

**Petition to WCD from women's groups from across the country:**  
**Seeking more consultation on the proposed Nirbhaya Centres**

**To,**  
**Ms Maneka Gandhi,**  
**Minister Women and Child Development,**  
**New Delhi**

Dear Manekaji,

We, the undersigned, are individuals and organisations working on women's issues for the last many decades. We write to you in connection with the One Stop Crisis Centre (OSCC) scheme named 'Nirbhaya Centres' that the ministry has flagged under your leadership.

While we wholeheartedly appreciate this long overdue measure that will offer 'effective handholding' of women affected by violence with a plan outlay of more than Rs 470 crores, we wish to place on record some of our reservations and apprehensions about the said scheme. You will appreciate the following:

1. Given the diversity of organisations across the country in terms of geographical locations, resource availability and language etc. posting a Concept Note on the website with a very limited period for responses cannot possibly be the best process for decision making on major public policy measures such as this. Any haste will prove to be ill advised, we are afraid.
2. The Concept Note cites studies of different models of OSCCs from countries like England and Wales, Malaysia, Bangladesh, South Africa, Rwanda, Zambia and Australia. Most of these models have OSCCs based in Public Hospitals. Yet the Concept Note proposes independent/ stand alone OSCCs. Lack of supporting evidence renders the rationale rather weak.
3. We in India have the benefit of valuable insights from home grown models of OSCC such as the Rape Crisis Cells (set up by WCD) and Dilaasa in Bhabha Municipal Hospital run by Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) in partnership with CEHAT. Both these models have not only shown promising results, but the creation of more editions also underscore their 'replicability'. Along with the models from countries other than India, we need to evaluate merits and demerits of these models and think of how best they can be upscaled.
4. The very fact that women approach public health facilities to deal with the health consequences of violence even though they do not want to talk about the abuse they are suffering makes the idea of having OSCCs in public hospitals a sound and rational public policy measure. WCD Concept Note does refer to Justice Usha Mehra Commission's recommendation to house OSCC in notified hospital and also mentions that "The DC/DM will have the option of locating the centre in the district hospital in a suitable location within the compound of the hospital, or any other suitable location situated within a 5 km radius from the district hospital."

Above mentioned points are only indicative of the fact that there are many aspects of Nirbhaya Centres that we want to discuss with you so that we have a well formulated policy and programme that women of India so deserve. We, therefore, urge you to kindly initiate a wider consultative process before embarking on any step according finality to it.

Looking forward to discussion and debate,

**Signatories:**

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Madhu Mehra, Partners for Law in Development, New Delhi  
Padma Deosthali/ Sangeeta Rege, CEHAT & Dilaasa, Mumbai  
Indira Jaising, Lawyers Collective, New Delhi  
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Veena Poonacha, Academic, Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNDT University, Mumbai  
Kamayani Mahabal, Lawyer, Mumbai  
Dr. Mira Shiva, Initiative for Health & Equity in Society, Diverse Women for Diversity  
Kavita Krishnan, AIPWA  
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