that parliaments have historically functioned as ‘gendered organizations’⁵, and ‘male-dominated institutional settings permeated by a culture of masculinity’⁶, stemming from a time when politics was an ‘all-male business’ (Erikson and Josefsson, 2022).

2. Building on successful initiatives like Panchayat se Parliament 2.0⁷, the National Commission for Women (NCW), in collaboration with the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Secretariats to **expand comprehensive capacity-building programs** for all women entering or aspiring to higher political office.

- Formally institute and rigorously enforce a zero-tolerance policy against all forms of sexist, misogynistic, and derogatory language by Members of Parliament and parliamentary staff.
- During an interview, a LAMP fellow commented, “Deep-rooted gender biases and stereotypes mean women are easier to target). Politics is “dirty,” so personal shaming sticks more for women.”

3. Establish **formal cross-party mentorship networks** by pairing newly elected women MPs with experienced women leaders to foster solidarity in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Secretariats.

- While valuable initiatives exist, such as political parties offering training for their new MPs and the Pratham Ti initiative (which focuses on capacity building for aspiring women leaders and provides internships), these typically address general parliamentary procedures or party-specific political preparation. The need for sustained cross-party solidarity and direct, peer-to-peer mentorship, specifically among elected women MPs to navigate the unique challenges of their roles, remains a gap to be addressed.

4. Parliamentary Leadership (including the Speaker, Chairperson, and party leaders) must proactively create and mandate opportunities for women Private Secretaries, advisors, and legislative aides to undertake high-visibility assignments.

RECOMMENDATIONS



CULTURE (LAMP Fellow)

“When a male MP or PA is around, men feel free to crack sexist jokes, discuss which woman MP is having an affair, or otherwise speak without filter. That camaraderie vanishes if a woman MP or PA enters—men assume women are ‘more sensitive’ and might report such remarks. Because of this, women MPs often end up hiring male PAs. Male PAs’ body language reassures ministers that politics can be conducted ‘properly,’ reinforcing the idea that women can’t handle political spaces without a male intermediary.”

4. Beyond the parliament, we also recommend all political parties to voluntarily adopt and ensure the implementation of internal quotas for women's membership and candidate nomination for parliamentary elections.

- In our interviews, a CSO leader revealed, based on their observations, TMC had given more tickets to women, which had led to more women MPs from TMC. When comparing the parliamentary activity of women MPs, those from the Trinamool Congress (TMC) received more speaking time than women MPs from other parties, particularly those with a lower representation of women.
- Rwanda's adoption of quotas led to women holding 48.8% of parliamentary seats in 2003, which grew to 63.8% in later years.⁸

5. Ensure clarity and accessibility of sexual harassment redressal mechanisms for all women in parliament.

- Many women in politics face threats, hate speech, and even physical violence. Globally, over 80% of women parliamentarians report psychological violence, and nearly half face death or rape threats.⁹
- While an Internal Complaints Committee has been constituted in the Lok Sabha Secretariat, an RTI revealed that only seven complaints have been received in the last five years.

6. Establish a dedicated, cross-party task force mandated to collect and analyse data on MPs' participation, speaking time, and access to leadership opportunities to promote transparency and inform inclusive reforms.

- Evidence from 159 developing countries shows that countries with higher proportions of women in parliament are more likely to enact laws addressing crucial social issues like domestic violence, sexual harassment, and gender equality in parental authority.¹⁰ This demonstrates how descriptive representation (the presence of more women in parliament) can directly influence substantive representation by bringing a broader range of societal concerns, including those that disproportionately affect women, onto the legislative agenda. An impact assessment can cultivate a culture that explicitly values and rewards all parliamentarians' tangible legislative contributions that address critical societal needs. By transparently measuring the real-world outcomes of their work, such metrics would encourage all MPs, including women, to leverage their positions to champion a diverse array of issues that result in concrete societal benefit, without confining their roles to specific 'women's issues' but recognising their unique contributions to a more responsive parliament.

RECOMMENDATIONS

C. PROCEDURES

For this section, we reviewed procedures at sansad.in¹¹ and reports published by IPU, EIGE, CEDAW¹²¹³ and arrived at 6 recommendations that we believe would be a positive step towards promoting women's leadership in politics.

1. Utilise the Indian Parliamentary Group to promote women political leaders at international and global forums.

Indian Parliamentary Group is an autonomous body formed in the year 1949, and acts as a link between the Parliament of India and the various Parliaments of the world by exchange of delegations, goodwill missions, correspondence, documents, etc. with foreign Parliaments.¹⁴

2. Include procedure for information, training, and complaints against workplace violence and aggression in Parliamentary procedure and extend to Political Parties for political leaders to be able to have a fair process to prevent or fight against Sexual Harassment in the workplace.

Parliamentarians, once elected or nominated, have a working space i.e., Sansad, colleagues, and working hours, usually sporadic in nature. Similarly, political parties also have politicians and party members in a working environment. While the applicability of POSH is still debated and deliberated upon, procedures for complaints, training, and knowledge sharing should be created for a healthy work environment for everyone.

3. Grounds of disqualification to include offenses such as sexual offenses against an adult or a minor

The inclusion of the Dowry conviction under the disqualification grounds of Lok Sabha membership sends a powerful message to the Indian society, and we would urge the authorities to also consider sexual offenses such as rape and sexual harassment to be included in the list.

4. Publish a consistent annual sitting calendar, giving MPs a minimum of 30 days' notice before a session.

- A parliamentary calendar will give MPs adequate time to prepare for the sessions, thus strengthening the democratic process. It will also allow women MPs with personal caring responsibilities to make appropriate arrangements, allowing them to participate unhindered in the sessions despite the unbalanced responsibility of care.¹⁵
- Parliamentary calendars are a well-established and beneficial practice, as evidenced by their successful implementation in parliamentary systems of mature democracies like the United Kingdom and Australia.

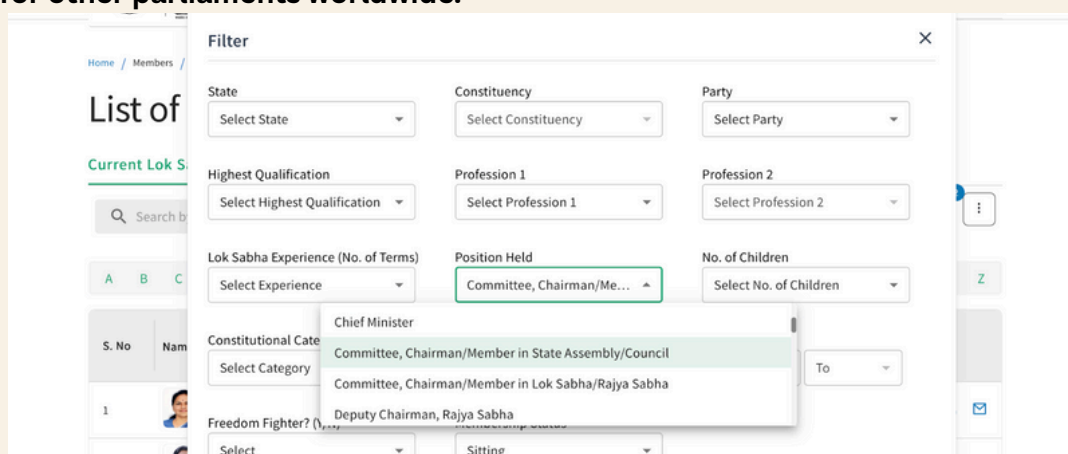
RECOMMENDATIONS



PROCEDURES (MP during the interview)

The whip is a very important person in the party structure and I don't think there's ever been a female chief whip in any of the political parties.¹⁶

5. Using the term “Chairperson” consistently throughout the website instead of “Chairman” would contribute to a more inclusive and welcoming environment and could set a positive example for other parliaments worldwide.



The screenshot shows a web application interface with a 'Filter' dropdown menu. The 'Position Held' dropdown is open, showing a list of options: Chief Minister, Committee, Chairman/Member in State Assembly/Council, Committee, Chairman/Member in Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha, and Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha. The 'Committee, Chairman/Member in Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha' option is highlighted. The background shows a 'List of Members' page with various filters like State, Constituency, Party, Highest Qualification, Profession 1, Profession 2, Lok Sabha Experience, and No. of Children.

6. Political parties should ensure equitable inclusion of women MPs in Financial Committees and DRSCs, and consider appointing them as Whips, committee leads, and Chairs. The Speaker should appoint an equitable number of women MPs as Committee Chairs, while the Rules of Procedure in both Houses should be amended to mandate equitable representation in line with the Constitutional Amendment.

- Ensure gender balance in committees and delegations, including in leadership positions. (EIGE Gender Equality Action Plan for Parliaments, 2024).¹⁷
- For instance, women make up only 2 of 22 members in the Public Undertakings Committee, 1 of 31 in the Defence Committee, and 2 of 31 in the Finance Committee.
- Out of 36 Committees in Lok Sabha (Financial, DRSCs, Other PRSCs, and Adhoc), women chair only 2 committees, one of them being Committee on Empowerment of Women. (Analysis from Financial Committees).¹⁸

FINDINGS

Elements	Finding	Description
Infrastructure	Lack of official data	<p>Basic infrastructure data is not publicly available. Parliament website omits details e.g the total number of women’s washrooms or breastfeeding rooms. This information vacuum makes it impossible to map needs (for example, how many washroom spaces should exist per floor for the MPs and the staff). Without visibility on existing facilities, planning effective upgrades is extremely difficult.</p> <p>Hence, there is an opportunity for the Parliament or a relevant civil society organisation to conduct a survey of women MPs regarding the infrastructure needs.</p>
Infrastructure	Creches and designated spaces for breastfeeding for MPs absent	<p>A sitting member of parliament from Rajya Sabha (the upper house) recently raised concerns about the absence of creches and designated spaces for breastfeeding. It was also reported that she mentioned ‘the toilets for men and women on the premises were designed in such a way that they faced each other, ignoring the privacy of women’.</p> <p>Source : LinkedIn Post, MP Fauzia Khan</p>
Infrastructure	Creches and designated spaces for breastfeeding for staff is available	<p>Staff of a parliamentarian disclosed that washrooms and drinking water facilities were easily available and breastfeeding and Creches or Childcare centre were available for staff in the Annexe Building.</p>
Infrastructure	Menstrual Hygiene Provisions	<p>While the RTI response revealed that for 63 washrooms available for women MP and staff, only 3 menstrual hygiene provisions were said to be available.</p> <p>From our interviews with MPs and staff, we noticed that there is a varying level of awareness when it comes to Menstrual Hygiene Provisions. In one of the staff member’s responses, they said they were unsure about the Menstrual pad dispenser in any of the buildings.</p>
Culture	The ideal Parliamentarian is imagined as male.	<p>Through our interviews, we discovered that the “ideal party member” is often imagined as someone unconstrained by external obligations. They are expected to have either domestic support or personal wealth that allows full-time political engagement. This inherently disadvantages individuals with caregiving responsibilities, thus disproportionately affecting women.</p>

FINDINGS

Elements	Finding	Description
Culture	Informal networks in politics are male-dominated.	Importance of informal networks within politics. Male MPs, personal assistants (PAs), and political staff often bond over casual conversations, shared jokes, or social gatherings that exclude women. These male-dominated networks become gatekeepers to political access and career growth. To dismantle these informal yet deeply entrenched power structures, institutions must go beyond surface-level gender inclusion and actively reshape workplace norms.
Culture	Gender Sensitisation Trainings	PRIDE trainings include gender sensitisation for all MPs.RTI 5
Culture	PoSH	There have been 7 complaints in 5 years and the RTI response to application of POSH was 'employees of LS' that was not clear if this applies to MPs and if they are aware of such mechanisms to deal with SH at workplace.RTI 1
Procedures	Gendered language used in manuals	<p>In the rules of procedure, there are 1363 references to 'he' whereas there are 13 references of 'she'. In all the 13 instances 'she' is used to refer to a specific woman MP whereas 'he' had been used to refer to MPs generally while discussing the practices and procedures.</p> <p>In the rules of procedure and conduct of business, Deputy Speaker of the house, Deputy Chairman of the Council, Secretary-General of the House or the Council have been referred to as 'he'. Similarly, the provisions relating to salaries and allowances of MPs also refer to MPs as 'he' and the use of 'chairman' appeared a couple of times.</p> <p>Source: https://sansad.in/ls/about/procedures</p>
Procedures	There is support for new MPs to navigating complexities of parliament	PRIDE conducts Orientation/ Capacity building programs for all MPs that will help new women MPs to navigate the procedural complexities of Parliament.
Procedures	Programs on best practices for Women MPs from other inclusive parliaments	PRIDE does not have any such program or partnership with any country.RTI 5

DISCUSSION

As India approaches a significant increase in women's parliamentary representation, strengthening institutional readiness is paramount. This report highlights three critical areas—procedural, infrastructural, and cultural preparedness—that are essential for transforming increased gender parity into meaningful change.

Addressing these gaps before the next wave of women MPs enters the Lok Sabha is crucial. Failure to do so risks perpetuating existing exclusions and barriers that have historically limited women's influence in political institutions. Conversely, a Parliament that proactively adapts its procedures, physical environment, and informal culture to support women's full participation will not only empower individual MPs but also enhance the democratic quality and responsiveness of the institution.

Implementing these reforms will also position India as a leader among global democracies striving for more inclusive and effective legislatures. The path to a gender-responsive Parliament requires concerted action, encompassing internal policy changes, infrastructural investments, shifts in norms, and enhanced accountability.

Parliamentary leadership, political parties, civil society organisations, and administrative bodies must collaborate to translate the promise of reservation into lasting institutional change. While this research captures essential readiness indicators, further work is needed, particularly in addressing data gaps concerning the experiences of women MPs with disabilities and the lack of detailed infrastructure data from RTI responses. This report serves as a foundation for future efforts, which can include targeted accessibility audits and confidential surveys.

Crucially, efforts must be intersectional and systemic, acknowledging that women are not a monolithic group but have diverse experiences and needs. Parliaments must recognise that different women—such as young mothers, older leaders, or women with disabilities—have varied requirements. Policy gaps, especially those intersecting with caste, religion, or class lines, must also be addressed. While MPs already have flexibility in attendance, institutional support structures like nurseries and childcare facilities remain vital. For example, a younger woman MP returning to Parliament after childbirth would benefit significantly from accessible, on-site childcare. Similarly, an older tribal woman MP might require briefing materials in local languages or targeted support for community outreach. A "one-size-fits-all" approach to gender inclusivity risks overlooking these varied and context-specific needs. Instead, an intersectional lens is required to recognise not only the presence of women in Parliament but also the differentiated support they need to participate fully and effectively.

DISCUSSION

Our recommendations align with global guidance, adapted to the local context. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's report on gender sensitisation emphasises the necessity of reforming legislative structures, processes, and culture. Achieving greater gender sensitivity demands sustained political and institutional commitment. Parliament must integrate gender equality as fundamental to its efficiency, effectiveness, and legitimacy. When women do not feel safe, seen, or supported, they—and by extension, half the country—cannot fully participate in or be adequately represented by their democracy. Conversely, a truly inclusive Parliament is more reflective and responsive to its citizens. By implementing these recommended measures—improved facilities, transparent rules, attitudinal change, and accountability—India's Parliament can ensure that its historic 33% reservation translates into tangible societal gains, moving beyond symbolic representation. Evidence from 159 developing countries demonstrates that higher female representation leads to stronger laws on health, education, and women's rights.

Beyond parliament-specific recommendations, consideration should be given to introducing dedicated funding for women MP candidates, including independents, at both party and parliamentary levels, to address the structural underfunding that hinders women without established dynastic or financial backing. Additionally, Parliament could establish an Equalities and Diversity Monitoring Body to track gender-disaggregated data on committee representation, speaking time, legislative sponsorship, and budget allocation, thereby institutionalising the monitoring and evaluation of gender inclusion.

The importance of this approach is amplified as the demographic composition of women parliamentarians becomes more diverse. As one respondent noted, the increasing presence of women having babies while serving as parliamentarians, a historically rare occurrence, underscores the need for Parliament to adapt its structure to support care and inclusion, whether through childcare facilities, maternity leave policies, or more flexible scheduling. These insights collectively emphasise that gender sensitisation must be both structural and cultural, involving not only policy implementation but also fostering a deeper attitudinal shift within parliamentary norms. By embedding intersectional awareness into its daily functioning and ethos, Parliament can achieve genuine gender inclusivity.

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Appendix

Interview Notes (Identities kept anonymous on purpose)

1. Gender and Parliamentary Studies Expert:

- The building must be safe—physically, culturally, and psychologically—for women MPs and officials. Safety concerns include secure access routes, on-site security measures, and a welcoming environment. Without reliable safety, reservations (e.g., 30% a) are meaningless, as members will continue to leave.”
- An expert noted that the term ‘gender’ was often met with resistance within a Parliament, as it is frequently misconstrued as being synonymous with ‘women’ and perceived as implying discrimination against men. In this context, reframing the discussion in terms of ‘diversity’ was seen as a more neutral and effective entry point, as it recognized multiple underrepresented groups and reduced the perception that gender reforms were about granting women ‘special measures’ at the expense of men.
- You gender sensitize the parliament as an ongoing thing, as an ongoing activity, not just as a test.
- As you diversify women, their needs from a parliament are, are quite different. increasingly we're seeing women having babies when they are parliamentarians, whereas that would have been very rare historically. So once you see this happening increasingly, then the parliament has to react to the different kinds of women who are present.
- I think we have to look at what can parliaments do to make them workplaces that are accessible and mean that women can do their work and people with caring responsibilities can do their work. So how parliament is organised, when it sits, what kind of facilities does it provide, what kind of additional resources might it provide for those who have to care for children, elderly relatives, put in extra protection, all of those.
- When you think about who's the good party member, we need to think about the good parliament in all areas. Who's the good party member? Is the good party member the person who goes to every meeting? Well, people who can go to every meeting have other people doing things for them, or they have the money to pay somebody, or they have the time.

Appendix

2. Parliament Secretariat Official

- We designed gender-specific facilities—separate washrooms with sanitary-pad dispensers, and dedicated common rooms for pregnant women to rest on medical advice. When planning the new building, the Parliamentary Works Agency (CPRUD) incorporated these essential provisions. Moreover, a positive ambience—good lighting, ventilation, and housekeeping—boosts productivity, though housekeeping is managed by CPRUD, not the Parliament itself.
- In my experience, it is not basically whether you are a male or a female. It is all about the seniority. For example, if you see MPs speaking or they may have very long speeches in the parliament, it is basically based on the time that is allocated to the concerned party not for individuals.
- During the last session, most of the MPs from Kerala, they had raised serious concern about an ASHA strike ongoing in Kerala. They were demanding for hike of their wages. So it is not being taken up on a gender issue but a social issue.

3. Ex-Research Assistant to MPs:

- Almost every MP, regardless of gender, struggles with research support. First-time MPs, especially women without a family background in legislation, lack guidance on procedures and access to dedicated research staff. This knowledge gap disproportionately impacts female parliamentarians.

4. Member of the LAMP (Legislative Assistant to Member of Parliament) Program:

- The Western Court offices have deplorable washrooms—broken windows, no latches, and poor hygiene. Women cannot use them for long periods, especially during menstruation or a UTI, effectively excluding them. We had to pressure officials to repair facilities before we could work there.
- Women must make space for themselves; nothing is handed over. Deep-rooted gender biases and stereotypes mean women are easier to target (e.g., it's simpler to go after a Mahima Mishra than a Ramesh Bidhuri). Politics is “dirty,” so personal shaming sticks more for women.
- Very few women work in Parliament or related policy roles. Even when women assist ministers or MPs, support still skews toward male PAs/PSs, because the system assumes men can get work done and include each other in jokes that exclude women. Most women MPs come from political families, so outsider women face steep barriers.
- In my office, an MP challenged why I, rather than my male colleague, made a bungalow allotment call. Talking to a man is “better.” I was left thinking, “If my work isn’t good enough, why am I here?” Male MPs and PAs form invisible barriers: men can bond beyond professional topics; if you talk casually with a male PA about college or parties, you risk being labeled “easy” or willing to engage beyond office hours. That barrier limits opportunities.
- When a male MP or PA is around, men feel free to crack sexist jokes, discuss which woman MP is having an affair, or otherwise speak without filter. That camaraderie vanishes if a woman MP or PA enters—men assume women are “more sensitive” and might report such remarks. Because of this, women MPs often end up hiring male PAs. Male PAs’ body language reassures ministers that politics can be conducted “properly,” reinforcing the idea that women can’t handle political spaces without a male intermediary.

Appendix

1. A Woman MP

- Women MPs enjoy substantial infrastructural support—office staff, accommodation, and personal networks. However, the new building's design is flawed: the women's and men's toilets face each other, causing discomfort for women from traditional backgrounds. The real challenge lies not in physical infrastructure but in social and institutional mindsets.
- The issue really is the mental infrastructure and the social infrastructure. Those are really the problems facing Indian women. And it's the mindset. It's the way political parties are structured. It's the way political parties don't give tickets to women, even though this law has been passed at 33% reservation. So, you know, it's a good question to ask that. Are a whole lot of women going to suddenly come into parliament with 33% reservation? No. I mean, there is 33% reservation enacted as a law, but it's a token. During a recent parliamentary interaction, a male MP told a woman MP she'd speak well on the budget because she "runs a kitchen," reducing her economic insight to domestic skills—a comment both misogynistic and deeply unfair. But this happens everywhere. This is not just parliament so as I said it's a mindset that needs to change, it's the cultural, social, psychological mindset that needs to change.
- Politics is a microcosm of society and society is entirely hostage to patriarchy and becoming more so. Actually, gender justice for women is going backwards. We're going back to a kind of hierarchical traditionalism.
- But certainly in terms of, say, the way you appear, the way you dress, that has to always be very, very sort of conservative and traditional, but then so even the men adhere to that, those movements. So that's a norm that applies across the board.
- That's a social problem, you know, women, visible women, women who are outspoken, women who are vocal, massively trolled online, offline, attacked, abused, vilified. But of course, there's a lot of hooting and jeering from the conventions, which they detest, open, you know, they detest vocal women. So every time I speak, there is jeering and sneering and catcalls and all of that. So that is what we face. This abuse is frequently dismissed as harmless or humorous, masking the serious and misogynistic undertones that shape women's experiences in public and political spaces. It's very very normalized and very sort of very sort of acceptable to kind of witch hunt a public woman.

Questionnaire by stakeholders RTI responses

RTI Reply on Posh

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT INFORMATION CELL

No.1(537)IC/25

02.05.2025

From
Nelojit Mayangbam
Under Secretary

To
Shri Akhil Neelam
(Online)

Subject: - Supply of information under the Right to Information Act, 2005.

Sir,

With reference to your Online RTI application dated 02.04.2025, bearing registration no.LOKSS/R/T/25.00212 received from Ministry of Parliamentary Affair, I am directed to forward information/reply furnished by the Divisions concerned of this Secretariat i.e Internal Complaint Committee, vigilance branch and as approved by the competent authority.

2. The details of the CPIO are as follows:

Shri Maheshwar ,Director & CPIO, Room No.110 EPHA, New Delhi – 110001 (Tel.23035810).

3. Appellate Authority for the Secretariat is Shri Y.M.Kandpal Additional Secretary, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Room No.G-01, Parliament House, Annexe, New Delhi – 110001 (Tel. 2304388). In case you want to go for an appeal in connection with above, you may appeal to the Appellate Authority within thirty days from the date of issue of this letter.

Format for the Appeal may be downloaded from the website www.loksabha.nic.in

Yours faithfully,

Nelojit Mayangbam
Under Secretary


Encl.: (Annexure)

Annexure

Reference: Lok Sabha Secretariat Letter No. 1(537)IC/25
Dated 02.05.2025

Query of the applicant	Reply
1. Does the Parliament of India have an Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) as mandated under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013?	Yes. In terms of Section 4 of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, the Lok Sabha Secretariat has constituted an "Internal Complaints Committee" (ICC) vide Notification No.F.7/52/2009-ANI DM&CC/GN-7420/2014 dated 6th May, 2014.
2. If yes: When was this committee constituted? What is the current composition of this committee? How many complaints have been received and addressed by this committee in the last five years?	A) Details as in Point 1 B) The current composition includes – 1 Presiding Officer 1 Member-Secretary 1 Advocate and 2 Members from Lok Sabha Secretariat C) 7 complaints
3. Is this Internal Complaints Committee applicable to women Members of Parliament (MPs)? If not, what mechanism exists for addressing complaints of sexual harassment raised by women MPs?	With regard to employees of the Lok Sabha Secretariat, in terms of Section 4 of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, [SHWW (PPR) Act] an "Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)", has been constituted from time to time to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace of Lok Sabha Secretariat and for redressal of complaints of harassment and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
4. Are there any separate guidelines or policies specifically addressing the prevention of sexual harassment for women MPs in Parliament?	

RTI Reply on Infra (1) and RTI Reply on Infra (2)

<p>भारत सरकार केन्द्रीय लोक निर्माण विभाग, संसदीय विधिल कार्य परिमंडल, संसदीय प्रान्तीय भवन, संसद भवन परिसर नई दिल्ली-110001 दूरभा-23034169, फ़ोन- 23019793 ई-मेल: delhepcw@cpwd.in</p>		<p>GOVERNMENT OF INDIA CENTRAL PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT Parliament Civil Works Circle, Parliament Library Bldg, Parliament House Complex, New Delhi-110001. Phone:23034169, Fax:- 23019793 e-mail: delhepcw@cpwd.in</p>
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संख्या :-3(6)/आरटीआई/संसदीय/2025/302 दिनांक : 01/08/2025

सेवा में,
✓ **Smt. Rashmi Patel**

विषय- सूचना अधिकार अधिनियम - 2005 के अंतर्गत श्रीमती राशमी पुरी द्वारा सूचना प्राप्त करने के बारे में।

संदर्भ- आपका आरटीआई पत्र सं० CPWDD/R/T/25/00076/3 दिनांक 20.03.25 Received in this office dt. 10.06.25


The Para wise Reply as Under :-

S.No.	Question	Reply
1	Does the Parliament have washroom or common areas for women?	Yes
2	Are they easily accessible?	Yes
3	Are sanitary towel easily available?	Yes

सहायक प्रशासनिक अधिकारी
संसदीय विधिल कार्य परिमंडल

प्रतिनिधि-
1) विशेष महानिदेशक (परिभोग्यवि), संसदीय विधिल, निर्माण भवन, नई दिल्ली।

सहायक प्रशासनिक अधिकारी
संसदीय विधिल कार्य परिमंडल

<p>भारत सरकार केन्द्रीय लोक निर्माण विभाग, संसदीय विधिल कार्य परिमंडल, संसदीय प्रान्तीय भवन, संसद भवन परिसर नई दिल्ली-110001 दूरभा-23034169, फ़ोन- 23019793 ई-मेल: delhepcw@cpwd.in</p>		<p>GOVERNMENT OF INDIA CENTRAL PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT Parliament Civil Works Circle, Parliament Library Bldg, Parliament House Complex, New Delhi-110001. Phone:23034169, Fax:- 23019793 e-mail: delhepcw@cpwd.in</p>
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संख्या :-3(6)/आरटीआई/संसदीय/2025/301 दिनांक : 01/08/2025

सेवा में,
✓ **Sh. Akhil Neelam**

विषय- सूचना अधिकार अधिनियम - 2005 के अंतर्गत श्री अखिल नीलम द्वारा सूचना प्राप्त करने के बारे में।

संदर्भ- आपका आरटीआई पत्र सं० CPWDD/R/T/25/00191/3 दिनांक 28.06.25 Received in this office dt. 15.07.25

Sl. No.	Question	Reply
Building Facilities and amenities for Women MPs:-		
1.	What is the total number of washrooms designated for women MP/male staff?	> 63 Nos.
	Please Provide details of menstrual hygiene provisions available	> 3 Nos
2.	What crèche and childcare facilities exist within the Parliament premises?	> 01 Nos
	Please include details regarding capacity,	> 14 Nos
	Operating hours and	> Operating Hour = 9:30 am to 6:30 pm (Monday to Friday)
	Accessibility for women MPs.	> Yes
3.	Are there designated private spaces for breastfeeding, resting or personal needs? Please Provide specifics.	> Yes available, separate space/cabin provided for breastfeeding, resting or personal needs.
Accessibility :-		
1.	What steps have been taken to ensure the Parliament's infrastructure is accessible to women MPs, particularly for those who are pregnant or new mothers.	> Already available
2.	What ongoing or planned initiatives exist to enhance accessibility for women MPs? Provide details.	> Not Applicable.
Inclusive Design :		
	What measure have been implanted to upgrade parliament facilities with women-friendly feature (e.g. improved lighting, safety protocols, and clear signage)?	> Already available
	Are there any official policies or guidelines regarding gender-sensitive infrastructure within the parliament premises? Please provide copies or references.	> Not Applicable.

सहायक प्रशासनिक अधिकारी
संसदीय विधिल कार्य परिमंडल

प्रतिनिधि-
1) विशेष महानिदेशक (परिभोग्यवि), संसदीय विधिल, निर्माण भवन, नई दिल्ली।

सहायक प्रशासनिक अधिकारी
संसदीय विधिल कार्य परिमंडल

RTI Reply on Cultural Readiness

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
INFORMATION CELL

No. 1(336)/IC/25

Dated: 04.04.2025

From

Girdhari Lal
Deputy Secretary

To

Ms. Ragini Puri
Online

Subject: - Supply of information under the Right to Information Act, 2005.

Madam,

With reference to your online RTI application dated 03.03.2025 bearing registration number LOKSS/R/T/25/00127, I am directed to forward information to the extent pertaining to and available in the Branch/ Division concerned i.e. Pride of this Secretariat as approved by the CPIO.

2. The details of the CPIO is as follows:

Shri Maheshwar, Director & CPIO, Room No. 110, Block A, Extension Building, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi-110001 (Tel.: 23035810).

3. Appellate Authority is Shri Y.M. Kandpal, Additional Secretary, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Room No. G-1, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi-110001 (011-23034388). In case you want to go for an appeal in connection with above, you may appeal to the Appellate Authority within thirty days from the date of issue of this letter. Format for the Appeal may be downloaded from the website www.loksabha.nic.in

Yours faithfully,

Sd/-

DEPUTY SECRETARY
Phone : 23035696

RTI Reply on Procedural Readiness

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT INFORMATION CELL

No.1(344)/IC/25

28.03.2025

From
K Muanniung Tunglut
Deputy Secretary

To
Shri Akhil Neelam

Subject: Supply of information under the Right to Information Act, 2005.

Sir,

With reference to your RTI application dated 03.03.2025 bearing registration number LOKSS/R/T/25/00135 received on transfer from Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, I am directed to forward information to the extent as held by the Branches concerned of this Secretariat viz, Committee Branch, PRIDE and as approved by CPIO, for your information.

2. The details of CPIO is as follow.

Shri Maheshwar, Director & CPIO, Room No. 110, Extension Building,
Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi - 110001 (Tel.23034268).

3. In case you are not satisfied with information furnished herewith, you may prefer an appeal to the First Appellate Authority within thirty days from the date of issue of this letter. The Appellate Authority for the Secretariat is Shri Y.M Kandpal, Additional Secretary, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Room No. G 1, Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi - 110001 (Tel. 23034388). Format for the Appeal may be downloaded from the website www.loksabha.nic.in.

Yours faithfully,

Sd/-
(K Muanniung Tunglut)
DEPUTY SECRETARY

Reference: Lok Sabha Secretariat Letter No. 1(344)/IC/25 dated 28.03.2025

Point No.	Information Sought	Reply
1	What measures are being taken within Parliament to ensure gender diversity in leadership positions within Parliamentary Committees? How are these roles distributed? What impact does gender have on the decision-making process in Committees?	As per Rule 2 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, "Parliamentary Committee" means a Committee which is appointed or elected by the House or nominated by the Speaker and which works under the direction of the Speaker and presents its report to the House or to the Speaker and the Secretariat for which is provided by the Lok Sabha Secretariat. Further, as per Rule 254 (1), the members of a Committee shall be appointed or elected by the House on a motion made, or nominated by the Speaker as the case may be. Rule 258 (1) further provides that the Chairperson of a Committee shall be appointed by the Speaker from amongst members of the Committee. Direction 122(1) (e) of the 'Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha' provides for nomination to a Parliamentary Committee in proportion to the strength of the Party.
2	Can you share how women MPs are assigned to Parliamentary Committees from 2009, 2014, 2019 and 2024 LS and to which Parliamentary Committees?	Details of women Members of Lok Sabha inter alia containing information regarding membership of various Committees can be accessed on the Lok Sabha website. The link of the website is- https://samad.in . On the website home page, please click on 'Members' drop-down menu on the top -> Click on 'List of Members' -> Click on 'Filter' button on the top right above the list of members -> Select 'Gender' -> 'Apply'. The detailed information about a particular woman Member may be found by clicking on the Member's name. There are various tabs related to the Member like Profile, Other Details, Dashboard, 'Committee Membership', etc. Click on 'Committee Membership' tab to check the membership/ Chairpersonship of a Committee held by that Member. However, Compilation of the data in the format desired by the applicant would disproportionately divert the resources of the Secretariat and is denied under Section 7(9) of the RTI Act, 2005.

3	Are there any mentoring or capacity building programs in place that are specifically aimed at helping women MPs navigate the procedural complexities of Parliament? If yes, how do these programs help women MPs strengthen their leadership skills and enhance their impact in the legislative process?	No. PRIDE conducts Orientation/ Capacity building programs for all MPs
4	Are there ongoing or recent efforts/partnerships/programs (2014, 2019, 2024 LS) to learn from global best practices in countries where Parliamentary systems have successfully increased women's participants and representation? Please	PRIDE does not have any such program or partnership with any country
5	How does the Indian Parliament monitor and report on gender inclusivity in its processes, decisions, and legislative outcomes? What role do data and reporting play in ensuring that gender considerations are integrated into Parliamentary practices? Please share any ongoing data/reports on this (2014,2019,2024 LS)	The query sought is interrogative, academic in nature which does not fall under Section 2(f) of RTI Act, 2005