

Tibetan Women's Empowerment Policy

I. Introduction:

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama has publicly stated on numerous occasions that women are inherently kind, compassionate and equipped with qualities to nurture and care. His Holiness has therefore always encouraged and advocated for women to play a bigger role in guiding future generations and helping bring about a more peaceful and compassionate world.

During the December 2016 conferment of the historic *Geshema* degree to twenty nuns of Tibetan Buddhist tradition, His Holiness the Dalai Lama remarked that through education women from all over the world have contributed significantly to the social and political development of their countries and have risen to become leaders in their respective countries.

Similarly, Tibetan women have played a crucial role in safeguarding Tibet's unique and rich religious, linguistic and cultural traditions. On March 12, 1959, Tibetan women led a non-violent uprising against Communist China's occupation and its flawed and repressive policies towards the Tibetans. Tibetan women continue to sacrifice their lives for the restoration of the Tibetan freedom struggle.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama had the vision to democratize the Tibetan polity and soon after arriving into exile in India in 1959, His Holiness began the democratic reform process and promulgated the Constitution of Tibet in 1963. Women parliamentarians were elected as early as 1964 when even some advanced economies still did not have women parliamentarians. In 1991, the Charter for the Tibetans in exile was promulgated and two seats were reserved for women from each of the three provinces of Tibet in the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

The 14th Kashag formulated regulation whereby a third of Tibetan settlement Officer Positions are reserved for women. Women now make up forty-five percent of the overall workforce of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). Forty-eight and sixty percent of the staff of Education and Health departments respectively are women. Over half of all new and incoming CTA staff are women. CTA rules and regulations and the Charter provides for equal opportunity for Tibetan women. There is no gender pay gap. CTA's Basic Education Policy for Tibetans in Exile encourages the recruitment of women as kindergarten teachers and ensures that their salary is on par with that of secondary school teachers.

Even though Tibetan women and girls have made rapid strides in contemporary Tibetan society in exile, there are still areas for further improvement. The 15th Kashag recognized the need to revise the Tibetan Women's Empowerment Policy established in 2008 to better enable Tibetan women to fully participate and contribute to the Tibetan society and the world.

II. Goal:

The CTA is fully committed towards making the Tibetan women equal partners in all aspects of the Tibetan society. The goal of this policy is to enable Tibetan

women and girls to participate as equal partners in all socio-economic and political activities.

III. Policy Outline:

1. Women and Human Rights in Tibet

- 1.1 Create awareness on human rights violation pertaining to Tibetan women in Tibet in the international community and global forums
- 1.2 Encourage Tibetan women in exile to be strong advocates for the aspirations of women in Tibet
- 1.3 Deepen ties between Tibetan women in exile and inside Tibet

2. Education

- 2.1 Strengthen equal access to education and educational resources for women and girls
- 2.2 Create a gender sensitive curriculum and environment in school
- 2.3 Launch an initiative to build self-esteem and confidence in women
- 2.4 Provide equal access to women to pursue religious study

3. Health

- 3.1 Provide special care and services to ensure the health of mother and child and educate parenting skills related to cognitive, emotional and physical development of a child particularly through 0-5 years of age
- 3.2 Provide health related education and services to women using both traditional and allopathic knowledge system
- 3.3 Educate women on their health at various stages of their age
- 3.4 Promote good mental health and ensure nutrition for women and children

4. Economic

- 4.1 Encourage, facilitate and support women entrepreneurs by providing training, access to financial services, etc.
- 4.2 Provide support services to women such as childcare services that would enable women to fully participate in the workplace
- 4.3 Allow sufficient and flexible maternity and paternity leave in the workplace
- 4.4 Encourage more women to pursue career opportunities in business

5. Governance and Leadership

- 5.1 Enable more women in leadership positions in governmental, non-governmental organisations and other institutions
- 5.2 Change perspectives on women leadership to reduce social and cultural barriers
- 5.3 Provide equal access and full participation of women in policy and decision making bodies at all levels
- 5.4 Formulate gender sensitive personnel policies in the appointment and management of women staff in the workforce

6. Social

- 6.1 Engage and strengthen grassroots organisations working on gender and women's empowerment issues
- 6.2 Create awareness on important roles and contribution of women in developing a healthy society by changing social attitudes towards women
- 6.3 Educate and empower boys and men to be important partners in addressing gender issues and empowering women
- 6.4 Provide special support to single mothers, widows, the elderly and other vulnerable women to reduce their social and economic hardships

7. Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV)

- 7.1 Adopt a zero tolerance policy towards sexual and domestic violence
- 7.2 Disseminate information regarding laws on SGBV and sexual harassment in schools, settlements, home and in workplaces
- 7.3 Sensitize community members on SGBV and sexual harassment
- 7.4 Establish a redressal mechanism for those who have experienced SGBV, harassment and discrimination

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(Note: This is the English translation. Should any discrepancy arise, the original Tibetan should be considered the final and authoritative.)