

# National Policy for Women, 2016

The **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)** had prepared a draft National Policy for Women in **2016** for articulating a vision for the Empowerment of Women. Previously, the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (NPEW) was formulated in 2001, nearly a decade and a half ago.

## Introduction

- 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 the 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.

## Women Empowerment

- The 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 the 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.

## Current Status of Women in India

- 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.

## Highlights of National Policy for Women, 2016

- The National Policy for Women, 2016 acts as a generic policy framework that guides various sectors to issue more detailed policy documents that are sector-specific.
- The **vision** of this policy is to build 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.
- Moreover, the **mission** is 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.

## Priority Areas

The draft policy addresses the diverse needs of women through identified priority areas, which include:

1. Health including food security and nutrition
2. Education
3. Economy (includes Poverty, Raising visibility, Agriculture, Industry, Labour and Employment (Skill Development, Entrepreneurship), service sector, Science and Technology)
4. Governance and Decision-Making
5. Violence Against Women
6. Enabling Environment (includes Housing and Shelter, Drinking Water and Sanitation, Media, Sports, Social Security, Infrastructure)
7. Environment and Climate Change

## Implementation of Policy

- 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, businesses, trade unions, NGOs and community-based organizations.
- 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.
- At the national level, the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** will act as a **nodal agency** for working towards the realisation of constitutional and international commitments to gender equality and social justice.
- 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.
- An **inter-ministerial committee** will be set up to periodically monitor the achievements and progress made under the action plan.

## Some Important Initiatives for Women

1. **National Commission for Women** - In January 1992, the Government set up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc.
2. **Reservation for Women in Local Self -Government** - The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one-third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies, whether in rural areas or urban areas.
3. **The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000)** - The plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.
4. **National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001** - The Department of Women & Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a “National Policy for the Empowerment of Women” in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

