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ADVANCING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: NEW CHAIRPERSON FOR NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Vijaya Rahatkar has been appointed as the Chairperson of the National Commission for Women NCW. A notification in this regard has been issued by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. Ms Rahatkar has served as Chairperson of the Maharashtra State Commission for Women and Mayor of Aurangabad.



National Commission for Women



VISION:

The Indian Woman, secure in her home and outside, is fully empowered to access all her rights and entitlements, with the opportunity to contribute equally in all walks of life.

KEY FACTS :

- Formation:** The National Commission for Women was formed in January 1992.
- Objective:** It aims to review the legal and constitutional safeguards for women, recommend remedial

legislative measures, and ensure the effective implementation of laws related to women's rights.

3. Act: The National Commission for Women Act of 1990 is the legislation under which the NCW was established.

4. Composition: The NCW consists of a chairperson, a member secretary, and other members, usually including women from various backgrounds, such as law, social work, and education.

5. President: The chairperson of the NCW is appointed by the President of India.

6. Advisory Role: It advises the government on policy matters related to women.

7. Investigation: The NCW has the power to investigate complaints and violations of women's rights.

8. Research and Advocacy: It conducts research on issues affecting women and advocates for their rights.

9. Mahila Helpline: A support system for women facing violence or distress.

10. Awareness Campaigns: Programs aimed at educating women about their rights and legal recourse available to them.

POWER AND FUNCTION OF NCW:

1. Investigative Authority: The NCW can investigate complaints and issues related to violations of women's rights. It has the power to summon witnesses and demand documents necessary for its investigations.

2. Advisory Role: The Commission can advise the government on policy matters, legislative measures, and any other issues affecting women.

3. Power of civil court: The NCW can recommend legal reforms and amendments to existing laws to ensure better protection of women's rights.

4. Annual Reports: It is required to prepare and present annual reports to the government detailing its findings, activities, and recommendations.

5. Public Awareness: The Commission has the authority to promote awareness about women's rights and legal protections through campaigns, seminars, and workshops.

Functions

1. Monitoring Implementation: The NCW monitors the implementation of laws and policies related to women's rights and gender equality.

2. Complaint Redressal: It provides a platform for women to file complaints regarding discrimination, harassment, and other violations of their rights.

3. Research and Data Collection: The Commission conducts research on issues affecting women and compiles data to inform policy-making.

4. Advocacy: It advocates for the rights of women in various forums, including legislative assemblies and public discussions.

5. Capacity Building: The NCW conducts training and capacity-building programs for women to empower them and raise awareness about their rights.

6. Support Services: The Commission provides information and referral services to help women access legal aid, counselling, and other support services.

ISSUE WITH NCW:

1. Manpower and Resources:

Limited Staff: The NCW often operates with insufficient manpower, which hampers its ability to effectively address the numerous complaints and issues related to women's rights.

Resource Constraints: Budgetary limitations can affect the Commission's outreach and operational capacity.

2. Selective Action:

Bias in Handling Cases: Critics argue that the NCW sometimes exhibits selective action, prioritizing certain

cases over others based on political affiliations or social status.

Lack of Transparency: The decision-making process regarding which issues to pursue can lack transparency, leading to concerns about fairness.

3. Politicalization:

Influence of Politics: The NCW's functioning may be influenced by political considerations, impacting its independence and effectiveness in advocating for women's rights.

Appointment of Members: Political affiliations may play a role in the selection of members, affecting the Commission's impartiality.

4. Appointment Procedure:

Lack of Clear Criteria: The procedure for appointing members and the chairperson can be opaque, with insufficient criteria for selection, raising concerns about meritocracy.

Dependence on Government: The government's role in appointments may lead to biases, affecting the diversity and representation within the Commission.

5. Recommendations Without Action:

Advisory Nature: The NCW primarily has a recommendatory role, which means that its suggestions may not always be implemented, limiting its effectiveness.

Lack of Follow-Up: There is often inadequate follow-up on the implementation of its recommendations, leading to frustration among stakeholders.

6. Awareness Among Target Groups:

Limited Outreach: Many women, especially in marginalized communities such as Dalits, are not aware of their rights or the services offered by the NCW.

Cultural Barriers: Social and cultural barriers can prevent women from seeking help or utilizing the resources provided by the Commission.

7. Focus on Urban Issues:

Neglect of Rural Concerns: The NCW's focus may be skewed towards urban issues, leaving rural women and their specific challenges underrepresented.

WAY FORWARD:

1. Policy Advocacy: The NCW should advocate for policies that address gender disparities in various sectors, including education, healthcare, and employment.

2. Awareness Campaigns: Launching campaigns to raise awareness about women's rights and issues can help educate the public and encourage a cultural shift towards gender equality.

3. Support for Victims: Strengthening support systems for women facing violence and discrimination, including legal aid and counselling services, is essential.

4. Economic Empowerment: Promoting initiatives that support women's entrepreneurship and financial independence can significantly impact their empowerment.

5. Collaboration with Stakeholders: Engaging with NGOs, businesses, and government agencies can foster a more comprehensive approach to women's empowerment.

6. Research and Data Collection: Gathering data on women's issues can inform policies and highlight areas needing attention.

7. Mentorship Programs: Establishing mentorship programs can empower young women and provide them with guidance and opportunities in various fields.

8. Focus on Education: Ensuring equal access to education for girls and women is fundamental for long-term empowerment.

CONCLUSION:

The NCW must overcome challenges like limited resources, selective action, and political influences while also addressing the low awareness among marginalized communities. To be more effective, the Commission should strengthen its operational capacity, ensure transparency, and broaden its focus on diverse women's issues, particularly in rural areas. By implementing robust follow-up mechanisms and expanding outreach efforts, the NCW can empower women to access their rights and support services.

PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q. Consider the following statements regarding strategies to enhance the effectiveness of the National Commission for Women (NCW) in India:

1. Implementing a reduced budgetary framework to optimize resource allocation and operational efficiency.
2. Establishing a comprehensive and transparent merit-based criterion for the selection of the chairperson and members to ensure independence and integrity.
3. Allowing political affiliations to guide the prioritization of cases to align the Commission's objectives with governmental agendas.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Answer: B

MAINS QUESTION:

Q. We are witnessing increasing instances of sexual violence against women in the country. Despite existing legal provisions against it, the number of such incidences is on the rise. Suggest some innovative measures to tackle this menace.

(250 words, 15 marks)

[Ritik singh](#)

“EMPOWERING RURAL GROWTH THROUGH PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS”

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is organizing a Panchayat Sammelan on “Ease of Living: Enhancing Service Delivery at the Grassroots” at the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), Hyderabad.



CONSTITUTIONAL MANDATE:

Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992: This Act introduced Part IX to the Indian Constitution, establishing Panchayats as institutions of self-government in rural areas. It provided for the constitution, powers, responsibilities, and elections of Panchayats at the village, intermediate, and district levels.

KEY PROVISIONS OF PART IX

- 1. Gram Sabha (Art. 243A):** Empowered by state legislation to function at the village level.
- Constitution of Panchayats (Art. 243B):** Panchayats must be constituted at all three levels.
- 2. Composition (Art. 243C):** Direct elections for members, with states empowered to legislate additional provisions.
- 3. Reservation of Seats (Art. 243D):** Seats reserved for SCs, STs, and women.
- 4. Duration (Art. 243E):** Panchayats have a tenure of 5 years.
- 5. Powers and Responsibilities (Art. 243G):** Panchayats are responsible for implementing schemes for economic development and social justice, particularly related to the subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule.
- 6. Finance (Art. 243H, 243I):** State legislation governs taxation and funds, and Finance Commissions review the financial status of Panchayats.
- 7. Elections (Art. 243K):** State Election Commissions supervise Panchayat elections.
- 8. The Eleventh Schedule** of the Indian Constitution lists 29 subjects under which Panchayats may have responsibility for planning and implementing schemes related to local development.

SIGNIFICANCE OF PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS:

Women's participation in decision-making: Panchayats promote the inclusion of women in local governance, enhancing their role in shaping community development and local policies.

Financial provisions: Panchayats receive financial allocations to manage local resources and services, improving financial autonomy and enabling grassroots development.

Regional development (especially in tribal and backward areas): Panchayats play a crucial role in addressing the needs of underdeveloped and tribal areas, focusing on regional disparities and fostering balanced development.

Participation in policy-making: Local communities, through Panchayats, actively participate in policy formulation, ensuring that local needs and priorities are reflected in governance decisions.

People's role in planning (Kerala's People's Planning Campaign): Kerala's Janakeeya Aasoothranam is an example of how people's involvement in planning can lead to effective local governance and inclusive development.

Role in sustainable development: Panchayats contribute to sustainable development by implementing eco-friendly and community-driven projects, as seen in villages like Gendra, Attha, and Bari Sirkiri in Madhya Pradesh.

Efficient provision of services (Water Supply in Guttakaadu Gram Panchayat): Panchayats ensure efficient delivery of essential services, such as water supply, as seen in the Guttakaadu Gram Panchayat.

Water management in Kinnigoli Gram Panchayat, Karnataka: Kinnigoli, located near Mangalore, is an example of how Panchayats manage water resources and other services to benefit rural communities.

ISSUES LIMITING THE SUCCESS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS (PRIS):

Lack of mandatory financial devolution: Insufficient and irregular financial transfers from state governments hinder the Panchayats' ability to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

Concept of the 'Sarpanch Pati': In many regions, male relatives of elected women representatives (commonly husbands) informally control decision-making, undermining women's empowerment.

Irregular elections in some states: Delays and inconsistencies in holding regular Panchayat elections weaken democratic participation and governance at the grassroots level.

Unequal devolution of power across states: Different states devolve varying degrees of authority to Panchayats, creating imbalances in their functioning and limiting their overall impact.

Lack of awareness (Mani Shankar Aiyar Committee): Many rural communities remain unaware of the roles and functions of Panchayats, diminishing their involvement in local governance.

Bureaucratization: Excessive control by higher-level officials over Panchayat affairs restricts local autonomy and decision-making, hampering efficiency.

Lack of expertise in resource-rich areas: Panchayats often lack the technical knowledge and skills to manage important projects, particularly in resource-rich areas, leading to inefficiencies in utilizing local resources.

WAYS TO STRENGTHEN PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS (PRIS) FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE:



Provide PRIs with adequate finances and clear functions: Ensure sufficient funds and clearly defined responsibilities for Panchayats to enable them to effectively govern at the grassroots level.

Effective use of the District Planning Committee: Strengthen the role of the District Planning Committee to coordinate and integrate local development plans with state-level priorities.

Conducting regular elections: Ensure timely and consistent Panchayat elections to maintain democratic accountability and active participation in governance.

Promote role in social development schemes: Involve Panchayats in implementing key government schemes like PM Jan Dhan Yojana and MGNREGA to boost local development and social welfare.

Utilize Digital India Mission for Awareness: Leverage digital platforms to spread awareness about the roles and functions of Panchayats, encouraging greater community involvement and participation.

Granting revenue-raising powers to Panchayats: Empower Panchayats by giving them authority to raise local revenue, enhancing their financial autonomy and reducing dependence on state governments.

Annual monitoring and evaluation: Institute regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track Panchayat performance, ensuring transparency and accountability in governance.

Conduct summits and seminars: Facilitate knowledge-sharing through national and regional summits where Panchayats can exchange best practices and learn from other states' successes.

CONCLUSION:

In the last three decades, the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have seen a mix of successes and challenges. To truly transform rural governance, it is essential to strengthen these institutions from both within and through external support. Empowering PRIs will accelerate progress toward a more developed and inclusive Bharat. This transformation is crucial in achieving the vision of a "Vikshit Bharat" by 2047.

PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The Gram Sabha has the power to levy the tax in its jurisdiction
2. Gram Sabha consists of all members of the village who consist of the electoral college of the Panchayat.
3. The gram Sabha is the principle law law-making body of panchayat.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

ANSWER: A

MAINS QUESTION:

The Panchayat Raj Institutions have the potential to transform the idea of rural development and good governance. In this context suggest the ways to unleash the potential of the PRI. (Answer in 250 words)

[Munde Dhananjay Navnath](#)



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UPSC CSE Interview of 2020

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