



Mahila Sabhas on the International Women's Day

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Why in News

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has directed all the States and Union Territories to organise **Special Gram Sabhas and Mahila Sabhas (Women's Assemblies)** in all **Gram Panchayats** on **8th March, 2020** to mark the **International Women's Day**.

- The **theme** of the International Women's Day 2020 is "**Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights**".
- The Gram Sabhas will hold discussions on "Poshan Panchayat", land rights, education, safety, reproductive health and equal opportunity.
- It will also highlight issues like the **importance of breastfeeding during the first 1,000 days of the new-borns** for their ideal physical and mental growth; and raising awareness about **Child Helpline – 1098**.

Role of Women in Panchayati Raj Institution

- **PRI** was constitutionalized through the **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992** to build democracy at the grass roots level and was entrusted with the task of rural development in the country.
The act provides for a **Gram Sabha** as the foundation of the panchayati raj system.
- The **act provides for the reservation of not less than one-third of the total number of seats for women** (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging the SCs and STs).
- So far **20 States** have enacted legislation to raise **women's reservation to 50% in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**.
- As a result, out of the **30.41 lakh elected representatives of PRIs, 13.74 lakh (45.2%) are elected women**, some of them from socially disadvantaged groups.

Gram Sabha

- The term Gram Sabha is defined in the Constitution under **Article 243(b)**.
- It is the primary and permanent body of the Panchayati Raj system.
- The power to annul a decision of the Gram Sabha rests with the Gram Sabha only.
- **Composition:**

Persons, those who are above 18 years, living in the village whose names are included in the electoral rolls for the Panchayat at the village level.

Powers and functions:

The constitution empowered the State Legislatures to define the powers and functions of the Gram Sabhas through laws passed by them.

Women Empowerment and Gram Panchayat Development Plan

- **The Ministry of Panchayati Raj** has framed the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) for **integrated development planning at the Gram Panchayat** level to focus on the **community's needs and priorities**.
- The GPDP is **part of the Vision Document-2024** of the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** that focuses on capacitating the Elected Representatives in sectoral areas to make them the Agents of Change
- Some of the **key aspects of GPDP guidelines that are relevant to Women Empowerment include** proactive participation of women in budgeting, planning, implementation and monitoring of GPDP and convening Mahila Sabhas prior to the general Gram Sabhas and their inclusion in Gram Sabhas and GPDP.

Source: PIB