
UNIT 5 EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN – POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this unit are to acquaint the student on policies and programmes initiated by the Government of India from time to time on advancement and empowerment of women. After reading the unit, the student will be:

- 1 able to understand constitutional provisions enshrined in the Indian Constitution;
- 1 able to know the various committees and commission at international and national level;
- 1 understand the provisions for women in major policies in social sector and National Policy on empowerment of women;
- 1 institutions relating to administrative machinery for advancement of women;
- 1 main thrust of five year plans on women from 1st to 10th Five Year Plans; and
- 1 major programmes/schemes of economic, social and political empowerment of women, more specially of rural women.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Policy documents concerning Indian women have been guided by the Constitution. The Preamble to the Constitution of India assures “to secure to all its citizens: Justice, social, economic and political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status and opportunity; and to promote among them all Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the Nation”. To attain these national objectives, the Constitution guarantees certain fundamental rights and freedoms such as freedom of speech, protection of life, personal liberty and the prohibition of discrimination or denial of equal protection.

The country’s concern in safeguarding the rights and privileges of women found its

best expression in the Constitution of India. While Article 14 confers equal rights and opportunities on men and women in the political, economic and social spheres, Article 15 prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of sex, religion, race, caste etc. and Article 15(3) empowers the State to make affirmative discrimination in favour of women. Similarly, Article 16 provides for equality of opportunities in the matter of public appointments for all citizens; Article 39 stipulates that the State shall direct its policy towards providing men and women equally the right to means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work; Article 42 directs the State to make provisions for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief; and Article 51(A)(e) imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women. To make this de-jure equality into a de-facto one, many policies and programmes were put into action from time to time, besides enacting/enforcing special legislations in favour of women. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women.

From Independence to the current day, India's approach to development planning has shifted from welfare to human development. This has occurred partially through an interaction between India's national planning and its role in the international community. International and national thinking on women, gender and development issues has seen many changes since Independence, in large part through international processes to improve the status and living standard of women. At the same time, India's tradition of including women in freedom, equality and development struggles was supported and strengthened by international activities. These dynamics resulted in the formulation of national policies that were guided less by ideas of women's welfare, where development is guided by planners and policy makers and women are considered targets or beneficiaries, and more by notions of productivity, empowerment, sustainability and equity.

5.2 EVOLUTION OF POLICIES ON WOMEN

India has ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments striving to secure equal rights for women. Key among there is ratification of the *Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*. The convention promotes the substantive model of equality: equality of opportunity, equality of access and equality of rights. Besides the CEDAW, several other instruments have been ratified, notably the *Convention on the Rights of Child, Convention on Civil and Political Rights, Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*. India has also endorsed the *Mexico Plan of Action; Nairobi forward looking strategies, Beijing Platform for Action*.

Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards there has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. In 1971, following a resolution of the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, the *Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI)* was constituted at the instance of the UN General Assembly. The presentation of the report of the CSWI "Towards Equality" coincided with the celebration of 1975 as International Women's Year. To operationalize the recommendations of CSWI, a Blueprint of *Action Points and National Plan of Action for Women, 1976* was formulated by the then Department of Social Welfare, Government of India. This, in turn, led to the presentation of the Report of the *Working Group on Employment for Women, 1978*, as well as the Report of the *Working Group on Development*

of Village Level Organisations of Rural Women, 1978. It also formed a part of the Sixth Five Year Plan exercise. The impact of these reports resulted in a separate chapter on Women and Development 1980-85 in the Sixth Five Year Plan. It also resulted in women being perceived as productive contributors to the nation's economy.

Following an agreement signed between the then Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Government of India and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (UN), a Report of the National Committee on Role and Participation of Women in Agriculture and Rural Development, 1980 was submitted. Further report of the Working Group on Personnel Policies for Bringing Greater Involvement of Women in Science and Technology – 1981 reported the extent of participation of women in scientific establishments and suggested measures for promoting greater involvement of women in science and technology. In the Seventh Five Year Plan, the Chapter on Socio-Economic Programmes for Women – 1985-90 moved further away from a 'welfare' approach to a more positive 'developmental' approach to women's concerns. The Indian Parliament also adopted a ***National Policy on Education–1986***, which laid special emphasis on the education of women and girls in all fields including science and technology.

The women's movement and a wide-spread network of non-Government Organisations, which have strong grassroots presence and deep insight into women's concerns have contributed in inspiring initiatives for the empowerment of women. However, there still exists a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the Constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programmes, and related mechanisms on the one hand and the situational reality of the status of women in India, on the other. This has been analyzed extensively in the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, ***"Towards Equality"***, 1974 and highlighted in the ***National Perspective Plan for Women, 1988-2000***, the ***Shramshakti Report, 1988*** and the ***Platform for Action, Five Years After – An assessment"***.

Women issues found prominent place in various policies formulated and adopted from time to time by the Government of India. ***The National Health Policy 2001*** promises to ensure increased access to women to basic health care and commits highest priority to the funding of the identified programmes related to women's health. During the Ninth Plan period, several new initiatives were taken as part of the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) Programme (1997), in order to make it broad-based and client-friendly. All the interventions of the erstwhile programme of Child Survival and Safe Motherhood (CSSM) became part of RCH. During this period, the focus shifted from the individualised vertical interventions to a more holistic integrated life-cycle approach with more attention to reproductive health care. This includes access to essential obstetric care during the entire period of pregnancy, provision of emergency obstetric care as close to the community as possible, improving and expanding early and safe abortion services and provision for treatment of Reproductive Tract Infections/Sexually Transmitted Infections (RTI/STI) cases at the sub-district level.

The National Nutrition Policy (1993) advocates a comprehensive inter-sectoral strategy for alleviating all the multi-faceted problems of under/malnutrition and its related deficiencies and diseases so as to achieve an optimal state of nutrition for all sections of society, but with a special priority for women, mothers and children, who are vulnerable as well as 'at-risk'. Of the two major problems of macro and micro-nutritional deficiencies that the women, mothers and children suffer from, while the former are manifested through chronic energy deficiency (CED), the

latter are reflected in Vitamin A, Iron and Iodine deficiencies.

The National Population Policy adopted in 2000 seeks to address the issues related to population stabilisation and to ensure universal access to quality contraceptive services as a step towards attaining the two-child norm. It calls for reduction in the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) to 30 and Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) to 100 by 2010, immunisation of children, promoting delayed marriage for girls and enhancing the number of institutional deliveries. IMR and MMR have been showing a steady declining trend. While IMR declined from 94.5 in 1988 to 71.7 in 1998 and to 70.0 in 1999, MMR declined from 437 in 1993 to 407 in 1998.

The National Policy on Education, announced in 1986 (revised in 1992), gave a big momentum to the task of providing basic education for all. Concerted efforts made during the Ninth Plan were able to expand access, increase retention and improve learning achievements of children in primary and upper primary schools. The National literacy Mission, set up in 1988 with the goal of attaining full literacy, i.e. a sustainable threshold level of 75 per cent by 2005, continued to follow a multi-pronged strategy to eradicate illiteracy in the country. The Mahila Samakhya scheme was launched in 1989 to translate the goals of the empowerment of women into a concrete programme for education and empowerment of women in rural areas, particularly the women in socially and economically marginalised groups. The programme is currently implemented in over 9,000 villages in 60 districts spread over 10 states. The programme has enabled women's collectives to address the larger socio-cultural issues that have traditionally inhibited the participation of women and girls in the education system. Through its strategy of building grassroot women's organisations, the programme has created a forum and environment for women's education at the community level besides managing 866 NFE Centres and around 1,000 Early Childhood-Care Education Centres by the end of the Ninth Plan.

5.3 NATIONAL POLICY ON EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The Government has adopted the *National Policy for the Empowerment of women* on 20 March 2001. The main objective of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and to ensure their active participation in all spheres of life and activities.

The themes and issues covered by the policy include the judicial-legal system, economic empowerment of women, social empowerment including health education and violence against women, etc., women and decision making, women and media, women and science and technology, girls child, etc. The policy provides prescriptions under each of the above and calls upon different departments and ministries for the coverage of their resources and actions. The policy also stresses on the importance of earmarking allocations under the Women's Component Plan and prioritizes the need for gender budgeting.

Goal and Objectives

The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The Policy will be widely disseminated so as to encourage active participation of all stakeholders for achieving its goals. Specifically, the objectives of this Policy include:

- i) Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.
- ii) The *de-jure* and *de-facto* enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres – political, economic, social, cultural and civil.
- iii) Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation.
- iv) Equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office, etc.
- v) Strengthening legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.
- vi) Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women.
- vii) Mainstreaming a gender perspective in the development process.
- viii) Elimination of discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; and
- ix) Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organisations.

To ensure that the policy prescriptions get implemented, the Department has drafted a Plan of Action (POA) with achievable goals by the year 2010. The POA will also identify commitment of resources and responsibilities for implementation and strengthen institutional mechanisms and structures for monitoring. The operational strategy also mentions the need to develop Gender Development Index as a method of gender auditing and stresses the importance of collecting gender-disaggregated data, which will be useful for planning, implementation and monitoring. The POA is being finalized in consultation with all the stakeholders.

5.4 REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES IN FIVE YEAR PLANS

Development of women has been receiving attention of the Government right from the very First Plan (1951-56). But, the same has been treated as a subject of 'welfare' and clubbed together with the welfare of the disadvantaged groups like destitute, disabled, aged, etc. The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB), set up in 1953, acts as an Apex Body at national level to promote voluntary action at various levels, especially at the grassroots, to take up welfare-related activities for women and children. The Second to Fifth Plans (1956-79) continued to reflect the very same welfare approach, besides giving priority to women's education, and launching measures to improve maternal and child health services, supplementary feeding for children and expectant and nursing mothers.

The shift in the approach from 'welfare' to 'development' of women could take place only in the Sixth Plan (1980-85). Accordingly, the Sixth Plan adopted a multi-disciplinary approach with a special thrust on the three core sectors of health, education and employment. In the Seventh Plan (1985-90), the developmental

programmes continued with the major objective of raising their economic and social status and bringing them into the mainstream of national development. A significant step in this direction was to identify/promote the ‘Beneficiary-Oriented Schemes’ (BOS) in various developmental sectors, which extended direct benefits to women. The thrust on generation of both skilled and unskilled employment through proper education and vocational training continued. The Eighth Plan (1992-97), with human development as its major focus, played a very important role in the development of women. It promised to ensure that benefits of development from different sectors do not by-pass women, implement special programmes to complement the general development programmes and to monitor the flow of benefits to women from other development sectors and enable women to function as equal partners and participants in the development process.

The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) made two significant changes in the conceptual strategy of planning for women. Firstly, ‘Empowerment of Women’ became one of the nine primary objectives of the Ninth Plan. To this effect, the Approach of the Plan was to create an enabling environment where women could freely exercise their rights both within and outside home, as equal partners along with men. Secondly, the Plan attempted ‘convergence of existing services’ available in both women-specific and women-related sectors. To this effect, it directed both the centre and the states to adopt a special strategy of ‘Women’s Component Plan’ (WCP) through which not less than 30 per cent of funds/benefits flow to women from all the general development sectors. It also suggested that a special vigil be kept on the flow of the earmarked funds/benefits through an effective mechanism to ensure that the proposed strategy brings forth a holistic approach towards empowering women.

To ensure that other general developmental sectors do not by-pass women and benefits from these sectors continue to flow to them, a special mechanism of monitoring the 27 BOS for women was put into action in 1986, at the instance of the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO). The same continues to be an effective instrument till today. Sector/scheme-wise achievements under women-specific and women-related sectors of health, nutrition, education, labour, rural development, urban development, science and technology and women and child development are detailed in the following paragraphs:

Tenth Five Year Plan will give emphasis on:

- Creating an environment, through positive economic and social policies, for the development of women to enable them to realise their full potential;
- Allowing the de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by women on par with men in all spheres – political, economic, social, cultural and civil;
- Providing equal access to participation and decision-making for women in social, political and economic life of the nation;
- Ensuring equal access to women to health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office, etc.;
- Strengthening legal systems aimed at the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women;
- Changing societal attitudes and community practices by active participation and involvement of both men and women;
- Mainstreaming a gender perspective into the development process;
- Eliminating discrimination and all forms of violence against women and the girl child; and

- Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organisations, corporate and private sector agencies.

5.5 ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY

A number of government institutions also contribute to the advancement of women. For example, the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) was established in 1985 as the nodal agency for monitoring schemes relating to women. The *Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)* was set up in 1993 as a national-level mechanism to meet the credit needs of poor and assetless women in the informal sector. RMK has taken a number of promotional measures to popularise the concept of micro-financing, thrift credit, formation and stabilization of SHGs and also enterprise development for poor women. Since its inception, RMK has so far, sanctioned credit worth Rs. 109.73 crore, benefiting 4.2 lakh women through 992 NGOs and disbursed Rs. 82.38 crore upto February 2002. The *National Commission for Women (NCW)*, set up in 1992, has a mandate to safeguard the rights and interests of women. Its major objectives are to investigate, examine and review all matters relating to the safeguards provided for women under the Constitution, review of both women-specific and women-related legislations and suggest amendments wherever needed and to function as an agency to keep surveillance and facilitate redressal of grievances of women. Of the total 41 legislations having a direct bearing on women, the Commission reviewed and suggested remedial legislative measures in respect of 32 Acts and forwarded the same to the government for further action. The Commission has accorded the highest priority to securing speedy justice to women.

The National Commission for Women reaches out to people through a complaints and counselling unit, court interventions and state seminars. It also facilitates workshops, conferences and public hearings. The *Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB)* channels funds to NGOs and other agencies working on women's development issues. A *Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women* was established in 1997 to monitor development and empowerment initiatives. Finally, state and national government ministries and parliamentarians take steps towards women's empowerment in the post-Beijing era.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Write your answers in the space provided below.

b) Compare your answers with the text.

1) What are international documents on rights of women?

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2) Write a short note on the evolution of policies for the advancement of women.

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3) Describe the main provision for women in National Health Policy.

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4) Write short note on Central Social Welfare Board.

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5.6 PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Employment and Income-Generation

The status of women in society depends on a large extent on economic empowerment. If a women is earning independently the income of the household or if she has control over the productive or even non productive assets of the household, her value, esteem and even power of bargaining within the household, and in the community and the society at large increases. An earning woman has to face less attitudes of discrimination in the society than a non earning one, although her dual role as mother and husband within the family and worker outside puts additional strains on her, which is not always compensated by her income. Further, women have been found to be more judicious in spending their income. Additional income of women have been found to have far greater incremental effect on spending on nutrition, shelter and savings than the additional income of a male. Therefore, the net income worth of the income of a woman has been found to be higher than that of a man.

Employment and Income Generation

Further, as the ultimate objective of empowering women is to make them economically independent and self-reliant, special efforts will be made to generate gainful employment through promotion/expansion of both wage and self-employment opportunities. In this context, the on-going training-cum-employment-cum-income-generation programmes viz. *SGSY, SJSRY, PMRY, STEP, NORAD*, etc. will be further expanded to create more and more of employment-cum-income-generation opportunities and to cover as many women as possible living below the poverty line. In these efforts, priority will be given to female-headed households and women living in extreme/abject poverty.

The Department of Women and Child Development is implementing three unique programmes for the empowerment of women at the grassroots through the processes

of mobilization, organisation and awareness generation, which would enhance the self-confidence of women within the household and community and empower them to access resources from various available and new sources. *Swayamsidha* is a centrally sponsored programme implemented in 650 selected blocks throughout the country, modeled on the basis of the two erstwhile programmes of Indira Mahila Yojana and Mahila Samridhi Yojana, which it subsumes.

Women and Micro-Credit

There is a need for a comprehensive Credit Policy to increase women's access to credit either through the establishment of new micro-credit mechanisms or micro-financial institutions or strengthening the existing ones. In this context, expansion of the activities of RMK will receive special attention with adequate financial support. Efforts will be made to draw lessons from the success stories of various voluntary organisations, which have already established their credentials in the field of micro-credit for women and encourage them to expand their activities, both within and outside their states. There will also be efforts to equip all States/UTs with Women's Development Corporations to provide both 'forward' and 'backward' linkages of credit and marketing facilities to women entrepreneurs, besides being active catalysts for empowering women economically. Further, the government will try and expedite the earlier efforts of setting up of an exclusive 'Development Bank for Women Entrepreneurs' in the Small Scale and Tiny Sectors.

Swayamsidha is an integrated scheme for women's empowerment. It is based on the formation of women into self-help groups (SHGs) and aims at the holistic empowerment of women through mobilization, awareness generation and convergence of various schemes. The long-term objective of the programme is the all-round empowerment of women by ensuring their direct access to and control over resources through a sustained process of mobilization and convergence of all the on-going sectoral programmes. The immediate objectives of the programme are:

- 1) Establishment of self-reliant women's self-help groups (SHGs).
- 2) Creation of confidence and awareness among members of SHGs regarding women's status, health, nutrition, education, sanitation and hygiene, legal rights, economic upliftment and other social, economic and political issues.
- 3) Strengthen and institutionalize the saving habit in rural women and their control over economic resources.
- 4) Improving access of women to micro credit.
- 5) Involvement of women in local level planning.
- 6) Convergence of services of DWCD and other departments.

The programme will cover 650 blocks throughout the country including 238 IMY blocks. Fifty-three thousand one hundred self help groups comprising 9,29,250 new women beneficiaries shall be set up throughout the country under the programme. The most important component of the programme is the formulation, implementation and monitoring of block-specific composite projects for four to five years, incorporating the following four elements:

- 1 Group formation/mobilization activities,
- 1 Community oriented innovative interventions,

- 1 Other schemes of DWCD, namely Swawblamban, STEP, SEP and AGP, and other schemes, too, if there is a felt need for the same, and
- 1 Schemes of other departments, whether converged under GOI directions or state government initiative.

The Swa-Shakti Project, also known as Rural Women's Development and Empowerment Project, was sanctioned on 16 October, 1998 as a centrally sponsored project to be implemented in seven states over a period of five years with an estimated outlay of Rs. 186.21 crore. In addition, an amount of Rs. 5 crore was provided for facilitating the setting up of revolving funds for giving interest bearing loans to beneficiary groups primarily during their initial formative stage.

The project is implemented through Women's Development Corporations (WDCs), other state government undertakings and NGOs in the states of Bihar, Haryana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal, covering 57 districts, 323 blocks and 7,288 villages. A project support unit at the central level (CPSU) provides technical and managerial support for project implementation. The project originally covered 35 districts in seven states. The mid term review in March 2001 recommended both intensification and expansion of the project. Accordingly two newly created states, viz. Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal, and 22 new districts were taken up. Swa-Shakti is a rural women's development and empowerment project supported jointly by World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The project aims at enhancing women's access to resources for better quality of life through use of drudgery and time reduction devices, health, literacy and confidence enhancement and increasing their control over incomes through their involvement in skill development and income generating activities. The specific objectives of the project are:

- 1) Establishment of 7,400-12,000 (later revised to 16,000) self-reliant women's self help groups (SHGs) having 15-20 members each.
- 2) Developing linkages between SHGs and lending institutions to ensure women's continued access to credit facilities for income generation activities.
- 3) Increased control of women, particularly poor women, over income and spending, through their involvement in income generation activities, which will help in poverty alleviation.
- 4) Enhancing women's access to resources for better quality of life including those for drudgery reduction and time saving devices.
- 5) Sensitizing and strengthening the institutional capacity of support agencies to pro-actively address women's needs.

A substantial part of the project fund is available as soft term loan credit to Government of India from the IFAD and International Development Association (IDA). Fund needed for setting up the revolving fund in project states are being provided by the Government of India from its own sources.

About 16,000 women self-help groups (covering over 2.40 lakh women agriculturists and agricultural labourers) were expected to be formed under the programme, however, the actual group formation has exceeded the target. So far, 17,527 women self help groups have been formed with the involvement of 231 partner NGOs. A very significant feature of the project is that 717 clusters have been linked with the banks. Group savings aggregating an amount of Rs. 10.78 crore have been mobilized and inter-loaning of Rs. 19.25 crore have been transacted among the members.

Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)

This programme, launched in 1987, seeks to provide updated skills and new knowledge to poor and assetless women in traditional occupations, such as, agriculture, animal husbandry, dairying, fisheries, handlooms, handicrafts, khadi and village industries, sericulture, social forestry and wasteland development for enhancing their productivity and income generation. This would enhance and broaden their employment opportunities, including self-employment and development of entrepreneurial skills. Women beneficiaries are organised into viable and cohesive groups or co-operatives. A comprehensive package of services, such as, training, extension, infrastructure, market linkages etc. are provided besides linkages with credit for transfer of assets.

Since the inception of the programme, about 6,55,222 women have been covered under 138 projects launched in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and West Bengal. So far, women in the dairying sector have been receiving the maximum support, keeping in view the nature of demands. This is followed by handlooms, handicrafts, sericulture and poultry.

In the year 2001-2002, 29 projects were sanctioned to benefit 87,140 women and an amount of Rs. 18.57 crore was released. During the first three quarters of the financial year 2002-2003, seven new projects have been sanctioned at a total estimated cost of Rs. 1,934.18 lakh out of which an amount of Rs. 451.80 lakh was released to the implementing organizations. This will benefit 32,821 women.

Swawblamban

The programme was launched in 1982-83 with assistance from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) to provide training and skills to women to facilitate them to obtain employment or self-employment on a sustained basis. The target group under the scheme are the poor and needy women, women from weaker sections of society, such as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, etc. Previously known as Women's Economic Programme, the nomenclature of the programme was changed to swawblamban during the year.

Financial assistance under the programme is provided to women's development corporation, public sector corporations, autonomous bodies and voluntary organisations to train poor women, mostly in non-traditional trades and to ensure their employment in these areas. Some of the popular trades under the programme are computer programming, medical transcription, electronics, watch assembling, radio and television repairs, garment making, handloom weaving, secretarial practice, community health work, embroidery, etc. Financial assistance is also provided to the guarantee organisations for hiring of training-cum-production sheds, training cost, machinery and equipment, stipend to the trainees and remuneration for the trainers. The upper ceiling for assistance under this scheme is normally confined to Rs. 8,000 per beneficiary. The success of the programme has demonstrated the efficacy of informal and low cost training modules in imparting skills to disadvantaged women at the grassroots. Various evaluation studies, including independent studies commissioned by NORAD, have shown that nearly 50-60 per cent of the women trained under the programme have been able to get employment or self-employment.

Considering the success of the programme, the Ninth Plan (1997-2002) adopted it as a central sector plan scheme. While on the one hand, the total allocation under the programme was stepped up, the assistance of NORAD was scaled down. During the Ninth Plan, assistance of NORAD was restricted to 20 per cent of the total outlay of Rs. 88.98 crore on the scheme, as per the proposed new agreement

with the Norwegian Government during the first three years (2002-2004) of the Tenth Plan. This works out to only about six per cent of the total programme outlay during the Tenth Plan period. This assistance shall be utilized for improving the methodology of the training programme, certification of training and monitoring of the programme.

Annually, about 2000 project proposals are received from the NGOs and other organisations, out of which nearly 50 per cent are sanctioned by the Project Sanctioning Committee. Most of the project proposals are received from the voluntary organisations. Training in specialized fields like computers, electronics, medical transcription, etc., are conducted through organisations or undertakings specialising in these fields and having good extension network in the field. Women's Development Corporations are the nodal agencies for the implementation of the programme in the states. The corporations are required to conduct pre-appraisal of project proposals and mid-term monitoring of sanctioned projects, for which three per cent of the project costs are sanctioned to them.

In order to have enhanced involvement of the states in the implementation of the programme, a State Empowerment Committee has been set up in each state (except Bihar, Goa, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram) during the current year. The Empowered Committee scrutinises the project proposals received from the NGOs/corporations/undertakings from the state concerned and submits the same, along with its recommendations, to the Department for consideration. All eligible and complete project proposals are received through the State Empowered Committee (PSC) of the Department for consideration. Another change in the procedure introduced during the year is the proposals received from the states by the internal finance wing of the Department before these are put up before the PSC. As many as 902 projects including 262 continuing projects, benefiting 58,458 women, have been sanctioned during the first three quarters of the current financial year.

Women in Small-Scale/Cottage Industries

The Tenth Plan will make special efforts to identify the traditional sectors that are shrinking due to advancement of technology, market shifts and changes in the economic policies and will introduce necessary training programmes to re-train/upgrade the skills of the displaced women to take up jobs in the new and emerging areas of employment. Also, formulation of appropriate policies and programmes will be attempted to generate opportunities for wage/self-employment in traditional sectors like khadi and village industries, handicrafts, handlooms, sericulture, small scale and cottage industries. While attempting to bring forth necessary structural adjustments in these sectors, women will receive priority attention.

Women in the Unorganised/Informal Sector

Women in the Informal Sector will receive special attention, as they account for more than 90 per cent and are still continuing to struggle in the most precarious working conditions without any legislative safeguards. To start with, efforts will be made to ensure both minimum and equal wages for women at par with men, towards fulfilling the Constitutional commitment of 'equal pay for equal work'. To this effect, the Tenth Plan will also endeavour to extend the important labour legislations to the Informal Sector, especially those legislations where the employers have a mandatory binding for providing basic minimum working conditions along with necessary welfare services for women workers. While formulating necessary policies and programmes for the betterment of women in the Informal Sector, the findings/results of the Fourth Economic Census (2001) as well as the un-attended recommendations of the National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector (Shram Shakti) will be taken into consideration.

Women in Poverty

As women comprise nearly 70 per cent of the population living below the poverty line, and are very often in situations of extreme/abject poverty, the on-going poverty alleviation programmes are expected to address specifically the needs and problems of such women as poverty affects women more than men. Though 40 per cent of benefits under SGSY have been earmarked for women, but in practice, benefits are not reaching women in the same proportion, as some of the studies have revealed. Therefore, the Tenth Plan will address the need for better targeting of benefits to women under various poverty alleviation programmes. Further, as the women-specific scheme of Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) has been subsumed/merged under the SGSY, it is necessary to exercise a greater vigil to ensure that the allocations earmarked for women are not diverted to other components of SGSY. Also, as the earlier programmes have proved that the 'Group Approach' is more successful than the individual beneficiary approach, steps will be taken for mobilisation of poor women into SHGs and through convergence of services, offering them a wide range of economic and social options, along with necessary support services to enhance their joint capabilities. To this effect, the available programmes for women will be converged into block level action plans of the newly launched Swayamsidha programme, meant for empowering women.

Women in Agriculture and Land Management

As the majority (89.5 per cent) of female workforce is concentrated in the agricultural sector, they are being doubly marginalised, first as women and secondly as landless labourers with no inheritance rights, either for land or for other productive assets. Therefore, the effective implementation of land reform legislations, ceiling and distribution of surplus land and issue of Joint *Pattas* under Government schemes etc. will go a long way in the process of the empowerment of women. It will also make concerted efforts to ensure that the benefits of training and extension in agriculture and its allied activities of horticulture, small animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries etc. reach women in proportion to their numbers. Special training programmes in the latest technology, keeping in view the role of women as producers, will be expanded to assist rural women in meeting the market demands. With the rise in the number of women-headed households, the phenomenon of feminisation of agriculture, will be attended to as a concern at the policy level.

Women's Component in Ministry of Rural Development

The Ministry of Rural Development has special components for Women in its programmes and funds are earmarked as "Women's Component" to ensure flow of adequate resources for the same. The major Schemes having Women's Component, (implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development during the last three years) include the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY), the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY), the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), the Restructured Central Rural Sanitation Programme, the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme, the (erstwhile) Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), the (erstwhile) Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY). The brief details of the Schemes are as follows:

The Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana, which has been launched with effect from April 1, 1999, is a holistic programme covering various aspects of self-employment, such as organisation of the poor into self-help groups, training, credit, technology, infrastructure and marketing. It is envisaged that 50 percent of the

Groups formed in each Block should be exclusively for women who will account for at least 40 percent of the Swarozgaris. Under this Scheme, women are encouraged in the practice of thrift and credit, which enables them to become self-reliant. Through assistance in the form of Revolving Fund, Bank Credit and Subsidy, the Yojana seeks to integrate women in the economy by providing increasing opportunities of self-employment.

The Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) has been launched with effect from April 1, 1999, with the twin objectives of creation of demand-driven community village infrastructure and the generation of supplementary employment (for the unemployed poor) in the rural areas. Wage-employment under the JGSY is extended to below poverty line families. It is stipulated that 30 percent of the employment opportunities should be reserved for women.

The Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) aims at providing assistance for the construction of houses for people 'Below the Poverty Line' in rural areas. Under the Scheme, priority is extended to widows, Women Self-help Group engaged in income generation activity and unmarried women. It has been laid down that IAY houses are to be allotted in the name of women members of the household or, alternatively, in the joint names of husband and wife.

The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), which came into effect five years back represents a significant step towards introducing a National Policy for Social Assistance benefits to households 'Below the Poverty Line', with major focus on women. The NSAP has three components, namely, the National Old Age Pension Scheme, the National Family Benefit Scheme and the National Maternity Benefit Scheme. The National Maternity Benefit Scheme is exclusively aimed at assisting expectant mothers by providing them Rs.500 each for the first two live births. Under the National Old Age Pension Scheme, Central Assistance of Rs.75 per month is provided to women and men, who are 65 years of age and above and have little or no regular means of subsistence from their own sources of income or through financial support from the family members. Under the National Family Benefit Scheme, Central Assistance of Rs.10,000 is extended to the bereaved family in the case of death of the primary breadwinner due to natural or accidental causes. Women are also beneficiaries under this Scheme.

The Restructured Centrally Sponsored **Rural Sanitation Programme (RCRSP)**, which was launched with effect from 1st April, 1999, provides for the construction of sanitary latrines for rural households. Where individual household latrines are not feasible, provision exists for the construction of village sanitary complexes exclusively for women, to ensure privacy/dignity. Upto 10 percent of the allocated fund can be utilised for the construction and maintenance of public latrines for women.

Under the **Rural Water Supply Programme**, training is being afforded to women to enable them to play an active role in using and maintaining handpumps for the supply of drinking water. Women are also represented in Village Level Committees and are actively involved in the selection of sites for handpumps and other sources.

The erstwhile Scheme of **Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA)**, now merged with the SGSY, was intended to raise the income level of women of poor households so as to enable organised participation by them in social development for economic self-reliance. The primary thrust was the formation of groups of 10-50 women from poor households at the village level for delivery of services like credit and skill training and cash and infrastructure support or self-employment.

5.7 PROGRAMMES OF SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Gender Justice

As stated earlier, the principles of gender equality and gender justice and protection of women's rights have been the prime concern since independence. The Constitution of India not only guarantees gender equality by conferring equal rights on both women and men, but also prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex. It also empowers the State to make affirmative discrimination in favour of women only to ensure gender justice through Gender Equality.

Eliminate all forms of gender discrimination and, thus, enable women to enjoy not only de-jure, but also de-facto rights and fundamental freedom at par with men in all spheres, viz. political, economic, social, civil, cultural etc. through:

- 1 Complete eradication of female foeticide and female infanticide through effective enforcement of both the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 with most stringent measures of punishment, so that a very harsh path is set for the illegal practitioners.
- 1 Adopting measures that take into account the reproductive rights of women to enable them to exercise their reproductive choices.
- 1 Working out strategies, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, to ensure extension of employment opportunities and thus, remove inequalities in employment – both in work and accessibility.
- 1 Initiating interventions at the macro-economic level to amend existing legislations to improve women's access to productive assets and resources.
- 1 Ensuring that the value added by women in the Informal Sector as workers and producers is recognised through redefinition/re-interpretation of conventional concepts of work and preparation of Satellite and National Accounts.
- 1 Defining the Women's Component Plan (WCP) clearly and identifying the schemes/programmes/projects under each Ministry/Department, which should be covered under WCP and ensuring the adoption of women-related mechanisms through which funds/benefits flow to women from these sectors.
- 1 Initiating action for enacting new women-specific legislations; amending the existing women-related legislation, if necessary, based on the review made and recommendations already available to ensure gender justice, besides, reviewing all the subordinate legislations to eliminate all gender discriminatory references.
- 1 Expediting action to legislate reservation of not less than 1/3 seats for women in the Parliament and in the State Legislative Assemblies and, thus, ensure women in proportion to their numbers reaching decision-making bodies, so that their voices are heard.
- 1 Arresting the ever-increasing violence against women and the Girl Child including the Adolescent girls on top priority with the strength and support of a well-planned Programme of Action prepared in consultation with all the concerned, especially the enforcement authorities; implementing effectively with the strength of the Law and Order Authorities both at the centre and state levels and assessing the situation.
- 1 Expediting standardisation of a Gender Development Index based on which the gender segregated data will be collected at national, state and district levels; compiled/collated and analysed to assess the progress made in improving the

status of women at regular intervals with an ultimate objective of achieving equality at par with men.

- 1 Initiating/accelerating the process of societal reorientation towards creating a Gender-Just Society. The number of children between 0-6 years came down from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001 illustrate the most disturbing survival scene of women and the girl child in India. The ever-declining trend in the sex ratios can be attributed to higher mortality rates amongst females as compared to males in all age groups right from the childhood to the child-bearing ages. Other contributory factors include – limited access to health care services and relative deprivation of the female child in respect of rearing as well as feeding practices. Interventions to this effect have been in progress, but not with much impact in reaching the set goal.

Affirmative developmental policies and programmes for development of women, besides providing them easy and equal access to all the basic minimum services so as to enable them to realise their full potentials through –

- 1 Providing easy and equal access to ensure basic minimum services of primary health care and family welfare with special focus on the under-served and under-privileged segments of population through universalising Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) services.
- 1 Achieving the goals set by the National Population Policy (2000) with regard to reducing Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) to 30 per thousand and Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) to 100 per lakh live births by 2010.
- 1 Supplementing health care and nutrition services through the Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY) to fill the critical gaps in the existing primary health care infrastructure and nutrition services.
- 1 Tackling both macro and micro-nutrient deficiencies through nutrition supplementary feeding programmes with necessary support services like health check-ups, immunisation, health and nutrition education and nutrition awareness etc.
- 1 Consolidating the progress made under female education and carrying it forward for achieving the set goal of 'Education for Women's Equality' as advocated by the National Policy on Education, 1986 (revised in 1992).
- 1 Providing easy and equal access to and free education for women and girls at all levels and in the field of technical and vocational education and training in up-coming and job-oriented trades.
- 1 Increasing enrolment/retention rates and reducing drop-out rates by expanding the support services through mid-day meals, hostels and incentives like free supply of uniforms, text-books, transport charges, etc.
- 1 Extending the existing network of regional vocational training centres to all the states and Women's Industrial Training Institutes and Women's Wings with General Industrial Training Institutes with residential facilities in all districts and sub-districts and provision of training in marketable trades.
- 1 Encouraging the media to project positive images of women and the Girl Child; change the mind-set of the people and, thus, promote the balanced portrayals of women and men.
- 1 Gender sensitising both the administrative and enforcement machinery and ensuring that the rights and interests of women are taken care of, besides involving them in planning, implementation and monitoring of processes.

Access to Health

Discrimination in the access to health and education for women and girls continues to persist in many areas owing to negative societal attitudes. Discriminatory practices do exist even in child-rearing, feeding and providing health services. The same are very much reflected in the health and nutritional status of women and girls, especially amongst pregnant and lactating mothers, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, the government will adopt a holistic approach to women's health, which includes both nutrition and health services with special attention to the needs of women and girls at all stages of the life-cycle. Also, special efforts will be made to increase easy access towards a comprehensive, affordable and quality health and nutrition care through widespread RCH and ICDS services. Also, measures will be adopted to take into account the reproductive rights of women to enable them to exercise their reproductive choices.

Education and Training

Girls and young women are expected to manage both educational and domestic responsibilities, which often results in poor academic performance and early drop-out from the educational system. The same are very much reflected in the existing gender differentials in respect of literacy rates (54.16 for females as against 75.85 per cent for males in 2001), enrolment ratios (85.2 for girls and 104.1 for boys at the primary level in 1999-2000) and drop-out rates (42.3 for girls and 38.7 for boys at the primary level in 1999-2000). These have long-lasting consequences for all aspects of women's life. Therefore, the Plan will endeavour to create a favourable social environment in which women and men and girls and boys are treated equally and are encouraged to achieve their full potential. Further, it will also initiate various actions to increase access to women and girls through special affirmative measures, viz. providing free education, appointing more women teachers, creating a gender-sensitive educational system, increasing enrolment and retention rates of girls through provision of hostels, mid-day meals and improving the quality of education to facilitate life-long learning as well as development of vocational/technical skills and thus, eliminate discrimination against women and girls in respect of education. Efforts will also be made to develop gender-sensitive curricula at all levels of the educational system in order to address the issue of stereotyping, which is one of the causes of gender discrimination.

The bold decision to declare 'Education as the Fundamental Right' (being processed) reflects the Government's concern and commitment to ensure that everyone born in this country is literate/educated and, thus, fulfil the Constitutional commitment of 'Education for All' by 2007. Through the specially targeted programme of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)*, launched in 2000, efforts will be made to reach the un-reached women and the girl child. Thus, all out efforts will be made during the Tenth Plan to ensure that the SSA achieves its commitment within the set time target.

While 'Education for All' continues to be a priority area in the Tenth Plan, special efforts will be made to create an enabling environment by providing easy and equal access to and free education for women and girls. Steps will also be initiated to remove gender bias and stereo-types in the curricula, text-books and learning material; create a gender-sensitive educational system; promote gender sensitisation of teachers on a regular basis; appoint more women teachers at primary level (at least 90 per cent); reduce drop-out rates and increase enrolment and retention rates of girl children through special incentives like free supply of uniforms, text-books, mid-day meals, scholarships, flexible school timings and attached hostels and crèches; and improve the quality of education besides facilitating life-long learning through

correspondence courses, distance learning and self-study programmes for women and girls, who drop-out from the formal system of schooling. In fact, the re-cast programme of BSY revolves around the very same theme of educating and empowering the girl child living below the poverty line with adequate financial support till she completes higher secondary education or gets equipped with the necessary skills to earn her livelihood. (More details under Section on ‘Development of Children’.)

Vocationalisation of secondary education and vocational training for women is another priority area requiring greater attention. In this direction, efforts will be made to extend the existing network of regional vocational training centres to all the states and Women’s ITIs with residential facilities to all districts and sub-districts. Simultaneously, efforts will also be made to encourage eligible women/girls with suitable incentives to join vocational education/training, so that the facilities available both at the general/exclusive Training Institutions for women are utilized optimally. Introduction of part-time and short-term courses will also be considered to meet the special needs and timings of working women/girls. Special campaigns will be organised, with necessary incentives, to encourage women and girls to opt for the emerging trades/areas of technical education having high employment potential, such as electronics, computer applications, bio-engineering, bio-technology, food processing, fabric designing, beauty culture, communications, media, etc.

Distance Education for Women’s Empowerment

The objective of the project is to provide a certificate course of training of “Empowering Women Through Self Help Groups” to voluntary social workers, community organisers, social animators, facilitators, functionaries of self help groups, etc. through a distance mode all over the country. The project is being jointly implemented by the Department of Women and Child Development and Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) for the empowerment of women through self help groups (SHGs). While the expenditure for the project is borne by the DWCD, the development/implementation of the training programme is the concern of IGNOU.

Women and Environment

Considering the impact of environmental factors on sustenance and livelihood, special efforts will be made to increase women’s participation in the conservation and restoration of the environment and in the control of environmental degradation. Therefore, the major strategy is to promote only those programmes that involve the efficient use of non-conventional energy resources in an environment-friendly manner. Further, women will also be involved in propagating the use of solar energy, biogas, smokeless *chullahs* and other rural applications, so that these measures will have both visible and viable impact in influencing the eco-system and also in changing the lifestyles of rural women. Efforts will also be made to sensitise the forest staff and local communities about the need to involve women’s groups in the planning and management of forest conservation, as they have already proved their credentials through the programmes of Social Forestry in Gujarat and West Bengal.

5.8 PROGRAMMES OF POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT

Social and human development emphasises the leadership capabilities and talents of men and women of all ages. This includes the capacities of women to plan, implement,

make decisions and lead in public life. Women's participation in public life promotes notions of secularism and strengthens democracy in India. It fulfils India's commitment to international conventions and processes, such as the Beijing Declaration. Their participation also challenges current gender inequalities in Indian society and reconstructs that society to include women and men as equal partners in decision-making processes. Their participation is a form of empowerment, as they provide role models for young women and act as powerful agents in areas of society that are constructed as masculine.

There can be no true democracy, no true people's participation in governance and development without the equal participation of women and men in all spheres of life and levels of decision making. The goals of development cannot be attained without women's participation not only in the development process, but also in shaping its goals. In focusing attention on the most neglected portion of humanity today, women and girls, women's participation will make society more responsive to the needs of all people. In bringing new insights and contributions to all issues, it will enrich and shift the focus on content of discourse in politics and society to include wider ranges of misuse. In changing the unequal balance of decision making power and control in the relations of men women – in the household, in work place, in communities, in government and in the international area – it will lead to women's empowerment. Participation has two dimensions: quantitative and qualitative. In recent past, the 73rd Constitutional amendment provides women's participation in local governance by numbers only. In spite of one third representation of women, participation remains passive in Panchayati Raj Institutions without any voice in the decision making. There is, of course, a relationship between the quantitative and qualitative aspects of participation: the larger the number difference. Factors such as universal gender discrimination present obstacle not only to the number of women participants, but also to their access to leadership and decision making.

The political space belongs to all citizens: politics is the source for empowerment and affects the lives of each of us. More the participation of women, more they can change the modalities and outcomes of politics. Democracy and the participation of women go hand in hand and promote each other mutually. Although women are participating in increasing number in politics and public life in India, they still remain largely outside the realm of power and decision making in government. The gap between women's and men's political participation is still large.

Many interrelated factors affect women's ability to participate in politics as given below:

- i) Lack of experience in campaigning, public debate.
- ii) Prevailing negative attitudes towards women.
- iii) Lack of confidence and support for female candidates and politicians.
- iv) Difficulties in combining a political carrier with traditional women's role in family and society.
- v) Economic dependency or lack of financial means.
- vi) Insufficient education in general and political education in particular.
- vii) Women's reluctance to participate in politics.
- viii) Criminalization of politics.
- ix) Political parties not giving adequate number of tickets in election and their representation in party's governing/decision making bodies is also inadequate.

Women in Local Governance

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993 marks historic event in the advancement of Indian Women as it ensures 1/3rd of total seats for women in all elected offices of local bodies in rural areas and urban areas. In the rural areas, about eight lakh women are going to emerge as decision makers at the grassroots level and enter into public life. Of these, about 75,000 would be Chairpersons at the village, block and district levels. Women have, thus, been brought to the center stage in the nation's efforts to strengthen democratic institutions.

The Passage of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 marks a new era in the federal democratic set up of the country and provides constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The Act, which came into force from 24 April, 1993, stipulates that Panchayats shall be given powers and authority to function as institutions of self-government.

Salient Features of the Act

- 1 A 3-tier system of Panchayati Raj for all States having population of over 20 lakhs.
- 1 Regular Panchayat elections after every five years.
- 1 Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population and not less than 1/3 seats for women.
- 1 State Finance Commissioners to make recommendations on financial powers of the Panchayats.
- 1 Independent State Election Commissions.

Powers and Responsibilities of Panchayats

- 1 Preparation of plan for economic development and social justice.
- 1 Implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice in relation to 29 subjects given in Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.
- 1 To levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees.

Gram Sabha

The 73rd Amendment Act gives Constitutional status to the Gram Sabha – the general assembly of villagers. In the Gram Sabha, the rural poor, the women and the marginalised get an opportunity to participate in decision making on matters affecting their lives. Actively functioning Gram Sabhas ensure a vibrant grassroots democracy with transparency, accountability and achievement. The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 extend Panchayats to the tribal areas of the eight States, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan. This law vests Gram Sabhas and Panchayats with significant powers of control over natural resources as well as the social and cultural spheres of their lives.

The effective implementations of provision of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments calls for empowering the elected women representatives, so that they can actively participate in decision making process. Experience reveals that in spite of one third representation of women, their role in decision making is negligible in many a place, more specially, where women literacy is low. Still decisions are taken by male members or husbands/sons of the elected women representatives on their behalf. There is an urgent need to formulate comprehensive policy and programmes for training of elected women representatives.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Write your answers in the space provided below.

b) Compare your answers with the text.

1) Write short notes on following schemes:

i) Sawadhar

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ii) Sawablamban

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iii) Sarwa Shakti

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2) Write short notes on programmes relating to:

i) Women in unorganised sector

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ii) Women in small scale and cottage industry

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3) Write the major steps adopted for gender justice and social empowerment by Government.

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4) Write briefly on programmes relating to:

i) Health

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ii) Education

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iii) Employment

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iv) Micro-credit

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5) Describe the Political empowerment process of women.

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6) What are the obstacles in participation of women in Panchayats.

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7) Describe the major provisions of 73rd Constitutional Amendment.

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5.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit 'Empowerment of Rural Women–Policies and Programmes' we have discussed in detail about the evolution of policies on women in the Indian context. The Government of India adopted the National Policy for the Empowerment of women on March 20, 2001. We have described the objectives of this National Policy in detail. We have also seen that development of women has been receiving attention of the Government of India right from the first five year plan. We also discussed the emphasis given for the development of the women in various plans including the 10th five year plan. There are also several Government institutions which make contribution towards the advancement of women such as Rashtriya Mahilla Kosh (RMK), the National Commission for Women (NCW), the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) and the Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women. In this unit we have also discussed about the various programmes for the economic and social development of women. Another aspect which has been highlighted in this unit is on various programmes for the political empowerment of women. In short in this unit we have explained various policies and programmes pertaining to the empowerment of rural women.

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