



Gender



Gender Community

Solution Exchange for the Gender Community Consolidated Reply

For Comments: Women Charter of Demands

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From N. Hamsa, WomenPowerConnect, New Delhi

Posted 20 March 2009

WomenPowerConnect (WPC) is a national level organization of women's groups and individuals working together to influence policy level decisions and support legislations that are congruous with the vision of a gender-just society.

In the wake of the upcoming elections in April-May 2009, **WPC has drawn up a "Women Charter of Demands"** with an aim for its inclusion in all party mandates. On some of these demands, WPC through its state chapters have been proactive. WPC would also do post-elections follow-up on the implementation of the Charter by the party in power.

To help us modify/improve the 'Charter of Demands,' we would like to request members of the Gender Community to please read the Charter (available at http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/gender/resource/res_info_20030901.pdf (PDF; Size: 23 KB) and provide inputs on the document.

Specifically we are interested in your comments on the following:

- What issues in the 'Charter of Demands' needs prioritization and how should they be highlighted?
- What other information needs to be incorporated in the Charter?
- What strategies should be adopted to implement the 'Charter of Demands' effectively?

We would also appreciate it if you could bring to our notice, if any of the demands mentioned in the charter have been met/implemented at the state level. In addition, please share with us any information on other charters/manifestos on women's rights.

Your suggestions will be incorporated into the Charter to help strengthen it. We will then rigorously lobby and advocate for all political parties to consider it. I am looking forward to receiving your comments and suggestions.

Responses were received, with thanks, from

1. [Bhumika Jhamb](#), Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA), New Delhi
2. Leela Kumari P., State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Kerala ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))

3. [Asha Ramesh](#), Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), Hyderabad ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))
4. [Dolon Ganguly](#), Jeevika Development Society, West Bengal
5. [Rajshree](#), Gujarat Urban Development Mission, Gujarat
6. [D. Suryakumari](#), Centre for People's Forestry, Secunderabad
7. [Pamela Philipose](#), Women's Features Service, New Delhi
8. [Soma K. Parthasarthy](#), Gender Consultant, New Delhi
9. [Jyotsna Chatterji](#), Joint Women's Programme (JWP), New Delhi
10. [Subhadra Channa](#), Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, New Delhi
11. [Sindhu Nambiath](#), Council for Social Development (CSD), New Delhi
12. [C. S. Rama Lakshmi](#), Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad
13. [Preeti Abraham and Banamallika Chaudhury](#), ActionAid Guwahati and [Nonibala](#), Integrated Rural Development Service Organisation (IRDSO), Imphal
14. [Swarna Rajagopalan](#), Politics, Security and Women Initiative (PSW), Prajnya Initiatives for Peace, Justice and Security, Chennai
15. [Mandira Moddie](#), UN Millennium Campaign, New Delhi
16. [Ragini Sahay](#), Social Anthropologist, New Delhi
17. [Paramita Banerjee](#), Diksha, Kolkata
18. [Monisha Behal](#), North East Network, New Delhi
19. [Lysa John](#), Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, New Delhi
20. [Nighat Shafi Pandit](#), Human Effort for Love and Peace (HELP) Foundation, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K)
21. [Sheba George](#), SAHR WARU: Women's Action and Resource Unit, Ahmedabad
22. [Shashi Singh](#), Consortium of Women Entrepreneurs of India (CWEI), New Delhi
23. [Enakshi Ganguly](#), HAQ: Center for Child Rights: New Delhi
24. [Sridhar Sahoo](#), Women and Child Development Department, Government of Orissa, Orissa
25. [Renu Khanna](#), Society for Health Alternatives (SAHAJ), Baroda
26. [Shashi Sail](#), National Alliance of Women (NAWO), Chhattisgarh

Further contributions are welcome!

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Summary of Responses

In view of the 15th Lok Sabha Elections, WomenPower Connect (WPC) drew up a ten-point "Women Charter of Demands." Post election, it intends to follow-up with the party(ies) in power and lobby/advocate for the implementation of the Charter. To modify/improve the 'Charter of Demands', WPC requested members to comment on it, suggest additional points and recommend strategies for effectively implementing the Charter.

Respondents welcomed the WPC initiative, applauding the effort to develop a comprehensive document addressing the needs of women and agreed the Charter was fairly comprehensive. To help in the development of this document, they shared a number of **other Charters/Manifestos** on women's rights as a reference, these included:

- [Health Charter](#) prepared by Jan Swaasthya Abhiyan
- [Women's Political Manifesto](#) created by the National Alliance of Women

- [Women's Charter](#), which eight national organizations ([All India Democratic Women's Association](#), [Joint Women's Programme](#), [Muslim Women's Forum](#), etc.) drafted
- [All India People's Manifesto](#), prepared by [Wada na Todo Abhiyan](#)
- [Women's Voice in Budget and Policies Charter](#), drafted by the [Centre for Budgeting and Governance Accountability](#)
- [Women's Global Charter for Humanity](#), created by the World March of Women

Additional research also highlighted the [Sri Lankan Women Manifesto](#) as another potentially useful reference. Discussants noted these charters have many overlapping points/demands with the WPC Charter, but also contain unique points for consideration.

Discussing **strategies for implementing** the Charter, members stressed that implementation of the demands must encourage women's full participation to mitigate the risks and create opportunities to ensure effective implementation. Participants also noted that the Charter needs to substantiate any demand with a justification to help strengthen its acceptance and the process of implementation. Towards this, they recommended:

- Prioritize the demands, focusing on education, health (and undertake immediate post-election advocacy); (enactment and) implementation of laws that address violence against women (VAW)
- Translate the Charter into local languages and dialects to make it available to women everywhere
- Do a quick post-election assessment of the new government/newly-elected Members of Parliament and then present them the demands
- Engage in concerted lobbying efforts on each demand at the local, district, state and national level
- Conduct mass awareness campaigns through local media sources (in local languages) and regional and national newspapers to reach women across the country.

Respondents also suggested grouping the demands under various heads, for example, economic rights, social rights, cultural rights, civil and political rights, etc. Additionally, they observed implementation of demands necessitates civil society as well as government engagement, and advised women's organizations to put pressure on these bodies to play an active role.

Overall members felt the adoption and integration of even one or two demands from the Charter into the ruling party's mandate would be a major step forward, and concluded by making a plea to all women to vote in the 15th Lok Sabha elections to ensure that the best possible government is voted to power.

* * *

Responding to the request of specific inputs on the Charter, discussants commented item-wise on the document, along with suggestions on several additional points to include in the Charter.

Item 1: Right of Women to Equal Representation

- Increase representation up to 50%
- Urge political parties to build the capacity of young women in political administration and development issues to challenge the stereotypical roles/responsibilities assigned to women in parties

Item 2: Comprehensive (Life Cycle) Approach towards Women's Health

- The [Jan Swaasthya Abhiyan \(JSA\)](#) – a campaign for people's health, in particular suggested increasing the health budget to 5% of GDP
- Assure gender specific health entitlements (e.g. leave for maternity, safe abortion, sterilization, crèches, toilet facilities)
- Provide health security by offering health insurance schemes to women
- Institutionalize mandatory health checks and health education by providing more resources for basic infrastructural facilities, especially water

- Treat commodities such as sanitary pads as essential and supply them through the Public Distribution System at nominal prices and make them available in girls hostels (welfare homes), hospitals and workplaces
- Make informed and sensitive trauma counselors available to help women deal with mental health concerns

Item 3: Implement Gender Budgeting Across Ministries and Machineries, including State and Panchayat Level

- Institutionalize within the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), the nodal agency for gender responsive budgeting, stocktaking, monitoring and evaluation of all self-help group (SHG) programmes being implemented by different ministries
- Make gender auditing mandatory (like other audits) for all the gender specific programmes

Item 4: Enactment of Comprehensive Gender Specific Laws

- Repeal [Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code \(IPC\)](#) that discriminates on the basis of sexuality

Item 5: Equal Property Rights for Women

- Provide 'land to landless' including landless women and ensure joint entitlements

Item 6: Give Priority to Girl's Education

- Assure reach of girl's education especially in economically weaker sections
- Regulate and bring social control into the provision of private educational services
- Enact a Central law to provide free and compulsory education to all children ages 0-14 years

Item 7: Action to End Violence Against Women (VAW)

- Set up a National Task Force on VAW to monitor especially in conflict zones
- Create a network/helpline for women who are victims of gender violence
- Establish vigilance and monitoring cells attached to police department/State Women's Commission at the state level to handle grievances
- Revitalize Nyaya Panchayats to help check VAW and to provide an avenue for redressal/justice to women at the grassroots
- Demand the Government of India having endorsed the [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#) and the [Beijing Platform for Action \(PFA\)](#) fulfill its international commitments by introducing measures to help women achieve substantive equality and not leave it as de facto or de jure
- Take up the concluding observations made by committees like the [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination \(ICERD, 2007\)](#) and [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(ICESCR, 2008\)](#) in order to achieve equality and human rights for all women in the country

Item 8: Implementation of the [Pre-Conception & Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques \(Prohibition of Sex Selection\) Act](#)

- Regulate of the use of reproductive technologies that covers surrogacy, genetic engineering, cloning and intensive Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART).
- Eliminate coercive family planning laws and policies, especially the two-child norm
- Guarantee quality health services irrespective of the ability to pay (including safe abortion services and safe deliveries) and ensure ethical clinical trials

Item 9: Improve Women's Participation in Work Force

- Enact comprehensive legislation to regulate working conditions
- Provide maternity benefits, public childcare and social security to agricultural workers and workers in the unorganized sector

Item 10: Review Structure and Functioning of Self-Help Groups (SHG)

- Do not limit SHGs to microfinance, strengthen their functioning to further women's rights, improve women's position/situation in their communities, and to promote inclusion of women in the economy and ensure livelihoods
- Make the rate of interest for SHGs maximum 8%

Suggestions for Additional Information in the Charter

- Set up an HIV/AIDS cell within the MoWCD in line with the commitments made in [National Aids Control Programme \(NACP\) III](#) to integrate issues of HIV/AIDS into existing programs and schemes of the Ministry, such as the [Swayamsiddha Scheme](#)
- Create a pro-poor Agricultural Policy to ensure food sovereignty for all
- Extend the [National Rural Employment Guarantee Act](#) (NREGA) to all urban areas, and also remove the upper limit of 100 days
- Ensure actualization of benefits for women inherent in the NREGA (e.g. providing for crèche facilities)
- Amend the [Special Economic Zone \(SEZ\) Act](#) 2005 to protect the interests of farmers, farm laborers and other sections vulnerable to displacement
- Apply the [International Labour Organization norms](#) in SEZ's and Export Processing Zone (EPZ's) where women are employed (such as garment and aqua industries)
- Universalize and strengthen the Public Distribution System
- Extend pension schemes for widows and the elderly to all eligible beneficiaries
- Include under social welfare allocations, special allocations for physically challenged women (especially in all women related schemes and for female-headed families in all Government schemes)
- Address the specific needs of dalit, adivasi and minority women through special measures, affirmative action and budgetary allocation- 15% of budgetary support in all government schemes to Minorities in minority dominated areas including women beneficiaries
- Give reservations to dalit Muslim women
- Rigorously implement [The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes \(Prevention of Atrocities\) Act, 1989](#)
- Fill the entire backlog of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe reserved posts in a timely manner
- Repeal the [Armed Forces Special Powers Act \(AFSPA\)](#) from all states of the northeast
- Encourage the Government of India to ratify resolution [UNSC 1325](#), which allows women to be involved in all levels in decision making in conflict areas
- Implement the findings of the [Sri Krishna Commission Report](#)
- Compensate victims of communal riots in the country
- Extend the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) to all habitations
- Regularize Anganwadi employess and ASHA workers with adequate/minimum wages
- Increase funds for supplementary nutrition programmes, including the Mid Day Meal Programme
- Make ensuring the safety of women of all ages (specifically professional women working late or doing night shifts) a priority to ensure women's right to enjoy their lives and right to mobility
- Stop "moral policing" of women's behavior
- Introduce a national liquor policy to prevent proliferation of liquor vendors (viewed as a source of revenue mobilization)
- Promote and financially support Women's Studies Centers in all universities
- Draft and implement a gender-sensitive Media Code

Comparative Experiences

Andhra Pradesh

Health and Sanitation Needs of Women (from [D. Suryakumari](#), Centre for People's Forestry, Secunderabad)

In tribal areas and other forest fringe villages unhygienic practices during menstruation and labour/delivery led to several problems- affecting the women's physical and mental health as well livelihoods. To help address this problem, the Centre for People's Forestry conveyed to political parties in the state through community federations the issues facing tribal women. Read [more](#)

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

Women's Charter of Demands (from [Dr. N Hamsa](#), Women Power Connect, New Delhi)

Charter; Women Power Connect; 2009

Available at: http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/gender/resource/res_info_20030901.pdf (PDF, Size, 24KB)

Charter of Women's demands with an aim of inclusion in all party mandates and post-elections follow-up on its implementation with the party in power.

All India Peoples Manifesto (from [Lysa John](#), Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, New Delhi)

Manifesto; Wada Na Todo Abhiyan; March 2009

Available at <http://www.wadanatodo.net/events/2009/allmanifesto.asp>

Demands to develop a policy framework for 'People's Common Minimum Program' that can be submitted to the new Government.

From [Shashi Sail](#), National Alliance of Women (NAWO), Chhattisgarh

Women's Global Charter for Humanity Prepared by the World March of Women in 2005

Charter; World March of Women; 2006

Available at http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/qui_nous_sommes/charte/en

Outlines demands made with women's groups in 60 countries; the Charter describes the world women want to build based on five values - equality, freedom, solidarity, justice, and peace.

Women's Political Manifesto 2009

Manifesto; National Alliance of Women (NAWO); 2009

Available at http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/gender/resource/res_info_30030901.pdf (PDF, Size: 52 KB)

Highlights major political demands to all political parties as an outcome of consultations with grassroots women

Women's Charter of Demand's on Budgets and Policies (from [Bhumika Jhamb](#), Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability CBGA, New Delhi)

Charter of Demands; Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, 2009-10

Available at http://cbgaindia.org/whats_new/Women%27s%20CoD.pdf (PDF; Size 696 KB)

Makes demands for more gender responsive budgets and policies, to give priority to women's concerns in the budget making process as well as in policy formulation in the country

Jan Swasthya Abhiyan's (JSA) Charter of Demands (from [Renu Khanna](#), Society for Health Alternatives SAHAJ, Baroda)

Manifesto; Jan Swasthya Abhiyan

Available at <http://www.phmovement.org/cms/en/resources/charters/peopleshealth>

Outlines demands based on the principles of primary health care and people's perspectives as an outcome of the People's Health Assembly to add to the women's charter of Demands

Towards An Alternative Government That Will Safeguard Women's Interests Women's Charter for the 15th Lok Sabha Elections – 2009 (from [Jyotsna Chatterji](#), Joint Women's Programme (JWP), New Delhi)

Charter; All India Democratic Women's Association; Centre for Women's Development Studies; Council of Catholic Women; Guild of Service; Joint Women's Programme; Muslim Women's Forum; National Federation of Indian Women; YWCA of India; 2009

Available at: http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/gender/resource/res_info_15040901.pdf (PDF, Size 56 KB)

Highlights concerns that could become part of the political agenda in the forthcoming elections and in Government Policy

From [Bhumika Jhamb](#), Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA), New Delhi

National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) III

Report; National AIDS Control Organization, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Government of India; New Delhi; 30 November 2006

Available at http://www.nacoonline.org/National_AIDS_Control_Program/

Reviews a policy document on mainstreaming HIV into policies, schemes and programs in various ministries, suggestion for its implementation in Government schemes such as Swayamsiddha

Swayamsiddha Scheme

Article; Manisha Jain; Government of India

Available at <http://pib.nic.in/feature/feyr2001/fnov2001/f051120011.html>

Describes self-help group-based programme dedicated to women's empowerment, with emphasis on convergence activities, suggestion for mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in this programme

Sri Lankan Women's Manifesto (from [Dhivya David](#) Research Associate)

Manifesto; Women's Political Forum; 2007

Available at: http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/gender/resource/res_info_15040902.pdf (PDF, Size 212 KB)

Makes demands to take gender-sensitive positions on national and international issues, affecting Sri Lankan Women

Concluding comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against

Women: India (from [Asha Ramesh](#), Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), Hyderabad; ([response 1](#)) and [Monisha Behal](#), North East Network, Guwahati)

Report; United Nations; 2 February 2007

Available at

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw25years/content/english/CONCLUDING_COMMENTS/India/India-CO-3.pdf (PDF; Size 70.6 KB)

Calls upon the State party to focus on those areas in its implementation activities and to report on action taken and results achieved in its next periodic report, demands for its implementation

From [Asha Ramesh](#), Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), Hyderabad; ([response 1](#))

Beijing Platform for Action India: Report by Government of India to United Nations, Questionnaire on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action,

Article: AWID, 12 February 2008,

Available at <http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/India-Report-by-Government-of-India-to-United-Nations-Questionnaire-on-Implementation-of-the-Beijing-Platform-for-Action>

Reviews India's progress in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the further initiatives and actions identified

Sexual Harassment at the Workplace Bill 2006

Draft Bill; National Commission of Women; 2006

Available at <http://ncw.nic.in/sexualharassmentatworkplacebill2005.pdf> (PDF Size: 276 KB)

Draft bill for the proposed law on Sexual harassment at the Workplace, to protect women's Right to Livelihood, prevent and provide mechanisms for redressal; demands to enact this bill

Social Security Bill for Unorganized Sector Workers 2005

Act; Government of India; 2005

Available at http://pmindia.gov.in/nac/communication/Draft_Unorganized_Sector_Workers_Bill.pdf (PDF Size: 80 KB)

Draft policy document on the proposed Social Security Bill that would provide for social security and welfare of unorganized sector workers, including women

Women's Reservation Bill (from [Jyotsna Chatterji](#), Joint Women's Programme (JWP), New Delhi and [Asha Ramesh](#), Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), Hyderabad ([response 1](#)))

Legislative Brief; PRS Legislative Research, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, South Asia Citizens Watch; 23 September 2008

Available at http://www.sacw.net/IMG/pdf/WoResBill_final.pdf (PDF, Size: 159 KB)

Seeks to reserve one-third of total number of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and in each state legislative assembly for women, one of the key demands in several women's charters

The Protection of Women from

Domestic Violence Act, 2005 (from [Asha Ramesh](#), Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), Hyderabad, [response 1](#); [Bhumika Jhamb](#), Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA), New Delhi; and [Ragini Sahay](#), Social Anthropologist, New Delhi)

Act; Mahila Ayog, Government of Maharashtra; 13 September 2005

Available at http://mahilaayog.maharashtra.gov.in/new/pdf/domestic_voience_act_05.pdf (PDF, Size: 128 KB)

Protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the Constitution who are victims of violence, suggestions for budgetary allocation in governments for effective implementation

ILO Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Regard to Human Rights (from [Asha Ramesh](#), Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), Hyderabad; [response 2](#))

Guidelines; University of Minnesota, Human Rights Library; 2003

Available at <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/links/norms-Aug2003.html>

Suggested to check exploitation of women working in Special Economic Zones and Export Processing Zones, recommended for the government to take action against women's exploitation

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), 2005 (from [Pamela Philipose](#), Women's Features Service, New Delhi)

Act; Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India; 2005

Available at <http://nrega.nic.in/>

Provides enhancement of livelihood security, giving at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a year, recommended to ensure benefits for women are actualized

From [Jyotsna Chatterji](#), Joint Women's Programme (JWP), New Delhi

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989

Act; Ministry of Social Justice, Government of India; September 1989

Available at <http://socialjustice.nic.in/schedule/poa-act.pdf> (PDF, Size: 51.3 KB)

Prevents the commission of atrocities against members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, recommended for implementation and inclusion of Dalit Muslims in its purview

Sri Krishna Commission Report

Report; Sabrang Communications and Publishing Private Ltd; 2001

Available at <http://www.sabrang.com/srikrish/sri%20main.htm>

Probes the communal riots that took place in Mumbai following the Barbari Masjid Demolition in 1993, charter could include implementation of the commission's findings.

Amendments to the Laws Relating to Rape and Related Provisions

Draft Bill; National Commission of Women; 2006

Available at <http://ncw.nic.in/Amendments%20to%20laws%20relating%20to%20women.pdf> (PDF; Size 120 KB)

Outlines amendments proposed to the existing laws on rape to a more comprehensive law on sexual assault, as the existing law has been found to be limited in scope.

Sec 377 of the IPC (from [Jyotsna Chatterji](#), Joint Women's Programme (JWP), New Delhi and [Renu Khanna](#), Society for Health Alternatives (SAHAJ), Baroda)

Article: Sangama, Karnataka,

Available at <http://sangama.org/campaigns/Repeal377>

Criminalizes any penetrative sex that does not lead to reproduction, becomes a weapon to harass and abuse sexual minorities; the women's charter makes demands for repealing it

From [Preeti Abraham and Banamallika Chaudhury](#), ActionAid, Guwahati and [Nonibala](#), Intergrated Rural Development Service Organization (IRDSO), Imphal

Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA): A Study in National Security Tyranny

Article; South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre; 2003

Available at http://www.hrdc.net/sahrdc/resources/armed_forces.htm

Provides legal analysis of the Act, suggested that it be removed as it has resulted in innumerable incidents of arbitrary detention, torture, rape, and looting by security personnel

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

Resolution; Peace Women, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, United Nations Office; New York, USA; October 2000

Available at <http://www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html>

Addresses the impact of war on women, and their contributions to sustainable peace, suggestion for ratifying it, as it allows for women to be involved in decision making in conflict areas

Millennium Development Goals Indicators (from [Mandira Moddie](#), UN Millennium Campaign, New Delhi)

Report; Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on MDG Indicators United Nations Statistics Division; 15 January 2008

Available at <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators/OfficialList.htm>

Presents over 60 indicators to measure progress towards the Millennium Development Goals to be used as the framework, within which specific demand can be made for the Women's Charter.

From [Monisha Behal](#), North East Network, New Delhi

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

Covenant; The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations; 2007

Available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/English/law/cescr.htm>

Grants economic, social, and cultural rights (ESCR) to individuals. The government is expected to fulfil these international commitments on women's rights

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Convention; The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations; 2007

Available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cerd.htm>

Outlines rights and freedoms, in particular as to race, colour or national origin the government is expected to fulfil these international commitments especially with regard to women's rights

Special Economic Zone (SEZ) Act 2005 (from Asha Ramesh, Centre for World Solidarity, Hyderabad; [response 2](#))

Report; Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce

Available at <http://www.sezindia.nic.in/>

Provides SEZ's with quality infrastructure and attractive fiscal packages, with the minimal regulations, suggestions for its amendment to check exploitation and to stop land acquisition

Recommended Organizations and Programmes

Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA), New Delhi (from [Bhumika Jhamb](#))

A-11, Second Floor, Niti Bagh, Khel Gaon Marg, New Delhi 110049; Tel: +91-11-4174 1285/6/7; Fax: +91-11-2653 7603; info@cbgindia.org; http://www.cbgindia.org/about_overview.php

Promotes transparent, accountable and participatory governance, and a people-centred perspective in preparation and implementation of budgets

National Commission for Women, New Delhi (From Asha Ramesh, Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), Hyderabad; [response 1](#))

4, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi 110002; Tel: +91-11-23237166/6988; Fax: +91-11-23236154; ncw@nic.in; <http://ncw.nic.in/>

Organizes workshops/consultations, constitutes expert committees on economic empowerment of women could support in advocating and in implementation of the Charter

Centre for People's Forestry, Secunderabad (from [D. Suryakumari](#), Centre for People's Forestry, Secunderabad)

12-13-483/39, First Floor, Street No. 14, Lane 6, Nagarjunanagar, Tarnaka, Secunderabad – 500 017
Tel/Fax: +91 40 2715 4484/94; Email: info@cpf.in; <http://www.cpf.in/>

Works on livelihood rights and people's rights over forest and natural resources and their conservation and management, especially amongst tribal, dalits and the resource poor

National Alliance Of Women (NAWO), (from [Shashi Sail](#), National Alliance of Women (NAWO), Chhattisgarh)

Bangalore Secretariat, No.392, 11th Main, III Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore – 560 011; Tel: +91-80-26642053; Fax: 91-80-266302626; New Delhi Secretariat, U-9, II Floor, Green Park Extension, New Delhi – 110 016, Tel: +91-11-26171446, E-mail: nawo@ndf.vsnl.net.in; <http://www.nawoindia.org/main.asp>

Strengthens and builds new initiatives, networks, forums etc., for protecting women's rights, worked on the NAWO Women's Charter of Demands

From [Jyotsna Chatterji](#), Joint Women's Programme (JWP), New Delhi

National Federation of Indian Women, New Delhi

1002, 10th Floor, Ansal Bhavan, K.G. Marg, New Delhi 110001; Tel: +91-23319541; Fax: +91-23386427

Works for legal, social, cultural, political and economic rights of women, it is part of a network of National Women Organisations which worked on the women's manifesto

All India Democratic Women's Association

121. Vithal Bhai Patel House, Rafi Marg, New Delhi - 110 001; Tel: +91 11 23710476, +91 11 23319566; Fax: +91 11 23710476; Email: info@aidwa.org / aidwa@ndb.vsnl.net.in; aidwa@rediffmail.com; www.aidwa.org

Left oriented women's organisation committed to achieving democracy, equality and women's emancipation, has been active in formulating their Women's Charter

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), New Delhi

Ashoka Road, New Delhi -1100 01; Tel: +91-11- 23362975/ 23743238 ; Fax: +91-11-23745138; info@ywcaofdelhi.org, <http://www.ywcaofdelhi.org>

Works for women's empowerment through leadership training, advocacy work on all women's issues, and community development work, worked on the women's manifesto

Guild of Services, New Delhi

C-25, Qutub Institutional Area Behind Qutub Hotel, New Delhi 110016; Tel: +91-41013416-17; Fax: +91-41013418; gos@bol.net.in, guildofserviceni@yahoo.com

Empowers women and children in conflict situations, economically, politically and socially by giving them vocational training, worked on the Women's manifesto

Joint Women's Programme (JWP)

CISRS House, 14, Jangpura B Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 019; Contact Person: Dr. Jyotsna Chatterji – Director; Tel: 91-11-26963485; Fax: 91-11-42143810; e-mail: jwp@airtelbroadband.in

Secular organisation for the welfare of women, especially marginalized groups, without any distinction of caste or creed, has worked on the women's manifesto

Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS), New Delhi

25, Bhai Vir Singh Marg, Gole Market, New Delhi 110001; Tel:+91-11-23346044/5541, +91-11-23366930/46044; cwds@vsnl.com, cwdsorg@eth.net, cwds@cwds.ac.in, cwdslib@vsnl.net; <http://www.cwds.org/advocacy.htm>

Promotes and disseminate knowledge about women's roles in society and economic trends that affect women's lives and status worked on the women's charter

Muslim Women's Forum

Saiyidain Manzil, 267-A, Gulmohar Avenue, Near Tikona Park, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi –110 025; Tel: +91 11 26821053;

Involved in Legal Literacy for Muslim women, raises concerns with the government and with Ulemas on matters concerning their rights, worked on the women's manifesto

Council of Catholic Women of India

National Secretariat: 21 Museum Road, Bangalore, Karnataka – 5600025; Tel: +91 080 5588072; Email: council@bgl.vsnl.net.in

Council of Catholic Women, Yusuf Sadan Archbishop House, 1 Ashok Place, New Delhi -1100 01; Tel: +91 11 23344435

Provides a medium for Catholic women to speak on all issues of public interest and issues that affect the life and ideals of women, worked on the women's manifesto

United Nations Millennium Campaign

UN Resident Coordinator's Office; 55, Lodi Estate, New Delhi-110003; Tel: +91 11 24628877; Fax: 011-24627612; <http://southasia.endpoverty2015.in/campaignprofile/aboutus>

Works to increase awareness of the Millennium Development Goals through campaign and policy advocacy work which focuses on accelerating the progress of achieving MDGs

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (from [Lysa John](#), Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, New Delhi)

C -1/E, 2nd Floor, Green Park Extension, New Delhi – 1100 16; Tel: +91-11-46082371; Fax: +91-11-46082372; info@wadanatodo.net; www.wadanatodo.net;

Developed the All India People's Manifesto a statement of national objectives based on ground realities to establish a grassroots driven, people's development agenda

World March of Women, Brazil (from [Shashi Sail](#), National Alliance of Women (NAWO), Chhattisgarh)

R. Ministro Costa e Silva 36, Pinheiros, São Paulo, SP, CEP: 05417-080, Brazil ; Tel: +55 11 3032-3243; Fax: +55 11 3032-3239; info@marchemondiale.org;

http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/qui_nous_sommes/en/

Developed the Women's Global Charter for Humanity, describes the world women want to build, based on equality, freedom, solidarity, justice and peace

Recommended Portals and Information Bases

Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) (PCPNDT Act), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India (from Asha Ramesh, Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), Hyderabad, [response 1](#) and [Jyotsna Chatterji](#), Joint Women's Programme (JWP), New Delhi)

<http://pndt.gov.in/>; <http://pndt.gov.in/index2.asp?slid=49&sublinkid=31>

Provides details of the PCPNDT Act, guidelines for awareness, as well as resources for stakeholders for its improved implementation

Related Consolidated Replies

Citizens' Charter from DWCD, Government of Orissa, from Usha Padhee, Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar (For Comments). Gender Community and Maternal and Child Health Community, Solution Exchange India, Issued 16 August 2007

[http://www.solutionexchange-](http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/en/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=758&Itemid=78)

[un.net.in/en/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=758&Itemid=78](http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/en/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=758&Itemid=78) (PDF, Size: 142 KB)

Comments on the Charter including additional information which needs to be incorporated to make it more citizen-friendly and adopt strategies to make it more effective and useful

Responses in Full

Bhumika Jhamb, Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA), New Delhi

Integration of even one or two demands in a party's election manifesto from the charter drawn by WPC would be a major step forward. CBGA had organized a National Consultation on 'Strengthening Women's Voices in Budgets and Policies' on 12-13 November 2008 with the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. Following two days' deliberations CBGA drew a Women's Charter of Demands, which can be viewed at http://cbgaindia.org/whats_new.php?id=16

However, we felt that it is almost impossible to take up a whole list of demands to the policy makers and therefore as you have rightly pointed out, it is important to prioritize some of them. The Ministry also suggested us to cull out four-five core demands from the list and also provide justification and budgetary requirement for the same. We submitted five demands to the Ministry of Women and Child Development, which we felt need urgent attention and which had clear budgetary implications. These include:

1. Create an Incentive Fund to support and incentivize and supplement allocations being made to states for effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act.

2. Since MoWCD is the nodal agency for gender responsive budgeting, it should institutionalize within the ministry, the stocktaking, monitoring and evaluation of all SHG programmes being implemented through different ministries.

3. In line with the commitments made in NACP III co should take the lead and set-up an HIV & AIDS cell at the ministry. This cell can help integrate issues of HIV & AIDS within the existing programs and schemes of the ministry, such as, the Swayamsiddha Scheme.

4. Set up a National Task Force on Violence against Women to monitor VAW in conflict zones and make adequate budgetary allocations for it.

5. Issue a circular to states to reduce stamp duty for registration of agricultural land in a women's name.

As far as strategy is concerned, it is important that the demands be substantiated with a justification of putting forward that particular demand (or raising that particular concern) which could help strengthen the effort.

Leela Kumari P., State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Kerala ([response 1](#))

WPC's initiative is a welcome phenomenon for the poor women who are considered as weaker sections of the society. I would like to put the following suggestions for including in the charter.

1. Political parties should take initiatives in capacity building of young women in political administration and development issues. This will definitely contribute to the performance level in the future, when they (these women) will be elected.

2. Government has spent a lot of money in women specific programmes; however, implementing agencies do not run the programme in proper manner. Hence, Gender Audit should be made mandatory just like other Audits, for all the gender specific programmes along with gender budgeting.

3. Health security should be provided to deserving women through Health Insurance Schemes. Local Self Government Institutions should be given priority for Health Insurance.

4. A network/helpline may also be provided to all women who are victims of gender violence.

5. A vigilance and monitoring cell attached to police department/State Women's Commission may be formulated at state level for addressing the grievances of depressed/oppressed women.

Asha Ramesh, Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), Hyderabad ([response 1](#))

First, congrats to WPC for this initiative! The women's Manifesto needs to be applauded. However, it is time that we do not let the government get away with promises previously made and left unaddressed. I have made some suggestions. I feel that we all need to build pressure and secure for ourselves rights that we have been talking about for decades. While asking for them, we need to be cautious that we do not get co-opted and agree to the few crumbs that often get thrown at us to keep us from agitating.

Women's Charter of Demands

There should be a special budget provision earmarked separately within the existing (total) budget exclusively to develop mechanisms, set up institutions, special studies etc. to protect women's rights, entitled to them as per the Constitution.

The Government of India has endorsed Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA); therefore, it is obligated to introduce measures that will help women achieve substantive equality and not leave it as defacto or dejure.

Women are not a homogenous group. Therefore, addressing the specific needs of dalit, adivasi and minority women needs to be addressed through special measures, affirmative action and looking at issues through their perspective so that these women are enabled and empowered to seek their rights. There should be a special budget to address these issues.

1) Right of Women to Equal Representation -To enact the Women's Reservation Bill and to ensure that every party should field at least 33% women candidates to contest the election. Women representatives at Panchayat level should also get more autonomy, financial resources and power to make decisions in the panchayat.

2) A comprehensive lifecycle approach towards women's health—from cradle to the grave. Adopt women-centric health initiatives to improve the maternal mortality rate. Ensure a minimum allocation of 3% of GDP on health, as was promised under the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP).

3) Gender budgeting should be implemented across all ministries and all machineries, including at the state and panchayat level. Ensure that all the ministries and departments effectively implement a gender budgeting policy with one third allocation of resources for women. Also there should be one scheme in all the ministries which allocates 100% resources for women.

4) In the sphere of law: Enact a comprehensive social security bill for unorganized sector workers; Enact a Law on Sexual Harassment at the Workplace; Enact a comprehensive gender specific law on sexual violence, with an expanded definition of rape, honor killings and acid attacks with gender neutral provisions to address child sexual abuse. (There has already been some work initiated on expanding the definition of rape by a group of women activists at the behest of the NCW under the chairpersonship of Ms. Mohini Giri. Perhaps that needs to be revoked and the issue of honor killings and acid attacks incorporated. The draft on the revised rape law did include a section on the rape of minors.)

5) Equal Property Rights for Women- Women should be accorded an equal share in land and property rights as it is believed that laws on land ownership are discriminatory in nature. Women should have the security of tenure that is the right to own, lease, rent, mortgage or dwell on land, housing and property and the right not to be forcibly evicted (This should be on priority and landless women be given land by the government).

6) Priority for Girl's Education- The commitment of at least 6% of GDP for education as promised under the NCMP must be fulfilled. Targeted efforts need to be made to get and retain girls in schools. Operationalise the 86th Constitutional Amendment making education a Fundamental Right. To develop technical institutes and computer education centers at panchayat levels.

7) Action to End Violence against Women - Ensure greater public awareness of the Domestic Violence Act. Also ensure training and sensitization of the police system to women issues. Adopt policies to reduce vulnerability to violence. Ensure there is adequate infrastructure and budget and create an Incentive Fund for the effective implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (Government of India's commitment to check VAW by setting up a Commission at different levels –district upwards needs to be re-looked. Also explore the possibility of revitalizing the Nyaya panchayat module to check violence and provide redress and justice to women at the grassroots level itself, with a gender just perspective).

8) Take immediate steps to arrest the declining child sex ratio by regulating medical practitioners and giving due emphasis to the implementation of the PCPNDT Act.

9) Improve women's participation in work force as well as their productivity - Ensure equal pay for equal work to women in all sectors; strengthening women's skills and capacities and access to technology.

10) Review structure and functioning of Self-Help Groups to ensure economic and social empowerment of women. There should be a cap on interest rates and provide concessional interest rates to women's Self-Help Groups.

Dolon Ganguly, Jeevika Development Society, West Bengal

Thanks for the initiative. Though I find the Charter of Demand fairly okay, I would nevertheless like to add a few points, as follows:

- When we are talking about the capacity building of the women in political administration and development issues (referred by [Ms. Leela Kumari](#) yesterday), we should demand for increased number of women in political force and challenge the stereotypical roles and responsibilities assigned to women even within the parties
 - Women's right to choose their profession
 - Abolish restrictions in women's mobility
 - Stop moral policing (related to the Mangalore pub incident) and ensure women's right to enjoy their lives
 - Ensure the functioning of SHGs for furthering women's rights, improving women's position and situation in community; inclusion of women in economy as well as ensuring livelihoods; treating each woman SHG member as a capable human being not as an instrument to serve family (by accessing money)
-

Rajshree, Gujarat Urban Development Mission, Gujarat

Women Charter of Demands can include:

- Increase reach of girl's education especially in economically weaker sections, where a girl child has to sacrifice her education - either to take care of siblings or for earning the bread!
 - Access to all the available facilities or the schemes offered by government is possible only if all women (from different strata) are aware of the laws and the schemes available to them.
 - Mass awareness and constant awareness campaigns should be done through local media in local languages, which reaches to the targeted section of women.
-

D. Suryakumari, Centre for People's Forestry, Secunderabad

It is nice to know about WPC's initiative. Congratulations to the team involved in developing this charter and thank you for sharing the same with us and providing us an opportunity to share our concerns as well.

I have one point to make and request all the members to kindly go through the same and include it in the list as appropriate.

We at the Centre for People's Forestry work with the forested communities. I have traveled extensively in the tribal areas and other forest fringe villages. During my interaction with several women of these interior areas, it was found that unhygienic practices during the menstrual cycle (and delivery/miscarriage time) lead to several problems with adverse - physical, mental and livelihood levels - impacts (both short and long term).

During last elections time, we tried to convey this message to all political parties in Andhra Pradesh, through the community federations using pamphlets etc. One demand therefore that can be included explicitly in this respect could be as follows:

- Treat sanitary pads as essential commodity and supply them through the PDS at nominal price based on the number of women/adult girl children present in the house as per ration card
 - Ensure supply of these to all needy - at nominal price in girl's hostels (welfare homes), hospitals and at workplaces etc.
-

Pamela Philipose, Women's Features Service, New Delhi

This is further to your invitation through Solution Exchange to send across feedback on the Women's Charter. First, I must congratulate you and the others in this process for evolving a comprehensive document of this kind at a time when politicians would, arguably, be at their most responsive.

In terms of prioritizing the suggestions, since education, health and personal security (including ending violence against women/domestic violence/pre-natal sex determination/sexual harassment at the workplace) are central to a woman's right to life, they should I believe be prioritized.

The other points, I think, should follow in this order: right to women's participation in the work force, equal property rights, right to equal political representation, gender budgeting and SHGs.

I believe in the right to work, we could flesh it out a bit more to ensure that the benefits for women inherent in the NREGA are actualized (it is important to make the act more women friendly by insisting on crèche facilities for instance). Stigmatization of women in prostitution as well as women living with HIV/AIDS is another concern that has not been spelt out. Perhaps this needs a mention.

In terms of strategies, I think first the charter should be translated in various local languages and dialects and made widely available to ordinary women. Quick accessing of the new government/newly-elected MPs and the presentation of these demands is also an approach that may be useful.

Soma K. Parthasarthy, Gender Consultant, New Delhi

Apart from the points raised by [Asha](#) and [Bhumika](#), which I fully endorse, we must demand the protection and restoration of livelihoods for women, with a focus on support for women's entitlements to land and resources individually and collectively.

Any development initiative must be whetted with women's full participation for its likely impact to women's livelihoods so that risks are mitigated and instead opportunities are created for restoration of livelihoods rights and the wherewithal for communities to develop their resources and regions.

This message is to briefly bring to your notice the need for concerted lobbying around this imperative issue.

Asha Ramesh, Centre for World Solidarity, Hyderabad (response 2)

I had already sent in a detailed response to the Charter of Demands. Again, Congrats to WPC for this initiative! A couple of points I would like to add here that the Charter needs to consider:

1. Women's right to land and property is mentioned but land to landless women is important and needs to be the priority of the new government.

2. Making the commitments of the Beijing Conference real. Setting up mechanisms at the grassroots level to address violence against women, for instance revitalizing the Nyaya Panchayats like in Himachal Pradesh, the Social Justice Committee in Karnataka and the like in other states, so that justice to women is speedy and affordable and which is Gender Just and has women's perspective.

3. Adequate budget allocation to take forward the women's agenda. From the total budget, separate earmarking for women's empowerment initiatives, gender budgeting etc. Special attention to promote bottom up budgeting at the PRI levels so that women's agenda is brought to the fore from below.

4. The SHG wave should not be limited to only micro-finance, but there should be a social component in it and the rate of interest should not be more than 8% at the maximum.

5. Selling of land for Special Economic Zone (SEZs) be stopped and wherever women are employed in Export Processing Zone (EPZ's) such as garment industry, aqua industry, the ILO norms be applied and exploitation of women checked.

Please have a look at what I have already detailed on the Manifesto document earlier, which includes some of the points mentioned above.

Jyotsna Chatterji, Joint Women's Programme (JWP), New Delhi

Thank you for sharing WPC's 'Women Charter of Demands'. I am herewith sending you a copy of the 'Women's Charter', presented to political party leaders, in the wake of the 15th Lok Sabha Elections, on behalf of eight National Women's Organizations. These organizations include All India Democratic Women's Association, Centre for Women's Development Studies, Council of Catholic Women, Guild of Service, Joint Women's Programme, Muslim Women's Forum, National Federation of Indian Women and YWCA of India.

Several of our demands are the same. We have broadly classified them as under: Economy, Social, Legal and Others. Please note below.

Economy:

- Universalize and strengthen the Public Distribution System. Restore allocation of food grains to all states. Ensure access to health and education and social welfare schemes to all who require it, without BPL categorization
- Extend ICDS to all habitations. Regularize Anganwadi employees with minimum wages. Increase funds for supplementary nutrition including Mid Day Meals. Ensure just wages for ASHA and mid day meal workers
- Implement special packages for the rehabilitation of women and children in suicide affected households. Debt write offs to reach women farmers also, including those indebted to private money lenders
- Extend the NREGA to all urban areas. Remove the upper limit of 100 days
- Distribute land to landless households, and house sites to the homeless in joint names of women and men
- Amend the SEZ Act to protect the interests of farmers, farm labourers, and other sections vulnerable to displacement
- Enact comprehensive legislation to regulate working conditions and provide maternity benefits, public childcare and social security to Agricultural workers, and workers in the unorganized sector
- Treat Self Help Groups as a priority for the credit sector and provide them with loans at 4%. Ensure adequate training and marketing support for their products.

Social:

- Increase public spending on Education to 6% and on Health to 3% of the GDP. Regulate and bring social control on private educational and health services. Enact a Central law to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group 0-14 years
- Increase allocation for social welfare schemes. Ensure that pension schemes for widows and the aged are extended to all eligible beneficiaries. Include special allocations for physically challenged women as a special category in all women related schemes, and also for female headed families in all Government schemes
- Provide central budgetary support for the effective implementation of the PWDV Act
- Introduce a liquor policy and prevent proliferation of liquor vends as a source of revenue mobilization
- Rigorously implement the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. Fill the entire backlog of SC and ST reserved posts in a time bound manner. Give reservations to Dalit Muslims
- Ensure allocation of 15% of budgetary support in all government schemes to Minorities in minority dominated areas, taking care to include women beneficiaries
- Enact legislation to stringently punish those guilty of communal violence. Implement the findings of the Sri Krishna Commission Report. Compensate the victims of communal riots in the country
- Special emphasis in all areas for women with disabilities and the elderly.

Legal:

- Pass the 33% Women's Reservation Bill
- Bring in a law to penalize Sexual Harassment at the Workplace
- Bring a comprehensive law to deal with Sexual Assault. Repeal S 377 of the Indian Penal Code. Enact a law to deal with Child Sexual Abuse
- Bring a law for joint matrimonial property rights for women
- Bring a law against the trafficking of women and children
- Ensure strict implementation of the PCPNDT Act, with rigorous monitoring and stringent legal action against offenders

Other:

- Promote and financially support Women's Studies Centres in all Universities
- Draft and implement a gender-sensitive Media Code.

Subhadra Channa, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi, New Delhi

I think a major area that is often neglected in India is the issue of women's health and well-being. The government should provide facilities for free health check up for women especially for breast and cervical cancer. A majority of women are responsible for feeding and providing for water and nutritional needs for their families. If women spend half their lives queuing up for water or do not have access to nutritional food for themselves and their families, other things become less of importance. These aspects are usually neglected in favour of such things as inheritance and education.

We must realize that for a majority of women in India getting a bucket of drinking water is more important and real than getting inheritance from their fathers. Most women suffer miserably from lack of health facilities and timely detection. Mandatory health checks and health education should be prioritized and more resources pumped into providing basic infrastructural facilities especially water.

Sindhu Nambiath, Council for Social Development (CSD), New Delhi

Health (not only women's health) and health allocation should always get top priority. Life cycle approach to women's health is crucial and central to women's right to life. Another equally important requirement and necessary condition to women's development is Equal Property Rights for Women. Recognition of women's contribution both at work and in domestic front is another area that needs attention.

As [Pamelaji](#) suggested, translating this into regional languages would be an excellent way to take it to larger audiences. Giving this in national and regional newspapers is also a good idea.

C. S. Rama Lakshmi, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad

I spent more than one decade building the SHG movement in Andhra Pradesh and widely traveled in and out side the state. Perhaps the greatest threat to women in the present system is the divide and rule policy of our 'political masters' based on caste and religion.

I feel that there is a great need to prepare women to meet all the challenges in the 21st century and one of the ways to prepare them is through Skill building and Skill development programmes, aiming to teach them both, survival and Livelihoods. There is a need to set up a Central Authority to look into the Women's issues (from cradle to grave). Multiple Ministries and a plethora of schemes failed to deliver results.

Finally I would request that all women must try and actively participate in the upcoming elections to get the best Government for them.

Preeti Abraham and Banamallika Chaudhury, ActionAid, Guwahati and Nonibala, Intergrated Rural Development Service Organization (IRDSO), Imphal

WPC has taken up a fantastic initiative and thanks for sharing it with us. In consultation with some women activists with whom we work with closely, we have come up with the following sets of demands of women from the North-Eastern states to be included in the charter:

- Remove the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) from all states of the Northeast- it has led to the most heinous forms of violence against women.
- Recognize and address needs of women living with HIV and AIDS by including their concerns in the HIV and AIDS bill and enacting it in parliament
- The systems and structures under customary laws must be reviewed to ensure equal participation of women.
- 50% reservation of seats for women in parliament and not just 33%
- The Government of India should ratify UNSC 1325 resolution, which allows women to be involved in all levels in decision making in conflict areas.

Regarding the presentation of the demands, is it possible to group them under various heads? For example, economic rights, social rights, cultural rights, civil rights, political rights, etc.?

Also attached is the NAWO Women's Political Manifesto 2009 (<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/gender/resource/res-info-05040901.pdf>) (PDF: Size 52 KB) for reference and information.

Swarna Rajagopalan, Politics, Security and Women Initiative (PSW)/Prajnya Initiatives for Peace, Justice and Security, Chennai

The ten demands listed are all important but some are specific, are already written as concrete policy measures while others are more normative/directive, and may require as much civil society engagement as the state. An example of the former is item 1 on the Charter of Demands and that latter, item no. 7.

I am wondering if there would be a greater efficacy to do one of the following:

1. Re-ordering so at least the first 5-6 items can be taken immediately and placed on a legislative agenda while we open conversations on the remainder of the list.

2. Rewrite each one so there is a broad rubric flagging an issue, and then one specific policy measure under it, with broader statements. Bulleted 3rd point under Demand (item no.) 4 for instance, could easily find its way into Demand (item no.) 7, making that concrete. In general – item no. 4 can be disbanded and distributed across the rest leaving room to add one point just about women in the unorganized sector.

That said, in terms of prioritizing these, maybe we should think also about what is the most likely demand to get adopted and place that first. There is a certain advantage of gaining momentum with the easier ones first, while we build the grounds well for support on the rest.

While these may look like tinkering comments, the fact is that this charter is in fact pretty comprehensive so the issue to my mind is increasing its readiness for application rather than adding or amending points. I would love to engage with this process if you could use another 'drafter'.

I think your initiative is an excellent idea and there is no time like the present - election-eve, to get in there and push!

Mandira Moddie, UN Millennium Campaign, New Delhi

If you are looking for a framework within which to place the issues, I would suggest using the Millennium Development Goals as the overarching framework, within which you can push for specific demands.

I am attaching the official list of MDG indicators for your use (please click here http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/gender/resource/res_info_27030903.pdf). Of course the MDG indicators are global indicators, which need to be adapted to the national and local contexts. Addressing women as a cross cutting theme across the MDGs ensures that we address all the goals.

Please do let me know if the Millennium Campaign can help support your initiative in any way.

Ragini Sahay, Social Anthropologist, New Delhi

Over the years, the violence on women has been increasing in various forms. Apart from domestic violence other forms of sexual violence have also emerged. I feel these issues need to be prioritized. Comprehensive gender specific law on sexual violence is a brilliant idea.

(On point 7 - action to end violence and the implementation of DV Act – I wish to add, the awareness of DV should not only be limited to women members but need to be extended to her family members as well).

Some further thoughts on the charter:-

- Can we demand something for the urban, educated-middle class working women, who face problems regarding 'support system for upbringing of their children'? There are hardly any standard safe facilities like crèches, day cares for children of working mothers in the cities. Most of the work places do not have any women friendly atmosphere. This prevents lot of professional women to take up challenging tasks despite having better competencies than their male counterparts. Though a large number of women have higher qualifications especially in metropolitan cities, few of them are able to take up jobs as per their competencies (due to domestic responsibilities and lack of proper support).
- Safety of women in general (of all ages and specifically for professional women working late or in night shifts) is another important issue, which can be included. While young women are mainly the

victim of sexual abuse/violence with rapid growth of cities and break-up of joint families - single old women are equally vulnerable.

Paramita Banerjee, DIKSHA, Kolkata

I strongly feel a demand for gender education from the primary level is what could effectively pave the way for steady change in the discrimination girls and women face. Given that gender-unjust values and beliefs are perpetrated and reinforced in a million different ways in the process of socialization, promoting gender-just values through organized education (right from the primary level) emerges to be a 'must-do'.

If we start today, we might see results in twenty years time! Otherwise, stop-gap measures may well lead to tokenism and cosmetic changes that are only superficial.

Leela Kumari P., State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Kerala (response 2)

Political parties should be take initiative and include women in all opportunities available. For example, opportunity for attending programmes in committee meetings/policy level decision making; programmes/membership in high-level committees/workshops, seminars/training programmes/even outside exposures.

Compulsory representation of women in all sectors should be made mandatory.

Monisha Behal, North East Network, New Delhi

On behalf of the North East Network (www.northeastnetwork.org), we want to put across just one point and that is:

The Government should fulfill its international commitments on women's rights made through various treaties/conventions India is party to. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, (CEDAW) which was ratified in 1993 is foremost among them. The political parties and the soon to be elected government should follow up on and implement the concluding observations of the CEDAW made to India in 2007.

Similarly, concluding observations made by committees like the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination ICCERD (2007) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ICESCR (2008) should be taken up in order to achieve equality and human rights for all women in the country.

Lysa John, Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, New Delhi

Thank you for initiating a discussion around the priorities that we need to highlight on the women's agenda for the next term of government. I am writing to share the 'Women's Manifesto' for the National Elections has emerged through the local hearings being held across 365+ parliamentary constituencies as part of the All India People's Manifesto effort.

At the end of February, Local Manifestos had been completed in 100 Parliamentary Constituencies and the consolidation of demands for women that emerged through this process contributed to the Women's Manifesto that was released on 8 March 2009. The Women's Manifesto and Key Demands of the AIPM were submitted to 10 political parties across the last month and we are encouraged to see that several demands have been reflected in the two recently released Party Manifestos, in relation to:

- Equal pay for equal work in all sectors and reservations for women's employment

- Creation of a special program to support working women, including childcare, transport, healthcare and maternity benefits
- Promotion of Women's Entrepreneurship Development through mandatory purchase of women produced products by public agencies
- Right to health and education protected by law, increased investment and upgrading of local facilities to provide quality services
- Stringent measures to end female foeticide and underage marriages, and promote the girl child in all spheres of life
- Stronger implementation of the DVA and special protection for women against atrocities committed on caste and communal grounds.
- Promotion of housing and livelihood for single, destitute and aged women
- In keeping with the efforts shared across this discussion, the enactment of the Women's Reservation Bill was emphasized as a core demand. However there have also been other important demands which have not been reflected politically and need further emphasis. These include,
- Accordance of Farmer Status for Women and mandatory inclusion of women beneficiaries in all development programs
- Allocation of community owned and barren lands to women's collectives to promote housing and livelihood
- Creation of separate recreational and public facilities for women
- Household level sanitation facilities for women
- Enabling women from minority communities to the right to marital property after divorce and legal right to adoption

The AIPM process is ongoing till the date of the elections, with the objective of consolidating demands and developing a policy framework or 'People's Common Minimum Program' that can be submitted to the next government.

In this context, we thank WPC for taking the lead in bringing together the demands that have emerged across various networks and look forward to joining forces on a common 'National Agenda for Women' that can be the focus of our efforts across the next term of government.

Nighat Shafi Pandit, Human Effort for Love and Peace (HELP) Foundation, Jammu and Kashmir

The issues relating to women in J & K are very different from other parts of India. After the conflict started, women are the worst sufferers. Main issues at this point are the problems faced by women known as half widows. These are women whose husbands are missing for last 7 years and so on. They have no access to any legal aid nor is there any agency of the government listening to them.

Then there are the cases of widows who need rehabilitation and empowerment. These are the women whose husbands were militants or died in an encounter. There are no policies for their rehabilitation.

Then there should be any easy way to healthcare, which is not available to most of the women population residing in remote villages. Government has no specific or easy way to give them livelihood. Women have also suffered mental problems for last two decades and there seems to be no end to this dark tunnel. Facilities for such patients are grossly inadequate and awareness about the mental disorders is lacking.

Further, due to the ongoing conflict young men have been dying everyday (leaving behind young widows), with no right to property because their in-laws deprive them of the right to inherit (under the local law).

Sheba George, SAHR WARU: Women's Action and Resource Unit, Ahmedabad

The whole gamut of mental health, informed and sensitive trauma counseling is also a critical area of Health that is severely neglected in the varied forms of violence suffered in both private and public spheres.

The nature of treatment is of grave concern as well as access.

Shashi Singh, Consortium of Women Entrepreneurs of India (CWEI), New Delhi

A lot has been outlined for incorporation in the charter. However, economic security with equal remunerations without discrimination is a major concern in the private sector.

Opportunities in developing and enhancing skills are missing due to lack of infrastructure and policy with denial of trainings to girls below 18, and women who could not pass Standard 8th.

Access to latest technologies is another major demand along with adequate and timely credit and direct linkages with the market.

Enakshi Ganguly, HAQ: Center for Child Rights, New Delhi

HAQ: Centre for child rights works on issues of violence and exploitation of children among other things. While overall violence is and must be addressed, there are some forms that are increasing, such as trafficking of girls, and not just into prostitution, but into labour, entertainment and for several other purposes. This could be linked to the growing marginalization of the poor in the current economic model and growing commoditization, leaving the girls more and more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. The trafficking of girls as brides is also directly connected to sex selective abortion and falling sex ratio (as we can see in Haryana, some districts of Gujarat and other states).

Provision of early childhood care and crèches is directly linked to freeing the woman to be financially independent. Most women are forced to stay at home because they do not have safe space to leave their children and therefore unable to participate in the workforce and be productive even if she were skilled. (The current ICDS programme is not adequate for this).

Sridhar Sahoo, Women and Child Development Department, Government of Orissa, Orissa

I feel most women in slum areas are do not get to meet their basic needs viz. food and health services. They are both financially and literary, so poor.

If we focus at the grass root level, especially at the slums and fulfill their basic demands, we might see better results.

Renu Khanna, Society for Health Alternatives (SAHAJ), Baroda

Congratulations on initiating this effort and WPC's interest to take it to political parties for their consideration.

From the Gender and Health point of view I had like to share some salient points from the [Jan Swaasthya Abhiyan's \(JSA\) Charter of Demands](#).

1. Doing away with coercive family planning laws and policies especially the two-child norm

2. Guaranteeing comprehensive and quality health services irrespective of ability to pay, including safe abortion services and safe deliveries.
3. Assure women gender specific health entitlements (e.g. leave for maternity, abortion, sterilization, crèches, toilets etc.)
4. Ensure ethical clinical trials.
5. Regulate use of invasive reproductive technologies in private sector that covers surrogacy, genetic engineering, cloning and intensive ARTs.
5. Include violence and sexuality as part of medical and paramedical curricula.
6. Repeal Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and other laws that discriminate on the basis of sexuality.

JSA has also demanded increase in the health budget to 5% of the GDP.

Shashi Sail, National Alliance of Women (NAWO), Chhattisgarh

I appreciate the effort on the Women's Charter of Demands. We could include the issue of implementation of the Land Reforms Act in the Charter. First, we demand that Land be distributed to the landless and then we emphasize that the woman's name be included in the title.

We can also address the issue of food sovereignty for all demanding a pro-people Agriculture Policy

Please do let me know how you are going to use/promote the Charter. I am enclosing here NAWO's Manifesto. Please read it http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/gender/resource/res_info_30030901.pdf (PDF, Size: 52 KB). You can also access the Women's Global Charter for Humanity prepared by the World March of Women in 2005 at http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/qui_nous_sommes/charte/en

Many thanks to all who contributed to this consultation!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Gender Community in India at se-gen@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "Re: [se-gen] FOR COMMENTS: Women Charter of Demands. Additional Reply."

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