PART – A

(A) EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND FIVE YEAR PLANS

(i) REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN FOR THE TENTH FIVE YEAR PLAN (2002-07) GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PLANNING COMMISSION OCTOBER - 2001

In the context of the preparations for the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07), Planning Commission was constituted with the following Terms of Reference.

a) to review the existing approach, strategies and priorities; the on-going policies and programmes of empowering women and development of children in the Ninth Five Year Plan; and suggest, if necessary, alternative strategies, priorities, policies and programmes to accelerate the empowering process;

b) to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of 'Women's Component Plan' and suggest specific measures and mechanisms to ensure that the funds/benefits flow to women from other development sectors;

Steering Committee on 'Empowerment of Women and Development of Children' under the Chairpersonship of Dr. K. Venkatasubramanian, Member, Planning Commission
c) to assess the impact of the on-going economic reforms and progressive globalization / liberalization of economy on the conditions of women and children and suggest effective strategies to cope up with the situation;

d) to review the effectiveness of the existing women & child - specific and women and child-related legislations and their enforcement and suggest corrective measures;

e) to review the effectiveness of the existing Institutional Arrangements for implementation of policies and programmes relating to women and children, both at Central and State levels and suggest improvements, if necessary;

f) to assess the role of NGOs and the status of devolution of Powers and resources to Panchayati Raj Institutions and Local Self Government Bodies, as per the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments and suggest specific measures for their involvement in the planning policies; and

g) to suggest an approach and necessary strategies, priorities, policies and programmes along with physical and financial targets.
Simultaneously, Planning Commission had also set up two Working Groups at the ministerial level under the Chairpersonship of Shri B.K. Chaturvedi, Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development.

Besides the above two Working Groups, Planning Commission also set up, for the first time, a Working Group on the Welfare and Development of Adolescents, to look into the developmental needs of the Group on priority basis, as they have been identified as the most neglected lot during all these fifty years. While the nodal responsibility of taking the follow-up action lies with the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports, recommendations having a direct bearing on the well-being of adolescent girls will be taken note of by the Steering Committee on Empowerment of Women and Development of Children.

The Steering Committee, in its First meeting held on the 31.1.2001, took stock of the status of women and children in the country, besides deliberating upon –

(a) the fast-changing situations and persisting as well as emerging problems/issues that should receive priority attention during the Tenth Plan; and

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185 one on the 'Empowerment of Women', and the other on the 'Development of Children'
186 under the chairpersonship of Dr N.C. Saxena, Secretary, Planning Commission
the line of approach required to be adopted in the Tenth - Plan to ensure empowerment of women and the development of children. The Steering Committee, in its Second meeting held on 9.5.2001, discussed in detail, the Reports of both the Working Groups with a special reference to the gaps /problems identified and the priorities/approach suggested for the Tenth Plan and accepted them.

Based on the detailed deliberations that took place in the Meetings of the steering Committee and also taking into consideration the suggestions and recommendations of the Working Groups, the Steering Committee on the Empowerment of Women and Development of Children finalized its Report as mentioned herein.

It was stated in the report that according to the 2001 Census, women as an independent target group account for 495.74 million in actual numbers and represent 48.3 % of the total population of the country. Depending upon the developmental needs of the individual age-group, the entire female population projected for 2001 can be categorized for the planning purposes into the following five distinct sub-groups:
a) Girl children in the age-group of 0-14 years\(^{187}\) deserve special attention because of the gender bias and discrimination they suffer from at such a tender age;

b) Adolescent girls in the age group 15-19 years\(^{188}\) are very sensitive from the view-point of planning because of the preparatory stage for their future productive and reproductive roles in the family and society;

c) Women in the reproductive age group of 15-44 years\(^{189}\) need special care and attention because of their reproductive needs;

d) Women in the economically active age group of 15-59 years\(^{190}\) have different demands like those of education/training, employment, income generation and participation in the developmental process, decision making etc.; and

e) The elderly women in the age group of above 60 years\(^{191}\) who have limited needs mainly relating to health, emotional and financial support.

(II) DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH FIVE-YEAR PLANS (1951-2002)

\(^{187}\) who account for 169.03 million (34.6%)
\(^{188}\) who account for 51.39 million (10.5%)
\(^{189}\) numbering 230.35 million (47.1%)
\(^{190}\) who account for 285.22 million (58.4%)
\(^{191}\) numbering 34.36 million (7.0%)
FIRST TO EIGHTH FIVE YEAR PLANS (1951-97)

Development of women has been receiving attention of the Government right from the very First Five Year Plan\(^{192}\). But, they have treated development of women as a subject of 'welfare' and clubbed it with the welfare of other disadvantaged groups requiring attention of the Government. The First Five Year Plan sought to 'promote the welfare of women' by helping them to play their legitimate role in the family and the community and stressed that 'the major burden of organizing activities for the benefit of vast female population has to be borne by the private agencies'. The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was set up in 1953 to act as one Apex Body at national level and to promote action organizations at various levels, especially at the grassroots; to take up welfare related activities for women. The Second to the Fifth Plans, including the Plan holidays also continued to reflect the same welfare approach, except according priority on education for both men and women besides launching of 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 Five Year Plan\(^ {193}\) which made the Planners, and Policy-makers recognize women not only as partners but also as stakeholders in the development of the country. The report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, which was published during

\(^{192}\) (1951-56)
\(^{193}\) (1980-85)
the same period, also highlighted the imperatives for Women to be considered as an independent target group requiring special focus in planning and development. The Sixth Plan adopted a multi-disciplinary approach with a special thrust on the three core sectors of health, education and employment. Accordingly, priority was given to programmes for women in agriculture and its allied activities of dairying, poultry, small animal husbandry, and handlooms, handicrafts, small-scale industries etc. the Seventh Plan development programmes continued with the major objectives of raising their economic and social status and bring them into the mainstream of national development. A significant step in this direction was to identify/promote the 'beneficiary oriented programmes' for women in different developmental sectors, which extend direct benefits to women. The stress on generation of both skilled and unskilled employment through proper education and vocational training continued. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) with its major focus on 'Human Development' played a very important role in the development of women. It promised to ensure that benefits of development from different sectors do not bypass women, implement special programmes to complement the general development programmes and to monitor the flow of benefits to women in the three core sectors of education, health and employment. Women must be enabled to function as equal partners and participants in the developmental process. This approach of the Eighth Plan marks a further shift from 'development' to 'empowerment' of women. Some of the Policy Programme Initiatives undertaken for empowering women during the Eighth Plan period include the following:

194 (1985-90)
a) setting up of a National Commission for Women in 1992 to safeguard the interests of women;

b) setting up of Rashtriya Mahila Kosh in 1993 for women to meet the credit needs of poor and assetless women;

c) adoption of the National Nutrition Policy in 1993 to fulfill the Constitutional commitment to ensure adequate nutritional standards to its people;

d) launching of the scheme of Mahila Samriddhi Yojana in 1993 which seeks to empower women by institutionalising their savings so that they can have greater control over household resources195;

e) setting up of National Crèche Fund in 1994 so as to meet the growing demand for crèche services which is a support service for working mothers;

f) launching of Indira Mahila Yojana in 1995-96 (renamed as Integrated Women's Empowerment Programme in 1999); and

g) formulation of a National Policy for Empowerment of Women196.


The Ninth Five Year Plan made a major commitment of 'Empowering women as the Agents of Socio-Economic Change and Development', through the following strategies --

195 later merged with integrated Women's Empowerment Programme
196 a draft - 1996
a) to create an enabling environment for women to exercise their rights, both within and outside home, as equal partners along with men, through early adoption of 'National Policy for Empowerment of Women';

b) to legislate reservation of not less than 1/3 seats for women in the Lok Sabha and in the State Legislative Assemblies and thus ensure adequate representation of women in decision making;

c) to adopt an integrated approach towards empowering women through effective convergence of existing services, resources, infrastructure and manpower in both women-specific and women-related sectors;

d) to adopt a special strategy of 'Women's Component Plan' to ensure that not less than 30 per cent of funds/benefits flow to women from other developmental sectors;

e) to organize women into Self-Help Groups and thus mark the beginning of a major process of empowering women;

f) to accord high priority to reproductive child health services and thus ensure easy access to maternal and child health services;

g) to universalize the on-going supplementary feeding programme - Special Nutrition Programme (SNP) and Mid-Day Meals (MDM);

h) to ensure easy and equal access to education for women and girls;¹⁹⁷

i) to initiate steps to eliminate gender bias in all educational programmes;

j) to institute plans for free education for girls up to college level, including professional courses;

¹⁹⁷ through the commitments of the Special Action Plan of 1998
k) to equip women with necessary skills in the modern upcoming trades which could keep them gainfully engaged besides making them economically independent and self-reliant; and

l) to increase access to credit through setting up of a 'Development Bank for Women Entrepreneurs' in small and tiny sectors.

The following paragraphs give a detailed account of the efforts put in by both the women-specific and women-related sectors to translate the Ninth Plan commitments into action during the Ninth Plan period.

(A) Women and Child Development

Keeping the commitments of the Ninth Plan in view, the nodal Department of Women and Child Development, which is responsible for empowering women, initiated action in finalising the Policy. The Group of Ministers (GOM), which examined the draft Policy, made certain changes to make it more effective and recommended the same for approval of the Cabinet. Finally, it got approved in March 2001. The other major step in this direction was to seek 33-1/2 per cent reservation of seats for women\textsuperscript{198}. To this effect, a Bill on the subject was introduced in the Lok Sabha in September 1996, but the same is yet to be passed.

\textsuperscript{198} both in the Lok Sabha and in the State Legislative Assemblies
Besides setting up of a Standing Lok Sabha Parliamentary Committee on Empowerment of Women in March 1997, to review the progress of empowering women from time to time, a Task Force on Women and Children was also constituted in August, 2000 to review all the related measures and to draft a Programme for Celebrating 2001 as the 'Year of Women's Empowerment'. The Task Force, which met on 12 September 2000 finalised a Programme for Celebrating the Women's Empowerment Year. Further, to have a detailed review of all the legislations relating to women, the Task Force set up two Sub-Groups - Sub-Group II and I. The two Sub-Groups, while submitting their reports, recommended certain amendments. The Task Force, after having a detailed discussion on the amendments proposed, accepted the reports of the Sub-Groups in its meeting held on 6.9.2001.

With regard to earmarking of funds/benefits under Women's Component Plan, the Planning Commission, as reported, requested all the Central Ministries/Departments and the State Governments to draw up Women's Component Plans. The Minister for Human Resource Development had also requested all the Central Ministers for their personal intervention in the matter of earmarking of funds/benefits under Women's Component Plan in the plans/programmes of their respective Ministries/Departments.

The nodal Department of Women and Child Development also made a request to all the Ministries/Departments to –
a) set up Advisory Committees to help the Ministries/Departments in the preparation of Women's Component Plan;

b) set up a 'Women's Cell' to monitor the implementation of Women's Component Plan; and

c) include a chapter on Women's Component Plan in their Annual Reports.

As per the information available, 12 Central Ministries/Departments, viz. - Health and Family Welfare, Education, Labour, Agriculture, Urban Affairs and Employment, Rural Development, Social Justice and Empowerment, Textiles, Industries, Non-Conventional Energy Sources, Science and Technology and Information & Broadcasting, have confirmed their efforts of extending benefits for women under Women's Component Plan. While the State Governments of Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh have made a bold initiative of earmarking funds for Women's Component Plan, Rajasthan is also trying to follow the path very soon. Although, it is difficult to quantify the efforts of various Ministries/Departments in terms of allocations, yet the flow of benefits to women from the core sectors of health and family welfare, education, labour and employment, rural development, urban development, agriculture, science and technology etc. can be easily enlisted, as reflected in the chapters of this document. Efforts have already been on for preparing a Gender Development Index to assess the impact of various policies and programmes in improving/raising the status of women at regular intervals.199 The Committee on

199 A set of 18 Developmental Indicators selected for the purpose are being field-tested to find out the feasibility of data being available at the district level on a regular basis.
Empowerment of Women, referred to above, also inter-alia, reviews the implementation of the progress of the Women's Component Plan from time to time, as part of the strategy for empowering women.

Besides formulating policies and programmes, enacts/amends legislation concerning women; and reviews, guides and coordinate the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organizations, the nodal Department also implements a few innovative programmes. They include –

a) empowering strategies;
b) employment and income generation;
c) welfare and support services;
d) awareness generation and gender sensitization; and
e) other enabling measures.

These programmes, in fact, play the role of supplementary/complementary to the other general development efforts for women. Progress of some of the important on-going programmes is given below:

i) Empowering Strategies
Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY), launched in 1995-96 was recast and retitled as 'Integrated Women's Empowerment Programme (IWEP)' in 2001 to empower women.

Merged with the programme of Mahila Samriddhi Yojana, IWEP will be an effective instrument for empowering women, both socially and economically, besides organising them into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to form a strong institutional base.200

The Rural Women's Development and Empowerment Project (RWDEP), now being called as Swa-Shakti Project sanctioned in 1998 as a Centrally-Sponsored Project, is yet another governmental intervention which was already put to test in Tamil Nadu and found to be successful in empowering women through awareness generation and income generation. The same is being replicated in the States of Bihar, Haryana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh with the assistance from IDA and IFAD. The Women's Development Corporations and the NGOs in these States are actively associated in implementation of the programme.

ii) Employment and Income Generation

200 The end of 2000 formed more than 42,000 Women SHGs.
The Support of Training and Employment Programme (STEP) provides a comprehensive package of up-gradation of skills through training, extension inputs, market linkages etc. in the traditional sectors of Agriculture, Dairying, Handicrafts, Handlooms and Animal Husbandry, Sericulture, Fisheries etc. Since inception of STEP in 1987, about 4,91,795 women have been covered under 96 projects launched in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Nagaland, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Setting up of Employment and Income Generation Training cum Production Centre for Women (NORAD) extend training for poor and needy women in the age group of 18-45 years in the up-coming non-traditional trades. Since 1982-83 when the programme was started, 1477 projects benefiting 2.28 lakh women have been approved. The Socio-Economic Programme (SEP) provides 'work and wage' to needy women such as destitute, widows, deserted, disabled etc. By the end of the Ninth Plan 50 new units were likely to be set up under SEP. The Condensed Courses of Education and Vocational Training (CCEVT) provide new vistas of employment through continuing education and vocational training for school dropouts. A total number of 3753 courses were likely to be started by the end of the Ninth Plan.

iii) Welfare and Support Services
Support services to working women are being extended through the programme of Hostels for Working Women (HWW), which aims to promote greater mobility for women in the employment market through providing safe and cheap accommodation to workingwomen of lower income strata. A nation-wide study conducted in 1998 by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai suggested expansion of the scheme to meet the ever-increasing demand for such hostels. The Master Plan of Operations (MPO) prepared by the Department in 1992 also indicated the need to provide hostel accommodation for about 1.35 lakh workingwomen throughout the country. Not even half of this target could be achieved, so far. The other two major support services include –

a) ICDS through its nation-wide networking of 6 lakh anganwadi centers and

b) crèches/day-care centers for working and ailing mothers. Details of these two programmes are given under the section 'Development of Children' of this Report.

The welfare programme of Short Stay Homes (SSH) for Women and Girls has been under implementation since 1969 to protect and rehabilitate those women and girls who are in social and moral danger due to breakage of families, mental strain/stress, social ostracism, exploitation etc. During the year 1999-2000, the financial pattern and norms under the scheme were revised as mid-

201 Since inception of the Scheme in 1973 till February 2001, 861 hostels had been sanctioned to provide accommodation to 60,865 working women.
term corrections during the Ninth Plan. Programme Evaluation Organisation (PEO) of the Planning Commission evaluated the scheme of SSHs in 1998. Based on their recommendations, the scheme has been transferred to Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) to develop linkages/get merged with another alike scheme called Family Counseling Centers launched to help those families, which are on the verge of breakdown.

iv) Awareness and Gender Sensitization

The Ninth Plan attaches great importance to those efforts, which trigger changes in societal attitudes towards women and the girl child. An integrated media campaign projecting a positive image of both women and the girl child through electronic, print and mass media forms the most important component of the government's communication strategy. Also, a set of 10 Legal Literacy Manuals were brought out in 1992 with the aim of educating women about the laws concerning their basic rights. These Manuals being simple and illustrated, even semi-literates and neo-literates can easily comprehend the messages.

v) Other Enabling Measures

Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) is a national-level mechanism to meet the micro-credit needs of poor and asset-less women in the Informal Sector. Since

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202 At present, there exist a total number of 339 SSHs benefiting about 10,170 women/girls.

203 The manuals have been distributed to all the State Governments and NGOs for wider dissemination and the same are also being translated into all other Indian languages.
inception of RMK in 1993 till February 2001, a total credit worth Rs.100.27 crore was sanctioned to benefit more than 4 lakh women through the medium of 827 NGOs spread all over the country. Disbursements already made are worth Rs. 74.92 crore. RMK has been maintaining a very creditable recovery rate of 90 to 95 per cent. It also ventured to develop an institutional base at the grass-root levels through Self-Help Groups for expanding its credit services. For expansion of these activities, RMK needs financial support from the Government.

The National Commission for Women, set up in 1992, has a mandate to safeguard the rights and interests of women. The Commission continued to pursue its mandated activities viz - safeguarding women's rights through legal awareness programmes; looking into the individual complaints/pre-litigations, sexual harassment of women at work place; organising 'Parivarik Mahila Lok Adalats' with the help of local NGOs and Legal Aid Boards; and review of the existing legislations and preparation of new Bills relating to Prevention of Inter-Country trafficking in the SAARC Region, framing of Rules under Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 etc. The Commission accords highest priority in securing speedy justice to women.

(B) Monitoring the Beneficiary-Oriented Schemes (BOS)

At the instance of the Prime Minister's Office, the nodal Department of Women and Child Development monitors the progress of implementation of the

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204 In this process, it also started developing linkages with the existing Women's Groups of IMY and DWCRA.
27 Beneficiary-Oriented Schemes for Women through the mechanism of Inter-Ministerial Review Meetings. Based on the findings of the review, the nodal Department plays an interventionist role with the help of PMO in removing the obstacles/impediments and thus improves the implementation of the 27 BOS. Status Reports prepared by the nodal Department form the base for the necessary follow-up action by the individual Ministries/Departments. A review of the 27 BOS reveals that –

i) a total outlay of Rs. 20688.70 crore representing 2.4 per cent of the total public sector outlay is available in the Ninth Plan for empowering women; and

ii) of this, while Rs. 12878.28 crore (62.2 %) flow from 6 women-related Ministries/Departments, the rest of Rs. 7810.42 crore (37.8%) flow from one single Department of Women and Child Development. This justifies the fact that the women's component plan needs to be concretized right from the very beginning of formulation / launching of the Plan so that the benefits from other developmental sectors do not by-pass women.

(C) Review of Legislation (women-specific & women-related)

As per the mandate, the National Commission for Women reviewed all the 39 legislations, which have bearing upon women. The two Sub-Groups of the Task Force on Women and Children examined a total of 22 women-related
legislations and completed the task of giving recommendations with regard to the following –

i) Employees’ State Insurance Act, 1948;

ii) Factory Act, 1948;

iii) Minimum Wage Act, 1948;

iv) The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976;

v) Legal Practitioners (Women) Act, 1923;

vi) Maternity Benefit Act, 1961;

vii) The Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986;

viii) The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976;

ix) The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966;

x) The Cinematograph Act, 1952 and related Laws;

xi) The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970;

xii) The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Condition of Service) Act, 1979;

xiii) The Payment of Wages Act, 1936;

xiv) The Plantation Labour Act, 1951;

xv) The Workmen’s Compensation Act, 1923;

xvi) The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987;

xvii) Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986;

xviii) Family Courts Act, 1984;

xix) Indian Penal Code, 1860;

xx) Criminal Procedure Code, 1973;
xxi) The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956; and
xxii) Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961;

(D) Health And Family Welfare

Improvement in health status of women is sought to be achieved through improving the access to and utilization of health, family welfare and nutrition services with a special focus on under-served and under-privileged segments of population. Technical improvement and increased access to health care have resulted in fall in mortality rates, but the disease burden continues to be high. Substantial variations exist between States and districts in availability, quality and utilization of health care services and women 's access to such services, as well as the health status. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa, are areas where reduction in the IMR has been slow and pre-natal and neonatal mortality rates have not declined.

Anaemia is the most widespread yet most neglected micronutrient deficiency/disorder in India. Poor dietary intake of iron and folic acid are the major factors responsible for anaemia. Pregnant women and pre-school children are the worst affected\textsuperscript{205}. Training programmes to improve screening of pregnant women for anaemia and initiating appropriate therapy have been initiated as a part of Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) programme. However, the programme is yet to be operationalised. In the past serious shortage and poor

\textsuperscript{205} Prevalence of anaemia among pregnant women ranges between 50%-90%.
quality of iron and folic acid tablets had crippled the programme. The RCH aims at eliminating these.

The issue of maternal and child health are given high priority through the RCH programme which is proposed to be universalized by the end of Ninth Five Year Plan. Improvements in the indicators like life expectancy, maternal mortality, gaps between male and female infant and child mortality, female literacy and participation in grassroots level democracy are noticeable positive changes. Integrated reproductive and child health care were to be provided and Area specific strategies for micro-implementation of the RCH programme were to be adopted. RCH focuses on the obstetric care aimed to achieve substantial reduction in maternal mortality and morbidity through - early registration of pregnancy, screening of all pregnant women at least thrice in pregnancy for detection of risk factors; appropriate referral and care for at risk person and safe delivery.

The strategy aimed to achieve substantial reduction in maternal morbidity through the Contractual appointment of additional Auxiliary Nurse Midwives and Public Health Nurse/Staff Nurse to improve institutional deliveries. Safe delivery component of the RCH Programme was to be strengthened through provision of Kits and the training of Dais. Initiatives to Promote Safe home deliveries in poorly performing states were also envisaged such as screening of all pregnant women

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206 The Ninth Plan sought to address the issue of high population growth rate by bringing about a shift in focus from reducing infant mortality to reduce high desired fertility and by encouraging contraception to reduce unwanted pregnancies.
to detect and refer high-risk group, Training of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) regarding danger signals and timely referral, and the promotion of use of disposable delivery kits to reduce infection. Referral units were identified and strengthened but did not become fully operational due to lack of skilled manpower, adequate infrastructure, equipment and medicines. STI/RTI prevention, detection and management in women are priority areas as parts of essential RCH care at all levels of health care. Fall in routine immunization is a matter of concern. Poor coverage is mainly due to vacancies of staff, poor access, distribution and storage of vaccines, lack of supervision and monitoring, and ongoing campaign mode programmes disrupting routine activities. Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions was envisaged to improve the health services.

Efforts to educate the girl, her parents and the community to delay the marriages of their daughters were to receive focused attention during the Ninth Plan. Effective management of nutritional and health problem in adolescent girls was also proposed. Health care needs of adolescents were addressed under the RCH Programme in coordination with Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme in blocks where ICDS Centers exist. The impact of this however has been negligible.

The National Population Policy adopted in 2000 seeks to address the issues related to population in the country and ensure universal access to quality contraceptive services towards attaining two-child norm. It calls for full coverage
of registration of births, deaths and marriage and pregnancy and universal access to information/counseling services for fertility regulation. Reduction in Infant Mortality Rate and immunization of children are priority areas identified. It seeks to promote delayed marriage for girls and reduction in Maternal Mortality Rate, and enhance the number of institutional deliveries. It emphasizes the containment of Sexually-Transmitted Diseases (STD).

(E) Food and Nutrition Security

States where the incidence of poverty is maximum are also the States where the Public Distribution System (PDS) is least developed.\textsuperscript{207} This has led to severe nutritional deficiency among the majority of the people, especially among women and girls. Apart from the PDS, the ICDS and the Mid-Day Meal Programmes are the two other schemes of the Central Government that address the issue of food security and seek to reduce household malnutrition.

(F) Education & Training

The thrust areas for educational development in the Ninth Plan include Universalization of elementary education, achievement of full adult literacy, raising the quality of education at all levels, improving learner achievement, upliftment of the educational status of disadvantaged groups including

\textsuperscript{207} Studies have shown that only 15 per cent of the needs of rural poor households are in fact met by the PDS and they are compelled to go to the open market for their needs.
Female Literacy rates increased at a faster rate than male literacy rates for the decade reaching a level of 75.85 for males and 54.16 for females. The gap in male and female literacy rates stands at 21.69 per cent for population above 5 years of age.\textsuperscript{208}

The National Literacy Mission Authority played a critical role in the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) phase to mobilize NGOs, experts and volunteers in large numbers and recorded significant participation of women – over 60%. For the first time the number of female literates outnumbered the illiterates. There are currently 450 Total Literacy Campaigns (TLC) and 250 Post Literacy Campaign (PLC). Continuing Education (CE) projects are being implemented in 68 districts but are yet to gain momentum, with little energy and few creative ideas to sustain people’s interest in reading and learning.

The alternative models like Mahila Samakhya, non-formal education, adult education, early childhood education etc. contributed in various ways. Some programmes like District Primary Education Program, Operation Blackboard, Lok Jumbish, Shiksha Karmi, National Open School etc. have considerably improved female literacy. A focus on qualitative aspects has brought about substantive change in the education of girls.

The Mahila Samakhya (MS) is the only women focused programme of the Department of Education, reaching out to more than a lakh women in 10 states.

\textsuperscript{208} There are still a large number of districts especially in BIMARU states with female literacy rates below 10%. 

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through its state societies. Through its strategy of building grassroots women’s organizations the MS programme has created a forum and environment for women’s education at the community level and has also been influential in raising issues related to the education of girls in a number of areas. Although MS has highlighted the need for a gender focused and holistic approach to women and girls education, it continues to be viewed as marginal in the department’s efforts of education despite its successes and long years of existence.

The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan has committed to provide useful and quality elementary education to all children in the 6–14 age group by 2010 and bridge the gender and social category gaps at primary level by 2010. Plans for free education for girls up to college level, including professional courses have not been instituted universally in the Ninth Plan period although some State Governments have made education free for girls at all levels.

(G) Economy, Work and Employment

The increasing growth rate of the economy at 7 per cent per annum of the period was accompanied by policy initiatives towards expansion of social security to workers through self-financing systems; addressing the conditions of workers and elimination of evils of child labour and bonded labour and strengthening of accreditation facilities for vocational training institutes including services sectors
and better coordination of vocational training imparted by various departments were attempted.

The Ninth Five Year Plan strategy envisages a growth of 4.5 percent per annum in agriculture sector, and a target of doubling food production and making India hunger-free in 10 years. The concept of food security has been broadened to include accessibility and availability of basic nutritional requirements. The priority to access to food grains for the poor has been emphasized in the plan document; the reality seems rather bleak in that context especially for women.

(H) Women in Agriculture

New initiatives taken for achieving the Ninth Plan objectives include introduction of crop insurance scheme "Rashtriya Krishi Bima Yojana (RKBY)", establishment of Watershed Development Fund (WDF), launching of Technology Mission on Cotton (TMC), launching of Kisan Credit Cards. These have little significance for women as invisible family workers or as labourers.

Focused programmes for women in agriculture have been introduced, and have been quite successful in addressing technology, food security, access to information and resources such as land leases etc., yet these experiences and issues of equity are not adequately reflected in the mainstream policy on agriculture. Programmes for women include:
a) 'Women in Agriculture' scheme to extend support services such as technology, extension etc.

b) Farmers, which provide micro capital assistance and revolving funds exclusively for women to purchase inputs, land base, undertake land development activities, risk coverage collective farming and hiring of equipments etc.

c) Agricultural Cooperatives, which provide a special protection to women in the form of assured work by organizing cooperative societies for women in agricultural based sectors.

Besides these, specific areas have been identified in 6 other schemes that could provide for spaces for incorporation of women's needs and target them as a beneficiary constituency. Despite these measures and the progressive perspective that they reflect for women's concerns in the agriculture sector, creating access to resources for acquisition of assets and production inputs and access to technologies and inputs, the larger perspective of the agriculture sector seems to remain gender blind.

(I) Poverty Alleviation
The Ninth Five Year Plan envisaged a creation of entitlements (through self-employment and wage-employment schemes, food security and social security) and building up of capabilities through basic minimum services like education, health and housing. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) continued as a major self-employment scheme till April 1, 1999 and 53.50 million families have been covered at an expenditure of Rs. 13,700 crore since the inception. Rural poor families have however remained constant in number at 55 million in the last 20 years despite high growth and high investment in IRDP and wage-giving programmes as investment per family remained at sub-critical levels. The restructured IRDP, Swarnajayanti Gram Swa-Rozgar Yojana (SGSY), aims at self-employment of the rural poor. The Development of Women and Child in Rural Areas (DWCRA) scheme, which was a women focused intervention, was also merged as part of these initiatives.

209 Investment at the beginning of Ninth Plan of Rs.16,753 was not much higher in real terms and could not finance viable projects to offer adequate incomes on a sustained basis.