

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DRAFT NATIONAL POLICY 2016

AZAD FOUNDATION

The Draft National Policy for Women 2016 proposed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India is refreshing in many aspects and takes on board several concerns of the feminist movements in India, including the need for taking into account unpaid care-work of women, creating more gender disaggregated data and making skill and technology available to all, with a special focus on marginalized women. It makes a reference to the rights and social security of migrant workers and domestic workers, again important concerns for development and feminist activists. However, we would like to bring to the attention of the Government, certain important points:

First the Policy refers to the training and skill up-gradation of women in traditional, **new and emerging sectors** in line with the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015. The National Policy also asks for special emphasis to be given to skill development of marginalized women. *Our experience with the 2015 National Skill Development Policy shows that very little financial investment is made in skill development and it is extremely short term and technical in nature, bypassing the fact marginal women need holistic capacity building programmes, including social dimensions of empowerment as well as life skills for engaging in sustainable livelihood, especially non-traditional livelihoods. Given that this National Policy is geared towards women's empowerment, special emphasis should be put on the nature of skill training leading to livelihoods.* **Second**, Skill development programmes are apparently gender neutral and the low enrolment of women in skills pertaining to traditional masculine trades (such as driving, masonry, carpentry, electrician's work etc.) are attributed to lack of interest on part of women and the absence of a viable market. **However the National Policy should ask for proactive women centred approach to mobilization for enrolment to such skill programmes (pertaining to traditionally men dominated trades) and creation of markets for such trades. This is the only way that gendered disparities in training and skills can be bridged and the active role of the Government in bridging these will pave the path to greater participation of women in the learning of these skills and the practice of these trades.**

Third, on p. 9, The Policy mentions: ‘Suitable strategies will be developed and implemented to ensure that women have equal opportunities to enter and enjoy decent work...’ On p 9 and p 10, the Policy repeatedly talks about the fact that the Government must make special efforts to increase women’s work participation, to eliminate discrimination and promote equality through reducing wage gap, unpaid work time and promoting social security. Some important concerns in this section are that, Government must take cognizance of the fact that:

- *Wage gap needs to be addressed not only at low end jobs but also at high end jobs such as telecommunication, financial services etc.*
- *In order to reduce women’s unpaid work time, it is not enough to invest in labour saving technology, crèche, parental leave etc. but also to direct efforts at redistribution of household responsibilities between men and women so that both can share the responsibilities of unpaid domestic and care work as well as paid work.*

Fourth, no mention is made about addressing horizontal segregation of labour markets, i.e., the chasm between what is understood as men’s work and women’s work in the paid economy. In high paying services, gender gaps in types of work have begun to be bridged with highly educated or professionally trained women entering various professions, earlier closed to them, be it in finances, management, science and technology or armed forces. However, at low paying jobs of the poor, gender segregation is maximum with work such as paid domestic work, care work, unskilled construction work, petty vending and a few others being the only options open to women. It is here that the National Policy needs to take cognizance of skewed labour markets and actively intervene to expand the set of opportunities for remunerative work available to women. This would mean skilling and creating markets for such work.

We would also like to bring to the attention of the Government, that currently several organisations are scattered all over India engaging in non-traditional livelihoods of women, especially socially and economically marginalized women. Professional driving is an emerging sector and so is masonry, carpentry and electrical work. **On p. 15, under the Infrastructure head, the Draft Policy observes: ‘More women transport professionals will be trained and promoted to safeguard women’s safety and security’.** While it is significant that women transport professionals receive mention, it is not clear what is meant by the term or how such professionals will be created and incorporated into the system. *More importantly, this forms part*

*of the recommendations for infrastructure ensuring women's safety rather than recommendations for women's livelihood options. **Professional driving along with a host of other NTL professions need to be highlighted as emerging sectors in the Industry, Labour and Employment Section.***

In a recent Convention (Delhi, 6-8 April 2016) some of the NTL organisations and friend organisations (namely, *Azad Foundation*, Delhi, *Archana Women's Centre*, Kerala, *Samaan*, Indore, *SAATH*, Ahmedabad, *RASTA*, Kerala, *Dalit Shakti Kendra*, Ahmedabad, *Kerala Women's Development Corporation*, Srijan, Rajasthan, *Jabala*, West Bengal, *Humsafar*, Lucknow, *Janvikas*, Ahmedabad, *ASPBAE*, *EMpower*) who are in the process of forming a National Network, defined non- traditional livelihoods as follows:

Non Traditional Livelihood refers to livelihood practices¹ that help women break stereotypes emerging from the intersections of gender, caste, class, religion, sexual orientation, disabilities and other marginalities and oppressive structures, within a dynamic context of space and time. NTL increases the set of viable livelihood choices available to women and give them access and control over skills, technology, market, mobility and resources. It creates economic stability along with psychological, social and political empowerment.

Ground experiences of several organisations and case studies of actual practitioners of different NTL trades point to the fact that such jobs, generally performed outside home, requiring mobility and earning higher incomes than jobs traditionally open to women, carry the possibility of social as well as economic empowerment leading to ownership of property, assertion against violence on women and greater decision making within the family and community. Experience also shows that to sustain in such jobs and to lay claim to the empowering potential of such jobs, training programmes need to focus on extensive capacity building based on technical skills, awareness of rights and gender issues and personality development through life skills.

NTL organisations and the professionals trained by these organisations are also gaining recognition from the side of Government and other national and international forums. For example, Azad Foundation, a pioneer organisation in the field of women chauffer services and women run taxis was approached by the Delhi Commission for Women and 22 women

¹ By livelihood practices we mean dimensions of production of goods and services as well as marketing.

chauffeurs trained by Azad were appointed as drivers for the Mahila Helpline Programme run by them. The NSKFDC (National Safai Karamachari Development Corporation) has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Azad whereby women members of the families of rag pickers are being funded to take training with Azad. The Delhi Transport Commission also came forward to hire its first woman bus driver, a trainee of Azad. Our chauffeurs have gained countless recognition in national and international forums and received considerable media attention. Recently the Director of the Kolkata office of Azad also received the Woman of Substance Award by the Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare for bringing women chauffeur services to Kolkata. Corporate entities have also come forward not only through CSR activities but also as a consumer of our services. National and international donors have also been taking an interest in our activities. This holds true for many of the organisations involved with NTL and slowly but surely, it is emerging as a viable and important sector that strikes at the root of gendered labour markets and challenges gender stereotypes at work and workplaces.

Given the importance of this emerging sector, which we call the NTL sector, we propose that it receives special mention in the Policy document. Further we would like to see the integration of various concerns of the NTL sector in the various propositions and recommendations of the Policy.

Finally, we would like to conclude by mentioning two other important points:

- *While the Draft Policy mentions the construction of toilets in houses, communities and at workplace (p. 10 and p.13, emphasis should also be laid on construction of women's toilets on the roads and in public places.*
- *Under enabling environment (Pg 13), we should include working with families and men in communities so that they too can be sensitized to questions of gender justice and gender equality and become partners of positive change.*

To summarise, following are our recommendations:

1. Make a special mention of the NTL sector and its role in challenging gender segregated labour, technology and skill markets. This needs to be included in the subsection,

Industry, Labour and Employment (Skill Development, Entrepreneurship) under Section III. Economy of the Draft Policy.

2. Make a proposal whereby the Government promotes this sector, first through a system of active mobilization and incentivisation for increased participation of women in skill training in non-traditional trades; second through investing resources in a training modules through which holistic capacity building can happen not only to address skill needs but also needs for social and cultural empowerment (communications, self defense, gender and legal rights, sexuality and reproductive health, personal counseling to name a few); and third through the development of a market for the services and products of this sector by for example, mandating or recommending a quota/reservation for employment of women in its related departments and also by incentivizing (for example, tax benefit) the private sector to purchase services and products of this sector.²
3. The Policy could also elaborate on the point that the NTL sector targets resource poor women who are not only economically but also the socially vulnerable for whom job opportunities are extremely limited and confined to a few traditional sectors. These vulnerabilities include multiple oppressions of gender-caste-class-community-sexuality, disability. Several organisations engaged in NTL are also reaching out to specific vulnerable groups such as single women, sex workers, children of sex workers, survivors of violence, survivors of trafficking and the LGBTQ+ community. The Policy needs to make specific recommendations for promotion of livelihood options for such communities whether in the NTL or other sectors.
4. Wage gap needs to be addressed not only at low end jobs but also at high end jobs such as telecommunication, financial services etc.
5. In order to reduce women's unpaid work time, it is not enough to invest in labour saving technology, crèche, parental leave etc. but also to direct efforts at redistribution of household responsibilities between men and women so that both can share the responsibilities of unpaid domestic and care work as well as paid work.

² A case in point could be a minimum job reservation for women drivers in Government run public transport system

6. In order to encourage presence of women in public spaces, more and more hygienic toilets should be created on public roads apart from at homes, workplace and within community spaces.
7. To create an enabling environment, the Draft Policy should include working with families and men in communities so that they too can be sensitized to questions of gender justice and gender equality and become partners of positive change.
