

INDIA

1. Part I: Overview of Achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

The Government of India adopted a National Policy for the Empowerment of Women in 2001 to bring about gender justice and make *de jure* equality into *de facto* equality. Several State Governments have also formulated a policy for women's empowerment. A draft Plan of Action for implementing the National Policy is under formulation. National and State Councils will oversee its operationalisation. Members of the Councils are expected to include officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, trade unions, academics, experts, social activists, etc. Progress made will be reviewed twice a year. The policy aims at

- the advancement, development and empowerment of women in all spheres of life
- more responsive judicial legal systems that are sensitive to women's needs
- women's equality in power sharing and active participation in decision making
- mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process
- comprehensive economic and social empowerment of women
- strengthening and formation of relevant institutional mechanisms
- partnership with community based organizations
- implementation of international obligations/commitments and cooperation at the international, regional and sub-regional levels

India is a signatory to CEDAW, and ratified it on 25-6-1993 (with one reservation and two declaratory statements). First report was considered by the CEDAW Committee in 2000. Second and Third reports are in process of submission. A Task Force on Women, headed by the Deputy Chairperson Planning Commission, has been constituted to review laws and legislations on women. Important changes in legal framework include:

- Amendment in laws related to divorce and maintenance. Specifically,
 - Indian Divorce (Amendment) Act 2001
 - Indian Succession (Amendment) Act 2001
 - Marriage Laws (Amendment) Act 2001

These amendments increase grounds on which women can file for divorce, enables Christian widows to get a share in property, and set a time limit for the resolution of maintenance petitions. The ceiling imposed on maintenance amounts has been raised and wide discretion given to the magistrate to award appropriate maintenance.

- Landmark judgements have been recorded in recent years on cases relating to sexual harassment at the workplace, maintenance rights of women, divorce and guardianship. The mother is now recognized as the legal guardian of the child. For example, regarding benefits at work; the discrimination between male flight attendants and female airhostesses in respect of age of retirement and other benefits has been removed (2003).
- A new bill called the 'Protection from Domestic Violence Bill 2002' was introduced in Parliament in March 2002. With the change in government, this will be re-submitted.
- Amendment of Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prevention of Misuse and Regulation) Act (1994) in 2002 to tighten enforcement.

- In accordance with the Supreme Court's directives, the National Commission on Women has formulated a Code of Conduct for preventing Sexual Harassment at the Workplace (1997).
- The Chairperson of the National Commission for Women is an ex-officio member of the National Human Rights Commission, enabling synergy in efforts to protect the legal and constitutional safeguards provided for women.

The reservation of one third of the seats for elected women representatives through the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments has contributed significantly to political empowerment of women.

Over the last ten years, efforts towards gender sensitisation of a traditionally male dominated society have been intensified. Examples include

- Gender sensitization of the law enforcement agencies especially the police and the judiciary through periodic training, given both by Government agencies and NGOs. Gender sensitization forms part of the training given by the National Judicial Academy. Most State level training institutions include a gender sensitization module for the orientation of officials.
- Sensitisation of medical officers who are responsible for implementing the Pre-natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prevention of Misuse and Regulation) Act through regional seminars with collaboration of UNFPA, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and State Governments.
- National Research and Training Centre set up at the country's premier institution at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration for the training of administrators to impart training in gender concerns. Gender budget analysis is part of the syllabus.
- Gender sensitization of Census enumerators was undertaken in 1991 and again in 2001.

The Constitution of India confers equal rights and opportunities on men and women in the political, economic and social spheres. The Millennium Development Goal 3 – Promote gender equality and empower women – is one of the central concerns of the Tenth Plan (2002-7) which spells out a three pronged strategy of empowering women including

- Social Empowerment - 'create an enabling environment through adopting various policies and programmes for development of women, besides providing them easy and equal access to all the basic minimum services so as to enable them to realize their full potential'
- Economic Empowerment – 'ensure provision of training, employment and income generation activities with both forward and backward linkages with the ultimate objective of making all women economically independent and self reliant'
- and Gender Justice – 'eliminate all forms of gender discrimination and thus enable women to enjoy not only de jure but also de facto rights and fundamental freedom on par with men in all spheres, viz, political, economic, social, civil, cultural etc.'

Monitorable targets set by the Tenth Plan include

- reduce gender gaps in literacy and wage rates by at least 50% by 2007
- reduce maternal mortality rate to 2 per 1000 live births by 2007, and to 1 by 2012
- reduce infant mortality rate to 45 per 1000 live births by 2007, and to 28 by 2012
- reduce poverty ratio by 5% by 2007 and by 15% by 2012
- reduce the decadal rate of population growth between 2001 and 2011 to 16.2%

- ensure that all children are in school by 2003, and that all children complete 5 years of schooling by 2007
- increase in literacy rates to 75% within the Plan period
- ensure that all villages have sustained access to potable drinking water within the plan period
- provide gainful and high quality employment to the addition to the labour force over the Tenth Plan period.
- Increase forest and tree cover to 25% by 2007, and 33% by 2012
- Clean all major polluted rivers by 2007, and other river stretches notified by the government by 2012

For the first time, **State level goals** have been set for each State in addition to National targets.

The **Women's Component Plan** which records the funds earmarked for schemes targeted to women and girls and those with a significant women's component is an effective mechanism in the planning process for targeting public expenditure in favour of women. The women's component plan and gender budgeting initiatives have brought out the need to further strengthen women-oriented initiatives in certain sectors.

India embarked upon a re-structuring of its economic policy framework in 1991. Globalisation and structural adjustment have had varying sectoral impacts. Women have gained employment in new avenues, for example in Information Technology. These are mainly urban and educated women. However an adverse impact on women's livelihood has been reported from different parts of the country, such as agriculture. The Report of the National Commission on Labour (2002) noted that with upgradation of skills, opportunities for employment of women exist in several areas such as health services, food processing and crafts.

Key areas of concern include

- Women in small subsistence farming households
- Women workers in garment and textiles who will face increased competition after the phasing out of the Multi Fibre Agreement in 2005.
- Women displaced by new technologies in sectors such as construction which have traditionally absorbed large numbers of women.

Government, NGO and civil society partnerships have been critical in the march towards women's equality. Civil society has played a catalytic role in bringing about change. It has provided independent assessments and advocacy for new legislation or policy change. NGO interventions at the grassroot complement efforts at the national policy level. Government has encouraged partnership in implementation of programmatic interventions. Representation on commissions, committees and policy bodies is another aspect of the sustained consultative process in place.

Partnerships are seen as necessary to bring about attitudinal changes. For example, the UNFPA, National and State Governments, concerned NGOs, religious leaders, corporate sector, have all come together in an advocacy coalition to stop the incidence of sex selective abortion.

2. Part II: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

2.1 Women and Poverty

Available data suggests increased feminisation of poverty over the last decade. The proportion of women agricultural labourers has increased. There are indications of the increased presence of women in unprotected, sub contracted labour. These changes are linked to globalization and informalisation of work. Recognising that women can leverage their strength, increase bargaining power and enhance capacities and skills through joint action, the approach of the government has been to organize women into groups and channel resources to these groups. Women Self Help Groups are implementing a large number of developmental initiatives including watershed development, social forestry and employment oriented initiatives.

Initiatives taken to tackle poverty include

- Providing women with access to savings and credit mechanism and institution through micro credit schemes. Various micro finance initiatives have gathered momentum in the recent years. The self-help group movement has been supported through schemes of a large number of departments including the Women and Child Development, Rural Development, Urban Development, Handlooms and Handicrafts, Sericulture, Agriculture, etc. at the national and state levels. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) provides credit for livelihood and related activities to poor women. The Indira Mahila Yojana was successful in states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. An estimated 1.9 million women are beneficiaries of schemes run by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and RMK (March 2003) with Rs 2176 (21.76 billion) crores having been disbursed to them.
- Skill and capacity building interventions are supported through programmes such as
 - STEP (Support to Training and Employment Programme) which aims at providing training to poor and assetless women in traditional sectors like agriculture, animal husbandry and handicrafts
 - Swawlamban, to train women for employment in traditional and non-traditional trades
 - Swashakti, a rural women's development and empowerment project
 - Swayamsiddha, launched in 2001, the Integrated Women's Empowerment Programme, aimed at all round empowerment of women by ensuring their direct access to and control over resources through a sustained process of mobilization and convergence of all the ongoing sectoral programmes.
- For greater efficiency and better implementation, convergence of programmes has been effected. All self employment schemes for rural areas have been integrated into Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana launched in 1999. 40% of the benefits under this programme are earmarked for women. The Swarnajayanti Shahari Swarojgar Yojana was launched in 1997-8 to reach benefits to the urban poor.
- Anti-poverty programmes have special focus on women. 30% of the employment opportunities created under the wage employment scheme of Sampoorna Grammen Rozgar Yojana are reserved for women. The Indira Awas Yojana stipulates that houses under the scheme are to be allotted in the name of the female member of the beneficiary household.

- Food security for the poorest is attempted through the Targeted Public Distribution System introduced in 1997; the Antyodaya Anna Yojana launched in 2000 and some Grain Bank Schemes. The Right to Food Campaign and use of Right to Information Acts by activist groups have been helpful in extending the reach of these programmes to poor and vulnerable women.

2.2 Education and Training of Women

- The female literacy rate increased from 39% in 1991 to 54% in 2001, while the male literacy rate increased from 64% to 75% over the same period. The gender gap in literacy has thus come down from 25 to 21 between 1991 and 2001. There has been a decline in the absolute number of female illiterates from 200.07 m in 1999 to 189.6 m. in 2001. Residual illiteracy remains a problem in some areas and the 2001 Census identified 45 districts with female literacy below 30%. To tackle this, an accelerated female literacy programme has been started in 8 districts.
- The Mahila Samakhyas Programme (Education for Women's Empowerment) started in 1987 focuses especially on the socially excluded and the landless women. It is now operational in 56 districts in 9 states. This programme is an example of creative collaboration between the voluntary sector and the State.
- The 93rd Constitutional Amendment makes free and compulsory education a fundamental right for all children in the 6-14 age group. The Government of India is committed to realizing the goal of elementary education by 2010. The Gross Enrollment Ratio for girls in primary education increased from 64.1% in 1980-81 to 85.2% in 1999-2000. It is still less than that for boys. Enrolment for boys was 104.1% in 1999-2000. The gap between the Gross Enrollment Rates of boys and girls has declined steadily from 28.5 and 29.6 percentage points at the primary and upper primary levels in 1990-1 to 19 and 18 in 1999-2000.
 - The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), the national umbrella programme for free and compulsory elementary education launched in 2000, seeks to reduce the gender and social gap through context specific innovative interventions.
 - The National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL), a component of SSA, provides region specific strategies to enable girls to come to school, provide remedial teaching through bridge courses and residential camps.
 - The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) started in 1994 has a holistic approach to reducing gender and social disparities and universalizing access, retention and achievement. Enrolment of girls has shown significant upward trend in DPEP districts as compared to non-DPEP districts.
 - A synergetic public-private partnership is proposed to be built up during the Tenth Plan to achieve the objectives of UEE.
 - There has been significant mobilisation of women's groups, grassroots level women's associations and mothers' groups to secure regular attendance and continuation in schools.
 - School curricula and teaching-learning materials have been revised to make them gender sensitive.
 - Schooling has been made completely free for girls in most states upto the higher secondary stage.
- Several programmes exist for the skill training of women, both governmental and non-governmental. An innovative pilot project linking the existing training institutions with the

needs of illiterate women in informal employment, and encouraging women to acquire non-traditional skills, has been started in two cities with support from the ILO.

- New initiatives for legal literacy and general awareness have been started. The NCW initiated a countrywide Legal Awareness Programme for women in 1996 to impart practical knowledge on basic legal rights and remedies provided under various laws and to prepare them for real life challenges. The course curriculum has been revised in 2003-4 to include educational schemes, health programmes and economic development schemes of government. The camps are participative rather than academic and provide an opportunity to participants to come together to form Self Help Groups.
- Nutrition and health education of women has been intensified through innovative measures undertaken by the Food and Nutrition Board since 2000.

2.3 Women and Health

- The approach to women's health has evolved over the 90's into a focus on health care. A rights based, holistic, integrated life cycle and needs based approach has been adopted. Progress is evident from the data, which shows fall in MMR from 437 in 1993 to 407 in 1998. The TFR stood at 3.2 in 1998 and the objective is to bring this down to 2.1 by 2110. IMR for girls was 70.8 in 1999 and 69.8 for boys. Latest data suggests that the IMR in 2002 stood at 64. The crude birth rate fell from 29.5 to 26.1 and the crude death rate from 9.8 to 8.7 between 1991 and 1999.

Interventions include

- The National Health Policy 2001 promises increased access to women for basic health care and commits highest priority to funding identified programmes relating to women's health.
- The Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) Programme (first phase 1997-2003, second phase starting 2003) aims at the reduction of maternal and infant mortality and creation of awareness about the rights of the population in health care. Visibility for men is sought in RCH programmes. Male participation strategy is under formulation.
- The Family Welfare Programme has adopted a Community Needs Assessment Approach since 1997, through a decentralized participatory planning strategy.
- The National Population Policy 2000 recognises links between socio-economic development and health. It affirms the commitment of the Government toward voluntary and informed choice, consent of citizens while availing of the reproductive health care services, and continuation of the target free approach in administering family planning services.
- Adolescents have been recognized as a priority group in the National Population Policy and the RCH programme.
- The sex ratio was 927 in 1991 which improved to 933 in 2001. But for the 0-6 age group, it has fallen from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001. The incidence of female foeticide has been reported from some sections of society.

Actions to stop female foeticide include

- The Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Amendment Act 2002 seeks to prevent misuse of new technologies by bringing the technique of pre-conception sex selection and use of mobile ultra sound machines within the ambit of this Act and has made punishments prescribed under the Act more stringent.

- Other relevant legislative enactments include amendment to the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971, which has been passed by the Rajya Sabha (upper House of Parliament) and includes specific punishments for conduct of illegal abortions by unqualified persons and at places not approved by the concerned authority.
- The Indian Medical Association in collaboration with UNICEF and NCW held a meeting of religious leaders in 2001 at which sex selection was strongly condemned.
- Advocacy Strategy formulated in 2002 and being implemented in partnership with UNFPA, other UN agencies, NGOs and the private sector.
- Nutrition and health of women are a high priority:
 - The International Conference on Nutrition jointly organised by WHO and FAO in December 1992 at Rome, the National Nutrition Policy adopted by the Government of India in 1993 under the aegis of Department of Women and Child Development, the National Population Policy, 2000, the National Health Policy, 2001 and the successive World Health Assemblies, the National Plan of Action on Nutrition, 1995 gave high priority to women's nutrition and health with special emphasis on nutrition and health education of women, improving nutritional status of adolescent girls, ensuring better coverage of expectant women in order to reduce the incidence of low birth weight in newborns, controlling micronutrient deficiencies of vitamin A, iron and folic acid and iodine through intensified programmes, and implementing global strategy on infant and young child feeding giving due emphasis to women's health.
 - Studies undertaken to develop National Strategy for Reducing Childhood Malnutrition under the Regional Technical Assistance programme of Asian Development Bank identified female illiteracy, age of marriage of girls and age at the first child birth as the critical determinants of malnutrition and low birth weight in newborns which directly and indirectly influence infant and maternal mortality rates.
 - In order to address the widespread problem of malnutrition particularly among women and children, the Department has set up a National Nutrition Mission under the chairpersonship of the Prime Minister in July 2003 involving a two-tier supervisory structure. In the first phase of the mission a pilot project was launched in 2002 in 51 backward districts in the country where undernourished adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women are provided 6 kg of wheat/rice per month per beneficiary free of cost. The basic objective of the mission is to address the problem of malnutrition in a holistic manner and accelerate reduction in various forms of malnutrition specially in women and children such as undernutrition, anaemia, vitamin A deficiency, iodine deficiency disorders and chronic energy deficiency. The mission would also be responsible for policy direction and effective coordination of nutrition programmes being implemented by the Government.
- HIV/AIDS has emerged as a formidable challenge to public health over the last decade. HIV prevalence in India among adults is estimated at 0.8% (or 4.58 million persons) in 2002; 25% of reported cases are women. The spread of HIV infection is not uniform across states. Six states have been categorized as high prevalence states. Key factors fuelling spread of HIV infection have been identified as labour migration from economically backward pockets to more developed regions, low literacy levels particularly among marginalized and vulnerable sections of society, gender disparity, prevalence of reproductive tract infections and sexually transmitted diseases among both men and women. Measures to deal with HIV/AIDS show progressive improvement:

- The National AIDS Control Organisation was set up in 1992.
- Phase II of the National AIDS Control programme launched in 1999 has a specific focus on strengthening the capacity of the Central/State governments to respond to HIV/AIDS on a long term basis.
- The National AIDS Control and Prevention Policy 2002 makes special mention about the protection of rights of HIV positive women in making decisions regarding pregnancy and childbirth.
- There has been a change in approach from seeing transmission mechanism as mother-to-child to seeing it as parent-to-child. The Government commits itself to providing prophylaxis for prevention of parent to child transmission and the requisite counseling to all infected mothers. This facility will be voluntary, on the basis of informed consent.
- Safe blood transfusion is assured at district level.
- As per agreed guidelines of the WHO and the GOI, by 2005, 3 million persons with HIV will be covered by anti retroviral (ARV) drugs. From April 1, 2004, free ARV drugs are being made available to mothers living with HIV.
- The Family Health Awareness Campaign is an effort to address the management of STIs and HIV/AIDS by generating awareness among the vulnerable groups, residents of rural and urban slums and vulnerable women.
- In a unique initiative the Indian Railways, a large Public Sector Institution, in partnership with UNIFEM, UNDP, UNFPA and Swavalamban through a three year pilot project (2002-2005) is using gender friendly HIV education and counseling to railway employees and their families (1.5 lakh people) in the project area of the Vijayawada division of the South Central Railways. Peer educators and counselors are the vehicle for this strategy and they interact with the railway population through five entry points – railway Mahila Mandali, railway schools, railway hospitals, railway worker's unions, railway training institutions. Once successful this model could be used in other public sector enterprises in India to provide velocity to HIV prevention and care activities.

2.4 Violence against Women

- Gender based violence is especially intractable given its invisibility. Actions include
 - Pilot project launched in 1998 to study efficacy of community based strategy of neighbourhood committees to create zero violence zones.
 - All women police stations have been set up in 14 states to facilitate the reporting of crime against women. Voluntary Action Bureaus and Family Counselling Centres in police stations seek to provide rehabilitative services.
 - Family Courts have been set up in some states to adjudicate cases relating to maintenance, custody and divorce.
 - The Parivarik Mahila Lok Adalat (PMLA) evolved by the NCW is an alternative justice delivery system which is part of the Lok Adalats (People's Courts) for providing speedy justice to women. NCW has been organizing PMLAs since 1995 in association with NGOs to complement the judicial system.
 - An innovative development has been the emergence of community level responses to VAW initiated and sustained by grassroots collectives. For example, *Nari Adalat* and *Mahila Panch* have emerged out of the collectives formed under the Mahila

- Samakhya programme in select districts of Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. They function outside the formal legal system and use community pressure and informal social control and mechanisms to punish perpetrators of violence and restore women's rights within the family. Cases of domestic violence, rape, child sexual abuse, and harassment are handled.
- The Department in 2001-2 launched Swadhar, a scheme for holistic rehabilitation of women in difficult circumstances. The target group includes destitute women, widows deserted by their families, women released from prison, trafficked girls or women rescued from brothels, victims of sexual crimes, etc.
 - Following the report of the Justice Malimath committee (2003) rape laws are under scrutiny.
 - The annual conference of highest State level police officials includes a session on violence.

2.5 Women and Economy

- The undercounting of women's work – paid and unpaid, productive and reproductive – is an old problem. A pilot Time Use Survey conducted in 1998-99 by the Central Statistical Organisation showed that 51% of women's work is not recognized as such. 93% of women workers are in informal employment (including agriculture) and a majority in low income jobs. Wage gaps between male and female labour persist and are greater in urban than rural India.
- The NCW undertook a series of public hearings in 2002 to understand the impact of globalization on women. The first of these was held in Kerala in 2001. These hearings showed that the groups of women workers who have lost jobs include women in agriculture and plantations in Kerala; workers in gem cutting, handloom weaving, construction in Tamil Nadu; others affected adversely include home based women workers in match industry, shoe and chappal making; fisher folk, bamboo workers. Reduction in prices, competition from imports, and new technologies explain these losses. On the basis of these hearings, recommendations are being formulated by the NCW.
- Export subsidies and domestic support given by the developed countries have depressed market prices in agriculture. Women in small subsistence farming households have been the worst affected. The National Agriculture Policy (2000) promises to initiate appropriate structural, functional and institutional measures to empower women, build their capabilities, and increase their access to inputs. The Department of Agriculture has constituted an Expert Committee of Women in Agriculture to analyse policies and strategies and suggest ways to make agriculture policy gender friendly. The Committee has formulated an Action Plan.
- The Multi Fibre Agreement governing export allocations to countries will end in 2005. Competition is expected to increase, pushing down wages of women workers in the sector. Government is pursuing options to enable export units to be competitive while at the same time strengthening compliance with labour laws.
- For women displaced by new technology, various measures have been initiated to train women in the work place in technology intensive industries.
- Positive measures for workers in informal employment include
 - A new policy of health insurance for workers in informal employment.
 - Following the recommendations of the Second National Commission on Labour, the Unorganised Sector Workers Bill 2003 is currently under review. This proposes to set

- up a Welfare Fund, norms for conditions of work, and some benefits to unorganized sector workers.
 - A draft Bill on Home Based Workers is also being reviewed.
 - The National Social Assistance Programme (1995) aims at ensuring a minimum national standard of social assistance over and above the assistance provided by States from their own resources.
- Institutional mechanisms to assist women workers to get their due include the Minimum Wages Act and the Equal Remuneration Act, monitored by a special cell of the Ministry of Labour. Co-ordination and monitoring of vocational training institutes of women is done by the women's cell within the Directorate of Employment and Training.

2.6 Women in power and decision making

- The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments passed in 1993 provide for reservation of 33 1/3 % of elected seats for women at different levels of local governance in both rural and urban local bodies as also one-third reservation for women to posts of chairperson of these bodies. This has dramatically increased women's participation in local bodies and a million women are now in these local bodies. In some states, the number of elected women exceeds the reserved one-third. Training and political education to newly elected women representatives is being given by both government and non government institutions. Over the past decade women in these local bodies have become more assertive and vocal and are actively participating in various developmental activities. Gender budgeting involving grassroots elected women representatives is being used for advocacy in several places. Special reservations for women from Scheduled Castes and Tribes have ensured their participation. With a few years of experience, women have emerged as articulate, motivated leaders all over the country.
- Encouraged by this success at local levels, a similar Bill for reservation of seats for women in Parliament has been introduced though not yet passed.
- The numbers of women in official positions remains relatively low. The representation of women in decision making level through the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service which stood at 5.4% in 1987 increased to 7.6% in 2000. Of all employees in central, state and local governments 17.47 % were women in 2001.

2.7 Human Rights and Women

- The Indian Constitution prohibits discrimination between men and women and enables the State to allow affirmative discrimination in favour of women as a fundamental right. India has ratified CEDAW in 1993 and Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1992. The State has created independent national institutions for the protection and promotion of human rights for all citizens, especially women, religious minorities and caste based communities such as
 - National Human Rights Commission, 1994
 - National Commission for Minorities, 1992
 - National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 1990.
- Actions taken to prevent and curb trafficking include
 - A manual under the aegis of National Human Rights Commission is being prepared in co-operation with UNICEF Country Office and National Law School, Bangalore containing guidelines regarding the handling of cases pertaining to trafficking of

women and children. Keeping in view their state of victimization and vulnerability, the manual will help the judiciary in speedier justice for the victims and to take more stringent action against traffickers.

- As part of its commitment to fight trafficking the Department plans to introduce a new scheme to give financial assistance for rescue of trafficked women. The new scheme proposes to assist voluntary agencies working in the sector.
- The Department is also in the process of finalizing amendment of the ITPA Act to stop the further victimization of rescued/trafficked girls and to make the law more stringent for the traffickers.
- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in partnership with premier research institutions and UNIFEM is working on a status report on trafficking in women and girls in India. The study is investigating causal and behavioural aspects of all agents in trafficking in 11 states. An offshoot of the research has been the appointment of Nodal Officers in 21 states, thus initiating the process of mainstreaming the issue of trafficking within the human rights agenda of the different states.
- The Rights of Older Women have been recognized. Implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing necessitates linkages from the Central Government to the Panchayat level associations. At the national level, the Government of India has formulated the National Policy on Older Persons in 1999 with special focus on women. The policy visualizes that the state will extend support for financial security, health care, shelter, welfare and other needs of older persons, provide protection against abuse and exploitation, make available opportunities for development of their potential, seek their participation, and provide services. A National Council for Older Persons has been set up under the chairmanship of the Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment.
- Religious leaders and opinion leaders have spoken out strongly against trafficking.

2.8. Women and Media

- Media is extensively used in changing gender stereotypes and providing information. The approach to media strategy is two fold, to use it as an instrument of change and to control its possible misuse. An integrated media campaign to project a positive image of women and the girl child is an important component of Government's communication strategy. There is an increased presence of women in managing media and in gender sensitization of the media in depiction of sensitive issues.
- Media is encouraged to develop a code of conduct, professional guidelines, other self-regulatory mechanisms to remove gender stereotypes, and promote balanced portrayals of women and men. Policy initiatives include
 - A Code for Commercial Advertising
 - Review of programmes by Doordarshan prior to telecast
 - 50% representation of women in the Film Censor Board
 - Information Technology Act has declared online pornography a punishable offence
 - The Parliamentary Committee has issued a stricture against the depiction of domestic violence by the media.

2.9. Women and Environment

- Women have traditionally been responsible for subsistence and survival tasks like providing water and food, fuel and fodder collection. The quality of rural environment directly affects women's livelihood. The nodal agency for activities relating to environment is the Ministry of Environment and Forests. Gender sensitive resource management is encouraged through several schemes including
 - Under the Joint Forest Management Schemes, 50% of the members are required to be women.
 - Women's participation is encouraged in community resource management and watershed programmes.
 - Rural women living below the poverty line are provided with financial assistance to raise nurseries in forest lands
 - The Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources is implementing several programmes to benefit women by reducing drudgery and providing better and convenient systems for cooking and lighting.
 - Environmental education programmes supported by the Department of Education play an important role in creating awareness and seeking locale specific solutions to environmental problems.
 - New initiatives to improve urban environment, especially water and sanitation, emphasize partnerships between private, community and government agencies.

2.10. The Girl Child

- 1991-2000 was observed as the decade of the Girl Child. The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1992) recognizes the right of the girl child to equal opportunities, to eliminate all forms of violence perpetuated against the girl child and to provide inputs for personality development of the girl child. India is a signatory to the CRC. The first report to the UN Committee of Experts on the Rights of the Child was submitted in 2000.
- Actions to improve the situation of the girl child include
 - The ICDS programme gives special focus to health and nutrition needs of girls. It now covers 31.5 million children and 6.0 million expectant and nursing mothers.
 - The nutrition and health of adolescent girls received due recognition in Government programmes. Kishori Shakti Yojana, an intervention for adolescent girls (11-18 years) was launched in 2000-01 as part of the Integrated Child Development Services programme. The scheme is currently being implemented in 2000 ICDS projects. Iron and folic acid supplementation of adolescent girls is being undertaken in the World Bank Assisted ICDS projects and also under the Reproductive and Child Health Programme of Department of Family Welfare on pilot scale. Micronutrient supplements are provided to adolescent girls through ICDS in 4 States in collaboration with the Micronutrient Initiative.
 - Immunization of the girl child is given special attention under the RCH programme of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
 - Under the DPEP and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan specific strategies have been designed to enhance girls access, enrolment and schooling.
 - Intra household discrimination and household son preference require attitudinal shifts for which awareness campaigns are regularly conducted through the media.

3 Part Three: Institutional Development

3.1 The **National Machinery** for the advancement of women is visualized as a set of structures and systems, with the Department for Women and Child Development at the centre.

- The **Department of Women and Child Development** set up in 1985 as a part of the Ministry of Human Resources Development is the nodal department in the Government of India to look after advancement of women and children
- The **National Commission for Women** was established by an Act of Parliament in 1992 to safeguard the rights and interests of women. It acts as a statutory ombudsperson for women whose annual report containing recommendations is to be placed in Parliament by the Government of India with a detailed compliance report.
- The **National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development** assists the Department in the areas of training and research. Objectives of the Institute include the development and promotion of voluntary action in social development. It has developed innovative gender training/ sensitization modules.
- **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh** (National Credit Fund for Women), established in 1993, has as its main objective to facilitate credit support or micro finance to poor women, as an instrument of socio-economic change and development.
- **Central Social Welfare Board** is an umbrella organization networking the activities of State Social Welfare Boards and voluntary organizations. It implements a number of schemes including Family Counseling Centres, Short Stay Homes, Rape Crisis Intervention Centres, crèches for children of working mothers, etc.
- At state level, the **State Departments of Women and Child Development** and the **State Commissions for Women** form part of this institutional system. The latter have been set up in 18 states and union territories to act as statutory ombudspersons.
- Gender focal points (**Women's Cells**) have been formed in the ministries in the development sector, including Education, Rural Development, Labour, Agriculture.
- The **Panchayati Raj system** and **urban local self-government** institutions provide a framework for women's empowerment in political participation and decision making all over the country
- A **Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women** was constituted by the Lok Sabha in 1997 to review the effectiveness of measures taken by the central government for the empowerment of women. This has 30 members, 20 from the Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha.
- The **Planning Commission** carries out periodical reviews of programmes and policies impacting on women.
- Commissions and Committees are set up from time to time to focus on specific areas.

3.2 In the area of **Gender Statistics**, important steps have been taken to improve the data base on women, to institutionalize systems of data collection, and to use this data in planning and advocacy for gender justice.

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has started a regular publication, 'Women and Men in India' since 1995. A National Plan of Action identifying data gaps has been formulated. For some indicators requiring detailed probing the Plan of Action recommends that NGOs take the lead. A National Data Dissemination Policy has been

formulated. A Time Use Survey was conducted in six states. The report was brought out in 2000 and results have been widely disseminated.

- Gender sensitization of enumerators and respondents was undertaken for the population census in 1991 and in 2001, in partnership with UNIFEM. In order to capture women's work better, a few probing questions were added in the Individual Slip administered as part of the Census process to elicit better information on women's work, paid or unpaid. This has increased the reporting of women's work, with overall work participation rate of women being 19.7 in 1981, 22.3 in 1991 and 25.7 in 2001.
- Special effort was made to obtain information on women in unorganized sector activities in the Economic Census conducted in 1998.
- The National Sample Survey (NSS) Employment- Unemployment round of 1999-2000 included a module on the Informal Sector, which has yielded important and new data on the size and characteristics of home based workers which is approximately 30 millions, a majority of whom are women.
- National Family Health Surveys (1992-93 and 1998-99) have further strengthened the database for implementation of the RCH approach as adopted after the ICPD.
- All programme statistics are expected to provide gender based data/information.
- To enable preparation of a Gender Development Index, 18 indicators have been identified, after extensive consultations, for collection of data at district level.

3.3 Gender Mainstreaming

- The Tenth Plan reaffirms the major strategy of mainstreaming gender perspectives in all sectoral policies and programmes and plans of action. Women specific interventions will be undertaken to bridge existing gaps.
- Gender mainstreaming has been a major approach to ensuring gender justice especially through creating an enabling situation for making women equal partners and beneficiaries of all socio-economic activities and development in the country. The Eighth Plan (1992-97) spoke of the need to ensure a definite flow of funds from the general development sectors to women. The Ninth Plan introduced the Women's Component Plan (WCP) - that 30% of funds/ benefits under various welfare and developmental schemes were to be earmarked for women. A review of the progress of the WCP has confirmed its effectiveness. The Union Budget of 2001-2 and 2002-3 has been analyzed in a gender perspective and identified schemes that are 'pro women' (with significant women component) and 'women specific' (targeted to women and girls). It is seen that the Ministries/Departments of Family Welfare, Health, Education and Indian Systems of Medicine contributed to women 50-70% of their gross budgetary support during the Ninth Plan period. Labour and Rural Development contributed between 30-50% of their gross budgetary support.
- State Human Development Reports (HDRs) have emerged as a powerful tool for advocacy for gender justice since their inception in 1995. Gender mainstreaming of the HDRs has been done both in the form of specific chapters on gender as also highlighting gender concerns in the sectoral analysis of education, health, livelihoods and governance. The ownership of the State HDRs rests with the State Governments and the exercise is supported by the Planning Commission, Government of India and through the Human Development Resource Centre (HDRC), UNDP. The process of State HDR preparation is underway in 27 Indian States. Seven States have already prepared their State HDRs and eight State HDRs are being finalised.

In the state of Karnataka, after the publication of the report in 1999, the State government launched a massive programme (*Sthree Shakthi*) for the empowerment of rural women through the institution of self –help groups. The objective of this programme is to enhance the financial stability of rural women, thereby creating an environment for social change, through the promotion of thrift and credit.

Some of the common findings across the States are:

- Wide gender differentials persist across districts in all States irrespective of the overall level of development.
- Socio-cultural characteristics of the State play a very important role in determining the status of women.
- Women suffer from double deprivation of low attainments and wide differentials across all dimensions of human development –health, education, livelihoods and decision-making.

3.4 **Partnerships** have been essential to the formulation and implementation of approaches to gender equality.

- The country wide network of more than 12,000 voluntary organizations have played a very significant role in the empowerment of women and development of children as they share the major burden of implementing Governmental policies and programmes, with the exception of ICDS. NGOs have demonstrated viable alternatives in the areas of women’s literacy, support services, micro-credit for poor women, employment and income generation, gender sensitization, organizing women into SHGs, fight against atrocities, etc. The various programmes and schemes of the Department are based on the concept of Self Help Groups that have been set up with the co-operation of organizations at the grassroot level.
- The Department also works in partnership with bilateral, multilateral and UN agencies on women-specific and women related projects. Examples include gender budgeting initiative, with UNIFEM.

4. Part Four: Main Challenges and actions to address them

Existing challenges and actions proposed to address them are given below. In general, existing approaches will be intensified through more effective implementation of existing policies. Partnerships between Government and civil society to address gender issues will be continued and further strengthened.

Some of the priority concerns over the next few years include the following

Human Rights and Feminization of Poverty

- Strengthen the implementation and monitoring by Governments, communities, civil society organisations and corporate sector of gender equality and rights based policies and programmes with a view to eradicating feminization of poverty as a priority, particularly among rural women.
- Low attainments and wide gender gaps at the upper primary and secondary stages of education are areas of concern. The challenge remains to improve the quality and relevance of the school system, and to integrate early childhood care and education with the schooling system. Actions to address the main determinants of persistent gender inequalities such as illiteracy, deprivation and stereotypical socialization patterns and adverse cultural practices will improve educational and other outcomes.

Monitoring of Progress on the Implementation of CEDAW and PFA

- Strengthen national processes to review the progress on full implementation of CEDAW, the PFA and the B+5 Outcome Document. Facilitate Government and NGO collaboration at regional and national levels for this purpose.
- Initiate a process for development of appropriate indicators at national and regional levels to facilitate monitoring and implementation of CEDAW and B+5.

Violence Against Women

- Strengthen support services for victims of gender based violence.
- Strengthen the legal system to address issues of gender based violence.
- Strengthen implementation of the SAARC Convention on Trafficking of Women and Children
- Strengthen measures against female foeticide, including advocacy for attitudinal change.

Women's work and Globalization

Most women workers in India are engaged in agriculture, where livelihoods are insecure and wages are low. There also exists a significant gender gap in terms of wages. Women's unpaid work is "invisible" and unrecognized both socially and in the national accounting schemes. Actions to improve women's work and livelihood outcomes in a context of globalization include

- Support processes to engender global trade agreements and treaties
- Support efforts to promote policies and institutions which give women, especially rural women, employment, ownership and access to economic resources, assets, capacity building and social security. Attention to training and re-focusing of skills.
- Continue to strengthen the networks of women workers in the informal sector
- Extend and deepen the reach of ICT beyond the educated middle class, including women.

- In addition, need to examine and address the social impacts of globalization

Building capacity for gender sensitive planning

- To take forward the processes towards gender sensitive governance by developing and applying tools such as gender analysis of budgets, gender audit and engendered planning and monitoring at the national and local levels.

Political Participation

Women are under-represented in governance and decision-making positions at all levels. Women's presence in local bodies does not guarantee women's effective participation in decision-making. Challenges faced by women in the electoral process such as women being elected as proxy candidates, intimidation of independent women candidates and other such constraints still persist.

- Continue to strengthen processes including through affirmative action to increase women's participation in decision-making and leadership.
- Enhance capacity of elected women through training and political education.

Health

Serious gender gaps remain in health outcomes such as mortality and morbidity rates and life expectancy. High fertility rates and low mean age at marriage has a debilitating impact on health of girls and women Diseases like anaemia, stemming from nutritional deficiency, persist. There are increasing numbers and vulnerability of women to HIV/AIDS and issues pertaining to mental health of women. Actions will include

- Intensification of efforts to address the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS using a multi-sectoral approach and building capacity of individuals, institutions and networks.
- More effective implementation of existing programmes

Media & ICT

- Create mechanisms to increase women's access to media and communication technology, and support the training of media personnel to eliminate gender bias in reporting
- Support processes to engender ICT in all initiatives of PFA and CEDAW implementation
- Engender the depiction of women in media. Gender to be included in curricula of art and drama schools.
- Regulatory mechanisms for the media to be put in place and implemented

Information sharing and advocacy

- Develop expertise and share learning of best practices on key gender concerns
- Ensure free access to data collected by and through official agencies for all users.
- Providing information for women, in particular, reaching out to grass roots women

National Women's Machinery

- Strengthen the capacity of line ministries/ departments/ committees and shift their focus from project implementation towards formulation of gender sensitive policy, advocacy and monitoring with a focus on the more disadvantaged women belonging to poor and weaker and other vulnerable sections of society