



# A model policy for women in the police

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## **It must ensure equal opportunities for women in all aspects of policing as well as a safe and enabling work environment**

- Women constitute about 7% of the police strength in India.
- This number is expected to rise, with many States and Union Territories providing for 30% (and more) reservation for women in the police in specific ranks.
- The discourse on mainstreaming women in the police by making policing inclusive, non-discriminatory and efficient in India is missing in policy circles.

## **Need for policies**

- One way to mainstream women in the police is to develop a model policy that will challenge the deep-rooted patriarchy in the institution.
- Unfortunately, till now, not a single State police department has attempted to even draft such a policy.
- Thus, neither the Central nor State governments can get very far by merely adopting reservation to increase gender diversity without considering the need for policymaking.
- A model policy, while laying the foundation for equal opportunities for women in every aspect of policing, should also strive to create a safe and enabling work environment.
- Without this, all other efforts will remain piecemeal.
- One of the first steps to ensure a level playing field for women in the police is to increase their numbers.
- Merely providing reservation is not enough; police departments should develop an action plan to achieve the target of 30% or more in a time-bound manner.
- To achieve the target, the police should reach out to the media and educational institutions to spread awareness about opportunities for women in the police.
- Current data reveal that most women in the police are concentrated in

the lower ranks, efforts should be made to change this.

- Second, the model policy should strive to ensure that decisions on deployment of women are free of gender stereotyping to facilitate bringing women into leading operational positions.
- At present, there appears to be a tendency to sideline women, or give them policing tasks that are physically less demanding, or relegate them to desk duty, or make them work on crimes against women alone.
- Women police officers should be encouraged to take on public order and investigative crimes of all types, and should be given duties beyond the minimum mandated by special laws.
- Desk work too must be allocated evenly among men and women.
- A major burden of family and childcare responsibilities falls on women.
- Yet, police departments still lack proper internal childcare support systems.
- Departments need to be mindful of this social reality and exercise sensitivity in making decisions on transfers and posting of women personnel.
- As far as possible, women should be posted in their home districts in consultation with supervising officers.

### **Preventing sexual harassment**

- Police departments must also ensure safe working spaces for women and adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards discrimination and harassment, in order to make policing a viable career option for women.
- Some of these suggestions have already been made by the National Conference of Women in Police.
- However, Central and State governments have not yet developed or adopted a comprehensive framework towards achieving substantive gender equality.