

India: Assam Govt Sets up Six-Member Transgender Welfare Board

Monday 29 June 2020, by [DAS Gaurav](#) (Date first published: 22 June 2020).

Assam becomes the seventh state in the country to have such a welfare board.

Guwahati: A six-member transgender welfare board has been set up by the Assam government and members from the state's transgender community have now been incorporated into the welfare board. This was confirmed by a state government notification issued on June 17.

The establishment of the state transgender welfare board has been a welcome change for the transgender community. With its creation, as per the All Assam Transgender Association (AATA), Assam is the seventh state in the country to have such a welfare board.

The Assam state government in February approved a draft policy for the welfare of the state's transgender community. This paved the way for the transgender welfare board.

In March this year, the state policy for transgenders was notified by the state government. The setting up of the transgender welfare board, which will have quasi-judicial powers with the power to issue summons, will now seek to end discrimination in the employment sector, end sexual harassment faced by members of the transgender community almost on a daily basis, and other issues that make the community vulnerable. The board will now aim at implementing schemes meant for the transgender community's overall development.

The state, with its own transgender welfare board, will make efforts for the upliftment of the community, by providing reservation in educational institutions, medical facilities, empowerment, and fight discrimination, among others.

Swati Bidhan Baruah, a transgender activist who has been fighting for the state's transgender community for the last few years, has been incorporated into the transgender social welfare board as an associate vice-chairperson. Speaking to *The Wire*, Baruah said that after years of fighting and grassroots activism undertaken by her and her fellow transgender activists, the establishment of a transgender welfare board was a step in the right direction.

"The members who have been incorporated in the transgender welfare board are all grassroot activists who have been taking up the community's cause for some years as of now. They will have a fair amount of understanding in seeking overall development for the community by working in tandem with the state government. Assam is the seventh state in the country to have a welfare board for the transgender community. We are glad that the state government decided to set up a welfare board for the community. But at the same time, we have a lot to work on," said Baruah, who is the state's first transgender judge.

On March 2, 2019, the social welfare department of the state government issued a notice that said:

"The government of Assam has formulated a draft policy for the transgenders living in

the state on a rights-based framework in consonance with the judgement of the Supreme Court (*NALSA v. The Union of India and Ors*). The draft policy is placed in the public domain with a request to stakeholders and other interested persons to submit inputs and suggestions if any within 15 days of the of issue of notice. Objections and suggestions which may be received from any persons/NGO stakeholders with respect to the said draft policy before the expiry of the period specified above will be given due considerations by the government before the finalisation of the state transgender policy.”

Baruah had also challenged the contentious Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, in the Supreme Court. In the petition which was filed in December 2019, Baruah had said that the Act violated the rights accorded to transgender persons under Articles 14, 15, 16, 19 and 21 of the constitution.

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