1. PREAMBLE

Though the Constitution of India guarantees equality of all citizens before the law still women carry the burden of centuries of subordination thereby making it difficult for them to realise their constitutional rights. Recognising the real status of women, the Constitution also provides for positive discrimination in favour of women. The Government of Rajasthan reaffirms its commitment to work for the realisation of constitutional guarantee of equality, social justice and non-discrimination on the basis of sex, caste, community, language and religion. This policy takes the letter this spirit of the Constitution of India as the starting point.

In the global development scenario, Rajasthan has almost become synonymous with low status of women, patriarchal society, feudal customs and values, social polarisation along caste lines, high illiteracy and extreme poverty. To some extent this picture of Rajasthan may be the contribution of mass media and films. Yet the bitter truth is that girls and women are considered an unwanted burden in Rajasthani society. This is evident from the adverse sex ratio (910) in the state. There are wide regional variations. The sex ratio ranges from 795 in Dhaulpur District to 995 in Dungarpur District. The bottom ten districts in terms of adverse sex ratio are Dhaulpur 795, Jaisalmer 807, Bharatpur 832, Sawai Madhopur 854, Ganganagar 877, Alwar 880, Kota 881, Dausa 884, Bikaner 885 and Bundi 889 (Census of India, 1991). A wide range of social factors contribute to this situation and this sex ratio is an outcome of the prevailing socio-economic condition of women and their position in society. Female infant mortality, age specific female morbidity and mortality, educational access and achievement, work participation, access to health services, poor nutrition and other development indicators point to women's low status in society.

Customs such as Sati and female infanticide were common mal-practices for many centuries. Purdah system and practice of dowry are still widely prevalent in the State. It is also widely believed that domestic and sexual violence against women is quite high. Female literacy is among the lowest in the country. A larger number of girl children than boys die in the ages of 0-4 due to disease and presumably neglect. Women and girls of Rajasthan are known to carry a greater burden of illiteracy, poor health, oppression, social discrimination, poverty and powerlessness as compared to their sisters in many other parts of the country. Persistence of the tradition of child marriage and looking at a girl child as "Paraya Dhan" have robbed many girl children of their childhood and plunged them into domestic responsibilities at a tender age. The security of traditional and social systems provided to women moving out of their homes for education and employment is being regarded as insufficient which needs to be strengthened. In the absence of new social norms, laws and enforcement systems, women of Rajasthan are passing through a critical transitional period. These are indeed challenging times.

Despite poor status and hard living conditions, women of this state are known for their courage, strength and firm determination. Surviving in such a harsh environment where simple necessities of life like water and firewood involve many hours of hard work is a major achievement in itself. Women of Rajasthan are known the world over for their artistic sense, song, dance and traditional crafts. They are also well known for their capacity to work hard in difficult work environments on construction sites and roads. While on the one hand, women can be seen working hard side by side with men in Delhi and other neighbouring states, on the other hand in some communities where men folk have migrated for earning a living, women communities are left
behind for running their households on their own in very harsh circumstances.

Rajasthan is the first state to have launched in 1984 in 6 districts, the Women Development Programme for the development of women. Then keeping in view the positive results of the evaluation of this programme, it was extended to the whole of the state. This in itself is a unique programme. This programme aims not only at providing services and facilities to women as inactive beneficiaries, but also to empower them economically and socially by imparting them knowledge, education and training in order to bring them to the main stream of development. Under the main strategy of this plan, this programme provides for the active participation of voluntary institutions. At the state and district level Idara (Information, Development and Resource agency) is selected in the form of a reputed voluntary institution. - IDARA provides technical, academic and resource facilities.

Many departments have different plans aiming at ameliorating the condition of women directly and indirectly. Women Development Programme ensures the association of women with all these plans. For this they are to be acquainted with all the development works and to be linked with the development process so as to receive maximum benefits. Due to limited resources the programme has its limits yet it cannot be denied that Women Development Programmes played an important role in making them aware of their respective fields, modifying their approach to social justice imparting them the benefits of development works and giving them a sense of leadership. In this respect, the state government has taken two more important decisions under which the Rajasthan State Women Commission has been constituted and 30% reservation for women has been provided for in government-services.

Perhaps due to all these efforts, women of Rajasthan are eager to come forward in all fields. It is obvious from the experience of implementing the various programmes of women development that if an appropriate environment is created, women can easily be linked with the main stream of development. We look forward to the day when the women of Rajasthan will not be placed at the bottom end of the human development ladder. The State Policy for women hopes to create an enabling environment, where women's struggle for equality and social justice will be supported and promoted by the Government at all levels. The policy seeks to provide guidelines for appropriate legislation and equitable resource allocation. This document is not just a policy of the Government, but a platform to encourage and promote Women's struggle for equality and social justice in society. This will hopefully trigger wide debate and action in society among organisations and institutions, trusts, welfare bodies and others.

THE CONTEXT

During the past few years the State Governments of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have announced their policy for women. The Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India also initiated a discussion in 1996-97 on the national policy for women. These efforts kindled a debate on the usefulness of such a document in women's struggle for equality and social justice.

Many experts are of the opinion that the existence of progressive policies and legal provision are helpful in safeguarding citizen's rights. The Constitution of India also makes positive discrimination in favour of women. The very sanction of affirmative action in favour of women has given legitimacy to pro-women legislation's, reservations and special programmes. The State Government recognises that every step towards promoting gender justice contributes in some way to women's struggle for equality. It is with this conviction that the Government decided to announce a policy for women.

It is hoped that policy will also signal a major departure from conventional policy documents. It would be proper to treat it as a working document, which is, dynamic and forward-looking. This policy does not provide all the answers nor does it purport to be an all-inclusive statement of intent concerning the interest of women. This document tries to mark the parameters and it is hoped that it will be further refined as we gain experience.

The greatest challenge before the Government is to bridge the gap between policy programmes and ground reality. We have one of the most progressive constitutions in the world. We have laws and legislation's based on gender Justice. We are committed to equality, non-discrimination and social justice. We are one of the signatories to the United Nations "Convention of All Forms of
Discrimination Against Women" (CEDAW, 1979). The challenge before us is to ensure that they are implemented in letter and spirit. This document does not purport to say anything new or radically different. It affirms the commitment of the Government to ensure the implementation of the laws of the land.

2. **OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY**

The aim of this policy is to bring improvement in the status and position of women to make the process. Modalities and systems dynamic in order to eliminate exploitation and exploitative practices and to create a supportive environment for the overall development of girls and women.

In order to realise the objective, the following steps are out-lined -

- Initiate policies and programmes that promote gender equality and social justice (including gender justice) and enable women to realizetheir constitutional rights.
- Recognise the productive role of women in household economy, the economy, and the State; the Government will strive towards ensuring equal access to and control over resources and the fruits of development;
- Recognise the special needs of girl children, adolescent girls, and women in extreme poverty and difficult circumstances and target developmental interventions in such vulnerable sections of society;
- Recognise the vicious circle of poor nutrition, poor health, early childbearing and high mortality among women; promote a life cycle approach to women's health that recognises the needs at every stage from childhood to old age. Assist women gain greater control over their reproductive health and prevent unwanted pregnancies;
- Ensure that all girl children have access to at least primary education; illiterate/neo-literate adolescent and women have opportunities for basic and continuing education; and in general women have equal access at all levels of education;
- Create a conducive environment and appropriate mechanisms for gendersensitisation of Government functionaries at all levels and in all departments and initiate systems for sensitisation of political leaders, opinion makers and the media;
- Promote and support effective participation of women in political processes and gain their access to decision-making government and non-government institutions and organisations.

3. **THREE DIMENSIONAL APPROACH**

No one policy can capture the entire range of factors that affect women widely. In a large state like Rajasthan, this work becomes all the more difficult because of geographical disparities at regional levels, and the different societal and traditional attitudes towards women aggravate the environment of inequality. Every community has its own tradition and culture, and maintaining their form and - attaining the object of gender equality by eliminating their wide mal-practices is a very difficult task. In the present scenario the state government should play the important role of extending full positive cooperation for the overall develop of women and create such an environment where the women of all groups, having been empowered and united may receive their suitable place in society. The most salient feature of the policy is that this policy has been drafted, by taking into consideration the fundamental principles of equality, social justice and equal citizenship propounded by the Constitution. For the sake of implementation, this policy has been given a three-dimensional form which defined the feeling of the government in letter and spirit. These three dimensions are as follows -

I. **Reaffirming a rights perspective**

The first dimension provides a philosophical foundation to this policy and enables us to move
away from a welfare orientation to a rights and empowerment approach. In the present scenario, it is important to create such an environment wherein the women do not depend fully on the societal and governmental system, but may become themselves empowered and play a decisive role in the development of their rights and liabilities. For this it is important to change the dominant mind-set of administrators, policy makers, political leaders and service providers towards women.

II. Access to women in difficult circumstances and special focus groups

The second dimension marks vulnerable sections of our society and acknowledges that all women do not belong to the same and undifferentiated category. This will help administrators and service providers to target their efforts at groups who need it most.

III. Priority areas for suitable legislation, programme development observation and action

The third dimension lists priority areas for action by the Government, non-governmental organisations, various social institutions and the private sector. This will help them to prepare their work plans in their respective fields, keeping in view the priority areas.

4. REAFFIRMING A RIGHTS' PERSPECTIVE

Taking off from Constitutional guarantee of equal rights, this policy reaffirms Government's commitment to work towards realisation of fundamental rights of women. The Government moved away from a welfare approach to women's development to empowerment approach during the Women's Decade (1975-85) and the Government of India endorsed the December 1979 "Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women" of the United Nations. This convention reaffirmed the spirit of the Constitution of India. This policy document is rooted in a rights perspective; this policy especially refers to the following rights

- Right to life, survival, means of livelihood, shelter and basic needs;
- Right to equal pay for equal work; non-discriminatory work environment and recognition of women's contribution in human reproduction and concomitant right to child-care services for working women;
- Right to natural resources and access to common property resources;
- Right to safe environment that supports life for present and future generations;
- Right to health care at all stages of life from infancy, to old age;
- Right over one's own body and right to reproductive choice;
- Right to education, information, skill development and other tools of knowledge;
- Right to protection from violence, violations and bondage. Right to dignity and personhood, freedom from violence and violations of all kinds;
- Right to legal and social justice, including right to legal aid for poor women;
- Right to non-discriminatory personal law for women of all communities and castes;
- Right to equal access to public spaces, institutions and to employment;
- Right to participate as equals in political, administrative and societal institutions of governance.

These rights provide the philosophic basis for the policy formulation and acknowledge, for example; women's access to education, health, skill training, livelihood and so on which are important in themselves, and not just as instruments for fertility transition. This policy reaffirms the need to move away from a reproductive approach to women's development to one rooted in empowerment and rights. It is hoped that
such a perspective, if adopted with full understanding, will change the dominant mind-set of administrators, policy makers and service providers at all levels. This implies that women will no longer be viewed as passive recipients of welfare, but as active participants in determining the nature and content of programmes meant for them, leading to greater autonomy, confidence, knowledge, information mobility and skills.

In short, such a perspective will enable the Government to work towards women's empowerment in letter and spirit.

5. SPECIAL FOCUS GROUPS

Women are not an undifferentiated and homogeneous category. Women and girls from different social and economic groups have different problems. It has been widely accepted that Rajasthan has to pay special attention to girl children and adolescent girls. Given the prevailing social and economic situation, the number of women in difficult circumstances is increasing. Handicaps-physical and mental affect men and women in different ways. Similarly, violence, social conflict and forced migration affect men and women differently. Recognising the importance of identifying and listing groups that need special attention, this policy is committed to reaching out to women and girls in all groups, communities, regions and age groups and in difficult circumstances.

(A) Girl children and adolescent girls

No society can hope to progress unless it learns to value, nurture and cherish its young. A child scarred by discrimination, under-fed, illiterate and subject to violence is not likely to grow up to be a healthy and happy adult. She will perpetuate the cycle of deprivation, discrimination, under-nutrition, illiteracy and ill health. Investing in health, education and happiness of girl children and adolescents is perhaps the most important arena for public action. This is of particular importance in Rajasthan, where the sex ratio is going down at an alarming rate. Female age of marriage is still 15.4 and effective marriage is 17.9. Girls shoulder domestic responsibilities, including child bearing, before their body has a chance to mature. The Government is committed to reach out to girls and introduce programmes that will make a difference. Recognising the real situation and acknowledging the sensitive nature of this problem, the following key areas for action are proposed:

- Mount an intensive awareness campaign on the declining sex ratio, sex selective abortions, value of girl children, guarantee of constitutional rights of women; nutritional disparities in the household and resultant malnutrition and anaemia among girls; adverse impact of child marriage and teenage pregnancy, and the value of basic education;
- Reach out to the girls in different ways to ensure that every girl gets an opportunity for education (formal/non formal) and gets health care attention especially to prevent malnutrition and anaemia; provide support services and create a positive environment to allow the girls to develop into healthy and confident young women;
- Encourage and support non-governmental efforts to work with girls and adolescent girls within the formal school system and outside. Make available programmes for girls that include health awareness and education, counseling services and personality development programmes.
- Take effective steps to implement the Child Marriage (Restraint) Act, 1978.

(B) Vulnerable Groups

Almost all indicators of progress show sharp community, regional and caste differences. There are tribal, nomadic and scheduled caste communities in Rajasthan where maternal and child mortality is unacceptably high and literacy rate is as low as 0.5 per cent. Where instances are not uncommon. Lack of sustainable means of livelihood in some areas force women even into prostitution, often to keep their children alive. Women and girls from such poor and underprivileged castes and tribes have hardly any clothing to wear, thus keeping girls away from school and public places. The difficult economic situation
is further exacerbated by violence at home and in social the situation of women belonging to such castes, tribal communities, nomadic groups and other minority groups need special attention.

- As a first step the Government is committed to listing such groups district wise by preparing their profiles. This will hopefully force the attention of planners, administrators and service providers to target their programmes more carefully;
- Design and develop holistic programmes that address the varied needs of such communities; and
- Encourage non-governmental organisations to focus their efforts on such groups.

(C) Women in difficult circumstances

In the present social set up, some women themselves are isolated and marginalised. They become vulnerable and are often subject to humiliating treatment. Widows, divorcees, deserted women, unmarried women, childless women - all of them are viewed as a burden on the family and society. Many of them are cast away or forced to work for long hours only to ensure some shelter and food. Exploitation of such women has been documented in history. Because of increasing social pressure and poverty, such women shoulder an unequal burden of poverty. This is often referred to as feminisation of poverty, where the bottom end of the social and economic ladder has mostly women.

- Since the early 1950s the Government has targeted many welfare schemes and programmes for women in adverse circumstances. Such women are scattered all over the state, hence developing workable programmes for them has proved difficult. The Government is committed to exploring innovative ways of reaching out to such women and creating opportunities for education, skill development, income generation and employment. This policy acknowledges that such efforts have to be made within the overall framework of empowerment and rights.
- Handicaps, both physical and mental, affect women differently. They are social cast-offs, and even if they do live with their families, their plight is miserable. Physically handicapped women often end up as unpaid workers at home. Loss of sight, hearing, speech and mobility force women and girls to the bottom end of the social ladder. The Government recognises the importance of creating opportunities for their education and means of livelihood. It also recognises that community-based organisations, NGOs, and philanthropic institutions have a significant role to play.
- The plight of women confined to mental institutions has been highlighted from time to time by the media. While many of them may be suffering from mental illness, a large number are said to have been sent there by their families on the pretext of madness (or even witchcraft). Once they are admitted in such institutions, many families are unwilling to take them back even if they are cured. The Government is committed to exploring ways and means to rehabilitate them.
- Poverty and powerlessness may drive girls and women into prostitution for earning their livelihood. Many of them are forced into immoral traffics young girls, often sold or kidnapped from their homes. Women living along major highways in Rajasthan are sometimes compelled into casual prostitution in order to supplement their meager household income. Such women lead a precarious existence, risking their health and that of their children, to keep body and soul together. They are often subject to extreme forms of violence and abuse. Sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and reproductive health problems are often left untreated. With low self-confidence and self-esteem and extreme sense of insecurity, they are unable to negotiate safe sex. Many of them are cast-off by their families when they are no longer able to earn. The Government acknowledges the need to reach out to such women and empower them to lead a life of dignity. Here again the role of community-based organisations, NGO's and philanthropic groups is significant.

6. PRIORITY AREAS FOR LEGISLATION, PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND ACTION
Though this policy has been designed by the state government with the co-operation of and discussion with all concerned, yet the government acknowledges that its implementation with success is neither possible, nor desirable, only by the government or its agencies. Therefore, non-government and voluntary organisations/academic institutions, social and community organisations, and people’s representatives and other leading groups need to be associated for the implementation of the policy.

It should be accepted that for the empowerment of women, a multi-pronged and united programme is needed in place of separate working plans of certain departments and organisations. A multi-pronged approach within a holistic perspective is needed to make a positive impact. Lack of progress on one front can slow down others. For example, it will be difficult to improve the health status of women in the absence of meaningful education programmes. Social support services like childcare, clean drinking water, proper sanitation facilities, income generation opportunities and mechanisms to deal with violence against women at home and in the society have to tackled simultaneously. Slowing down population growth will be impossible unless people, both men and women, feel secure about the survival of their children and the availability of opportunities for livelihood. Transferring the burden of fertility transition to women and making them the target for population control will not yield results.

In the following paragraphs, some of the important points relating to women development have been identified, the main departments have been listed and the concerned government departments have been entrusted with their responsibility. This has been done to facilitate the work of preparing an integrated work plan for women's development. The Government expects a significant role from all government and non-government organisations, institutions, people's representatives and other leading groups in the work plans prepared by it.

(A) Economic Empowerment

It is widely accepted that the economic work done by women in agriculture, care of animals, collection of forest produce, wage labour in rural and urban areas (mining, construction etc.), home based work in food processing, handicrafts and small trading and in other non-organised fields is practically ignored. Despite the enormous contribution of women to the survival of households women are still treated as parasites, an unproductive members of the family. Women of Rajasthan are viewed as an economic liability in the natal home and a burden in the marital home. Invisibility of women's work, lack of control over money generated or earned by them and lack of negotiating power have contributed a great deal to the perpetuation of a negative image in the family, and society and in politics. It is now widely acknowledged that women are being pushed into the informal sector and are engaged increasingly in low skill and low paid occupation. There are few opportunities for women to move into non-traditional occupations and even if such an opportunity is available, they cannot take advantage of these opportunities on account of family and societal bandages.

Most economic programmes designed for women have failed to adopt a holistic approach to skill development, income generation, confidence building increased mobility and greater awareness. Power and social status of women is determined by their access to intellectual resources through education and experiential knowledge, positive self-esteem, self-confidence, Membership of or participation in a collective and economic resource group. Access to income alone without control has been the bane of many income generation programmes in the last fifty years. Recognising the importance of economic empowerment, the government is committed to promoting the financial and economic empowerment of women.

The main thrusts of this policy are

- **Ensure access to financial resources** :- Prescribing the minimum limit of women beneficiaries for financial assistance under the various development programmes and bank finance schemes in the rural and urban areas. Trying to make under IRDP all assets or allotment of plots at the time of rehabilitations of slums in urban areas, jointly under the name of husband and wife, providing credit facilities in financial institutions to women's groups and self-help groups. Prescribing the minimum limit of the number of women beneficiaries in employment guarantee schemes and
poverty alleviation programmes.

- **Encourage formation of women's groups and co-operatives.** Encourage through specific schemes and programmes the formation of women self-help groups, women's collectives and co-operatives; provide such groups with continuing education and training and enact appropriate legislation, rules and procedures, so that these groups are recognised by financial institutions for credit facilities, for empowering and mobilising the collectives, imparting timely training and organising refresher training and review the activities of these collectives.

- **Enhance negotiating power of women and build self-confidence.** Recognising that women's collectives and groups have fared poorly in the absence of specific inputs to enhance their self-confidence and negotiating power, the Government is committed to creating opportunities for training of women's groups, collectives and co-operatives.

- **Improve access to training, skill development and management:** Create opportunities for training and skill development for women in rural and urban areas. Encourage flexible entry system for women into industrial training, paramedical training (ANM), teacher's training and the like. Ensure that women who are desirous of acquiring professional or para-professional training after completing child-rearing responsibility do not face disqualification. Revamp and redesign training facilities so that they are in tune with emerging opportunities for employment and self-employment, with a focus on highly skilled and non-traditional occupations.

- **Recognise and promote the contribution of women farmers:** Contribution in agriculture will be given greater visibility by targeting training, research, subsidies and marketing support to women farmers.

- **Encourage women entrepreneurs:** Create mechanisms and appropriate linkages to encourage women entrepreneurs through training, counseling facilities and credit through financial institutions.

- **Women-friendly employment policies:**
  - **Ensure equal pay for equal work and non-discrimination in the workplace:** Ensuring equal pay for equal work is the first step towards promoting women-friendly employment policies. This is of particular importance in Government sponsored employment guarantee schemes and poverty alleviation programmes.
  - **Promote flexible entrance and exit systems in formal sector:** Amend existing rules and regulations governing employment in the formal sector to enable women to enter the formal sector after completing childbirth and child rearing responsibilities, when widowed, deserted or divorced.
  - **Encourage flexible timings in formal institutions:** In view of the fact that women with domestic responsibilities are forced to choose between a career and home, encourage formal institutions (Government, Private and Non-government) to introduce flexible timings.
  - **Child care centres or creches:** Enforce legislation to provide child care facilities in any organisation/workplace, employing 25 or more men and women.
  - **Protection and redressal against sexual harassment:** Implement and strengthen the Supreme Court of India verdict on redressal mechanisms for sexual harassment in the work place. Amend the various laws; rules like conduct rules by enacting suitable provisions so that there should be no escape from implementing the court's directions.
  - **Creating a safe working environment:** The Government acknowledged the importance of safe working environment for women workers. This is of particular importance for health, child development, education and rural development functionaries working in rural areas.
  - **Protection against discrimination in the workplace:** Discrimination against
women in the workplace, and non-availability of promotion and carrier advancing prospects is a major issue for women in the formal sector. The Government is committed to promote non-discriminatory practices in the formal sector through appropriate legislation.

- **Housing and basic sanitation facilities for women working in remote/rural areas**: Providing housing, toilets and safe drinking water sources for women working in rural and remote areas on a priority basis.

- Maternity leave and paternity leave: In addition to statutory maternity leave, provide paternity leave up to two weeks and half-pay leave for mothers up to six months.

**Nodal Department**: Special Schemes Organisation (Rural Development)

**Key Departments**
- Labour and Employment
- Finance
- Personnel
- Industries
- Agriculture
- Animal Husbandry
- Science and Technology
- Higher and Technical Education
- Urban Development and Housing

**B) Social support services**

Since the early 1950s the Government has played an important role in providing support structures and supportive laws as an instrument of affirmative action. In the case of women, the importance of providing child care centres for working women, accommodation for rural school teachers and ANMs has been recognised. Most recently, provisions of toilet facilities in schools, educational institutions, work places and public places has been acknowledged as an important support service.

The Integrated Child Development Programme was conceived as a village-based institution that would provide pre-school facilities and supplementary nutrition for children below 6 years. It was also conceived as a rural child care centre. Similarly, development of working women's hostels has been on the agenda of the Social Welfare Department.

While the above interventions have been noteworthy, the Government recognises that much more needs to be done to provide social support services to poor women. Three broad areas have been identified for advocacy and action, namely

- Provision of child care facilities for all working women in rural and urban areas. This is of critical importance to migrant workers, wage-labourers involved in construction work, workers in the informal sector and in village where women have to leave their children for many hours to attend to agricultural work. The Government is committed to drafting necessary rules and regulations to make it mandatory for the private sector to provide child care facilities in an organisation/work place. The possibility of framing rules or sub-rules for employing minimum prescribed number of persons (men and women). Introducing mandatory welfare contribution towards these child care support centres will also be explored.

- Provision of toilet facilities in schools, educational institutions, and public places and in rural and urban settlements. This is important for the general health and well-being of women. Toilet facilities in educational institutions are a necessary investment to ensure retention and regular attendance. Implement existing rural sanitation programmes, extend them, and develop new
programmes for provision of toilets in rural areas.

- Encourage and support non-governmental organisations to establish and run working women's hostels, colleges, industrial and employment oriented educational and training institutions (especially in small towns where such facilities are not available).
- Initiate/revamp programmes and schemes to encourage non-governmental organisations, philanthropic institutions and women's groups to set up short--stay homes for victims of violence, abuse and domestic conflict.
- Encourage and support municipal and public bodies, private institutions and non-governmental organisations to establish toilets for women in urban slums and public places.
- Promote the use of non-conventional energy and energy saving technologies to reduce the drudgery of women and girls and promote a smoke free cooking environment.
- Encourage and support non-governmental organisations to run training programmes for widows and single and deserted women; with a view to help them earn a livelihood with dignity;
- Encourage and support non-governmental organisations to develop schemes for rehabilitation of under-trial and convicted women;

**Nodal Department:** Social Welfare Department

**Key Departments**

- Urban Development and Housing
- Transport
- Panchayati Raj and Rural Development

(C) **Health, Nutrition and Public Health (water, sanitation, etc.)**

In view of the special geographical, cultural, economic and social circumstances prevailing in the state, special programmes at state, district, sub-division, village panchayat and family level need to be implemented. The effect of increasing population on weaker economic system and on the lives of the people of Rajasthan is not beyond understanding.

Infant and child mortality rate in Rajasthan is exceptionally high, which is a great cause of anxiety. Pre-mature delivery is the main cause of the deaths of more than half of neonates. This all depends on women's status, illiteracy, poverty, non-availability of care during pregnancy, early marriage and pregnancy at an early age, lack of access to health care services before and after delivery, the level and utility of these centres, and the services provided by the available nurse at the time of delivery. Besides, infants die of acute respiratory infection. Dysentery among pneumonia, infections in the umbilical cord, etc. malnutrition, untimely and irregular vaccination and neglecting female children by the family and the main causes of infant-mortality.

Though in the absence of authentic evidence, it is difficult to prove the prevalence of such practices, yet the neglect of girl in comparison to boy receiving nutrition, health and maintenance, is widely acknowledged. Timely medical attention is difficult to come by for girls as compared to boys. The health care needs of women outside the reproductive age groups, is practically non-existent. The need of improving these special medical facilities is widely reorganised.

Government acknowledges the need for drastic action to improve the health and nutritional status of women. Given the enormity of the task, the Government also recognises that it can do little without the support of civil society.

**The main thrusts of this policy are**
• Acknowledge the vicious cycle of ill health, the Government recognises the importance of providing health-care services to women of all age groups.

• Adopt a holistic reproductive and child health approach to strive towards reducing infant and maternal mortality rates through active intervention to strengthen primary health care, reproductive health services especially referral services for maternal and child health emergencies, prevention and management of reproductive tract infections, and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS to launch public campaign to increase community awareness (especially among men) about the factors contributing to high mortality and morbidity among women, and to increase the pool of trained traditional birth attendants (Dai) in every village, hamlet and urban settlement.

• Enable women to gain greater control over their reproductive health and prevent unwanted pregnancies through provision of information about contraception (including side-effects).

• Improve the quality of health care services, with a focus on a client centred approach, which respects women's right to privacy and to be treated with dignity.

• Enhance clinical skills, self-esteem and self-confidence of grassroots paramedical workers through systematic pre-service and in service training, supportive supervisory systems, and back-up referral services. Strengthening this cadre is acknowledged as the key to enhancing women's access to health-care services.

• Reduce malnutrition and other nutrition disorders like anaemia among children, adolescent girls and women particularly pregnant and lactating women through public education and appropriate supplementary nutrition. Encourage and propagate the use of locally available food supplements to improve nutrition levels.

• The Public Distribution System (Fair Price Shops) accessible to the women of the most vulnerable sections of society, ensure that ration cards are made in the names of women. Explore avenues to hand over the running of such shops to women's groups. This will arrest leakage and corruption and improve poor women's access to subsidised food and fuel.

• Improve the general health status of children, especially girls through special programmes for the prevention and management of early childhood diseases.

• Promote environmental sanitation through various programmes to enhance access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

• Strive to prevent and manage infectious diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and water borne diseases through public education, awareness and improvement of sanitation.

• Work towards provision of safe drinking water and proper sanitation facilities by forging convergence of services at the grassroots level, involvement of the community, especially women, in planning, execution, maintenance, monitoring and surveillance of the water supply and sanitation.

**Nodal Department:** Medical, Health and Family Welfare

**Key Departments**

- Public Health and Engineering Department
- Education
- Rural Development and Panchayati Raj
- Housing and Urban Development

**(D) Literacy and Education**

Rajasthan has the lowest female literacy rate in India. As per Census of India, 1991, this literacy rate in Rajasthan was at 20.44 per cent. According to the recently published Human Development Report on
Rajasthan, 1999. The highest literacy rate (men 70.66 and 37.46 per cent for female) is in Kota and the lowest rate (for men 36.56 per cent and 7.68 per cent for female) is in Barmer District.

It is a matter of great satisfaction that the literacy rate has increased 5 times during the last 4 decades. We have reason to believe that with the steps taken in this direction, the ensuing Census will reveal a better picture of literacy in Rajasthan. Still much more is required to be done for attaining the National average in literacy. The Government is persistently striving in this direction.

In view of the seriousness of the problem, this policy reiterates the main thrust of the National Policy on Education. "Education will be used to improve the status of women. In order to neutralise the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived effort in favour of women. The National Education System will play a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new social values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, training and orientation of teachers, decision makers and administrators and active involvement of educational institutions. The removal of women's illiteracy and the obstacles inhibiting their access to, and retention in, elementary education, will receive overriding priority, through provision of special support services, setting time targets and effective monitoring." (GOI, NPE, 1986).

In the light of the above commitment, the main features of this policy will be as follows

- The Government is committed to making girl's education the most important thrust of educational intervention. It recognises that girl's enrolment and retention have to group if universal elementary education is to become a reality. In order to achieve this, it is important to recognise the need to simultaneously permit multiple modes, namely formal, non-formal, condensed programmes and night schools (during the transitional phase).

- Providing schools is not enough. Addressing the constraint that prevent girls from attending schools, will receive priority. Burdened with domestic chores and tired after many hours of housework, girl children need special attention and care in schools. Making the school environment a happy and secure one and making education a joyful learning exercise is necessary to retain children, especially girls, in schools.

- Provision of pre-school and child care facilities within or close to the schools is essential to ensure the enrolment and retention of young girls who have to care for their siblings.

- Involvement of the community and elected representatives to improve the quality of education and make it a people's movement.

- Reviewing the existing text books and educational material with a view to promote the positive picture of women, to accept their contribution in family and society and to respect their rights.

- Encourage the recruitment and ongoing education and training of women teachers, especially in rural schools, with a view to create role models for girls and women.

- Orientation of all teachers, women and men, to the particular situation of girl children, sensitising them to gender issues and enabling them to play a catalytic role in girls' education.

- Organising additional training programmes for women teachers and educational workers in order to prepare them for regular pre-service and in-service training. This is necessary to bring them on an equal platform as men.

- Introduce gender training for all workers across the board.

- Arrange for vocational and career guidance for girls and their parents in schools or in designated

- Review of text-books and education material particularly orthodox viewpoint regarding role of girls and women with a view to modifying them so as to promote a positive image of women, acknowledging their contribution within the family and society, and respecting their rights.

- Increase seats and residential facilities for girls at higher and technical educational
institutions.

• Promote establishment of a degree college exclusively for girls in each district to provide hostel facilities for them and increase post secondary educational opportunities through colleges, polytechnics and industrial training institutes.

• Introduce gender studies either as a part of the regular curriculum or as an extra-curricular programme - i.e. through Women's Studies Centres in Universities and Colleges.

• Encourage and promote life-centred continuing education for adult women and adolescent girls through Jajams, Melas, Camps, Sangams and mutual learning networks.

**Nodal Department** Primary and Secondary Education Department

**Key Departments**

Higher and Technical Education Department
Rural Development and Panchayati Raj
Department of Agriculture
Department of Industry

(E) **Prevention of atrocities and violence**

Constitutional guarantee of fundamental rights and freedoms have meant little to millions of women all over Rajasthan who have been subject to centuries of oppression and all forms of exploitation. Their secondary status in society coupled with oppressive caste system and grinding poverty has effectively robbed them of their rights and a life of dignity which were envisaged by our constitution makers. The government acknowledges that despite good laws and rules, their enforcement has been a major problem. Unless there is a social movement that can transform existing attitude and behaviour patterns, the role of the Government is limited and active support of civil society is necessary. The Government can play a catalytic role in fostering a climate where women's rights, dignity and security are safeguarded.

The Government is committed to the following goals:

• Review existing legislation with reference to women's rights, constitutional rights and directive principles of state policy with a view to remove anomalies and make them relevant and to remove procedural complexities.

• Increase the number of family courts; hold periodic reviews in the High Court for time bound disposal of cases of serious crimes against women.

• Ensure implementation of Equal Remuneration/Wages Act, especially in the unorganised sector.

• Safeguard the rights of widows and provide housing/land on priority basis to women in difficult circumstances.

• Establish informal watch-dog mechanisms to monitor and report discriminatory practices.

• Encourage and support legal literacy/education and legal aid programmes for women at all levels.

• Work towards the prevention of all forms of discrimination against girls, adolescents and women including sexual exploitation, female infanticide and forced abortions in public and private spheres. This will be done through advocacy, sensitisation of law enforcing departments/people; stringent action and awareness programmes.

• Work promptly at every stage towards the prevention and eradication of all forms of
violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, and to ensure that the oppressed gets suitable shelter and justice and their rehabilitation may be possible. This will be done through advocacy, training and sensitisation of the police force and judicial officers at all levels, awareness drives, establishment of short-stay homes for battered and harassed women and expediting disposal of cases in the courts, if necessary, through special tribunals.

- Encourage women to study law and encourage non-governmental organisations to launch legal education and literacy programmes for women at all levels. Encourage training in the female related laws in various government training centres and promote research work on such subject.
- Appointment of Mehila Sahayata Samiti as a focal point to refer case of violence and atrocities against women. Encourage voluntary organisation to set up legal aid cells and legal literacy programmes with a view to enlarge the pool of aware and confident women who can help women access legal redressal mechanisms of the State.
- Work towards establishment of special women police station, (Thanas) in all the Districts.

**Nodal Department** : Home

**Key Departments** :

- Law
- Social Welfare
- Public Relations
- Education
- Medical, Health and Family Welfare
- Panchayati Raj and Rural Development

**(F) Natural Resources and the environment**

In the last three or four decades there has been steady decline in people's access to natural resources like fuel, fodder, water and forest produce. For centuries, the poor have been able to survive because of their access to natural resources. Unprecedented exploitation of natural resources, deforestation. Pollution and gradual decline in people's right to common property resources have increased the pressure of survival. It is widely acknowledged that women and girls shoulder a greater burden of this phenomenon. Women have to walk longer distances for water, fuel and fodder. They are also subject to harassment and violence by the "guardians" of such resources. The problem is particularly acute in reserve forests and sanctuaries where longer hours spent in such survival tasks impact on girl's education, forcing parents to send their daughters to collect water, fodder and/or fuel.

Beijing Declaration (1995) is an agreed document of the nations of the world which unequivocally calls for equitable social development policies that recognise empowering the poor, particularly women, to utilise environmental resources in a sustainable manner. This is a necessary foundation for sustainable development. Women as farmers, agricultural workers, users and managers of forests, care takers of animals and the like, can be engaged in a meaningful partnership to manage their environment. Recognising the importance of involving women in planning and management of natural resources, programmes have been formulated where women can voice their concerns and influence policies and strategies.

- Recognising the importance of finding amicable solutions to this vexing issue, the Government is committed to exploring avenues for community, especially women's involvement in management of natural resources and the environment.
- Returning common property resources like common village lands, public land and grazing land to the community and ensuring unfettered access to such resources requires innovative strategies. This has major implications for women from poor landless families, especially those belonging to
disadvantaged communities/castes.

- Create safe drinking water sources through hand-pumps/tube-wells with equitable water distribution system. This is a priority area for action.

Some innovative programmes in the country have demonstrated alternative strategies. Drawing lessons from successful and not so successful programmes is the first step towards developing a state level policy for management of natural resources. Working along this line will go a long way in reducing the workload of women.

**Nodal Department**: Panchayati Raj.

**Key Departments**

- Public Health and Engineering Department
- Environment
- Urban Development and Housing (including municipalities)
- Department of Forests

(G) **Media**

In Rajasthan as in the entire country, there has been a virtual explosion of electronic and other media films, television and satellite programmes, have opened up hitherto unheard of avenues for communication through channels, radio, internet etc. The disturbing aspect of this explosion is the increasing violence, sex and consumerism. It is popularly believed that this has contributed to increasing violence against and abuse of women, commercialisation of sex and changing attitudes towards women in society. This global phenomenon requires a national strategy, and one state can do little to stem the tide; the government is committed to initiating statewide debate on the impact of the media on the social fabric. Promoting a more gender just portrayal of women sending signals that societal violence against women will not be tolerated and sensitisation of media persons is acknowledged as a priority area.

- The prevailing mind-set of people in positions of authority in society within the Government and outside come in the way of implementation of progressive and gender just policies and programmes. Media can play a key role in fostering new values, especially towards women's education and employment. As an education tool, the mass media can become an instrument for educators to foster a positive attitude towards women's right to equality and social justice.

- Such a proactive role is especially called for to combat gender based violence. This should be done not by sensationalising events but by shaming the perpetrators, promoting positive images of women and girls and confronting gender stereotypes, television, radio, folk media, films and the print media can play a positive interventionist role in promoting gender justice.

- Encourage the media industry and IEC programmes in the Government to develop, in appropriate language, traditional, indigenous and other ethnic forms (such as story telling, drama, poetry, songs, etc.) to foster new values. In particular, gear the Information, Education and Communication programmes of different departments to promote gender justice. This is of special importance - in the Medical and Health field where the Government has invested a substantial amount of funds to promote the small-family norm, safe motherhood, child survival (including universal immunisation) and other health programmes.

- The Government is committed to exploring opportunities to engage people working in the media, in the ongoing national debate on gender justice, gender stereotypes and gender based violence through workshops and gender sensitisation programmes.

- Use this policy document as a tool for advocacy by encouraging statewide debate on the importance of such a policy and the role of non-government institutions in the realisation of the
objectives. The above can be done through special project for education and advocacy through the media and with the media. Non-governmental organisations have a significant role to play in this area.

**Nodal Department:** Department of Public Relations

**Key Departments**

- Home
- Health and Family Welfare Ministry
- Education
- Rural Development and Panchayati Raj,

(H) **Political Participation**

The real position of women in society is reflected by their low participation rate in the wide range of political space from the Legislative Assembly of the State to the Panchayats. The provision of 33 per cent reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Bodies, has given an important chance to the women to play a decisive role in the development. This step of the government has played a remarkable role in making a radical departure from the prevailing thinking. The next challenge is to give to women influential role in politics, Panchayati Raj Institutions and local bodies. In this regard, there is growing evidence that strong and articulate women are often made victims of no confidence motions. Despite the odds, it is indeed gratifying to note that women are coming out of patriarchal structures and claiming a place in politics.

- The Government is committed to facilitating capacity building of elected women representatives through training workshops, exposure visits/study tours and mutual learning networks. Needless to add, active participation and support of women's organisations, training institutions and social activists will be necessary to reach out to women across the length and breadth of the State.
- Encourage grassroots functionaries in the Government and in non-governmental organisations to consciously enlarge the pool of literate, aware and confident women who can participate in local self-government institutions, community based committees (to support and monitor education, health, drinking water, agricultural extension and other programmes) and other public forums.
- Highlight the personal experiences of women who have made a difference in elected bodies and in public institutions. Focusing on the achievement or ordinary poor women will create role models for women of Rajasthan leading to their greater participation in public life.

**Nodal Department** : Panchayati Raj

**Key Departments**

- Women and Child Development Department
- Education

7. **IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

I. The Women and Child Development Department will be the nodal department to co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of this policy.

II. The implementation of this Policy will be the responsibility of all the departments. They will prepare plans in their respective sectors along with an action plan, time frame and budget. Due care will be taken to account for inter-district and inter-community differences. These plans will be consolidated at the level of women and child development department and will be an integral part of
III. Integration of gender issues into mainstream programmes and schemes needs careful planning and strict monitoring. To this end the Planning Department and Women and Child Development Department will oversee integration at the State level and ensure that every departmental plan has addressed the specific needs of women and girls.

IV. Each Department will assign a nodal officer at the State level who will monitor the implementation of Departmental Plans and sensitivity to gender issues.

V. The Nodal Department will regularly interact with all the Departments: Public organisations, people's representatives, non-governmental organizations, banks and financial institutions and women's groups and organisations.

VI. The Rajasthan State Women Commission was established in May 1999. Hence the Nodal Department (Women and Child Development Department) will be responsible to obtain the progress reports from all the departments, public organisations, people's representatives, non-governmental organisations, banks, financial institutions and women's groups and organisations and consolidate and place them before the Commission every three months. The Commission will send its recommendations to the state about the implementation of the policy of the Commission. The state government will be responsible to ensure the implementation of these recommendations.

VII. A Committee headed by the Chief Minister will oversee the progress and review it every year and a committee headed by the Chief Secretary will monitor implementation every six months at the State Level.

VIII. The Government will explore the possibility of setting up an autonomous Women's Resource Centre to conduct research and enhance the base of knowledge needed for training and sensitisation and for use by various Departments. This resource centre will conduct regular training and orientation programmes, and provide technical assistance to various departments, schemes and programmes.