

National Policy for Women 2016

Articulating a Vision for Empowerment of Women

DRAFT



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CONTENTS

<u>S.No.</u>		<u>Page No.</u>
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Vision	2
3.	Mission	3
4.	Objectives	3
5.	Priority Areas	3
	1. Health including food security and nutrition	3-4
	2. Education	5-6
	3. Economy	6-10
	4. Governance and Decision Making	11-12
	5. Violence Against Women	12-13
	6. Enabling Environment	13-16
	7. Environment and Climate Change	16-17
6.	Emerging Areas	17
7.	Operational Strategies	17
8.	Resource Management	21
9.	Implementation of Policy	22

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Empowerment of women is a socio-political ideal envisioned in relation to the wider framework of women's rights. It is a process that leads women to realise their full potential, their rights to have access to opportunities, resources and choices with the freedom of decision making both within and outside home. Empowerment would be achieved only when advancement in the conditions of women is accompanied by their ability to influence the direction of social change gained through equal opportunities in economic, social and political spheres of life.
- 1.2 The Constitution of India conveys a powerful mandate for equality and rights of women in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Duties and also provides for specific provisions for affirmative actions. India is also a signatory to a number of UN Conventions, primarily Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action and Convention on Rights of the Child where the commitment of the nation to protect and empower its women and girls is quite pronounced. The recent endorsement by India, of the ambitious 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will further change the course of development by addressing the key challenges such as poverty, inequality, and violence against women, which is critical for the global success of the goals as well.
- 1.3 Notwithstanding the Constitutional mandate, the discourse on women's empowerment has been gradually evolving over the last few decades, wherein paradigm shifts have occurred – from seeing women as mere recipients of welfare benefits to mainstreaming gender concerns and engaging them in the development process of the country.
- 1.4 Nearly a decade and half has passed since the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (NPEW), 2001 was formulated, which laid down a comprehensive progressive policy for the advancement, development and empowerment of women with appropriate policy prescriptions and strategies. Since then, significant strides in global technology and information systems have placed the Indian economy on a trajectory of higher growth, impacting the general populace and women in particular, in unique and different ways.
- 1.5 These changes have brought forth fresh opportunities and possibilities for women's empowerment while at the same time presenting new and emerging challenges which along with persisting socio-economic problems continue to hinder gender equality and holistic empowerment of women. Further, the deep-rooted patriarchal social constructs position women in disempowered social and economic hierarchies that impede in realization of their rights.
- 1.6 Several paradoxical trends have been observed in the past few years. The growing acknowledgement of gender rights and equality is juxtaposed against increase in reporting of various forms of violence against women such as rape, trafficking, dowry etc.; expansion of new work opportunities for women alongside continued weak bargaining power in the labour market; increasing number of educated, aspiring career women entering the work place, while large sections of women are still in the low paid informal sector. Similarly, feminisation of agriculture and growing number of women farmers raises the larger issue of gender entitlements to land and assets ownership;

growing state of art medical facilities has to be analysed against high Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR), Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), malnutrition and anaemia and lack of geriatric care and support; growing urbanisation and resultant migration of women in relation to the availability of safe spaces and social security net for vulnerable women. Though climate change has significant gendered impact, women have been sidelined in debates about managing climate change and environmental resources. The misuse of rapid advances in Information Technology (IT) and telephony has resulted in new and varied forms of sexual abuse such as cyber crimes and harassment of women through mobiles and internet. The regulatory frameworks are not in pace with the growth in technology as yet.

- 1.7 Investment in basic social infrastructure and services such as education, health, food security and nutrition, social protection, legal empowerment and poverty alleviation programs, will continue to be of paramount importance. However, the new millennium and the dynamics of a rapidly changing global and national scenario have ushered in new facets of development and growth giving rise to complex socio-economic and cultural challenges for women in a society with deep rooted cultural and social beliefs about gender roles.
- 1.8 The current status of women with respect to human development parameters, legal rights for women to life and freedom from violence, economic and social discrimination and their rights to equality and equity shows that a lot still remains to be done. It is necessary therefore, to reinforce the rights-based approach for creating an enabling environment in which women can enjoy their rights.
- 1.9 In the coming years, India is expected to gain significantly from its 'demographic dividend' as the share of its potential productive workforce will increase in numbers as compared to the aging population of other countries. To what extent the country can seize this dividend and benefit from it will largely depend on how women exercise their rights and entitlements and contribute to the development process.
- 1.10 There is need therefore to formulate a new policy that can guide the transformative shift required for making gender rights a reality, addressing women's issues in all its facets, capturing emerging challenges and ultimately positioning women as equal partners of sustained development progress that the country is experiencing presently.
- 1.11 The re-scripting of women's empowerment has been envisaged as a socially inclusive right based approach while reinforcing the rights and entitlements provided under the Constitution of India. The policy will enable sustainable socio economic, political empowerment of women to claim their rights and entitlements, control over resources and formulation of strategic choices in realisation of the principles of gender equality and justice.
- 1.12 As a generic policy framework, the National Policy for Women, 2016, guides various sectors to issue more detailed policy documents that are sector specific. Sectors will be able to integrate the principles contained in this Policy Framework into their prevailing policy, strategy and program documents.

2. VISION

A society in which, women attain their full potential and are able to participate as equal partners in all spheres of life and influence the process of social change.

3. MISSION

To create an effective framework to enable the process of developing policies, programmes and practices which will ensure equal rights and opportunities for women in the family, community, workplace and in governance.

4. OBJECTIVES

- i) Creating a conducive socio-cultural, economic and political environment to enable women enjoy *de jure* and *de facto* fundamental rights and realize their full potential.
- ii) Mainstreaming gender in all-round development processes/programmes/projects/actions.
- iii) A holistic and life-cycle approach to women's health for appropriate, affordable and quality health care.
- iv) Improving and incentivizing access of women/ girls to universal and quality education.
- v) Increasing and incentivising work force participation of women in the economy.
- vi) Equal participation in the social, political and economic spheres including the institutions of governance and decision making.
- vii) Transforming discriminatory societal attitudes, mindsets with community involvement and engagement of men and boys.
- viii) Developing a gender sensitive legal-judicial system.
- ix) Elimination of all forms of violence against women through strengthening of policies, legislations, programmes, institutions and community engagement.
- x) Development and empowerment of women belonging to the vulnerable and marginalized groups.
- xi) Building and strengthening stakeholder participation and partnerships for women empowerment.
- xii) Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, audit and data systems to bridge gender gaps.

5. PRIORITY AREAS

I. Health including food security and nutrition

- i) Maternal and peri-natal mortality will remain a priority to bring down the high rates of MMR and IMR. The outreach and capacity of the frontline workers like ASHAs, ANMs, Anganwadi workers and the number of trained skilled home birth professionals with supportive supervision will be increased in remote and backward areas.
- ii) A coordinated Referral Transport System (RTS) for safe deliveries as well as emergency obstetric care will be made available in all areas especially in difficult, remote and isolated areas and during the time of natural/environmental calamities.
- iii) Focus on Pregnant and Lactating (P&L) women will be continued by organizing special health camps for the prevention and treatment of diseases affecting P & L women such as Anaemia, low BMI, under nutrition etc., and launch special drives to impart health and nutrition education.

- iv) A gender transformative health strategy which recognises women's reproductive rights with shifts such as family planning focus from female sterilisation to male sterilisation will be developed and implemented.
- v) Apart from maternal health, the focus of other health problems of women including communicable and non-communicable diseases like cancer, cardio vascular disease, HIV/AIDS will be given prioritised attention with appropriate strategies and interventions.
- vi) Taking into account the vulnerable status of elderly women above 60 years of age who constitute 8.4% of the population, geriatric health care will require special attention in conformity with the National Policy on Senior Citizens 2011. Geriatric services including preventive, curative, and rehabilitative healthcare will be strengthened with appropriate government and public-private sector participation.
- vii) Health interventions will aim at both physical and psychological well-being of women.
- viii) The National Mental Health Policy (2014) recognises that women have a greater risk of mental disorders due to various reasons primarily due to discrimination, violence and abuse. A systematic approach to provide requisite screening, care and treatment especially at primary level will be made.
- ix) Special emphasis will be given to the health care challenges of adolescents and investments in their health care. Adolescent sexual and reproductive health needs will get a focus of attention as a health issue in all health centres and hospitals.
- x) There is a dearth of health care for women in their menopausal age. Though, the phase is generally dismissed as a natural occurrence, women are increasingly facing physical and emotional health problems like osteoporosis, cardiovascular diseases, depression etc. Suitable interventions will be initiated in this regard.
- xi) Traditional knowledge of women including healing practices will be promoted for indigenous treatment systems in remote areas.
- xii) Special attention will be given to the expansion of health insurance schemes such as RSBY and the same linked to programmes like ICDS, JSY, NRLM, NREGS, NULM benefitting women particularly the vulnerable and marginalised.
- xiii) To improve the health services, complete, accurate, and timely gender based data as well as organizational data is urgently required. Investments in data infrastructure for linking gender based data collected by public and private organizations and individual researchers will be made to address the health reforms in other diseases apart from maternal health and to monitor the impact of e-initiatives.
- xiv) As assisted reproduction pregnancies are more risky due to the high rate of multiple births and the risk of infection, healthcare coverage will be provided to the surrogate during the pregnancy, during post-pregnancy checkups and treatments that follow.
- xv) Nutrition will be accorded utmost priority as women are at high risk for nutritional deficiencies in all the stages of their life cycle. To tackle the problem of malnutrition, focussed attention will be paid at every stage right from Ante-Natal Care (ANC) and Post Natal Care (PNC) for healthy foetal development to the needs of adolescent girls to the stage of elderly women. Interventions and services for addressing the

intergenerational cycle of under-nutrition, with focus on nutritional care for the first 1000 days of the child after birth will be strengthened.

- xvi) Improving the nutrition and health status of adolescent girls will be accorded special focus. Suitable strategies to end intra-household discrimination in nutritional matters with regard to girls and women will also be devised. Regular data on prevalence of nutritional deficiency in Children sex-wise (district wise data) and data on weight at birth (by sex) will be ensured.
- xvii) Effectiveness of ICDS in preventing and reducing under-nutrition and promoting young child survival and development roles of ICDS & Health functionaries - ANMs, AWWs, ASHAs, AWHs and their team work with greater community involvement, especially at critical contact points will be reviewed and strengthened.
- xviii) Nutritious and safe food through Public Distribution System (PDS) for households especially the unreached women and children with high nutritional vulnerabilities as envisaged in National Food Security Act, 2013 will be made available. Management of institutions of food/grain banks by women Groups (SHGs) could be considered to enable uninterrupted supply of food grains even in times of natural/man-made calamities or disasters such as flood, drought etc.

II. Education

- i) Pre- School education at the Anganwadi Centres will be strengthened and efforts will be made to improve access to pre-primary education for girl children by involving the community and sensitizing the parents. This will improve children's communication and cognitive skills as a preparation for entry into primary school. This will help older children, particularly girls, to attend schools and prevent their poor performance and early dropouts by making them free from the responsibility of sibling care.
- ii) In conformity with the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, ensuring implementation of quality elementary education across board for all children including differently abled children and other marginalised children will remain a priority. Every effort will be made to effectively implement the RTE Act, 2009 by using the education cess particularly in addressing the infrastructure gap, availability of adequately trained teachers, promoting safe and inclusive school environment etc. in remote and tribal areas.
- iii) Priority will be accorded to increased enrolment and retention of adolescent girls in schools, at post primary level it will be done through provision of gender friendly facilities like functional girls' toilets, and higher recruitment of women teachers. Promotion of skill development, vocational training and life skills as a part of the secondary school education curriculum for adolescent girls and young women will be given importance. Efforts will be made to address the repetition rates for girls including those from the marginalised communities with varying underlying causes to arrest drop-out. A mission mode approach for literacy amongst women is envisaged.
- iv) Efforts will be made to provide a supportive environment in schools and colleges through a responsive complaint mechanism to address discriminatory attitudes within the organisation and in practice, particularly on the issue of sexual harassment and intimidation of girls and young women. Opportunities for recreation and participation in cultural activities will be promoted.

- v) Continued efforts will be made for the gender sensitization of the faculty and curriculum, content and pedagogies for an understanding of concepts of masculinity and femininity and gender stereotypes. Gender champions in schools and colleges will be promoted to ensure gender sensitivity in the educational system.
- vi) There is a need for quality management of government schools in terms of teaching, facilities and standards. Monitoring and evaluation by the community, Mothers groups and SHGs will be encouraged.
- vii) Children of migrant families tend to get left out of the school system and existing schemes are not effectively coordinated or implemented. Innovative and accessible educational systems will be developed, especially in large construction sites, salt pan areas, plantations, and other manufacturing zones, which predominantly employ women labour.
- viii) Major constraints that prevent women from accessing higher and technical/scientific education should be identified and girls will be encouraged to take up new subject choices linked to career opportunities. An inter-sectoral plan of action will be formulated for encouraging the enrolment of women in professional/scientific courses, by provision of financial assistance, coaching, hostels, child care etc.
- ix) Distance from schools, especially secondary schools is an important factor that impacts enrolment and retention of girls in schools particularly in rural and remote areas and consequently impedes girl's access to education. Innovative transportation models will be developed such as cluster pooling of mini buses, differently abled transport, tempos, autos in addition to increasing public transport frequencies.
- x) Through innovative partnerships with leading universities at the international level, opportunities for higher education will be may be expanded for ensuring access and quality to girl students and staff and also for nurturing of talent and entrepreneurship to contribute to the national development challenges.
- xi) Distance education plays an important role in providing opportunities of higher education to women of all ages. Universities and academic institutions will be encouraged to launch online distance education courses to promote skill development and entrepreneurship for all women including those who had a break in their educational attainment.
- xii) Adult literacy will have an added objective to link literacy programs to life skills, financial literacy, education on rights, laws, schemes etc. in partnership with government schemes such as NRLM
- xiii) Efforts will be made to remove the disparities in access to and proficiency in information and communication technology (ICT), particularly between socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged children, and between rural and urban schools as the use of ICT has now become pivotal for the entire education system. Public-private partnerships (PPP) will be adopted for building ICT infrastructure, developing applications and locally relevant content using gender-sensitive language, operations and maintenance and developing the capacity of teachers required for harnessing the full capacity of ICT productive tools.
- xiv) Regular Audit on a continuous basis, of the various schemes and incentives, subsidies that are being offered to promote girls education will be undertaken to assess whether these interventions have resulted in transformative changes.

III. Economy

Poverty

Women constitute majority of population affected by poverty. Efforts for assessment of the incidence of poverty by gender estimates will be done as household estimates do not provide gender poverty estimates. Relation between gender and poverty dynamics will be addressed. Since poverty head count ratio is not sex disaggregated, alternative gendered pilot surveys to address intra-household differentials in wellbeing will be undertaken. All poverty eradication programmes will give focus to women participation.

Raising visibility

- i) Increasing the participation of women in the workforce, the quality of work allotted to them and their contribution to the GDP are indicators of the extent of women being mainstreamed into the economy. Important macro-economic policies will be engendered and mainstreamed so that women's concerns are adequately reflected and they benefit equally from the fruits of development.
- ii) Gender wage gap across rural and urban, agricultural and non- agricultural jobs, regular and casual employment will be addressed. Ensuring pay parity, satisfactory conditions of work are critical subjects for insecurity for women particularly in the informal employment. This growing informalisation and casualization of women's work / labour will also be adequately addressed. .
- iii) Fiscal and monetary policies will be analysed from gender perspective since they have impending impact on the lives of women. The gender affirmative role of direct taxation will be further enhanced through various incentives like reduction in stamp duties for women if assets are registered in their name, lowering of income tax slabs for women etc.
- iv) Financial inclusion of women needs to be universalised so that women gain a financial identity, have access to financial services such as credit sources, saving services, insurance, pension schemes aimed towards poor women (with contributions), special financial literacy programmes for the poor women, and also availing of the transfer benefits and subsidies that are offered by the government. All financial inclusion schemes will incorporate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess gender outcomes to women and in particular to the women belonging to the marginalized and vulnerable sections.
- v) Recognising that trade agreements are not gender neutral and that differential impact of trade policies on gender exists, especially for women working in agriculture, food processing, textiles etc., A full review of all existing trade treaties and agreements from a gender equity dimension will be made. Future negotiations should be backed by Gender Trade Impact Assessment of policy and agreements on women's wages, health and livelihood.
- vi) Women undertake the bulk of unpaid care work such as looking after and educating children, looking after older family members, caring for the sick, preparing food, cleaning, and collecting water and fuel etc. This unequal burden of unpaid care undermines women's participation in economy. Recognizing women's unpaid work in terms of economic and societal value, household surveys will be undertaken to assess

the gender inequality in the household work and undertake suitable strategies to integrate unpaid work with the major programmes. Further measures will be undertaken to free woman's time for paid work through time-saving technologies, infrastructure, child/parental care services (Crèches) and child care/parental leave.

- vii) New Challenges such as increased inter-state migration, changing labour markets, meeting aspirations of the growing literate women workforce, and rapidly changing technology for women in labour force will be addressed through adequate/new skill development programmes.
- viii) Identification of differently abled women through support of family, community, schools etc. and other stakeholders will be promoted along with family counselling and education to enable them to assist their differently abled members. Care-giver support programs for people with disabilities will be planned and made available for example, at the community, panchayat or municipal level. Special provisions under various rural and urban livelihood schemes for women with different forms of disabilities will be made.
- ix) In order to prevent marginalization of women migrant workers at their place of destination, a system of new registration or portability of entitlements such as ration cards and identity papers from source place will be ensured particularly under PDS. Registration of tribal migrants by Panchayats will be ensured. Special efforts will be made to safeguard the interests of migrant tribal worker especially domestic workers by registration of migrant domestic workers under the Unorganized Sector Social Security Act 2008. The system of monitoring and accountability of placement agencies for domestic workers will be strengthened.

Agriculture

- i) Gender equity is an important concern for sustainable agricultural development. With increasing feminization of agriculture, women will be recognized as farmers in the agriculture and allied sectors and related value chain development. Efforts will be made to support women farmers in their livelihoods, their visibility and identity, secure their rights over resources, ensure entitlements over agricultural services, provide social protection cover.
- ii) Concerted efforts will be made to ensure that the schemes/programmes for training women in soil conservation, social forestry, dairy development, horticulture, organic farming, livestock including small animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries etc. are expanded to benefit women working in the agriculture sector. Attention will be given to ensure the availability of extension services offered by different line departments to women farmers. Efforts will be made to utilize skills and capacities of successful women farmers as last mile extension workers and trainers or '*Krishi Sakhis*' in order to extend agriculture extension services.
- iii) Women have been traditionally known to conserve genetic diversity (seed banks, selection and preservation) and champion good agricultural practices. Women collectives like SHGs, cooperatives will be encouraged and incentivized in following sustainable agriculture practices. Agriculture for Nutrition campaign will be launched in selected districts where nutrition indicators are poor in popularizing cultivation of nutritional crops, horticulture products and traditional varieties. Procurement of such crops will be prioritized here, so that the same can be used in Anganwadis, for supplementary nutrition and in school mid day meals. Skill development for forest-

based, livestock-based, poultry and fisheries-based livelihoods will be encouraged as part of the inclusive strategy in agriculture.

- iv) Legal provisions of the relevant Acts will be effectively implemented to ensure the rights of women to immovable property. Exploitation that arises out of land ownership by women such as witch hunting will also be addressed.
- v) Regarding resource rights of women, efforts will be made to prioritize women in all government land redistribution, land purchase and land lease schemes to enable women to own and control land through issue of individual or joint land *pattas*. In the case of private land, joint registration of land with spouses or registration solely in the name of women will be encouraged along with measures such as concessions in registration fee and stamp duty etc. to incentivize land transfers to women.
- vi) Women farmers' collective farming enterprises will be incentivized, by providing support for post-harvest storage, processing and marketing facilities. Where this is done by leasing in land, appropriate changes in tenancy laws will be facilitated. Institutional and funding support for the formation of women producers associations and existing women's federations/cooperatives to process, store, transport and market farm produce, milk, fish, crops etc. will be provided.
- vii) Efforts will also be directed to accurately capture and reflect women's work in the agriculture and allied sectors including gender differentials in wages, gender sensitive social security policies at regular intervals to inform Research and Development, policies and programmes.
- viii) Gender-disaggregated land ownership database at all levels starting from the revenue village upwards will be collected and maintained for more focused interventions.
- ix) Steps will be taken to involve women farmers in on-farm participatory research for agricultural technology and development of women friendly implements/ tools. Database of women friendly technologies/equipments available for all stages in the agriculture value chain for bulk purchase with list of manufacturers will be developed.
- x) Wives of farmers who committed suicide on account of failure of crops or heavy indebtedness are highly vulnerable and are left behind to take care of their children and family. Special package for these women that contains comprehensive inputs of programs of various departments/Ministries like agriculture, rural development, KVIC, MWCD will be provided for alternative livelihood options.

Industry, Labour and Employment (Skill Development, Entrepreneurship)

- i) As the Indian economy grows and more new and innovative initiatives take place in the public and private domain, women have to have a fair share of these development gains. Indicators of mainstreaming women in the economy such as participation of women in workforce, type of work allotted to them and their contribution to GDP will be developed and monitored.
- ii) Suitable strategies will be developed and implemented to ensure that women have equal opportunities to enter and enjoy decent work, in just and favourable environment, including fair and equal wages, social security measures, occupational safety and health measures. Appropriate steps will be taken to facilitate women workers and economic units move from the informal economy to the formal economy.

- iii) Effort will be made for training and skill upgradation of women in traditional, new and emerging areas to promote women employment in both organized /unorganized sectors as envisaged in the new National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015. Special Emphasis will be given to skill development of marginalised women and those in difficult circumstances in the unorganised sector, and by linking them to urban and rural livelihood programs. Special provisions will also be made for promoting re-entry of highly /technically skilled women in the job market especially for those who resign or take a break to manage the care economy.
- iv) Entrepreneurial development must ensure participation of women through accelerated involvement in various sectors through programmes and schemes of various departments/Ministries while identifying their needs such as access to credit, technology, market etc.
- v) Specific efforts will be made to increase work participation of women in the organised and industry sectors. The availability/creation of part-time jobs and arrangement of flexi-hours in the organized sectors will be promoted. Provision of affordable housing and gender friendly facilities at workplace will be made as more women tend to migrate to cities and metros for work.
- vi) A review of Labour Acts and policies for increasing female work participation and for eliminating discrimination and promoting equity will be undertaken. Suitable policies will be introduced to promote workforce participation in terms of parental leave and child and elder care.
- vii) Effective safety nets mechanisms will be formulated for migrant women such as those working in construction, domestic servants; brick kilns plantations, along with protection of their entitlement of benefits such as BPL and ration cards.
- viii) A mechanism will be put in place for monitoring the compliance of mandatory laws like Maternity Benefit Act and The Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, and display of the rights and benefits of female employees provided by the organization. Provisions such as natal and post-natal benefits, child care facilities, flexitime, housing which impact women's productivity will also be encouraged.

Service Sector

- i) Women's participation in the upcoming services such as information based industries, telecommunication, infrastructure, customized highly skilled business services, software- designs; computer programming and financial services (Banks and insurance) will be encouraged. Skills and work incentives for frontline workers which rely heavily on female labour in health and education will be strengthened.
- ii) The service sector will encourage equal employment opportunity through jobs/enterprises for women especially in high paid jobs to post graduates and professionally qualified women.
- iii) Conducive infrastructural facilities such as toilets, restrooms, child care facilities at workplaces will be ensured for providing a safe and encouraging working environment for women. Provisions for women friendly infrastructure should be part of Urban

/Panchayat planning processes. Efforts will be made to improve accessibility of safe public transport for women.

- iv) Enable women to access the formal banking system with their own collateral and develop a strategy for the financial institutions to address the significant gender gap by removing the constraints for accessing private finance.

Science and Technology

- i) Technological needs of women, in both urban and rural areas as well as across various sectors will be addressed. Use of technology as a tool to increase employment, reduce drudgery, improve access to health, education, and communication services and political participation etc. will be compiled and suitably incorporated in training and best practices manuals, and widely disseminated in all training programs.
- ii) Since women greatly benefit from ICTs, mobile telephone applications will be proactively used as a tool for mass communication and dissemination of information on legal rights, payments under wage employment schemes, subsidies, pension payments, markets etc. Efforts will be made to collect gender based data through mobile phones to feed into policy prescriptions.
- v) Enabling mechanisms will be institutionalized to encourage girl students/women to enter into the areas of science, information and communication technology, for ensuring technical training, its access and usage through e-education in rural areas and to serve as a means for income generation.
- vi) To enable women SHGs, cooperatives, federations, CBOs, NGOs to take active part in technology dissemination, suitable training manuals will be prepared and cascading training programs organised at multiple levels.

IV. Governance and Decision Making

- i) Establish mechanisms to promote women's presence in all the three branches of the government including the legislature, executive and judiciary. Women's participation in the political arena will be ensured at all levels of local governments, state legislations and national parliament with at least 50% reservation for women in local bodies and 33% in state assemblies and parliament to provide more responsive, equitable and participatory development.
- ii) Increase the participation of women in civil services, judiciary and in corporate boardrooms through appropriate modules for guidance and counselling, coaching, provision of financial incentives and quotas.
- iii) Increase the participation of women at all levels such as in trade unions, political parties, interest groups, professional associations, and businesses/private sector.
- iv) In order to achieve women's full participation and representation at all levels, maintain gender disaggregated data to track and assess progress, or serious inconsistencies.
- v) Strengthen the Administrative Training Institutes (ATIs) to systematically train the civil servants on gender issues to efficiently and effectively respond to the gender based challenges created by the rapid economic growth, devolution of funds, enhanced

transparency through the right to information, globalization, climate change and extremism and so on.

- vi) To enable women SHGs, cooperatives, federations, CBOs, NGOs to take active part in decision making, and promoting women's rights, capacity building exercises and training programs will be undertaken.
- vii) Quality of women's representation will be improved through greater capacity building on aspects of decision making and women's rights and legislations.

V. Violence Against Women

- i) Efforts to address all forms of violence against women will be continued with a holistic perspective through a life cycle approach in a continuum from the foetus to the elderly starting from sex selective termination of pregnancy, denial of education, child marriage to violence faced by women in private sphere of home, public spaces and at workplace. It will identify and combat violence and abuse through a combination of laws, programs, and services with the support of diverse stakeholders.
- ii) Efforts to improve Child Sex Ratio (CSR) will be continued through a judicious combination of effective implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994, and advocacy through awareness and sensitisation to change the mindsets by involving communities and the stakeholders for valuing the girl Child. Special measures to combat violence and crimes against adolescent girls in public and domestic spaces will be adopted.
- iii) Trafficking of women and children is a cause for concern and will receive prioritized attention. Requisite steps for prevention of trafficking at source, transit and destination areas for effective monitoring of the networks of trafficking will be given a priority. Existing legislations/schemes for prevention, rehabilitation of victims of trafficking will be suitably strengthened. Efforts will be made to raise awareness regarding the subtle and violent nature of sex trafficking and how women and children subjected to this crime are victimized through coercion.
- iv) There is need for effective implementation of The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 to ensure that all provisions of the Act are benefiting differently abled girls and women. To prevent violence and sexual exploitation of the differently abled, focussed advocacy and sensitisation of various stakeholders such as law enforcement, judiciary, panchayats will be undertaken
- v) Strict monitoring of response of enforcement agencies to violence against women will be put in place. Efforts will be made to ensure speedy /time bound trial of heinous crimes against women. Alternate dispute redressal systems such as family courts, *Nari Adalats* etc., will be strengthened.
- vi) Efforts will be made to increase the representation of women in judicial positions across the board.

- vii) Effective mechanisms for network and convergence of relevant institutions/agencies like National Legal Services Authority (NLSA), District Legal Service Agency (DLSA), National Commission for Women and Ministry of Women and Child development will be strengthened for providing easy and affordable access of justice to woman. NLSA, DLSA will create linkages with supportive institutions such as Shelter homes, One Stop Centres in order to give required legal aid to women staying in these homes.
- viii) Efforts will be made to streamline data systems through review of various data sources (Census, NFHS, NSS, NCRB) to develop a compatible and comprehensive data base on Violence Against Women.
- ix) Engaging men and boys through advocacy, awareness generation programmes and community programmes will be undertaken.
- x) Gender specific training incorporating gender sensitivity and a thorough briefing on the specific laws for women will be undertaken continuously for all ranks and categories of police personnel. Training for the judiciary, judicial schools, and all legal practitioners, will be accorded a priority for developing the specialized skills needed to investigate and prosecute cases related to gender based violence.

VI. Enabling Environment

Housing and Shelter

- i) Gender perspective in housing policies, planning of housing colonies and in the shelters both in rural and urban areas will be given a priority. Special attention will be given for providing safe, adequate and affordable housing and accommodation to women in urban areas including single women, homeless, migrants, women heads of households, working women, students, apprentices and trainees etc.
- ii) State run temporary or permanent shelter homes will have improved living conditions for women survivors of domestic violence or any other forms of violence to feel safe and secure. Efforts will be also be made to make slums and informal settlements safe for women.
- iii) Central or State run housing scheme that provides for a house in the name of women will be universalized.

Drinking Water and Sanitation

- iv) Ensuring safe drinking water and sanitation will be considered critical for the health of women. In this context, accessible and operational toilets for women within the house or at the community level will be universalised. Women's groups may be involved for the operation and maintenance of women community toilets in rural areas. Availability and access to adequate water and sanitation facilities including menstrual hygiene support for adolescent girls will be facilitated to improve retention of girls in the school.
- v) Efforts to educate women and girls about the dangers of unhygienic practices will be continued. Sustained efforts will also be made to increase the running water facilities in schools to improve menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls and their retention in

schools. Sewage disposal facilities in schools/households/community places especially in rural areas and urban slums will be encouraged.

- vi) To mitigate women's water burden, future programmes/projects should be designed keeping in view the women as water users. Water conservation programmes need to be initiated to generate awareness on conservation methods such as rain water harvesting by involving women groups. Women should be trained as water manager for better utilization of water.
- vii) Water resource management strategies should include a gender perspective which *inter-alia* values and reinforce the important role played by women in acquiring, conserving and using water. Women will also be included in the decision making process related to waste disposal, improving water and sanitation systems and agricultural industrial and other land use projects that affect quality and quantity of water. Women's participation will be ensured in the planning, delivery and maintenance of such services.

Media

- i) Gender parity in the mass media i.e. print and electronic media, advertising world, film sector and new media will be promoted by increasing the presence of women in the decision making positions.
- ii) Encourage the entry of women in media industry through promotion of journalism and mass media courses and ensuring adherence to equitable work conditions. Setting up women media centres to provide technical training and skill building will be encouraged.
- iii) Gender Sensitisation and non-discrimination in portrayal of women in all forms of media and use of gender sensitive language will be advocated to ensure that women are not represented in a demeaning or stereotypical manner. Private sector media networks will be sensitised and encouraged to portray empowering images of women with self-regulatory mechanisms.
- iv) Encourage the use of new media applications of social media like internet, facebook, twitter and mobile phone communication and information systems to benefit women while at the same time provide enough safeguards to protect the dignity and safety of women.

Sports

- i) Social practices and physical differences between men and women usually make it imperative that separate but equal facilities be made available to girls and women in terms of sports equipment, scientific support, medical support, diet/nutritional support, financial support and competition exposure. Financial support in terms of sponsorship/coaching/ equipment for budding talent of girls especially in rural areas will be promoted.
- ii) Conscious efforts will be made to ensure gender parity in the induction of trainees, trainers, recruitment of coaches under various schemes of Sports Authority of India (SAI). Sports competitions that start from block level onwards to district, state and national level will promote participation of women. Effort to make existing institutional sports facilities available to sports women on a neighbourhood basis will be strengthened.

Social Security

- i) Efforts will be made to strengthen the existing supportive social infrastructure for women especially the vulnerable, marginalized, migrant and single women. This is imperative in view of their increasing life span, more conservative investment habits, variability in labour force participation and the role in home based production or unpaid work. Attention will also be paid to the needs of domestic workers and appropriate steps taken to ensure overtime pay, annual paid leave, minimum wages and safe working conditions.
- ii) Concerted efforts will be made towards strengthening social security and support services like insurance products, pensions, travel concessions, subsidies, benefits under BPL systems, childcare, crèches, working women hostels, shelter homes. Corporate sector may be involved on a long term basis in the financing of the insurance component under the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
- iii) Among the various aspects of social security, measures will be taken to ensure effective implementation of provisions of maternity benefits such as leave and nursing breaks under the Maternity Benefit Act (1961).
- iv) In the context of social security and poverty alleviation the Public Distribution System should be mandatorily linked to the data generated by the Socio-Economic Caste Census for ensuring more inclusive and transparent distribution of food to the disadvantaged women in remote rural and tribal areas.

Infrastructure

- i) Efforts will be made to provide affordable and improved conventional transport services on feeder roads and the potential for women's group/community based low-cost transport schemes will be explored. More women transport professionals will be trained and promoted to safeguard women's safety and security.
- ii) To promote safety of women, all urban planning and smart city projects will mandatorily include safe and gender sensitive infrastructure and facilities. Urban Safety Audits will be conducted periodically to ensure all gender safe measures are provided.
- iii) Similarly, in rural areas, panchayat functionaries' orientation will include capacity building on development of women friendly and safe infrastructure. They will be persuaded to allocate at least 10 percent of their budget towards the development of women friendly and child friendly infrastructure.

VII. Environment and Climate Change

- i) As women are highly affected by climate change, environmental degradation, distress migration and displacement in times of natural calamities, policies and programmes for environment, conservation and restoration will compulsorily incorporate gender concerns. An integral part of this discourse will be to enable equitable ownership control and use of natural resources and secure the asset base of marginalised poor women to counter poverty and climate shocks.

- ii) Mitigation and management of natural disasters is very important from the gender perspective as floods, droughts etc. impact women severely exposing them to social and economic vulnerabilities. Holistic gender specific strategies in disaster management and prevention will be formulated and implemented aiming at their safety, well-being, health and rehabilitation.
- iii) Measures will be taken to comprehensively address the adverse implications of crop selection, use of chemicals and pesticides etc on women's health and their surrounding environment.
- iv) Environmental friendly, renewable, non-conventional energy, green energy sources will be promoted and made affordable and accessible to rural households for their basic household activities.
- v) Women participation will be ensured in the efficient use and spreading the use of solar energy, biogas, smokeless *chulas* and other technological applications to have positive influence on their life styles and a long term impact on meeting sustainable development goals. Micro-enterprises based on environment friendly technologies, organically grown produce will be promoted to provide viable livelihoods options to women.
- vi) All aspects of energy planning and policy-making must include gender dimensions and actively advance women's leadership. Specific attention would be paid to remove the barriers to women executives, entrepreneurs and employees within the energy sector as sustainable energy future requires a diversity of voices, and the solution has to be encompassing not only to break the cycle of poverty but to respond to the increasing workforce demand of the expanding energy sector.
- vii) Though gender roles in using forest resources differ widely depending upon the region as well as socioeconomic class and tribal affiliation, rural women's association with the forests varies from gathering and processing of Non-timber Forest Products (NTFP) to wage employment, production in farm forestry and management of afforested areas in the community plantation. Women sustain household economies, procuring food, fodder, Minor Forests Produce (MFP), fuel-wood and other needs such as medicinal plants from forests. Efforts will be made to recognize their rights under the Forest Rights Act as individuals and communities and their roles in forest governance will be strengthened.
- viii) Sustained efforts will be made to increase the capacity of local women, SHGs, elected women representatives to mitigate and adapt to climate change while increasing their knowledge on the subject.

6. EMERGING ISSUES

- i) Redistribution of gender roles is imperative in a scenario where women are expected and aspire to contribute to the economic development of the country. Efforts will be made to prepare family-friendly policies, which provide for childcare, dependent care and paid leave for women and men both in organized and unorganized sectors to help employees balance work and family roles.
- ii) Given the plurality of the personal laws a review is required of the personal and customary laws in accordance with the Constitutional provisions. This will enable equitable and inclusive and just entitlements for women.

- iii) With technological advancement, there has been incidence of frauds, misuse of information uploaded on the cyberspace and hence there is a need for developing protective measures for citizens keeping in view that victims of such frauds are largely women.
- iv) As more women are taking the recourse of artificial reproductive techniques, efforts will be made to ensure the rights of these women adopting these techniques i.e. surrogates mothers, commissioning mother along with children born as a result will be protected.
- v) To recognize special needs of single women including widows separated, divorced, never-married and deserted women. A comprehensive social protection mechanism will be designed to address their vulnerabilities, create opportunities and improve their overall conditions.
- vi) To create ecosystem for women to participate in entrepreneurial activities, take up decision-making roles and leadership in all sectors of the economy.

7. OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES

7.1 Action Plan

For translating the policy into a set of concrete actions, action plan through a participatory strategy will be adopted at the Central as well as State level. There will be short term (one year), mid-term (0-5 years) and long term (above 5 years) action plan with definite timelines and outcomes. The template of the Annual Plan will necessarily include the following

- i) Action points based on each priority area to be achieved during each fiscal year
- ii) Outcomes with Indicators
- iii) Responsible Agencies
- iv) Identification and commitment of resources

7.2 Effective gender institutional architecture

- i) To ensure the rights of women and to promote gender equality interdisciplinary and multi sectoral gender institutional architecture will be strengthened and streamlined at the national, state and local levels.
- ii) The operationalisation of the Policy will be done through the formation of Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) at the National level to be headed by the Minister, Women and Child Development. Similar mechanism to be adopted at the state level with Committee to be headed by the Chief Minister. Sector-specific sub-Committees will be formed with representation from the concerned Ministries/Departments, National and State Commissions for Women, Social Welfare Boards, representatives of Non-Government Organizations, Women's Organisations, Corporate Sector, Trade Unions, financing institutions, academics, experts and social activists etc. as per the requirement of the sector concerned. These bodies will review the progress made in implementing the Policy once a year.

- iii) At the national level the Ministry of Women and Child Development will act as a nodal agency for working towards realization of constitutional and international commitments to gender equality and social justice. In pursuit of the broad goals, the Ministry will work towards transforming the institutions, laws, policies, procedures, consultative processes, budgetary allocations and priorities of the government to take into account the needs and aspirations of all women. Towards this end, a participatory approach for widening and deepening of dialogue with other strategic partners will be adopted.
- iv) State Resource Centres for Women under the National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) will be strengthened and will provide technical support to the respective State/UT Women and Child Development Department for coordination and implementation of the policy.
- v) Women specific institutions such as the National Commission for Women, State Commissions for Women, Central Social Welfare Board will be reviewed to assess their efficacy in delivering the mandate for which they were set up and measures for further strengthening and restructuring these institutions with provision of adequate resources will be undertaken. National Mission for Empowerment of Women will continue to provide technical support to the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
- vi) The roles and responsibilities of the Panchayats and Urban local bodies with respect to gender will be strengthened and their work more effectively coordinated. Clear consultation and communication strategies will be prepared and disseminated to ensure that panchayats and urban local bodies as well as the frontline workers are responsive to the needs of women.
- vii) Participation of civil society organizations, associations, federations etc., will be ensured in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies and programmes impacting women. Towards this, such organizations will be empowered through capacity-building, education and training, as well as through the provision of information and resources.

7.3 Legislation

- i) The existing legislations affecting/relating to women will be reviewed/harmonized to enhance their effectiveness and additional legislative measures or amendments to be taken up based on the emerging needs.
- ii) Concerted attempts will also be made to make the registration of all marriages compulsory. Efforts will be made to make marriage registration easy and the advantages of registering a marriage will be widely publicised. Implementation of the Maternity Benefit Act will be strengthened and universalized for all women workers across the organized and unorganized sectors. Efforts will be made to enact a comprehensive legislation specifically designed to meet the working condition of the domestic workers.
- iii) Effective implementation of legislations would also be promoted by involving civil society and community. This will be through enforcement of all relevant legal provisions and speedy redressal of grievances with a special focus on violence and

gender related atrocities. For increased awareness and knowledge dissemination on the legal rights of women, effective use of ICT will be undertaken.

7.4. Advocacy and Stakeholder Partnerships

- i) There will be a strong emphasis on mind-set change through advocacy campaign, multi-sectoral actions, training, sensitization, awareness raising and community mobilization on the ground. Availability and misuse of diagnostic tools that enable sex determination that pose a serious challenge to survival, protection and empowerment of girl child will be strictly monitored.
- ii) Societal institutions like the family and community will be gender sensitised to wean them away from patriarchal moorings. Effective strategies will be formulated for engaging men and boys in targeted gender sensitisation interventions to enable transformative behavioural change towards women with advocacy, gender sensitisation, capacity building and training programs.
- iii) Women's organisations and voluntary sector organisations will be empowered through capacity building and training programs to generate awareness on gender concerns and promote women's rights and entitlements.
- iv) Private/corporate sector have increasing presence in the economic growth of the country and gender balance in these enterprises is crucial. More employment and skill development opportunities for women will be promoted and adhering to laws and regulations relating to women will be ensured through systematic gender sensitization exercises. Companies will be encouraged to reserve a certain percentage of their CSR as gender component.
- v) Grass root level SHG capacities will be significantly strengthened to enable them to participate in planning and policy and make informed decision and choices on social and economic development programs. It will be the endeavour to institutionalize SHGs into cooperatives and federations so that these are economically self sustaining and can play a greater role in governance and decision making.

7.4 Inter-Sectoral Convergence

- i) Ministries/state government departments/local bodies/PSUs/Corporates etc. will review their administrative structures, recruitment and promotion practices, policies and programme implementation including the operational guidelines, to identify and reduce roadblocks to the formation of inter-and intra-institutional partnerships that facilitate convergence.
- ii) To understand the translation of 'why' of undertaking convergence into the practical 'how' of fostering it in an individual institutional setting, and also to facilitate innovation in convergence, education and training programs will be designed and a cadre of officials developed, to facilitate convergence.
- iii) Due to the blurring of boundaries between different sectors a framework/action plan for converged departments will have to be prepared to resolve overlapping issues like technology or facilitating labour mobility etc.

- iv) The Village Facilitation and Convergence Service (VCFS) at the grassroots level facilitating communitization of services to women through the Village Coordinators would be strengthened and expanded. This would help in reaching out the information to women about all the government programs/schemes/ services and helping them to utilize those benefits, conduct capacity building training programs to create awareness and enhance their knowledge and skills, maintain a database, and coordinate with the outreach services of various departments.
- v) Legal awareness and legal aid are key facilitators for providing easy and affordable access to justice to woman. Effective mechanisms for network and convergence of relevant institutions/agencies like National Legal Services Authority, National Commission for Women and Ministry of Women and Child development will be strengthened towards this purpose.

7.6. Gender Budgeting

- i) The gender focal points, gender desks, Gender Budgeting Cells set up in Ministries, state government Departments, Panchayats and urban local bodies with the broad mandate covering coordination and awareness raising, will be strengthened to conduct in-house gender audit of requisite policies, programs and schemes as well as their institutional mechanisms to suggest and/or take remedial action.
- ii) The gender focal points, gender desks, Gender Budgeting Cells will serve as a focal point for advancing data collection on various issues affecting women that require immediate attention and intervention.
- iii) The gender desks, Gender Budgeting Cells need adequate resources and decision making authority to impact on wider sector practices and stakeholders. The gender desks, Gender Budgeting Cells will be placed relatively high within the institutional hierarchy to ensure that they can authorize and implement proposed changes as required.
- iv) Nodal Centres on Gender Budgeting will be set up to fill in the awareness gap, increase public awareness through continuous training, prepare and upgrade sector specific training manuals and guidelines, undertake research on issues for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

7.7 Generating gender-based evidence

Though India has robust data system, it remains largely gender neutral. Data gaps on women's economic, political and social rights remain very large. In view of our national priorities on gender equality as well as the SDGs, the data system needs to be gender disaggregated for better planning and policy formulation. The priority areas include poverty, economic participation, violence against women, environment, health and nutrition, education, governance, media etc. This will involve the following indicative methodologies and tools:

- i) Complementing poverty statistics with measures of women's access to personal income from labour market earnings or social protection.
- ii) Regularly conducting time-use surveys and assessing the impact of macroeconomic policies, environmental disasters on women.

- iii) Developing methodologies for collecting data on women's employment in informal sector, asset ownership and entrepreneurship.
- iv) Investing in civil registration and vital systems to ensure that births, deaths and marriages are accurately recorded.
- v) Developing standards and methods for assessing the quality of social services being provided including the rights of women
- vi) Conducting regular surveys on violence against women will not restrict to only information on prevalence of violence but also information regarding health consequences of violence including mental and physical consequences.
- vii) Given the number of new laws and policies related to gender-based violence, paternity leave, child support and gender equality broadly, it is crucial to understand the impact of such national-level and policy-level changes on boys and men. Efforts will be made to generate qualitative data on the impact of legal structures, laws, policies and broader public practices on the behaviour or attitudes of men and boys.
- viii) Sex disaggregated data will be mandated for all major schemes and programs. The Gender Budget Statement both at the national and state level will be used as a monitoring tool to assess the flow of funds to women under schemes and programs.
- ix) The Ministry of Women and Child Development will periodically undertake an assessment of the status of women. A regular mechanism will be set up for continuous evaluation and assessment of the status of women.

8. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- i) A life cycle approach to programmatic and legislative interventions is required where women's social, political and economic empowerment are juxtaposed with their rights and entitlements and placed in the context of regional and ethnic diversities. Gender based investment strategy will be made in accordance with the requirements of this strategy.
- ii) National and state government departments which have schematic interventions for women need to accordingly provide adequate financial and human resources for this purpose and gender budget and audit techniques adopted to assess the benefits flowing to women.
- iii) Efforts will be made to ensure that broadening the tax base does not impact negatively on women through regressive taxation. Progressive tax policies and systems that address gender biases will be put in place through gender analysis by tax experts.
- iv) Leveraging private sector investments will be critical. Efforts will be made to engage and guide the private sector to develop business strategies in alignment with national development efforts to enhance gender equity.
- v) Innovative PPP models for gender economic and social development projects may be explored where diverse stakeholders contribute resources and technical expertise. Companies may be encouraged to reserve at least 10% of their CSR for gender related development projects.

9. IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY

- i) In translating the policy framework, **specific, achievable and effective strategies for implementation** will be required to be made at the national, state and local government

level, in PSUs, corporates, business, trade unions, NGOs and community based organizations.

- ii) An **inter-ministerial Action plan** will be formulated with action points with respect to the policy prescriptions in the Policy document, where definitive targets, milestones activities, timelines (short term, medium term & long term) and outcome indicators will be given along with the Ministries/ departments responsible for implementing the actions.
- iii) An **inter-ministerial committee** will be set up to periodically monitor the achievements and progress made under the Action plan.
