



Expanding Scope of NCW

For Prelims: Legal Framework for Welfare of Women, Background & Mandate of National Commission for Women (NCW).

For Mains: Evolving needs of women in the country, Background & Mandate of National Commission for Women (NCW).

Why in News?

Recently, the **30th Foundation Day (31st January)** of the [National Commission for Women \(NCW\)](#) was celebrated.

- According to the Prime Minister, given the evolving needs of women in the country, the scope of NCW must be broadened.

What is the need to expand the scope of the NCW?

- **Development of New India:**
 - The [Atmanirbhar Bharat](#) (self-reliant India) campaign has shown the link between the ability of women with the development of the country.
 - This change is visible as about 70% beneficiaries of [Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana](#) are women.
 - The country has seen a threefold increase in the number of **women self-help groups** in the last 6-7 years.
 - Similarly, in more than 60 thousand **startups** that have emerged after 2016, 45% have at least one woman director.
- **Old Thinking in Society:**
 - Industries from textile to dairy have progressed due to women's skills and power.
 - India's economy relies on [Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises](#) and there is a need to promote women entrepreneurs in the country.
 - However, people with **old thinking** are of the view that the women's roles are restricted to domestic work.
- **Increasing Crime Against Women:**
 - In 2021, the NCW had informed that there was a rise of **46%** in complaints of crimes against women in the first eight months of 2021 over the corresponding period of preceding year.
 - Crimes that women were subjected to: [Domestic violence](#), [Harassment of married women](#) or [dowry harassment](#), [Sexual harassment at workplace](#), [Rape and attempt to rape](#), [Cyber crimes](#).

What is the Background & Mandate of NCW?

- **Background:**
 - The **Committee on the Status of Women in India** (CSWI) recommended nearly five

decades ago, the setting up of a NCW to fulfil the surveillance functions to facilitate **redressal of grievances** and to **accelerate the socio-economic development of women**.

- Successive Committees/Commissions/Plans including the **National Perspective Plan for Women** (1988-2000) recommended the constitution of an apex body for women.
- Under the **National Commission for Women Act, 1990**, the NCW was set up as a statutory body in January 1992.
- The First Commission was constituted on 31st January 1992 with **Mrs. Jayanti Patnaik as the Chairperson**.
 - The commission consists of a chairperson, a member secretary and five other members. The chairperson of the NCW is nominated by the Central Government.
- **Mandate and Functions:**
 - Its mission is to strive towards enabling women to achieve equality and equal participation in all spheres of life by securing her due rights and entitlements through suitable policy formulation, legislative measures, etc.
 - Its functions are to:
 - Review the [constitutional and legal safeguards for women](#).
 - Recommend remedial legislative measures.
 - Facilitate redressal of grievances.
 - Advise the Government on all policy matters affecting women.
 - It has received a large number of complaints and acted suo-moto in several cases to provide speedy justice.
 - It took up the issue of [child marriage](#), sponsored legal awareness programmes, Parivarik Mahila Lok Adalats and reviewed laws such as:
 - [Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961](#),
 - [Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act 1994](#),
 - Indian Penal Code 1860.

What is the major Legal Framework for Welfare of Women?

- **Constitutional Safeguards:**
 - **Fundamental Rights:**
 - It guarantees all Indians the **right to equality (Article 14)**, no discrimination by the State on the basis of gender (**Article 15(1)**) and **special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women (Article 15(3))**.
 - **Fundamental Duties:**
 - It ensures that practices derogatory to the **dignity of women** are prohibited under **Article 51 (A)**.
- **Legislative Framework:**
 - [Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005](#)
 - [The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961](#)
 - [The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace \(Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal\) Act, 2013](#)
 - [The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences \(POCSO\), 2012](#)
- **Women Empowerment Schemes:**
 - [Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme](#)
 - [One Stop Centre Scheme](#)
 - **UJJAWALA:** A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation
 - SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)
 - NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR
 - Mahila police Volunteers
 - Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)
 - NIRBHAYA.

Way Forward

- **Amending NCW Act:** Women's role is continuously expanding in today's India and the expansion

of the role of the NCW is the need of the hour.

◦ Further, the State Commissions must also widen their ambit.

- **Increasing Minimum Age for Marriage:** The age of marriage of daughters is being attempted to be [raised to 21 years](#) so that marriage at an early age does not hinder the education and career of daughters.
- **Addressing Violence Against Women:** Violence against women continues to be an obstacle to achieving equality, development, peace as well as to the fulfillment of women and girls' human rights.
 - All in all, the promise of the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) - to leave no one behind - cannot be fulfilled without putting an end to violence against women and girls.
- **Holistic Effort:** Crime against women cannot be resolved in the court of law alone. A holistic approach & changing the entire ecosystem is what is required.
 - All the stakeholders need to get their act together, including Law makers, police officers, forensic dept, prosecutors, judiciary, medical & health dept, NGOs, rehabilitation centres.

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