

A GUIDE BOOK ON

# WOMAN AND GIRL FRIENDLY PANCHAYATS

A Resource for Locally Elected Representatives



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# **WOMAN AND GIRL FRIENDLY PANCHAYATS**

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## » Introduction to Woman and Girl Friendly Panchayats



Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) play a critical role in advancing gender equality and ensuring the well-being of women and girls at the grassroots level. As the closest tier of governance to the people, they have the power to create inclusive and gender-responsive development, and steer the localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) has envisioned nine themes (poverty free, healthy, child friendly, water sufficient, clean & green, self-sufficient infrastructure, socially secured, good governance and women friendly villages) to localize the SDGs. To steer progress on achieving gender equality across these themes, MoPR has adopted a dual approach - through a dedicated theme (Theme 9 - Woman and Girl Friendly Villages), and through integration of gender across all nine themes.

This guidebook is developed as a practical resource for locally elected representatives (ERs) to make their panchayats more woman and girl friendly. By using this guide, ERs can strengthen gender-sensitive planning, promote women's leadership, ensure access to essential services, and foster safe and inclusive communities. Woman and girl friendly panchayats hold the key to a more sustainable, equitable and prosperous rural India.

## What is a Woman and Girl Friendly Panchayat?

**A Woman and Girl Friendly Panchayat (WGFP) actively promotes gender equality, women's empowerment, and the well-being of girls by ensuring their voices, rights, and needs are at the centre of governance, planning, and service delivery. It is a panchayat that is committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and enabling environment where women and girls can thrive, participate in decision-making, and access opportunities without discrimination.**

### The focus areas for a WGFP include:



Health and  
Nutrition



Education and Skill  
Development



Access to Economic  
Opportunities



Action Against Gender  
Based Violence and  
Harmful Practices



Participation  
in Governance



Gender Responsive  
Planning and Budgeting

While working with women and girls, special consideration must be accorded to vulnerable and marginalized sub-groups, with particular attention to disability, caste, tribe, religion, SOGI, socio-economic background.

## » Building Woman and Girl Friendly Panchayats

### What are the key focus areas and strategies for Woman and Girl Friendly Panchayats?

ERs should focus on the following six key areas and strategies to ensure that a panchayat is woman and girl friendly:

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### Health and Nutrition



**A WGFP is one where:**

- ▶ All women and girls have **information on availability of health services**
- ▶ All women and girls have **access to quality health services**, including **sexual and reproductive health**
- ▶ All women and girls have access to **adequate nutrition**
- ▶ **Adolescent friendly** and **gender responsive health services** are available
- ▶ **Regular outreach** is undertaken to **improve health seeking behaviour** among women and girls





**ERs can use the following strategies to create WGFPs:**



- Ensure **women's representation and participation** (at least 33%) in Village Health, Sanitation, and Nutrition Committees (VHSNCs) to **monitor and ensure quality healthcare services**
- Implement **community-based monitoring for health services** using **participatory audits** and **social accountability tools**, with the involvement of women and girls
- Increase **access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services**, (including access to sustainable and hygienic menstrual health products and disposal) **through ASHAs, ANMs, and digital health solutions**
- Generate **awareness on good nutritional practices** and promote **integration in local agriculture techniques** (kitchen gardens, biofortified crops), and midday meals





## Education and Skill Development



**A WGFP is one where:**



- ▶ All girls **enrol** in, and **complete, secondary schooling** and are able to pursue aspirations for **higher education**
- ▶ All girls have **access to life skills education**
- ▶ All women and girls are **linked** with age appropriate **skill development programmes**, including through **Self Help Groups**
- ▶ All schools have **adequate infrastructure** and **safe spaces** for women and girls, including **WASH facilities**
- ▶ **Safe transport** options are available to women and girls to **access education/skill development programmes**







**ERs can use the following strategies to create WGFPs:**



- ▶ Strengthen **Balika Manch** and **adolescent girls' groups** to keep girls in school
- ▶ Ensure proper implementation of **Right to Education (RTE) Act**, with a focus on **gender-responsive school infrastructure** (WASH facilities, functional toilets, menstrual hygiene facilities)
- ▶ Ensure **effective functioning** of the **School Management Committee** with **equal and active women's participation**
- ▶ Enable **safe transport options** for women and girls to **access education and skill development**, through initiatives such as cycle banks or pooled transport resources; provision of bicycles for school going girls; buses with women drivers/helpers; well-lit bus stops
- ▶ Establish **linkages** with **vocational training** and **life skills education** aligned with **local job markets**, including by leveraging Women's Self Help Groups



III



## Access to Economic Opportunities



**A WGFP is one where:**



- ▶ All women and girls have **access to decent work and equal wages**
- ▶ All women and girls have **access to financial and digital literacy**
- ▶ All women and girls have **access to formal credit and markets** for pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities
- ▶ All **workplaces** are **safe** and **inclusive** for women and girls
- ▶ Adequate **infrastructure** is in place to promote women and girls' **participation** in the **workforce**, including working women's hostels, child care centres, and safe transport facilities
- ▶ There is **equal sharing** of **caregiving** and **domestic chores** to enable women to pursue decent **work opportunities**



**ERs can use the following strategies to create WGFPs:**



- ▶ Facilitate **women-led micro-enterprises** and access to SHG-based **financial inclusion schemes** (NRLM, DAY-NULM)
- ▶ Set up **Panchayat-level enterprise hubs** for women in agriculture, dairy, handicrafts, and digital services
- ▶ Ensure effective **functioning** of the School Management Committee with **equal** and **active women's participation**
- ▶ Provide **financial literacy training** and access to MUDRA, Stand-Up India, and PM SVANidhi schemes
- ▶ Raise **awareness** on women's **right to land and property**, and actively promote **joint ownership** at the household level, including through **community level campaigns and drives**



IV



## Action against Gender Based Violence and Harmful Practices



**A WGFP is one where:**

- ▶ There is **zero tolerance** for **GBV** and **harmful practices** - any act is met with legal action and social condemnation
- ▶ Women and girls are **valued**, and their **presence** and **participation** in both private and public life is **welcomed**
- ▶ ERs lead by example, acting as strong **champions** of **gender equality** and **mobilising community members** to take a strong stance against GBV and harmful practices
- ▶ **Responsive** and **effective grievance redressal system** is in place to address GBV and harmful practices
- ▶ All women and girls experience **safety** in both **public and private spaces**, are able to freely and **safely navigate** from one place to another, using either public or private transport
- ▶ Men and boys are **equal allies** in **challenging** and **shifting discriminatory norms** by **championing** the cause of **gender equality** and **sharing responsibilities equally**





**ERs can use the following strategies to create WGFPs:**



- **Strengthen and raise awareness** about **One-Stop Centres** and **local Women's Help Desks** (at the police station/local panchayat), where available
- **Activate** community based **Nigrani Samitis** (village vigilance committees) to **monitor GBV** and **harmful practices**
- Raise **awareness** and ensure **effective implementation** of **laws** addressing **GBV and harmful practices** at the **panchayat level**
- Undertake **safety audits** to **identify spaces** where women and girls feel **unsafe**, and **address any gaps** and **challenges**, including through the **GPDP**
- Undertake **behaviour change campaigns** on **gender norms**, focusing on **men and boys** as **key allies**
- Adopt **Safe Public Spaces Initiatives** (including through GPDP support) – ensuring lighting, transport safety
- Ensure **provision of Legal Aid** (including through linkages with State and District Legal Services Authorities) – for **accessible justice for women and girls**
- Ensure display of **Referral Directories** at the Panchayat offices and other prominent places with **contact numbers and addresses** of all key personnel providing GBV and harmful practices **response services**; eg. Protection Officer, OSC Centre Administrator, Police, DLSA focal point, Child Protection Officer, Child Marriage Prohibition Officer. This **directory** must be **updated on a regular basis**.



V



## Participation in Governance



**A WGFP is one where:**



- ▶ Women and girls **participate equally and actively**, and their **voices are heard and valued** in all aspects of **governance**
- ▶ Individuals or groups of women and girls (especially from **vulnerable and marginalized** populations) directly or indirectly affected by a decision are **actively involved in the decision-making process**, ensuring **inclusion** of their **perspectives and concerns**





**ERs can use the following strategies to create WGFPs:**



- ▶ Ensure **compliance** with the legally prescribed **representation of women in PRIs**
- ▶ Ensure **organization** of **Mahila Sabhas** for **gender-responsive decision-making**
- ▶ Ensure all **panchayat meetings** meet the **minimum quorum requirement** (33%) for **women's participation**
- ▶ **Build capacities** of ERs on **creating** and **monitoring** WGFPs, and **enhance leadership skills** of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) through **training** and **exposure programmes**
- ▶ Ensure women's **active participation** in all **decision-making processes** and **eliminate proxy participation** in panchayat leadership
- ▶ Promote **gender audits** of **panchayat programmes** to track inclusion

VI



## Gender-responsive Planning and Budgeting



**A WGFP is one where:**

- ▶ **Dedicated resources** are allocated across sectors for women and girls through **gender responsive budgeting**
- ▶ Gender specific **challenges are identified and addressed** through **Gram Panchayat Development Plans**
- ▶ **Regular monitoring and evaluation** is undertaken to **assess the effectiveness of schemes** relating to women and girls
- ▶ A **gender perspective** is integrated into **planning for climate resilience and disaster management**





ERs can use the following strategies to create WGFPs:



- ▶ Institutionalize **Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB)** at the **Panchayat level**
- ▶ Ensure **gender audits** of **schemes** and **earmarking** of **funds** for **women and girl-centric projects**
- ▶ Integrate **gender data** in Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) for **evidence-based planning**
- ▶ **Engage** local women's collectives (SHGs, Mahila Sabhas) in **budgeting decisions**
- ▶ **Track panchayat performance** on **Theme 9** through **Panchayat Advancement Index**



## » Monitoring Woman and Girl Friendly Panchayats

### What are the indicators for monitoring the implementation of Woman and Girl Friendly Panchayats?

A detailed indicator framework is currently being developed by MoPR to periodically monitor the implementation of WGFPs across the country. Additionally, a comprehensive set of indicators including indicators related to Theme 9 are also captured in the [Panchayat Advancement Index \(PAI\)](#).

To track and monitor progress on the six thematic areas outlined for WGFPs, the following outcome areas may be considered:



**Health and Nutrition:** access to take home ration under ICDS for pregnant women; access to complete antenatal care for pregnant women; stunting/malnutrition/wasting in girls under the age of five years; prevalence of anaemia among adolescent girls; organization of Village Health & Nutrition Days; percentage of girls and women (including pregnant and lactating women) registered under ICDS



**Education and Skill Development:** enrolment, retention and transition between primary, upper primary and secondary school; ratio of male-female students in primary and secondary schools; availability of separate and functional toilets for girls in schools; skill training opportunities for SHG members



**Access to Economic Opportunities:** engagement of women and girls in income generating activities; inclusion of old/widowed women and women with disabilities in government sponsored social protection schemes; participation of women under MGNREGA; availability of creche facilities in MGNREGA work sites; access to banks and financial services for women and girls; percentage of women included in SHGs



**Action against GBV and Harmful Practices:** community level awareness building campaigns against GBV and HP (like child marriage and gender biased sex selection); conduct of regular safety audits; awareness generation about OSCs and allied referral services, including women helplines



**Participation in Governance:** organization of mahila sabhas, participation of women in gram sabhas; inclusion of mahila sabha activities in GPDPs



**Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting:** percentage of budget of GPDP that is allocated for activities agreed to by the Mahila Sabhas; percentage of planned activities in Mahila Sabhas that are included in the GPDPs to advance the rights of women and girls.

**WGFPs have the potential to be transformative spaces that challenge inequalities, strengthen women's collective and individual agency and create an inclusive and sustainable future for all.**









