Joint Statement from National Women’s Organisations regarding ARTs and Surrogacy

We the undersigned women’s organizations and people representing the interests of the weaker and marginalized sections of our society, express our grave concern at the phenomena of market-driven medical tourism, in which the commercialization of human reproductive choices in many regions of our country. Many of these are indulging in exploitative practices.

The practice of women being rented out for a price has become a thriving and lucrative business. Not in the least because neo-liberal policies and globalization have transformed everything, including motherhood and various body parts, into marketable commodities. Medical tourism is just one such example.

The first and most serious concern that the women’s organizations have is with regard to medical tourism and the Government of India. The practice of women renting out their bodies to commercial interests is leading to the exploitation of the otherwise economically and socially vulnerable sections.

The women’s movement would like to strongly suggest the following:

1. The Government of India frame a National Policy on Assisted Reproductive Technologies as a whole, taking into account Surrogacy as an important aspect of the same. The Policy should reflect the stand of the Government of India, with respect to the human rights, ethical, medical, health issues at the core of the subject. The delay in generating such a policy has already led to negative impact, since ARTs are flourishing in a rapid and ever increasing way. The Policy on Surrogacy and other ARTs should reflect the values and priorities of the Government of India, in safeguarding the rights and interests of all persons involved, especially the more vulnerable sections.

2. A very disturbing trend in medical tourism in India has taken place in recent times, like other medical procedures, they have become one of the major reasons for medical tourism in India today. It is time to come clean and make it public, in effect inviting people from all over the world, to utilize the "services" (including hiring the uterus of Indian women) in a cheap, and easy manner that their own countries would not allow.

3. We demand that a status report be made public by the Government of India, on Assisted Reproductive Technologies and ART clinics so that we can understand the reality as it is at the present point in time. This should be made transparent to the public.

4. The present ART guidelines of the Indian Council for Medical Research, as presented at the meeting organized by the Ministry of Women and Child Development are highly inadequate, and should be reviewed. We would also like to point out that these ART guidelines are mere guidelines which are not enforceable in a court of law.
3. Recognizing the fact that there is an increase in infertility due to various causes, there is a need to address the issue of ARTs and Surrogacy in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

We demand that there should be an immediate response from the Govt, and the issue should be treated with the urgency and seriousness that it requires.

ORGANISATIONS

1. GUILD OF SERVICE
2. All India Democratic Women’s Association (AIDWA)
3. National Federation for Indian Women (NFIW)
4. Lawyer’s Collective
5. Joint Women’s Programme (JWP)
6. Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA)
7. Initiative for Health, Equity and Society
   Diverse Women for Diversity
8. Centre for Women’s Development Studies (CWDS)

SIGNATURES

V. Maffe
Annie Raja
Kajal Chatterjee
PND Desai
Mina Chiva
F. Zabeena