

West Bengal State Policy for Empowerment of Women

1.1 Gender equality is recognized as a key human development issue. The social role prescribed for women by generations, that kept them confined within their home with traditional role of motherhood & take care of family and kept them beyond the outreach of most developmental programmes. Development for women means the provision of equal opportunity & capabilities that enables them to assert their social & economic rights. Through empowerment & gender justice material and social condition of women will improve.

The Goal of this Policy is to bring about holistic development, advancement in all fields and empowerment of women to a state so that in "every field of life no differential exists between male and female. This policy will target to usher into an egalitarian society where women will have equal participation and contribution in all walks of life and all the economic, social, demographic indicators will have no gender based differentials.

2.1 The Objective of this policy will be to encourage and ensure active participation of all its stakeholders for achieving its final goal. Specifically the Objectives of this policy will be: -

- i) To create an environment through just social, economic and political policies conducive to holistic development of women so that they can realize and achieve their full potential,
- ii) To empower women for equal participation in decision making in social, economic and political life of the State,
- iii) To ensure support infrastructure and facilities conducive to their need for working women/women who work outside home in organised as well as unorganised sector,
- iv) To ensure equal-access for women to health care,, quality education up to highest*level, career and vocational guidance, employment at all level, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security, economic resources including common property, forest, land and other means of production,
- v) To strengthen legal systems and infrastructure to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and to deliver justice without any delay,
- vi) To enact legislation to set up separate court to try all cases of domestic violence and violence / atrocities against women.
- vii) To change present societal attitude and community practices which undermine women and ensure active participation of men and women at par.
- viii) To introduce gender perspective in the Development process by introducing gender budgeting in the state government financial process,
- ix) To eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girl child and to make the workplace in government as well as non-government sector free from sexual harassment for all the women,
- x) To strengthen infrastructure to provide benefit of all the Social legislations enacted so far for the women,
- xi) To build and strengthen partnership with civil societies, womens organisations and Institutions working for the women,
- xii) To ensure de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights including reproductive health right as well as sexual health right and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all sphere - political, economic, cultural and civil.

3.1 West Bengal State Government will work in i he direction so that the total female population will become equal partner in the Nation Building,

4.1 "Equal opportunity" policie should be followed gradually in appointments to jobs and public offices. In the jobs where physical strength jnd measurement is basic criteria for selection, there shall either be two sets of measurements for male and female, or the measurements should be such that the females, who are genetically different from males, are not deprived due to physical problems. Government will consider reserving jobs and posts at ail level for females according to ratio of female population. This may be done in phased manner as well as relaxing the age limit for women for all jobs.

5.1 Under the Labour Department Government will consider preparing Women Employment Bank where Private Enterprises and Establishments will also be encouraged to join so that women desirous of getting job can get more openings.

6.1 In the field of Self Employment and small entrepreneurship the women will be encouraged to

participate and for ensuring their participation government may undertake reservation in favour of women. A special drive may be taken by State Government to set up a separate Chamber of Commerce for women entrepreneurs where they will organise skill development training & help to upgrade the marketing facilities and organize sensitization programme with information about business ventures and improvements thereafter, so that women may come forward to join self employment to deal with business in a complete male bastion situation.

- 7.1** Along with ensuring participation of women in the job market at par with the men, government will ensure total protection of women from sexual harassment at workplace whether it is in government sector or non-government sector as well as in organised and unorganised sector. The state Government will initiate a mechanism under the suitable State level coordinating agency to check whether the vigilant group and committees have been set up in all organisations for implementing sexual harassment policy.
- 8.1** With the higher participation rate of women in the productive work or different jobs, Government will ensure providing support service such as working women hostels, creches adjacent to the workplaces, providing child care leave even in the non - government sector, providing social security cover to the working women in the unorganised sector.
- 9.1** In education field there exists a large gap of attaining "literacy between male and female"; this gap is manifold when we consider the same in the higher as well as professional field of education. State Government will undertake measures to minimize the gap and if required undertake positive discrimination in favour of females and introduce infrastructure to bring women to the arena of education. Emphasis on higher education for women is an imperative especially at the district level and more importance may be given to science education for girls with proper laboratory facilities. State Government will incorporate courses on techniques of self defence as a compulsory component in the syllabus of Physical Education. Concept and approaches of Gender & related Social legislations will suitably a part of Primary Education as well as Secondary Education. For this purpose different action plan will be worked out in coordination with the School Education, Higher Education and Technical Education Department. State Government may relax the age limit in scholarships & may also think about the revision of age limit for women appearing for competitive examinations.
- 10.1** In the field of nutrition and access to health services the participation of women will be encouraged and the matter will be monitored by Health and ICDS up to the village level. A programme may be undertaken for meeting iron deficiency among adolescent girls.
- 11.1** In development process gender perspective will be introduced in the department level first by the process of Gender Budgeting which will later be taken up to the Gram Panchayat level. Each Gram Panchayat will undertake their individual annual action plan which will accommodate gender budget and ensure achievement of Goal of this policy in planned phased manner.

State Government will undertake annual action plan and annual achievable targets for implementation this policy. Government will undertake population policy planning also a part of overall development planning such as achieving of targeted different population indicators, namely Sex Ratio, Child Sex Ratio, Fertility Rate, Infant Mortality Rate, Under Five Mortality Rate, Maternal Mortality Rate, Safe Delivery/Institutional Delivery Rate, Nutritional status of girl child/women etc. Government will target to allocate 20% of its Plan Budget for women, which is at present is at 5.8%, immediate action will be taken to raise it to 11% in the next few years.

- 12.1** If situation demands Government will consider undertaking individual cash incentive programme for girl child in specific area for specific community or specific group of people. In the case of natural disaster women are severely affected and the incentives/ benefits will be given to women household by state authority.
- 13.1** At present there are several programmes run by different departments for the welfare of women as well as some programmes from where women also can be benefited; but the downtrodden women cannot access all the departments to suit her need. As a result of it, the women remain deprived of any benefit. State Government will ensure to establish convergence & facilitation centre/ Helpline; Service Centre/Information Hub up to the village level to bridge information gap among the women. For this purpose Government will consider utilizing existing government infrastructures up to village level of different government departments. The government through the department dealing with Women Development issues will initiate advocacy/workshops/seminars/awareness campaign on women and child and gender issues intensively throughout the state involving all levels of administrations, printing & electronic media, NGOs/Community Based Organizations and communities.

- 14.1** There is a number of Legislation which directly or indirectly provides benefit as well as rights to the women. But in the field of implementation of such legislations so far no infrastructure has been developed; as a result of it the legislations have not been able to cut a significant mark in the society. New government will ensure proper infrastructure up to the Block/municipality level so that women are not deprived of the benefit and rights which has been recognized by the law.
- 15.1** Government will ensure setting up Special Court at the District level to try Domestic violence cases as well as cases of violence / atrocities against women to ensure justice to the women without any delay. A legislation to set up such court will be enacted to provide women their right to justice without delay. There will be stringent punitive measures for violating different provision of compulsory registration of Marriage, undergoing child Marriage etc.
- 16.1** The Government will develop mechanism to sensitize the Police Department in collaboration with other Departments and Civil Society Organisations so that women can enjoy all human rights including reproductive child health rights and sexual health rights and enjoy freedom on equal basis with men in all spheres.
- 17.1** Government will utilise different educational Institutions, Women study Centres, State Resource Centre for Women to assess status of Women across the state and districts annually which will help to undertake future development planning for achieving the Goal. A resource pool of fund will be reserved annually for the purpose. Government will consider developing trained personnel up to village level from the existing village level staff or volunteers for collection of data regularly. SRCW may act as a state level information centre which will prepare database on women's need with various information services and prepare gender empowerment measurement report of the state.
- 18.1** Availability of Institutional Services for women of different age groups may be rationalized. Government will consider providing such services to all the districts and if situation demands new Homes will be set up for the Districts where no such service is available at present. However, Government will consider launching of new scheme with existing inmates of different Government or NGO run Homes for rehabilitation of destitute girl child/women, by way of providing employment assistance or lump financial assistance, separate vocational and educational training for self employment and empowerment.
- To ensure that every woman will get an opportunity to live a dignified life, the Government will consider launching of new scheme for rehabilitation of women & girl child vulnerable to trafficking or trafficked or those who are compelled to take a hazardous job where she feels exploited.
- 19.1** Although Government will arrange proper resource allocation for Women, but effective implementation is possible if proper monitoring mechanism is there. The Government has initiated effective monitoring mechanism at the District level by setting up Development Monitoring Committee under the leadership of District Magistrate and same has been replicated up to Block level. Government will consider setting up District Level Board / Council for Welfare of Women with adequate power/authority by enacting legislation or administrative order whichever is appropriate for the same. Such Body/Council may be headed by any eminent women activist/personalities of the District supported by other such women personalities with the right perspective as well as District level senior Officers will also be inducted into the Committee. District Social Welfare Officer may be made Member-Convener of the same.
- 20.1** West Bengal Legislative Assembly has passed the West Bengal Panchayat Election Bill, 2012 which provides 50% reservation for women, in elections. Government will consider reservation for women in urban bodies also. Besides, in other sectors of decision making such as Apex Bodies of Cooperative Societies, different Federation of Weavers' Cooperative Societies, and Boards of different Government Corporations / Undertakings, the reservation for Women will be made. By this initial push up women will be able to come forward in the centre stage of decision making for Nation Building and engendering of Government Policies and activities will take place."