

14

**COMMITTEE ON EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN
(2007-2008)**

(FOURTEENTH LOK SABHA)

**‘NATIONAL OVERSEAS SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME
FOR SCHEDULED CASTE STUDENTS FOR HIGHER STUDIES
ABROAD’**

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT

*[Action Taken on Sixth Report of the Committee on
Empowerment of Women (Fourteenth Lok Sabha)]*

FOURTEENTH REPORT



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

November, 2007/Agrahayana, 1928 (Saka)

(FOURTEENTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT

Presented to Lok Sabha on 03rd December, 2007

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 29th November, 2007.....

**COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE ON
EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN
(2007-2008)**

Hon'ble Chairperson - Smt. Krishna Tirath

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3. Smt. Jayaprada
4. Smt. Preneet Kaur
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| 4. | Smt. Veena Sharma | Deputy Secretary |
| 5. | Smt. Reena Gopalakrishnan | Committee Officer |
| 6. | Shri Shams Afroz | Senior Executive Assistant |

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson of Committee on Empowerment of Women, present the Fourteenth Report (Fourteenth Lok Sabha) on the Action Taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Sixth Report of the Committee on Empowerment of Women (Fourteenth Lok Sabha) on 'National Overseas Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Caste Students for Higher Studies Abroad' relating to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

2. The Sixth Report (Fourteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Empowerment of Women was presented to Lok Sabha and laid in Rajya Sabha on 22nd May, 2006. Replies of the Government to all the Observations/Recommendations contained in the Report have been received.

3. The Draft Report was considered and adopted by the Committee on Empowerment of Women (2007-2008) at their sitting held on 29th November, 2007. The Minutes of the sitting form Part II of the Report.

4. For facility of reference and convenience, the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee have been printed in thick type in the body of the Report and have also been reproduced in a consolidated form in Appendix – I of the Report.

5. An Analysis of the Action Taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Sixth Report (Fourteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee is given in Appendix II.

**NEW DELHI,
29th November, 2007
8 Agrahayana, 1928 (Saka)**

**KRISHNA TIRATH
CHAIRPERSON
COMMITTEE ON EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

CHAPTER I

REPORT

This Report of the Committee deals with the action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Sixth Report (Fourteenth Lok Sabha) of the Committee on Empowerment of Women on the subject 'National Overseas Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Caste Students for Higher Studies Abroad'.

2. The Sixth Report of the Committee was presented to Lok Sabha on 22nd May, 2006. Replies of the Government in respect of all recommendations have been received and are categorized as under:-

- i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government.
Para Nos:- 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 49, 50, 52, 53 and 54.
- ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the replies of the Government.
Para Nos:- 51 and 55
- iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee.
Para No:- 47 and 48.
- iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which the Government have furnished interim replies.
Para No:- Nil

3. The Committee desire that replies in respect of recommendations contained in Chapter 1 should be furnished by the Government expeditiously.

4. The Committee will now deal with those action taken replies of the Government which need reiteration or merit comments.

A. Allocation of specific number of scholarships to women candidates

Recommendation (Para No. 45)

5. The Committee in their original Report had expressed their concern that no efforts had been made by the Government to provide Scheduled Caste Women better opportunities for pursuing higher education abroad by way of reservation of seats exclusively for women. The Committee felt that there was an urgent need to reserve some seats exclusively for women under the 'National Overseas Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Caste Students for Higher Studies Abroad' as it would encourage more women candidates to come forward and avail benefits under the Scheme. The Committee, therefore, had desired that the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment should look into the possibility of allocating at least 30 per cent of the seats to women candidates under the Scheme.

6. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment have submitted the following reply in this regard:-

"The endeavour is to encourage women candidates, therefore, in the modified Central Sector Plan Scheme of National Overseas Scholarships for SC etc. candidates and Passage Grants during the 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2008 to 2011 -2012), 30% of the awards for each year are to be earmarked for women candidates from the selection year 2007-2008 to 2011-2012. However, in case adequate number of women candidates are not found suitable for selection, then

the unutilized slots are to be utilized by selecting suitable male candidates.”

7. The Committee in their earlier Report had recommended that the Government should look into the possibility of allocating at least 30 per cent of scholarships under ‘National Overseas Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Caste Students for Higher Studies Abroad’ to women candidates. They are happy to note that in pursuance of their recommendation, the Government has earmarked 30% seats for women candidates in the modified Central Plan Scheme of National Overseas Scholarships for SC etc. during the 11th Five Year Plan. The Committee appreciate this as a positive step that will certainly encourage more women candidates to aspire for higher studies abroad. However, the Committee desire to be apprised of the actual number of women candidates who have been awarded scholarship under this Scheme by the end of academic session 2007-08. The Committee further recommend that concerted efforts should be made by the Government to create awareness among the women aspirants so that the earmarked 30% seats for women candidates are optimally utilized. The Committee would like that the documentary proof of efforts made by the Ministry to create awareness regarding the scheme may be furnished to them.

B. Increase in the number of scholarships

Recommendation (Para No. 47)

8. The Committee in their Original Report were constrained to note that the Ministry had not increased the number of scholarships as per the increase in the Scheduled Caste population. The Committee had desired that the number of scholarships should be realistically increased keeping in view that increase in the population of scheduled castes in the country. The Committee further desired that all eligible candidates' applications should be considered for scholarship under the scheme irrespective of their number.

9. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment have submitted the following reply in this regard:-

“In the modified Central Sector of National Overseas Scholarships for SC etc. candidates during the 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2008 to 2011 -2012), 30 awards per selection year have been provided”.

10. The Committee in their Original Report had recommended that the number of scholarships under the scheme should be realistically increased as per increase in the scheduled caste population. The Committee further desired that all eligible candidates applications should be considered for scholarship under the scheme irrespective of their number. The Committee feel that increasing the number of scholarships to 30 is not sufficient considering the increase in population of scheduled castes. The Committee, therefore, reiterate that the number of scholarships should be increased realistically and all applications should be considered irrespective of their number.

C. Time-bound completion of selection procedure/Streamlining of funding procedure

Recommendations (Para Nos. 48 & 49)

11. The Committee had observed in their original Report that one of the reasons for poor performance of the Scheme was that the existing selection process for awarding scholarship to the candidates was quite long and often exceeded the one-year cycle. The Committee had felt that such delays defeat the purpose of the Scheme itself, as it might cause loss of one full academic year to eligible candidates. The Ministry in this regard had stated that some steps were being contemplated to expedite and complete the selection process in six months period by simultaneously carrying out overlapping activities. The Committee, therefore, had hoped that the measures would be introduced at the earliest and followed in letter and spirit. The Committee had further emphasized that there was a need of devising a mechanism whereby the funds could be made available to candidates within a month after their selection in foreign universities, so that they were not denied admission for non-payment of fees in time.

12. The Committee had further regretted that the funds allocated for the implementation of the Scheme were not properly utilized during most of the years. The Committee were of the view that the under-utilization of funds had deprived many aspiring candidates belonging to the under-privileged sections of the society of the benefits of the Scheme. They, therefore, had desired that the Government should take necessary steps to ensure that such situations did not arise and maximum number of candidates were given the benefit of the Scheme each year.

13. The following reply has been furnished by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in this regard:-

“The system of reimbursement of funds under the Scheme to Ministry of External Affairs after verification and settling of Bills/Claims received from that Ministry was a time taking process, therefore, it has been revised from the financial year 2007-08. According to the revised

mechanism, this Ministry has to periodically place funds with the Ministry of External Affairs, which in turn has to intimate the progressive figures of expenditure to the Pay and Accounts Officer of this Ministry to monitor the flow of expenditure and seek more funds according to further estimated requirements. As such the Ministry of External Affairs from 2007-08 is not required to furnish the Bills/Claims to this Ministry for verification and settlement. To begin with the Office of the Principal Pay & Accounts Office, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment vide his letter dated 27.06.2007 has placed an amount of Rs. One Crore at the disposal of Ministry of External Affairs which has been authorized to book the expenditure under the relevant budget head for the Scheme.”

14. The Committee note that a mechanism has been put in place to ensure availability of funds periodically at the disposal of Ministry of External Affairs. The Committee are, however, unhappy that the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment have not taken tangible measures whereby funds could be made available to the candidates within a month after their selection in foreign universities. The Committee, therefore, desire that Government should take suitable measure to expedite and complete the selection process within six months by simultaneously carrying out the overlapping activities viz. initiating the process of appointment of the Chairman of the Screening Committee while tabulation of application forms is going on, holding the selection committee meeting within three weeks of the meeting of the Screening Committee etc. The Committee desire to be apprised of the action taken in this regard. The Committee also desire that if candidates secure admission in foreign universities and are eligible under the scheme, they should also be considered for scholarship.

D. Diversification of disciplines covered under the Scheme

(Recommendation No. 54)

15. In their Original Report, the Committee had expressed their concern that there were only 20 subjects listed for awarding scholarship under the Scheme. The Committee had also pointed out that some popular subjects like medicine and aviation were not included under the Scheme. The Committee, therefore, had recommended that disciplines under the Scheme needed to be diversified further by including some of the disciplines popular among women candidates such as medicine, as this would popularize the Scheme further.

16. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in the Action Taken reply have stated that no change has been made in the specified subjects for the selection year 2007-2008. However, for selection in the subsequent years i.e. 2008-2009 to 2011-2012, a revised list of subjects would be prepared in consultation with the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

17. The Committee find that though no change has been made in the specified subjects under the scheme for the selection year 2007-08, the Ministry propose to prepare a revised list of subjects for selection in the subsequent years i.e. 2008-2009 to 2011-2012 in consultation with the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The Committee hope that the Ministry would consider revision of the list of subjects by further diversifying the disciplines, including the ones popular among women candidates such as medicine etc. The Committee wish to be apprised about the final decision taken in the matter.

CHAPTER II
OBSERVATIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN
ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

Recommendation (Para No. 39)

18. Education is the first and foremost pre-requisite for social and economic development of any strata of society. It is all the more important for the upliftment of the underprivileged sections of Indian society. Hence, conscious efforts are essential to bring these sections at par with the rest of the society. They need to be given opportunities to develop, enhance and sustain their capabilities and capacities. The commitment to uplift and empower the Scheduled Caste population is enshrined in Article 46 of the Constitution of India, which stipulates that 'the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation'.

Recommendation (Para No. 40)

19. The 'National Overseas Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Castes etc. Students for Higher Studies Abroad' was introduced by the Government of India in 1954-55. The Scheme is designed to facilitate Scheduled Caste students for pursuing higher studies abroad in specified fields of engineering, science and technology. Under this Scheme scholarship is awarded to selected candidates in specified fields for Masters, Ph.D and Post Doctoral Research programmes. This Scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and it is categorized under the Non-Plan Expenditure head. Prior to bifurcation of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the Scheme had in total 30 slots, 17 for SCs, 9 for STs, 1 for Denotified Nomadic Tribes and Semi Nomadic Tribes, 2 for SC converts to other religions, and 1 for landless agricultural labourers and traditional artisan. Since the formation of a separate Ministry of Tribal Affairs in 1999, the

Scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for 20 slots only: 17 for Scheduled Castes, 2 for De-Notified Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes and 1 for landless agricultural labourers and traditional artisans. The scheme is implemented in coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs as all payments are routed through Indian Embassies and High Commissions abroad and they provide necessary assistance to the Indian students who go abroad for pursuing higher studies.

Recommendation (Para No. 41)

20. The selection of candidates under this Scheme is done on an All India basis and applications are invited through an open advertisement in major daily newspapers and Employment News. Under the scheme, financial assistance is provided to selected students on the basis of merit. The assistance includes payment of full fees charged by the institutions, annual maintenance allowance, contingency allowance, air passage, visa fees, medical insurance premium etc.

Recommendation (Para No. 42)

21. A critical analysis of the working of the Scheme indicates that there are various shortcomings in its implementation. The scheme, which was launched with a specific and laudable objective, has not been implemented in its right perspective. The following factors are responsible for the ineffective implementation of the Scheme. The Committee will discuss these issues at length in the succeeding paragraphs of the Report.

- (i) The Scheme was not implemented continuously. It was discontinued for some years for want of approval of the Committee on Non-Plan Expenditure (CNE).
- (ii) Considering the large number of Scheduled Caste persons in the country, the stipulated number of scholarships under this Scheme, i.e. 20 is insufficient.
- (iii) The representation of women among the selected candidates is negligible.

- (iv) There is no reservation of seats for women under the scheme.
- (v) The entire selection process often exceeds the one-year cycle, thus putting at stake one full academic year of the applicants.
- (vi) There is a wide disparity in the Budgetary allocations made and the amounts utilized.
- (vii) There is an income ceiling of Rs. 18,000/- prescribed under the Scheme, which debars many bright women candidates.
- (viii) The criteria of work experience for availing benefit under this scheme also disqualifies many potential women candidates.
- (ix) The disciplines of study included under this Scheme are not diverse enough. There is scope to include more disciplines, such as Medicine, which are popular among women candidates.
- (x) The scheme has not been widely publicized among women especially in the remote areas of the country, which is reflected in poor representation of women in the scheme.

Recommendation (Para No. 43)

22. The Committee, therefore, desire that prompt remedial measures should be taken on these aspects urgently so as to eliminate these shortcomings with a view to achieving the avowed objectives of the Scheme.

Reply of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for Recommendation No. 39 to 43

23. The continuation of Scheme of National Overseas Scholarships for SC etc. candidates and Passage Grants during the 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2008 to 2011 -2012), has been approved as a Central Sector Plan Scheme with following amendments therein:-

(i) Number of Awards:-

Thirty awards per year shall be available under the Scheme from the Selection Year 2007-2008, with following distribution: -

(i)	Scheduled Castes	27
(ii)	Denotified, Nomadic and Semi- Nomadic Tribes	02
(iii)	Landless Agricultural Labourers and Traditional Artisans	01
	Total	30

If for any specific year, successful candidates are not available to the extent prescribed for each of the above listed categories, the awards for that year will become open for candidates belonging to other categories mentioned above as per merit grades attained by such candidates. Bachelor Level Courses as well as Post Doctoral Research in any discipline are not covered under the Scheme.

(ii) Reservation of Awards for Women

As the endeavour is to encourage women candidates, 30% of the awards for each year shall be earmarked for women candidates from the selection year 2007-2008 to 2011-2012. However, in case adequate number of women candidates are not found available as per the stipulations of the Scheme or found unsuitable for selection by the Selection Committee, then the unutilized slots are to be utilized by selecting suitable male candidates.

(iii) Approved Courses

The under mentioned courses have been approved for studies for Master's Degree and Ph. D, under the Scheme. The award may also be given for a specialty or super specialty under the broad disciplines mentioned below and in such cases this Ministry reserves the right to decide the programme of studies that could be considered for award of scholarship.

1. Bio-technology/Genetic Engineering
2. Industrial Environmental Engineering.
3. Nano-Technology
4. Marine Engineering.

5. Petro-Chemical Engineering.
6. Plastic Technology.
7. Cryogenic Engineering.
8. Mechatronics.
9. Automation Robotics including Artificial Intelligence.
10. Laser Technology
11. Low Temperature Thermal Dynamics.
12. Optometry.
13. Art Restoration Technology.
14. Dock and Harbour Engineering.
15. Imaging System Technology.
16. Composite Materials Engineering including De-centralised Power Distribution (for solar heat) system, Energy Storage Engineering, Energy Conservation, Energy Efficient Habitat Engineering.
17. Packaging Engineering /Technology.
18. Nuclear Engineering.
19. Information Technology including Computer Engineering, Software, Software Quality Assurance, Networking/Connectivity Engineering, Communication System under Hazardous or Post-disaster conditions, Multi-media Communication.
20. Industrial Safety Engineering.

24. The aforesaid specified subjects shall be in operation only for the selection year 2007-2008 and for the subsequent selection years (2008-2009 to 2011-2012), a revised list of subjects shall be adopted after having consulted Ministry of Human Resource Development.

(iv) Dispensation of Experience as an essential requirement.

The mandatory requirement of experience for pursuing Ph.D and Master's Degree has been dispensed with from the selection year 2007-2008. Preference would however be given to the experienced candidates, especially to those who are on lien with their existing post/employer.

(v) Income Ceiling

Total income from all sources of the employed candidate or his/her parents/guardians, shall not exceed Rs.25,000/-(Rupees Twenty Five Thousand) per month, (excluding such allowances as are not treated as part of total income for the purpose of income tax) as certified by the employer. A copy of latest tax-assessment as well as latest monthly salary slip from the employer is also required to be enclosed with the application.

(vi) Accompanying Spouse and Children

In case, married candidates take a decision to take their spouse and children with them or join them subsequently during the period of study, it is entirely for them to assess their financial potential and availability of passport, visa etc., as no financial assistance of any kind as well as any other support coverage is provided under the Scheme for their spouse and children.

(vii) Financial Assistance

I. Annual Maintenance Allowance

(a) For United States of America and other countries except United Kingdom

The annual maintenance allowance of US Dollars 14,000/-(Fourteen Thousand) has been prescribed for all levels of courses covered under the Scheme.

(b) Only for United Kingdom

The annual maintenance allowance of 9000/-(Nine Thousand) Great Britain Pound (GBP) has been prescribed for all levels of courses covered under the Scheme.

II Annual Contingency Allowance

(a) For United States of America and other countries except United Kingdom

The prescribed annual contingency allowance for books/essential apparatus /study tour/travel cost for attending subject related conferences, workshops etc./ typing and binding of thesis etc. is US Dollars 1375/-(One thousand three hundred seventy five).

(b) Only for United Kingdom

The prescribed annual contingency allowance for books/essential apparatus /study tour/travel cost for attending subject related conferences, workshops etc./ typing and binding of thesis etc. is Great Britain Pound (GBP) 1000/-(one thousand).

(viii) Incidental journey allowance & equipment allowance

The prescribed Incidental journey allowance is US \$ 17/-(Seventeen) or its equivalent in Indian Rupees and the prescribed equipment allowance is Rs.1200/-(One thousand two hundred).

(ix) Duration of Financial Assistance

The prescribed financial assistance shall be provided upto completion of the course/research or the following period, whichever is earlier: -

For Ph.D. -- 04 years (Four years)

For Master's Degree -- 03 years (Three years)

2. A copy of Office Memorandum No. 11015/9/2006-SCD.V, dated 09.07.2007 of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment issued in this regard along with a copy of the amended Regulations governing the Central Sector Scheme of National Overseas Scholarship for SC etc. candidates with effect from 2007-2008 to 2011-2012(Plan) is accordingly enclosed which has become applicable from the date of issue of this Office Memorandum and the stipulations contained therein shall be applicable to all those already pursuing

their studies abroad and those who will go abroad in future up till the Scheme is in force.

3. The coverage of Post Doctoral Research under the Scheme has been discontinued with effect from 2007-08. However, such candidates who have already been selected by the Selection Committee for the Selection Year upto 2006-2007 and are either already pursuing the Post Doctoral Research abroad or would go abroad in future, shall get the prescribed financial assistance under the Scheme as admissible to candidates pursuing Master's Degree and Ph.D.

4. The revised annual maintenance allowance, revised annual contingency allowance and revised Incidental journey allowance & equipment allowance shall become admissible with effect from the date of issue of the aforesaid Office Memorandum, to all such candidates who are already pursuing studies abroad under the Scheme and to those who shall in future be leaving for abroad to pursue prescribed subjects under the Scheme, till the Scheme is in force.

(O.M. No. 11015/29/2005-SCD-V, dated 20-09-2007)

Recommendation (Para No. 44)

25. The Committee are shocked to note that out of the total 101 candidates selected under this scheme from 1993-94 to 2004-05, only five were women. Of the five women, two were selected during 1998-99 and 1999-2000(combined) and three during 2004-05. Such a dismal representation of women in the Scheme is a major cause of concern to the Committee. The Committee feel that women, in general, are a deprived and neglected lot of our society and it becomes all the more important to make consistent efforts to improve their participation in the field of education when they belong to the underprivileged section of our country. Education is an instrument to bring about change in the status of women and ensure their empowerment. It is a crucial pre-condition for their participation in the development process. The Committee are of the opinion that the need for superior academic achievement is greater for girls as compared to boys because of

the prevailing socio-economic conditions. The future of the girl rests squarely on her educational achievements and economic independence.

Recommendation (Para No. 45)

26. It is a matter of great concern to the Committee that there have been no efforts on the part of the Government to provide Scheduled Caste women better opportunities for pursuing higher studies abroad by way of reservation of seats exclusively for women. The Committee feel that there is an urgent need to reserve some seats exclusively for women under the Scheme as it would encourage more women candidates to come forward to avail the benefits of this Scheme. The Committee are given to understand that the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment are now contemplating to propose reservation of some seats for women at the time of continuation of the scheme in 2006-07. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should look into the possibility of allocating at least 30 per cent of the seats to women under the Scheme.

Reply of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment **(Recommendation No. 44 & 45)**

27. As already mentioned in reply for Recommendation No. 42, the endeavour is to encourage women candidates, therefore, in the modified Central Sector Plan Scheme of National Overseas Scholarships for SC etc. candidates and Passage Grants during the 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2008 to 2011 -2012), 30% of the awards for each year are to be earmarked for women candidates from the selection year 2007-2008 to 2011-2012. However, in case adequate number of women candidates are not found suitable for selection, then the unutilized slots are to be utilized by selecting suitable male candidates.

(O.M. No. 11015/29/2005-SCD-V, dated 20 -09 -2007)

Comments of the Committee on Recommendation No. 45

(Please see Para 7 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Para No. 46)

28. As per the information made available by the Ministry, the Scheme was not implemented during some of the years and no selections were made. For instance, during the years 1995-96, 1997-98 and from 2001 to 2004, no candidates were selected. The reason furnished by the Ministry in this regard that the Scheme was not functional during these years for want of approval of the Committee on Non-Plan Expenditure is not convincing. The Committee have not been apprised as to why the Committee on Non-Plan Expenditure did not accord approval to the Scheme during these years. It has also not been indicated by the Ministry as to what efforts they had made at their level to get the requisite approval from the Committee on Non-Plan Expenditure. The Committee feel that timely action and follow up in this regard could have avoided such a situation. The Committee are of the view that non continuance of the scheme for years deprives the candidates of weaker sections of the requisite benefits, defeating in the process the very objective of the Scheme. The Committee, therefore, desire that to avoid such gaps in the selection of candidates under the Scheme, the Ministry should devise, in coordination with the other concerned Ministries, a fool proof mechanism to ensure that the Scheme continues uninterrupted and such instances do not recur in future.

Reply of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

29. Noted. Further, the Scheme with modifications therein has been continued as a Central Sector Plan Scheme of National Overseas Scholarships for SC etc. candidates and Passage Grants during the 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2008 to 2011 –2012).

(O.M. No. 11015/29/2005 -SCD-V, dated 20 -09 -2007)

Recommendation (Para No. 49)

30. The Committee regret to note that funds allocated for the implementation of the scheme were not properly utilized during most of the years. While for some years, i.e. during 1993-94 and 1994-95, there had been over utilization of funds, there was under-utilization of allocated funds for the years 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99. In the years 1993-94 and 1994-95, Rs. 260 lakh and Rs. 562 lakh were utilized as against 76 lakh and Rs. 148 lakh allocated for the respective years. Whereas during the years 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 against the allocation of Rs. 490 lakh, 475 lakh and Rs. 375 lakh respectively, only Rs. 180 lakh, Rs. 226 lakh and Rs. 125.83 lakh were utilized. The Ministry, in this regard have stated that this disparity is caused due to the fact that expenditure under this Scheme is initially incurred by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment reimburse the expenditure incurred on the candidates on receipt of bills from the Ministry of External Affairs. The Committee do not find the reasons furnished by the Ministry as convincing. The Committee feel that had timely and proper measures been taken by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs, such incongruity between the funds allocated and the utilized could have been avoided. The Committee are inclined to conclude that the under utilization of funds has deprived many aspiring candidates, belonging to the underprivileged section of society, of the benefits of the scheme. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should take necessary steps to ensure that such situations do not arise in future and maximum number of candidates are given the benefit of the scheme every year.

Reply of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for Recommendation No. 49.

31. The system of reimbursement of funds under the Scheme to Ministry of External Affairs after verification and settling of Bills/Claims received from that Ministry was a time taking process, therefore, it has been revised from the financial year 2007-08. According to the revised mechanism, this Ministry has to periodically place funds with the Ministry of External Affairs, which in turn has to intimate the progressive figures of expenditure to the Pay and

Accounts Officer of this Ministry to monitor the flow of expenditure and seek more funds according to further estimated requirements. As such the Ministry of External Affairs from 2007-08 is not required to furnish the Bills/Claims to this Ministry for verification and settlement. To begin with the Office of the Principal Pay & Accounts Office, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment vide his letter dated 27.06.2007 has placed an amount of Rs. One Crore at the disposal of Ministry of External Affairs which has been authorized to book the expenditure under the relevant budget head for the Scheme.

(O.M. No. 11015/29/2005-SCD-V, dated 20-09-2007)

Recommendation (Para No. 50)

32. The Committee note that the scheme is being implemented under the Non-Plan Expenditure Head since its inception. The Committee understand that Plan Schemes are designed to be implemented for a certain period. But in case the scheme is not approved for continuation, care needs to be taken to provide for a Budget for the committed liabilities beyond the approved period. At the same time the advantage of having a Scheme under Plan head is that it is easier to increase the funding. The Committee, therefore, desire that the Ministry should take up the matter with the Planning Commission/Ministry of Finance to explore the feasibility of shifting the Scheme to the Plan Expenditure Head, if it will help the Ministry to get the Budget allocations enhanced as per their future requirements.

Reply of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

33. The Scheme with modifications has been continued during Eleventh Five Year Plan as a Central Sector Plan Scheme and the allocation has been increased from Rs. 1.40 crores in 2006-07 to Rs. 4.00 Crores in 2007-08.

(O.M. No. 11015/29/2005-SCD-V, dated 20-09-2007)

Recommendation (Para No. 52)

34. The Committee also note that as per the eligibility criteria listed under this scheme, 'work experience of two to five years' is required to apply for the three courses offered i.e. Master degree, Ph.D and Post Doctorate. The Committee feel that due to this requirement many deserving women candidates are not able to apply for scholarship under this Scheme. The Committee are of the view that a woman should not be deprived of the opportunity to apply for the scholarship just because she does not have the required work experience in the desired field. Therefore, the Committee desire that 'work experience' should not be mandatory, rather it should be treated as a desirable requirement and the rules may be amended accordingly.

35. The Committee also feel that the age limit of 35 years prescribed under this Scheme for the applicants may also be increased so that more women may be able to take benefit of the scheme.

Recommendation (Para No. 53)

36. The Committee have been informed that for grant of scholarship under the Scheme the income from all sources of the employed candidate or his/her parents/guardians should not exceed Rs. 18000/- per month. The ceiling was revised from Rs. 12000/- per month in July, 2004. The Committee desire that under the Scheme, income of the employed candidate from all sources should only be taken into consideration if the candidate – male or female – is totally self-dependent and the income of his/her parents/guardians should not be considered for the income ceiling. The Committee, keeping in view the present status of the market, which is characterized by inflation feel that the present income ceiling is still low. The Committee suggest that clause should be added to the Rules governing this Scheme whereby every year the income ceiling be increased by 5 to 10 per cent, so that the impact of inflation and resultant increase in salary or income may not affect adversely the candidates who were in the eligibility zone in the previous years.

Reply of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on Recommendation No. 52 & 53.

37. As already mentioned in reply to Recommendation No. 42, the Scheme with modifications has been continued during Eleventh Five Year Plan as a Central Sector Plan Scheme and the income ceiling has also been revised. Accordingly the total income from all sources of the employed candidate or his/her parents/guardians, shall not exceed Rs.25,000/-(Rupees Twenty Five Thousand) per month, (excluding such allowances as are not treated as part of total income for the purpose of income tax) as certified by the employer.

(O.M. No. 11015/29/2005-SCD-V, dated 20 -09-2007)

Recommendation (Para No. 54)

38. The Committee are concerned to note that there are only twenty subjects under this Scheme for which scholarships are awarded. These twenty subjects do not include disciplines such as aviation, medicines and other highly specialized disciplines for which sufficient facilities do not exist in India. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the disciplines under this Scheme need to be diversified further by including some of the subjects popular among the women candidates such as medicine, as this in itself will popularize the Scheme further.

Reply of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

39. As already mentioned in reply to Recommendation No. 42, no change has been made in the specified subjects for the selection year 2007-2008. However, for the subsequent selection years (2008-2009 to 2011-2012), a revised list of subjects may be revised in consultation with the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

(O.M. No. 11015/29/2005 -SCD-V, dated 20 -09-2007)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see para 17 of Chapter I of the Report)

CHAPTER III

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF THE REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT

Recommendation (Para No. 51)

40. The Committee have been told that there are certain eligibility criteria and standards, such as minimum qualification, age limit, income ceiling, etc. which the applicants should fulfill while applying for the scholarship under this scheme. The Committee desire that the Screening Committee while scrutinizing the applications should be more considerate especially towards women candidates, since the purpose of the Scheme is to effect welfare to a particular section of the society, and should not reject applications on technical grounds only at the screening level. The Committee also feel that maximum number of candidates should be given a chance to appear before the Selection Committee to face the interview. The Committee also find that sometimes after the selection of the candidates in the foreign university they are not able to seek admission and deposit fee etc. within the limited prescribed time as the meeting of the Screening Committee has not been held during that period to recommend their cases. The Committee, therefore, desire that in such cases the Ministry should themselves recommend their cases to the Selection Committee so that the candidates are not denied admission due to non-clearance of their application by the screening Committee. Therefore, the Ministry should themselves approve such cases so that all those candidates may get there scholarship in time.

Reply of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

41. The screening of initially received applications for a Selection Year is conducted by the Screening Committee headed by a Chairperson who is an academican. This is a prudent and vigorous exercise undertaken to determine that only eligible applicants are subsequently called for interviews by the Selection Committee comprising of subject experts.

(O.M. No. 11015/29/2005 -SCD-V, dated 20 -09-2007)

Recommendation (Para No. 55)

42. As far as publicity and awareness about the Scheme is concerned, the Committee are given to understand that the Scheme is advertised on all India basis through National/Regional Newspapers and the Ministry's website on the Internet. In this connection, the Committee desire that the advertisement regarding the Scheme should be prominently printed in leading National and Regional Newspapers. The Committee also desire that copies of the press-clippings of such advertisements given in the various newspapers may be furnished to them. The Committee also feel that reliance on only print media and internet are not sufficient to popularize the Scheme and reach out to the beneficiaries. The Committee wish to emphasize that to ensure greater representation of women under the Scheme, due importance needs to be given to its publicity so that it reaches out to the maximum number of people for whom it has been formulated. The Committee, therefore, suggest that there should be effective involvement of electronic media as well, especially TV and Radio, so that the Scheme is made popular among the women living in difficult and remote parts of the country. The Committee also desire that some amount should be specifically allocated in the Budget Provision for this purpose.

Reply of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

43. Adequate publicity is provided to the Scheme through electronic and print media. Hence, there is no need for a separate budget provision.

(O.M. No. 11015/29/2005-SCD-V, dated 20 -09-2007)

CHAPTER IV

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE

Recommendation (Para No. 47)

44. The Committee regret to note that there has been no increase in the number of scholarships under the Scheme which was started way back in 1954-55, even though the Scheduled Caste population in the country has increased to 16.5 cores as per Census 2001. On the contrary, when the Scheme was initiated, there were 30 slots for Scheduled Caste and scheduled Tribe candidates whereas at present these are for 20 slots only, out of which 17 are for Scheduled Castes. The Committee are constrained to point out that the Ministry have not taken this aspect into consideration while revising the scheme in 2001. The apathy of the Ministry towards this vital issue is nothing but regrettable. Considering the present population of Scheduled Castes in the country, the Committee feel that 20 scholarships per year (out of which 17 are for Scheduled Castes) are grossly insufficient. They, therefore, desire that the number of scholarships to be awarded per year under the Scheme should be realistically increased keeping in view that increase in the population of Scheduled Castes in the country. The Committee further desire that all the eligible candidate's applications should be considered for scholarship under the scheme irrespective of their number. The Ministry may approach the Ministry of Finance and the Planning Commission to provide adequate funds, if so required.

Reply of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

45. As already mentioned in reply to Recommendation No. 42, in the modified Central Sector of National Overseas Scholarships for SC etc. candidates during the 11th Five Year Plan (2007-2008 to 2011 -2012), 30 awards per selection year have been provided with following distribution: -

(i)	Scheduled Castes	27
(ii)	Denotified, Nomadic and Semi- Nomadic Tribes	02
(iii)	Landless Agricultural Labourers and Traditional Artisans	01
	Total	30

(O.M. No. 11015/29/2005-SCD-V, dated 20 -09 -2007)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see para 10 of Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation (Para No. 48)

46. One of the reasons for poor performance of the Scheme is that the existing selection process for awarding scholarships to the candidates, from inviting applications to awarding scholarships, is quite long, and often it exceeds the one-year cycle. The Committee feel that such delays defeat the purpose of the Scheme itself, as, it might cause loss of one full academic year to eligible candidates, which could be detrimental to the candidate's career. The Ministry in this regard have spelt out some measures contemplated by them to expedite and complete the selection process in a six months period by simultaneously carrying out overlapping activities viz. initiating the process of appointment of Chairman of the Screening Committee while tabulation of application forms is going on, holding the selection committee meeting within three weeks of the meeting of the Screening Committee and interviews to follow soon after. This, according to the Ministry would facilitate early selection. The Committee hope that necessary measures will be introduced at the earliest and followed in letter and spirit.

47. The Committee also wish to emphasize the need of devising such a mechanism whereby the funds are released to the candidates within a month

after their selection in foreign Universities, so that they are not denied admission for non-payment of fees etc. in time.

**Reply of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for
Recommendations No. 48 and 49.**

48. The system of reimbursement of funds under the Scheme to Ministry of External Affairs after verification and settling of Bills/Claims received from that Ministry was a time taking process, therefore, it has been revised from the financial year 2007-08. According to the revised mechanism, this Ministry has to periodically place funds with the Ministry of External Affairs, which in turn has to intimate the progressive figures of expenditure to the Pay and Accounts Officer of this Ministry to monitor the flow of expenditure and seek more funds according to further estimated requirements. As such the Ministry of External Affairs from 2007-08 is not required to furnish the Bills/Claims to this Ministry for verification and settlement. To begin with the Office of the Principal Pay & Accounts Office, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment vide his letter dated 27.06.2007 has placed an amount of Rs. One Crore at the disposal of Ministry of External Affairs which has been authorized to book the expenditure under the relevant budget head for the Scheme.

(O.M. No. 11015/29/2005-SCD-V, dated 20-09-2007)

Comments of the Committee

(Please see para 14 of Chapter I of the Report)

CHAPTER V

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAVE FURNISHED INTERIM REPLIES

-Nil-

**New Delhi
29th November, 2007
8 Agrahayana, 1929 (Saka)**

**KRISHNA TIRATH
Chairperson
Committee on Empowerment of Women**

APPENDIX I

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Sl. No.	Para No.	Ministry/Department	Observations/Recommendations
1.	7.	Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment	The Committee in their earlier Report had recommended that the Government should look into the possibility of allocating at least 30 per cent of scholarships under 'National Overseas Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Caste Students for Higher Studies Abroad' to women candidates. They are happy to note that in pursuance of their recommendation, the Government has earmarked 30% seats for women candidates in the modified Central Plan Scheme of National Overseas Scholarships for SC etc. during the 11 th Five Year Plan. The Committee appreciate this as a positive step that will certainly encourage more women candidates to aspire for higher studies abroad. However, the Committee desire to be apprised of the actual number of women candidates who have been awarded scholarship under this Scheme by the end of academic session 2007-08. The Committee further recommend that concerted efforts should be made by the Government to create awareness among the women aspirants so that the earmarked 30% seats for women candidates are optimally utilized. The Committee would like that the documentary proof of efforts made by the Ministry to create awareness regarding the scheme may be furnished to them.
2.	10.	Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment	The Committee in their Original Report had recommended that the number of scholarships under the scheme should be realistically increased as per increase in the scheduled caste population. The Committee further desired that all eligible candidates applications should be considered for scholarship under the scheme irrespective of their number. The Committee feel that increasing the number of scholarships to 30 is not sufficient considering the increase in population of scheduled castes. The Committee, therefore, reiterate that the number of scholarships should be increased realistically and all applications should be considered irrespective of their number.

3. 14. Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment The Committee note that a mechanism has been put in place to ensure availability of funds periodically at the disposal of Ministry of External Affairs. The Committee are, however, unhappy that the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment have not taken tangible measures whereby funds could be made available to the candidates within a month after their selection in foreign universities. The Committee, therefore, desire that Government should take suitable measure to expedite and complete the selection process within six months by simultaneously carrying out the overlapping activities viz. initiating the process of appointment of the Chairman of the Screening Committee while tabulation of application forms is going on, holding the selection committee meeting within three weeks of the meeting of the Screening Committee etc. The Committee desire to be apprised of the action taken in this regard. The Committee also desire that if candidates secure admission in foreign universities and are eligible under the scheme, they should also be considered for scholarship.
4. 17. Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment The Committee find that though no change has been made in the specified subjects under the scheme for the selection year 2007-08, the Ministry propose to prepare a revised list of subjects for selection in the subsequent years i.e. 2008-2009 to 2011-2012 in consultation with the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The Committee hope that the Ministry would consider revision of the list of subjects by further diversifying the disciplines, including the ones popular among women candidates such as medicine etc. The Committee wish to be apprised about the final decision taken in the matter.

APPENDIX II

(Vide Para 5 of the Introduction)

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT ON THE SIXTH REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN (14TH LOK SABHA)

(i)	Total No. of Recommendations	17
(ii)	Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government: Para Nos. 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 49, 50, 52, 53 and 54.	13
	Percentage to Total	76.47%
(iii)	Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the replies of the Government: Para No. 51 and 55.	2
	Percentage to Total	11.76%
(iv)	Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee: Para Nos. 47 & 48.	2
	Percentage to Total	11.76%
(v)	Observations/Recommendations in respect of which the Government have furnished interim replies:	Nil
	Percentage to Total	-

PART - II

Minutes Committee on Empowerment of Women (2007-2008)

Third Sitting (29.11.2007)

The Committee sat on Thursday, the 29th November, 2007 from 1530 hrs. to 1630 hours in Committee Room 'D', Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

PRESENT

Smt. Krishna Tirath - **Chairperson**

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Smt. Preneet Kaur
3. Smt. Manorama Madhawraj
4. Smt. K. Rani
5. Smt. Karuna Shukla
6. Shri P.C. Thomas

RAJYA SABHA

7. Kumari Nirmala Deshpande
8. Smt. Brinda Karat
9. Smt. Maya Singh
10. Smt. Syeda Anwara Taimur

SECRETARIAT

1. Shri S.K. Sharma - Additional Secretary
2. Smt. Veena Sharma - Deputy Secretary

2. At the outset, the Hon'ble Chairperson welcomed the Members of the Committee to the sitting. Thereafter, the Committee took up for consideration the draft Action Taken Report on the subject 'National Overseas Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Caste Students for Higher Studies Abroad'. After

some deliberations, the Committee adopted the draft Action Taken Report and authorized the Chairperson to finalise the Report and present the same to Parliament.

3. ***

4. ***

5. A verbatim record of the proceedings has been kept.

The Committee then adjourned.

* *Matters not related to the Report*