

Standing Committee Report Summary

Working of National Commission for Women and State Commission for Women

- The Standing Committee on the Empowerment of Women (Chair: Dr Heena Vijaykumar Gavit) submitted its report on “Working of National Commission for Women and State Commission for Women”, on August 10, 2023. The National Commission for Women (NCW) is mandated to facilitate grievances of women and recommend women specific legislative and policy measures. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **The National Commission for Women Act, 1990:** The Committee observed that the NCW attempts to safeguard the various rights of women by providing recommendations for reviewing existing law. It noted that there is an urgent need to review the National Commission for Women Act, 1990 to make the NCW more independent, and effective. It recommended empowering the NCW with a certain degree of accountability over the police to implement their directions and penalty for non-compliance. It also recommended the NCW to propose amendments in the 1990 Act and submit them to the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD).
 - **State Commissions for Women:** The Committee noted that many established State Commissions for Women are not fully functional due to non-appointment of Chairpersons or lack of allocation of funds. It observed that many states including Bihar and Madhya Pradesh do not have their own State Commission for Women. The Committee observed that functional State Commissions for Women will help the NCW in disposing complaints emanating from their respective states. It recommended establishing a statutory linkage with State Commissions for Women to ensure smoother coordination. It also recommended the MWCD to urge states to strengthen their Commissions by filling up vacancies and allocating adequate funds. Further, it recommended the MCWD to take up the matter at the highest level with states which have not established a Commission.
 - **Implementation of recommendations:** The Committee noted that the NCW has reviewed and suggested amendments for about 161 laws. These amendments include laws related to: (i) child marriage, (ii) domestic violence, (iii) women’s safety, and (iv) the medical termination of pregnancy. However, the Committee noted that there is no time frame followed for the implementation of NCW’s recommendation. It recommended the establishment of a mechanism within the MWCD, Ministry of Law and Justice, and other concerned ministries to adhere to a fixed time frame and ensure the implementation of recommendations made by the NCW.
- **Staff Shortage:** The Committee observed staff shortage, including posts of law officers and research officers, in the NCW. It recommended the MCWD and the NCW to create and fill up the requisite number of posts in the NCW to ensure smooth functioning.
- **Complaint redressal mechanism and helpline:** The Committee found that the NCW deals with complaints under 23 broad categories of grievances. These include rape, acid attack, dowry death, and domestic violence. It observed that only 62% of complaints received from 2015-2016 to 2022-23 have been closed. It recommended that the MWCD and NCW take appropriate measures to resolve all complaints by: (i) streamlining the procedure, (ii) having an efficient workforce, and (iii) coordinating with concerned agencies.
- The Committee noted that the NCW is in the process of linking the emergency response helpline number with its own 24x7 women helpline number for an improved redressal mechanism. The Committee recommended the NCW to consider making the existing numbers easier to remember.
- **NRI Cells:** The NRI Cell processes complaints of Indian Women abandoned by their Non-Resident Indian (NRI)/Overseas husbands and assists with mediation by coordinating with different stakeholders. The Committee observed that out of a total of 2,056 registered cases since 2019, 1,554 cases are still pending settlement. It noted the difficulty in effectively dealing with cases due to legal complexities arising from different jurisdictions. It recommended: (i) entering into Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties with more countries, (ii) a database on harassment and duping cases for public awareness, (iii) establishing a one-stop centre for legal and psychological counselling in coordination with Indian Missions, and (iv) enhancing the financial assistance under the Indian Community Welfare Fund.

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