

“Evaluation of Policies on Empowerment of Women at Grass Root Level”



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Study Sponsored by
National Commission for Women

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1. Background:

1.1 Women's Development in India :

The present status of women in India is the outcome of constantly changing national and international scenario, a range of National and International Women's Movements, various Initiatives taken by United Nations, pre-Independence legislations, social upheavals including World Wars I and II, Industrial Revolution followed by Globalisation as well as the policies adopted by the Indian government. Passionate and consistent efforts by social reformers, independence movement and the government and non-government organisations in India have also played a direct and crucial role in women's development in India.

In India the principal of 'Gender Equality' has been accepted and adopted from the beginning, since independence. It recognises equality as the value of life. Article 14 of the Constitution of India states that, 'the State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of law within the territory of India.' Further it specifies about gender equality in clear terms. Article 15 states that, 'The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, sex, place or any of them, whereas Article 15 provides for positive discrimination in respect of women.' Further Article 16 provides for equal opportunities to all citizens relating to employment or appointment of office. However, in practice equality is a big challenge for Indian society after 75 years of independence.

Indian society is very diverse and divided into rural and urban population. As per the report *Women and Men in India 2020, (Gender data, A Compilation of Gender Related indicators in India, 22nd issue, published Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, Government of India.)* "India's projected population in 2021 is 136.13 Crore with 48.65% female population." "For the first time since Independence, the absolute increase in population is more in urban areas than in rural areas • Rural - Urban distribution: 68.84% & 31.16% • Level of urbanization increased from 27.81% in 2001 Census to 31.16% in 2011 Census. • The proportion of rural population declined from 72.19% to 68.84%".

(https://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/data_files/india/Rural_urban_2011.pdf). Taking into consideration rural and urban population divide Indian Government had implemented policies for women's development since independence. But women are still at secondary position in family, in power positions and decision-making roles.

They receive unequal pay for same work and they have been targeted of physical and sexual abuse. The women-owned enterprises are economically disadvantaged and do not get equal opportunity to compete. Women also face legal and other barriers that affect their opportunities at work and as entrepreneurs. Also rural and urban women face different issues and challenges in daily life. Therefore, women empowerment is an important topic for study even though we have entered in the 75th year of Independence. We would like to note here that *Bharatiya Stree Shakti (BSS)* had earlier published a study report, '**Women Related Policies in India with Special reference to International conventions and Conferences on women: An Overview**' in 2019. One observation of the study was a trajectory of policies evolved from welfare approach to gender equality while policies were made and implemented. On this background *Bharatiya Stree Shakti* decided to work on Evaluation of Policies on Empowerment of Women at Grass Root Level.

After the independence Indian Government accepted the model of Five Year Plans for overall Development. Various schemes were launched from First Plan in 1952 till Twelfth plan in 2015. Also various reports were published and suggestions made for women's development. The most important of them are **Towards Equality (1974)** report and **Shram Shakti Report (1988)**. The suggestions mentioned in the report were a step forward for women's empowerment. Though the term Empowerment was used later in the policies, these reports were path breaking.

1.2 Background of Women Empowerment Policy 2001 in India.

The word 'Women empowerment' was first introduced in International Women Conference at Nairobi in 1985 by UN Women. Empowerment is a process of creating favourable environment for the women to make her capable, self-sufficient and take her own decisions and monitor her own life. It includes holistic empowerment i.e. economic, social, political, emotional and cultural.

Policy refers to the guidelines, which documents the pathway, entire future plans and activities of a phenomenon. *The efforts of the Government of India in respect of Women Empowerment have been directed by the Women Empowerment Policy of India 2001.* Though the first and the only National Policy on Women Empowerment was framed in the year 2001 by Government of India, women development was focused in all five year plans. In 2016 Women and Child Development Ministry has proposed new Policy draft, which is still to be finalized. But before exploring this topic in detail we have to look back to some other plans and policies with reference to women's development in India. Because some interesting shift had already happened before introducing the women empowerment policy (2001). Also, before evaluation of policies on empowerment of women at grass root level, we have to go through the evolution of policies in India after Independence. As mentioned in the earlier paragraph BSS had published a report related to policies in India. Some important points from that report are mentioned below.

1.3. Five Year Plans: Brief Overview

- After Independence the Indian Government accepted the model of Planned Development and accordingly the Planning Commission was established on 15 March 1950.
- The concept of women's development in the First Two Five Year Plans (1951-56 and 1956-61) was welfare oriented.
- In the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) Mahila Mandals were organized for development of women at the grassroots levels.
- Women's education received an impetus in the Third (1961-66) and Fourth (1969-74) five year plans.
- The Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India appointed the Committee on the Status of Women in India in the year 1971 and its report titled '**Towards Equality**' was published in 1974. This was an extensive, ground breaking report as it reviewed and new realistic measures were recommended.
- The focus in the Fifth Five Year plan (1974-79) shifts from welfare to development. The need for training women with skills that would guarantee them source of income and their protection was stressed in the Fifth Five Year Plan.
- Declaration of 1975 as the Women's Year and 1975-85 as a Decade dedicated to Women by UNO was a galloping step for the whole world in general and especially for women.
- The National Plan of Action (1976) provided guidelines based on UN's World Plan of Action identifying areas like health, family planning, nutrition, education, employment, legislation, and social welfare for formulating and implementing action programmes for women, and planned interventions to improve the conditions of women in India.
- During the period 1978 to 1982 numerous programmes were launched with a thrust on generating self-employment for women, to name a few of them – IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme), DWCRA (The Development of Women and Children and Rural Areas), TRYSEM (Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment) etc.
- A new category of 'marginal workers' (i.e., persons working less than 183 days in a year given activity) was introduced in the 1981 census in view of the seasonal nature of women's work. This was a great step forward, as the previously invisible work of women found statistical recognition and the economic contributions of women could now be accounted for.
- In December 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This is regarded as being one of the most powerful instruments for women's equality.
- The Second world conference on women took place at Copenhagen in 1980. The Copenhagen Programme of Action called for stronger national measures to ensure women's ownership and control of property, as well as improvements in women's

rights to inheritance, child custody and loss of nationality. In the mid-80s the term **Women's Empowerment** was being used at the international level. In India, the term '**Empowerment**' was being used with reference to women's policies and development after 1987. It was the direct impact of International discourse on Indian Policies.

- The Third World Conference on Women was held in Nairobi in 1985 and it changed the way policies for women were viewed thus far. They were now integrated into mainstream social and economic development rather than a separate agenda for women. This had an impact on Indian policies too, as the focus now shifted from welfare to development in women oriented programmes.
- Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) had a chapter on 'Women and Development' focusing on access to health care, family planning, education and economic independence.
- The Seventh Plan (1985-90 continued till 1992 due to political uncertainty) the development programmes for women focused on raising their economic and social status marking the shift towards economic independence in government policies. A very significant step therein was to identify and promote "beneficiary oriented programmes" which extended direct benefits to women. This was to bring them into the mainstream of national development.
- The Shram Shakti report of 1988 was the first report by Government of India to review the participation of women in workforce and their contribution in various fields.
- It recommended that Women's policies and schemes should be allocated between 30 to 50% of the funding by the Center. This had some impact on Policies in Ninth and Tenth Five year plans. When Central Government accepted Gender Budgeting in 2004-05 it was mentioned that minimum 30% of allocation should go to women's development. Several suggestions of this report were adopted in the Ninth and Tenth Five year plans. This was the path breaking report.
- After this report, the word Working Women was coined in discussions at different levels and it was demanded that women's contribution should be taken into consideration in calculation of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

1.4. National Perspective Plan for Women 1988 –

To boost up the programmes for women's development, a National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000) was brought out by the Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development. The plan pays special attention to the rural women who suffer from double discrimination. The plan does not seek more investment or more resources but gives a new thrust and responsiveness to developmental programmes at all levels. The Nation promote holistic perspective to the development of women. It was a document promising to free Indian women from the clutches of social oppression. The recommendations include: a uniform civil code, property rights to women, reservation of seats for women in elected bodies, banning of sex tests, and making harassment of wives for dowry as a ground for seeking

divorce. The National Perspective Plan to provide employment options to up a Central Maternity Perspective plan reservation was given Institutions) which had provided an opportunity to women to raise their social and economic issues at local level. It recognized that political participation of women is severely restricted and suggested that 30 percent quota for women must be introduced at all levels of elective bodies. This may be said as impact of International Conferences held at Copenhagen in 1980 and Nairobi in 1985. Its reflection could be traced in Shram Shakti report 1988 and 73rd and 74th Amendment in 1992-93.

The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) signaled the beginning of the LPG era (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalisation) in India. Human resource development was one of the major goals of this Plan and this underlined the value of women as a national human resource. There was a shift from development to empowerment of women. Several positive steps were taken by the government in favour of women's empowerment. Under National Commission for Women Act, 1990 (Act No. 20 of 1990 of Govt. of India), The National Commission for Women (NCW) was set up in 1992 to safeguard the interests of women. In 1993, Rashtriya Mahila Kosh was set up to meet the credit needs of poor women, the National Nutritional Policy was initiated to fulfill the constitutional commitment of improving the nutritional status of all, with special attention to children, adolescent girls, expectant and nursing mothers. The Mahila Samridhi Yojana was launched on 2nd October, 1993 with the objective of empowering the rural women by institutionalizing their savings so that they could have greater control over household resources. Other notable schemes provided for women's empowerment through Self Help Groups, crèche scheme and the empowerment of Adolescent Girls. Government also adopted The National Plan of Action (1991) for a Girl Child. The action plan is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child. Ultimate objective of it is to build the future of a girl child.

- The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments Acts, 1992, ensures women's participation in decision making as women got 33% reservation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). (Reservation for women was recommended by National Perspective Plan in 1988) Now-a-days, in some states it is extended up to 50%. Shram Shakti Report had recommended that Women's representation should be in proportion to their numbers in decision making bodies. However, for Parliament and for State Legislative Assemblies the legislative provisions are not yet done.
- We should note here that the social impact of Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation (LPG) policy was not always good for women. As per UN report 1992 the LPG policy has resulted into rise in the poverty of women all over the world. The term Feminisation of poverty was introduced in the discussion with the policies related to Women's Development in 1990s.
- The Noble Prize winner economist Dr. Muhammad Yunus introduced the concept of Microfinance to the poor without collateral security. In India microfinance through Self Help Groups became popular since 1990s. In the year 1992 a pilot project for financing 500 SHGs was launched by National Bank for Agriculture and

Rural Development (NABARD) and Self Help Group Bank Linkage Programme (SBLP) has become world's largest micro finance programme in terms of its reach. At present the number of SHGs under this programme are more than 85 lakhs covering more than 16 crore deposits. (Add latest data - as per 2016-17 figures - NABARD report).

- The mission statement of the Beijing Platform for Actions (BPfA1995) aimed at removing the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. The term Gender Equality was introduced in 1995. The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, proposed gender mainstreaming as a key strategy to reduce inequalities between women and men.
- As the world entered the 21st Century, the United Nations adopted Millennium Development Goals (MDG) to reduce extreme poverty. In the 1990s there was a strong opposition to globalisation, which insisted that the benefits of globalisation were not reaching the poor and women. This backlash against globalisation compelled the world to rethink the earlier policies. Also the term Inclusive Growth was being used at the International Level and the Concept of Pro-poor growth was introduced.
- These discussions at the international level struck a chord closer home and influenced the policies and plans in the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) which envisaged the empowering of women as the agents of social change and development. Focus on – (a) Empowerment of women and socially disadvantaged groups. Emphasis was on people's participation in planning and implementation of strategies. (b) Promoting and developing people's participatory institutions (like Panchayat Raj institutions and self-help groups) 35 (c) Strengthening efforts to build self-reliance. (d) The convergence of services from different sectors. (e) A women's component plan at the Central and State levels.
- National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001 sets the tone for women's development as per the International discussion. One of the objective of the policy was Building and strengthening partnerships with civil society, particularly women's organizations.
- The Policy also takes note of the commitments of the Ninth Five Year Plan and the other Sectoral Policies relating to empowerment of Women". The goal of this Policy was to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. The term Gender inequality was used in this policy. The policy noted that, "The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to social and economic structure, which is based on informal and formal norms and practices".
- The Tenth Five Year plan (2002-07) focused on building up on the pro-poor, pro-women policies which were already in existence and sought to make them more effective rather than duplicating efforts. This plan also focused on building up on the pro-poor, pro-women policies which were already in existence and sought to

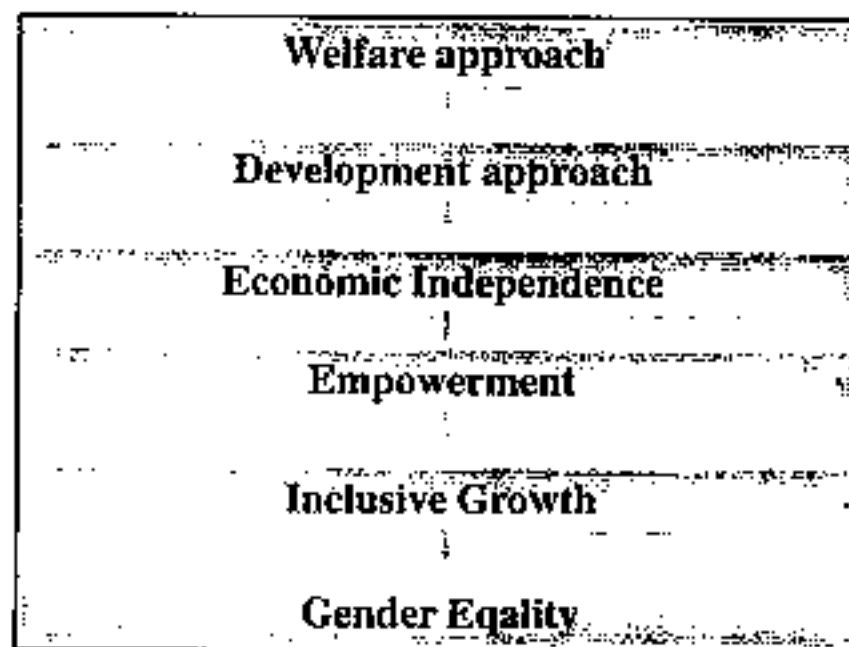
make them more effective rather than duplicating efforts. The Tenth Plan aims at empowering women through translating the National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) into action.

- As mentioned in the Tenth Plan, Government accepted the concept of Participatory development and tried to engage local populations in development projects. Gender Budget is derived from the concept of Participatory development and is related to Inclusive growth.
- Gender Budgeting is a powerful tool for achieving gender mainstreaming so as to ensure that benefits of development reach women as much as men.
- The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12) attempted to move beyond empowerment and recognised women as agents of sustained socio-economic growth and change. The plan pays special attention to rural women who suffer from double discrimination. For the first time the term Gender Equality was mentioned in the Eleventh plan approach paper. This Plan acknowledged women's agencies and tried to ensure that their needs, rights and contribution were reflected in every section of the Plan document. This marked the stage of inclusive growth with regard to policies for women.
- In June 2012, many countries agreed at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development to launch a government-led process to create a set of universal sustainable development goals (SDGs).
- The Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) made efforts to expand the reach of various schemes to women and children via faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth.
- It is interesting to note that the concept of sustainable development and inclusive growth was introduced in India in 1960's itself. It was known as "Ekatma Maanavvaad" (Integral Humanism). It was propounded by Pandit Decndayalji Upadhyaya in 1965. But we are not discussing this in detail here.
- In 2015 The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action completed 20 years. This blueprint for gender equality has inspired many countries and some countries have attested to the marked improvement in the status of their women citizens.
- Despite all the efforts taken at national and international level, gender inequality still remains a challenge in this century.
- Taking full cognizance of the developmental approach at national and International level, the National Policy for Women 2016 was drafted by the Central Government (Ministry of Women and Child Development).
- This policy articulated a perfect vision for the empowerment of women. The priority areas mentioned in the policy are health, education, economy, governance, violence against women, enabling environment for the development of women and environment and climate change.

- The 12th Five Year plan (2012-17) came to an end in April 2017 along with the 66 years old practice of planning for socio-economic growth of the country. But Government extended the 12th Plan Policies till September 2017.

1.5. The trajectory of the policies and the change in approach towards women's policies has emerged from welfare approach to gender equality as shown in the following flow chart.

Figure 1.1
Trajectory of the Policies



(Ref - 'Women Related Policies in India with Special reference to International conventions and Conferences on women: An Overview' published by BSS in 2019).

It is important to note here that International conventions provided boost to frame Women empowerment policy 2001. Especially, the 4th International conference held at Beijing in 1995 gave impetus to put the policy in clear terms.

1.2. Globalisation and International Conference on Women

In 1990s, globalisation brought 360-degree transformation in the world. Not only economic but it also led to socio cultural and political transformation. It changed completely the life of mankind in both positive and negative direction. Globalisation has definitely changed the role of women. It led to more opportunities for higher education, high salaried jobs; opportunities to learn advanced skills, availability of high technology to girls/women are definitely the positive changes that have brought a paradigm shift in the life of a woman. Of course globalisation has increased the number of lower paid and part time jobs in unorganised sector, which may prove exploitative for women. The feminization of poverty has further aggravated the problems. It has also led to changes in family composition leading to a nuclear family and increased need of child care and old age homes. Similarly, male migration from rural areas to urban centres has put the women in rural sections under triple burden of home making, farming and earning for family. At the same time, migration of women for economic reasons has led to increased risk of exploitation including sexual exploitation and trafficking. The

feminization of poverty was a key concern of the women's gathering at the World Summit on Social Development.

On the background of Globalisation the International Conference on Women was held at Beijing in the year 1995. In 2020, it completed 25 years since the Beijing Platform for Action was set out to remove the systemic barriers that hold women back from equal participation in all areas of life, whether in public or in private. (UN Women).

1.2.1 The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 (BDPA) is the most visionary agenda for the empowerment of women and girls, around the globe. Globalisation has definitely changed the role of women. It led to more opportunities for higher education, high salaried jobs; opportunities to learn advanced skills, availability of high technology to girls/women are definitely the positive changes that have brought a paradigm shift in the life of a woman. Of course globalisation has increased the number of lower paid and part time jobs in unorganised sector, which may prove exploitative for women. The feminization of poverty has further aggravated the problems. It has also led to changes in family composition leading to a nuclear family and increased need of child care and old age homes. Similarly, male migration from rural areas to urban centres has put the women in rural sections under triple burden of home making, farming and earning for family. At the same time, migration of women for economic reasons has led to increased risk of exploitation including sexual exploitation and trafficking. The feminization of poverty was a key concern of the women's gathering at the World Summit on Social Development.

The 4th International Conference tried to give a strategic remedy to the challenges emerged out of Globalisation. It is described as a turning point, 'the mile stone' in the history of women conferences. The term Gender Equality was coined in this Conference which aims at equality, development and peace for all women, implementation of Human rights in respect of women, women empowerment and equal right of participation in all spheres of life. It also talked about gender sensitive policies, challenge of violence against women. It was resolved to adopt Gender perspective at all programmes and policies

(BDPA) Beijing Declaration in the World Conference refers the issues regarding – poverty, inequality between men & women. The main critical concerns under Beijing policy were as follows:

- Women and poverty - When women are poor, their rights are not protected and they face double discrimination, on account of their gender and economic situation. Women, their families, communities and economies suffer as a result.
- Education and training of women - Education is essential for women to reach gender equality and become leaders of change. While women and girls today are far more educated than ever before, gaps remain. Educated women benefit entire societies, contributing to flourishing economies and the improved health, nutrition and education of their families. Education and training are also tools to help change harmful gender stereotypes.

- **Women and health** - Women need to be healthy in order to realize their full potential. This includes proper nutrition, sexual and reproductive rights, and mental health, as well as freedom from violence.
- **Violence against women** - Violence hurts women and girls and hampers their ability to thrive in multiple ways.
- **Women and armed conflict** - Wars and armed conflict destroy families and societies and leave women and girls particularly vulnerable. Sexual violence is widespread and often used as a war tactic.
- **Women and the economy** - Whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees, or through unpaid domestic or care work at home, women make enormous contributions to economies. Gender discrimination means women often end up in insecure, low-wage jobs, and constitute a small minority of those in senior positions.
- **Women in power and decision-making** - Once in leadership roles, women make a difference. But they are under-represented as voters and in top positions, whether in elected office, the civil service, corporate boardrooms or academia.
- **Institutional mechanisms** - Specialized institutions have played an important part in informing laws, policies and programmes and advancing gender equality. Robust laws and policies coupled with stronger mechanisms to coordinate various actors and ensure their effective enforcement and implementation can push the agenda.
- **Human rights of women** - Women and girls are entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of all of their human rights. The Beijing Platform for Action confirms that protection and promotion of human rights is the first responsibility of governments and core to the work of the United Nations.
- **Women and the media** - The media plays a significant role in perpetuating and challenging social norms that condone discrimination or violence against women. It can objectify women but also showcase strong women leaders and protagonists who can become role models for their audience.
- **Women and the environment** - Women are among the most affected by climate change. They are often the ones gathering water, fishing or farming land affected by flooding. Meanwhile, their voices are often ignored in environmental planning and management. They also have less access to land and productive resources.
- **The girl child** - Specific forms of violence and harmful practices, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and cutting, breast ironing and child marriage, affect girls in particular, including child sexual abuse.

These guidelines at International Level helped Indian Government to frame the policy of Women Empowerment in the year 2001.

The all out efforts mentioned above gave birth to 2001 Women Empowerment Policy being the first and only policy of Government of India on women empowerment.

- The State has to evaluate gaps and scope of the schemes and expand the scheme to the unreached area.
- The Benefit under various schemes is suggested to be given at the earliest without lagging much time.
- Strengthening monitoring strategies for procedural delays and paper work involved in implementation of scheme.
- Organised training programme for effective administration of the scheme.

Recommendations for district level authority for effective implementation of the scheme

- Establish One Window system and Help Desk for all the schemes at district level.
- *Mohalla Jana sunwai* sessions on the scheme is to be organised by the local government.
- Under *STEP* scheme the training module need to incorporate topic on the knowledge about online bank transactions, online marketing activities.

The soft skills and computer skills need to be imparted under *STEP* scheme training module and provide exposure to the grass root level women.

The training programmes should be organised frequently under the scheme *STEP*.

Training programme on bank procedures in particular locality may be organised.

Facility of offline submission of forms and documents need to be provided.

Short term training programme is to be organised on the procedure to availing the schemes and technicalities under each scheme.

Under *STEP* the women may be facilitated by providing ready markets such as marketing centres, exhibitions, fairs etc. at district level.

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following recommendations are made on the basis of the discussion with respondents, based on focused group discussion, analysis of the data obtained and conclusions made. As in most of the schemes, policy formation is the jurisdiction of Central Govt., State Govt. execute them and the responsibility of district level authority is to implement the schemes. Taken into consideration this hierarchy, the recommendations are formulated.

Recommendations for policy formulation at Central Government:

- *Indira Gandhi Widow Pension* - The widows may get benefits of both the schemes that is IGWNP and old age pension scheme.

The pension payable to a widow should be continued till her death without any pre condition of ceiling of her age or her son's status of earning. (As per the provision a widow gets a pension till her sons becomes 25 years old).

The amount of Pension is to be increased.

- In respect to *Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana* the amount of benefit may be increased.

The benefit of the scheme may be extended to second delivery also.

- *Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana* is very popular scheme however, it is recommended that the price of second cylinder may be reduced, as well as size of the cylinder provided under the Scheme may be increased.

- Delay in releasing the funds from central government for various schemes to state government may be avoided.

Recommendations for execution of the scheme through State Government:

- In respect with all the schemes massive publicity of the scheme, through various agencies, media; is highly recommended.
- Efforts are necessary to reach maximum number of needy women, particularly in rural, tribal & slum areas. Big hoardings, wall paintings are some recommended proven successful way of campaigning.
- Training camps/workshops may be conducted to make people aware about the schemes and procedure to avail the schemes, knowledge about technicalities needed under each scheme.
- State has to organise massive publicity drive of all the scheme, through various agencies, media.