Gender Issues

in Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods

Volume 1

A course for undergraduates in agricultural universities

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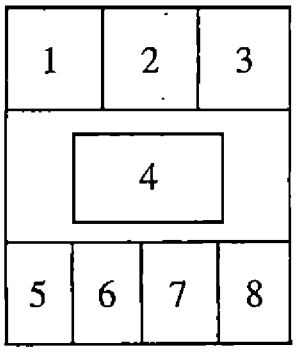

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Foreword

Agriculture is the largest and oldest private sector enterprise initiated by women over 10,000 years ago. There is evidence to suggest that while men were hunting game in forests, women started gathering seeds and growing them in the backyard of their dwellings. Thus began the era of settled cultivation or agriculture ten to twelve thousand years ago. Over the centuries, a large number of plants had been identified from nature for use in strengthening human security in all its dimensions - nutritional, health and livelihood. It is a tribute to the early agriculturists that humankind has not been able to add new plants to those cultivated for food, fibre or medicine during the last few centuries. Many of the new additions to the human food basket have come from breeding and not from direct selection from the wild flora.

Throughout recorded history, the role of women in agriculture has been multi-dimensional. Women have been actively involved in operations relating to crop and animal production, as well as in post-harvest processing and marketing. They have also been instrumental in selecting and storing seeds for sowing in the following season. Many of the activities assigned to women, under the traditional gender division of labour, involve great drudgery and hard work. Women are also involved in activities characterized by health hazards as for example in tobacco, cashew, coir and shrimp industries. So they remain not only undernourished and underpaid, but also invisible from the point of view of recognition and compensation.

The Beijing Conference on Women and Development held in 1995 urged that in addressing the economic potential and independence of women, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men respectively.

It is in this context that the programme of the Uttara Devi Centre on Gender and Development of MSSRF and the Centre for Study of Gender Concerns in Agriculture, Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) in engendering the curriculum of agricultural universities assumes great significance. A concrete output of this joint exercise is the preparation of a core module for building the capacity of the faculty in mainstreaming the gender dimension in classrooms as well as in fields and forests.

The present module has been prepared by Dr Sara Ahmed while serving as a Visiting Fellow at MSSRF, with the whole-hearted cooperation of the faculty of KAU, led by Dr P.S. Geethakutty. We are indebted to the Ford Foundation, but for whose generous support the preparation and printing of this module would not have been possible. We hope it will be widely used and will mark a new beginning in gender sensitization in agricultural universities. Such sensitization will be particularly relevant in the context of the assurance given in the Common Minimum Programme of the United Progressive Alliance in the area of women's empowerment, including the right to land.

We wish to express our appreciation and gratitude to Dr Sara Ahmed, as well as to Ms. Mina Swaminathan and Dr. P. S. Geethakutty, for organizing this work and for producing such a meaningful module. This should help to bring about a transformation in the design of the curricula of agricultural, veterinary and fisheries universities, thereby spreading awareness among farm graduates of the field reality of the pivotal role played by women both as farmers and as farm labour in enhancing the productivity, profitability and sustainability of the major farming systems of our country.

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Publishers' Note

"The face of the Indian farmer is a woman's face," says Maithreyi Krishnaraj in her recent book "Women in Agriculture" (2004). Even more emphatically, Vandana Shiva titled her book "Most Farmers in India are Women!" (1991). These statements draw attention to the universal presence of Indian women in agriculture — toiling day and night in the fields, farms and forests. Not only that, this presence is increasing — there are proportionately more women than men in agriculture today, a process sometimes referred to as the "feminisation of agriculture", and this trend is likely to continue. Yet the paradox is that women in agriculture are practically invisible — especially at the level of textbook, agricultural college, extension services, or policy-making. Their work is unrecognized, unsung and unrewarded. In other words, they toil without adequate return, most of them being labourers, in the category of "unpaid family labour"; they work at the most unskilled and backbreaking manual jobs, lacking in training and access to technology and skills; above all, women are rarely recognized as "farmers", lacking, as they do, access to land and other productive assets in their own right.

The reasons for this state of affairs are not far to seek — they stem from the in-built gender inequality in our deeply patriarchal society, which makes it easy for everyone, both men and women, to take for granted the subordination of women in all spheres of life, including agriculture, and results in almost universal acceptance of certain attitudes and patterns of thought. What is more important here to address is how this state of affairs can be altered. Change must begin in hearts and minds, since that is where the problems lie. Where should we start, and when? With the change agents — the policy-makers, Government functionaries, extension workers, researchers, teachers, and above all, students, who will become all these tomorrow. That is the rationale for this attempt to introduce issues of gender equity into the undergraduate curriculum of agricultural and other Universities.

This attempt began in 1997, and in the next two years, M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) conducted a series of meetings, with the support of the National Commission for Women (NCW) and Indian Council for Agriculture (ICAR), first on the **Technological Empowerment of Women** and then through a national-level Task Force supported by ICAR on **Women in Agriculture**. Both these groups recommended, along with other measures, reorientation of course curricula and mainstreaming of gender in courses. This phase concluded with a workshop organized by MSSRF in December 1999 to develop this theme further, bringing together Vice-chancellors / deans and faculty from 15 agricultural Universities, including Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) as well as gender specialists, representatives of ICAR, NGOs and other academics. The group identified themes and topics for inclusion in the curriculum, pedagogic processes and strategies, as well as resource materials and persons, all of which could support curriculum development. The Resource Guide, **Engendering Undergraduate Agricultural Education**, an outcome of this effort, has been used to disseminate information widely and advocate for change.

From November 2000, MSSRF and KAU, which had meanwhile set up the Centre for Study of Gender Concerns in Agriculture (CSGCA) in November 1999, began a fruitful collaborative process leading to the present module. Between November 2000 and mid-2001, a series of three workshops were jointly organised for the faculty of KAU. The objective of the first workshop was to orient the faculty to theoretical gender analysis frameworks and to discuss the practical applications for teaching, research and extension in agricultural development at the level of the University. Two major recommendations of this capacity-building workshop were the need to evolve gender-sensitive curriculum at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as these concerns are not addressed by the present curriculum, and second, the need to gender-sensitise the field-work component, or Rural Agricultural Work Experience (RAWE). The second workshop in the series was devoted specifically to evolving gender-sensitive field-work tools for RAWE. The third was part of CSGCA's FAO-funded project to integrate gender concerns into the undergraduate curriculum of KAU.

Subsequently, through 2001 and 2002, KAU undertook a series of exercises, with FAO support, to "engender" agricultural education in all relevant disciplines of the undergraduate programme along with the approach for an additional course on Gender Perspectives in Agriculture, and succeeded in modifying the RAWE programme. Capacity building of the faculty and syllabus revision is continuing, as part of the process of introducing gender-integrated disciplines. Throughout this period, the need was constantly expressed by all participants for a core module to introduce the basic concepts to students and to develop support materials. It was felt that the core module and the discipline-wise modules would support each other and further, that each would be meaningless without the other.

Hence, in October 2002, it was jointly decided to take up, as a collaborative venture, the task of developing such a module. Dr. Sara Ahmed, a specialist in gender and development, was invited to accept a Visiting Fellowship at MSSRF to undertake the task, with the support and cooperation of KAU faculty and CSGCA. From the beginning, it was felt that such an exercise should be useful to the larger teaching community, and hence it was decided to develop a generic module, and not a Kerala-specific one, so that users could feel free to draw on it and adapt it to their own needs and context. The need to involve students and teachers in the process, and also for field-testing of the module, orientation of teachers and development of a training manual at a later stage were also kept in mind.

Dr. Sara Ahmed graciously accepted the invitation and began the preparatory work in January 2002. In late March 2003, she visited KAU for a week to interact with students, teachers extension personnel, administrators and team members of CSGCA, to look through existing curricula and course materials and to study the recommendations of the KAU—FAO project on engendering agricultural education, and was able to prepare the draft outline of the module by June 2003. Comments were sought on this outline from a group of concerned specialists in social sciences, gender and development experts, as well as selected faculty members of KAU. A feedback workshop was held in September 2003 at MSSRF, which some of them attended. This workshop strongly endorsed the

need for a core curriculum, with some optional segments to suit discipline specialization, and also emphasized the need for a generic module as opposed to a context-specific one. The three main objectives and a tentative outline of the course content were also spelled out. It was suggested that the module could also be used with post-graduate students, paving the way for a future course at the higher level. The need for field-testing, orientation of teachers and the preparation of a teachers' manual were reiterated.

Based on this feedback, Dr. Ahmed prepared a revised draft outline, as well as some complete units, by January 2004, while the rest were completed during a further period of residence as a Visiting Fellow at MSSRF in June 2004. The process of developing and printing this module has been supported financially by the Ford Foundation endowment at MSSRF. The module is now available for distribution as a CD or in print, and KAU will be conducting the first Orientation Workshop in early 2005 for selected faculty members who are expected to teach this module at the undergraduate level.

Acknowledgments

This module, a widely applicable generic one, is the product of sustained cooperative effort over more than two years and is our humble effort to serve the teachers, and through them the students, of agricultural Universities, as well as other professional colleges and general Universities. Throughout this enriching process, which we have been steering to the best of our ability, we have been sustained by the warm encouragement and support of Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, Chairman, MSSRF; Dr. P.C. Kesavan, former Executive Director, MSSRF; Dr. M. Velayutham, present Executive Director, MSSRF; Prof. K.V. Peter, Vice-Chancellor, KAU; Dr. K. N. S. Nair, former Vice-Chancellor, KAU; present and earlier Deans and Directors of KAU and by the unswerving cooperation of our colleagues in the various campuses of KAU and MSSRF.

Above all, we would like to express our appreciation of the author, Dr. Sara Ahmed, who probably entered into this adventure without fully realizing where it was leading, but who nevertheless has cheerfully and willingly responded to all our demands, and developed the first-ever course module on this challenging subject.

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Preface

Both women and men play critical roles in agriculture throughout the world, producing, processing and providing the food we eat. Rural women in particular are responsible for half of the world's food production and produce between 60 and 80 percent of the food in most developing countries. Yet, despite their contribution to global food security, women farmers are frequently underestimated and overlooked in development strategies. www.fao.org/gender/en/agri-e.htm

Despite the fact that rural women in India constitute more than 50 per cent of the agricultural workforce their role as farmers and their rights to productive resources and technical knowledge is rarely recognized. Partly, this lacuna arises from our teaching systems, which produce young people who go on to formulate policies or implement rural development programmes with little understanding of how our society is socially stratified. Agricultural universities have a wide variety of courses on soil quality, farming techniques and technology, plant diseases, animal husbandry and so on, but the focus on people, men and women, and the social relationships that embed them is limited. And when graduates from these centres of learning encounter the real world they not only reproduce the top-down approaches to knowledge which they have imbibed, they also remain largely insensitive to the wider socio-economic, historical, cultural, legal and political context which shapes institutional practice.

Soon after I left the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA, Gujarat) after teaching there for 10 years (1992–2002), Mina Swaminathan approached me and asked if I would like to design a course on gender, agriculture and rural livelihoods as part of ongoing efforts to engender the agriculture curriculum. I had been teaching two courses at IRMA: a core course on rural development and an optional course on gender issues in development policy and practice. Just before my leaving IRMA, the optional course had been accepted as a half-credit core or compulsory course, making IRMA the first management institute to decide that its students, most of whom join the development sector, needed to be gender-aware. To now develop and take these two courses forward to a wider body of students through agricultural universities and rural training institutes was indeed a challenge.

I began this work during my tenure as a Visiting Fellow at the Uttara Devi Resource Centre for Gender and Development of MSSRF in early 2003 – a Visiting Fellow in the true sense of the word, as home is Ahmedabad and because of family obligations it was not possible for me to be based at MSSRF for the full tenure of my fellowship. Though, in hindsight, the serene MSSRF campus and interactions with its body of scientists and social scientists would probably have speeded up the process of writing this module. Further, as I was not a student of agriculture I was not fully aware of the kind of courses and fieldwork that students have to contend with. A short visit to the Kerala Agricultural University in March 2003 and my interactions with staff and students there, facilitated by Dr. Geethakutty of the Centre for Studies on Gender Concerns in Agriculture, helped tremendously in developing a structure for the course and a perspective on how to situate it, given what was missing from the existing curriculum.

For example, courses on rural sociology at KAU, and no doubt other agricultural universities too, where gender should be addressed as an important axis of stratification along with caste and class, are rooted in the positivist tradition of social systems such as neighbourhood, community and kinship groups, with little attention to social processes

or power relations. This not only means that women as farmers are 'invisible' to the multitudes of young students who pass out of these academic institutions, but that gender-blind policies and practices are reproduced in agricultural organizations, including training, research and extension services.

This curriculum therefore provides an outline for a comprehensive foundation undergraduate (UG) course on gender and rural livelihoods, which can also be used for post-graduate teaching and for faculty training and capacity building on gender and equity issues (for example, with agricultural extension services). The broad objectives of this course are threefold:

- To **build perspective** in agricultural students by providing an overview of the social construction of gender and socio-economic inequality in India
- To **create skills** to help students identify and analyse gender roles, rights and responsibilities in different agro-ecological systems and understand how they shape gender relations
- To **bring about attitudinal change** by facilitating gender sensitivity among students and helping them internalize equity concerns as fundamental human rights

The course comprises two modules:

- **Module 1: Gender Relations and Rural Livelihoods** consists of 12 core units covering topics ranging from why gender is an issue for agricultural policy, how the social construction of gender shapes the different work that rural women and men do to cross-cutting gender concerns such as land rights, access to credit, women's participation in community institutions and empowerment, the impact of technology and the role of disasters in building livelihood resilience and adaptation.
- **Module 2: Gender Issues in Different Agrarian Sectors** covers four sectors – irrigation, fisheries, forestry and livestock – looking at the broad gender concerns in each sector, policy approaches and examples of good practice.

The design of the course was evolved after considerable discussion with faculty from the Horticulture College at KAU (see full list of names in acknowledgement) and feedback from other gender researchers and development professionals in India and overseas over a period of two years. Some of the feedback on the first draft of the course outline was shared through e-mail, but most re-shaping took place after the review workshop held at the MSSRF in September 2003 where the course outline was discussed in depth by KAU faculty, the MSSRF team, academics and development professionals. It was felt that a 16-unit course would be most appropriate given the structure of the KAU curriculum and the time available for students. Core units need to be taken by all students, but optional units are flexible, depending on the student's specialization or the focus of the college in which s/he is enrolled (for example, in the KAU system there are separate colleges of forestry and fisheries).

All units have three sections:

- A Unit Framework provides a conceptual and/or policy overview on the unit topic as well as short casestudies as illustrative examples. The framework is a guideline for the teacher / facilitator, a gendered perspective on a particular topic supported by key references, data insights and information on organizations working in that field.

- Readings are related articles from a range of books and journals providing background material for the teacher/facilitator to explore the subject further. Each unit has at least two readings, and these have been collated in Volume 2.
- Practical Exercises are facilitated exercises designed to enhance the student's understanding of a particular concept or framework. They include short case studies for small group discussion, points for debate and tools for exploring the local environment to understand the complexities of gender within institutions (household, community and organizations).

According to the KAU system, each unit would entail at least two hours of contact time in one week and this should ideally be divided between an introductory lecture outlining major issues from a gender perspective and the practical exercises. However, this is a generic course and can be adapted to suit any university, research institute or learning environment which is committed to addressing gender and equity concerns in rural livelihoods. Please note that the unit framework and readings are the interpretation and selection respectively of the author and do not represent the views of either KAU or MSSRF. Neither are they meant to provide the definitive way to teach a particular topic. On the contrary, given that development is multi-dimensional and complex, the teacher should ideally supplement each topic with readings, data and case studies that are context specific.

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to warmly thank Dr. P. S. Geethakutty, Associate Professor & Project Coordinator, CSGCA, KAU, for all her help in not only facilitating my interactions with staff and students at KAU, but also in sharing her knowledge about gender and agricultural issues. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. R. Vikraman Nair and Dr. C.K. Peethambaran, former and present Directors of Research, KAU; Dr. George Thomas, Associate Professor, KAU; Dr. K. S. Purushan, Fisheries Station, KAU; Dr. G. Shobhana, Associate Professor, KAU; Ms. Deepa, Research Assistant, CSGCA; Ms. Suma Nair, Research Fellow, CSGCA; Mr. Oneil, Agricultural Officer, Perinjanam Panchayat; Ms Geetha, Agricultural Officer, Avanur Panchayat; Mr. Biju, Agricultural Officer, Ayyanthole Panchayat; Ms. Anitha Karunakaran, Agricultural Officer, Chazhoor Panchayat – all of whom shared their insights on agriculture and gender concerns with me as well as the students of the Horticulture College with whom I interacted.

At MSSRF I would at the outset like to thank Prof. M. S. Swaminathan, Chairman, Dr. P. C. Kesavan, former Executive Director and Dr. M. Velayutham, present Executive Director, for providing me with all the facilities and a stimulating environment in which to work on this module. There are many scientists and social scientists with whom I have interacted over the past two years, who facilitated field trips to MSSRF's field sites in Pondicherry and willingly shared their case studies and research insights. To them and all the staff at the MSSRF, particularly the guest-house and library services I owe a very warm thank you. Thanks are also due to Dr. Meera Devi, Coordinator, from the Uttara Devi Resource Centre for Gender and Development for her help in finding readings and case studies, to Ms. Sheela Pankaj, Senior Secretary and Ms. Latha Murugesan, Assistant Programme Manager for providing all administrative support.

Sandhya Sundar as editor has put in tremendous work in finalizing each Unit, looking for inconsistencies and suggesting changes or additions, which I have greatly appreciated.

Above all, I would like to thank Mina Swaminathan, Honorary Programme Director, from the Uttara Devi Resource Centre for Gender and Development for her guidance, enthusiastic support and empathy during the various ups and downs that a project of this magnitude has endured. Mina has also provided all the information on the sources for the various films and the questions for classroom discussion after each film.

The process of putting together this course curriculum has been very enriching for me and I hope that it proves useful for students and teachers of agriculture and rural development.

Sara Ahmed

List of abbreviations

1. AHW: Animal Health Worker
2. ASC: Agro-Service Centres
3. APL: Above Poverty Line
4. BD Act: Biological Diversity Act
5. BPL: Below Poverty Line
6. CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity
7. CDP: Community Development Programme
8. CEDAW : Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
9. CIDA: Canadian International Development Agency:
10. CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child
11. CSGCA: Centre for Study of Gender Concerns in Agriculture
12. CWDS: Centre for Women's Development Studies
13. DANIDA: Danish International Development Agency
14. DAWN: Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era
15. DFID: Department for International Development
16. DP: Disaster Preparedness
17. DPAP: Drought Prone Area Programme
18. DWCRA: Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas
19. DWD: Diverse Women for Diversity
20. FAO: Food and Agricultural Organisation
21. FCA: Forest Conservation Act, 1980
22. FD: Forest Department
23. FFH: Female-Headed Households
24. FFS: Farmer Field School
25. FIG: Farmer Interest Groups
26. FIPA/IFAP International Federation of Agricultural Producers
27. FRLHT: Foundation for the Revival of Local Health Traditions
28. FYP: Five-Year Plan
29. GAD: Gender and Development
30. GATT: General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs
31. GDI: Gender Development Index
32. GEAG: Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group
33. GEM: Gender Empowerment Measure
34. GMO: Genetically Modified Organisms
35. GR: Green Revolution
36. GRB: Gender Responsive Budget
37. GWSSB: Gujarat Water Supply and Sewerage Board
38. HDI: Human Development Index
39. HYV: High-Yield Varieties (of crops)
40. ICAR: Indian Council for Agriculture
41. ICDS Integrated Child Development Scheme
42. ICPD: International Conference on Population and Development
43. ICSF International Collective in Support of Fish Workers
44. ICT: Information and Communication Technology
45. IDRC: the International Development Research Centre
46. IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development
47. IFPRI: International Food Policy Research Institute
48. IFS: Indian Forestry Service

49. IMT: Irrigation Management Transfer
50. IRDP: Integrated Rural Development Programme
51. ISED: Institute of Socio-Economic Development, Orissa
52. ISET: Institute for Social and Environmental Transition
53. ITDG: International Technology Development Group
54. IUCN International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Geneva
55. JRY: Jawahar Rozgar Yojana
56. LEISA: Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture
57. MDC: Millennium Development Compact
58. MDG: Millennium Development Goals
59. MHHDC: Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre
60. NABARD : National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
61. NAS: New Agricultural Strategy
62. NAWFR: National Alliance for Women's Food Rights
63. NCW: National Commission for Women
64. NDDB: National Dairy Development Board
65. NGO: Non Governmental Organisation
66. NTFP: Non-Timber Forest Product
67. PDS: Public Distribution System
68. PESA: Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act (1996)
69. PGN: Practical Gender Needs
70. PIM: Participatory Irrigation Management
71. PPVFR Act: Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act
72. PRI: Panchayati Raj Institutions
73. PTD: Participatory Technology Development
74. RAWE: Rural Agricultural Work Experience
75. RBI: Reserve Bank of India
76. RWCT: roof water collection tanks
77. SCs Scheduled Castes
78. SEWA: Self Employed Women's Association
79. SGI: Strategic Gender Interests
80. SHG: Self Help Groups
81. SHT :Spearhead Team
82. SIDA Swedish International Development Agency
83. SOPPECOM: Society for Promoting People's Participation in Ecosystem Management
84. STs: Scheduled Tribes
85. STEP: Support for Training and Employment Programmes
86. (T&V) System of Extension: Training and Visit System of Extension
87. TGCS: Tree Growers Cooperative Society
88. TRIPs: Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights
89. TRYSEM: Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment
90. UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
91. UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund
92. UPOV: Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants
93. VIKSAT: Vikram Sarabhai Centre for Development Interaction
94. VKC: Village Knowledge Centre
95. WID: Women in Development
96. WTO: World Trade Organisation
97. WUA: Water User's Association

About the Author

Dr. Sara Ahmed has been working on the politics of community participation in natural resource management interventions in India since 1983. After completing her doctorate from the University of Cambridge (1991) she joined the Institute of Rural Management (IRMA), Anand, Gujarat, in 1992, teaching courses in rural development, gender policy and environmental issues. She left IRMA in 2002 and was Visiting Fellow for 2003–2004 at the Uttara Devi Resource Centre for Gender and Development, M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai. Sara is presently based in Ahmedabad where she works closely with a number of NGOs on gender-inclusive, rights-based approaches to livelihood security. Her current action-research interests include gendered vulnerability and disasters, building multi-stakeholder partnerships in river basin management and strengthening people's advocacy on decentralized and equitable water alternatives. In addition, Sara is a member of the National Steering Committee for the Global Environmental Facility Small Grants Programme and a member of the Executive Committee of PRAVAH, a civil society network on water and sanitation issues in Gujarat.

Unit 1
Poverty, Livelihoods and Sustainability

The service of India means...the ending of poverty, ignorance, disease and inequality.
- Jawaharlal Nehru, 14 August 1947

...the task that Nehru had identified remains, alas, largely unaccomplished. - Dreze and Sen, 1996

Understanding poverty

Media images of 'India Shining' in the early part of 2004 sought to project a country where economic growth was at its highest ever, balance of payments were robust and foreign exchange reserves and investments were booming. India was self-sufficient in food, there were significant increases in literacy and life expectancy, greater access to communication and information services and a general 'feel-good' factor, proud to be Indian. Such images, however, contrast sharply with the dark underside of India, where poverty is characterized by multiple deprivations including the lack of access to basic amenities, education and security of livelihoods. This was most vividly portrayed at the World Social Forum (Mumbai, January 2004) where social movements on the rights to food, water, shelter, income and livelihood security as well as campaigns against all forms of discrimination, violence and unfair trade practices linked national and global actors in a common agenda to make 'another world possible'.

According to the UNDP Human Development Report (2003) more than 1.2 billion people – one in every five on Earth – survive on less than $1 a day. During the 1990s the share of people suffering from extreme income poverty fell from 30 per cent to 23 per cent. But with a growing world population, the number fell by just 123 million – a small fraction of the progress needed to eliminate poverty (UNDP 2003:5). Thus, not surprisingly, the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) seeks to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The first target, to *'halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 a day'* (emphasis added), is a critical benchmark for all nations who have accepted the Millennium Development Compact (MDC). The eight goals and seventeen targets or benchmarks [Annexure 1] that comprise the Compact are meant to lay the foundation for a nationally owned, broad-based plan of action which should involve a range of stakeholders (including for example, members of civil society, corporates, policy-makers and planners) in the challenge to eradicate or at best, lower a country's poverty levels.

In India, a signatory to the MDC, there is considerable debate about the numbers of people in poverty. According to government surveys, 320 million people or 35 per cent of the total population fall below the official

poverty line which is significantly lower than the $1/day benchmark (DFID 1999).[1]

Some 80 per cent of poor people live in rural areas, where the incidence of poverty is slightly higher (37%) than in urban areas (31%). Rates of poverty vary widely between states: in Punjab about 12 per cent of the population live below the poverty line (as defined by the Indian Government), whereas in Bihar this figure is as high as 55 per cent. For most states, however, the figure is between 25 and 45 per cent.

Although India has made significant progress in poverty reduction over the last two decades, there is still a long way to go with over a quarter of the world's poor living here. Prior to the mid-1970s, nearly 55 per cent of the population lived below the official poverty line. Between 1975 and 1987 there was a steady decline to 38 per cent, coinciding with an increase in the rate of economic growth from 4 per cent to 5 per cent per annum and strong rural growth.[2] While the correlation between strong economic growth and poverty reduction continued in the 1990s, the proportion of people living in poverty has fallen more slowly, particularly in rural areas, because the focus of growth shifted to industry and services rather than agriculture. In fact, the overall number of poor people has remained roughly constant over the past 25–30 years due to population growth.

Defining poverty

While this quantitative overview of poverty is a useful beginning, it is based on a rather limited definition of the poor as those who are deprived of the basic needs required for their well-being simply because they do not have adequate income (the $1 benchmark). The Indian State for example, "equates poverty with the tangible dimensions of deprivation, that is, lack of access

Gender, caste and poverty

The invisible women who do not participate

Deepa Devi lives alone with her two children in Chuni village as her husband has migrated to a nearby city. Theirs is the only scheduled caste family in the village. When the World Bank's *Swajal* project came in the mid-1990s with its promises of clean water, hygiene education and income-generating programmes, Deepa found that she did not have the time to participate in any of the training sessions, nor was she informed of meetings, though the higher caste women claimed that they had informed her. However, given the fact that Deepa barely receives Rs 200–300 a few times in the year from her husband, and her children are too small to help in agricultural work, she would have had little time to attend the meetings. Her ritually 'polluting' position would have made it difficult for her to sit in the small, tightly packed rooms for sewing or literacy classes. Her house was neither connected to the community water supply, nor did she receive the subsidised sanitation promised by the project.

Ironically, Chuni is the first village to have completed its project allocations under *Swajal*, thanks in part to Menaka Devi, the active treasurer. Not only does her retired husband have a regular job, but her four children help with the housework and her social status in the village means that few men can challenge her. Despite her honest and diligent work on the project, she was one of the most vocal in declaring that Deepa should not have access to any project benefits.

Source: Joshi and Fawcett 2000

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in Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods

Volume 1

to food, nutrition, clothing, shelter, water and basic education" (Murthy and Rao 1997: 11). As 'food deprivation' is seen as the most degrading form of deprivation, the poverty line is defined as the monthly per capita expenditure which enables a person to consume the minimum calorific requirement of 2400 calories per day for rural areas and 2100 calories per day for urban areas (ibid. 52).[3] This figure was fixed in 1973-74 at Rs.49.09 per capita per month for rural areas and Rs 56.06 per capita per month for urban areas and subsequently endorsed by an Experts Committee appointed by the Planning Commission in 1993-94, as Rs 49 and Rs 56 per capita per month for rural and urban areas respectively. Each year, the poverty line is adjusted by the National Income Private Consumption Deflator to account for price rises (inflation), separately for rural and urban areas (Consumer Price Index for agricultural labourers and industrial workers). For example, it currently stands at Rs 24,200 per annum per household or roughly Rs 2000/month.

Such a narrow equation of poverty with material deprivation has been challenged on many fronts: the UNDP Human Development Report (1997) argues for broadening the definition of poverty to include deprivation in terms of creativity, freedom, dignity, self-esteem and the respect of others. Chambers (1988) extends the intangibles to include social isolation, vulnerability during crises such as 'natural' or 'human' disasters, powerlessness and dependency. Thus, the poor are seen as people who have certain social characteristics related to the local economic, social and power relationships in which they are embedded. The most visible manifestation of the *social exclusion* approach to poverty is the situation of *dalits*, *adivasis* and women in India. Scheduled castes and tribes who comprise almost a quarter of the country's population (their share in the population varies from state to state) account for more than 40 per cent of those who are officially defined as poor. Despite affirmative legislation (e.g. reservation) and guarantees of equality in the Indian Constitution, *dalits* and *adivasis* continue to be victims of systematic discrimination and violence. Although caste and class hierarchies do not necessarily coincide, the resilience of caste attitudes and practices, particularly in rural areas, and the ad hoc implementation of development schemes make it more difficult for the vast majority to break out of the twin ties of social oppression and economic exploitation.

Gender and poverty

Women are less than 50 per cent of the population of India. The 2001 Census records a sex ratio of 933 females to 1000 males, down from 972 at the turn of the century. This declining sex ratio is an indicator of the low status of women and gender disparities in access to education, health care, property rights (land) and employment opportunities and of the increasing violence at all levels (home and workplace). Protective legislation, such as banning dowry or child marriage, is often ineffective, especially in rural areas. Although overall women represent an increasing proportion of the poor, the inter-linkages between gender disadvantage and poverty are complex and contested.[4] However, preoccupation with the *incidence* of poverty among men and women (based on income or purchasing power) has outstripped consideration of a far more important question, namely *how* – through what social and institutional mechanisms – men and women slide into poverty and stay there or move out (Razavi 1999). This perspective sees poverty as a dynamic *state of being* in which people enter and stay in for varying periods of time during the course of their life cycle. For example, rural poverty has a strong seasonal dimension (distress migration), or can be due to sudden 'shocks' (loss of land or family members in floods or an earthquake), or be precipitated over time (for example, the impact of HIV+ and AIDS on agricultural labour in many African countries).

Feminisation of poverty[5]

The term 'feminisation of poverty' originates from debates in the United States about single mothers and welfare, dating from the 1970s when various movements such as feminism, environment and peace were increasingly visible. Although there is much discussion about the phenomenon, there is little clarity about what the concept means and whether or not such a trend can be empirically verified. The feminisation of poverty has been linked to firstly, a perceived increase in the proportion of female-headed households (FFHs) and, secondly, to the rise of female participation in low-return, urban, informal-sector activities, particularly in the context of structural adjustment programmes. The term has been used to mean

- That women have a higher incidence of poverty than men.
- That their poverty is more severe than that of men because they start from a disadvantaged position of gender discrimination.
- That there is greater poverty among women, particularly associated with rising rates of FFHs.

However, although global estimates suggest that the number of FFHs is about 30–35 percent of households, there is no direct causal relationship between poverty and FFHs as there are several other impacting factors, for example, the number of dependents a woman has to look after, or the support from family and social networks.

From poverty to a livelihoods focus

To sum up, definitions and measurements of poverty based on income or consumption levels are limited for a number of reasons (Cross 2002):

- They ignore the assets on which most poor people rely for their livelihoods, including access to resources (natural and financial), good health and the capacity to work.
- They fail to capture the many critical aspects of deprivation, including the health burden linked to poor housing and lack of basic services such as access to potable water and sanitation.
- They tend to overlook the social relations underpinning poverty or processes of impoverishment, for example, insecure or uncertain tenure (land) or resource rights (e.g. to water), the lack of political influence and continuing discrimination on the basis of caste, class or gender. Inequalities in entitlements and the institutional structures which perpetuate inequality (e.g. intra-household relations of power and decision-making) limit people's access to income-earning opportunities, services and resources as well as the fulfillment of their civil, political, economic, or fundamental human rights.

The growing recognition of the multi-dimensional nature of poverty has led to the more holistic concept of 'livelihoods', which at its simplest defines the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and labour required for a means of living.

A livelihood comprises people, their capabilities and their means of living, including food, income and assets. Tangible assets are resources and stores (stocks) and intangible assets are claims (entitlements) and access. People who lack the necessary resources to ensure a regular supply of the necessary flows in the face of seasonal and other variability and shocks of various kinds are 'vulnerable'. People who lack the flows are 'poor' (adapted from Chambers and Conway 1991, see also: www.livelihoods.org).

A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and can maintain or enhance its assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the

resource base on which it, and future generations, depend. Apart from environmental sustainability, the notion of sustainability has other dimensions including:

- Economic: maintaining a baseline of minimum economic welfare which is context-specific; that is the norms will vary in each country – USA and India, for instance, have differing baselines.
- Social: minimizing social exclusion and enhancing social equity.
- Institutional: creating an effective and participatory governance framework.

Although sustainability is difficult to define, let alone measure, and not many livelihoods will qualify as being sustainable over all the dimensions outlined, it does provide a useful conceptual framework for looking at the *processes* and *institutional structures* underlying poverty and poverty-alleviation strategies. From the perspective of rural development the concept of sustainable livelihoods enables us to look at agriculture, the major source of livelihood in rural India, through a more holistic lens. This encompasses the natural resource base on which farmers depend (land) and the social relationships determining access to resources and inequitable patterns of ownership or use rights.

Such an approach endorses the agency of the rural poor and recognizes the diversity of livelihood strategies that they adopt in the face of complex relations of inequality, conflict, competition, exclusion, patronage and marginalization.

Endnotes

[1] The Below Poverty Line/Above Poverty Line (BPL/APL) distinction is used to 'measure those below/above the official poverty line. In 2002, according to government estimates only 25 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line.

[2] This is the 'official' government position on declining rates of poverty. However, it has been contested by Amartya Sen and others, who question the kind of data and methods used. Currently, there is an ongoing exercise to expand the definition of poverty by including more variables, but for political reasons, the State is as yet unwilling to release this data.

[3] For a detailed discussion on the calculation of the poverty line, see Murthy and Rao 1997.

[4] Feminist scholars argue that the focus on 'women in poverty' or the feminisation of poverty in the 1970s easily accomodates the welfare approach designed to address the needs of poor women as mothers and wives, rather than tackle questions of gender subordination and equity concerns (Kabeer 1997).

[5] Source: BRIDGE (2001) Briefing paper on the feminisation of poverty, IDS BRIDGE Report No.59, Sussex: Institute of Development Studies.

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Exercises

1. Classroom discussion

Voices of the poor

Learning Objective

- To enable students to reflect on their perceptions of the poor and poverty.

Procedure

- Divide the class into small, mixed groups of 4-6 students.
- Give each student a set of the three readings provided.
- Ask the students to read the three selections individually or as a group (it may take longer but students could gain more by reading loudly as a group, though you will have to see that they do not disturb other groups in the process). Then ask each group to reflect on the following questions:
    - What is the image of poverty that the poet is trying to convey to you?
    - Do you think that the imagery used is realistic? Share images of poor people or poverty that you know best, that have made an impact on you.
    - If you were poor and someone suddenly gifted you one lakh rupees and three wishes that could change your life, what would you do?
- Ask the students to put down their 'wishes' on chart-paper and pin these up around the class room.
- Let the different groups walk around and read these charts.
- Summarise key emerging themes on poverty and how they perceive it. For example, are the poor only seen as victims and dependents on charity? Or do the students feel that the poor are agents of their own destiny, that they are human beings with dignity.

Daridro

Kazi Nazrul Islam

O poverty, thou hast made me great.
Thou hast made me honoured like Christ
With his crown of thorns. Thou hast given me
Courage to reveal all. To thee I owe
My insolent, naked eyes and sharp tongue.
Thy curse has turned my violin to a sword.

O proud saint, thy terrible fire
Has rendered my heaven barren.
It has prematurely dried beauty.
My feelings and my life.
Time and again I stretched my lean, cupped hands
To accept the gift of the beautiful.
But those hungry ones always came before me.
And did snatch it away ruthlessly,
Now my word of imagination is
Dry as a vast desert.
And my own beautiful!

My yellow-stalked pensive desire
Wants to blossom like the fragrant shafali.
But thou cruel one
Dost ruthlessly break the soft stalk
As the woodcutter chops the branches
Off the trees. My heart grows tender
Like the autumn morning
It fills with love
Like the dew-laden earth.
But thou art the blazing sun
And thy fiery heart dries up the tiny drop of the earth.

I grow listless in the shadowy skirt of the earth
And my dreams of beauty and goodness vanish!
With a bitter tongue thou askest,
"What's the use of nectar?
It has no sting, no intoxication, no madness in it.
The search for heaven's sacred drink
Is not for these in this sorrow-filled earth.
Thou art the serpent, born in pain.
Thou will sit in the bower of thorns
And weave the garland of flowers.
I put on thy forehead the sting
Of suffering and woe."

O I sing, I weave a garland,
While my throat is on fire,
And my serpent daughter bites me all over!

O unforgiving Durbasha! Thou wanderest
From door to door with thy beggar's bowl.
Thou goest to the peaceful abode of
Some sleeping happy couple
And sternly callest, "O fool,
Knowest thou, that this earth is not anybody's
Pleasure bower for luxury and ease.
Here is sorrow and separation
And a hundred wants and disease.
Under the arms of the beloved
There are thorns in the bed,
And now must thou prepare
To savour these." The unhappy home
Is shattered in a moment,
And woeful laments rend
The air. The light of joy is extinguished
And endless night descends.

Thou walkest the road alone
Lean, hungry and starved.
Suddenly some sight makes thine eyebrows
Arch in annoyance and thine eyes
Blaze forth fires of anger!
And lo! Famine, pestilence and tempest
Visit the country, pleasure-gardens burn,
Palaces tumble, thy laws
Know nothing but death and destruction.
Nor for thee the license of courtesy.
Thou seekest the unshamed revelation of stark nakedness.
Thou knowest no timid hesitation or polite embarrassment
Thou dost raise high the lowly head.
At thy signal the travellers on the road to death
Put round their neck the fatal noose
With cheerful smile on their faces!
Nursing the fire of perennial want in their bosom
They worship the god of death in fiendish glee!
Thou tramplest the crown of Lakshmi
Under thy feet. What tune
Dost thou want to sing
Out of her violin? At thy touch the music turns into cries of anguish!
Waking up in the morning, I heard yesterday
The plaintive Sanai mourning those

Who had not returned yet, At home
The singer cried for them and wept bitter tears
And floating with that music the soul of the beloved
Wandered far to the distant spot
Where the love anxiously waited.
This morning I got up
And heard the Sanai again
Crying as mournfully as ever.
And the pensive Shefalika, sad as a widow's smile,
Falls in clusters, spreading
A mild fragrance in the air.
Today the butterfly dances in restless joy
Numbering the flowers with its kisses.
And the wings of the bee
Carry the yellow of the petals,
It's body covered with honey.

Life seems to have sprung up suddenly
On all sides. A song of welcome
Comes unconsciously to my lips
And unbidden tears spring to my eyes
Someone seems to have entwined my soul
With that of Mother Earth. She comes forward
And with her dust-adorned hands
Offers me her presents.
It seems to me that she is the youngest daughter of mine,
My darling child! But suddenly I wake up with a start.
O cruel saint, being my child,
Thou weepest in my home, hungry and reviled!

O my child, my darling one
I could not give thee even a drop of milk
No right have I to rejoice.
Poverty weeps within my doors forever
As my spouse and my child.
Who will play the flute?
Where shall I get the happy smile
Of the beautiful? Where the honeyed drink,
I have drunk deep the hemlock
Of bitter tears!
And still even today
I hear the mournful tune of the Sanai.

Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899–1976) was born in the village of Churulia, West Bengal. He produced more than 20 books of poetry, songs, fiction and plays. He is known as the rebel poet. Translation by Kabir Chowdhury, from the Kazi Nazrul Islam Page at http://www.globalfront.com/nazrul/, edited by Ben Jones. Thanks to Asit Dowla for this selection.

2. The Orphan

Muhammad al-Maghut

Oh! The dream, the dream!
My sturdy gilded wagon
Has broken down
Its wheels have scattered like gypsies everywhere.
One night I dream of spring
And when I woke
Flowers had covered my pillow.
I dreamt once of the sea
And in the morning
My bed was full of shells and fins of fishes
But when I dreamt of freedom
Spears were surrounding my neck
Like the morning halo.
From now on you will not find me
In ports or among trains
But thre ...in public libraries
Falling asleep over the maps of the world
(As the orphan sleeps on the pavement)
Where my lips touch more than one river
And my tears stream
From continent to continent.

The Syrian poet and playwright Muhammad al-Maghut has lived in Damascus, Beirut and the Gulf region. His central concern is with freedom and justice in the Arab world. In this poem he describes an orphan who dreams of finding freedom through literacy and travel. Translated by May Jayyusi and John Heath-Stubbs, from Modern Arabic Poetry: An Anthology, edited by Salma Khadra Jayyusi. © 1987 Columbia University Press. Reprinted with the permission of the publishers. www.worldbank.org

3. Du Fu, Wisdom about Poverty and Inequality

Behind the gates of the wealth
Food lies rotting from waste
Outside it's the poor
Who lie frozen to death

When visiting China ..., IDS researchers ... visited the house of the famous 8th century Chinese poet Du Fu. Whilst there, their Chinese hosts recited one of Du Fu's most famous short poems which, it turned out, is about poverty and inequality.

(http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/pvty/prpnl3.html) with limited information about the author and the work. Thanks to Asfi Dowla for this selection. We 'd welcome any information that anyone can offer.

2. Photo-study

Learning Objectives

- To use photographs as a method of understanding and studying life situations and issues of poverty and livelihoods
- To interpret visual clues and analyse their meanings
- To understand and appreciate different viewpoints

Procedure

A. Collecting photographs

- Make a personal collection on the theme by cutting out pictures from magazines and journals, downloading them from the Net, or by taking your own (for those who like using a camera). It is useful for teachers to add to and maintain such a collection on different themes for classroom use.
- Request students to make a similar collection by similar methods and then bring them for the class discussion. Give sufficient time for this preparation.
- If some of the students are interested in photography, organise a contest or festival on the theme and prepare the exhibit in time for the discussion

B. Using photographs

- For the discussion photographs may be mounted and displayed on a board, placed on the table, or passed around. If possible displays should be maintained for some time after the discussion.
- Depending on the size of the class divide the students into pairs or small groups for discussion and assign one photograph to each group. When the group starts talking about their conclusions, the photograph should be prominently displayed so that everyone can see it.

Note: These are only suggestions. Teachers can use other methods also.

Discussion

- Give a title or caption to the photograph. Give reasons for your choice.
- What do you think are the circumstances/background to the kind of situation you see in the photograph? What makes you think so?
- What can you find out about the kind of deprivation experienced and/or about the kind of livelihoods of the people in it?
- What kind of social relationships are portrayed/hinted at?
- What do you think are the "causes" for what you see in the photograph?
- What emotions did you feel when you saw the photograph? What do you think you were expected to feel?
- What is the photographer trying to tell you? Can you sum it up in a few words?

Unit 2
Understanding Gender : Can men and women be equal?

For centuries it was believed that the different characteristics men and women exhibited were natural and immutable – determined by biological or sex-based differences. Interpretations of sexual difference are complex and are rooted historically in both science and religion. For example, in the mid-1980s the evolutionary British philosopher Herbert Spencer argued that the division of labour between the sexes was the result of evolution: the different roles that men and women performed had evolved to ensure the survival of the fittest. Thus, those societies in which men did physically harder work, allowing women time to rest and produce healthy children, have, according to this viewpoint, gained in the struggle for survival.

The biologists Geddes and Thomson (late 1800s) maintained that the physiological differences between men and women were due to basic differences in cell metabolism. Female metabolism was 'anabolic' (having the ability to transform and store food) while male metabolism was 'katabolic' (which destroys food reserves immediately). Hence, somewhat in contrast to Spencer's view, the division of labour in which men rested and allowed women to work was in their opinion, "the best, the most moral and the most kindly attainable" (in Sayers 1982).

Such biologically determined arguments were used to deny women access to educational opportunities on the grounds that education was too stressful for them. Moreover, it was alleged that sexual equality could only be achieved at the cost of damage to women's reproductive functions. Latter-day studies on the differences between male and female brain sizes were used to justify women's apparent lack of intellectual ability, as their brain is smaller and lighter. In addition, sex-trait stereotypes determined ideas and beliefs about what was masculine and feminine behaviour – women were considered gentle, emotional and patient whereas men were seen as rational, aggressive and physically stronger. Sex-role stereotypes were based on assumptions about appropriate aptitudes or work for the sexes: women were seen as being better at 'social work' as nurses or teachers, whereas men were considered more fit for technical jobs such as engineering, plumbing, carpentry or arduous work like long-distance truck-driving.

Ancient philosophers and the world's religions also distinguish between men and women,

associating the former with 'culture' (rationality, intelligence) and the latter with 'nature' (wild, needing to be tamed). Christianity's Adam and Eve myth maintains that God created man, an exemplary human being, first and next woman, the one who sinned, from his rib, and Hindu texts and Islam associate women's bodies with impurities. The Buddhist Jataka tales claim that women are "unstable as the sand, cruel as the snake ... sowers of strife and dissension ... their passions insatiable, for they act according to their inborn nature" (Geetha 2002). On the other hand, all religions venerate the mother figure – the virginal Mary, or Ceres, the Greek goddess of fertility, or Kali-Ma – celebrating the maternal values of compassion, nature and nurture.

'Differences' as a social construct: gender

Since the 1950s, cross-cultural research has shown that rather than being predetermined or natural, almost all such perceived characteristics have been shaped and constructed by society. Essentially, building on biological difference (male/female), societies have evolved roles, traits and forms of behaviour that are thought to be typical of women and men. From the time we are born as boys and girls we go through a process of socialization or **gendering,** which unconsciously and consciously, directly and indirectly defines who we are and our attitudes and beliefs about each other. Institutions such as the family, school/college, religious and cultural institutions, the media and the workplace set norms or standards against which we measure ourselves: patterns of work, modes of feeling and relating, style of clothing, systems of learning and, most significantly, access to resources and power.

Thus, **gender** roles are socially constructed and may overlap with biological roles defined by our sex, but they are mediated through our interactions with our social environment. For example, women's biological role in child bearing and nurturing may extend their gender roles to not only child rearing but also caring for other household members, food preparation and household maintenance. Our **gender identity** determines how we are perceived and how we are expected to think and act as women and men because of the way society is organised.

Gender relations are the **social** relations between men and women that reflect how **power** is distributed between the sexes (March 1999). They define the way in which roles, responsibilities, rights and obligations are allocated and the way in which each is given a

Table 1 : The Differences between Sex and Gender

Sex	Gender
Biological difference: male/female	Social relationship: men/women
Universal or similar whether you are categories, born in India or Iceland	Varies according to socio-economic specific historic, political and cultural contexts, economic and technological change
Cannot be changed (except through medical intervention)	Can be changed or at least challenged
Biological differences may contribute to gender differences, but they are mediated through interactions with our social environment. **Men and women are social products.**	

value. Gender relations create and reproduce systemic differences in men and women's position or status in a society. However, gender relations are context-specific. That is, they are mediated by other social relations of power which construct inequalities such as class, caste, ethnicity, race, disability as well as age. For example, *dalit* and *adivasi* women may have relatively more mobility in the public domain, and hence access to economic opportunities, than an upper caste woman who may be restricted because of the social practice of *purdah*. However, social exclusion practices based, for example, on the notion of 'pollution' will define which well a *dalit* woman can use for fetching drinking water (invariably further away) or render both *dalit* and *adivasi* women the objects of sexual exploitation by landlords, the police, etc.

Gender relations are **dynamic**; they vary across time and place and between different groups of people depending on factors such as reforms in laws, economic policies, technological change and the role of social actors who seek to transform gender inequalities.

It is important to understand that gender relations are **complex** and can be simultaneously relations of cooperation, connection and mutual support and of conflict, separation and competition (Ramaswamy et al 2000). Despite the different skills, domains of work and priorities that rural men and women have in India, they do at one level share a common interest to bring up the family and ensure livelihood security through access to productive opportunities both in agriculture and related non-farm activities. Although men across different social categories tend to have greater power and control over resources than women, their gendered identities are also being challenged and re-negotiated. While it is important that when we look at gender as a social construct we consider *both* men and women, gender analysis tends to focus on women, as they have been largely ignored by the mainstream and their access to resources, endowments and opportunities is still restricted compared to men.

Summary

Gender defines the process by which individuals who are born into the biological categories of 'male' or 'female' become the social categories of 'men' and 'women' through the acquisition of culturally defined attributes of masculinity and femininity as well as the resources and responsibilities associated with these categories.

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Exercises

1. Classroom discussion
Understanding our gendered identities

Learning Objectives

- To increase awareness of male/female stereotypes
- To initiate discussion about some of the consequences of stereotyping.

Procedure

- Divide the class into small, single-sex groups and give each group two sheets of flipchart paper and some marker pens.
- Ask each group to brainstorm all the characteristics of the opposite sex which they believe or which they have heard commonly expressed. For example, women are emotional, talkative, soft; men are hardworking, strong.
- Ask the group to repeat the same exercise for their own sex – and head each sheet of paper accordingly.
- Ask each group to share their ideas for five minutes in a plenary. If the class is too large, let each group share only one set of characteristics. Or, as the facilitator, go through one set of characteristics of each sex (e.g. women are/men are) by the same sex/opposite sex at a time. You may have more control over the discussion if you follow this option as the exercise can create tension. Further, each group does not have to contribute all the characteristics they have come up with. Many will be repetitive, so you could go around and ask a group for one characteristic at a time under the headings "women/men are " keeping in mind the distinction between the same sex/opposite sex rendering of traits.

Discussion

Lead a discussion on stereotypes and their consequences for men and women. For example, men are expected to be aggressive and not show feelings or cry. What are the implications of this for men in the group? Ask the group not to be defensive but to think of where they have acquired such stereotypes from and ways of challenging them.

*(**Source:** Oxfam Gender Training Manual, Activity 25 – adapted)*

2. Classroom discussion
Proverbs on men and women

Proverbs

The male is by nature superior, and the female inferior. One rules and the other is ruled. *Aristotle, 4th century BC, Greece.*

To be a woman means to submit. *Early Han Dynasty, China.*

To bear a girl is to bear a problem. *Ethiopia*

Woman has the form of an angel, the heart of a serpent and the mind of an ass. *Germany*

A woman, a dog, a hickory tree – the more you beat them, the better they be. *European proverb*

A woman's place is at her husband's feet. *India*

A woman belongs to her father when she is born, to her husband when she is married and to her son after she is widowed. *The Laws of Manu, 300 AD, India*

Virtuous is the girl who suffers and dies without a sound. *India*

The man who is not master of his wife is not worthy of being born. *18th century, France*

Women should remain at home, sit still, keep house and bring up children. *Martin Luther, 1502, Germany*

Learning Objectives

- To look at the way in which societies around the world have expressed their beliefs about girls and women and their roles.
- To understand the potential impact of these beliefs on girls and women.

Procedure

- Choose one or more proverbs from the list, or you can provide proverbs of your own, also taking some common ones from the regional language.
- Lead a discussion in the class.

Discussion

Most of the proverbs suggest that women are inferior and need to be controlled by men/ society.

- Ask the students to reflect on what could have been the possible implications of these proverbs for women historically.
- How relevant are these proverbs today, for instance, in shaping our beliefs and attitudes to the girl child?

Unit 3
Policy Approaches to Women and Development: From 'WID' to 'GAD'[1]

The colonial state

The recognition that Indian women are underprivileged and discriminated against dates back to the late 19th century when social reformers – Western missionaries, British legislators, Indian nationalists and Brahmin pandits tried to eradicate degrading social practices including dowry, sati, child marriage and the ban against widow remarriage. At one level such gender reforms need to be seen in the broader colonial context where women became one of the means by which colonial authorities could justify their rule over a 'backward' people in need of a 'civilizing mission' (John and Lalita 1995). At another level, they were led by prominent upper caste/class men (Ram Mohan Roy, etc.) as part of the larger agitation against colonial rule and the process of self-definition for a modernizing India, particularly the emerging bourgeoisie, for whom education was critical.[2]

Nationalist leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose drew many outstanding women leaders – Sarojini Naidu, Durgabai Deshmukh and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya into the movement for independence. Although a number of significant women's organisations were formed in the early 20th century (notably, the All India Women's Conference, the National Commission for Women, and the Women's India Association), women's specific concerns or rights issues were subsumed under the more immediate struggle for independence. Despite nationalist attempts, largely led by Gandhi, to reinforce the image of the docile, submissive Indian woman, the ability of articulate women leaders to participate legitimately in the public domain provided a strong foundation for addressing issues of rights, autonomy, caste and religion in the post-colonial period. Not so well documented, however, are women's struggles in rural areas on survival issues, where anti-imperialism went hand-in-hand with anti-landlord feelings (Kasturi 1995).

Post-Independence: The welfarist approach

The Constitution of independent India (1950) put forward the basic principle of equality of all citizens before the law, irrespective of caste, creed or gender (Articles 14 and 16). Recognising the existence of institutionalized

inequalities the Constitution provided for mandatory instruments for affirmative action by the State – reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) and special measures, overriding the fundamental right of equality if necessary, in favour of women and children (Article 15[3]). More concrete measures to achieve social and gender justice were left to the Directive Principles of State Policy. Although the Constitution is not perfect, it provides the basis for defining women's identity as full citizens of the Indian Republic (e.g. universal adult franchise) and is a statement of their rights to equality, dignity and justice (Mazumdar 2000) (Annexure2).

In 1952, the Backward Classes Commission headed by Kaka Kalelkar declared the women of India, comprising half the population, as 'backward'. Since the government was primarily concerned with the task of nation-building, women, along with other vulnerable groups (the aged, destitute, orphans, handicapped), were seen as a residual category. The First Five Year Plan (1951–56) outlined a philosophy to "promote the welfare of women" so that they can play their "legitimate role in the family and the community" (cited in Chakrabarti 2001). Thus, childbearing, motherhood, health, education and family planning gained visibility as areas in which women should rightfully participate towards the national development effort. However, the Plan noted that special organisations were lacking in the Central and State governments and therefore stressed that "the major burden for organizing activities for the benefit of the vast female population has to be borne by private agencies" (ibid.).

A Community Development Programme (CDP) was launched in 1952 to improve agriculture and transform village society. It provided for the appointment of two *gram sevikas* (village-level workers) and a *mukhya sevika* (woman animator) in each block. Attempts were also made to organise women into *mahila mandals* (women's groups) and in 1954 the Central Social Welfare Board was formed to extend social services to women, particularly destitutes and widows, and vulnerable groups.

While initiatives under the welfare approach were important and well meaning, they reinforced women's traditional roles (the mother–child dyad), saw the household as an undifferentiated unit with man as the head and (economic) provider and were largely non-threatening to the patriarchal order.

Towards equity and equality: 1970s ...

In 1974, as part of the growing global recognition to understand the different dimensions of women's vulnerability, the government set up a Committee to study the Status of Women in India. The Committee's landmark report, **Towards Equality**, concluded that barring a few gains for women who had found jobs in the expanding public services sector, the previous two to three decades of planned development had seen a worsening of women's situation on various fronts. The report sought to provide an extensive database on the socio-economic position of women in India through the analysis of gender-disaggregated data on the sex ratio, literacy, infant mortality, life expectancy and access to health and educational opportunities by women/girls. Amongst the many recommendations of the Committee were the need for greater participation of rural[3] women in local governance, a well-defined policy to provide equal employment opportunities for women, particularly those in the informal sector, and the need for a uniform civil code.

Spurred by the activities under the UN Decade for Women (1975–85), the 1970s can be seen as the first phase of the women's movement in India with the emergence of extensive campaigns against all forms of violence,

particularly dowry deaths and rape. Using a variety of strategies, women's organisations raised public awareness on the declining sex ratio and violence against women, protested on specific incidents (e.g. the Mathura rape case), provided support to women victims and sought legal reforms in antiquated laws. Organisations such as the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a trade union of women in the unorganised sector, campaigned for their rights as workers employed in a variety of trades and services (see: www.sewa.org). Recognising their economic contribution, the Census of 1981 came up with a new employment category called 'marginal workers' (persons working less than 183 days/ year in a given activity). The *Shramshakti* Report (1988) of the Committee on Women in the Unorganised Sector further emphasized the need to recognize women's contribution to the informal economy and give home-based workers and others an identity.

The equity approach saw women as active participants in the process of development and sought to integrate them into the economic system (by providing employment opportunities and access to the market) through legal and administrative changes. However, top-down legislation was never easy to implement as it called for a fundamental restructuring of institutions to address relations of gender and power. Thus, by the 1980s there was a shift in focus to the material conditions underlying women's position vis-à-vis men.

The anti-poverty approach: 1980s...

By the mid-1980s there was sufficient data emerging to suggest that one-third of predominantly rural households around the world were headed by women, whether *de jure* or *de facto*.[4] Large-scale migration from rural areas had compelled women to not only look after their families but also their landholdings, often in the face of adverse conditions and with little access to land tenure or agricultural expertise. The 'feminisation of poverty' argued that women's poverty was not a problem of subordination vis-à-vis men, but one of underdevelopment – that is, women were seen as the poorest of the poor as they lacked access to or control over productive resources including land, credit, skills, information and knowledge.

The World Bank's 1991 report on Gender and Poverty in India (World Bank 1991 emphasized the criticality of access to resources: "Efforts to improve the position of women must focus on women as economic actors. Women are more vulnerable than men to the extremes of poverty and its consequences. The labour force participation of women and their proportional contribution to total family income are the highest in households with the lowest economic status. Even where there is a male earner, women's earnings form a major part of the income of poor households ... Compared with men, women contribute a larger share of what they earn to basic family maintenance. Policymakers ... fail to recognize, and hence to harness, the strategic potential of women as critical actors in the process of moving their families out of poverty. Measures to enhance women's access to productive resources are critical as direct and self-targeting means to reduce poverty. Women are central to the success of poverty alleviation measures in the short and long-term. Market forces have great potential to influence gender ideology and increase the perceived value of women. The question of access is fundamental to the social construction of gender" (cited in Ramaswamy et al. 2000).

Such strong words provided the underlying rationale for a host of poverty alleviation programmes to be either targeted at women directly (DWCRA) or have special quotas for them (IRDP, TRYSEM, STEP, JRY). Savings

and credit activities were an integral part of these schemes, which ranged from self-employment through enterprise promotion to wage employment or participation in numerous projects around the restoration of land, water and forest resources (wasteland development through social forestry, watershed management, handpump maintenance, sanitation, etc.). Population control was also viewed as a simultaneous objective based on the rationale that increasing women's economic potential through education and employment would in turn lead to a reduction in fertility rates.

Experience with the anti-poverty approach suggests that income-generating schemes have tended to be small in scale and have not only reinforced women's traditional skills (e.g. tailoring, *papad* and pickle-making), but have also extended their nurturing roles to the community (e.g. raising nurseries) without questioning who controls income within the family or enhancing their decision-making roles. Furthermore, since they have been based on the assumption that women have 'free time' many anti-poverty programmes have ignored women's reproductive roles. Such programs may impose an additional work burden on women in cases where childcare facilities are not available. Alternatively, this responsibility is passed on to younger daughters. The assumed elasticity of women's unpaid labour time has become particularly critical in the recent context of structural adjustment and globalization where the market (local, national, global) and privatization have been given primacy over public expenditure for social goods such as basic health care, primary education and the provision of drinking water.

The efficiency approach

World Bank and IMF-driven structural adjustment programmes and stabilization measures were initiated in India from the early 1990s, though the Latin American, African and to some extent West European nations have been victims of such policies since the 1980s. 'Sector reforms' (e.g. agriculture, water sector, power, infrastructure, etc.) have become the underlying basis for planning and resource allocation with a strong focus on privatization, reduction in subsidies and in social-sector expenditure. But the assumed neutrality of the market overlooks prevailing 'male bias' in institutional structures. On the one hand, these structures deny women equal access to opportunities in an increasingly competitive environment and, on the other, shift the burden of costs from the paid to the unpaid economy, particularly through the use of women's unpaid labour time.

The efficiency approach has become attractive with many donors and the State as it seeks to invest in women as a productive resource to ensure that development is more efficient and effective. However, the economy is only seen in terms of goods and services which have a *value*, the household is viewed as an altruistic unit and gender barriers to labour reallocation are ignored. Women are seen more or less entirely in terms of service delivery, capacity and ability to extend the working day – the underlying rationale being that 'women can always cope' (with more work).

The empowerment approach[5]

By the mid-1980s, it was recognized that women experience oppression differently according to their class, caste, race, culture, religion, age, history and so on. Grassroots women and feminist writers, activists and academics from India, South Asia and around the world argued that Third World women were not a homogenous unit waiting to be 'developed' but rather, the 'feminisation of poverty' was the direct result of women's *inclusion* in the development process. Attempts to make women visible by including them in development projects were merely proposing

false remedies as a solution for the side effects caused by that very remedy, that is, development itself! In explicitly challenging local, national and global power structures, the empowerment approach stressed that women, particularly the poor, should be given the right to make their own choices in life and to influence the direction of change, through their ability to gain control of material and non-material resources (Moser 1993).

In India the past two decades have seen the emergence of two major parallel, but different approaches towards women's empowerment. The first is at the macro level where the State as an agent of social change has been enacting legislation to support women's empowerment. Notable amongst these were the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1993 conferring constitutional status on local self-government bodies and calling for one-third reservation for

Table 2 : WID & GAD

Women in Development - WID	Gender and Development - GAD
1. The Approach	
An approach which views women as the problem	An approach to development
2. TheFocus	
Women	Relations between men and women
3. The Problem	
The exclusion of women (half of productive resources) from the development process	Unequal relations of power (rich and poor women and men) that prevents equitable development and women's full participation
4. The Goal	
More efficient and effective development	Equitable, sustainable development with women and men as decision-makers
5. The Solution	
Integrate women into the existing development process	Empower the disadvantaged and women.
6. The Strategies	
Women's projects • Women's components • Integrated projects • Increase women's productivity • Increase women's income • Enhance women's ability to look after the household	• Identify the different tasks/activities that women and men do across different socio-economic groups • Address different dimensions of social exclusion and vulnerability in terms of access/control of resources and benefits • Organise and empower the poor to 'own' and define the process of development.

women in *panchayats* and proportionately at different levels of governance (block, district). State governments have responded according to their own political exigencies: for example, local elections were only held recently in states such as Bihar. On the whole, decentralization has yielded mixed results for women's political participation and empowerment, depending on the larger institutional context, conflicting interests (local vested groups) and competing demands on women's time. More recently, the Centre has formulated a National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (March 2001), based on the lead taken by states such as Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra; other states have either followed suit or are in the process of initiating such a policy (e.g. in Gujarat the gender equity policy process is being supported by UNFPA). Not so successful however, is the rather beleaguered 81st Constitutional Amendment Bill introduced in 1996, seeking one-third reservation for women in Parliament.

While macro laws and policies create important and legitimized spaces for women's political participation and recognition, for grassroots women to effectively access such opportunities needs tremendous capacity building. And here the second approach to empowerment, basically bottom-up building of women's capacities through their collective mobilization in informal/formal groups has grown in the last two decades. A whole range of development organisations and actors have facilitated spaces for women to share experiences, organise, save, participate in community decision-making and gain access to and control over critical productive resources. The methodologies, approaches and strategies involved differ tremendously as do the relationships with other actors – government, donors, media, to name a few, but the need for networks and alliances between different groups working on similar issues as well as the need for involving men in the discourse on women's development is now widely acknowledged.

In sum, empowerment is not something that can be 'done to' women – appropriate external support can facilitate and support the process of empowerment. But ultimately empowerment is a process where women (and men) themselves critically assess their own situation and are active agents in the process of transforming gender relations.

Summary

Although the various policy approaches – welfare, equity, anti-poverty, efficiency and empowerment – have been presented here in some kind of a chronological order it would be misleading to view them as existing exclusively of each other, in neatly distinguished time periods. Rather, many of the policies have appeared more or less simultaneously with different policies having an appeal for different institutions (the State, NGOs, donors, women's groups) at different times. For example, from a welfare approach to women in the post-independence period, the State has now co-opted the language of women's participation and empowerment, albeit without institutionalized mechanisms to address women's rights and entitlements (Banerjee 1995).

The policy overview also outlines a paradigm shift, in theory if not always in practice, from the more separatist attempts to integrate 'women in development' to a nuanced understanding of the need to mainstream gender as an analytical and social construct at all levels of development policy, organisations and action. Essentially, the WID approach focuses on women's **practical gender needs**, that is, on their everyday material **conditions**, the drudgery of fuelwood and water collection, or the time spent on childcare and cooking, or limited access to employment and educational opportunities. Interventions such as providing access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, or credit and income-generating activities, or a better cooking environment

through the provision of smokeless stoves or biogas seek to ameliorate the drudgery of women's work but do not question who does the work or who benefits.

A GAD approach, on the other hand, focuses on the socially constructed basis of difference between men and women. It emphasizes the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations through addressing **strategic gender needs,** which seek to improve women's position or status (in society, the home, etc.) through capacity building, access and control to resources/assets and so on. However, the distinction between practical and strategic gender needs is not so sharp in practice. Many organisations may begin with a practical intervention – for example, access to irrigation, and seek to involve women despite the fact that they are not 'landowners' while working to secure independent land and water rights for women farmers.

Summary of different policy approaches

Kabeer (1995) summarises the policy shift from WID to GAD in terms of development interventions and their underlying assumptions about gender.

- **Gender-blind policies** do not distinguish between the sexes; they make assumptions which lead to a bias in favour of existing gender relations and tend to exclude women, typically: *'It is a household programme.'*
- **Gender-sensitive policies** are of essentially two types, neither of which challenge the existing distribution of resources and responsibilities:
- **Gender-neutral policies** work within existing gender relations to meet the practical gender needs of both sexes:

  'We will target resources at the right gender.'
- **Gender-specific policies** use the knowledge of gender differences in a given context to respond to the specific practical gender needs of women or men:

  'Women are poor, let us work with them.'
- **Gender-redistributive policies** are intended to transform the existing distribution of power and resources towards gender equity:
  'We need to establish land rights for women.'

Endnotes

[1] These approaches follow Moser's categorization (1993) but are contextualised according to Indian history. WID = Women in Development; GAD = Gender and Development

[2] For a more extended discussion on women's participation in the nationalist movement see Kumar (1993).

[3] The Committee specifically was concerned with rural women because there was already an ongoing dialogue about the restructuring of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) at the time. Besides, the vast majority of deprived or marginalized women in India are rural.

[4] *De jure,* in this case, refers to women who are legally recognized as the head of the household, e.g. single mothers, widows or single women, while *de facto* refers to women who are acting heads of the household in the absence of men who may have migrated (short/long-term).

[5] Empowerment is a complex concept that is interpreted differently by different actors – we look at this in more detail in Unit 10.

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Exercises

1. Classroom discussion
Policy approaches and development practice

Mini-case studies

Case study 1: Education

An evening literacy-project for women ran for six months very successfully. Women studied basic literature and numeracy materials for two hours each evening. The emphasis of the materials was centred on health, agriculture and the status of women. After six months the project ceased and classes were set up in another district, again for six months.

A year later evaluators of the project found that the women had lost their literacy skills through lack of use and their status had remained unchanged within the community.

Case study 2: Environment

Women were selected to be the focus of a forestry project involving the planting of sapling trees in nurseries. They were asked to form village management- committees, and female extension workers came every month to talk with and train women in nursery and forestry techniques.

A few months after the initial meeting the government enforced a law that the nearest forests, which were situated two hours' walk away, uphill, were to become part of a national park and it would therefore be illegal to gather firewood within the park boundaries.

The women felt helpless and had no obvious means available to them to protest against the environmental policy of the government. The female forestry-extension workers, who were non-local, attempted to organise a campaign among the women to protest.

The men in the community were outraged that their women should adopt such a public role and refused to allow their women to attend future meetings with the forestry extension-workers. The women were then compelled to walk greater distances to gather firewood and fodder.

Case study 3: Relief

The workload of women in a refugee camp meant that only men were able to give their views on the running of the camp to the organisers. Although many separated or widowed women were heads of their family units in the camp, traditionally they were not expected to take part in community-council meetings.

The organisers of the refugee camp attempted to set up mixed committee meetings with 50 per cent representation from men and women but found women were extremely reluctant to come forward.

Case study 4: Income generation

A project funded by a large international development agency had been set up to target the status of women. Through credit provision, a women's development officer organised with the male bank manager and male local development officer opportunities for women to borrow money for income generating activities. According to the prescribed annual plan the women's development officer had to build a child-care centre.

Women in the community were expected to knit numerous garments to sell but there was not a suitable market in the immediate proximity and spare cash in an area of subsistence farming was lacking.

The building of a child-care centre involved carrying local construction materials for many miles, and although women were in favour of the concept of childcare, neither they or the men were willing to spend time building.

The women's development officer predicted failure and felt pressurised by her head office superiors who would enquire why money had not been spent as anticipated. She also felt pressurised by the bank manager who had seen little if any returns on his loans. The local development officer was not particularly supportive. He was of the opinion the women are traditionally agriculturalists and therefore finance is wasted if women are involved in development.

Learning Objective

- To examine a number of short case studies of women's development projects and identify strengths and weaknesses in the project approach from a gender perspective

Procedure

- Divide the class into small mixed groups.
- Hand-out the case studies on different development projects and programmes and ask the students to go through each of them, keeping the following questions in mind: *(20 minutes)*

  What are the objectives of the project or programme?

  How does this project affect the workload or status of women?

  Does the project meet women's practical gender needs or strategic gender interests?(neither/both/ or either, see Unit 2 for definition of PGN and SGI)

  What is the underlying policy perspective behind this project: welfare, equity, anti-poverty, efficiency or empowerment?

  How, if at all, can this project be improved to contribute to women's equality and empowerment?

- Ask each group to share their analysis in the plenary *(20 minutes)*. As a facilitator you could ask the students the following:

  Did the case studies provide you with sufficient information to answer the questions asked?

  What additional information do you think you would need to re-design these projects?

  Do you know of any other similar projects or programmes? Please share your insights.

2. Classroom discussion
Gender budgeting

Brinda Karat

Gender budgeting, if it is to be useful as a tool for women's advancement, has to be implemented in conjunction with an egalitarian and democratic vision.

The reference to gender budgeting in the Union Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram's speech brings into the parliamentary domain an issue that has been of concern to women's movements. It is unfortunate that Members of Parliament who spoke on the budget ignored it. There are around 40 countries around the world that have followed the 1984 Australian Government initiative to look at governments' public expenditures and revenue collections from a gender point of view, that is, to assess the differential impact of such policies on women and girls as compared to men and boys. The most comprehensive experience is from South Africa that in 1995 started a gender audit exercise of all Ministries to identify inequalities and to take measures towards their elimination.

There are several aspects of gender budgeting. The collection of gender-disaggregated data mentioned by the Finance Minister is one such aspect. The actual allocations for women-specific schemes or for the women's component in general schemes are important, as is the design of the schemes and programmes meant for women and children. Suppose for example, that the Government of the day was to increase the allocations for women's training and skill development schemes but only for those that strengthened women's "traditional" roles as care-givers. More funds for Industrial Training Institutes to teach women how to sew and cook better would hardly merit marks for gender sensitivity!

Another aspect is how general policies impact on women. Collection of revenue, say, through a hike in excise duties of essential commodities would certainly have a worse impact on women, because generally speaking in patriarchal cultures women would bear a disproportionately bigger share of the burden. Thus the concept of gender budgeting if it is to be useful as a tool for women's advance has to be implemented in conjunction with an egalitarian and democratic vision.

In the light of global experience women's movements in India should be clear about their approach to gender budgeting. In the growing body of literature on gender budgeting, or as it is more popularly called gender responsive budgets (GRBs) and its experience in different countries, the exercise is usually divorced from a critique of the mainstream macro-economic

policy. It is usually seen as part of 'gender mainstreaming' that is, when the mainstream is taken as a given, written in stone. In its recent documents both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have commended the importance of GRBs. In the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers prepared by the Bank and in the debt relief initiatives launched by the IMF in certain countries, the Bank-Fund panaceas have included 'gender mainstreaming' and 'GRBs' as practices, which are essential for 'good governance.' Mary Rusumbi the Director of the Tanzanian Institute working on gender budgeting in that country commented: "The support that the Government is getting from global institutions like the World Bank is very constraining. A lot of instructions come from them, which are kind of anti-progressive towards women and men. One such programme forced the Government to withdraw subsidies for small farmers, the great majority of whom are poor women. These policies are not analysed with a gender perspective."

Thus, even though the Bank–Fund would be pushing policies that are gravely injurious to the interests of women at the macro-level through a neo-liberal economic framework, they could still lay claim to "gender sensitivity" if their definition or concept of GRBs were to be accepted.

In India, the impact of neo-liberal policies on the majority of women has been devastating. The experience has also helped women's organisations and groups to go beyond the tools of conventional feminist analysis of comparisons between men and women or girls and boys to include a wider context relating to inequalities between classes and castes and discriminations faced by minority communities. As long ago as 1988, when India was just entering the phase of structural adjustment policies, women's organisations in a critique of the National Perspective Plan of the Rajiv Gandhi Government had stated: "Problems of women in India are not uniform. A development policy that does not examine women's relationship to macro-policies for national development in different sectors runs the risk of becoming welfare handouts... recommendations to bring women into the mainstream of development ignore the reality of women's marginalisation being the result of such mainstream development." This critique is equally relevant today since it is mainstream neo-liberal policies that have adversely affected women's status the most.

Going by his first budget for the United Progressive Alliance, it would appear that the gender budgeting referred to in the Finance Minister's speech is within the Bank–Fund understanding of it.

While the speech is full of good intentions reflective of the Common Minimum Programme of the UPA, it is not backed up by the necessary funds thus impacting also on women-specific schemes. Budget analysts have linked the low allocations to ideologies that promote privatisation of social services and a retreat of the Government from its social responsibilities. Secondly, there is inadequate appreciation of the depth of the agrarian crisis gripping India and the terrible conditions of distress of the rural poor, particularly women. Thus while the supposed financial restrictions have been used to explain the meagre allocations, say, for food-for-work schemes, such restrictions have not prevented the huge increase in Defence expenditures. The contrast with the rest of the allocations raises disturbing questions about the Government's priorities. Indeed in some cases they are directly discriminatory towards women.

The National Democratic Alliance regime had shown its utter indifference if not contempt towards the issues of poor women by leaving unutilised over Rs.300 crores of funds allocated for these sections in the 2002–2003 budget. This became the basis of a cut of Rs.200 crores

in the interim budget presented by Jaswant Singh in February this year (2004). Instead of reversing this trend, shockingly, the Chidambaram budget retains the reduction in all the schemes relate to women and children under the Human Resource Development Ministry.

In the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and child care schemes, those meant for the most vulnerable sections of society, children of the rural poor, there is a cruel reduction of Rs. 58 crores. At present about 23 million children are covered under the ICDS *anganwadi* projects whereas close to 60 million children need the service. There is an urgent need for redesigning and expanding ICDS and child care services, which require more funds not less. Women's welfare schemes in any case had a meagre allocation of just Rs. 212 crores in the 2002–2003 budget and this has been further reduced by Rs. 37 crores. There is no rationale for doing so. On the contrary, widows for example and female-headed families in low-income groups whose numbers have greatly increased due to increased male migration in conditions of unemployment distress require urgent help but do not find a mention in the budget. Those schemes designed to help improve women's skills through training have received no attention.

Even the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, created as the premier agency to provide self-employed women and women's groups credit, has got just Rs.1 crore more. The only welcome addition, however, is allocations for the rehabilitation of trafficked women, though the concept of rehabilitation needs to be designed keeping in view the demands and needs of the women.

Another important area is that of Health. The Health Ministry is divided into two departments, one for general health, the second for family welfare, a euphemism for population policy–related matters. Even the design of the reproductive and health services is more geared to the control of women's fertility rather than concern for her low health profile. Fortunately the emphasis this time is not on reproductive health programmes. The Rs.500 crore increase to the department is partly for polio eradication and a welcome one-third increase in maternity benefit schemes. However, the general health department gets only an added Rs.200 crores, which is far from the increase in health expenditure promised in the CMP. There are around 1.37 lakh sub-centres in rural India to provide primary health care services but which are actually used for family planning. The Chidambaram budget has no fresh planning for these centres and actually reduces the allocation by Rs.30 lakhs.

There is an ominous message in the crucial area of food security firmly embedded in the wholly misconceived concept of targeting first introduced by Mr. Chidambaram in 1997, which has virtually killed the public distribution system. Thus the budget instead of moving towards universalising the PDS recommended by an earlier Government committee and endorsed by the CMP suggests a pilot project of further targeted 'food stamp schemes' which, as was seen in the Andhra Pradesh experience, can for the poor only be a 'pilot' for disaster.

Going by the experience of this budget it is important for women's representatives and organisations not to allow a 'depoliticising' of the concept of gender budgeting. Its undoubted utility lies in its linkages with the wider struggle for gender justice against the current framework of neo-liberal policies.

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Source: The Hindu (Opinion – Leader Article, 24/07/2004)
URL: http://www.thehindu.com/2004/07/24/stories/2004072401181000.htm

Discussion

- What do you understand by the concept of gender budgeting as discussed in the article?
- How does gender budgeting benefit women?
- Why is gender budgeting an important exercise for the Central government?
- How many state governments have implemented gender budgeting exercises?
- Who, according to the author, largely influences the practice of gender budgeting in India?
- How do you think the proposed 2004 budgetary changes (as discussed in the article) are going to impact poor women, men and their families?
- What role can civil society and women's groups play in ensuring that gender budgeting benefits poor and marginalised women and men?

Unit 4
Gender and Agriculture : An Overview

Women as farmers : invisible work, unequal wages

Agriculture is the largest sector in the Indian economy accounting for 73 per cent of the total labour force in the country. In their varied roles as agricultural labourers, *de jure* landowners, *de facto* household heads, or as self-cultivators and 'managers' of their homesteads women are the invisible backbone of Indian agriculture. Nearly 79 per cent of the total female workforce is engaged in agriculture compared to only 69 per cent of the male workforce. Despite women's diverse productive and reproductive roles in rural agrarian and non-farm activities, their participation as a percentage of the rural workforce, although more than double urban rates, is only 36 percent compared to male participation which stands at 64 per cent.[1]

Table 1 : Trends in Distribution of the Workforce by Sex (%)

	1991		2001	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Rural	67.7	32.3	64.12	35.88
Urban	85.65	14.35	83.02	16.9
Total	71.42	28.58	68.44	31.56

Source: Registrar General of India

However, the extent of female work participation varies across regions and even within the same village depending on caste and class hierarchies and norms of social mobility and seclusion. For example, upper caste women (Darbars, Rajputs, Patels, Nairs and Reddys) will seldom go out to work in the fields, though they may help with tasks that can be done in the family compound (winnowing, seed selection) or around the homestead (looking after kitchen gardens). In contrast, it is generally acknowledged that women from poor peasant households spend between 12 to 16 hours a day on work (this is a vast generalization, but includes both visible and invisible tasks), though this is hardly accounted for in national statistics.

One of the main reasons for the under presentation of women in the data is the implicit or explicit bias in definitions of 'work' in the census forms (and to a lesser extent, the National Sample Survey), the manner in which questions are framed, the inherent biases of investigators (not necessarily linked to their sex)

and the practical difficulties in classifying different activities in the field (Athreya 2002). "For example, if the question is 'what is your main activity?' (in terms of time) even a female respondent would reply 'housework', despite the fact that she may contribute significantly to family production" (Duvvury 1989). On the other hand, conceptual biases arise when apart from wage-work or agricultural work, other tasks performed by rural women are not seen as 'economic contributions', that is, women's work is not 'valued'. The 1961 Census had an expanded definition of work to account for marginal workers, mostly women, who "pounded rice for a wage, minded cattle, sold firewood, or made and sold cow-dung cakes, grass, etc." (Ibid.).

With an overwhelming focus on industry and services under the structural reform process in India, particularly under the NDA government, the rate of growth of employment in the agricultural sector is much slower compared to the organized sector, particularly for women. The 2001 Census show that women's employment in the agricultural sector is growing at an annual rate of 2.3 per cent as opposed to a 3.66 per cent growth rate in the organised sector. However, most of this growth is in female casual labour, which is significantly higher than that of male casual labour. Not only have men found it easier to avail of opportunities in non-farm employment (e.g. in transport and communication sectors), the lack of female mobility between sectors (farm/non-farm) renders them more vulnerable to policy changes. Various factors like socio-cultural barriers (context specific), lack of adequate skills, gender biases in hiring, etc., are responsible for this lack of mobility. On the other hand, the higher percentage of female agricultural labourers has ironically made women's agricultural work more 'visible'.

Table 2 : Percentage of Women in Workforce in India

	1991	2001
Agricultural labourers	38.12	46.62
Cultivators	20.07	32.36
Household Industry Workers	33.05	49.03
Total workers (Main+Marginal)	28.58	31.56

Source: Census 2001

Although there is some inter-regional variation in the incidence of female agricultural labour (depending on different parameters and definitions), it is clear that the shift towards wage-work co-relates with the period of the Green Revolution and the advent of high-yielding cash crops dependent on intensive applications of water, fertilizers and pesticides (see Unit on 7 on women and technology). More than 50 per cent of the growth in female agricultural labourers is due to the increase in the number of non-scheduled castes and tribes agricultural labourers, mostly landless (Duvvury 1989).

Another factor affecting female labour is the unequal wage rates – the ratio of the agricultural wage rate of female labour to that of male was around 70 per cent in the 1980s, but declined substantially to about 60 per cent in the 1990s (Athreya 2002). Regional and seasonal variations notwithstanding, gender discrimination in wage rates often intersects with other forms of exclusion or vulnerability, such as caste, age, disability, 'status' (single, deserted, widow), which further weaken women's ability to negotiate equal wages. Wage differentials can be both direct (different wages for the same work, e.g. paddy harvesting) or indirect (different wages for the different tasks which women and men do: e.g. weeding seen as women's work and field bunding as male work).

"The low wages paid to women cannot be linked with any perceived inefficiency on their

part. In fact, tests conducted...by the Punjab Agricultural University at the...government potato seed farm found that women were four times as efficient as men. The picking rate per labourer per minute was 1.6 for men and 5.2 for women" (MHHDC 2003:). Sometimes unequal wage rates are so deeply entrenched that any attempt to challenge them is met with resistance, often violent, from landowners. In other cases, women are not paid cash but in kind: a portion of the crop they harvest . But women are not necessarily the ones who undersell their labour – male family members often act as go-betweens and are sometimes forced to agree to lower rates either because of social compulsions (low caste) or economic factors (in debt, sometimes to the same landowner/usurer).

Review of agricultural development in India from a gender perspective

Although agriculture was the primary source of employment and income in post-independent India, gross inequities in land distribution coincided with exploitative tenancy and labour relations, unequal access to credit or markets and rural underemployment. High population growth rates, low life expectancy, low levels of literacy and limited access to healthcare facilities also marked the rural sector where 'development' had largely served the interests of the colonial government (extraction of revenue).

Recognising the need for more investment in the agricultural sector, the First Five Year Plan (FYP, 1950–55) allocated almost a third of the total outlay to agriculture, including irrigation and flood control. However, this was something of an exception – all subsequent plans have given agriculture only 20–25 per cent of the total resource outlays. The focus has been instead on the Nehruvian–Mahalanobis strategy of industrial growth and its underlying assumptions of backward-N-forward linkages with the agrarian sector (e.g. through the development of the fertilizer industry or large dams). Community Development programmes and land reforms introduced in the mid-1950s, in the name of participatory development (extension services) and social justice (land redistribution), were poorly implemented, suffering additionally from a lack of resources and the political will to really address the needs of the poor and disadvantaged, including women (see Units 3 and 6). Non-production co-operatives – credit and marketing – also initiated during this period had mixed results, as they did not tackle underlying inequalities in resource distribution.

Over-dependence on cheap food imports under the P.L.480 programme, rising agricultural prices and the impact of periodic droughts during the 1960s on food availability coupled with the increasing likelihood of starvation (famine) forced the State to think of a strategy to avert the growing agrarian crisis. It is in this context that the New Agricultural Strategy (NAS) was launched. It focused on high productivity areas and high yielding crop varieties and also resulted in a subtle shift from public to private investments, particularly in the irrigation sector, despite State guarantees to ensure remunerative prices and continuing subsidies for farmers (Rao 1998).

The **Green Revolution** (GR) is the name given to the set of innovations promoted by the State from the mid-1960s onwards, primarily in the wheat-growing north-western belt (Punjab and Haryana) and in limited pockets of rice-growing areas. It has two core components: the water-seed-fertiliser technology associated with the high yielding crop varieties and the use of mechanical technology such as tractors, combine harvesters, threshers, etc. While the impact of the GR on food availability and distribution is widely debated[2] there are a few important points about the GR strategy from

an equity/ecological perspective that need to be recapitulated:

The almost exclusive focus of the GR interventions were on farmers who had the resources to invest whether in private irrigation infrastructure (tubewells, bores and pumps) or costly inputs (fertilizers, pesticides). Not surprisingly this has had long-term impacts on water tables (overexploitation of groundwater), water-logging (poor canal management), soil fertility and water quality (surface run-off and leaching).

Profits from investments meant a return to self-cultivation by many absentee landlords which in turn, had an impact on tenant farmers – the overall area under tenancy fell from 20 per cent in 1953-'54 to 11 per cent in 1970-'71 (Agarwal 1988). Correspondingly, there has been an increase in the percentage of small and marginal farmers and the landless.

Although the GR package meant an increase in total labour time per acre/crop across regions, the demand has been for hired labour rather than family labour, particularly female casual labour.

While (heavy) agricultural mechanization clearly displaced hired labour, the gendered impacts have been mixed. For example, in many areas tractors are commonly used to transport female agricultural labourers, thus extending the potential labour pool for employers (Duvvury 1989).

Realising some of the negative impacts of agricultural modernization on women farmers, the Fourth FYP for the first time made an effort to address their needs. A 'Farmers Training and Education Programme' was launched by the Ministry of Agriculture, which sought to establish a network of 150 farmer training centres to extend new technologies to women farmers through a range of media such as functional literacy programmes and farm radio broadcasts. This initiative was taken further in the Fifth FYP with the launch of the 'Training and Visit (T&V) System of Extension' in the mid-1970s, on a pilot basis in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and then gradually nationwide. However, the T&V system was based on the assumption that information provided to one family member (typically, by male extension workers to the more visible male farmers/ household heads) would somehow reach others in the household, including women. Not only did this assumption ignore gender dynamics of power *within* households, it concentrated almost exclusively on information about main crops, that is, cash crops, rather than look at the diversified agricultural systems in which women were involved.

The Sixth FYP with its focus on women as active agents of development saw agriculture being promoted in the wider context of rural development and women's empowerment. Donor agencies such as DANIDA supported the mobilisation of women farmers through 'Women in Agriculture' programmes run with the support of state governments in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Orissa. (The Royal Netherlands Embassy launched a similar initiative in Gujarat during the Seventh FYP and in Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh in the Eighth FYP). Essentially these programmes sought to organise 'self-help' farm-women's groups to access support services and technical inputs as well as build their capacity (leadership skills) as extension workers. Some attempts were also made at the state level (including district and local government) to mainstream gender concerns – provide spaces both for the recognition of women as farmers and for professional female support staff in the various agricultural/rural departments. The Central Sector Scheme of Women in Agriculture launched during the Eighth FYP, and extended in the Ninth FYP, seeks to motivate and mobilise farm women into groups, to access technological inputs, credit, etc. besides providing training in managerial and entrepreneurial activities.

The National Agricultural Policy (2001) supports the various Plan initiatives for women farmers and calls for the 'mainstreaming of gender concerns in agriculture'. In practice, this implies "appropriate structural, functional and institutional measures to empower women, build their capabilities and improve their access to inputs, technology and other farming resources" (GoI 2001). Further, the policy discusses the need for land reforms – consolidation of landholdings, redistribution of ceiling-surplus lands and wastelands among the landless and the recognition of women's land rights. But it stops short of spelling out the mechanisms that need to be adopted or put in place for the implementation of such social intent. And given the poor past record of most states in the area of land reform and land rights for women, it is unlikely that capacity-building initiatives alone will lead to the empowerment of women farmers.

1990s onwards: impact of agricultural liberalization on women farmers

The growing integration of India with the global economy over the past decade or so has had a significant impact on the agriculture sector in general and on the incidence of rural poverty and food security in particular. The basic assumption underlying the opening up of trade in agricultural products under the Uruguay Round of the GATT agreement in the early 1990s was that if domestic prices are brought in line with international prices, the terms of trade would move in favour of agriculture and the comparative advantage of India in selected crops (rice, wheat, cotton, tea) can boost up exports (Duvvury 1998). However, markets are not neutral – the insistence that subsidies to farmers in developing countries need to be reduced, while the West still maintained a policy of 'protectionism', has had drastic consequences for a system built on public procurement with minimum support prices for a range of major (cash) crops and subsidised distribution of some essential food items through the PDS shops largely for BPL families.

Food procurement and consumer prices have fluctuated widely – domestic food producers have had to compete with relatively cheaper food imports on the one hand and lower procurement prices on the other. This has led to the incredible growth of food grain stocks held by the public sector, often in rotting, rat-infested godowns, while incidences of chronic absolute poverty and malnutrition amongst significant pockets of the population persist (see MHHDC 2003). Meanwhile, the thrust towards agri-business has led to the dismantling of land legislation in many states. Instead of land going to the landless, it is being given to private corporations for the promotion of export-oriented agriculture: horticulture, floriculture, aquaculture, plantation crops and agro-processing units are all flourishing businesses with often disastrous consequences for food security (shift from food to cash crops), the rights of agricultural labourers (exploitative wages, contract farming) or ecological sustainability (heavy use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides).

The impacts of agricultural reforms on rural women are mixed and need further empirical examination. For example, while there may potentially be more days of wage employment in some cash crop cultivation, the tendency to hire men under contract farming, especially for harvesting operations, can have a negative impact on women's labour. Rising consumer prices coupled with the shift to cash crops has made it difficult for women to ensure household food security or meet other livelihood needs – for example, drinking water sources in many water-scarce areas are drying up largely because of extensive pumping for irrigation or to supply water to growing urban water markets. The 'fiscal discipline' of adjustment policies also necessitates a cut in social support systems –

apart from PDS and public health services, reforms in the water and sanitation sector (demand management, pricing and privatization) have had a significant impact on women's time and workload and, in turn, on access to education of girls who often have to take-over their mother's domestic and childcare responsibilities.

Not surprisingly, the Manila Declaration of the International Conference on Women in Agriculture (November 2003) organized by FIPA/IFAP (International Federation of Agricultural Producers, see: www.ifap.org) has asked agricultural planners to recognize the gendered impacts of trade policies and has called for urgent action on a number of inter-related fronts, including:

Guarantee women's rights to basic livelihood resources, support services and market opportunities; establish mechanisms for participation, access and accountability in trade negotiations and policies that allow women (and men) farmers to take part in the 'governance' of international trade and the delivery of rural programmes; provide capacity building for women farmers and ensure gender-disaggregated data collection and monitoring systems.

Endnotes

[1] All data from Census 2001

[2] According to GoI statistics food grain production went up from 51 million tons in the early 1950s to 206 million tons by the turn of the 20th century; and most of this growth is attributed to the G R strategy.

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Exercises

1. Fieldwork and discussion
Wage rates in agriculture

Class discussion: Ask the students to find out what are the wage rates for different agricultural activities in their area for men/women, for the same tasks/different tasks. Are there crop or seasonal variations? Why do these differentials exist? For example, do women take 'longer' to do certain work or is some work more physically demanding? How do communities perceive such differences – what kind of reasons do they have?

2. Film and Discussion
Invisible hands, unheard voices

In all the film-based exercises, start by viewing the film together as a group. Then initiate a discussion with a few questions. Start with the more general questions and then go on to the more detailed or specific ones. Round off the discussions with the conclusions reached by the group.

Often the students may not be able to respond adequately after one viewing, especially in the case of long films like this one, and it may be necessary to have a second viewing. Before doing this, arouse interest in the topic with some questions and let the students discover for themselves that they need to see it again to explore the issue in depth.

At this point, it may also be useful to provide the questions before the viewing, and/or to divide them into small groups. Allow the small group discussions to continue and each group's findings can be shared with the larger group.

Learning Objectives

- To learn about gender roles in agriculture in diverse regional and sectoral contexts
- To understand the underlying patterns and try to identify the reasons for these

Discussion

- The word "invisible" occurs in the title. What do you think is "invisible"? Why?
- The film was made about fifteen years ago. How much do you think things have changed since then? In which respects? Give some examples of areas where there has been change and those that have remained the same. Can you think of reasons?
- There were several examples in the film of contradictions between what women were saying about themselves, and what others were saying about them. Give a few examples. What do you think could be the reasons?

- Find examples from the film of technologies that were empowering to women and those that were not. Discuss the reasons in each case.
- Some of the major issues for women mentioned were landlessness, unpaid labour, and displacement by machinery. Which one would you prioritise? Discuss reasons for your choice
- Towards the end of this film, the then Director-General of ICAR, the producer of the film, admits that up to then, (1987), scientists had not done much about women-specific technologies, but that this situation would change in the future. Do you think it has done so? Is technology the main problem facing women in agriculture?

Invisible Hands, Unheard Voices

Time	:	52 mins.
Year	:	1987
Language	:	Multiple, English subtitles
Director	:	Saba Dewan, Rahul Roy
Producer	:	ICAR / Jamia Mass Communication Centre
Where available	:	Saba Dewan, A19 Gulmohar Park, New Delhi 110049 Tel: 011-26515161; Fax: 011-26960947 Email: khel@vsnl.com
Format	:	VHS and VCD
Price	:	VHS: Rs. 300 + Rs. 30 courier charges
VCD	:	Rs. 200 + Rs. 30 courier charges
Procedure for obtaining	:	DD in favour of Saba Dewan

Unit 5
Understanding Gender Roles in Agricultural Systems

Both women and men play critical roles in agriculture throughout the world, producing, processing and providing the food we eat. Rural women in particular are responsible for half of the world's food production and produce between 60 and 80 per cent of the food in most developing countries. Yet despite their contribution to global food security, women farmers usually have more limited access to resources and opportunities and are frequently underestimated and overlooked in development strategies. (www.fao.org/gender/en/agri-e.htm).

Why do we need gender analysis?

At its simplest, gender analysis is 'seeing what our eyes have been trained not to see' as it provides us with the conceptual framework, tools and techniques to make visible women's contribution to agriculture.

Gender analysis enables us to explore and highlight the underlying inequalities in the relationship between women and men by asking questions about:

- Who does what work?
- Who has access to which resources and their benefits?
- Who has control over which resources and their benefits?
- Who decides? How?

When asking these questions we need to qualify them by also asking: Which men? Which women? Gender roles and responsibilities are not only structured by the socio-economic position of a household in terms of caste and class, but are also mediated by age – typically it is women and girls from lower caste and class groups who shoulder most of the burden of domestic work in rural India and are the most vulnerable. Upper caste/class women, in contrast, though they may not bear the same burden of productive and domestic work, are generally more socially restricted in their mobility. Older women across caste or class categories tend to enjoy more freedom of movement. (Needless to say there will be exceptions to such broad generalizations. For example, mentally or physically challenged women will always be 'restricted' to some extent, not because of their inherent constraints but because of the way society perceives them and, hence, the limited opportunities for physical access provided to them).

In the context of agriculture, gender analysis enables us to identify the different activities that men and women do, to especially acknowledge women's role as farmers and to understand the constraints and opportunities that women and men face in a specific farming system. On the one hand, gender analysis can help ensure the provision of appropriate agricultural services that are needed by both men and women farmers. And on the other, gender analysis helps us to look at how power relations within the household (normally seen as the private domain) interrelate with the wider

public domain – the community, market and institutions of the State.

Gender analysis is based on two key conceptual categories that help us to understand the structure of inequalities between men and women:

- The gender division of labour
- Access to and control over resources and benefits

The gender division of labour

In all societies, men and women are assigned tasks, activities and responsibilities that are socially determined rather than natural or immutable. The gender division of labour varies from one society and culture to another and, within each culture, it also changes with external circumstances and over time. That is, the gender division of labour is context-specific and 'context' can be as micro as one household to the next within the same community. But gender roles are not rigidly defined and are characterized by both co-operation in joint activities and separation in others. However, the work that women and men tend to do is recognised and ***valued*** differently.

According to Marxist thought, in primitive or pre-class society, the first division of labour was between men and women for the propagation of children – a "'pure and simple outgrowth of nature"' (Engels 1972: 129 cited in Kabeer 1995: 44). "Men provided the means of subsistence while women were concerned with the production and reproduction of human life. Associated with this division of labour was an egalitarian and complementary division of spheres of responsibility. Both contributions were seen as vital to the community so that both sexes enjoyed equal status. Changes in the relations of production, associated with the development of agriculture and the domestication of animals, led to the production of a surplus and the accumulation of wealth. Men's control over this wealth and their need to pass it on to identifiable heirs led to the overthrow of mother-right on which (some) earlier communities had been based, and laid the institutional foundations of women's subjugation, private property, monogamous marriage and patrilineal inheritance" (Kabeer 1995).

The emergence of a capitalist market economy saw a growing distinction between the production of commodities, which shifted to the public sphere of the market from simple exchange, and the (re)production of human life and labour, largely confined to the private sphere of the home. However, by relegating women to the home ('a mere instrument for breeding children') Marxist theory not only marginalized their role in production but also saw their emancipation in limited terms: as workers entering the labour force, they would be free from their dependent family status, build solidarity with working class men and eventually attain 'freedom' through class struggle and revolution. Feminists have sought to address some of the conceptual weaknesses in Marxist theory, particularly the marginalization of women in both types of work: productive and reproductive.

- **Productive work** involves the production of goods and services for consumption and/or trade. It is this work which is mainly recognised and valued as work by individuals and societies, and which is most commonly included in national economic statistics. Although both women and men are involved in productive activities that generate income, women's work is usually undervalued or underpaid compared to that done by men. For example, farmers are nearly always referred to as men, despite rural women's significant contribution to agricultural production. Of the female labour force in India, more than 94 per

cent are in the unorganised or informal sector where they do not have the same rights or security as have workers in the formal sector.

- **Reproductive work** encompasses care and maintenance of the household and its members, including bearing and nurturing children, cooking, washing and collecting water, fuelwood and fodder. Reproductive work is crucial to human survival, yet is seldom considered as 'real work' because it is not subject to quantification by national accounting systems. However, reproductive work is not only largely unpaid, it is also labour intensive, time-consuming and mostly the responsibility of women (or young girls).

There is a third category of work, namely **community work,** which is used to define all the activities that men and women do beyond the household. As, for example, attending/ participating in panchayat meetings, organising community events such as marriages or festival celebrations, managing community resources such as hand-pumps, wells, or sanitation facilities. In general, women extend their 'nurturing' roles to the community by assuming responsibility for the provision of collective goods, such as clean water or healthcare. The extent to which women can manage such enterprises varies according to their skills and abilities (technical, financial), the time they have to participate in community meetings as well as the nature of the group formed (mixed or separate women's group).

Men, because of their relatively easier access to the public domain and the cultural authority they have vested in them, tend to assume community leadership roles. Where women are involved in mixed organisations they tend to form the 'rank and file' and are often socially unable to speak out in meetings. To some extent this has changed with the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments calling for one-third representation of women and SCs/STs in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), but in practice in many parts of the country men still continue to operate as 'leaders' behind their elected wives.

Access is defined as the opportunity to make use of a resource; for example, access to land, water and forest resources on the one hand and to community institutions on the other.

Control refers to the power to decide how a particular resource is used and who has access to it.

Access to and control over resources is mediated by social relations underlying different property regimes, which include:

- **Private property:** The most common example of privately owned resources is land. In India and in most of South Asia land is owned by men despite changes in laws and attempts to give women joint legal rights.
- **Common property resources:** These include community wells, tanks and grazing lands which were traditionally managed through a well-defined system of communal rules and regulations determining who had access (rights and obligations). However, over the years, population growth and socio-economic policies have led to a significant breakdown in the notion of 'community' and their ability to govern institutions.
- **Open access resources:** These are the rivers, streams and wastelands, which are not owned by anyone in any clear legal sense, but fall in the vast realm of *de facto* State ownership and that are largely unregulated and therefore increasingly degraded.
- **Market access:** Traditional relations of exchange and open access to community resources are slowly being taken over by

the market through various forms of privatization and pricing mechanisms – some supported by the State (water sector reforms); others involving NGOs, communities and small entrepreneurs (public–private partnerships); and, at the extreme end, the large controversial transnational corporations such as Coke and Pepsi, which many would argue are indiscriminately exploiting scarce resources such as groundwater, paying little attention to public health standards.

In conclusion

Policies and programmes can challenge and change socially constructed gender roles and access/control over resources and benefits in pursuit of gender equity. For example, women have been successfully trained and employed as water technicians (e.g. handpump mechanics with SEWA, Gujarat, or water and sanitation masons with the Socio-economic Foundation, Kerala), handling jobs that were previously considered as male domains. In addition, in many parts of the country small and marginal women farmers have been mobilised to lease land, which they are collectively farming. However, programmes aiming to increase women's economic participation must ensure that they are not only properly remunerated, but that they are able to exert control over their earnings/savings. Furthermore, they need to find how men or public systems can reduce women's domestic responsibilities without necessarily passing on this burden to the girl child.

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Exercises

1. Fieldwork and discussion

Gender roles analysis: Productive work

Learning Objectives

- To understand the different types of productive work that rural men and women from different caste/class backgrounds do (roles and responsibilities).
- To look at how the time spent on different activities by men and women is valued.

Because the triple role of women is not always recognised, any intervention in one area of work (e.g., enhancing agricultural productivity) will affect the other areas (increase in the number of crops or cropping seasons will put extra pressure on women's time for domestic work). An analysis of the time spent doing different types of work by both men and women including seasonal variations is useful in understanding the time available for them to participate in development projects and the impact of such interventions on community social and economic functions. In addition, nature of productive work and time spent on different tasks will also give the students an insight on who does what work, why, skills and labour involved and so on. This exercise is Part 1 of the Harvard Analytical Framework (see handout) which was developed in the 1980s at the Harvard Institute for International Relations to facilitate the integration of women into development. The basic starting point for the HAF (now renamed the Gender Analysis Framework) is the need to make visible women's work so that they can not only be accounted for, but more importantly, can be included in development planning through the identification of their needs and priorities. Thus, the Framework is essentially a tool for organising information, but it should not be used as a blueprint. For example, many of the productive and reproductive activities overlap and cannot necessarily be separated into neat boxes or time slots. You will also find that communities' understanding of time is very different from our linear days, weeks and months. More importantly, the number of days required for a particular agricultural task will vary with the size of the landholding and access to labour or technological inputs – so there is no uniform number of hours or days for a given activity. That is why it is important that students look at a sample of households and then share their findings in a plenary session.

Procedure

- Identify farming households/communities near the campus.
- Households can be selected according to different castes (dalits, Patels, Reddys, Nairs) or class groups (small or marginal farmers, large farmers, landless). Samples can also be selected according to whether the household is male or female headed and its principle occupation – farming, fishing, animal husbandry, etc.
- Divide the students into small mixed groups (preferably not more than 4 in a group). The number of groups will depend on the different types of households in the vicinity which can be sampled. Ideally, each socio-economic category of household should be profiled separately by one group.

- Each group should do a profile of their rural household focusing on who does what productive work by gender, age and time spent.
- For example, in terms of agricultural activities this can be looked at with reference to:
  - The ongoing cropping season
  - Time allocated daily/seasonally to different tasks
  - Location of activity
- Agricultural tasks can also be:
  - Separated by crop
  - Separated by fields
  - Separate tasks for e.g., plowing, transplanting or post-harvest processing.
  - Shared tasks

Discussion

In looking at the different types of productive work/activities that rural households are engaged in, students can also look at how the work profile has changed over time.

- Have families have moved from being cultivators to agricultural labourers?
- How has male migration (seasonal, long-term) affected women farmers – positively ('control' over decision-making on food crops, perhaps) and negatively (access to male labour, e.g. for ploughing)?
- In terms of paid work, students can also discuss the wages that men and women are paid for the same tasks/different tasks and why.
- How rigid is the division of labour?

2. Fieldwork and discussion
Gender roles analysis: Reproductive work

Learning Objectives

- To understand the different types of reproductive work that rural men and women from different caste/class backgrounds do (roles and responsibilities).
- To look at how the time spent on different unpaid activities by men and women is valued.

Procedure

- Largely as in the first exercise, the reproductive work profile can be done either with the same household or another one, but preferably in the same socio-economic category.
- Reproductive work is unpaid work which goes towards the care and maintenance of the family and involves a range of diverse tasks including:

  Fuelwood, fodder and water collection

  Caring for livestock (grazing, stall-feeding, milking, etc.)

  Cooking, washing, caring for children, elderly, the sick and the disabled
- The profile on reproductive work should assess who does what work, by gender, age and time spent on different activities.

Discussion

- How rigid is the gender division of labour? Has it changed over time, e.g. are men helping in household work more than perhaps they were earlier? If so, why?
- What is the impact of work, particularly reproductive work, on girls' access to education (vis-à-vis boys)?

The students will realise that in some cases the time spent on productive and reproductive work can overlap – for example, women can be engaged in home-based income-generating activities (sewing, making pickles, etc.) while also looking after small children. When mothers engage in paid work to meet household consumption needs, the burden of domestic responsibilities tends to fall on the girl child, and in some cases on both girls and boys. From a life-cycle point of view it will also be useful for the students to understand how women's home-based activities have changed over time and age – as an old mother she may no longer go to collect fuelwood or water, unless she is living on her own, and most of her time will be spent in cooking and/or caring for small children.

THE HARVARD ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This framework was developed in the 1980s in the Harvard Institute for International Relations to facilitate the integration of women into project analysis. It is outlined in *Gender Roles in Development projects: A Case Book,* edited by Catherine Overholt, Mary B. Anderson., Kathleen Cloud and James E. Austin. It is a useful tool for gathering data, understanding women's and men's roles in a society, and taking account of external forces which affect development planning. It is a flexible instrument which can be used at many different levels of planning and analysis, and can be expanded to disaggregate data according to cultural, ethnic and economic factors as well as gender and age. The framework can also be used as a planning and implementation tool for programmes and projects. There are four inter-related components:

The Activity Profile, which is based on the gender division of labour and delineates the economic activities of the population in the project area. It provides for disaggregation by sex, age and other factors, and for recording the amount of time spent on activities and the location of the activities (see Table 1).

The Access and Control Profile, which identifies the resource individuals can command to carry out their activities and the benefits they derive from them. By distinguishing between access to resources and benefits and control over them it is possible to assess the relative power of members of a society or economy.

[The Access and Control Profiling Exercise (Table 2) will be done after a study of Gender and Land Rights in Unit 6].

Factors influencing Activities, Access and Control: Factors (such as gender division of labour, cultural beliefs) which create different opportunities and constraints on women's and men's participation in development. The impact of changes over time in the broader cultural and economic environment must be incorporated into this analysis.

Project Cycle Analysis is the final component, which consists of examining a project proposal or area of intervention in the light of gender-disaggregated data and social change.

The Activity Profile charts productive activities, such as those related to agriculture or employment and then lists specific activities under the headings of each area. There can be a large number of activities depending on the nature of the situation. Under 2, Reproductive Activities are listed. These may be related to water, fuel, small livestock, child care, etc. The influencing factors would include political, economic, cultural, legal, international factors.

TABLE 1 ACTIVITY PROFILE
Gender/Age[1]

Socio economic Activity	FA	MA	FC	MC	FE	ME	TIME[2]	LOC[3]
1. Production of Goods And Services								
a. Product/Services								
i. Functional Activity								
ii. Functional Activity								
iii. Functional Activity								
b. Product/Services								
i. Functional Activity								
ii. Functional Activity								
iii. Functional Activity								
2. Reproduction & Maintenance of Human Resources								
a. Product/Services								
i. Functional Activity								
ii. Functional Activity								
iii. Functional Activity								
b. Product/Services								
i. Functional Activity								
ii. Functional Activity								
iii. Functional Activity								

CODE

[1] FA = Female Adult FC = Female Child FE = Female Elder
MA = Male Adult MC = Male Child ME = Male Elder

[2] Percentage of time allocated to each activity: seasonal, daily

[3] Within home; field or shop; local community; beyond community.

Source: *Gender Roles in Development Projects: A Case Book* edited by Overholt, Anderson, Cloud and Austin.

Unit 6
Gender and Land Rights

Now that we have the land, we have the strength to speak and walk. - Manimala 1983

Why are land rights important?

Land rights are essentially claims which are legally and socially recognised and enforceable by an external legitimate authority, be it a village-level institution or an authority of the State. Land rights can be in the form of:

- Ownership: for example, private property, generally the most secure right
- Usufruct: for example, customary rights to common property resources
- Tenancy rights

Land rights can stem from:

- Inheritance
- Community membership
- Transfers by the State (land reform)
- Tenancy agreements
- Purchase or land-leasing from the market (limited for women)
- Encroachment on public land (more limited and contentious)

Lack of access to land in rural India is of fundamental importance as it is linked to the incidence of poverty: "Aside from its value as a productive factor, land ownership confers collateral in credit markets, security in the event of natural hazards or life contingencies, and social status. Those who control land tend to exert a disproportionate influence over other rural institutions, including labour and credit markets" (Mearns 1999:1).

Land reforms are seen as a critical means of redistributing land and transferring some rights to the poor and socially excluded groups. In India, land was made a state subject in 1935 and land reform was the responsibility of individual state governments. Although the degree of implementation of land reforms varies significantly from state to state, legislation in post-Independence India has been of essentially three types:

- **Abolition of intermediary tenures** during the 1950s, namely the colonial *zamindari* system, bringing substantial gains to many farmers at relatively low political cost but somewhat high financial cost (heavy compensation paid to *zamindars*).

- **Regulation of the size of holdings through ceiling-surplus redistribution and/or land consolidation:** the former

achieved little in terms of redistribution because of loopholes in the law which allowed landlords to retain control over landholdings if they could bribe the village *patwari* to register holdings in the name of deceased or fictitious persons (*benami* transactions). Land consolidation, although a popular strategy for empowering small and marginal farmers, has tended to benefit those with larger landholdings.

- **Settlement and regulation of tenancy** has also generally been weak and in many cases led to a worsening of tenure security. According to some estimates tenancy reforms have led to the loss of access (to land) by the rural poor to around 30 per cent of the total operated area (Mearns 1999: 11). In states where tenancy reform has been successful, as in West Bengal, it has been due to the political system which supported legislative change, particularly through the PRIs and awareness campaigns (land settlement camps) which sought to enhance the bargaining power of tenants.

Given the inherent structural limitations of land reforms it is not surprising that women's land rights were never a policy concern till recently. Women in poor households may have benefited in terms of overall food security, but redistribution was always based on the household as a unit and men as household heads (except in the rare cases where widows or divorcees were eligible, see Jacobs 1998). As one official from the Ministry of Agriculture pointed out to Bina Agarwal, an internationally recognised authority on women's land rights: "You want women to have land?! What do you want to do? To destroy the family?" (cited in Agarwal 1994: 53).

Recognising the need for women to have land tenure, the Sixth FYP (1980–85) mandated that all redistributed land should be under joint title, but this has never been easy to implement. The Eighth FYP (1989–95) went a step further by calling for a change in inheritance laws to accommodate women's rights but gave few specifics. It called upon state governments to allot 40 per cent of ceiling-surplus or State-redistributed land in the name of women alone, with the remainder to be held jointly (Mearns 1999: 26). The Ninth FYP and the National Perspective Plan for Women: 1988–2000 made several substantive recommendations for closing the gender gap in access to land, but there is still little sustained focus on the question of women and land (Agarwal 2003: 186).

Why are land rights for women important?

Essentially there are three types of arguments underlying the importance of land rights for women (Agarwal 1994): welfare, efficiency and empowerment.

- **Security against poverty/welfare:** To the extent that women's livelihood strategies are land-based, direct access to land for women means greater control over agricultural income, not just for their own well-being, but more importantly, for their children, since it is well-known that children's nutritional status is more closely related to their mother's income rather than the father's. Land owned by women enables them to be recognised as 'farmers' and provides them with indirect advantages such as access to extension services, collateral for credit or as an asset which can be mortgaged or sold during a crisis. For widows and the elderly, owning land could improve welfare not just directly, but also by enhancing their entitlement to family welfare (Agarwal 2003: 194).

- **Efficiency implications:** Women are often the sole or *de facto* head of the household (e.g. when men have migrated) and independent land tenure provides them with production incentives – to adopt improved agricultural technology and practices, for example. However, such initiatives need to be supported by agricultural extension services and access to other inputs like credit – the organisation of women into Self Help Groups (SHGs) has been critical in this respect. While production inefficiency associated with tenure insecurity continues to be one of the important rationales for land reform, there is also emerging evidence, albeit contested, which suggests that women might use resources more efficiently than men in a given context (Agarwal 2003: 195–96).

- **Empowerment:** Land titles provide women with status/identity and strengthen their bargaining power in the family and community, though the extent to which women are able to challenge male dominance is contingent on several other contextual factors (e.g. her 'fallback' position, access to community social networks, ability to manage land). Where social movements such as the Bodhgaya movement in Bihar (see Rao and Rurup 1997) or NGOs like the Deccan Development Society (see **www.ddsindia.com**) in Andhra Pradesh have enabled poor rural women, particularly *dalits*, gain access to land, the women have vividly voiced their perceptions of change in their social status: "Having land in women's name has made an enormous difference – learning to take on land means taking on more power and wisdom. Once we got land, our eyes opened," claimed *dalit* women who had purchased land with the help of the DDS (Agarwal 2003: 197 citing Hall 1999).

Obstacles to women inheriting, accessing and managing land

Property relations are essentially social relations, that is, between people rather than between people and 'things'. In the context of gender inequalities, all over the world and to the extent that they have access to power and authority, it is men who wield greater claims to property. Even where laws have been modified to give women some inheritance rights there are a number of social factors which prevent them from exercising their (legal) claims and being able to effectively manage their property/ landholdings, such as:

- **Unequal personal laws** which favour sons or male heirs. Despite some changes in inheritance rights in favour of women, both Hindu and Moslem personal law generally treat agricultural land differently from other property. Moreover, women's rights in tenancy land depend on state laws and here there are striking regional differences. In the three southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka as well as Maharashtra, under amendments to the Hindu Succession Act (1956), women can inherit agricultural land, whether owned (by including daughters as coparceners in joint family property) or under tenancy, while Kerala has abolished joint family property altogether (Agarwal 2003: 203).

- **Social bias** arising from:

  - *Resistance to women inheriting land:* Women are often accused of being witches, particularly in *adivasi* communities, as a means to not only torture them, but also to reclaim land and other economic assets (see Kelkar and Nathan 1991; Rao 1999).

- o *Vulnerability of women:* Women 'voluntarily' forego their claims in the face of violent threats from male relatives, or because they see their brothers as potential protectors from violence and ill-treatment inflicted by their in-laws.

- **Administrative bias:** Local officials are often unwilling to record women's inherited shares in land.

- **Inability to manage/cultivate land:**
  - o *Prevalence of patrilocal marriage patterns* which means that most daughters leave their natal villages and find it difficult to manage land given by their parents.
  - o *Restrictions on women's mobility,* particularly in upper caste and Moslem families in northwestern India (Uttar Pradesh).
  - o *Dependency on male labour for ploughing,* a commonly accepted norm all over the country, arising from women's alleged 'impurity', it is a social taboo for women to touch the plough.
  - o *Gender bias in extension services. Limited access/control to cash or credit* (see Unit 8)

Given the constraints in granting women individual or joint land titles, many gender-progressive development organisations have mobilised rural women (small and marginal farmers, landless and destitute) to collectively lease land (usually through their SHGs, *sangams* or *mandals*), with or without joint cultivation and management as a prerequisite. Apart from DDS, other organisations that have facilitated such efforts include the Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG)[1] and Society for Promoting People's Participation in Ecosystem Management (SOPPECOM)[2] in Pune. In both these cases land has been leased from large farmers in the village for a fixed period of time, with landless women collectively investing in resources using LEISA (low external input sustainable agriculture) techniques towards sustainable agriculture promoted by the NGOs. Such efforts are parallel to ongoing legal struggles for access to land whether through consolidation for small and marginal farmers or the numerous campaigns against land alienation by the State of village commons and 'wastelands', in favour of industrial holdings. However, women's rights tend to get subsumed in these larger arenas and the need for separate spaces for women's participation and articulation of gender inequalities in property rights is important (Mukhopadhyay 2001).

Endnotes

[1] Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group, P.O. Box 60, Gorakhpur 273 001 India. geag@nde.vsnl.net.in

[2] See AKF (2002) *Understanding Women's Experiences in Natural Resource Management* New Delhi: Aga Khan Foundation and Gujarat: ANANDI for more information on SOPPECOM.

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Suggested readings/case studies

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Exercises

1. Fieldwork and discussion
Access to and control of resources

Learning Objective

- To get a more accurate profile of intra-household dynamics of power and decision-making.

Procedure

This exercise is a continuation of the Gender Roles Matrix – students can work in the same groups as before and should preferably go back to the same sample of households they had profiled the previous week (Unit 5). This time however, they may want to work with just one household. Students can work in pairs to profile a particular household in their sample.

Ask the students to prepare an Access and Control Profile which identifies the different resources different individuals can command to carry out their activities and the benefits they derive from them. For example, a good starting point is land ownership – who owns the land? Is it inherited or acquired land? What is the system of inheritance which governs landholdings in the area?

Access to and control over resources/benefits

- Who has access to and control over productive resources such as land, labour, capital, knowledge?
- Who makes what decisions regarding land, crops, inputs, etc.?
- Who receives and who controls income and/or benefits from production?
- Which expenditure are men and women responsible for?

Table 2. Access and control Profile

Resources	Access M/F	Control M/F
Land		
Equipment		
Labour		
Production		
Reproduction		
Capital		
Education/Training		

Benefits	Access M/F	Control M/F
Outside Income		
Assets Ownership		
In-kind Goods		
(Food, clothing, shelter)		
Education		
Political Power/Prestige		
Other		

Source: *Gender Roles in Development Projects: A Case Book* edited by Overholt, Anderson, Cloud and Austin.

2. Film and discussion
Sona maati (Golden earth)

Learning Objectives

- To understand the importance of "ownership rights" and the link between women's land rights and women's recognition as farmers.
- To understand the dynamics of the struggle for land rights and the various class, gender, caste and other forces involved.
- To analyse the role of the various groups involved.

Procedure

Start by viewing the film together as a group. Then initiate a discussion with a few general questions and go onto the more detailed or specific ones. Round off the discussions with the conclusions reached by the group. Often the students may not be able to respond adequately after one viewing, especially in the case of long films like this one, and it may be necessary to have a second viewing. Before doing this, arouse interest in the topic with some questions and let the students discover for themselves that they need to see it again to explore the issue in depth.

At this point, it may also be useful to provide the questions before the viewing, and/or to divide them into small groups. Allow the small group discussions to continue among themselves and share their findings with the larger group.

1. Were you surprised by this film? What surprised you and why?
2. What do you think the Indira Gandhi Canal, a water resource, has to do with this subject?
3. Was this a struggle between men and women? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Why do you think there were only "poor women" and no "poor men" visible in this struggle?
5. Did you observe any violence in this struggle? Where did you see it? Give some examples.
6. How was it related to the theme?
7. Which scene in the film did you find the most powerful? Why? What was the message you got from that scene?
8. "Land ownership rights are a vital necessity for women." Debate this statement in two groups.
9. Who was helping the women in their struggle? Did their approach succeed? Did you notice a "role play" in the film? Who was doing it and why?

Sona Maati

Time	:	40 mins.
Year	:	1995
Language	:	Marwari, English subtitles
Director	:	Sehjo Singh
Producer	:	Sehjo Singh and Anwar Jamal
Where available	:	Magic Lantern Foundation I 1768, Basement, Chittaranjan Park, New Delhi 110 019. Phone : (91 11) 26273244/51605239/30937942 Email : magiclf@vsn.com Web : http://www.magiclanternfoundation.org
Format	:	VHS
Price	:	Rs. 550/- (Delhi), Rs. 600/- (Elsewhere in India) Prices inclusive of mailing
Procedure for obtaining	:	By Cash, Cheques (Delhi Cheques only) or DD favouring Magic Lantern Foundation

Unit 7
Technological Change and Gender Relations

Agricultural technology: innovating for whom?

Technological change in agriculture has arguably had both negative and positive consequences on the position of rural women. While technological development has been integral to humankind's quest for modernization – for a better quality of life – it is the *process* of technology development and transfer that has largely ignored complex social realities and gender-differentiated roles and responsibilities. Most technological innovations in agriculture, for example during the Green Revolution phase in India, were intended to increase crop yield, provide employment opportunities and enhance productivity.

However, narrow definitions of work do not reflect the diversity of labour relations which co-exist on the Indian farm – unpaid family labour, both male and female (and often children) from the same household, and regular or casual wage labour (mostly landless women) – which are affected differently by technological innovations.

Gender differentials mark both kinds of labour – not only do women and children have little control over their labour, or that of men[1], women's work as a member of the farming household is socially and politically invisible – till the 1980s, self-cultivating women farmers were not even counted in the census data. In wage work also, women labourers are typically discriminated against and rarely paid on equal terms with men for the same work.

For example, the high-yield varieties (HYV) of crop promoted under the Green Revolution required extra work for both men and women – more frequent and careful land preparation for men and increased transplanting, weeding, chemical application, harvesting and processing work for women. Mechanization where it has been introduced – for land preparation, harvesting and some processing activities – has invariably meant a transfer of female tasks to men in the name of greater efficiency. According to some analysts, the displacement of female labour in the Punjab as a result of the Green Revolution was as high as 90 per cent (MHHDC 2003: 118).

"The greater effort that HYV technology requires in all the tasks performed by women does not create jobs for women, since it is not met by mechaniszation, it is mainly met in

peasant farming classes by the more intensive use of female 'family' labour, (Whitehead 1985:31), demonstrating the ability of the male head of the household to extract more labour from family members (women) at no cost.

The strong tendency to mechanize post-harvest operations such as the traditional hand-pounding of rice or hand-grinding of flour has mixed results. Typically, many of these activities were done by landless women in those better-off households who could afford to hire them. But now they have been taken over by animal- or power-driven grinders/millers run by paid male workers. However, for many women self-cultivators these are time-saving and have had a positive impact on their work burden, despite the additional time spent in walking to a flour or rice mill.

There are many examples of female work being taken over by men and machines. For instance, "in Southern India, when irrigation techniques were introduced in tea plantations, technology was geared towards men only, ignoring the fact that it is women who perform this type of activity. As a result men replaced the women and women were deprived of their main source of employment" (MHHDC 2003:118). Or dairying=traditionally a female activity, but with the introduction of modern milk processing plants few women have been enlisted for training.

Marketing treadle pumps to women farmers in Eastern India

Established in 1981, the International Development Enterprises (IDE) is a not-for-profit organisation based in Denver, USA. Since the late 1980s, IDE has been promoting treadle pumps (a foot-operated, labour- and time-saving, water-lifting device) through NGOs in selected water-rich districts of U.P., Bihar, W. Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya. Most of the purchasers are small and marginal male farmers. However, treadle pumps are used extensively by women, particularly in areas where male migration rates are high. Women farmers are known to influence decisions to purchase treadle pumps, or buy them themselves, even if this asset is registered in the name of a male relative. Based on advice from evaluators and donors, IDE has increasingly begun to target treadle pumps to women farmers and to train them in maintenance. Initially, this meant confronting inherent gender stereotypes amongst IDE's predominantly male marketing staff whose performance was based on achieving well-defined, quantitative indicators. Questions also arose about how to reach women farmers who typically have less mobility, are largely illiterate and less likely to visit 'hardware' shops.

IDE's design approach to targeting women included sensitising their own field staff on gender issues, working with women leaders in communities where women's mobility was restricted and providing training and capacity building to women farmers with the support of their menfolk. In a survey of small and marginal women farmers in Sitamarhi district, north Bihar (Prabhu and Dash 1998, cited in Prabhu 1999) it was found that many have been able to reduce the time spent on irrigation and consequently send their children back to school. Others had begun growing higher-valued seasonal vegetables on family plots and male recognition of women's economic contribution was increasing.

Source: Prabhu 1999

New technological innovations fail to realise the diversity of women's work. For example, while the use of tractors has allowed a great number of acres to be ploughed, little progress has been made to improve equipment to facilitate women's tasks such as extracting oil from seeds, cleaning cotton, drying mango, drying, husking and grinding corn or peeling the tops of sugarcane for animal fodder (MHHDC 2003:118). Not only have most innovations been directed at improving the productivity of cash crops, little research has gone into innovations for small-holding, homestead agriculture (subsistence crops such as vegetables), which largely fall in the women's domain, or on decreasing their domestic (reproductive) workload so that they have more time for productive activities. Nor have technological innovators looked to learn from women's experientially derived knowledge. Agricultural extension workers continue to view male farmers as their main market for new or appropriate inputs.

Gender and agriculture in the information society

The new information technologies hold out a unique opportunity for women in the developing countries to speak out, and to be more visible and less isolated. Women also contribute towards expanding political, social and economic participation once they can encourage access to and the sharing of knowledge, establishing networks and strengthening decision-making power (FAO 2002 in Odame et al. 2002).

The increasing integration of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) offer exciting opportunities for rural people to improve their livelihoods, reduce vulnerability to disasters and find a voice in the global village. ICT is a generic term encompassing a variety of computer, telecommunication and networking hardware and software (wireless local loops, digital radio, Internet, village e-kiosks, mobiles) which essentially act as 'enabling' tools to provide the poor with access to timely information (market prices) or connect them to educational media, 'virtual' markets, or government schemes. While gender-disaggregated data on ICT use by rural women is limited, emerging examples of the empowering potential of ICTs suggest a number of opportunities and pitfalls (constraints) in ensuring that ICTs are gender-responsive.

Gender constraints to ICTs in rural areas

- **Physical access to information and communication infrastructure** is generally lower in rural areas, and more women live in the countryside than men.
- **Social and cultural norms** restrict women's mobility, particularly for young girls who may not, for example, feel comfortable going on their own to a telephone booth or cyber café, which tend to be dominated by young men. Rural girls are also less likely to opt for science, technology and engineering studies.
- **Lack of literacy skills and educational opportunities** are perhaps the biggest barriers for rural girls and women to access the Internet or other ICTs which require minimal reading and language knowledge, preferably, but not necessarily, in English. Not surprisingly, non-literacy–based tools such as community radios, mobile phones and satellite learning systems have been more popular with rural women (e.g. the Grameen phone project in Bangladesh, see: www.grameen.org or www.grameen.com).
- **Poverty and financial constraints** cut across all the above factors. When payment is involved to access information

women have less financial resources or are less willing to use disposable income even if it is a small amount. Cost-sharing arrangements through women's groups is one alternative.

Empowering rural communities : Village Knowledge Centres

In 1998 the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF, Chennai) with financial support from IDRC (the International Development Research Centre) and CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) launched a Village Knowledge Centre (VKC) programme in the Union territory of Pondicherry, known for its accessible government and reasonable telecommunication infrastructure. Almost a quarter of the population in this predominantly paddy- and sugar-cultivating area earn less than a dollar a day (Morrow 2002). The project links together ten villages, each with a small, community-owned and - managed VKC along a 'hub and spokes model' involving a hybrid wired and wireless network, consisting of computers, telephones, very high dial frequency radio systems and e-mail connectivity (Senthilkumaran and Arunachalam 2002). At the centre of the wheel is the project headquarters in the town of Villianur where staff collect information useful for rural communities – agricultural prices, government schemes, educational opportunities, etc. – translate it into Tamil, and transmit it to the community centres via an intranet.

Ensuring equitable access to information

Each sub-centre was carefully selected – participatory rural appraisals were done in order to identify an accessible rent-free building, electricity and volunteers. Participating villages also had to agree to certain criteria, stipulated in a written agreement with the MSSRF. Apart from being responsible for all running costs, they had to guarantee access to *dalits* as well as ensure that at least half of the trained volunteers are women. One VKC is actually located in a *dalit*-dominated hamlet, but it took a lot of negotiation with the dominant caste communities in the village before this could be done. Today each knowledge centre tracks the number of men and women visitors on an ongoing basis – women constitute 30 to 50 per cent of users, though this varies from village to village. Not surprisingly, women-run VKCs attract 12 per cent more female users than those run by men. Women's primary information needs are for family income supplements, public welfare schemes, low-cost insurance and health issues, especially childcare. Some women have also sought details on micro-enterprises while agricultural labourers who receive half their wages in grain have been interested in grain prices.

For example, a group of women in Kizhur village decided to start a small unit to manufacture incense sticks and found packaging and marketing information in their VKC, helping them to develop local outlets as well as access distant customers. Another VKC volunteer found out about vacancies for women at an agro-processing factory about 5 kms. from the village of Embalam. She distributed the information via the VKC network and not only was the factory able to meet its labour needs but women were also able to capitalize on income-earning opportunities in a competitive market. In addition, women at Embalam have formed SHGs using the VKC facilities to help them maintain accounts, to sell home-made products locally and contact other women's groups to share experiences. Interestingly, the VKC is located in the premises of a century-old temple, which has traditionally denied access to lower castes and menstruating women. However, the all-male temple trustees, after

much discussion, decided to give the premises to women's groups to manage the proposed VKC.

Apart from access to information, handling computers and answering questions posed by men have enabled women VKC operators to gain confidence and status within the community. But women's access to information is structured by several factors – for some, particularly the poorest, the demands of housework or labour make it difficult to go to the knowledge centres. In other cases, low levels of literacy limit VKC use to accessing information only – important as this is, it is different from 'knowledge' which unfortunately, at least on the Internet, is predominantly in English.

"No special efforts are made to promote access to ICTs among the poor. Our goal is to *empower them to improve their standards of living through better access to useful and relevant information.* Many 'telecentre' projects, in our opinion, make the cardinal mistake of putting the technology ahead of the people. For us the people, their context, and their needs come first. Then comes the content that can satisfy those needs. *Technology is just an enabler to deliver the content in a cost-effective manner*" (Senthilkumaran and Arunachalam 2002, emphasis added).

Endnotes

[1] The extent of 'control' that women have over their own labour or that of men varies considerably depending on whether the household is male-headed or *de facto* female-headed, often due to male migration the nature of 'jointness' in agricultural work, access to other resources and culture=specific definitions of conjugal obligations.

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Exercises

1. Case study and discussion
Fish smoking in the Godavari delta

Smoking of fish has been a commonly used method of curing and processing to enable fish storage for lean seasons or in some cases for transport and sale. Along the Godavari delta, in the state of Andhra Pradesh (AP), smoking of certain low-value fish and shrimp species is common, especially in the mangrove regions. Most of the species processed are locally sold and consumed.

Fish smoking is done using a platform made with wooden pieces tied together and stretched over an open fire. The fish/shrimp are spread across the platform and smoked for about 12–14 hours. These smoking chambers occupy almost an entire room in a small hut. Women of the household spend long hours in these rooms turning the fish, tending to the fire and in the process are exposed to a smoke-filled environment.

A post-harvest fisheries technology programme working in the area decided to develop a technology that would benefit the women by preventing exposure to smoke while at the same time producing a better quality product. The first design prototype was field tested in one of the villages. It consisted of a cylinder with circular trays with an opening for the fire at the bottom. The entire process was explained to the women who did not seem very enthusiastic, one of the reasons being that the quantity of fish processed per cycle was lower than the traditional kiln.

This design was then modified into a vertical structure with front loading trays and a chamber below for a fire. This structure was then sent for field trials to another village. The field functionaries were still testing the technology and had not involved the women in the demonstration. However, due to certain transport-related problems, the bin was left behind at the first village in the house of one of the processors, Sathiyamma, for a few days. The technologists decided to further work on the design as they did not feel satisfied with it.

After a couple of weeks when they returned to the first village it was found that the bin was fully operational, with Sathiyamma occupying a key role. She was using it dexterously and explaining it to the other women who were vying with each other to use it. The technologists were surprised because they felt that the mesh sizes of the trays that held the fish did not promote uniform smoking. Its popularity was therefore a puzzle to them and they were keen to know the reasons.

Discussions were held with the women who did not seem to care very much about the quality as they felt they could always turn the product around to promote uniform smoking. Meanwhile, demands for more bins started coming in and the technologists continued to be puzzled. They then decided to use a different approach and undertook a detailed study to appraise the technology from a social perspective.

The study found several reasons for its uptake: low consumption of firewood, comfortable working conditions, ease of operation and higher quantity processed per cycle (as compared to

the earlier design prototype). The fact that the quality of product was better in the first prototype did not seem to make much difference to the uptake. The second design was found to be so successful that it was decided to liaise with the government and plan an extension strategy covering more number of processors.

Source : Meera Sundarraj

Discussion

Hand out the article on fish smoking and have a class discussion based on the following questions:

- What factor according to you was the deciding one in the uptake of the fish smoking technology?
- Why did the superior quality of the product seem to make little difference to its uptake?
- What were the key extension-related issues that promoted its quick uptake?
- What could be the dangers of extending the programme on a mass scale with government support?

2. Case study and discussion
Sowing millets with a seed drill

Traditional farming methods are drudgery-intensive for rural women, time-consuming and have a high labour cost. Many research centres approached the MSSRF site office at Namakkal, seeking information about appropriate technology that would address these issues, but no appropriate instrument was available. So an initiative was taken to develop an instrument and in two months the present multiple seed drill was developed. This report carries the results of the first scientific testing at the Kondichettipatti on-farm trial plot at Namakkal with different landraces of minor millet and other millets.

Advantages of the instrument

The instrument was found to have the following advantages

1. A variety of seeds ranging from minor millets to major millets could be sown. (That is, the same instrument could be used for pulses and cereals.)
2. It could be used for different lengths of spacing between individual plants and rows (Adjustable).
3. It could be operated on even small terraced lands and large flat lands.
4. It could be used on land ranging from wet to dry.
5. It could be used for sole and mixed cropping.
6. Both women and men could drag the instrument.
7. Plant population could be maintained at optimum.
8. Thinning and weeding were easier.
9. Increase in yield could be obtained.

Methodology

The traditional method, a new method without a seed drill and the seed drill method were tested on 4000 sq. m. field for each method and each species. The spacing for different species was followed according to Table 1. Women were employed for all the experiments and were trained in the use of the drill during this process.

Table 1. Spacing of different millet species used in the experiments

S.NO	SPECIES	SPACING (CM)
1	Samai	20 X 10
2	Thinai	20 X 10
3	Ragi	20 X 10
4	Varagu	30 X 10
5	Cumbu	45 X 10
6	Cholam	45 X 10
7	Maize	45 X 15
8	Ground nut	30 X 15

Different methods of sowing

1. The traditional method of sowing is commonly known as the broadcasting method. Ploughing is done once or twice and seeds are scattered on the land followed by surface ploughing to cover the seeds.
2. In the second method, preparation of land is similar to the traditional method. After land preparation, a woman draws lines on the land in required spacing using a rope or stick. On these lines seeds are dropped by another woman and then a third woman covers the seeds with soil.
3. In the seed drill method, after land preparation the instrument's seed-cylinders are filled with seeds and immediately dragged on the land by women. As it is dragged, the instrument draws appropriate lines, drops seeds in these lines with appropriate space between plants in rows and covers the seed with soil and with leveler.

Comparison between different aspects of different cultivation methods

A detailed analysis has been made with the above three cultivation methods. The seed drill method was found to be more efficient. It also reduces drudgery for both men and women, since there is less surface ploughing, no need for bending to sow, fewer rounds are needed, saving distance and time and less weeding is needed. Most importantly, women could sow seeds without depending on men. The results can be generalized as given in Table 2.

Table 2. General results drawn from the experiments conducted through different methods

S. No.	PARAMETERS	TRADITIONAL	NEW	SEEDDRILL
1	Number of Individuals	Two	Three	Two
2	Men	One		
3	Women	One	Three	Two
4	Labour days per acre	Three	Six	Two
5	Seed rate	Very high	High	Optimum*
6	Technique	Familiar	Difficult	Easy
7	Cost	High	Very high	Low

* as per recommendations of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University

Modifications made during the testing phase

Problem 1

The seed drill first designed had a "shoe" (a small sharp horn-like part) attached along the holes through which seeds were dropped into the soil. But wet soil would get stuck to this shoe, which prevented seeds from dropping into the soil.

Solution

The shoe was removed and attached in a separated rod to scratch the soil in line with the holes in the seed drum. The scratched soil was covered with soil after dropping the seeds with a leveling plank rolling at the back of the seed drum.

Problem 2

Women who operated the seed drill felt that it was a little heavy to drag and lift.

Solution

The seed drum and wheel were made from plastic and reduced in weight as much as possible.

From the different experiments in sowing samai, thinai, ragi, varagu, cumbu, cholam and maize, with different pore sizes, the results show that by using the appropriate pore size the optimum seed rate could be obtained. The seed rate for different seeds is given in Table 3 and the optimum seed rates for different seeds are highlighted.

Table 3. Seed rate for different seeds using different pore sizes (kg/acre)

S.No	Pore size (mm)	Samai	Thinai	Ragi	Ragi Big	Varagu	Cumbu	Cholam	Maize
1	3.2	3-4	2-3	3-4	***	***	***	***	***
2	3.5	4-5	3-4	4-5	3-4	***	***	***	***
3	4	6-8	6-8	***	4-5	***	***	***	***
4	4.5	***	***	***	6-7	***	***	***	***
5	4.8	***	***	***	***	2-2.5	2-3	2-3	***
6	5	***	***	***	***	2.5-3	4-5	4-5	***
7	5.5	***	***	***	***	3-4	5-6	5-6	***
8	10	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	8-9
9	13	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	13-14

Source: Dr. L. Gopinath, Site Coordinator, MSSRF, Namakkal

Discussion

- In what way is drudgery reduced by the seed drill? Who benefits more – men or women?
- What are the risks and potential difficulties of the seed drill?
- Do you think farmers will be ready to purchase this seed drill? Give reasons for your answer.
- Who made this "innovation"? Why? Why did others not do it?
- What does this tell you about decision-making in the family?

Unit 8
Promoting Access to Credit: the Role of Women's SHGs

The exploitative landlord, the unscrupulous moneylender and the poor borrower forced to sell his land, mortgage his children or commit suicide are a pervasive feature of the landscape of rural indebtedness in India. Access to credit is necessary for a variety of reasons (Ramachandran and Swaminathan 2002) :

- To meet seasonal fluctuations in earnings and expenditure arising from the seasonality of agricultural and non-agricultural activities.
- Credit acts as an insurance against risk for more vulnerable households, particularly in the context of an emergency/contingency or disaster.
- In the absence of effective social security programmes or public distribution systems, rural households depend on credit to meet different consumption needs, social obligations and rituals.

However, not only is the supply of formal sector or institutionalized credit to rural areas inadequate, its distribution with respect to region, class, caste and gender is highly unequal (Ibid, p. 503). Not surprisingly then, most poor households depend on the informal sector for loans which come at very high rates of interest, often supported by an elaborate structure of coercion, economic and non-economic (e.g. violence or sexual exploitation) as the poor have few sources of collateral. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), one of the largest poverty alleviation programmes launched in India in the mid-1970s, sought to have the poor break out of this dependence by extending part loans and part subsidies to BPL households so that they could invest in productive activities. But IRDP, despite its target orientation failed to target the really poor. It assumed that access to credit per se would leverage change when in fact the poor needed access to a package of services. And moreover, at least in its initial phases, it was largely targeted at men, who failed to repay loans.

Why micro-credit?

The term 'micro-credit' or 'micro-finance' has gained advocacy over the last two decades partly because of the failure of formal banking institutions to meet credit needs of the rural poor in a manner which is innovative and goes beyond loan provision to what is now acknowledged as credit *plus*. According to the

Declaration of the Micro-Credit Summit (Washington, D.C. 1997) micro-credit programmes are those which "extend small loans to poor people for self-employment projects that generate income, allowing them to care for themselves and their families. In most cases, micro-credit projects offer a combination of services and resources to their clients in addition to credit for self-employment... These often include savings facilities, training, networking and peer support" (cited in Ramachandran and Swaminathan 2002: 528). The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) define micro-finance as the "provision of thrift, credit and other financial services and products of very small amounts to the poor in rural, semi-urban or urban areas, enabling them to raise their income levels and improve living standards," (cited in Ramachandran and Swaminathan 2002: 528–529). Although both these definitions focus almost exclusively on income-generating opportunities, it is difficult to draw a firm line between loans for consumption and loans for productive purposes, as the credit needs of the poor are determined in a complex socio-economic milieu (Adolph 2003).

The role of SHGs

All over the world the organisation of rural poor women (and increasingly, men) into self-help groups (SHGs) is widely being seen as an effective anti-poverty intervention, with a positive impact on economic growth and a range of social development indicators, including women's empowerment. While SHGs are primarily formed to provide poor women with a means of savings and access to formal credit (bank loans), today many of them are engaged in activities that go beyond micro-finance, for example, 'green' agriculture, collective marketing of farm products and addressing community development issues (which include access to water, violence, infrastructure development). Many SHG leaders

Gender-based factors limiting rural women's access to credit

- Legal restrictions on credit for women – for example, many banks require the husband's or father's signature on loan applications
- Lack of information about credit availability
- Lack of security for loans in the form of land or fixed assets acceptable to lenders – typically most women pawn their jewellery to get a loan from the moneylender at exorbitant rates
- Credit provided through extension services which do not necessarily target or reach women
- Women's greater transaction costs, including distance to lenders (banks), complex procedures and constraints on mobility
- Limited credit for non-agricultural rural activities
- Lack of complementary financial and business services (a 'consultancy package') which can take into account the specific needs of different rural women rather than simply come as a 'package deal'

Source : Adapted from World Bank Toolkit on Gender and Agriculture – Learning Module on Credit and Financial Services, see : www.worldbank.org/gender/module.

have also gone on to hold elected positions in their *gram panchayats*, including that of the council president.

The main objectives underlying targeting of credit to women through SHGs include:

- Breaking dependence on exploitative moneylenders by providing easy and timely availability of institutional credit at lower interest rates.
- Organisation of women into 'solidarity groups' acts as a social guarantor (joint liability) for bank loans as most poor women do not have access to the necessary collateral (e.g. land ownership or other assets in their name).
- Small amounts of credit can help women acquire assets or agricultural inputs or invest in employment and income-generating micro-enterprises, either collectively or as individuals.
- SHGs provide women with access to information and reduce transaction costs.
- Access to credit and investments in economic activities as well as collective mobilisation can increase women's status within the household or community.

India has one of the largest micro-finance initiatives in the world: today there are more than a million SHGs in the country with more than 17 million members (Wilson 2002). Non-governmental organisations play a critical role in facilitating SHGs and linking them to banks (supported by NABARD's re-financing programme) or non-banking financial institutions such as BASIX, (Hyderabad). They help in the identification of members, provide capacity building ranging from training in group-building and leadership skills to financial and business management, sensitise local bank officers on working with women's SHGs and support the formation of cluster-level federations of SHGs linking them to wider market services.

Although the rapid growth and spread of SHGs in the country, the size of their total savings and the scope of activities they are engaged in are considerable, a number of questions persist particularly with respect to their impact on poverty alleviation or women's empowerment.

Self-Help Affinity Groups

Affinity Groups are those "whose members are linked together by a network of relationships which enables them to perform certain traditional support functions. This affinity, which (usually) exists prior to any intervention, is based on mutual trust and reciprocity or functional support, homogeneity and voluntarism, and is adequate to cope with traditional needs. It constitutes what could be called – traditional, social and institutional capital" (Fernandez 2001: 5).

Do SHGs target the poor?

Many critics feel that micro-credit has become a supply-driven industry and that banks drive NGOs to achieve targets – number of SHGs formed in a year – rather than look at *who* (Which women?) are members, or the pattern of loan distribution within a group (Which members borrow and for what purpose?). Typically, SHGs are small groups of between 10 and 20 women who share relations of affinity and/or homogeneity (they come from the same caste or class background) and usually reside in the same village hamlet. Each SHG has a president, a secretary and a treasurer and usually these positions are rotated, though in areas

where female literacy is low, change of leadership is not so common, and dependence on external accountants is not uncommon.

Members meet either fortnightly or monthly to save/borrow – more frequently in the beginning during the group formation process. Amounts saved vary depending on the socio-economic context and women's earning/saving potential; for most groups savings range from Rs 10 to Rs 50/month. These amounts are decided by the group and can increase over time if the group is functioning well. Interest rates for loans are also decided by the group and on average are about 2 per cent/month – the balance of the interest which does not go to the bank, goes towards the group account to cover internal transaction costs and to strengthen the group fund. Most SHGs will go through one to three cycles of internal loaning before they establish bank linkages.

However, in many cases SHGs tend to exclude the poorest for a number of reasons (adapted from Adolph 2003: 5):

Social factors: The poorest are often those who are socially marginalized or excluded because of caste or community (dalits, adivasis, minorities) or physical/mental ability; they are usually also sceptical of the potential benefits of collective action.

Economic factors: The poorest do not always have the financial resources to contribute to savings regularly, particularly during lean times (e.g. drought or after a flood). Often they cannot attend meetings if they are compelled to migrate during the lean season or work on relief sites outside the village. In some cases the group may impose a small fine on members who do not contribute the monthly amount in time – one of the SEWA-promoted groups in Kheda district, Gujarat imposes a fine of 50 paise to Re.1 if a member fails to pay her monthly installment (Shylendra 1999: 20). Such 'rules' while they may strengthen group discipline, only serve to deter the poorest. Ironically, to a question on why the poorest women in the village were not members of their SHG, the women replied: "Oh, they do not know how to save!" (field discussion by author with a women's SHG.)

Intrinsic factors: These include the inherent biases of facilitating organisations who often find it more difficult to reach and motivate the poor. Some NGOs are making efforts to overcome this bias, for example, through participatory wealth ranking at the community level. But including the poorest in SHGs is not enough. Programmes need to be designed so that they provide rational and sensitive investment opportunities – interest free loans as part of a package that addresses the different loan needs of different groups of women.

Is 'thrift' an alternative to 'savings' for the very poor?

Thrift groups were the precursor of SHGs in many areas. and even today some NGOs continue to work with the concept of thrift as opposed to savings which assumes the accumulation of cash surplus. 'Being thrifty' implies setting aside even a small amount of grain or rice everyday or week that can be converted to cash at the end of the month when the group meets. Women try to motivate others to practice the discipline of thrift even in lean times as a future security (Wilson 2002: 229).

Do SHGs facilitate women's economic empowerment?

In the initial years, women take loans mostly to meet household consumption needs – healthcare, purchase of food grains during times of dire need such as after a disaster, or to meet basic educational needs of children (books, pencils, school uniforms, etc.). Gradually loans are taken for more productive activities such as the purchase of agriculture inputs, investing in new technology or livestock or starting a non-farm–based economic activity – petty shop, cycle repair shop, tea-shop. But information about who makes decisions to take a loan or who controls the use of the loan and is responsible for its repayment is conflicting (Hunt and Kasynathan 2001). There are some studies that suggest that many women take loans for their husbands or sons to start small businesses and that they merely become 'postboxes' for credit and repayment, despite the assertion of 'joint control' by the women or NGO staff (Goetz and Sen Gupta 1996). Others argue that no matter what the gender of the loanee or who controls the loan, loan-taking households generally have higher income and consumption standards than non-loanee households. In many cases, women were likely to have a greater say in household decision-making as well as decisions concerning their own autonomy (see Kabeer 2001 for a critical review of the Bangladeshi context).

Challenging gender relations: Social empowerment of women through SHGs

Most NGO staff will be quick to point out how things have changed for women who are SHG members: their greater mobility, confidence in speaking to strangers and negotiating with government officials and collective action on village issues such as alcohol brewing or sand-mining. While these are no doubt important changes for individual women and for them as a collective, there has been no radical change in, for example, the gender division of labour (sharing of the workload), or in women's access to and ownership of productive assets or in practices that discriminate against the girl child. Few women have joint bank accounts with their daughters or have created assets for them, and the practice of dowry by and large persists as does the incidence of violence, though the relationship between SHG membership and violence is complex. There is little evidence too of improvements in school enrollment and retention rates for girls; on the contrary women's engagement in credit-facilitated micro-enterprises may have a negative impact. Health and hygiene, food security and better nutrition are other areas that come under the quality of life, yet we have little evidence on the relationship between these social factors and the overridingly economic focus of most SHGs.

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with appropriate sustainable technologies. These "greened" SHGs have been working to promote and disseminate LEISA techniques and practices and establish self-sustained, community-owned extension systems. The groups have spearheaded the ecological agriculture movement and become extension agents of green technologies.

So far, approximately Rs. 1,200,000 (roughly US$ 24,000) have been lent by the bank and the repayment is almost a hundred per cent. The savings and loans obtained are used for agricultural production activities such as purchasing seeds, developing vermicompost, buying agricultural equipment and marketing. This has helped to ensure that women have direct control over these productive resources.

Table 1 : SHG Members adopting LEISA prctices

LEISA Practice	Number of SHG Members
Bio-pesticide (cow urine, neem products, tobacco ash, etc)	3100
Composting (pit)	2500
Tree plantation	750
Vermicomposting	432
Liquid compost	528
Nadep compost	238
Seed treatment	940
Seed production	580

The major components of the greening process are as follows :

Farmer Field School (FFS)

To facilitate sharing of experiences, innovations, ideas and the dissemination of technical know-how on LEISA techniques, FFSs have been operationalised. The FFSs have gained popularity amongst farmers not only from the project villages but also from other neighbouring villages. They are run by experienced farmers who have extensive practical knowledge of the topics covered. Occasionally, experts from outside are also invited. On average 40 farmers, mostly women, participate regularly in monthly FFS sessions. FFSs are managed by the SHGs/*Sangha,* who decide on the place and topics on the basis of the felt seasonal demand. There is one such FFS for every five villages in the project area.

Agro Service Centres (ASC)

In order to ensure the availability of quality inputs such as seeds, vermicompost, bio-fertilizers, bio-pesticides and treadle pumps (low-cost, manually driven pumps for irrigation), and to facilitate direct marketing of these inputs, Agro Service Centres have been established. These ASCs, established in the clusters of 5 villages, are controlled and managed by the women's self-help groups. Soil samples are also collected in these centres for analysis in a small laboratory established by GEAG. This laboratory makes recommendations on LEISA approaches.

Exercises

1. Case study and discussion
The greening of SHGs

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for women living in the Terai of Eastern Uttar Pradesh are moving beyond the usual SHG goal of helping women improve their socio-economic status. These groups are also being utilised to mobilise their members as agents of change and advocates for not only gender issues, but also sustainable agriculture. Farmer Field Schools have played an important role in the capacity building aspect of this greening process, which has involved bringing together many different extension and support mechanisms.

Self-Help Groups

The plains in the Terai region, at the foothills of Nepal Himalayas, have good rainfall and fertile alluvial soil. The majority of farmers can be categorised as small or marginal, with average land holdings of less than an acre (about 0.4 hectare). Agriculture is the main source of employment in this region.

The area has a feudal background with a caste-dominated society. Rural women of the region have very limited access to credit, information and extension services, in spite of their major contribution to agricultural activities and their ever-increasing responsibilities as their men migrate to the cities. To help empower these women, Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG) initiated the formation of women's self-help groups in 30 villages in Gorakhpur district.

Self-Help Groups were originally started in Bangladesh as an innovative and 'self-help' approach to savings and credit and have proved effective in empowering rural women. The GEAG SHGs have grown from three groups in 1996 to a total of 310 groups by mid-2002, with approximately 4500 women members in 30 villages. Most SHGs range in size from 10–18 members and 73 per cent of these groups belong to the category of oppressed classes (*Dalits*) and small, marginal farming families. The group members make a monthly deposit ranging from Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 (roughly US$ 0.20 to 0.40c). SHGs have their accounts in a nearby bank. GEAG has ensured a commitment that these banks will provide a loan to the SHGs of up to four times their original deposit.

SHGs in a village federate themselves to form a "Sangha". This organisation is entrusted with the responsibility of nurturing SHGs and making collective efforts for the development of the village. The self-help groups and the federation, besides facilitating credit flow for consumption and productive purposes, have played a pivotal role in creating a self-sustained agriculture production support system.

Greening the Groups

SHGs have been promoted not only as appropriate institutions to help women improve their socio-economic status, but also as a means to mobilise them as agents of change and advocates for gender issues and sustainable agriculture. GEAG has consciously developed the capacity of these groups through a "greening" process to equip them, conceptually as well as technically,

Master Trainers

A number of interested farmers have become Master Trainers after receiving intensive training in facilitation techniques and communication skills. The Master Trainers are selected by the SHGs/*Sangha* according to their background expertise and the specific needs of the area. As the Master Trainers live in the villages, they are always available and also ensure ongoing interaction with the SHGs.

There are usually two Master Trainers in each village, and they organise regular training sessions in the village according to the felt demand. They are also invited by other NGOs and projects to contribute their expertise. Tijia Devi, for example, an illiterate woman farmer from Awadhpur village, was invited as a resource person for training sessions organised by CARITAS for its Project Managers in Madhya Pradesh. There are several other examples where farmer Master Trainers have helped orient people towards and convinced them of the viability of LEISA techniques using the examples of their personal field experiences.

Extension System through the SHGs

The three major components of the "greening" process mentioned above are inter-linked and interdependent. However, there are also a number of other support mechanisms linked to the LEISA promotion system:

- **Laghu Seemant Krishak Morcha (Small-marginal Farmers Forum):** Farmers are unionising in this forum to advocate their interests and promote LEISA, at village, district and state levels.
- **Farmer Interest Groups (FIG) and Participatory Technology Development (PTD):** Farmers with specific needs, problems and interests (such as landless farmers, vegetable growers, seed producers, livestock farmers) are being organised to facilitate more focused interventions and linkages. These FIGs are formed by members from different SHGs who share a common interest. Non-SHG farmers who share the same interest are also welcome. In the Sardarnagar area they are involved in seed production and collective farming, while in Campierganj most of the interest groups are involved in vegetable growing and livestock rearing. The FIGs are also developed around common problems such as pest and fertility management and finding solutions through participatory technology development.
- **Demonstration Farms:** Farmers have taken the lead in developing their own farms. These are integrated with households and livestock and function as demonstration models of LEISA farming.
- **Experimentation site:** GEAG has provided land where farmers can experiment, take risks and innovate.
- **Awareness Group:** Selected women from different SHGs, as well as interested men, have come together and formed a cultural group to promote LEISA through local culture, for example, through street plays.
- **Soil Health Laboratory:** Through the SHGs farmers can get their soil samples tested in the laboratory established by GEAG and get the necessary advice.

Looking ahead

Extension of LEISA practices through women Self-Help Groups has been effective and meaningful. It has ensured that women have access to information, techniques, institutions and the means to experiment with new techniques. Women are able to do better within their recognised roles through the skills acquired and the confidence gained during this process. At the same time, gender-mainstreaming efforts have enhanced their position and contributed to their emancipation. They are now able to unionise and advocate for their rights in a traditionally male-dominated society. Their enhanced control over resources and increased decision-making capacity, backed by the skills they have acquired, have given a meaningful dimension to low-external-input agriculture in the area. The adoption of LEISA practices has significantly reduced the use of high-cost external inputs like chemical pesticides and fertilisers, thereby increasing net gain to small and marginal farming communities.

Source : Seema Tripathi and Shiraz Wajih

Discussion

- What are the main reasons why GEAG has been promoting women's SHGs?
- In the context of Eastern Uttar Pradesh, how do you think SHGs can help women farmers?
- What do you understand by the concept of 'greening of SHGs'?
- What are some of the constraints or difficulties that women and/or SHGs may have in advocating 'green' farming techniques (LEISA)?
- What role do Farmers Field Schools and Master Trainers play?
- How does the agricultural extension system facilitated by GEAG differ from government agricultural extension systems?
- How do you think GEAG can strengthen its agricultural extension system?

2. Field visit and discussion
The role of banks in promoting SHGs

Learning Objectives

- To provide students with an overall understanding of the relationship between financial system and micro-finance initiatives
- To enable students to assess the role of rural banks in promoting and women's self-help groups engaged in micro-credit activities

Procedure

This exercise involves a field visit to a local bank (public sector rural bank or a co-operative bank) which has been engaged with local women's SHGs for more than one year at least. The bank can either have a direct relationship with SHGs or through a local NGO. Either way, the following questions provide an initial guideline for the students' discussion on the interface between rural banks and SHGs, but the discussion can extend beyond these questions. However, it would be ideal if this discussion involved both the bank manager and some functionaries who directly deal with the SHGs.

Discussion

- How many SHGs is the bank lending to currently? What is the size/amount of the group fund held in the bank?
- How have the banks been linked with the SHGs – through an NGO, government programme, local officer....?
- What is the process of opening an SHG account?
- How do you assess an SHG when you are going to give them a loan? What is the criteria used when then is no collateral, e.g. land, house or other asset?
- What has been the repayment rate and experience to date – do the SHG members come and repay the loan on time or is there a follow-up process?
- How many SHG members operate individual accounts at your bank (i.e., after a period of time, some women do go beyond a group account to open their own personal accounts; check who is the joint account holder – daughters, sons, husbands?)
- What sort of orientation have bank officials had on SHGs? Has this been mostly technical or financial training? Has there been anything from a gender perspective looking at issues of women's economic empowerment, by whom, etc.?
- From your overall experience with SHGs to date, do you think the idea of micro-credit is worth promoting – scaling-up – and if yes, why?

Unit 9
Gender, Biodiversity and Food Security

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which was signed at the Rio Earth Summit in June 1992 (UN Conference on Environment and Development), explicitly recognises in its preamble 'the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity' and affirms 'the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation for biological diversity conservation' (UNDP 1992:2 cited in Zweifel at: www.nuffic.nl/ciran/ikdm/5-1/articles/zweifel.htm; MSSRF 2003).

Biological diversity, or biodiversity for short, refers to the variety and variability among living organisms – the totality of genetic resources which are the foundation of life on earth, providing us with food, medicinal herbs and raw materials for industrial products. Although some would argue that extinction and evolution are natural phenomena, it is the accelerating rate at which we have been losing literally whole species in the last century that has serious implications for food security as well as the adaptation of natural ecosystems to climate change. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that we lose plant varieties at the rate of 2–5 per cent per year, largely due to the commercialisation of agriculture and the move to mono-cropping, most vividly symbolised in the Green Revolution's focus on hybrid rice and wheat varieties, overlooking the diversity of poor farmers who grow sorghum, millets and beans (FAO

At the start of the 20th century, India was estimated to have 30,000 varieties of rice. In the 1970s, modern hybrid varieties were seriously attacked by disease. At the time natural resistance was found in 'only a single collection of one population' of one wild species from Uttar Pradesh, that species 'has never been found again'. By 1984 one hybrid wheat variety covered nearly one-third of the country's wheat growing area. Such 'genetic uniformity' carries huge risks and requires 'all too frequent applications of pesticides and other potent agrochemicals' (Tuxill 1998 in Christian Aid 2000).

1996, cited in Christian Aid 2000). Not surprisingly, India is amongst the top ten countries with the highest number of plants threatened by extinction (IUCN 1997 cited in Christian Aid 2000).

Apart from the technological and economic push to replace biodiversity with homogeneity, is the threat to biodiversity from habitat destruction, whether it is the construction of mega-dams, the destruction of rainforests, or intensive aquaculture practices such as shrimp farming (the Blue Revolution). While the CBD recognises that biodiversity is the sovereign property of the nation in whose political boundaries it occurs, rather than the earlier notion where biodiversity was seen as the 'common heritage of humankind', its concerns are largely overshadowed by powerful economic and political interests which shape unequal global relations of trade. For the first time agriculture was brought into the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) and bio-resources such as seeds, germplasm and other living organisms are subject to patents under the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights regime (TRIPs) which India signed when it joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 1999.

The implications of patents – essentially monopoly ownership rights to the manufacturer on products and processes for a specific period of time -in agriculture' can mean that farmers lose their rights to preserve, use and improve seeds. The growth of transnational seed corporations such as Monsanto and Cargill and the tremendous resources that they have for research (biotechnology) has raised significant questions about the sustainability of the seeds they advocate (e.g., the failure of BT Cotton and the suicide of farmers in AP) and the ethics and safety of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Not surprisingly there have been several conflicts between farmers and seed companies led by grassroots leaders and supported by social activists, scientists, etc.[1]

Gender and biodiversity: Critical issues

The crucial linkage between diversity and the survival of humanity also has implications for gender relations arising from the significant role played by rural women in sustaining their families, ensuring food security and managing ecosystem diversity. Women play an important role in seed selection, collection and storage and are known to practice intercropping, crop diversification and be more concerned about maintaining traditional food crops such as 'wild' food species which require little external inputs and are of vital importance to the poor. However, with the modernization of agriculture and the growing emphasis on market-based transactions, the relevance of women's knowledge and their status, notably as 'seed keepers' (see the Palestinian poem) is changing. As women farmers know, it takes a sharp eye, a sensitive hand and a lot of patience to tell the difference among seeds. But there is little use for such knowledge in modern agricultural practices.

Shiva (1997) argues that the model of industrialization and the 'rationality' of scientific research on which it is premised is essentially patriarchal, associating men with creativity and culture (productive growth) while relegating women to the sphere of nature and reproduction (non-productive). Looking at this duality from the perspective of the gendered seed/earth metaphor and the colonization of women's bodies, she adds:

"Activity, as purely male, was constructed on the separation of the earth from the seed, and on the association of an inert and empty earth with the passivity of the female. The symbols of the seed and the earth, therefore, undergo a metamorphosis when cast in a patriarchal mold; gender relations as well as our perception of nature and its regeneration are also restructured. This non-ecological view of nature and culture has formed the basis of patriarchal perceptions of gender roles in reproduction

across religions and through the ages.....making the relationship of dominance of men over women appear natural...It is in this sense *(referring to biotechnology)* that the seed and women's bodies as sites of regenerative power are, in the eyes of capitalist patriarchy, among the last colonies," (Shiva 1997: 44).

While Shiva's position is indeed one end of the spectrum of perspectives on women's relationship with nature and the environment, the fact that agriculture has for the first time been brought into the global trading regime means that we need to look more critically at the changing role of rural women and men as guardians of our biodiversity. In many fragile environments where men have migrated in search of employment there is a growing interest in women's indigenous knowledge, skills and capabilities. Efforts by a range of development organizations seek not only to involve women in the documentation and conservation of biodiversity but, more importantly, provide livelihood opportunities based on ensuring access to and control over local bio-resources such as the marketing of medicinal (ayurvedic) herbs under the Gram Mooligai initiative of the Foundation for Revival of Local Health Traditions, Bangalore (see: www.frlht-india.org), or the establishment of in-situ rural gene/seed banks (Deccan Development Society[1], MSSRF). It is thus important that we look at gender and biodiversity in the context of agricultural/ livelihood systems, land tenure regimes and emerging market opportunities that provide women and men farmers with diversified sources of livelihood security which they can control and manage.

Gender roles in agro-biodiversity

An understanding of gender issues in agro-biodiversity requires a look at the different roles and relations of men and women as part of their overall livelihood systems that comprise farms and gardens, common property resources such as pastures and forested lands, as well as protected areas. In addition to staple food production in fields, home/kitchen gardens, largely the domain of women's responsibility, are often experimental plots where women try and adapt diverse wild plants or grown traditional subsistence food crops. The different livelihood strategies and interests, land tenure arrangements and organizational structures of different user groups (by gender, age, class, caste) as well as uneven power relations in access to, use and control over land, animal and plant resources directly influence their capacities and incentives to conserve agro-biodiversity.

Gender concerns in legal and policy initiatives

The government recently passed two acts which have implications for the conservation of biodiversity and the sharing of benefits arising from the use of the genetic resources and traditional knowledge. The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act (PPVFR Act, 2001) has been enacted in compliance with the TRIPs requirements for agricultural trade and has been hailed as a pioneering legislation that provides for rights and safeguards for farmers on par with plant breeders (Krishna 2004: 45).[2] While the inclusion of farmers' rights was in response to the strong stand taken by NGOs, the Act glosses over the dominant role played by women farmers "through its implicit conceptualization of the farmer as male," (Ibid. : 46). Neither in its recognition of 'community-owned' varieties does it address the complex heterogeneity of communities and the embedded power relations therein. Consequently, there is an apprehension that benefits may accrue not only to powerful elites within the community, but also to male farmers (household heads) undermining the knowledge and skills of women farmers and other marginalized groups.

The Biological Diversity Act (BD Act, 2002) which follows a decade after the government's ratification of the CBD (1992) raises some equity concerns in the benefit sharing arrangements proposed between communities and patent claimers, which also has gender implications. For example, there is no specific, explicit requirement for obtaining prior informed consent from the owners/conservers of biological resources, one of the core principles of the CBD. Section 21 of the Act states that the National Biodiversity Authority and the proposed State Biodiversity Boards may simply *prescribe* norms for equitable sharing of benefits while *panchayat* level Biodiversity Management Committees are to be merely consulted (MSSRF 2003). This raises serious questions of recognition of both men and women, just entitlements and the mainstreaming of gender and equity concerns in governance structures.

Global networks for food security

The MSSRF together with the FAO has played a leading role in bringing together different stakeholders to look at gender concerns in the various international and national agreements governing biodiversity, trade and intellectual property rights. The FAO has been asked to evolve a 'gender code' in the operational framework of farmers rights while the various national networks that are slowly emerging in the Asia-Pacific context have in principle, a commitment to address gender issues at all levels (see FAO/MSSRF 2000, MSSRF 2003).

The Diverse Women for Diversity (DWD), an international network of women, emerged as a Southern response to the threats to cultural and biological diversity posed by globalization. Founded in 1997, following the Conference on Plant Genetic Resources in Leipzig (June 1996), the movement today has a presence in all continents articulating alternatives to genetically engineered food and protesting against the dumping of unsafe/untested GE products in poor, developing countries, particularly disaster-prone areas, in the name of emergency relief, food aid or school mid-day meal programmes (See: www.diversewomen.org).

In India, the DWD articulates its commitment to diversity and food security through the National Alliance for Women's Food Rights, an umbrella forum of farmers groups, social activists and scientists concerned about the implications of the misappropriation and degradation of biodiversity for women's role in sustaining food security. Amongst the many demands outlined in the charter of the NAWFR is the call for strengthening of the public distribution system (PDS), more effective land use policies, the implementation of land reforms and the restriction or at least control of MNC investment in agriculture by the state so that farmers are not further impoverished.

Endnotes

[1] In response to its international commitments, the Indian government has recently enacted two Acts: the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers ' Rights Act (PPVFR, 2001) and the Biological Diversity Act (BD, 2002). For a more detailed discussion of the legal and gender implications see MSSRF (2003).

[2] The Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) dating to the early 1960s gave commercial protection (property rights) to plant breeders (scientists and farmers). While UPOV allowed farmers to save and reuse their seeds, breeders could use seeds to develop new varieties. In 1989, under the concept of 'farmers' rights' FAO recognized the contribution of farmers, particularly in developing countries, in the breeding and selection process of genetic material. However these were not individual rights.

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The Seed Keepers (a Palestinian poem)

Burn our land
burn our dreams
pour acid on to our songs
cover with sawdust
the blood of our massacred people
muffle with your technology
the screams of all that is free,
wild and indigenous.
Destroy.

Destroy
our grass and soil
raze to the ground
every farm and every village
our ancestors had built
every tree, every home
every book, every law
and all the equity and harmony.
Flatten with your bombs
every valley, erase with your edicts
our past
our literature, our metaphors
Denude the forests
and the earth
till no insect,
no bird
no word
can find a place to hide.

Do that and more.
I do not fear your tyranny
I do not despair ever
for I guard one seed
a little live seed
that I shall safeguard
and plant again.

Source: Cambridge Women's Collective (1984) *My Country is the Whole World – an Anthology of Women's Work on Peace and War.* London: Pandora Press (also in Shiva 1997).

Exercises

1. Case studies and discussion
Women's role in seed conservation

A. Community Seed Banks in Jeypore, Orissa

Orissa state with 4.7 per cent of India's total landmass has a large concentration of tribal population accounting for almost 22 per cent of its population (Census 2001). *Adivasis* largely depend on agriculture that is still mostly based on traditional practices and low external inputs.

The southern part of Orissa, known as the 'Jeypore tract' in Koraput district, lies in the northern part of the Eastern Ghats with a gently undulating plateau and residual hills. Nearly 45 per cent of the land is under cultivation and annual rainfall is 1800mm contributed largely by the South West monsoon. *Amanatya, Bhatara, Bonda, Didayi,* Ga *da ba, Ha/va, Kandha, Koya, Langia Paroja,* and *Saora* tribes are the original inhabitants of the forests and hills. The *Bonda, Paroja* and *Langia Saora* tribes still practice shifting cultivation along with settled agriculture. The district has a low literacy rate of 24.6 per cent. (See: http://orissagov.nic.in).

Agriculture in Jeypore

Rice is the predominant crop cultivated in upland, medium and lowland ecosystems. Nearly 85 per cent of 19,985 hectares of arable land is under paddy, mostly rain-fed. Other important crops are pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane and minor millets, grown in rotation at higher altitudes.

A considerable part of the rich genetic diversity in Jeypore tract once represented by about 1750 varieties of rice has now eroded. For example, an explorative survey conducted by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF, Chennai) during 1995-96 could locate only 324 rice varieties in the very area where more than thousand varieties were recorded only 40 years ago. The Jeypore tract thus presents a paradox of 'economic poverty amidst genetic prosperity'. Availability of canal irrigation in the region coupled with high-yielding varieties has accelerated the genetic erosion of many traditional landraces.

Three major cropping patterns are followed depending on the topography of the land. Rice is grown as a mono-crop in low, medium and uplands and minor millets are grown as mixtures in upland and medium land. Traditionally all agricultural operations are done together by men and women, although there is division of responsibilities between them. Women attend to weeding, storing grain and seeds, milling, and cooking; harvesting, threshing and winnowing are jointly done and men attend to ploughing, other field preparations and sowing.

Seed exchange and community seed banks

Seeds play a critical role in agricultural productivity and access to seeds or household seed security in Jeypore is strongly related to poverty. Poor households have less capacity to store seeds, yet they depend on them for consumption during lean periods – the dry season of March/April – as they do not have access to other sources of food grains. Seeds of traditional varieties are usually not available in the market so villagers acquire seeds through exchange from within the village or from neighbouring villages. Local seed exchange is usually based on kinship

or other 'traditional' relationships and is an important factor in determining the pattern of diversity as well as the diffusion of knowledge.

Seed exchange through a community seed bank is a strategy initiated to evolve institutional mechanisms for seed supply and facilitate access to traditional varieties within a community. Interested households contribute a specific amount of seed to the bank which pools, treats and stores the seed material and has backward–forward linkages with the MSSRF community gene bank at Chennai. Here there is elaborate documentation about crops, uses, contributors' details, etc. all based on the principle of 'informed consent'.

At the community level the seed bank is managed by *palli samithis*, traditional hamlet-level institutions (village committee) which have formal links with the elected *panchayat*. The *samithi* forms the seed bank committee which consists of three men and women, who share the responsibility of managing the bank. They record the name and quantity of seed requirements of needy families and distribute seeds accordingly. In the traditional mode of transaction, which the bank follows, if a person borrows one unit of seed before planting, they have to return two units of seed after the harvest.

About 200 hundred farmers both male and female are actively involved in the programme. Women play a key role in the seed bank and exchange system – they do vital tasks such as periodic monitoring to check the quality of seed. They also help in mixing the seeds for storage with a dried powder made up of *neem* and *karanja* leaves to protect the seed from pests. The seed bank primarily stores paddy seeds of 15 traditional cultivars as well as millet seeds, oil and vegetable seeds. In the year 2000 the total quantity of seeds transacted/exchanged was around 700 kg.

Apart from the seed bank, a Grain Bank has also been established. This is a decentralized facility for the storage of grain, which can be lent (and returned with interest) to families in need. The Grain Bank ensures food security and also minimizes the danger of seeds being consumed during times of stress by supplying excess grain as seed and gene material in times of need.

In 2002, the Jeypore Community Biodiversity Programme was one of 25 global projects awarded the *Equator Initiative's* Innovative Partnership Awards for Sustainable Development in Tropical Ecosystems at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, August 2002). Following the award, the Panchabati Grama Unnayan Samiti (PGUS), a farmers' association, was formed to scale-up the lessons learned in taking science to the people and ensuring food security. The executive body of the PGUS has representatives from all the 17 village committees currently part of the project. At least half of them are women. The PGUS is custodian of the Equator Initiative award of US$ 30,000 (approximately Rs 13.5 lakhs) which is being maintained in trust as a fund for community based conservation and development.

Source: Abstracted from FAO/MSSRF (2002) *Rural and Tribal Women in Agrobiodiversity Conservation – an Indian case study* and MSSRF *Community Agrobiodiversity Conservation in Orissa: Protecting to Prosper* . See also: www.mssrf.org

B. White gold or suicide – Suguna's story

In the mid-1980s the district of Warangal in Andhra Pradesh saw a rapid shift from traditional food crops such as millets, pulses and oilseeds to a hybrid cotton monoculture whose marketing promised high yields. Between1987–97 there was a three-fold increase in the area under cotton

cultivation, displacing food crops. Since there were no native cotton varieties or seeds evolved by farmers in the district, high yielding hybrid seeds were introduced. Planting the new seeds also replaced tried and tested methods of crop rotation. Cotton yields increased initially but while the cost of pesticides and fertilizers necessary to grow the hybrid crop went up, the price of cotton on the market went down. Moneylenders charging high interest rates to farmers needing credit to grow what became dubbed as the new 'white gold' were also often the sellers of seeds and pesticides. Heavy investments and high losses put many farmers into a never ending debt cycle, forcing them, or their wives/family members, to look at suicide as the only solution to their myriad problems. Suguna is one such wife.....

"Linga Reddy is a slight, quiet-spoken man of about 60 who leans heavily on a staff and moves slowly about their house and small farmyard. His eyes are deep-set, they seem sad and tired. Tears fall as he speaks of Suguna, his dead daughter-in-law. Overwhelmed by her family's debt burden and fearing that she may not be able to find the money for her daughter's dowry, Suguna hung herself from the family's guava tree on February 19, 1998. Now 15, Sravanti tries to fill her mother's place, caring for her father, grandfather and two younger brothers with help from her aunt sometimes.

Linga explains the background to the tragedy: "*We've got three acres of land and previously we grew millet and other crops. But once cotton was introduced to this area a few years back, we began to grow cotton. For the first 3-4 years we got a very good crop – but slowly, due to our use of chemicals we started suffering losses. The last time our loss was really heavy. Our investment, which began at about Rs 3,000, shot up to nearly Rs 40,000 and just to buy the right inputs for the crops we were forced to take out a lot of loans. The interest on these loans mounted and we just couldn't handle it.*" So, Suguna, who often borrowed money from her relatives, took her own life unable to even contemplate repaying the interest on loans. She knew that her family would get compensation from the government if death was seen as a result of crop failure.

Estimates vary, but at least 200 farmers are known to have committed suicide in the area – in the months following mid-December 1997, there was at least one suicide a day. Many farmers with some hope migrated to urban centres.

According to Samba Reddy, Suguna's widower, the seeds they used came from a local company MAYHCO, now affiliated to the seed giant, Monsanto which has since been trying to promote its own BT Cotton, genetically engineered to produce its own toxin for pest resistance. However, the Supreme Court has recently banned test plantings pending a judicial review of claims against the company. Indian farmers have raised questions of principle as well as fears of 'super pests' not deterred by the modified pesticide-like properties allegedly inherent in BT Cotton. Meanwhile, contradictions between the free trade rules of the WTO and the global commitment to protect the Earth's living resources under the CBD persist. Attempts to establish a strong Biosafety Protocol, for example, have been overruled by US trade negotiators and industry lobbyists. At another level, international and national resolutions on farmer rights rarely recognize the role of rural women as farmers conserving, improving and making available a wide range of bio-resources.

Source: Abstracted from: Christian Aid (2000) *Selling suicide: farming, false promises and genetic engineering in developing countries*

Discussion

- What role do women farmers play in biodiversity conservation in the two different agro-ecological zones discussed in the case studies?
- How do economic changes (e.g. trade related) in access to seeds and biodiversity affect farmers, particularly the poor and women?
- How can legislation (national and global) protect the intellectual property rights of farmers?
- What role can intermediary or catalyst organizations such as the MSSRF or NGOs such as the DDS or FRLHT play in facilitating participatory biodiversity conservation?
- What are the main facilitating and constraining factors (opportunities and threats) affecting such partnerships? [Teachers and students may bring in other examples from areas that they know to enhance and diversify the discussion.]

2. Group exercise
Changes in food consumption and biodiversity

Learning Objective

- To help students trace the impacts of changing biodiversity on daily food consumption

Procedure

- This can be either an individual or team exercise (small teams of no more than two students) done either during classroom time or outside of it.
- Ask each student to choose a family with elders in it, either their own if accessible or a family from the local community / neighbourhood. It is important that the family selected has people from at least 2-3 generations.
- For each family, ask the students to prepare a biodiversity and food profile looking at:
    - What foods are consumed on a daily basis now? [by men / women /children / elders, varying with age]
    - What foods were consumed in the past?
    - Where were/are these food items obtained from – grown or bought in the market?
    - What are the differences in terms of availability and intra-household access to food now and in the past?
    - What are the reasons for changes in food consumption patterns?
- Each student / team can then share their household food profiles in a plenary discussion.

Unit 10
Empowering Rural Women: Participation and Governance

"Empowerment is demonstrated by the quality of people's participation in the decisions and processes affecting their lives. In theory, empowerment and participation should be different sides of the same coin. In practice, what passes for popular participation in development and relief work is not in any way empowering to the poorest and most disadvantaged people in society."

Oxfam 1995: cited in Oxaal and Baden 1997: 7

Distinguishing empowerment

'Empowerment' and 'participation' became popular terms from the mid-1970s onwards as a response to the failure of top-down development planning to address the real needs of poor and marginalized people. However, there is no uniformly accepted definition of either concept – they have a variety of meanings depending on the institutional context and the nature of social actors involved. The concept of empowerment is closely related to participation whether in political processes (such as rural women's election to local panchayats) or participatory approaches to development involving rural women. But participation per se, which is essentially *enabling access*, does not necessarily lead to empowerment.

At the root of the term empowerment is the notion of power. And power can be understood as operating in a number of different ways (Oxaal and Baden 1997):

- **Power over:** This kind of power involves an either/or relationship of domination/ subordination. Ultimately, it is based on socially sanctioned threats of violence and intimidation, it requires constant vigilance to maintain and it invites active and passive resistance (internalized oppression). This kind of power is predominantly wielded by men over other men, men over women and by dominant social, political, economic or cultural groups over those who are marginalized. It is thus an instrument of domination whose use can be seen in people's personal lives, their close relationships, their communities and beyond (Rowlands 1995:101–102).
- **Power to:** This relates to having decision-making authority, the power to solve problems for example, and can be creative and enabling.
- **Power with:** This involves people organising with a common purpose or common understanding to achieve collective goals
- **Power within:** This refers to self-confidence, self-awareness and assertiveness. It defines the process through which individuals analyse how power operates in their lives and gain the confidence to act and influence this positively.

The concept of empowerment is rooted in the theories of the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire who put forward the notion of **conscientisation** in his seminal work, the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, as a process by which the poor could challenge the structures of power and take control of their lives. However, while Freire's analysis ignores gender as a determinant of power (Batliwala 1993) social movements all over the world (e.g. the civil rights movement in the USA, people's struggles over the environment, or for peace) have all used Freirian analysis to mobilise and advocate. Feminists have typically worked around the concepts of 'power with' (collective organisation) and 'power within' recognising that empowerment is a fluid process that may involve conflict between different groups (powerful/powerless) but is not necessarily as popularly believed, particularly by apprehensive men, a zero-sum game. That is, empowering women does not mean disempowering men; on the contrary, many feminists believe that men will also gain – they will be freed from their role as the perceived oppressor, relieved of gender stereotyping and be able to participate in a system which openly rejects hierarchy while embracing responsibility, nurturance and transparency or accountability.

Defining empowerment

Let us look at some of the diverse definitions of empowerment and see if we can identify common concerns:

"Empowerment involves challenging the forms of oppression which compel millions of people to play a part in their society on terms which are inequitable, or in ways which deny their human rights" (Oxfam 1995 cited in Oxaal and Baden 1997).

"Empowerment is the process of challenging existing power relations and of gaining greater control over the sources of power" (Batliwala 1993).

"Empowerment requires transformation of structures of subordination through radical changes in law, property rights and other institutions that reinforce and perpetuate male domination" (Sen and Grown 1995, cited in Banerjee 1995)

"Empowerment is the process through which women can participate effectively in decisions that affect their lives – at the family, community and higher levels of the political system" (ISED 1991, cited in Banerjee 1995).

"Women's empowerment should lead to the liberation of men from false value systems and ideologies of oppression. It should lead to a situation where each one can become a whole being regardless of gender, and use their fullest potential to construct a more humane society" (Akhtar 1992 cited in Batliwalla 1993:131).

"Empowerment is....more than simply opening up access to decision-making; it must also include the processes that lead people to perceive themselves as able and entitled to occupy that decision-making space" (Rowlands 1995:102).

'Empowerment as a feminist vision of development', advocated by DAWN (Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era, see: www.dawn.org), a network of Southern activists, researchers and policy makers, focuses attention to the related problems of poverty and inequality and the role of individuals and organisations in promoting gender-just and sustainable development.

Underlying these definitions is the understanding that

- Empowerment is an uneven process of change/transformation that cannot be imposed from the top, though development organisations and the State can play an enabling or facilitating role.
- Empowerment cannot be defined in terms of specific activities or end results

as it involves a process through which women can analyse, develop and voice their needs and interests, that is, informed choice.

- Empowerment is thus a relative and dynamic process rather than a static and absolutist state of 'being'. (As a teacher, I may feel empowered when I lecture my students for example, and disempowered when I have to relate to others in positions of power and authority above me, e.g. my director or chairperson.)

- Empowerment can be at two levels:
  - **Personal:** a sense of the self or self-efficacy wherein individuals have the confidence and capacity to look at internalized oppression. In addition, personal empowerment gives individuals the ability to negotiate unequal relationships and influence decision-making.
  - **Collective:** where individuals work together, for example, through self-help groups and co-operatives, or at a larger scale, through networks, alliances and social movements, to achieve a more extensive impact than each would have done alone. Group efforts involve collective awareness and capacity building by providing spaces for women (and men) to come together and understand their (disempowered) situation.

Strategies for rural women's empowerment

Since empowerment is a multi-faceted concept, strategies for facilitating women's personal and collective empowerment are diverse and include:

- **Legal empowerment:** through legislative action and its enforcement – reform in personal laws, policy on sexual harassment at the workplace (Bill being drafted), women's empowerment policies (Centre and some state governments) and laws to protect women against violence.

- **Political empowerment:** Facilitating women's participation in governance at different levels, for example, through one-third reservation in local government under the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments (See Unit 3).

- **Economic empowerment:** Enhancing women's access to and control over productive resources/endowments and benefits (both private and collective), for example, through the formation of SHGs, micro-credit activities, the promotion of entrepreneurship skills, access to the market.

- **Social empowerment:** Increasing women's ability to gain control over their bodies, fertility, sexuality and their identities through access to health (reproductive rights) and education (literacy and life-skills).

Essentially all these approaches towards empowerment are interconnected and emphasize the need for policy advocacy, legislative change, capacity building and strategies which facilitate women's participation and collective mobilisation at different levels while critically questioning existing gender relations (Murthy ed. 2001). The Millennium Development Goals (see Annexure 1) recognise that women's empowerment is central to poverty alleviation and development objectives. Goal 3 calls for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women through the elimination of gender disparities in primary and secondary education by the year 2015. However, transformatory change calls for strong leadership and gender-progressive organisational change that involves both men and women in

a process which by its very definition is non-linear, complex and context-specific.

Measuring empowerment

The claims for women's empowerment as the ultimate objective of many development policies and programmes leads to a demand for indicators both to reveal the extent to which women are already empowered and to evaluate if such policies or programmes have been effective in achieving their stated aims. Although a variety of indicators have been developed, given the multi-dimensional nature of empowerment it is difficult to quantify or 'measure'.

With respect to broad or societal indicators, the UN Human Development Report prepared for the women's conference in Beijing (UNDP 1995) came out with two composite indexes, namely the Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). Empowerment is recognised as one of the four essential components of the human development paradigm, the others being productivity, equity and sustainability.

The GDI attempts to measure countries' achievements in the basic capabilities covered by the HDI (life expectancy, educational attainment and income), taking note of the inequalities in achievement between women and men, and penalizing for inequality. Countries with greater gender disparities will have lower GDIs compared to their HDI. For example, the current GDI for India is 0.57, which ranks the country in the 103rd position out of a total of 144 countries for which the GDI is available. Surprisingly, the GDI ranking for India is higher than its HDI rank at 127 (UNDP 2003). But India's GDI is much lower than that of its comparative development partner, China (GDI = 0.71 / 83rd rank) or even that of smaller countries such as Sri Lanka (GDI = 0.72/ 80th rank) or Vietnam (GDI = 0.68 / 89th rank), suggesting that GDI has nothing to do with physical size, development resources or technological supremacy. Rather it reveals continuing gender discrimination, most visible in the sex ratio and growing violence against women, despite the drive towards modernization in a globalized economy.

The GEM on the other hand is a composite indicator which looks at women's representation in parliament, women's share of positions classified as managerial and professional, women's participation in the active labour force and their share of national income. It aims to examine whether women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life, particularly decision-making. Thus, while the GDI focuses on the expansion of capabilities, the GEM is concerned with the use of these capabilities to take advantage of opportunities (Oxaal and Baden 1997: 17). The current HDR has no GEM for India, partly because of the lack of sex-disaggregated data. GEM also does not reflect the degree of power which women are able to exercise in a given position of power, while participation in professional and managerial roles reflects mainly advancement for middle class women.

Clearly, empowerment indicators need to be project- or programme-specific as well as context-specific. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has developed a range of quantitative and qualitative indicators for assessing women's empowerment (CIDA 1997) in different spheres (legal, political, economic and social). However, CIDA recognises the complexity involved: for example, how do you measure changes in states of mind – from disempowered to empowered? Or measuring decision-making at the household level – this can be difficult and time-consuming and requires detailed qualitative analysis. Ultimately, it is only through the development of the 'self' – identity, autonomy and efficacy – that women can themselves measure their own state of empowerment. Macro-level

indicators such as the GEM or project/ programme indicators can only 'indicate' the different dimensions of what it means to be 'empowered' in a given context. But they can never fully capture what empowerment means in practice for vulnerable and marginalized people, whether men or women.

Gender Analysis Tool : Women's empowerment framework

The Women's Empowerment Framework is a tool developed by Sara Hlupekile Longwe, a gender and development consultant based in Lusaka, Zambia. It is intended to help planners understand what women's empowerment and equality mean in practice and to assess whether a development intervention is supporting such goals. Longwe defines women's empowerment as enabling women to take an equal place with men and to participate equally in the development process in order to achieve control over the factors of production on an equal basis with men (cited in March et al. 1999: 92). Development in this context means enabling people to take charge of their own lives, and poverty is related to oppression and exploitation rather than lack of access to productive resources. The Longwe framework is based on two tools:

Tool 1: Levels of equality

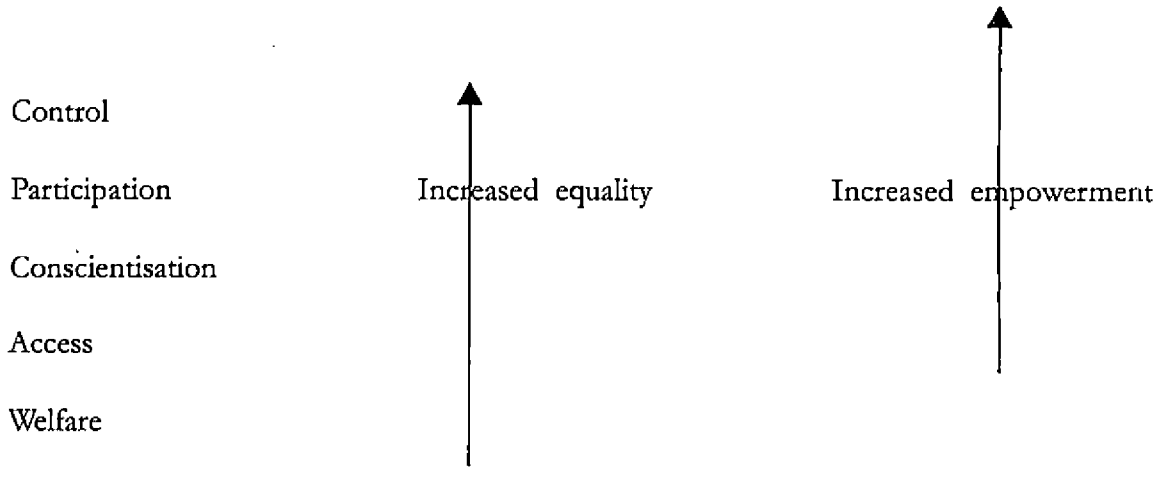
The Longwe framework centres on the concept of five 'levels of equality' which indicate the extent to which women are equal with men and have achieved empowerment. In hierarchical order, beginning with the lowest level, these are:

Welfare is the extent to which the basic needs of women are addressed relative to men. Women are seen as passive beneficiaries and critical questions concern their equal access to resources such as food, health care and income.

Access measures equality of access to the factors of production, namely, land, labour, capital, technology, etc. The process of empowerment is initiated when women realise that lack of access to resources is a constraint to their overall well-being and household security and take action to redress this.

Conscientisation refers to the awareness of how gender inequalities are socially constructed and institutionalized. Women also need to recognise the role that they play in reinforcing the system to the disadvantage of other women/girls (and boys/men) whether as a result of age and status within the household or socio-economic position (caste/class).

Participation is the ability of women to take equal part in the decision-making process at different levels – policy, project planning and



implementation, management and at the level of the household, community or organization.

Control denotes equality of control over the decision-making process where there is a balance of power between men and women, and neither gender dominates. Women are able to make decisions regarding their lives and the lives of their children (e.g. over the distribution of benefits) and play an active role in the development process.

Tool 2: Level of recognition of women's issues

According to Longwe, 'women's issues' are those which are concerned with women's equality in any social or economic role, involving any of the levels of equality as outlined. An issue becomes a 'women's issue' when it looks at the social/gender relationship between men and women rather than sex-based differences. The Framework does not specify whether the intervention should target women-only, men-only, or both. Rather, women's empowerment is seen as a concern for both women and men and projects which are potentially empowering are defined by the extent to which they address women's issues.

Longwe identifies three different levels of recognition of women's issues:

- **Negative:** project makes no mention of women's issues; most likely women will be made worse off by such projects.
- **Neutral:** project objectives recognise women's issues, but only go so far as to not leave women worse off than before the project (conservative).
- **Positive:** project objectives are positively concerned with improving the position of women relative to men.

Strengths and limitations of Longwe's framework

Why it appeals

- Emphasizes empowerment
- Strongly ideological /political
- Useful as a planning, monitoring and evaluation tool and for training
- Useful to identify the gap between rhetoric and reality in interventions which are in principle committed to women's empowerment

Potential limitations

- Hierarchy of levels may make users think that empowerment is a linear process; also, a strict interpretation of levels may lead to false conclusions
- The framework does not examine the macro-environment or institutions and organisations involved
- Does not take into account situational changes over time

Table 1 : Women's Empowerment Framework

Levels of equality	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Levels of recognition			
Control			
Participation			
Conscientisation			
Access			
Welfare			

- Does not consider other forms of inequality and can encourage a misleading view of women as a homogenous group
- By focusing on women rather than gender relations, the framework may lead to, albeit unintentionally, overlooking of men's needs and interests
- Since the framework is strongly ideological it can lead to confrontation if not used sensitively.

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Exercises

1. Film and discussion
When women unite

Learning Objectives

- To analyse the concept of "empowerment" and its various meanings and dimensions
- To understand the gender impact of the liquor trade
- To explore the social, economic and political dimension of the linkages between the liquor trade

Procedure

Start by viewing the film together as a group. Then initiate the discussion with a few questions. Start with the more general questions and then go on to the more detailed or specific ones. Round off the discussions with the conclusions reached by the group.

Often the students may not be able to respond adequately after one viewing, especially in the case of long films like this one, and it may be necessary to have a second viewing. Before doing this, arouse interest in the topic with some questions and let the students discover for themselves that they need to see it again to explore the issue in depth.

At this point, it may also be useful to provide the questions before the viewing, and / or to divide them into small groups. Allow the small group discussions to continue among themselves and let them share their findings with the larger group.

Discussion

- Try to define "empowerment" now, after you have seen the film. How would you have defined it before seeing the film? What is the difference?
- Whose support do you think was most critical for the women in their struggle - their own men, the authorities, the women's organisations, the literacy workers, or some other? Why?
- What do you think was the "turning point" in the struggle? What makes you think so?
- Do you see any link between the state of agriculture, the Green Revolution and the anti-arrack movement?
- Can you see any links between the economics of the liquor trade, the state of the economy and the policies of Government?
- What were the "benefits" the women received at the end of their struggle? Can you sum these up in a few words?
- What moved you most in this film? Why?

When Women Unite

Time	:	80 mins.
Year	:	1996
Language	:	Telugu & English (English subtitles)
Director	:	Shabnam Virmani
Producer	:	DRISHTI Media Group
Where available	:	Mr. Stalin, Director, Drishti Media Ltd., 103, Anand Hari Towers, Sandesh Tress Road, Podakdev, Ahmedabad – 54
Format	:	CD
Price	:	Rs. 500/-
Procedure for obtaining	:	DD in favour of Drishti Media Ltd.

2. Classroom discussion
Women's empowerment

Learning objective

- To understand the different dimensions of women's rights and empowerment

Procedure

Below is a list of different statements that convey popular notions about women's position, their roles and responsibilities and their capabilities.

- Write each statement on a separate piece of paper, fold it and put in a bowl.
- Depending on the number of students in the class you can divide them into pairs or small groups, preferably mixed.
- Invite each team to select one statement.
- Tell each team that they have 3 minutes to prepare their position on the statement and then another 2 minutes to share it in a plenary session.
- Begin!
- There may not be time for counter-questioning or challenging of each team's position on a particular statement. Instead the facilitator can summarise key emerging points at the end of all the team presentations by discussing whether the points raised were justified or not and why. How and why does society construct these perceptions?

Are these statements true or false?

1. Women get lesser wages than men because they do lighter work.
2. Women lag behind in technology because they do not come forward for training.
3. Women's lack of education leads to low skills and poor wages.
4. Household work is a labour of love.
5. Women cannot be members of dairy cooperatives because they can't handle large animals.
6. Tea plucking requires delicate fingers, skill and patience which men lack.
7. Women engaged in agriculture when their husbands migrate cannot be called farmers/ heads of households.
8. Income generation for women should be home-based so that they can use free time constructively to earn money.
9. Women are women's worst enemies/It is women who are barriers to women's development.
10. Women's income is supplementary because man is the breadwinner.
11. Women farmers are not the same as farm wives.
12. Household work cannot be included in national accounting because it is not productive work.
13. Women cannot work as plantation managers, because it is a tough and hardy job.
14. Women cannot handle machinery because of their lack of strength and knowledge.

Unit 11
Livelihoods in Transition: Disasters, Vulnerability and Adaptive Capacity

"Disasters are the unfinished business of development" (Duryog Nivaran, Sri Lanka)[1]

Disasters and vulnerability

Dominant perceptions of disasters construct disasters as *naturally* occurring, largely environmental hazards which may occur relatively suddenly - cyclones, volcanic eruptions and earthquakes - or with some degree of regularity in terms of seasonality, such as periodic cycles of drought and/or flood years.[2] As the State counts up the human and economic losses, or administers relief, those who experience disasters are conceptualized as a homogenous group called 'victims', a category which overlooks differences in terms of gender, caste, class, age, or physical and mental ability (Fordham 1999: 15). However, 'disasters' unfold in varying geographic, political, socioeconomic and cultural contexts (Enarson 2000: vii). People's ability to respond, cope with, or adapt reflects unevenly distributed patterns of **vulnerability** structured by access to and control over resources, the extent of diversified livelihood strategies, physical location (community settlement patterns, population density) or personal endowments (skills, education, key survival and recovery resources) and access to information and communication systems (DFID 2003).

Vulnerability is a more dynamic concept than poverty as it captures the changing degree of susceptibility to loss caused by exposure to disaster or risk – of individuals (who lack access to a 'basket' of assets), of communities (due to poor governance of resources) and of systems (that lack adaptive strategies and disaster preparedness). It is linked to complex sets of interacting conditions, some related to geography and location (where do the poor reside in flood-prone villages?), others with the nature of the dwelling (*kuccha* or *pucca* houses) and access to physical infrastructure (potable water supply systems) and some with everyday patterns of social interaction and organisation (social networks and community institutions). Thus, while poor nations and the poor as a social class are more at risk, the extent of vulnerability varies according to the ability of different groups or individuals to secure alternative livelihood options and ensure the flow of resources – financial, social and political – to maintain livelihood security. And the contextualization of disasters within *everyday* vulnerabilities recognises the role of interlocking systems of vulnerability in both physical and social space, that is, the construction of overlapping 'geographies of vulnerability' (Fordham 1999: 19).

In India it is well recognised that poor women, children and the elderly carry disproportionate

'vulnerability bundles' which places them in the highest risk category, even amongst marginalized communities (by caste, ethnicity, race or religion) and the poor. Writing almost a decade ago, Blaikie et al. (1994; cited in Enarson and Morrow 1998: 2) acknowledge that vulnerability is structured by relations of gender and power intersecting at different institutional sites:

"Gender is a pervasive division affecting all societies, and it channels access to social and economic resources away from women and towards men. Women are often denied the right to vote, the right to inherit land, and generally have less control over income-earning opportunities and cash within their own households. Normally their access to resources is inferior to that of men. Since our argument is that less access to resources, in the absence of other compensations to provide safe conditions, leads to increased vulnerability, we contend that in general women are more vulnerable to hazard."

Although there has been some progress in recent years in linking gender, disasters and development, partly arising from the work of NGOs, donors and others to strengthen the resilience of disaster-prone communities and challenge unequal relations of gender and power, the overriding discourse on disaster management is still largely un-gendered. That is, not only is the field of emergency relief and 'crisis' management predominantly male, engineering solutions such as embankments and check dams are also designed by men, often without consulting water users, particularly marginalized women. On the other hand, we also know "...as little about men's emotional work during disaster recovery as about women's physical work" (Enarson and Morrow 1998:4).

Disasters and the State

Asia as a continent is particularly vulnerable to disasters: between 1991–2000 it accounted for 83 per cent of the population affected by disasters globally. India accounted for 24 per cent of disaster deaths in Asia during this period, mostly due to floods and cyclones. Nearly 4 crore (hundred million) hectares of land area in the country are flood prone, while 68 per cent of the net sown area is vulnerable to drought. Given the economic magnitude of these disasters (see Tables 1 and 2), the Tenth FYP (2002–07) has for the first time got a separate chapter (Chapter 7) on the need for disaster mitigation from a development perspective. Traditionally, responses to disasters have been seen as non-planned expenditure (calamity relief), but the Orissa super-cyclone (1999) and the Kutch earthquake (2001) have made it apparent that the country needs to plan for disaster preparedness and mitigation to minimise the impact on development objectives:

"The message for the Tenth Plan is that in order to move towards safer national development, development projects should be sensitive towards disaster mitigation. With the kind of economic losses and developmental setbacks that the country has been suffering year after year, it makes good economic sense to spend a little extra today in a planned way on steps and components that can help in the prevention and mitigation of disasters, than be forced to spend many multiples more later on restoration and rehabilitation," (Tenth FYP 2002: 202).

While the chapter does not focus on droughts and floods per se, maintaining that there are several other components which cover these types of disasters[3], the basic thrust of the chapter is on the need for integrated planning and management systems, information (a sound data base), coordinated communication and networking channels and extensive capacity building at different levels (panchayats, armed forces, schools and knowledge centres, communities) to support this institutional infrastructure. Although the Plan recognises the need for community participation and within this, the need for identifying vulnerable

groups (women and children, elderly, physically challenged), it does not match this commitment in principle with resource allocation. Rather, the entire approach to disaster mitigation is top-down and technocentric, rooted in an 'engineering' paradigm (afforestation, earthquake-resistant housing), based on trained experts who are meant to interface with and support local communities organised by NGOs/CBOs into self-reliant teams empowered to 'cope with disasters'.

Such a perspective sees the vulnerable as 'passive victims' or beneficiaries and calls for "special assistance in terms of evacuation, relief, aid and medical attention to them in disasters" (Tenth FYP: 200).[4] Not only does it overlook contextualized social relations of power underlying vulnerability, it also fails to recognise the **resilience** of livelihood strategies based on longstanding experience of living with, instead of *coping with*, disasters. Resilience as applied to integrated systems of people and the natural environment refers to the amount and degree of change a system can undergo without collapsing into a qualitatively different state of existence (Moench and Dixit 2004:13). **Adaptation** in this framework broadly defines the approaches: for example, diversifying livelihood strategies and the 'learning' that communities adopt in order to respond to long-term variability.[5]

The impact of disasters

The frequency as well as the intensity of disasters in the past decade appears to have increased. Since 1990 there have been 118 recorded instances of floods, compared to only 31 instances between 1980 to 1989 (MSSRF 2001: 23). However, this may only be a statistical

Table 1 : Annual Damage due to Heavy Rain, Landslides and Floods 1999–2001

Year	Districts affected	Village affected	Population affected (in lakhs)	Crop area affected (ha)	House Damaged (no.)	Human Lives (no.)	Cattle	Value of loss (in Cr. Rs.)
1999	202	33,158	328.12	8.45	884,823	1,375	3,861	0.72
2000	200	29,964	416.24	34.79	2,736,355	3,048	102,121	631.25

Source: Annual Reports, Natural Disaster Management Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Tenth FYP: 192.

Table 2: Annual loss due to drought 1999–2001

Year	Districts affected	Village affected	Population affected (Lakhs)	Damage to Crop area (lakh ha)	Value of damaged crops (Rs Cr)	Cattle population affected (lakhs)
1999	125	—	369.88	134.22	6.44	345.60
2000	110	54,883	378.14	367.00	371.87	541.67
2001	103	22,555	88.19	67.44	NA	34.28

Source : Annual Reports, Natural Disaster Management Div., Ministry of Agriculture, Tenth FYP: 193.

phenomenon due to better reporting systems and heightened awareness.

Although in terms of the sheer extent of human population affected and the subsequent loss of lives the impact of floods is greater, drought has a more significant (and longer) impact on cattle and livestock numbers as well as cultivated area. These directly impact on the livelihoods of small and marginal farmers and, in turn, on food security and relations of gender and power *within* households.[6] Relief (whether in terms of food, work or cash) is usually extended ***to*** households, typically to male heads of households (fathers, sons or other male relatives) rather than looking ***within*** households at the differential impact of disasters on household members depending on gender, age, social status and how these determine their access to resources, the public domain and other institutions. The allotment of sites for the construction of houses after an earthquake or cyclone, for instance, is invariably in the names of husbands and sons, which does not take into account the specific vulnerability of single, deserted, widowed or old women.[7]

Gendered impacts of drought and floods

In a 'disaster' context, women's entitlements and perceptions of interest and well-being are contested as households struggle to survive: "Women themselves underestimate the enormous range of burdens they bear, they may harbour negative images about themselves and be unused to perceiving of themselves as strong and effective survivors, managing a wide spectrum of household and social responsibilities" (Parasuraman and Unnikrishnan 1999: 11). It is during these moments that the intersection of gendered identities with other cultural identities of caste, community, kinship or tribe become critical, either providing a means of social support (self help groups) or worse, denying access to basic human rights such as potable water. Let us look at some of these impacts drawing on research insights from drought-prone areas in Gujarat and flood prone districts in Eastern Uttar Pradesh.[8]

Economic impact

Increased time spent on unpaid work

- More time and energy spent on domestic water collection in drought prone areas – women have to walk to water sources further away from the village. It is not uncommon for women to spend up to 4 hours walking almost 6 km a day (back and forth) to fetch water. In upper caste households (Darbar, Rajput) of Saurashtra, Gujarat, the practice of *purdah* (female seclusion) dictates that men usually go to collect water but they often have access to transport (bicycles, tractors, bullock carts) and do not head-load water.
- Women's reproductive workload increases after a flood as she has to help with house repairs, cleaning, drying and maintaining belongings in addition to her routine work of cooking, childcare and biomass and water collection.

Reduced time available for productive work

- In drought prone areas, there is a direct correlation between the time available for productive work and the household's access to water. For example, where households have private wells or the resources to invest in roof water collection tanks (RWCTs), this has a positive impact on women's water collection time. Even where rainfall has been limited for effective working of RWCTs there is emerging evidence that these have been used as large water 'storage cupboards' by households who can afford to buy water for long-term domestic use in bulk from private tankers/sellers.
- Women may lose sources of paid work; for example, agricultural wage labour in

the aftermath of floods as fields are inaccessible, and it is also more difficult for women to move out of the village to work (extended caring roles and post-disaster 'flight of men' has been well documented). Where families have lost their own fields either in floods or through river cutting, this also has an impact on household livelihood security unless there are diversified sources of income from migration or non-land based occupations.

Male out-migration

- Seasonal or long-distance male out-migration– puts an added burden on women to manage land often without the security of tenure or financial resources to invest in inputs as well as look after children, elderly and other dependents.

  On the other hand, remittances provide some immediate security for women/ households to meet consumption needs after floods or make productive investments in land and water resources. (The degree of remittances or remittance flows varies across households depending on the nature of jobs and location. Migrant destinations in Gujarat range from local towns to more distant cities within the state, such as Surat, Ahmedabad and Baroda, or as far as Mumbai and, in some cases, the Gulf countries or beyond.)

Social impact

Conflicts

- Increase in conflicts between women at water queues: when tankers come to drought-affected villages, or at hand-pumps with reduced water flows, or at wells where water has to be accessed from great depths (in the Saurashtra region small girls and boys are often lowered into wells with ropes to collect water).
- Contested household entitlements, particularly on women and girls' access to food, healthcare and education. Women may often lose their right to control household income necessary for the basic social reproduction of the household. In the post-flood context too,

Kalavati's plight
Coping with floods on her own

Kalavati, a 65-year-old woman living in the village of Chittari, Brahmpur block, Gorakhpur district, was all alone with her two younger sons and her daughter-in-law who had a two-months-old son when the 1998 floods came, one of the worst in living memory for the region. "My husband and eldest son had gone to work in Gujarat so I was responsible for everyone in the family. I took them to the village across the river in a boat and we stayed with the family of a religious man till the waters abated. Then I sent my daughter-in-law and grandson to Gujarat with my middle son, and I and my younger boy, just 15 years old at the time, went back to look after our house, or rather what was left of it. We had lost our entire house and two cows, so we had to stay in a temporary shelter with plastic roofing. I remember being very sick at the time, I had high fever and vomiting, so my neighbours helped me with food. Even my little boy was not well – something had bitten his hand in the flood waters and it had all swollen up. But he still looked after me as best as he could."

Source: Author, field visit, November 2003

partly because of the trauma of displacement and devastation and partly because of the male bias of relief agencies and the dependence on men/ boys to collect dry fuelwood, fodder or potable water, women lose control (decision-making) over some of their domestic responsibilities.

Education

- Girls may be pulled out of school in drought-prone areas to either help with domestic work (water collection) or to look after siblings if mothers have to go out for work or spend more time in water collection.
- Extended drought years can also have an impact on female enrolment/ retention rates. In flood affected areas schools will remain closed for a number of days till the waters recede; schools are also used as temporary community centres and/or shelters if they are located at a high point.

Health, hygiene, water supply and sanitation

- Less water available for personal hygiene in drought prone areas, e.g. at times of menstruation, delivery and post-natal care. Women also report that they bathe and wash clothes less frequently in both drought and flood affected areas – the former because of limited water and the latter because it is difficult to find privacy when living in community shelters on embankments. The most difficult problem for women in flood affected areas is access to sanitation facilities – in U.P. and Bihar women use a small wooden platform either just outside the house (*machan*) and therefore more portable, or fixed on the edge of the rooftop. Many women, particularly the elderly, mentioned that they would eat less food to avoid going through the arduous task of finding a safe/dry/private place for defecation. Often women/girls go in groups as it provides more security in an uncertain environment.
- Lack of clean drinking water in flood affected areas – higher incidence of waterborne diseases also increases women's unpaid care responsibilities.
- Childbirth – many women recounted stories of friends and family members who had to deliver children on rooftops or even tree-tops – the only dry spot in flooded villages. Access to medical facilities is almost impossible, but men would help by ferrying across (by boat), the '*chamai*', the traditional lower caste woman who cuts the umbilical cord.

Access to food and nutrition

- Changes in food consumption patterns in Satlasana block, Mehsana district, Gujarat – women reported that vegetables are cooked once a day and stretched for two meals. Grains of a poorer quality are increasingly being used – rather than buy wheat and then grind it, many families buy small quantities of poor quality *atta* (whole-wheat flour) and using this for *rotis*.

Gender discrimination and violence against women and girls

Sexual exploitation

- *Dalit* women in northern Gujarat because of their scheduled caste (impure) status are often denied access to the village well or tank and have to walk further to collect water. Sexual exploitation by upper caste men is not uncommon, particularly when familial men are not around (migrated) to protect the honour of their wives, daughters or sisters, or even if they are around the sheer human need and desperation for water overrides concerns

of female autonomy over her body/ sexuality.

Sex ratio

- Declining sex ratios in drought prone areas of Gujarat over the last decade, particularly the child sex ratio is a cause of concern. According to VIKSAT's[9] primary survey, the sex ratio of children up to 5 years in Bhiloda taluka (Sabarkantha district) is as low as 717/ 1000 and in Satlasana block (Mehsana district) only 756/1000 (see Moench and Dixit eds. 2004). Gujarat has a history of female foeticide and infanticide and as one of the more prosperous, industrial states in the country access to sex selection technology is now widely available even in small towns and peri-urban areas.

Coping with drought and floods: women as agents of change

Despite the social, economic and physical hardships that women have endured as a result of living with periodic drought and recurring floods, they have also become resilient, finding ways and means to ensure the survival of their families.

Social mobility and the changing nature of 'work'

Relief work

Generally it is women who go to work on relief sites as they tend to be closer to the village. In Rajasthan, insights suggest that it is women who largely bear the burden of relief work in the heat while men sit around. Women are also

Unable to pay land tax
The social victimisation of farming women

Adhari from the lower caste *kevat* or boatmen community came to the flood prone village of Chandipur (Campierganj block, Gorakhpur district) six years after her marriage when she was 18 years old. For a while she lived as part of her husband's joint family with his three brothers. Her father-in-law owned 22 *bighas* of land, but once the grandchildren were born the land was divided with each brother getting about 3 *bighas* (roughly 1 acre) and 1.5 *bighas* was acquired by the state when they built the road connecting Chandipur with the main highway from Gorakhpur; the rest of the land (about 5 *bighas*) remained with the father. Like most of the other men in rural Gorakhpur district, Adhari's husband went to work in the construction business in Nepal for many years; later he returned to Delhi to do the same work, but died around 1991 in an accident on a housing site. With her husband gone, Adhari was responsible for most of the agricultural operations as well as looking after their three children. She recalls only too vividly what happened when the floods came and swept away her home and ruined their crops time and time again:

"In those days we had to pay a lagaan – land tax – to the local zamindar (landlord) of Rs 20/bigha. However, when the floods came and ruined our crops we were simply unable to pay this tax. So the zamindar's henchmen would tie five of us women together by our hair and make us carry heavy bricks on our back around the village for almost two hours as a punishment. I remember this happened to me at least four to six times." Ironically, colonial interest in controlling floods by building physical structures arose largely because of their diminishing agricultural revenues as a result of crop and land losses.

Source: Author's field visit, November 2003

keen to work on NGO-initiated drought relief projects as these tend to be investments in local water infrastructure: deepening the village pond, for instance.

Daily labour at the brick kilns

- This activity provides about eight months of work for drought-affected villages in Gujarat. Women from marginal and landless households head-load bricks at the rate of Re. 1/- for 36 bricks. Depending on how many trips one can make in the day and therefore how many bricks one can carry, a woman can earn between Rs 20 and 40 as daily wages, well below the minimum wage and the current agricultural labour rates. Women from the Darbar households who do not go out to work – they earn some money instead by selling soil from their fields to the kiln owners (negative impact on soil fertility).

Increase in sex work

- Emerging trends suggest that periodic drought from 1987 onwards in Gujarat has led to an increase in migration and sex work as an alternative livelihood strategy in *adivasi* dominated districts.[10] Often there are close links between families and/or friends who are engaged in sex work, daughters follow mothers or sisters in the same profession with young sons/brothers acting as 'pimps'. *Adivasi* women and girls can be found engaged in sex work near famous temples in Gujarat, but since their bargaining power is very low they are at more risk from unsafe sex practices which may lead to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Sale of assets

- Sale of assets such as livestock, milch cows or buffaloes will have an impact on women's income flows as well as on milk consumption within households.[11] Although livestock are an important asset in both drought and flood affected areas, particularly for landless households, beyond a critical threshold they can be a

Drudgery of relief work

Recounting the last drought in Gujarat

"During the drought of 1985, my husband and I started going to work on the relief sites digging earth. There was drought for four successive years and we dug earth for four years – there was no other way. All my hair fell out and I went bald," recounts Bhachiben, a SEWA member, married into a wealthy family (35 acres of land) who were forced to gradually sell their land because of economic circumstances till they were left with only 5 acres, which Bhachiben convinced them to retain as security.

"During the first drought year I was seven months pregnant, but I had to work on the relief sites, otherwise the family's survival would have been difficult. Regular work was never available – I had to borrow money from time to time, the moneylenders would charge 4% interest/month. Just 15 days after my son was born, I resumed digging – my elder son who was then four years (only) would look after his infant brother," recalls Puriben now an active SEWA member.

Source: from an International Technology Development Group (ITDG) occasional paper cited in Fernando and Fernando 1997

burden if there is no reliable fodder source or water is scarce. Community afforestation initiatives, such as VIKSAT's Tree Growers' Co-operative Societies provide a vital source of fodder during drought years. Some organisations, such as SEWA, have also started fodder banks, which are managed by women, in drought affected districts.

Sale or pawning of jewellery, a symbol of personal and household status, while weakening women's bargaining position within the household is a critical security for either immediate cash purchases (food) and/or productive investments. Women in Satlasana, Gujarat were reluctant to mention that their jewellery had been pawned and the money used to deepen wells.

Endnotes

[1] Duryog Nivaran is a South Asian network of NGOs and individuals working on disasters and vulnerability issues. They can be contacted at the International Technology Development Group, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Email: general@itdg.slt.lk

[2] Although droughts and floods are the result of precipitation patterns (amount and distribution of rainfall), soil moisture and water availability or processes of deforestation, etc. they have been greatly exacerbated by human interventions that have changed both hydrological systems (embankments and drainage congestion) as well as political dynamics (who declares a watrer scarece situation as drought?)

[3] For example, the Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Desert Development Programme, Flood Control Prograqmme, and various natural resource management and food for work programmes.

[4] This is typical welfare approach of the state towards the poor and vulnerable and dates back to the community development programmes of the 1950s with their focus on reaching out to women to be better mothers and homemakers through health, nutrition, education, and small-scale income-generating projects which they could do in the safety of their homes without questioning acess to or control over resources.

[5] There is a fine line which distinguishes between short-term coping strategies and the more long-term adaptation by communtieis to climate change and disasters; see Moench and Dixit (eds.) 2004.

[6] Note that there is no disaggregated data on the impact of disasters whether by gender, caste or age, except for the limited and small, geographically confined studies by NGOs and/or development researchers.

[7] It is not uncommon to find examples of sons denying mothers/sisters any share in the property or turning them out of the house to fend for themselves.

[8] These insights come from a collaborative study on Adaptive Strategies involving a range of institutions and individuals from the USA, India and Nepal with funding support from OFDA/USAID

[9] Vikram Sarabhai Centre for Development Interaction. www.viksat.org

[10] Discussion with Prof. Gaurang Jani from the Faculty of Social Sciences, Gujarat University.

[11] Women bear more responsibility for caring for livestock, milking them and marketing the milk where possible. However, this does not necessarily translate into 'control' over decisions about if and when to sell cattle (though theymay participate in the decision making process), or membership in dairy co-operatives which tend to be male dominated.

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Exercises

1. Case studies and discussions
Gender and drought

A. Maharashtra: Political dimensions of access to water[1]

In recent years, depletion and destruction of resources in rural India has made women's performance of their traditional tasks extremely difficult, often costing them their health and sometimes their lives. Scarcity of water and its poor quality are inextricably linked to the quality of life of poor women, and cannot be seen as separate issues. Drought, in this view, is a phenomenon with both environmental and social origins.

What causes water scarcity in rural Maharashtra? Although access to drinking water remains an acute problem in Maharashtra, it has not commanded the attention it deserves because of the way water scarcity is perceived by the State. Government and State policies explain water shortage and drought as arising from natural causes, thus absolving themselves of any serious responsibility other than that of providing short-term relief. The lack of an integrated approach and the fragmentation of the different departments responsible for water issues make it possible to ignore various anomalies such as the increase in the number of tubewells on the land of rich peasants, although common wells have dried up. Similarly, the increase in sugarcane cultivation reduces the amount of water available for households, and support for cooperative sugar mills has created powerful social and political cartels. The net result of all these factors is reduced access to resources, including drinking water, for poor families.

One relatively successful attempt to alleviate such problems involved pumping water to villages and ensuring that it was distributed equitably. However, although the Water Council established to operate the project ensured that water was indeed shared equally among households, and women did indeed benefit as a result of easier access to water, the plan failed to acknowledge women as individuals. Traditionally, only men can own land; under the Water Council scheme, therefore, only men were granted water rights. Although landless men are entitled to hold water rights, women, who are traditionally landless, are not. Moreover, the time saved by the women did not benefit them personally since men shifted responsibility for some of their own tasks to them. They claimed that as the women no longer had to spend so much time fetching water, they now had "free time" in which to perform other tasks.

Water scarcity reinforces caste and gender distinctions

In India, water has always been associated with purity and purification. But in rural areas, it has also served to make class and caste distinctions more rigid. In rural Maharashtra, as in most other parts of India, class and caste positions usually go together, and in times of drought, awareness of caste and class privileges, and their associated discriminations, become further entrenched. So in drought-ridden villages which are supplied with water by trucks every few days, it is usually the headman who is supplied first, followed by other prominent residents and lastly the lower income groups. Water scarcity may even be created, or intensified, through the use of caste and class power by richer farmers.

Although women are normally responsible for collecting water for their households, in times of scarcity it comes under the control of men of higher castes or classes. Another way in which water scarcity transforms gender relations is through male out-migration and desertion. Patriarchal relations and the low position in the caste and class hierarchies deny women these options, but leave them with the responsibility for ploughing the land and managing an extended family. Women's relations with other women are also changed by water scarcity. More time spent collecting water can mean less "personal" time for women, so that the use of the water site as a common meeting place gradually declines.

Other negative changes in ecological conditions likewise affect the relationship between women and communities. A tribal grassroots organisation has recently established a link between the revival of witch--hunting practices and local deforestation. Extensive forest loss has resulted in the disappearance of various medicinal herbs, plants and roots, which has led to increased disease and mortality. This in turn is being attributed to the practice of witchcraft by women, especially widows and deserted wives, and campaigns to hunt and kill such women are currently under way.

Changes in ecological conditions impact heavily on women's identities. Alienation from production conditions deeply affects their coping methods and life-views. The acquisition of gender consciousness is strongly related to the struggle for ecological resources; often women have to confront and defy the men in their families and communities when they participate in these struggles for family survival. In doing so they are usually accused of violating the position of "true womanhood." Yet, to achieve improved access to resources can be both a liberation and a form of upward mobility for women. Ecological crises can therefore serve as both an obstacle and an opportunity for women in their efforts to bring about social change.

B. Gujarat: Silence of the Lambs[2]

Drought: Landlords exploit the drought-hit Dalit women

It was pitch darkness. She was riding pillion with a government contractor, when the scooter skidded into a roadside ditch at Patan in north Gujarat. The man escaped with minor injuries but the woman suffered a fracture on her right forearm. Her medical bill came to Rs 7,000 and she lost a month's wages. But the Dalit woman, wife of a daily wage-earner, did not make use of the Mediclaim membership that Navsarjan, an NGO from Ahmedabad, had got her. A landlord paid the bills.

Drought is driving Dalit women into the arms of landlords and contractors. As most of their men have migrated in search of a livelihood or been forced into bonded labour, the Dalit women fall back on Thakurs, Chaudhary-Patels and Rabari-Desais in these tryingtimes.

At Nani-Chandur in Patan, Khemiben Vankar is jittery speaking to a journalist for the first time. "There is no sexual abuse," says the mother of six. But a little prodding and she opens up, "The Thakurs are haiwans (lechers). You never know when they will pounce on you! But the victim is invariably silenced by a compromise."

Such admissions by Khemibens across the rural hinterlands of Gujarat are reason enough for Navsarjan to take up the issue. Its activists covered half a dozen villages in Patan on May 26, 2004, to take stock of the situation. They are not sure whether the men would cooperate with them to launch a crusade against the exploitation of their women during droughts.

But the fact remains that the Dalit woman from Gujarat is the hardest hit by the present drought. Behind her colourful bandhini dupatta, her face conceals more than it reveals. Largely uneducated and ignored even by her own menfolk, she puts up with much more than the daily trudge for water. "I know of at least 40 rape incidents during the past five years in this vicinity," says Veerabhai Parmar, a Dalit of Harij taluka panchayat. "But first information reports (FIRs) were registered only in two or three cases. The atrocities against our women are always physical and vulgar. Do not expect them to come out in the open!"

In Nani-Chander, a small village of 5,000 people, the police have opened an outpost. But they deny reports of rape and insist that the cases are mostly of drunken behaviour and a few of molestation.

Some young men like Nareshbhai Rathod, 33, are left in the Dalit locality of300 families. "More than 200 men have left in search of work to various urban centres in Gujarat, and even to Delhi and Bangalore. Only women, children and elders live here," he says. But he is paying a price for staying back with his family: he is without any earnings and owes Rs 30,000 to the Thakurs. His five bighas of land is under mortgage.

For the Dalit women, the exploitation starts at the water taps. In Taranagar, there are three taps supplying potable water but the Dalits are forced to take brackish water from another one. "The Rabari-Desais will allow us to fill a few pitchers only if a young woman goes begging to them," says Paniben, 65.

Jethiben in Ekalwa village says that one cannot bathe in peace because of ogling eyes. "We have no bathrooms. The four charpoys covered by torn saris hardly provide any privacy from their prying eyes." But none of the women from these Dalit houses has filed a complaint. "Yes, they harass us. But we owe them money! Even if they beat us up, we will not speak a word against them."

And when Jethiben begins to open up to Navsarjan's Manjulaben Pradeep, landlords Visabhai and Bhavabhai Chaudhary-Patel make a sudden appearance. They want to know what exactly is happening in the locality. Manjulaben's requests to them to leave the place are spurned; they stay put, staring at Jethiben right in the eye. Jethiben stops speaking.

Manjulaben confronts them and they leave showering expletives. "These people [the women] enjoy our patronage," they say. "They are uneducated and without any support. Nothing is done by force. There are no economic compulsions. We are landholders and require their services to cultivate land and herd cattle." The women are silenced and the few Dalit men who are there also do not utter a word in protest. "We are bonded to them," mutters one of them.

[1] Summary of the work of Rao, B.(1991) Women and water in rural Maharashtra, *Environment & Urbanization* (3) 2: pp 57–65

[2] Anosh Malekar/Patan. http://www.the-week.com/20june04/events.htm

Discussion

- How, according to the case studies, does drought impact women and men?
- What are the reasons for the different gendered impacts?
- Apart from gender differences, even amongst women as a social category there are differential impacts. Why?
- How do women from different socio-economic categories negotiate or cope with these impacts?
- What sort of support structures, oif any, do women have to fall back on during times of crises?
- What role can or should developmental organisations and the State play in helping rural women assert their fundamental human rights (social, economic, cultural) during disasters?

2. Case study and discussion
Gender, shelter and security during disasters

Orissa: Shelters save lives and livelihoods

The villagers of Khurantatuth, on India's Orissa coast, had doubts about the cyclone shelter Some heavy storms blow in from the Bay of Bengal and they reckoned this structure, standing tall on its slender legs, would topple over. Maybe the Red Cross had misused the funds. Maybe they had skimped on building materials.

On an October night in 1999, seven months after the shelter's completion, they would learn if their suspicions were justified. India's worst disaster in living memory engulfed them. Wind speeds were said to have reached 250–350 kilometres an hour. Tidal waves up to seven metres high crashed inland. Whole villages vanished. Khurantatuth was one of them.

There had been a warning and the young volunteers of the Red Cross rescue team had alerted the population. When the winds picked up and the seas got wilder, they turned on the red light and siren on the shelter's roof. They went door to door urging people to evacuate. Some refused to move from their houses and as conditions worsened the team tied a rope to a sturdy village tree and ran it all the way to the shelter. Without that to hold on to, they would have all been blown away.

Visibility dropped to less than five metres. Team member Bibakar Kumar, a 25-year-old tailor, remembers, "It was like being in smoke. You lost your bearings. We stationed ourselves along the rope and waved red loincloths to be seen. When people reached us we had to physically help them. You had to pull yourself along and the wind was so strong the weaker ones collapsed from exhaustion. Some were unconscious by the time we reached the shelter."

Before the tidal wave engulfed the village, over 2,000 people were squeezed into a structure the Red Cross had meant for no more than 1,500. The main halls were full, everyone standing shoulder to shoulder. Outside, the flat roof was packed and more people lay on exterior walkways. When at the height of the storm the shelter began to sway, the villagers remembered

their misgivings. But the legs held; 11 metres of them buried below ground. The designers described the legs' swaying ability as an 'emergency buffer'.

After the storm had subsided, the villagers looked out and saw nothing but water and hundreds of floating corpses, among them the neighbours who had chosen to stay on their properties. Virtually nothing remained of Khurantatuth but the cyclone shelter.

Similar stories could be heard among the 22 other locations where the Orissa branch of the Indian Red Cross had provided safe havens. Supported by the German Red Cross and German government funding, they had constructed them in remote, high-risk communities. According to the Orissa government they saved 40,000 people.

How many shelters Orissa really needs is debatable. The State says 500, others say anything from 1,000 to 3,000. Whichever figure is correct, it was the Red Cross's 23 shelters that mattered. There were no others in Orissa.

German Red Cross delegate Britto Girgensohn-Minker is quick to point out, however, that numbers are just part of the equation. The role of shelter projects in between cyclones is equally important to communities. Red Cross shelters nurture rural disaster preparedness and social and economic development, inseparable elements of living with, and recovering from, natural hazards like cyclones.

The Khurantatuth shelter had been completed in 1999 but the programme had begun three years earlier. First, a disaster preparedness (DP) and shelter management committee had been established and a task force of rescuers recruited: DP, health and first-aid training followed. Women were encouraged to start self-help savings and credit groups. Said Girgensohn-Minker, "You can't just build a shelter and consider the job finished. There has to be a long-term approach, and social mobilization. The community has to take ownership."

Shelters become community centres and meeting places, housing schools and health centres. Khurantatuth lost its school in the cyclone but the shelter's two halls provide ideal classrooms. Almost a year to the day after the Orissa disaster, the women of Tentuliya, a community of farmers and fishermen three kilometres from the coast, were gathered in their shelter for some informal banking.

Debt entraps the poor and the landless of this region. When mishap or illness befalls them, the fortunate may borrow from relatives and friends but most have nowhere to turn. The banks will not lend without collateral, so their only recourse is to moneylenders whose interest rates can exceed 400 per cent over the period of repayment.

The Red Cross provides alternatives, arguing that families who escape such debt burdens cope more easily with crisis and recover faster from the consequences. With its support, the women of Tentuliya began a self-help savings and credit group in 1997. They contributed a modest monthly sum to the fund, and when in need borrowed on the conditions the group itself agreed to. Some used the fund to start businesses, acquired a cow and sold any milk that was surplus, or leased a little land and entered the betel-leaf business.

All had gone well with such schemes in Orissa. So well, in fact, that other women came forward and the groups began to snowball. Then came the cyclone. Cows were washed away, betel plots vanished, women who were widowed were left single-handed to support their families. They could no longer afford the repayments.

But these are honest, hard-working people. The debts were written off, the Red Cross provided more seed money, and the schemes took off again. On this morning in Tentuliya, the women had gathered for the first distribution of new credit. There was a tangible sense of purpose, and as each woman collected her money the group behind her applauded. Barely literate, or illiterate, older women signed their agreements slowly, or had literate friends guide their hands. A signature is required for the credit, and the group has literacy classes.

German support for the shelter projects will continue until 2003, fulfilling a commitment of almost ten years. But in the light of the success so far, a second phase could then begin, for an application to the German Government is likely to be looked on favourably. Up to 30 communities could benefit, with preparedness, relief and development again integrated into one continuous cycle of living with disaster.

Source : Williams, S., J. Seed and A. Mau (1994) Oxfam Gender Training Module. UK and Ireland: Oxfam.

Discussion

- What were the strategies used by the aid agencies in developing a disaster-mitigation programme for villages in coastal Orissa?
- How have women's self-help groups helped members cope with disasters?
- Do you think that writing off debts after a disaster, because the poor cannot afford to repay them, is a worthy humanitarian strategy and should be supported?
- It is often argued that we need to bring in the 'd' in disasters, that is, disasters are nothing but the other side of development and need to be seen in that continuum. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Unit 12
Gender and Organisational Change: Institutional Practice in Extension, Training and Research[1]

Understanding organisations

It is important to start by distinguishing between the terms 'institutions' and 'organisations'as they are often used interchangeably.

- **Institutions** essentially embody relations of power, through sets of formal and informal rules which shape social perceptions of people's needs, allocate resources and determine societal goals and objectives (shared norms : for example, market value profit while the State assumes responsibility for governance).
- **Organisations** are formed within the environmental constraints represented by institutions to administer rules and respond to needs (achieve a common purpose such as literacy for women or produce common output such as pumps).

While institutions can be thought of as "the rules of the game in society", organisations may be seen as "the players or groups of individuals bound together by some common purpose," (North 1990 cited in Goetz 1997a: introduction). Over time organisations can have an impact on the institutional arena, changing underlying rule systems and incentive structures to be more equitable and inclusive.

Why gender and organisations

"To say that an organisation, or any other analytical unit, is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. Gender is not an addition to ongoing processes, conceived as gender neutral. Rather it is an integral part of those processes, which cannot be properly understood without an analysis of gender" (Acker 1990: 146).

All organisations have structures, rules, policies, norms and values which determine the tasks that men and women do, decide upon the allocation of resources and conditions of work as well as shape formal and informal organisational cultures. Organisations are not neutral or value-free, nor do they exist in a vacuum. The concern for development organisations as 'engendering mechanisms' grew out of the debate on **mainstreaming gender** in development. That is, the need to look

critically at gender-inequitable structures, procedures and policy outcomes which both determine and are the result of gendered organisational practice. How, in turn, do these gendered organisational practices impact programme and project outcomes for different groups of men and women? How can we challenge or transform these practices not only to create better and more sensitive working environments for men and women but also to ensure that we are practicing the gender sensitivity we preach in the field?

Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is the term used to describe strategies aimed at integrating a gender perspective into all decision-making aspects of an organisation – policies, strategies, programmes and administrative and financial functions – thereby contributing to organisational transformation.

How are organisations gendered?

Organisations can be gendered in a number of ways and there are several tools and frameworks for analysing gender organisational practice. Essentially, the frameworks look at three interdependent levels:

- The substantive – organisational vision, mission, ideology and policies
- The structural – procedures and mechanisms for enforcing goals and objectives, organisational strategy
- The cultural – shared beliefs, values and attitudes of staff

The substantive level: reaching a shared vision for gender equality

The extent to which gender equality is reflected in the policies, vision or mission statement of an organisation is one of the first indicators of its perspective on and commitment to gender relations and social change.

Leadership plays a critical role in defining not only organisational policies with respect to mainstreaming gender but also setting the terms of engagement on gender, that is, influencing the direction, style and values of an organisation. However, biological identity (male/female) diesa not necessarily have any direct relationship with management styles. For example, some organisational analysts feel that women leaders and managers are inherently more nurturing, flexible and sensitive (feminine style of management) while male managers are driven by targets, tasks and authority. But such deterministic reduction of personal attributes is highly debatable and the complexity of leadership/management approaches makes it difficult to categorise even an all-female organisation as inherently more gender-sensitive than say a mixed organisation.

Another issue is the structure or 'shape' of the organisation. It is usually assumed that flatter, decentralized organisations are more open to participatory decision-making and are therefore more likely to be gender sensitive and inclusive. But research has shown that collective or consensual management does not eradicate problems of dominance – it simply makes them 'invisible' or 'latent' while other ways are found to establish dominance.

Many organisations now have or are putting together a gender policy, often a requirement from foreign funding agencies who have a strong commitment to gender equality in their own operational guidelines and country-level strategies. Typically, gender policies will outline the organisation's stand on issues such as maternity/paternity leave, child-care, safety and security for female employees engaged in field work and most importantly, their position on sexual harassment at the workplace.

Sexual harassment at the workplace

In 1997 the Supreme Court of India recognised and addressed sexual harassment at the workplace as systemic discrimination against women.This includes:

- Physical contact and advances
- Demand or request for sexual favours
- Sexually coloured remarks
- Display of pornography
- Any other unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature

The judgment created mandatory sexual harassment prevention guidelines for the workplace, including all public and private sector organisations as well as the unorganised sector and NGOs. The guidelines, which are currently being revised and will be made into law, call for the establishment of a grievance committee, headed by a woman with at least 50 per cent women members and third party representation (from civil society). For more information contact: the India Centre for Human Rights and Law, Mumbai, www.indiarights.org

The structural level: translating gender equity concerns into action

"Social transformation in organisations can be de-railed at the structural level – verbal and paper commitments to a vision of gender have a tendency to 'evaporate' when there is resistance to putting policy into practice through the procedures, mechanisms and rules of the organisation" (Sweetman 1997: 5).

Looking at gendered structures and practices necessitates an analysis of 'time' and 'space' within organisations as well as recruitment procedures, promotion policies, the allocation of tasks and responsibilities, the distribution of resources and patterns of decision-making. Before we look at an organisation's structural aspects, a caveat on gender parity or the question of a balance in the numbers of male /female employees is necessary. While the presence of more women in an organisation does not necessarily translate into a greater degree of gender awareness, it is an important starting point for drawing attention to women's *practical* (organisational) *gender needs*: for example, toilet or transport facilities or child-care support. A critical mass of women also has the potential to facilitate the examination of more strategic aspects of gender inequalities within the organisation. Let us look at these aspects of structure briefly:

Time and space

Practical arrangements of space (office space or approaches to fieldwork) and time (flexibility of the working day, life cycles and career management) can be seen as expressions of power as they "reflect the physical and social capabilities of those who dominate organisations" (Goetz 1997b: 17), on the one hand, and societal norms on the other.

- **Access to the field** is one of the most difficult obstacles for women field workers as it is not so easy for them to just jump on a bike or cycle to the field. Social and personal reasons (fear, apprehension) often intersect with organisational norms which justify giving male workers a 'set of wheels' but not necessarily women staff as they don't think its safe. ("What happens if her bike breaks down or she has a flat tyre in the middle of nowhere – much safer for her to get on a bus or on the back of her male colleague," are typically comments from seniors, though these values are slowly changing in some organisations.)
- **Life-cycles and mobility:** Often young, single women face pressures from their families which prevent them from doing extensive field-work; when they get married they sometimes have to move away with their husbands (patri-local

marriage patterns), and so are forced to give up their jobs, or husbands and in-laws apply restrictions, not wanting their 'new' daughter-in-law/wife to work. Motherhood and menstruation periods are other factors which restrict women's mobility, at least to the field. Some organisations respond by introducing flexi-time or having 'desk days' when women do not feel like going to the field.

- **Child-care and child support facilities** become a critical issue for organisations as the number of women increases and/ or older women are having their first children. While all organisations have norms for maternity leave (statutory requirement), paternity leave is slowly gaining recognition too, but there are a number of concerns that violate the principles behind such leave. For example, some men take paternity leave, but do little to help their wives at home; others feel embarrassed to ask for such leave (not 'manly', though with new age parenting being in vogue in urban areas this is also changing). Some organisations support a crèche facility at work, others provide minimal financial reimbursements so that employees can avail of private child-care if they do not have family support. But in many (mixed) organisations these provisions are often seen as 'concessions' for women and have not necessarily come without a struggle.

Roles and responsibilities: Who does what work in an organisation is normally a question of skills and experience but gendered patterns of task allocation, decision-making and coordination do persist. For example, in NGOs promoting natural resource management interventions it is not uncommon to find male staff handling most of the 'hardware' aspects (infrastructure development, surveys and mapping) while women staff deal with the 'software' or social aspects of these programmes such as forming forest protection groups or water user committees. Often many such women are highly qualified civil engineers or scientists but find it difficult to break out of organisational stereotypes on the one hand, ('they do not have the confidence to execute such work') and social or familial constraints on the other.

Capacity-building: Refresher training programmes – workshops on new managerial skills – are important for both male and female staff, but even here there can be gender biases. Typically, women are sent to gender-awareness workshops while men go for leadership development programmes. Sometimes organisations designate one person as the gender coordinator or specialist whose task is to mainstream gender in all projects and programmes and monitor impacts from a gender lens. However, while this may be important in the early phases of an organisation's growth (focused attention, material and skill development), it has limitations because of the tendency to vest accountability for achieving gender equality and equity goals in one person.

Perhaps the most critical factor for sustaining a focus on gender equity is financial. The allocation of resources, or budgeting, is a clear indicator of the extent to which organisation's prioritise their gender commitments.

The cultural level: changing attitudes, changing minds

"No matter how radically structures and systems may be reformed, if organisational culture is unchanged, the changes will remain superficial, cosmetic and ultimately without effect" (Macdonald et al. 1997: 20).

This is the core of organisational transformation as it touches on the beliefs and value systems of individuals. People do not leave their socially or culturally defined gender

perspectives and attitudes at the gates of organisations – they enter with them and this has a significant bearing on the organisation's own gender perspective. While the leadership supported by articulate gender-sensitive women and men play a strong role in developing an appropriate value system, organisations do not have a monolithic culture, although they may appear to in terms of their public face (e.g. bureaucracies). Rather, organisations are made up of a number of 'sub-cultures' and 'counter-cultures' which will either facilitate or resist efforts to mainstream gender.

Gender sensitisation training for all staff, at all levels, is one strategy that many organisations use to facilitate a better understanding of why gender equality and equity are organisational concerns. However, not only does training need to be handled effectively, preferably by both male and female gender trainers (so that gender is not simply seen as a 'women's thing'), training on its own is only a beginning, and one-off training programmes are never sustainable in terms of organisational change. Monitoring sexist remarks, language or behaviour are important steps and inevitably a long-term process which needs to be done carefully so as not to equate gender sensitivity with the creation of an Orwellian (police) state. 'Dialogue' is an effective tool for resolving difficult issues through communication rather than creating further conflicts. Similarly, building alliances with wider societal initiatives, learning from the experience of other organisations who have tried to 'look within' in mainstreaming gender and providing appropriate spaces for change as well as balancing the pace of change are important in facilitating organisational transformation.

Endnote

[1] This unit borrows heavily from the conceptual framework in Ahmed (2002).

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Exercises

1. Group exercise
Is my college/institute gender-sensitive?

Learning Objectives

- To identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that faculty/students face in promoting a gender-sensitive learning environment in their colleges.
- To discuss strategies for promoting gender-sensitivity in academic institutions.

Procedure

- Divide the class into small mixed groups.
- Explain the concept of SWOT analysis
- Do a SWOT ANALYSIS of your college/institute (see hand-out).

Discussion

1 What do you think are the strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats that your college or institute faces in promoting a more gender-sensitive learning environment?

2 Specify a goal and at least three objectives that_your college/institute should pursue to address gender concerns.

3 What are the enabling factors (positive forces) or hindering factors (obstacles) which you think will help or hinder your college/institute in achieving its goals/objectives?

2. Fieldwork and discussion
Gender at work

Learning Objectives

- To enable students to understand how institutions and organisations are structured according to relations of power and gender.
- To help students identify constraints and opportunities for organisations to move towards gender sensitive working environments

Procedure

- Divide the class into small mixed groups and let each group go and study one of the following types of organisations in the vicinity:
- Hospital
- School (teachers)
- Bank
- Factory
- Plantation
- Police station/services
- Restaurant/hotel
- Call centre

This is only a suggestive list and the type or organisations as well as their receptiveness to the study will vary from place to place.

Ask each group to prepare a gender profile of their organisation along the following guidelines:

- Number of employees – male/female and the different levels at which they are.
- Number of women in decision-making positions.
- Nature of tasks/activities that men/women do.
- Support services and policies if any for female staff (e.g. crèche, maternity)
- Staff turnover rate -- male/female (brief reasons)

Optional questions

- Problems that female staff face
- Does the organisation have a sexual harassment policy and redressal committee – if so, when was it established and who are its members? Students can add other questions as appropriate.

Discussion

Profiles can be shared in a plenary and during the discussion the teacher should draw upon the reasons why and how different types of organisations are gendered – have they historically been like this? What are the reasons for change if any?

Handout
SWOT ANALYSIS CHART

STRENGTHS (Internal)	WEAKNESSES (Internal)
OPPORTUNITIES (External)	**THREATS (External)**

Unit 13
Gender and Irrigation: Negotiating Water Rights

Why are irrigation policies gender-blind?

As the global demand for freshwater grows rapidly the cost of developing new supplies becomes prohibitive, and conflicts over scarce water resources increase. Ensuring access to water for irrigation becomes critical in efforts to improve food security and sustainable agricultural production. For the poor, water deprivation is linked both to their vulnerability, that is, the lack of financial and technical assets to access available water resources and the ability of better-off competitors (large farmers, absentee landlords, industries) to use their strong bargaining position to either claim, pay or extract more water, particularly during periods of scarcity, thus exerting pressure on the limited water resources of the poor.

Although rural women play an important role in farming systems, irrigation interventions tend to ignore their gender-differentiated needs and priorities. Even recent attempts at irrigation management transfer (IMT) or participatory irrigation management (PIM) look only at 'landowners', typically male household heads as members of water user associations responsible for decision-making on the distribution and management of canal water. Not only is the rural household perceived as a unit of congruent rather than conflicting interests, women in this model are seen to benefit indirectly as co-farmers through their husbands' rights to water.

There are three critical reasons for the gender-blindness of irrigation policies and approaches:

- **Equity** in the context of irrigation systems refers to the spatial distribution of water across the system, that is, ensuring that all irrigators, especially tail-enders, receive the same amount of water in relation to their landholding. The drive to provide water *efficiently* overlooks socio-economic differences between farmers – for example, the ability of large farmers to grow more water-intensive cash crops such as sugarcane because they have easier access to other inputs.
- The **analytical separation** between agriculture and irrigation systems is reflected in the creation of separate ministries and departments to handle planning and financial allocations with

little coordination or information sharing. The irrigation system, however, needs to be seen as a nested sub-system of larger interlocking systems that include agricultural and rural production/ livelihood systems as well as the local socio-political and economic context which shapes relations of power underlying irrigation and its impacts (on labour relations, for example).

- The **false dichotomy** which associates domestic water use, collection and management with women and productive water use almost exclusively with men, when in practice women are engaged in a variety of income-generating activities that are water-dependent – keeping small livestock, dying cotton for block printing, or growing vegetables for home consumption. Moreover, water from small irrigation systems is often used for domestic purposes – washing clothes and utensils or watering cattle.

Thus, "the most important source of gender differences with respect to water lies not so much in the gender specificity of water uses, but in gender differences with respect to access to and control of water" (Zwarteveen 1997: 1335). And since rights to water are intrinsically linked to land titles, which are predominantly in the hands of men, women and landless need to negotiate for equitable water rights, not only for irrigation purposes, but also to meet basic livelihood needs.

The impact of irrigation on gender roles

The introduction of irrigation can lead to several gender-differentiated impacts that need to be looked at in the context of the gender analysis framework – division of labour, access to and control over resources and participation in decision-making on water use and management. The most uniform impact of irrigation is the increased demand for women's labour, both unpaid (own land) and paid (more local employment opportunities). Women have to work on their husbands' fields, often growing cash crops, as well as meet household subsistence needs for food from the little land (home/kitchen garden) over which they have some control.

Where women are co-farmers with men they may share similar irrigation-related needs – an adequate supply of water for growing one or more crops a year. However, there may be differences of opinion regarding the timing and timeliness of water delivery. Women often have to balance other household tasks along with irrigation and usually find it difficult to irrigate at night, particularly if they are single women, because of social norms defining mobility and security concerns. Female-headed households often have to hire (male) labour to help with irrigation or depend on social networks of family and friends during the peak season. Moreover, female farmers who grow the same crops as men and who are thus, in principle, entitled to receive an equal amount of water, often find it difficult to claim and receive the water they are entitled to, especially when water is scarce.

Sometimes irrigation can lead to more food insecurity because of the shift to cash crops. A study of a Dutch-funded lift irrigation scheme in Andhra Pradesh (Groverman and Walsum 1994) found that with the shift to paddy from the traditional coarse grains which had been the staple diet for years, not only had food insecurity worsened but grains had to now be bought from the market. In poor marginal and landless households, although women had more income-earning opportunities working on the irrigated land of large farmers, they were doing this at the cost of the health of their small children and the schooling of their daughters who had to shoulder more domestic responsibilities.

There are, however, a number of positive impacts of irrigation – for example, women who have access to canals and distribution outlets to meet some of their domestic water needs spend less time and drudgery in water collection. Canal irrigation can also contribute to the growth of fodder, which is particularly beneficial for women who own cows or buffaloes and have some control over the income from the sale of milk. And finally, irrigation has a significant impact on distress migration especially in drought-prone areas where families struggle to survive on one rain-fed crop in the year.

The community lift–irrigation schemes managed by village cooperative societies facilitated by the NM Saduguru Water and Development Foundation in Eastern Gujarat (see: www.nmsadguru.org) have had a considerable impact on reducing distress migration of the *adivasi* population, particularly women and children. Most households in Sadguru's programme area are able to grow two to three crops a year, which also has implications for their diet, access to health services (additional income) and more stable educational opportunities for children (Ahmed 1999). The lack of baseline data notwithstanding, women reported that they were eating more food and did not mind the additional agricultural workload – better than the vagaries of life in urban slums. Besides, with men spending more time at home they had (some) help in housework, enabling them to attend meetings and participate in community decision-making on water use and management.

Facilitating women's participation in community irrigation institutions

Many NGOs have been working to enhance women's participation in community irrigation institutions despite the fact that membership is often based on land ownership criteria. Sadguru, for example, has been using the principles of one-third reservation for women suggested under the Panchayati Raj amendments to ensure that there are at least two or three women nominated to the executive committee of the Lift Irrigation Cooperatives they have helped form. Although such nominal participation does not give women voting rights it does help them articulate the specific concerns of women farmers: for example, the time and timeliness of water delivery. Single women, widows and women from marginalized households find it easier to approach women committee members if they are facing water-related conflicts. According to Kasnibehn, vice-chairperson of the Jhalod Lift Irrigation Federation in Dahod district, Panchmahals:

"Sometimes women may need water when it is not their turn and so they come to us for help. Although there is a schedule for water delivery the committee is flexible about it – for example, someone's crop may be ready for water earlier and it may not be their turn, so we adjust if we feel it is appropriate and the other farmers do not mind" (cited in Ahmed 1999).

Women's participation in community irrigation management also leads to efficiency in terms of fee collection, as the example of women-managed community lift–irrigation schemes facilitated by PRADAN in Jharkhand illustrates (Sarkar and Sarkar 2002). Women farmers also play an important role in conflict resolution as the case study on the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India) (AKRSP(I)) suggests. In contrast, a study of a farmer-managed irrigation system in Nepal (the 'Chhattis Mauja' scheme) noted that the absence of women from water user organisations had a negative effect on management performance because they were basically *free-riders*. De facto female-headed households were using more water than their official entitlement, while at the same time contributing less labour to the maintenance of the irrigation system. However, since women were non-members it was difficult for the

organisation to impose their rules on them which, in turn, was affecting the sustainability of the system (Zwarteveen and Neupane 1996).

The small stories of success of women's participation in water user associations have provided NGOs with 'models' they can use to negotiate for the de-linking of water rights from land ownership per se. For example, in Gujarat and Maharashtra draft legislation on farmers' participation in irrigation management argues for joint membership, one male/one female from each household as a beginning to recognise women's rights to water for productive purposes and their participation as full members. However, this still excludes many landless women/men from participation in decision-making on community water resources. SOPPECOM, an NGO based in Pune has suggested that other residents of the village who may not be direct beneficiaries should at least have associate membership in the proposed tertiary level Water Users' Associations (WUAs) as extraction of water for irrigation has an impact on other water uses/needs (Kulkarni 2003). Even where women do have membership (by virtue of being a member of a landowning household) their claims to participation may be restricted for a number of other social reasons. Thus, access to water cannot be separated from access to land for women and the landless or from capacity building efforts on technical aspects (maintenance of systems), agricultural inputs to support irrigation investments and financial aspects of irrigation management.

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Exercises

1. Case study and discussion
Mainstreaming gender in PIM: The case of AKRSP(I)

Established in 1983, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India) is a non-profit organisation working towards organising and empowering rural communities and marginalized groups, particularly women, through natural resource management interventions in three districts of Gujarat. Central to these capacity building efforts is the organisation of a variety of formal and informal village-level institutions where AKRSP(I) facilitates participatory planning and mechanisms for conflict resolution as well as mainstream gender concerns. In addition, since the early 1990s, AKRSP(I) has been systematically involved in both policy advocacy on PIM as well as organising farmers to manage their own canal irrigation systems through water user associations and irrigation cooperatives. Involving women in such efforts is a more recent development, partly arising from AKRSP(I)'s own re-thinking about the need to address gender equity concerns in PIM *right from the beginning*, and partly from ongoing efforts at gender-sensitive organisational transformation. Significantly, these *en*gendering processes were facilitated by AKRSP(I)'s second director, a man committed to addressing gender inequalities. In the process AKRSP(I) has been consistently trying to demystify commonly held perceptions which view farmers and hence, irrigators, as largely male, by illustrating rural women's predominant role in the larger agriculture system within which irrigation is nested.

Drawing on insights from participatory exercises with a range of canal irrigation societies in AKRSP(I)'s *adivasi*-dominated programme area in south Gujarat, Vasavada (2000) argues that women are involved in a number of irrigation activities such as maintenance of the canals, bunding of fields, watering and/or supervising watering during the daytime, supervising field watering during the night and conflict management on fields and along canals. Yet despite these roles, women often have little say in decision-making as they are only nominal members of the canal societies.

Participatory irrigation and the State

In 1995 the Gujarat government declared a policy on Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) calling for the participation of farmers in the planning, implementation and management of medium and minor irrigation projects and seeking the cooperation of NGOs as catalysts in this respect. A legal framework for involving NGOs and farmers was established and ambitious targets for bringing in 50 per cent of the total irrigable command area under PIM by the year 2003 were defined.

However, except for the limited efforts of a handful of NGOs such as AKRSP(I), little was achieved in terms of handing over responsibility for water distribution at the tertiary level to farmers. The chief reason for this was the sheer reluctance of the bureaucracy to share decision-making power with the farmers or to give up the rent-seeking practices that are now endemic to public management systems. Some efforts were made in 1996–97 to initiate participatory training for the irrigation bureaucracy to influence their attitudes and behaviour, but their stubborn resistance to attend such training meant that even this initiative was eventually abandoned.

In October 2001, the state government appointed a high level Task Force to accelerate the process of PIM through legislative action. Part of the political compulsion for this Task Force arises from the need to find appropriate management systems for the delivery of irrigation water under the extensive command area of the controversial Sardar Sarovar project. With representation from academics, NGOs active in the field of PIM and various senior water resource secretaries, as well as key inputs from international stalwarts in the field of IMT, there is tremendous pressure on the Task Force to not only meet its objectives, but to convince politicians of the immediacy to implement PIM effectively. The Task Force has recommended that there should be joint membership from beneficiary households and that women farmers should have the right to participate in decision-making on water use and management.

AKRSP(I): addressing gender concerns

Meanwhile, discussions were initiated in AKRSP(I) about the need to integrate gender in irrigation. Several staff though acknowledging the principles of gender equity found it difficult to integrate such concerns as an 'add on' in already existing projects. Not only was the task of organising (male) farmers itself massive, the reluctance of the state government follow any sort of power sharing, let alone address gender, was considerable. It was not till 1997–98 that opportunities emerged for AKRSP(I) to look at gender in new canal projects, making efforts to involve women right from the project inception stage.

Support for AKRSP(I)'s efforts at enhancing women's membership in PIM societies came, not surprisingly, from *adivasi* men. Interviews with *adivasi* men in a cross section of PIM societies revealed that they felt strongly about women's inherent capabilities in handling conflicts better than men and in exhibiting more self-discipline when it comes to framing and enforcing rules (Vasavada 2000). Men claimed that women are more sincere both in terms of collecting irrigation dues and saving money, at the household level, to pay for the same. In cases where women have been trained as canal supervisors they have also been more effective than men in ensuring that water is not wasted and that irrigators do not take water out of turn.

In addition to these direct impacts of involving women in irrigation decision-making, the AKRSP(I) case illustrates that canal water has multiple and diverse uses for women from bathing to washing clothes and utensils as well as water for livestock. That these gendered needs ought to be addressed in the design of irrigation systems and the adoption of rules governing access to water by PIM societies is increasingly being recognised. However, such efforts will not be sustainable unless gender concerns in PIM are placed in the larger context of equity where water needs of the landless and other stakeholders also need to be addressed.

Source : Vasavada, S. (2000) "Women irrigators and participatory irrigation management: policy and approaches to mainstream gender concerns – lessons from the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, India," paper presented at CIDA-Shastri Workshop on *'Empowering Rural Women? Policies, Institutions and Gendered Outcomes in Natural Resources Management'*. Anand: Institute of Rural Management, September 2000.

Discussion

- What were the different organisational strategies initiated by AKRSP(I)'s leadership to challenge internal gender perceptions about men/women farmers?
- How did AKRSP(I) staff convince male farmers to involve women in irrigation management?
- What were the reasons given by *adivasi* men in support of women's participation?
- How can women's participation in irrigation management be strengthened? What role can organisations like AKRSP(I) play in this respect?

2. Case study and discussion
SEWA : Campaigning for access to water for women

Traditionally, wells and tanks were the principal means of water harvesting in Gujarat, providing water for both domestic and agricultural purposes. Sites were chosen with great care and the construction of a stepwell was an important community event supported by the patronage of upper caste families for whom it was seen as one of the seven meritorious tasks that they must complete in their lifetime. While communities were responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of their water assets, over time these systems have broken down. Mechanization of water extraction for irrigation coupled with the post-independence focus on input-intensive agriculture (the green revolution strategy) has led to the overexploitation of groundwater resources.

Although Gujarat continues to meet nearly 80 per cent of its drinking water requirements from groundwater sources, water levels have become dangerously low and the quality of available groundwater is deteriorating because of leaching from agricultural run-off. In addition, waterlogging and saline intrusion in several low lying and coastal regions of the state have affected agricultural potential and the potability of water. Attempts to develop legal mechanisms for controlling groundwater withdrawal have been limited because of the difficulty in determining water rights. That is, does a farmer have the right to the water below his or her land, or does the water belong to everyone, or the State?

The Gujarat Water Supply and Sewerage Board (GWSSB), an autonomous body established in 1979, holds the primary responsibility for providing drinking water either through the development of local water sources in villages with a population of 500 or less, or through the implementation of regional water supply schemes. Currently, more than 340 water supply schemes transfer water from water rich areas to water poor or scarce areas through pipelines traversing considerable distances, the most famous of these being the Narmada project which hopes to take water up to the semi-arid districts of Banaskantha and Kutch. Not only are such pipelines often breached by villagers along the route who are not direct beneficiaries, thus limiting the availability of water for downstream users, the erratic electricity supply, particularly in the summer months, affects the frequency, timing and quantity of water available.

SEWA: Campaigning on water, women and work

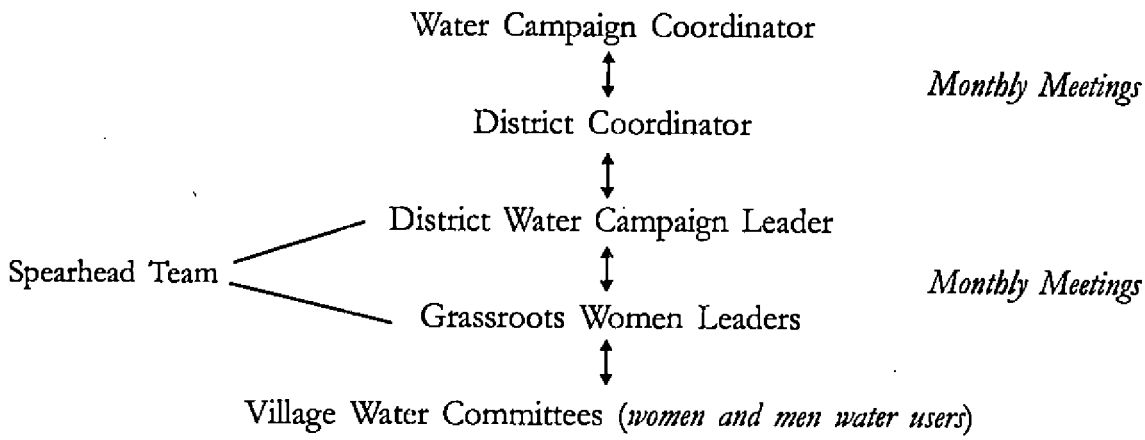
Established in 1972, SEWA is the largest trade union in Gujarat with more than 200,000 women members who are part of the informal sector. Recognising poor women's lack of access to water, which has a direct impact on their livelihoods (time, income, health), SEWA launched its Water Campaign in 1995.

The objectives of the Campaign are:

- To raise women's and the community's awareness about water problems.
- Establish and maintain community water sources through local water user groups with women as leaders.
- Enhance capacity building for women through leadership and technical training so that they can be more efficient resource managers.
- Facilitate women's 'ownership' of water resources, such as the registration of household rainwater collection tanks in women's names.

- To forge links with other organisations nationally and internationally to promote gender-responsive water policies.

Organisational Structure of the Water Campaign



The campaign is both a movement and a development alternative based on the promise of decentralized water management that captures the specific cultural and environmental contexts of the 11 districts where the Campaign is currently active. The organisational structure of the Campaign illustrates a well-coordinated, decentralized approach to water management involving a range of stakeholders at three inter-related levels of governance: the village, the district and the state.

Each district has a Water Campaign Leader who heads the Spearhead Team (SHT) at the district level and is responsible for coordinating the Campaign activities, liaising with district-level authorities and the SEWA District Coordinator. She is supported in her work by a group of 5-8 grassroots women volunteers (*ageyvans)* from villages across the district who meet once a month to review activities, discuss strategies and plan for the next month. The SHT's main task is to identify problems at the village level, mobilise rural women through meetings and group discussions and organise user-based committees to manage water resources. At the State level, monthly meetings for all district coordinators and SHTs are held where experiences and problems are shared and collective solutions sought in consultation with the Campaign Coordinator and other SEWA office bearers.

In addition, monthly exposure meetings are held in a selected village where the Campaign has been active and successful to share strategies that have worked ('best practices') with other members. This is essentially a *lateral learning* process providing members with an opportunity to learn from each other as well as visit parts of the state they would not otherwise do. For the women in the host village, this gives them an opportunity to discuss and demonstrate their water-related interventions and the impacts on local livelihoods. Thus, this is not only an exercise in capacity building, but also an empowering experience. Each district takes it in turn to host this meeting, which becomes an educational and social outing for the women involved.

SEWA is able to work on all three levels because it is primarily a membership-based organisation, which devotes a considerable amount of time and resources to collective organising (meetings, training programmes, etc). More importantly, SEWA has been able to link access to water to other gender-based rights (land) as well as its work on social security concerns (health, education

and credit). The strength of the Campaign is based on the interconnections between action at the community level, at the district level and at the macro (national) level. Information about the Campaign and related activities is disseminated through SEWA's quarterly newsletter, *Ansuya* as well as short video films and other visual material developed by the SEWA Research Academy in Ahmedabad.

One of the major achievements for SEWA was a training programme on handpump maintenance organised by the Gujarat Jalseva Training Institute for Campaign members in different districts in the latter half of the year 2000.[1] For the first time the Institute organised a programme for women in a language which they could understand, including technical and practical insights, and at timings which suited them.[2]

Despite the inherent difficulties in communicating with an all male, engineering bureaucracy at the GWSSB, SEWA is trying to facilitate a recognition in principle, if not yet in practice, of the role of women water users in water management and the gender differentiated needs that arise when one considers water holistically. For example, SEWA's campaign brochure highlights the different types of water that women workers need – from brackish water for aquaculture to soft water for block printing and sweet water for drinking in areas where women are involved in salt production. But for engineers water is just another 'resource' that needs to be made available to the largest number of users through the most cost-effective means, and SEWA is typically viewed as a social work organisation.

At the community level, a number of questions re-emerge for SEWA. For example, in meeting after meeting, women have pointed out the difficulty in re-building community institutions based on collective action. In fact the lowest link in the Campaign structure remains one of the most difficult and challenging. Resistance to women's decision-making roles is strong especially when questions of water-linked, land rights surface in social contexts where men are the predominant landowners. Conflict with vested interests, particularly the panchayats, persists in many villages, while women campaign activists and leaders also confront personal struggles at the household level. SEWA is aware that rebuilding local capacity for decentralized water management is a painfully slow process, requiring the support not just of women, but also other stakeholders, including men, community organisations and the State.

Endnotes

[1] Established in 1990 with the help of a loan from the World Bank, the Institute supports capacity building efforts in the water supply sector to strengthen the efforts of local institutions involved in water management.

[2] One of the requirements for the training programmes is a minimum grade 12 pass for participants, which typically means that most rural women would not ordinarily be eligible for participation. SEWA spent many months negotiating with the GWSSB to overcome this technical constraint.

Source: SEWA: Campaigning for Access to Water for Women. Ahmed, S. (2002) "Mainstreaming gender equity in water management: institutions, policy and practice in Gujarat," in Natural Resources Management and Gender: A Global Source Book, Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute and Oxford: Oxfam (edited).

Discussion

- How is the availability and quality of water for drinking and domestic purposes affected by agricultural development?
- How does water scarcity affect poor rural women's work?
- What is the strength of SEWA's organisational approach underlying its Water Campaign?
- Why, from the point of women water users, was it important for SEWA to negotiate with the GWSSB and how did it do this?
- What are the challenges that the Water Campaign has to confront at the community level?
- In September 2000 the Supreme Court in India declared that access to clean water is a fundamental right for all citizens. How can organisations like SEWA ensure this right?

Unit 14
Gender and Forestry: Managing Conflicts, Moving Beyond JFM?

"What do the forests bear? Food, fodder, fuel and fresh air....."

(refrain from a song sung by the Chipko women activists in the Uttarakhand region)

For centuries, forests have been important sources of supplementary livelihood opportunities and provided basic necessities for rural households, especially for the poor who own little private land. However, over the last 150 years or so access to forests has been curtailed by, on the one hand, state regimes defining usufruct rights and on the other, by patterns of development, including privatization of forest lands, pushing forest-dependent communities to the margins of survival. According to government estimates the extent of forest cover in India ranges from 17 to 30 per cent but there is tremendous variation across the country and little consensus on what constitutes 'forests' or green cover. Data provided by the National Remote Sensing Agency shows that states such as Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan have less than 4 per cent of their geographical area under forests while Assam, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh have about 30 per cent forest area (cited in MSSRF 2001). As forest areas decrease the corresponding percentage of degraded land or 'wasteland' is seen to be increasing. Between 30 to 50 per cent of India's land area is classified as 'wastelands,' which are either lying entirely barren or producing much below their economic potential. In fact, forest regeneration is typically a misnomer for wasteland development activities (Singh and Burra 1983) because of the limited access that communities have to forests technically 'owned' and managed by the State.

Gender roles and forest use

In relation to forests and forest products, men and women have different roles and responsibilities, which vary from region to region and between different communities, sometimes even within the same village. Women typically depend on forests for biomass needs both for subsistence and income, walking long distances everyday to collect (head-loading) fodder, fuel-wood, food (fruits, berries, roots) and non-timber forest products (NTFPs: *tendu* leaves, seeds, bark, etc.) for processing, home consumption or sale. Men may use many non-wood forest products, but more often cut trees for timber, which is used for house construction, to make agricultural implements, or sold. Both women and men are also involved in forest work as labourers (e.g. forest-clearing activities) or in small-scale forest-based enterprises such as nursery-raising (Chen 1983). While women tend to be preferred for certain operations (they have 'nimble fingers') they

often get lower wages than men for similar work. However, these relationships are changing as a result of several inter-connected factors such as the growing degradation of forests, male out-migration and the greater integration of women in the market economy or their mobilisation and organisation around rights (e.g. the work of ASTHA[1] in Rajasthan).

But it would be too simplistic to assume that rural women's relationship with forests is based on subsistence or small income-generating needs and therefore they are more likely to want to protect forests, whereas men are capricious and only interested in the exploitation of forests for commercial purposes. On the contrary, one needs to look closely at gender and class- and caste-differentiated interests that may lead to different and possibly conflicting forest management priorities not only between women and men, but also between women in the same village. For example, in the *adivasi* dominated Panchmahals district of eastern Gujarat, the gum of the *Dhawra* tree (*Annogeisus latifolia*) is primarily collected by the Naik group of Bhil *adivasis*. Although the gum is nutritious and fetches a good market price, women of other local communities, both *adivasi* and non-*adivasi*, feel ashamed to collect it because of its traditional association with the lower status Naiks. On the other hand, while women of most communities collect and sell *timru* leaves (also known as *tendu* leaves, used for rolling *bidis*), the Naik women do not collect them (Sarin et al. 1998:13)

Thus, conflicts can arise over the choice of species to be planted, over the area to be protected, or over sharing and distribution arrangements. However, not only do forest laws and policies tend to see the community as undifferentiated, so-called participatory programme interventions such as social, community, joint or shared forest management have largely been ahistorical and prescriptive, serving the interests of more vocal or powerful groups. Women's participation has been merely instrumental – forest protection – the programme does not address the complex social relations of power underlying participation and governance (Agarwal 2001).

Forests and the State: increasing control

Prior to the advent of colonial rule, forests were essentially sporting and hunting grounds for kings and princely rulers and therefore had to be well maintained. Customary rights governed who had access to forests and for what purpose, though the extent to which communities, particularly tribal, had an ecologically prudent and egalitarian relationship with the forests is debatable.[2] Although there are examples of sacred groves where particular tree species are worshipped and cannot be cut, these are gradually losing their significance. In Maharashtra these sacred groves are called *Devrais* while in Rajasthan they are called *Orans* and are attached to the village temples (Ghotge 2004).

By the mid-1800s the British were well established in India and had begun to recognise the commercial importance of forests. Whether it was timber for the development of the British shipbuilding industry, or the clearing of forests for agricultural revenue, or wooden sleepers for the construction of the Indian railway system to facilitate trade, colonial rule marked a significant ecological watershed in the way natural resources were used and managed (Gadgil and Guha 1992). The first Indian Forest Act (1865) empowered the British to declare any land covered with trees or brushwood as government forests and to frame rules regarding management. Subsequently, the second Forest Act (1878) divided forests into three categories: reserve, protected and village forests, artificially fragmenting people's holistic livelihood resource base into different legal categories and fostering conflicts between communities and the State (Sarin 2002):

- Reserve forests – people had no rights unless specifically recorded. The British

systematically cleared these forests under the guise of 'scientific management' either for plantation crops (tea, rubber) or quick growing monocultures (pine).

- Protected forests – people had some forest rights, but these were largely reserved for the State. Today many State-notified 'protected' forests are simply wastelands with significant implications for local development.
- Village forests – used for meeting local livelihood and subsistence needs were and continue to be typically under pressure from growing community needs and poor management systems. But not all provinces were able to successfully wrest village or *nistari*[3] forests from colonial appropriation and there were several rebellions in different parts of the country (Sundar 1997).

After Independence the State continued to maintain its territorially driven management priorities. The National Forest Policy Resolution of 1952 emphatically stated that forests were part of the larger national interest and that access by village communities had to be governed (i.e. restricted) by norms of 'scientific conservation'. In 1976, forests were moved from the state to the concurrent list of the Constitution empowering the central government to have a decisive say in forest management. The National Commission on Agriculture (1976) advocated the commercialisation of forests, arguing that the production of industrial wood (agro-forestry) had to be the *raison d'etre* for the existence of forests (Kulkarni 1997). It also maintained that the 'free' supply of forest produce to the rural population was responsible for the destruction of forests and that this process had to be reversed (ibid. p. 341). In addition, with the increasing market value of many non-timber forest products the State decided to nationalize these by vesting monopoly rights over collection and marketing of forest produce with state forest corporations or other state agencies. However, for poor landless and *adivasi* communities who depend on NTFPs, the shift from an open market system (gatherers could sell to anyone) to public contracting has brought few positive changes. In fact, not only has production come down, women find that they are caught between the bureaucracy of government appointed agents who are not able to pay them promptly and private contractors who offer them lower but timely payments (Saxena 1993:289).

The Forest Conservation Act of 1980 (FCA) which largely came as a response to two environmental movements – Chipko in the then Uttarakhand region of Uttar Pradesh state (now Uttaranchal, see Guha 1989) and the Silent Valley campaign in Kerala (see D'Monte 1985) - made it mandatory to have central government permission for converting or denotifying forest land for non-forest uses. While this may have prevented unwanted development (e.g. the large dam proposed to be built in Silent Valley would have destroyed one of India's few rainforests), it has also meant that state governments have not been able to meet basic needs of their rural populations without central government clearance. For example, in states with large forest areas such as MP and Orissa it was not uncommon for the state government to periodically grant legal tenure to de facto cultivators (e.g. slash and burn agriculturalists) and settlers (nomadic groups) who are typically labeled as 'encroachers' (Sarin 2002: 46). Meanwhile, the Wildlife Protection Act (1972) which enables the State to declare certain areas, including forests, national parks and sanctuaries as 'biosphere reserves' has in many cases curtailed the customary rights of local communities and physically displaced several people. This has lead to conflicts over livelihood rights, national interests and global priorities: as for example, patents (see Shiva, 1997) over a wide range of agricultural produce and biodiversity vis-à-vis indigenous knowledge systems and community rights.

From control to 'participatory' management

Recognising the magnitude of forest degradation and the impacts on forest-dependent communities, various state governments with the support of donor agencies such as the Ford Foundation, DFID, SIDA and CIDA launched a number of programmes seeking to involve forest users.[4] However, despite populist labels such as community forestry and social forestry, examples from across the country suggest that most government-facilitated initiatives were anything but participatory or gender-sensitive and typically ended up benefiting better-off households. There was limited understanding of the heterogeneity of communities or consultation with different stakeholders on, for example, issues such as choice of species or where to develop/protect community forests. People's participation generally was limited to wage labour – digging pits, planting trees and engaging in social fencing or monitoring against grazing animals and possible encroachers. In many cases, village woodlots were simply 'handed over' to panchayats, while villagers were not even aware of the decision to establish a community woodlot Where NGOs or other catalysing actors were involved such as the National Tree Growers Co-operative Federation[5], promoted by the National Dairy Development Board, Anand which sought to promote women's membership in village tree growers' co-operatives, or women's organisations such as the Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi,[6] which helped facilitate the Bankura project in West Bengal with landless women, participation of women and returns to them have been significantly better.

In 1988 the State issued a new Forest Policy articulating the twin objectives of ecological stability and biodiversity conservation with social justice. Emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between *adivasis* and other poor people living in or near forests, the Policy maintains that forest rights and concessions should be protected, with domestic requirements or local needs as the 'first charge' on forest produce. And finally, the Policy calls for "a massive people's movement, with the involvement of women" to meet its objectives, creating for the first time space for forest-dependent communities to participate in the management of State-appropriated forests (Sarin 2002: 47). In June 1990, the Ministry of Environment and Forests issued guidelines for the adoption of what is popularly known as Joint Forest Management (JFM). By October 2001, 27 of the country's 28 states, including the three new states of Uttaranchal, Chhatisgarh and Jharkhand, had defined arrangements for working in partnership with local communities.

Revised guidelines issued in February 2000 permit a cautious extension of JFM to well-stocked forests and seek to clarify some of the areas of conflict: for example, the relationship between the micro-plans drawn up by NGOs, CBOs and local communities and the silvicultural prescriptions, which are legally binding on state forest departments, in the State's working plans. In addition, recognising that women's participation in JFM groups was constrained by membership norms (one member from each participating household, invariably male) the revised guidelines specify minimum norms – 33 per cent in executive committees and 50 per cent in the general body,

Rights to trees?

Tree *patta* schemes, popular in the 1980s, sought to give usufruct rights to trees grown on revenue land to beneficiaries, typically scheduled castes, tribes, women and other vulnerable groups who did not own land. While in principle this may encourage afforestation and provide an asset for the poor, women did not have much choice over tree species or control over emerging benefits.

that is, at least one man and one woman from each household, a policy decision already implemented by many state governments. However, such a quota system while important in legitimizing space for women to participate overlooks the complexity of social, economic and cultural constraints that hinder women's effective and informed participation.

JFM and emerging gendered conflicts

Despite the recognition of women's participation in JFM groups and committees, poor diagnosis of the community's socio-economic, ecological and historical context (i.e. Who are the stakeholders? What is the relationship between them?) has meant that in many cases conflicts have not only increased, but women are the most affected. A large number of conflicts arise from the enclosure of 'forest areas' for tree protection and regeneration, others from the nature of sharing arrangements between communities and the state forest department – where women's needs may not necessarily be adequately articulated if their participation is limited.

Institutional strengthening to facilitate gender-sensitive, equitable and democratic decision-making in community forest management institutions is necessary to ensure that benefits go to the most poor and vulnerable forest users, both men and women, and not simply to powerful non-users. While a range of grassroots institutions, social activists, CBOs and NGOs are supporting self-initiated or externally mobilised forest groups to assert their rights through networks, alliances with other

Who Gains? Who Loses?
The impact of forest closure on women

- Poor women have to walk to more distant areas to collect firewood – increase in labour, time and energy expended – while women from better off or landed households are able to switch to agricultural residues, purchase fuelwood from head-loaders or employ labour to collect wood.
- Poor women may have to switch to low quality fuels such as leaves, husks, dung etc. which can increase time spent on cooking, have a negative impact on air quality or soil fertility.
- Increased vulnerability to humiliation from forest officials, other villagers and even members from their own households/community. Labeled as forest offenders or thieves these women are often subject to verbal abuse, or beating, sometimes by other women at the insistence of village men, or frequently sexual harassment by forest guards (this is particularly true of *adivasi* women).
- Because of the loss of primary sources of livelihood (e.g. from sale of NTFPs) or supplementary income (e.g. from head-loading) many women switch to other, often more exploitative, income-generating opportunities such as unskilled manual labour in road construction or brick kilns.
- Restrictions on open-grazing affect not only women – there is an increase in labour and time required for stall-feeding – but also settled pastoral communities who may not have land or access to irrigation facilities to ensure sustainable fodder cultivation.

Source: adapted from Sarin et al. 1998

Table 1 → Women across various cadres in the Indian Forest Service							
State \ Cadre	IFS	ACF	Ro	DR	FG	FW	TOTAL
Andhra Pradesh	5	3				8	
Andaman & Nicobar	1		1			2	
Arunachal Pradesh	1		1		35	35	72
Assam	4	1		16	5		26
Bihar	2			1			3
Chandigarh	1						1
Daman & Diu					1		1
Delhi					2		2
Goa, Panji	2		2		3		7
Gujarat	1				4		5
Haryana	2			1	24		27
Himachal Pradesh	5	2			25		32
Jammu & Kashmir	1						1
Karnataka	8		2	3	15		28
Kerala	2		1				3
Lakshadweep							0
Madhya Pradesh	12		3	9	48		72
Maharashtra	3						3
Manipur	1						1
Meghalaya		2					2
Mizoram		1					1
Nagaland			1				1
Orissa	5		21	51			77
Pondicherry							0
Punjab							0
Rajasthan	4			1			5
Tamil Nadu	5						5
Tripura					3		3
Uttar Pradesh	12			1	4		17
West Bengal	3			1	2		6

Key to Table 1

IFS.....Indian Forest Service
ACF.....Assistant Conservator of Forests
RO.....Range Officer
DR .....Dy. Range Officer/Forester
FG.....Forest Guard
FW.....Fire Watcher (semi-permanent post; on casual basis)

Compiled by Gopa Pandey, Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehradun
Source: Gender and Equity Newsletter, Issue No. 1, October-December 1999, VIKSAT, p. 3.

stakeholders and capacity building activities, they are consistently up against a powerful, increasingly centralized and often violent State apparatus. New laws such as PESA – Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act (1996) seek to devolve powers of local self-governance, and hence community-based forest management, to the *gram sabha* (the body of all adult voters in a self-defined community) in tribal dominated areas. Yet such progressive legislature is riddled with ambiguities in its interpretation allowing state forest departments to assume more power in JFM committees as is the case in MP (Sarin 2002).

Strategising for change

Strategies to strengthen participatory forest management and support gender-just and equitable development have been advocated at different institutional levels:

The Forest Department

- Increasing the number of women staff in the forest department at all levels: the Indian Forestry Service (IFS) was only opened to women in 1975 and currently there are less than 3 per cent women in the IFS cadres (see Table 1). Employing women as forest guards or range officers, which is the level of interface with local communities, is even more difficult, and in some states not even permitted. "As long as FDs remain almost exclusively male institutions, their effectiveness in convincing village women and men of their commitment to gender equality will remain questionable" (Sarin et al 1998: 71).
- Appointing a 'Women's Coordinator' to mainstream gender concerns and promote women's participation in the Forest Department. Results have been mixed. For example, in the West Bengal Forest Department, the Women's Coordinator found that she was responsible for everything to do with women or gender issues. When she was absent, work stopped and when she was finally transferred the post was simply lying vacant for a long time (Sarin et al.1998: 68–70).

The Community

- Organising separate meetings with women: Cultural traditions make it difficult for some women to participate in mixed JFM groups so many NGOs hold separate meetings with women forest users to understand their different needs and priorities, before bringing them together with men on a common platform.
- Promoting separate women's groups: Some NGOs have gone further by organising separate women's groups - often around savings and credit activities - to facilitate leadership skills, self-confidence and empowerment. However, questions have been raised about the marginalization of women/gender concerns through the creation of separate spaces, necessary as they may be. Although NGOs such as AKRSP(I) in Gujarat have developed the concept of dual membership for women in both Mahila Vikas Mandals and the larger Gram Vikas Mandal, many women do not find it convenient to attend both sets of meetings.
- Supporting people-to-people learning processes
- Promoting federations of women's groups
- Ensuring equal wages for women and men for the same work

Civil society organizations

- Promoting participatory micro-planning
- Sensitising the forest bureaucracy
- Facilitating linkages with and between networks and alliances - regional/ national/global

Endnotes

[1] ASTHA, which means faith in Hindi, is an Udaipur-based NGO

[2] Many environmental activists tend to represent the tribal's relationship with nature as harmonious but this is misleading and ahistorical. Interviews with Bhils in Panchmahals suggest that they were afraid of the jungle and were involved in several forest clearing activities.

[3] Nistar is a revenue term primarily used in central and eastern India to define people's right to take forest produce for non-commercial household purposes (Sarin 2002).

[4] These were either on revenue wastelands or degraded forest lands, both private and community owned.

[5] Now the Foundation for Ecological Security, Anand URL: www.fes.org.in

[6] www.cwds.org

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Exercises

1. Case study and discussion
Managing forests in Gujarat: women show the way

Vejpur is a small village located in the Bhiloda Taluka of Sabarkantha District in Gujarat with a population of 1932 belonging to 440 households. VIKSAT has been working in this village from the early nineties mobilising people for protection and management of the village forests. Though the response was quite slow in the beginning, it picked up momentum after a few months. A Tree Growers Cooperative Society (TGCS) was formed in 1992 and was formally registered in 1994.

Today, the cooperative society has a household membership of over 400 members (91%), out of which 85 are women. The conflict between members and non-members exists in this village to a certain extent.

In the last general body election (held in September 1998), a woman member, Asari Phulibehn Kamjibhai was elected President of the Tree Growers Cooperative Society. For VIKSAT, it was a moment of tremendous satisfaction as in its two decades of working in the tribal areas; it was the first time that a woman was elevated to the highest post in a TGCS. This illustrates that the process of empowerment of womenfolk, in particular in tribal areas, requires patience and perseverance.

It all began with the violation of rules and regulations in the context of forest protection. A group consisting of representatives of each household participates in the protection activity on a daily rotational basis. Usually men's groups keep vigilance during the night while women take up vigil during the day.

As is natural, there came a point of conflict between members and non-members (a few families) of the cooperative. The non-members families did not fully comply with the rules and regulations laid down by the cooperative. For example, sometimes, they violated the restrictions on grazing cattle in the protected areas, cutting of small timber, etc. On such occasions, members confronted the non-member families.

It so happened one day that a group of women which was on patrol cornered a group of men involved in cutting trees from the forest area. They tried to stop them from cutting the trees. The men wouldn't budge. An altercation followed and tempers ran high. In the process some women members were injured. The women's group reported the event to the President of the TGCS, adat Lakshmanbhai Changanbhai. The President didn't give much importance to the event and therefore no action was taken against the erring men.

Meanwhile, Phulibehn who was a member of the TGCS took the injured women to the local hospital for first aid. The news spread; the women members in particular were distressed about the indifferent attitude of the President. Gradually, the inaction became a prestige issue for the women members who got together and lobbied for a general body meeting of the TGCS. Phulibehn took the lead and contacted all the women members. Consequently, a general body meeting was held the same night to discuss the incident and review action taken by the TGCS.

The family members of the opposing group were also called for the meeting but they refused to attend. In the wake of the mounting tension in the village, members of the TGCS held a meeting the next day and took stock of the whole episode. The indifferent attitude of the President was also discussed. The women members passed a no-confidence motion against the President as they felt that he was not sensitive towards women and hence was not fit to be a President. They also felt that the issue was not taken seriously because only women were involved in it. The President could not give any convincing reasons to defend his action or inaction. The issue was also taken further to the forest officials and the local police station. A case was registered against the erring men.

Meanwhile, the group of men engaged in the act of manhandling the women also lodged a police complaint against the TGCS committee members alleging harassment.

Over a period of time, tempers cooled down aided by pacification from different people. Both the parties reached a compromise. The erring group committed in writing that henceforth they would not create problems and adhere to the rules and regulations of the TGCS. It is noteworthy that during the entire episode, the women members remained united while simultaneously influencing their male counterparts for facilitating settlement. The President of the TGCS was socially boycotted by the villagers for mishandling the case. It was felt that a prompt action could have averted involvement of the Police and the Forest department. Later on, the President contended the lapses on his part in not addressing the issue and promised never to repeat the same.

The matter subsided. During the ensuing general body meeting of the TGCS in September 1998, the women members decided to stake a claim for the post of President. The women chose Phulibehn as their leader as she has already demonstrated her initiative in protecting their interests. Now the Vejpur TGCS under the leadership of Phulibehn is actively involved in the protection and management of the forests. The male members have also extended their full support.

Source: Sujit G Kumar Gender and Equity Newsletter, Issue No. 1, October-December 1999, VIKSAT, Ahmedabad, pp. 2-4. The newsletter has now been discontinued.)

Procedure

Divide the class into different stakeholders based on the case study:

- The Forest Department (perhaps, at different levels of hierarchy, depending on the number of students/groups
- Forest users – men/women and non-users (class/cast/gender)
- JFM Committee
- Local NGO

A. Discussion

- What are the reasons for conflict between members and non-members of the Tree Growers' Cooperative Society (TGCS) in Vejpur village?
- What happened to the women when they were patrolling the forest – why do you think they were unable to stop men from cutting trees?

- What was the reaction of the TGCS President to the injured women? Why did he not want to help or get involved?
- How did the women forest users finally resolve the case? What were the strategies they used, which worked and why?
- How can women's role as forest protectors be strengthened? What role can NGOs like VIKSAT play in this respect?

B. Role Play

An alternative suggestion is to use this case study as a basis for a role play and divide the class into small, mixed (men/women) stakeholder groups as follows:

- Tree Growers' Co-operative Society members
- Forest users, non-members of the TGCS
- TGCS committee members – men and women, in a 70-30 ratio
- TGCS President – male
- Staff from VIKSAT (community organiser, program officer, gender specialist)

Ask each group to read the case study and discuss how they are going to enact the role allocated to them (15 minutes). The case study provides adequate detail for them to understand the key points about their role – however, they can improvise as they want.

Since this is a case study about gender roles in conflict negotiation on access to forest resources the actual 'role play' should see the diverse stakeholder groups negotiating with each other from their different positions of power. About 10 minutes of acting time should be enough for each group to present its case.

Spend another 10 minutes discussing and summing-up the main points that have emerged from the case study/role play.

2. Film and discussion
Slowly but Surely

Learning Objectives

- To understand the role of women in management of natural resources, especially forests
- To understand the role of collective activity in empowerment

Procedure

Start by viewing the film together as a group. Then initiate the discussion with a few questions. Start with the more general questions and then go on to the more detailed or specific ones. Round off the discussions with the conclusions reached by the group.

Often the students may not be able to respond adequately after one viewing and it may be necessary to have a second viewing. Before doing this, arouse interest in the topic with some

questions and let the students discover for themselves that they need to see it again to explore the issue in depth.

At this point it may also be useful to provide_the questions listed before the viewing, and/or to divide them into small groups. Allow the small group discussions to continue among themselves and let them share their findings with the larger group.

Discussion

- What are the roles of men and women in natural resource management (forests, in this case) and why?
- How did the women overcome their problems and gain better wages for tendu leaf collection?
- Who and what factors played a role in their success?
- Do you think the women are empowered now? Why? Give reasons.
- What roles do you think were played by the different arms of the Government-Department of Forests, Agriculture, the Panchayat?
- Do you think the women are destroying the forest? What policy should be adopted by the Government?

Slowly but Surely

Time	:	27 mins.
Year	:	1985
Language	:	English
Director	:	Chandita Mukherjee
Producer	:	Comet Media Foundation
Where available	:	Comet Media Foundation Topiwala Lane School, Lamington Road, Mumbai 400 007 Tel: 022 23869052, 23826674 Email: comet_media @vsnl.com
Format	:	VHS and VCD
Price	:	Rs. 500/-
Procedure for obtaining	:	DD in favour of Comet Media Foundation payable at Mumbai

Unit 15
Gender Issues in Fisheries Development: Fighting for Recognition

Importance of fisheries in rural livelihoods

Fishing societies are among the oldest form of community life known today, emerging in the Mesolithic era, or about 1000 years before the earliest agricultural settlements. Even earlier, in coastal areas and around inland lakes and streams, hunting and gathering societies included fish and shellfish in their diets. Fishing peoples, both past and present, have usually combined fishing with the gathering or cultivation of fruits, vegetables, grains, or other plants. They have developed a variety of crafts, skills and technologies for survival in addition to those associated with catching and preservation of fish for trading (CIDA 1993).

In India fisheries is one component of the agricultural sector that has tremendous income-earning potential. The country has a coastline of around 6,000 kms (excluding the Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands) and numerous inland rivers and lakes offering a source of livelihood to inland fishing communities. There are around 6 million active fishermen in this country (Ministry of Agriculture, 1994 cited in ICSF 1997), which translates into a population of around 36 million who depend directly on fishing for a livelihood (obviously with decadal growth this number would have increased). Such gross figures do not take into account the integrated division of labour which sustains fishing societies, in particular the role of women in fish-related activities. As fisheries' resources become increasingly threatened by mechanization, marine and freshwater pollution and the entry of new players driving the local–global market nexus, it is women who have been in the forefront of several struggles demanding their rights to access fish, credit, marketing infrastructure and sustainable resource use.

While most states have a Fishing Regulation Act, only some states have formulated a Fisheries Policy. But the jurisdiction of states is only within 22 km of the coastal area and although the Centre has issued various coastal zoning regulations, traditional fishing people compete for rights of access with not only mechanized trawlers, but also tourism and industry. Moreover, there is still no deep-sea fishing regulation. Despite the growing crisis in the fisheries sector it still provides considerable employment opportunities for marginalized workers from the agricultural sector who lose

their sources of livelihood from the land and forests.

Gender roles in fishing communities

There are a number of tasks performed by women and men in fishing communities and the gender division of labour is context-specific, intersecting with caste and class dimensions. However, broadly speaking, women are involved in the following activities defined by different stages of harvest (ICSF 1997:6):

Pre-harvest

- Marine sector
  Making and mending nets, sails, traps and boats (varies)
  Preparing hooks with bait
- Inland sector
  Pond preparation
  Seed collection
  Feeding fingerlings

Harvest

- Marine sector
  Netting in the estuaries
  Clam and mussel picking
  Collecting seaweed
  Pearl diving

Post-harvest

- Marine and inland sectors
  Fish vending-transporting and marketing
  Processing, that is, salting, smoking and drying
  Oil extraction
  As cheap labour in the processing plants

Men, on the other hand, are mainly responsible for building and maintaining boats and going out frequently to fish in the deep seas, an activity considered dangerous for women whose principal task is to look after children and manage the household.

Since fish vending is largely women's responsibility, transport is a key concern for them as they are typically not allowed on public transport (Anyone who has travelled in the crowded ladies' compartment of a Mumbai local train, squashed against fisherwomen with their baskets of fresh catch would know why!). So they have to either hire vehicles (mini-trucks) or walk or sell fish in local neighbourhood markets. Market timings vary from place to place as do vending patterns. For example, in Kerala some women sell in big markets 10–20 km away from their village, others have strategic roadside markets which they have created for themselves, while others engage in house-to-house vending with regular customers. On an average, women spend 8–10 hours outside the home, traveling and vending (ICSF 1997: 33).

Before the coming of ice, not much fish was sold fresh and even today the only fish available to many people, for example, in upland Kerala and the high ranges of the northeast, is dried. Women are involved in drying either as small self-employed producers buying fish from landing centres and then drying and storing it for sale, or working as labourers in big drying units. However, with the introduction of technology such as large fish driers, women are fast losing employment opportunities in this sector.

Impact of modernization

The technological and economic shifts taking place in the fishing sector have very direct implications for women, the gender division of labour and access to resources in environments that already lack basic amenities such as housing and sanitation.

Reduction of women's labour in the family fishing enterprise

With modernization and technological improvements, women's labour may either become redundant or be replaced by men's, particularly when a job becomes more skilled or technology-dependent. For example, in communities where women carry fish to market

Fish Vending in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra

Ratnagiri harbour is the largest shrimp landing centre in Maharashtra and also the home of one of the oldest fisherwomen's co-operatives in the country. The Mirkirwada Mahila Machi Vyavasayakauchi Seva Sahakari Saunstha Mariadith was registered in 1965 though it has been functioning since 1950. The cooperative has more than 500 members and assists them to transport fish to markets in interior areas in the three trucks and two buses that it owns.

Fatima, now 50 years old, has been vending fish since she was a young girl of 14. While agents of export companies buy shrimps and other export quality varieties, Fatima and her fellow members buy locally consumed fish from the fishermen, often on credit. The fish is then packed with ice in boxes which bear her name and that of the market where she sells her fish. The boxes are loaded on to trucks in the evening and are dropped off at the market. The cooperative has appointed persons in each market who unload the boxes and keep them in safe custody until the women come and take charge of them the next morning. The permitted 'load' for each woman is a maximum of 125 kg of fish, 25 per cent of which should be dry fish.

Although Fatima has access to credit, agents of merchants also advance capital for the daily operations of boats thus reserving their right over the catch. Not only do they buy prawns and other export varieties, leaving only the 'trash fish' for the women vendors, they have slowly begun buying the cheaper local varieties (seer, ribbonfish, etc.) for export to countries such as China. Moreover, local fisherwomen are also being displaced in other tasks, such as the sorting of trash fish for use in fish-meal and manure, by cheaper female labourers from Karnataka who also transport fish from the landing sites to the sheds of the merchants.

Source: ICSF 1997: 23

on foot or by public transport the introduction of insulated boxes or refrigerator trucks has the potential to displace them, unless they are organised and have access to financial resources. Also, when fish typically marketed by women become of interest to exporters they frequently lose control over their primary rights to the catch.

Replacement of family fishing enterprise

With growing modernization, the costs of entry into fishing are increasing and poor fishing families are being forced to give up their individual operations and boats to join large trawlers as fishing crew members working for wages or shares in the catch. Others look for 'coolie' work on the shore or are hired by fish-processing industries. As men lose the security of their own businesses, many turn to heavy drinking and incidents of violence increase. This in turn has an impact on women, as not only are they responsible for the survival of the household, but they have limited access to employment opportunities in other sectors or skills to try new things.

The National Fishworkers' Forum, the largest national trade union of artisanal fishworkers, has sought to protect marine resources and the livelihoods of those who depend on these resources. Yet women and gender issues have to a large extent remained invisible in this male-dominated movement. Just as women are rarely recognised as farmers, it has been difficult for them to be accepted as fishworkers and, hence, as members of the Forum which is made up of independent state-level associations.

However, since the early 1990s many women activists, mostly from Kerala, initiated discussion on gender issues and helped launch the Women in Fisheries Programme to document gender roles, changes and opportunities to work towards sustainable development. Over the past decade public hearings have been organised and women have been able to slowly articulate their demands for fair wages, transport facilities and representation in fishworkers' organisations.

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Exercises

1. Case studies and discussion
Women's changing role in fisheries

A. Backseat Driving

An NGO was working with fisherwomen in an isolated fishing village in Tamil Nadu on various livelihoods-based interventions. One of the major issues that often caused great concern to the women was that their village was isolated and the few buses that serviced the village would not allow them on board because of the fish. The women had tried various options (from forcibly getting into the bus to begging the conductor) to get on board.

As this directly affected their livelihoods, the group requested the NGO to assist them in buying a small fish cart (operated like a motor-driven tricycle). The economics were worked out and the women agreed to bear all cost relating to maintenance if the capital (i.e. the cart) was given to them free of cost.

However, operation of the fish cart began to pose a big problem. The transport management committee of the women's group found that they could not drive it. They requested one of the unemployed youth of the village to come forward to drive the cart for a nominal payment. The men said that they would not drive the cart with the women on it whatever be the salary that they might get. The women had to therefore get a driver from an inland village.

After a month of employing a driver, the women's group found that supervising him was very difficult. He was constantly complaining that parts had to be changed and was taking money for repairs. The women also found that whenever they questioned the driver about the expenditure, he either threatened to quit or drove very rashly when they were on board. The women found their ignorance about mechanical gadgets very frustrating. They therefore requested that the NGO give them an orientation training on the mechanics of the tricycle — its operation, the parts, etc. so that they had some idea of what was going wrong when the driver reported repairs.

When the men came to know about the training they raised a big hue and cry telling the NGO functionary that as there were many unemployed young men in the village who did not go fishing, they should also be invited to attend the training since such knowledge would help them find employment somewhere. The women objected to their participation. These clashes continued and the training programme had to be finally abandoned.

Meanwhile, the driver tried to run away one night with the vehicle. The women came to know about it and in the process of catching him there was a small accident and the vehicle was damaged. The women found that they could not pay for the repair. They requested the NGO to bear the cost but the NGO said that they could only pay for part of it since they had already paid for the vehicle. The women finally requested the traditional Panchayat head of the village to assist them. He said that he would if the management of the vehicle could be handed over to the Panchayat. After much discussion, the women decided to hand over charge to him.

Today, the fish cart is used by the Panchayat leader as a personal vehicle. The men often take it on hire to go together to a nearby liquor shop. A lot of money has been made by the traditional Panchayat head by hiring it out to traders to transport commodities to and from the village. The women still run behind buses begging the conductors to stop the bus, while some of them walk to nearby villages to sell their fish in the hot sun.

Source: Meera Sundararaj

Discussion

- Why do you think that the men objected to driving the women's group's fish cart?
- Do you think the women were justified in preventing the men from having access to their training programme on vehicle maintenance?
- What are your comments on the gender roles and relations prevailing in the village based on the above case study?
- If you were working for the fisheries department, how would you tackle the situation?

B. Kerala Fisheries: Growth or Marginalization?

Kerala with its 560 km coastline occupies a unique place in the Indian fisheries sector with 222 fishing villages spread over 9 districts. This sector in Kerala contributes 38 per cent of the foreign exchange earned through fisheries in India and employs over 65 lakh fish workers.

Both men and women fishworkers play an active role in fisheries in Kerala. However, their work is demarcated through a strong gender-based division of labour. Traditionally, men are responsible for fish harvesting. Women prepare for the men to go fishing — feeding them and packing their food – and are also involved in marketing of fresh fish and in post-harvest processing. Needless to say, cooking, cleaning, child rearing and all other domestic work is the responsibility of women. They carry on these activities in tiny hutments in poor sanitary conditions and with little or no basic amenities. In the past, women fishworkers were also involved in making and mending nets for catching fish. Given their key economic role, they had a fairly high, though not equal, status within the family.

A large number of women fishworkers are involved in fish processing and earn their income through peeling shrimps and prawns. In the past, they used to access shrimps and prawns from their spouses or purchase them from other artisanal fish workers. After peeling and sorting, they used to send it to advanced processing units within the state and outside, from where it was exported.

But in the last two and a half decades a lot of changes have started taking place in the fisheries sector. Towards the late 1960s/early 1970s, the Government of Kerala started emphasizing technological development of the fisheries sector in view of its export potential. The sector was modernized through introduction of mechanized trawlers, fish catching equipments, chilling plants and sophisticated processing units. Export earnings through fisheries really grew through these technological changes. However, these technologies were highly capital intensive. Artisanal fish workers did not have the capital to purchase the equipment, and hence well off non-fishing communities entered the fisheries sector as owners of trawlers and mechanized processing units. Absentee owners of trawlers and processing units have become quite common now. The fish catch of artisanal fishworkers has declined with the entry of mechanized trawlers, and many of the fishworkers have been forced to become wages workers in crews owned by well-off outsiders.

These developments, as well as the overall trend towards mechanization, have affected artisanal women fishworkers in different ways. Production and repairing of fishnets has now been taken over by large-scale mechanized units, in which at best a few women are employed. Women fishworkers no longer have access to catch at sea shores. They have to travel to centralized fish-landing centers located far away. Further, fish is auctioned to the highest bidder in these centres. As women do not have adequate capital, they are unable to compete with stronger male fish merchants from non-fishing communities. Neither can they turn to inland water bodies for accessing fish, as the recently introduced Inland Fisheries Act of Kerala denies them access to inland water bodies.

As a result of these developments women petty traders of fish are also turning to processing jobs. At the same time women's role in processing has also changed. No longer self-employed peelers, they have become wage employees. The conditions of work have deteriorated and real wages have declined as women fish traders of the past are also turning to this occupation. Some have started migrating to other states in search of jobs in processing units.

The words of the women themselves perhaps explain the changes best. To quote Leela from Alleppey:

"If there is a good catch in the harbours we get some job. But often it is for low wages as many of us are jobless and are ready to work for low wages. Twenty-five young girls are now away in Gujarat from our village working in the processing centers there. A few years back I also worked in Gujarat, but under highly exploitative conditions. After a struggle of three years I have come back. The contractor who took me promised me a salary of Rs.1400 with free accommodation and food. In reality, however, I was paid only Rs.1200, and food and accommodation costs were deducted from this amount. So at the end of the month, I received only 200 to 300 rupees. We were 64 girls totally, and we stayed in a small shed with only one bathroom and one toilet. We were made to work in continuous shifts for three days or more. I could not bear the back pain, and developed scabies. Once I met the contractor, and complained about the conditions. I was sacked immediately and he did not pay me any of the money due for three months of work. Somehow I managed to contact another known person and got a ticket to come back home. Being poor I could do nothing. After returning, I had to undergo

treatment for which we again had to depend on the moneylender. My family's condition has only become more miserable since I went to Gujarat."

On her way to Thuthukudi to purchase and sell fish, Philomina from Trivandrum recalls: "My mother used to vend fish that was available on the coast, and we as children often helped her to procure fish from the boats. Now the process has changed. Only those who have large amounts of capital can purchase fish. Where can we go for such huge capital? Only rich men do this business. We the small fish vendors have to travel to other towns and states – including Mangalore in Karnataka – with capital borrowed from moneylenders. It's our luck if we make some profit. Some of the women fish vendors who cannot travel so far are turning to domestic work and coir-making to ensure that their family survives".

Source: Josephine

Discussion

- What is the impact of recent developments on
  male artisanal fish workers
  female artisanal fish workers
  male middlemen from other communities
  female middlemen from other communities
- Analyse the impact on labour (employment, skills and wages), resources (access and control) and health of these groups.
- What do you think would be the impact of these developments on the status of women fish workers within the family and the community?

2. Film and discussion
A step forward

Learning Objectives

- To understand the role of women in fishing communities
- To understand the problems faced by women in fisheries due to the development of technology in fisheries.

Procedure

Screen the film to all the students as a first step.

Split the students into mixed groups with four or five members in each group.

Given each student the list of questions.

Give the students half an hour to discuss among themselves, following which each group can share their responses and insights with the larger group.

A second screening after the discussion will enhance their understanding of the issues involved.

Discussion

- Women play a major role in the marketing of fish. Do you agree?
- What issues do women face due to the mechanization of boats. How can they be solved?
- Do you accept that women in fishing are also the knowledge holders on fish processing and preservation techniques?
- Do you think that women require modern technology for producing dried fish? If so, who should take the initiative?
- In the present situation, is fish vending a viable enterprise for women?
- What support services do women require to make their livelihoods better than was shown in the film?

A Step Forward

Time	:	18 mins.
Year	:	2002
Language	:	Hindi/Malayalam (English subtitles)
Director	:	Rajani Mani and Nina Subramani
Producer	:	International Collective in Support of Fish Workers (ICSF)
Where available	:	ICSF, 29 College Road, Chennai 600 006 Tel: 044 28275303, Fax: 044 28254457 Email: icsf@vsnl.com Web: www.icsf.net
Format	:	VHS
Price	:	Rs. 150/-
Procedure for obtaining	:	Money order

Unit 16
Women and Livestock: Overcoming Gender Barriers

Almost 70 per cent of the farming community in India is involved in livestock rearing, especially those living in the more ecologically and economically fragile areas of the country. From dairying to sheep rearing or poultry farming, from 'settled' pastoralists to transhumance[1] migration, the livestock sector accounts for 9 per cent of the country's GDP (Gross Domestic Product), next only to agriculture in the rural sector (Ghotge 2004). Not only do livestock provide a range of food, fibre and 'utility' products (milk, eggs, wool, manure, etc.) for both subsistence and sale, they play a vital role in farming systems (as draught animals) and are an important asset for communities living in drought-prone areas, particularly the landless.

Patterns of livestock rearing vary according to the different agro-ecological zones but the extent to which these have 'adapted' depends on socio-economic factors as well as environmental determinants. For example, up in the northern mountainous regions (Kashmir, Ladakh, Uttaranchal) where landholdings are small and farming difficult, the hill slopes are home to a number of pastoral sheep- and goat-rearing communities like the Gujjars, Gaddis and Bhakarwals who come down to the valleys in the winters. In the arid and semi-arid plains of Gujarat and Rajasthan where irrigation and hence agriculture is limited, cattle, buffaloes, sheep, goats and camels provide an important source of livelihood for the Maldharis, Bhadawars and Rabaris. Sometimes reciprocal arrangements with farming communities are made – in return for crop stubble pastoralists allow their animals to graze on the farmer's field thus providing them with highly valued organic manure. In forest-based systems such as the north-east or the *adivasi* belt of central India, livestock are mainly raised for meat (pigs) or eggs (ducks, chickens) or as draught power (yak, elephants).

Gender roles and livestock management

Women play a central role in the livestock economy whether collecting fodder for stall-feeding, tending to the young and weak, milking, collecting or processing animal dung, spinning wool, weaving clothes and blankets or simply travelling with the men and the herds in some communities (Ghotge 2004: 53). According to some estimates, women constitute 93 per cent of the workers in dairying and animal

husbandry, though their level of involvement varies from state to state (Kumar 1997:19). Yet women's 'care' roles or their knowledge about animal healing are seldom recognised and they often have little voice in decision-making or access to animal husbandry services (such as training and skill upgradation).

Women's livestock rights vary by culture, class and type of animal – asserting claims to smaller species such as goats, sheep, poultry and pigs rather than cows, buffaloes, camels or donkeys is usually easier for women.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD at www.ifad.org) has been supporting women's self-help groups in the district of Ukhrul, Manipur, northeast India by providing loans and technical assistance for micro-enterprise development. Poultry rearing was one of the most popular loan-funded activities taken up by the largely adivasi women (Tangkhul tribe) in this hilly region. Apart from being a traditional activity, poultry rearing, according to the women, has low set-up costs, is easy to manage and local marketing of eggs or chickens is also relatively easy. "But there was another reason why women liked investing in poultry: the poultry are seen as women's property. Although men make the major financial decisions in the family, women need not consult them about poultry. Many women reported that keeping poultry gave them quick access to money for emergencies. Because they did not have to ask their husbands for small amounts of cash, it also gave them a sense of independence" (Nongbri 2000).

With increasing privatization, women often lose their traditional rights to both household animals and land, since ownership and decision-making become concentrated in a single, usually male, individual (Miller 2001). According to the World Bank, livestock sector reforms in India need to provide access to information on production, marketing and credit to women livestock producers in order to create a level playing field for them (www.worldbank.org/gender/module/cases/reform.htm). The Bank's policy recommendations suggest that not only should women's participation in dairy cooperatives be strengthened, but also that cooperative reform should include paying attention to the gender balance of cooperative boards. However, as the next section on gender and dairying illustrates, the Anand pattern of dairy cooperatives promoted by the National Dairy Development Board has a long way to go before it can claim to be gender sensitive.

Cattle, poverty and gender: does dairying provide an opportunity for women?

Cattle-rearing for milk is an important occupation of the landless rural poor across the four southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala (Waldie and Ramkumar 2002). The majority of cattle keepers are landless women whose menfolk have largely migrated and for whom agricultural labour does not offer an earning opportunity throughout the year. According to the study[2] the optimum size for a landless dairy farmer is three – two cows and a calf – to ensure milk production all the year round. Dairying accounts for at least 50 per cent of household income in these four states and the money is used on food, education of children and purchase of inputs such as cattle feed and oil cakes.[3] However, because they do not have landholdings of their own, fodder becomes a critical input, particularly with the erosion or privatization of communal grazing lands and the loss of 'freely' available fodder resources.[4] Although collective leasing and fodder cultivation on common or private wastelands is one policy option, women's groups have faced a number of problems ranging from poor land productivity to complex legal and social issues underlying tenure arrangements.

Although women are responsible for almost all the major tasks in terms of cattle rearing, they

are not involved in the sale or purchase of cattle (unless it is a female-headed household). In addition, membership of local milk co-operatives is mostly in the name of the male head of the household who invariably gets the benefit of animal extension services and access to new information and technological developments which he may/may not share at home. However, women's membership in mixed dairy cooperatives does not necessarily guarantee active participation, whether in terms of payments, attending meetings or exercising governance (Sinha 1996). Apart from context-specific, socio-cultural norms restricting participation, patterns of gendered hierarchy also determine *which* women participate.

Apex institutions such as the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) have been trying to promote women's participation and leadership, particularly through the organisation, albeit limited, of separate women's dairy cooperatives, and cooperative education and development programmes. But often women's cooperatives become defunct because of lack of functional literacy skills amongst women members, heavy dependence on male secretaries (often relatives of an office-bearing member) and the local political economy. Where perhaps women's dairy cooperatives have succeeded, women's development organisations such as SEWA in Gujarat (Chen and Dholakia 1986) and Adithi in Bihar (Srinivasan 1993) have played a critical role. On the other hand, nearly 70 per cent of the milk marketed in the country is done through informal and unorganised channels and while NGOs may have helped landless women to get loans for buying livestock, marketing is one area where many organisations have not had the capacity to venture.

Endnotes

[1] Transhumance – the seasonal moving of livestock to a different region

[2] This caselet is abstracted from the study by Dr. Kevin Waldie and Dr. S. Ramkumar (2002) "Improving Animal Husbandry Services for the Poor Women through Capacity Building in Gender Awareness." UK: DFID

[3] It is not possible to generalize about benefits to women and children from dairy income or from keeping milch cattle – improvements in health and nutrition are determined by wider gender relations of power.

[4] In some cases landless may have access to crop stubble from the fields of the landed classes but these reciprocal relationships are also changing.

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Exercises

1. Fieldwork and discussion
Gender analysis of livestock management

Learning Objective

- To understand gender-based responsibilities in any one livestock system

Procedure

- Use the gender analysis framework provided in Unit 5.
- Ask the students to assess:

  Who owns different animal species – for example, men tend to be responsible for cattle and larger animals and women for smaller animals, such as ruminants and poultry.

  Who is responsible for what work – regardless of who owns the animal(s) – and how much time is spent on different activities:

  Collection and fodder preparation
  Watering, cleaning stalls
  Herding, searching for lost animals
  Milking
  Care of sick animals (fetching the vet, animal healer)
  Breeding, (castrating) and slaughtering
  Processing of livestock products
  Marketing of livestock and/or livestock products

  Who has access to resources – land, labour, credit – to support improved stocks, feeds, or other inputs?

  Who makes decisions regarding (in addition to the work defined):

  Investments and control over income earned

These gender-based responsibilities can and do change over time. For example, with male out-migration, women (or children) may take over men's roles such as herding typically, or mechanization may involve men in what were formally women's production systems (e.g. milk processing).

2. Case study and discussion

Understanding women's roles in livestock/farming systems

Women and livestock care: ANTHRA

ANTHRA is a small NGO initiated by two women veterinary doctors in the early 1990s to understand gender concerns in livestock management and to address gender roles in indigenous knowledge systems. In 1996, ANTHRA undertook a participatory study with 'barefoot researchers' facilitated by local CBOs and NGOs in six different agro-ecological regions in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra to explore livelihood and knowledge systems with a specific focus on gender relations (Ghotge and Ramdas 2002). With respect to indigenous knowledge, ANTHRA found that women from *dalit* communities, traditionally employed by wealthy farmers to weed their fields, knew a lot about grasses and weeds for fodder and about the management of small ruminants. Conversely, women from prosperous, landed agricultural castes who may not necessarily do agricultural work were involved in dairying and knew about practices related to pre-partum, post-partum care and calf management.

However, although women had knowledge about simple household remedies, cures and medicines they had almost always been kept out of professional healing. Traditional healers were predominantly male, as knowledge was passed from fathers to sons and not to daughters. Only 3 per cent of the healers interviewed in AP and 2 per cent in Maharashtra had acquired their knowledge from their mothers/grandmothers, and few had any intentions to teach their daughters (Ramdas et al 2004). Many thought it was taboo to teach women because they believed the medicines would not be effective if used by menstruating women (ibid. p. 86). On the other hand, women complained that since male healers were mobile and rarely to be found in the village when needed, many animals suffered.

Thus, in 1998 after much debate on whether or not it was trespassing cultural norms, ANTHRA decided to train community Animal Health Workers (AHWs) on both 'modern' and traditional methods of animal care. ANTHRA is committed to ensuring that at least 75 per cent of all new AHWs are women. The organisation also makes a conscious effort that the training does not simply look at animal health issues but locates them in a larger framework of sustainable and gender-just development where questions of women's health and gender relations such as domestic violence can be raised. The women AHWs are encouraged to work closely with other women/ groups in the village and are gradually being recognised for their skills and accessibility, even in diverse areas such as conflict resolution. The training programmes, interactions and exposure visits have provided an opportunity for women to forge new friendships, exchange ideas and learn, growing in self-confidence and acceptance by the community. As livestock mortality and morbidity rates in the project villages are beginning to come down, the AHWs have formed state-level networks to deal with issues such as the lack of resources and are also finding constructive ways of working with male healers.

In addition, ANTHRA has initiated a pilot programme to conserve important species of fodder and medicinal plants on demonstration plots that are being maintained by local communities. AHWs are encouraged to use cultivated plants rather than those found in the wild which are in danger of extinction. School children have also begun to visit these mini field laboratories to

learn more about their immediate environment and the need to conserve it (Ghotge 2004: 117–120).

Source: Sara Ahmed

Discussion

- What are the different types or areas of knowledge that women and men have about livestock management?
- Why is this traditional knowledge important and how does it differ from 'outsider' knowledge or conventional scientific expertise?
- How has ANTHRA been helping rural women engage with more 'professional' healing systems? What are the key aspects of ANTHRA's approach or strategy?

ANNEXURES

1. Millennium Development Goals and Targets

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
   - Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day
   - Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
   - Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
   - Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015
4. Reduce child mortality
   - Reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under five
5. Improve maternal health
   - Reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality ratio
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
   - Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
   - Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
   - Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources
   - Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water
   - Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020
8. Develop a global partnership for development
   - Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction—nationally and internationally
   - Address the least developed countries' special needs. This includes tariff- and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction

- Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing States
- Deal comprehensively with developing countries' debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term
- In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth
- In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
- In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies—especially information and communications technologies

Source: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

2. Extracts from The Constitution of India

Part III Fundamental Rights

Right to Equality

Article 14.

Equality before law. The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

Article 15.

Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth

1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.
2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to- (a) access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment; or (b) the use of wells, tanks, bathing *ghats*, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of the general public.
3) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.

Article 16.

Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment.

(1) There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.

(2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.

Nothing in this article shall prevent Parliament from making any law prescribing, in regard to a class or classes of employment or appointment to an office

Amendments

Seventy-third Amendment Act, 1992.

Date on which the Act came into force: 24-4-1993 (S.O. 267(E), dated 24-4-1993).

243D. Reservation of seats

(1) Seats shall be reserved for

(a) the Scheduled Castes; and

(b) the Scheduled Tribes,

in every Panchayat and the number of seats reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that Panchayat as the population of the Scheduled Castes in that Panchayat area or of the Scheduled Tribes in that Panchayat area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

(2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes.

(3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

(4) The offices of the Chairpersons in the Panchayats at the village or any other level shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide:

Provided further that not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women.

Seventy-fourth Amendment Act, 1992.

Date on which the Act came into force: 1-6-1993 (S.O. 346(E), dated 1-6-1993).

243T. Reservation of seats

(1) Seats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in every Municipality and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that Municipality as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the Municipal area or of the Scheduled Tribes in the Municipal area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

(2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes.

(3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

(4) The officers of Chairpersons in the Municipalities shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide.

GLOSSARY OF GENDER TERMS

Gender: Socially constructed and culturally determined differences in the relations between men and women, and their roles/responsibilities in the household community or society. Gender differentials (which usually reflect social/cultural discrimination and inequality) are not to be confused with sex-based differences (which refer to biological –anatomical, physiological – differences between men and women.)

Gender Roles: Division of tasks, activities, responsibilities, roles as socially perceived/ Accepted at different times/places based on existing gender relations.

Gender Relations: Division of power, control, authority, responsibility between genders, involving the negotiation, contesting and establishment of power and control between them.

Gender Analysis: Gender analysis in programme/project planning seeks to distinguish the resources, activities, potentials and constraints of women relative to men in a given context.

Gender Interests: Long term interest involving personal autonomy and choice; entitlements and capabilities; ownership and control of labour and resources; and decision-making power at different levels. (Remember that men too have gendered interests.)

Gender Equity: The outcome of being fair to women and men. It does not mean that women and men have to become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.

Gender Needs: Needs specific to the particular conditions of women or men, because of their gendered roles and responsibilities.

Practical Gender Needs: Needs women identify in their socially accepted roles in society. They are practical in nature and often concern inadequacies in living conditions.

Strategic Gender Needs: Needs women identify because of their subordinate position in society, related to gender divisions of labour, power and control, and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages, and women's control over their bodies.

Gender Blind: Unaware of the socially constructed roles and relations between men and women; may seem to be gender-neutral while being implicitly male-biased.

Gender Neutral: Recognize gender differences but do not attempt to alter gender relations, or interfere with existing divisions of gender roles.

Gender Sensitive; Gender Responsive: Sympathetic awareness of gender roles and relations. Respond positively to differentials in gender roles and relations.

Gender Specific Policies: Favour women specifically as the target group, but do not alter existing gender roles and relations. (Gender specific policies could also favour men, but this is usually not the case)

Gender Transformatory Policies: Seek to change existing gendered-patterns of resource use, division of labour and responsibilities. Would usually require the redistribution of gendered privileges and transforming gender relations.

Women in Development (WID): Development workers and planners concentration on Women in Development issues arose from a realization that women's contributions were being ignored and that this led to many failures in development efforts. Women in Development projects, frequently involving only women as participants and beneficiaries, were an outcome of this realization.

Gender and Development (GAD): This approach shifts the focus from women as a group to the socially determined relations between women and men. A Gender and Development approach focuses on the social, economic, political and cultural forces that determine how men and women might participate in, benefit from and control project resources and activities differently.

Gender Mainstreaming : Gender mainstreaming is the process of ensuring that women and men have equal access and control over resources, development benefits and decision-making, at all stages of the development process.

Tools to Undertake Gender Analysis

Gender Disaggregated Information: Information differentiated on the basis of what pertains to women and their roles, and to men and their roles.

Gender Planning: A planning approach that recognizes that because women and men play different roles in society they often have different needs.

Gender Impact Analysis: Gender Impact Analysis is a systematic approach for assessing and understanding the different impacts of development on women and men because of their different gender roles.

Gender Training: Gender training is viewed as a technical part of the process which involves passing on practical skills for implementing gender sensitive policy, planning and training in specific circumstances.

Gender Diagnosis: is the organization of data to highlight key gender problems, underlying causes of problems for men and women, and the relationship between problems and causes.

Gender Objectives: Objectives clarify what gender problems will be addressed and what the practical and strategic goals are.

Gender Strategy: Clear operational strategies, which will be used to achieve stated objectives, must identify the incentives, budget, staff, training, and organizational strategies to achieve stated objectives.

Gender Monitoring And Evaluation: Flexible planning requires gender monitoring and evaluation to enable adjustment to experience and to establish accountability of commitment to achieve gender-specific priorities.

Commonly used terms

Matrilocal: Pertains to residence; the couple stays at the girl's mother's place after marriage

Matrilineal: pertains to descent; tracing the descent through the mother's line - grandmother to mother and mother to daughter - for passing the property and titles.

Matriarchal: Pertains to power relations; women have right to exercise power, to take all decisions and execute the decisions.

Patrilocal: Pertains to residence; the couple resides at the boy's father's place after marriage.

Patrilineal: Pertains to descent; tracing the descent through the father's line - grandfather to father and father to son.

Patriarchial: Pertains to power relations; men have the right to exercise power, to take all decisions and execute the decisions.

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