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Foreword



The Government of Chhattisgarh is firmly committed to capitalise on its 'new State advantage'. The State has taken a conscious decision to do away with past legacies and to adopt a fresh approach to economic and social development. This Women Empowerment Policy is not a modification of any earlier policy, but is based on the state's specific geographical, social and cultural characteristics. This policy seeks to address the unique situation and issues facing women in Chhattisgarh across urban, periurban, rural and tribal areas. It is based on a comprehensive analysis of the best practices of other Indian states and countries from where positive elements have been culled out and suitably incorporated keeping in view the State's unique features. The commitment of the State towards empowerment of women is evident from the fact that the Government has already set up a high level committee under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister to define and review the achievable and measurable goals for the newly formed State.



Strategic Intent and Approach

1.0 Strategic Intent and Approach

Women in Chhattisgarh are visible in every walk of life, be it in agriculture, collection and processing of the State's rich forest wealth or in construction / wage work in urban areas. Contrary to the situation in many parts of the country, Chhattisgarh enjoys a comparatively favourable position in terms of women's population reflected in the Sex ratio i.e. 990 per 1000 males. However, the sustenance of this women's proportion is a challenge.

The State recognises the need for increased participation of women for achieving rapid social, economic and cultural development of the state, which is one of the stated agenda of Vision 2010. The effective integration and participation of women in the process of development would be guided by political will and commitment. In order to achieve this the State would have to address a number of issues including gender based occupational stereotyping, male selective in-migration in the context of industrialisation, female illiteracy, impeding cultural practices and attitudes, dominance of women in marginal employment, lack of access to basic facilities, discrimination against the girl child etc.

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures and frame policies of positive discrimination in favour of women. Therefore, this policy aims to create an environment, which enables women to effectively contribute in the process of economic and social transformation and not be merely a passive beneficiary. Accordingly, the objectives of this policy are to:

- Facilitate a conducive environment to enable women to realise their full potential and promote self reliance
- Achieve equality in access to economic resources including forests, common property, land and other means of production
- Ensure participation of women in social, political and economic life of the state
- Encourage NGOs and Women Groups to effectively participate in the developmental process

To meet these objectives, the State has identified specific initiatives, which include:

- Creating a responsive statutory and institutional mechanism
- Integrating Gender perspective in Economic development
- Creating an enabling environment for Social Development of women

The State will set up a Committee for policy review and implementation to be headed by Minister– in-charge with representatives from the Department of Women and Child Development, State Women Commission, NGOs, community based organisations, other Government departments, etc. This committee would work in coordination with various departments to draw up detailed action plan for every sector in line with the initiatives outlined in this policy.



Chhattisgarh State Policy for Women

**Department of Women and
Child Development,
Government of Chhattisgarh**

2.0 Implementation Outline - Creating a Responsive Legal & Institutional Mechanism

In order to create a non-discriminatory as well as gender sensitive legal environment and strengthen the institutional mechanism to elevate the status of women, the State would take the following measures:

2.1 Legal Measures

- ◆ Adopt, enact, review and revise wherever necessary laws to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women
- ◆ Extend land rights to women and encourage co-ownership of property by women to other productive assets like house, shop, factory, etc
- ◆ Effective enforcement of all relevant legal provisions including Equal Remuneration Act, Minimum Wages Act, Child Marriage Restraint Act, etc.
- ◆ Enforcement of Dowry Prevention Act and effective legal action against domestic violence and harassment of women at place of work
- ◆ Public advocacy and swift legal redressal shall be ensured in cases where women are deprived of rights that are already secured under law
- ◆ Create mass consciousness and provide legal awareness about women's rights
- ◆ Implement laws regarding prenatal sex selection, practices of female infanticide, child marriage, etc., to eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child
- ◆ Consider providing concessions in court fees for poor and landless women litigants
- ◆ Deployment of women police personnel in rural police stations to the extent possible.

2.2 Institutional Capacity Building

- ◆ Earmark at least 10% of the social sector spending for supporting women's income generating activities
- ◆ Encourage access to low cost credit to women groups through Financial Institutions. Special mechanism/cell/Kosh could be set up under the Department of Women and Child Development to facilitate access to such credit. The State would also make special efforts to enhance the outreach of credit to women especially those below the poverty line
- ◆ Encourage participation of women at all levels especially in government local bodies, advisory boards, trusts, etc. The government would consider reserving one third of the membership in such bodies for women. Women would also be involved in review of various policies of the State and their implementation
- ◆ Set up a resource centre for women within the existing administrative structure for collection, collation and dissemination of information, conducting surveys, as well as evaluation and tracking progress of women empowerment through measurable goals in line with Vision 2010
- ◆ Encourage formation of Mahila Mandals and facilitate their registration at minimum possible fees. The Self Help Groups would be encouraged to act as effective forums to promote women interests especially at grassroot levels
- ◆ Undertake gender sensitisation of police force
- ◆ Set-up and strengthen existing systems of Women Cells in Police Stations, Family Courts, Legal Aid Centres, Counselling Centres, etc.
- ◆ Ensure independent and effective working of the State Commission for Women
- ◆ The State would ensure participation of women in schemes and programmes of every department in co-ordination of the Department of Women and Child Development with other departments viz. Health, Education, Industry, Forest, etc.
- ◆ Provision of at least one woman member in the Interview Boards



3.0 Implementation Outline - Integrating Gender Perspective in Economic Development

In view of the important role of women in the labour force and their contribution to the economic development of the State, the State will make concentrated efforts to ensure incorporation of the women's development dimension in to the various sectors. Accordingly, the State would take the following measures:-

3.1 Agriculture & Allied Sectors

- ◆ Encouragement and recognition of women as farmers. Research and technical innovations will be encouraged to reorient the administrative machinery of agriculture to cater to the needs of women
- ◆ Encourage women farmers to practice mixed farming including cereals, pulses, oil seeds, roots, tubers, etc., and their preservation to enhance the role of women in food security. The State would also encourage women in villages to take up organic farming.
- ◆ Promote the development of dairy, sericulture, fisheries, horticulture and floriculture under the management of active women's groups. To enable the women to work effectively in these areas, training programmes for women and women's groups will be organised in the processing, value addition and marketing aspects of these activities.
- ◆ Encourage the use of common lands in rural areas by women groups to cater to the fuel and fodder needs of the villages.
- ◆ Encourage women to pursue higher studies in agriculture and agricultural management
- ◆ Facilitate special training programmes for women in modern and developed farming techniques.

3.2 Water & Sanitation

- ◆ Provision of potable water to all villages would be the immediate priority of the state in line with the Vision 2010 thereby reducing the burden on women in terms of carrying heavy headloads of water.
- ◆ Facilitate the access to safe drinking water resources by facilitating access to hand-pumps, etc., within accessible reach of households especially in rural areas and urban slums. Women groups will be encouraged to take up the management and maintenance of hand pumps
- ◆ Generate awareness among women groups in rural areas regarding the problems of waste disposal especially in rural areas. The State will make provision for waste disposal separately for bio-degradable and non bio-degradable wastes in co-ordination with civic authorities for their timely disposal. The State would encourage women groups to come forward to claim responsibility for management of sanitation units. The State shall also make efforts to encourage sanitation programmes in rural and urban areas.
- ◆ In view of the existence and multiple uses of ponds in the villages of Chhattisgarh, the State shall make efforts to provide separate ghats for women and proper facilities for changing of clothes.
- ◆ Encourage training in coordination with reputed NGOs and other organisations on watershed and water conservation activities

3.3 Industry

- ◆ Provide training to women to promote skills for income generating activities like handloom weaving, traditional Chhattisgarh arts, handicrafts, terracotta, sale of compost, collection of waste, use of sewing machines as well as focus on Information Technology, Biotechnology, etc.
- ◆ Encourage development of cottage and handicraft industries where an increased role is envisaged for women



- ◆ Encourage part time jobs with flexible timings for increased women participation. The State will encourage corporates, government bodies to draw up women friendly personnel policies and provision of social security benefits, support services for women i.e. crèches at work places, security, welfare programmes, transportation, etc.
- ◆ Facilitate rural women's access to capital, technology know-how and other productive resources for increased work opportunities
- ◆ Provide additional incentives equivalent to 10% of the capital investment or Rs. 0.2 million (Rs.2 lakhs) per annum, whichever is less, for a period of 5 years to medium and large scale industries where women constitute more than 30% of the workforce in line with the Industrial Policy of the State
- ◆ Encourage development of managerial and entrepreneurial skills to encourage self employment
- ◆ To promote women's participation in the use of solar energy, biogas, smokeless chulahs, etc. which help in conservation of environment
- ◆ Take suitable measures to enable women work till late or in night shifts in organisations accompanied by support services such as security, transportation, etc
- ◆ Provide necessary mechanisms for marketing of goods produced by women
- ◆ Technical assistance for enhancing the skills of women engaged in traditional work and availability of raw material at reasonable prices
- ◆ Promote participation of women and women group's in extraction of mineral resources
- ◆ Encourage setting up of 'Mahila Sahakari Nagrik Banks' in the state.

3.4 Forest

With 44% area of the State under forest, the tribal women in the forest areas constitute a large population of the women in the State. To address their issues the state would:

- ◆ Facilitate the formation of women groups and their training for collection, value added processing, preservation, storage and trade of non timber forest produce, which is poised to be a major source of revenue for the State
- ◆ Encourage women for plantation, management and marketing of commercial forest species specially medicinal plants.
- ◆ Encourage formation of Mahila Mandals / Self Help groups with a focus on Joint Forest Management activities
- ◆ Give special emphasis to development of women of the primitive tribes of the state
- ◆ Ensure access to safe drinking water and foodstock, health services on a priority basis for tribal women. The Public Distribution System (PDS) will be strengthened and increased participation of women in the PDS vigilance mechanism will be ensured



4.0 Implementation Outline - Creating an Enabling Environment for Social Development

The State recognises that attempts at bringing about changes in the status of women through legislation or economic development is not sustainable without a simultaneous movement to change the underlying social values, trends and attitudes. In view of this interlinkage adequate emphasis would be given to provide the much needed impetus to the social development of women. Accordingly, the State would take the following measures:-

4.1 Health Care and Nutrition

- ◆ Ensure women have access to affordable and proper health care, information and related services
- ◆ Increased investment in women's education and health which have direct impact in reducing fertility and mortality rates and increased social returns.
- ◆ Ensure implementation of laws regarding registration of marriages, births and deaths to effectively meet the problems of early marriage and infant and maternal mortality
- ◆ Provide health training (particularly in reproductive and child health) to women. The State would undertake special efforts to meet the nutrient needs especially amongst pregnant and lactating women through education and encouraging participation of women in the planning and delivery of the system
- ◆ Expand and intensify access to safe, effective and affordable methods of Family Planning especially in the rural and tribal areas
- ◆ Increase women's knowledge related to her power to exercise choice with respect to conception or abortion of a child.
- ◆ Encourage local women organisations/Self Help Groups to participate in primary health care activities including traditional medicine and measures to promote self care and increased community care
- ◆ Undertake gender sensitive initiatives that address issues related to sexually transmitted diseases (like AIDS etc)
- ◆ Promote establishing separate hospitals / cells for mentally handicapped women
- ◆ Initiate necessary action to establish separate women hospital in the state
- ◆ Promotion of mid-wife training programmes to encourage institutional deliveries

4.2 Education

- ◆ Promote societal awareness to gender issues and women's rights as part of course curriculum
- ◆ Formulate special measures to increase enrolment and retention rate of girls
- ◆ Reduce fees / promote free education for girls belonging to SC, ST, backward communities specially below the poverty line
- ◆ Encourage women / girls to get trained in self defence
- ◆ Organise vocational and job oriented counselling and training exclusively for women to enable them to opt for courses relevant to their talents and interests
- ◆ Make efforts to promote functional literacy with special emphasis on viable economic skills, etc.
- ◆ To promote skill development training programmes for women with the help of polytechnics and technical institutes in the private sector.
- ◆ Facilitate provisions of assistance / loan through various agencies for professional courses to needy women.
- ◆ Special Action Plan to provide education and health care for adolescent girls. Provision for spread of the network of Ashrams and hostels for girls as per requirement.
- ◆ Necessary efforts will be made to encourage women in Sports
- ◆ Incorporate moral education (value based) in the course curriculum of the educational institutions



- ◆ Inclusion of course curriculum related with legendary women of Chhattisgarh and related cultural and historical aspects.
- ◆ Encourage girls for technical and scientific education

4.3 Housing & Shelter

- ◆ Encourage inclusion of women's perspectives in planning of housing and provision of shelter in rural and urban areas so as to ensure that the benefits of housing, essential services and community facilities are directed to women in general
- ◆ Preferential allotment of plots and houses to women by public agencies
- ◆ Set up homes and rehabilitation centres and orphanages with provision for medical, psychological and economic rehabilitation for women victims of marital violence, societal callousness, etc. The government will encourage NGOs across the State in setting up and running these centres and provide other financial and infrastructural support
- ◆ Suitable measures for setting up of 'Kishori Balika Griha' in Chhattisgarh.
- ◆ Encourage setting up of safe accommodation for working and single women

4.4 Social Welfare & Cultural Aspects

- ◆ Discourage the role of media and advertising, which affect consumer ideology adversely and contribute to the growth of culture of violence against women. The media would be encouraged to develop codes of conduct, guidelines to combat negative images of women, portray successful women as role models and act as a catalyst to promote the human dignity of women. The State would encourage enrolment of women in journalism and mass communication
- ◆ Examine the customary practices and belief systems and take steps to mitigate the negative and unacceptable elements that degrade women through education, penal action, etc. Efforts would be made to make the customary laws more rational and logical through education.
- ◆ Evolve special programmes for women victims of systematic cultural and social violence such as for women persecuted as 'Tonhis'
- ◆ Discourage domestic violence through media and awareness campaigns and make it a legally culpable offence
- ◆ Effective implementation of 'Nashabandi Karyakram' to discourage alcoholism among males, which bears a large share of responsibility for the domestic violence perpetrated on women. Rights for closure of the sale outlet would vest with the Gram Sabha as per the State Excise Policy.
- ◆ Strict enforcement of rules to deal with trafficking in women
- ◆ Formulate special protective measures including social security for vulnerable sections of women including widows, handicapped women, women in distress and particularly below the poverty line, etc. This will include effective implementation of schemes like Indira Sahara Yojana.
- ◆ Introduce measures to encourage widow remarriage
- ◆ Undertake if necessary with help of NGO's interstate tie-ups to ensure legal and social security for migrant women. Steps would be taken to increase employment and effective potential of labour absorption in rural areas as well.
- ◆ Jathas to debunk the superstitions associated with instances of systematic violence shall be linked up to People's Science networks and educational programmes
- ◆ Special measures for the rehabilitation of women in prisons and their dependent children.