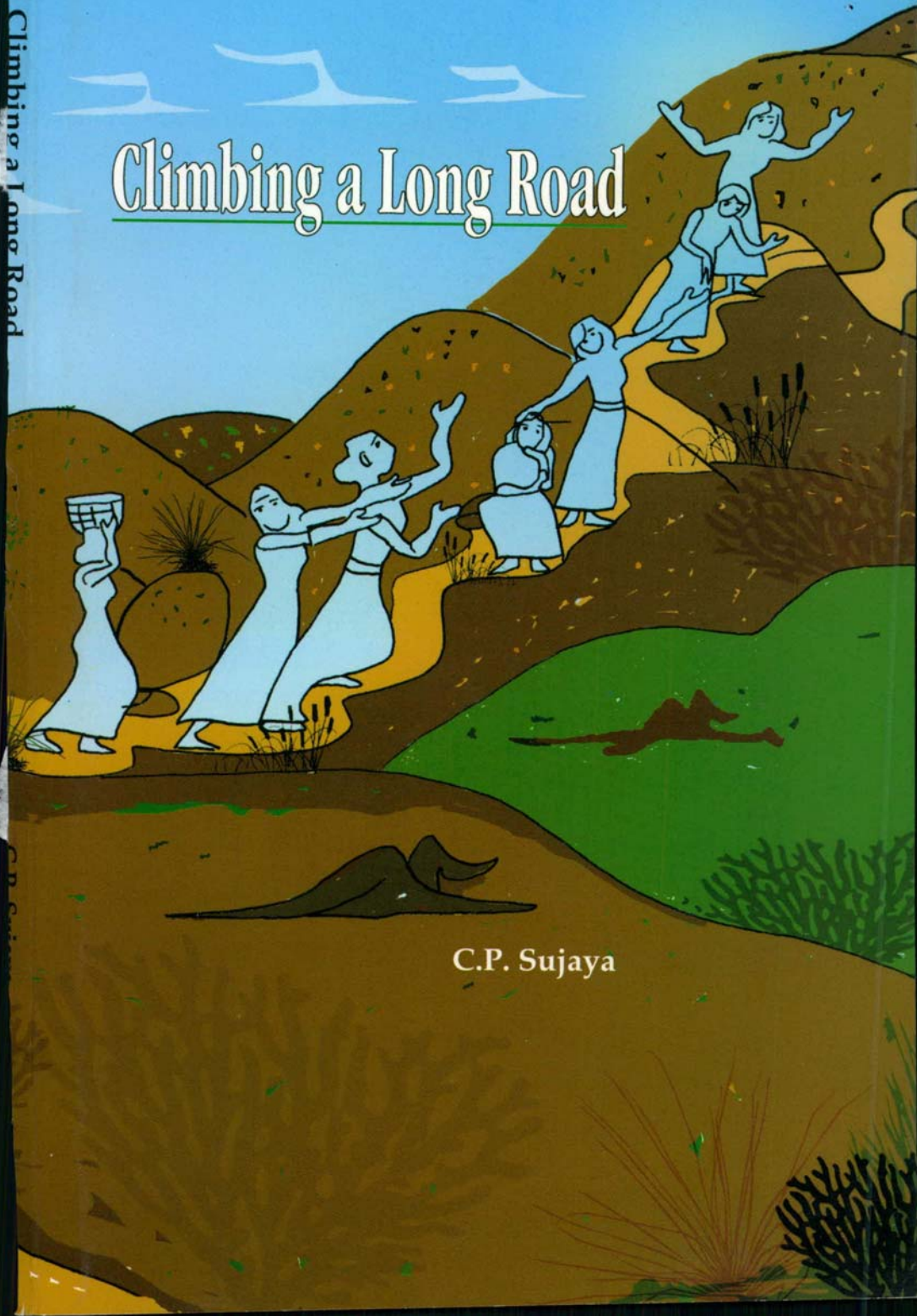


Climbing a Long Road

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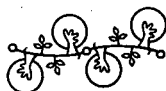


C.P. Sujaya

CLIMBING A LONG ROAD

Women in Agriculture in India
Ten Years after Beijing

C. P. Sujaya



M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation

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FOREWORD

From the earliest days of agriculture, women have played a key role in the selection of plants for domestication and in the preservation of a wide range of genetic material in plants of economic value. The role of women in the four major aspects of farming — conservation, cultivation, consumption and commerce - has been fundamental to agricultural progress. Yet women's efforts and achievements have been little recognized or rewarded.

Today, the overall situation in agriculture is grim. A Situation Assessment Survey (SAS), the first of its kind, was conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) during January-December 2003 on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. The results of the survey paint a dismal picture of the state of affairs in the lives of farming families. Income is going down and indebtedness is going up. Despite a significant increase in the flow of institutional credit, the SAS data reveal that over 42 percent of rural credit supply comes from money lenders at exploitative rates of interest. Unfortunately, SAS data are not gender-differentiated, so it may be difficult to accurately assess changes in the status of women in agriculture in the decade since the Beijing Conference of 1995.

The National Commission on Farmers (NCF) carried out a study of the position of women farmers and farm labour with the help of a group of eminent persons working in this area, including Ms. C. P. Sujaya. The first report of the NCF, presented to the Government in December 2004, contains several suggestions on the economic, technological and social empowerment of women in agriculture. NCF noted that less than five percent of Kisan Credit Cards had been issued to women farmers, since most of them lack title to land. Joint pattas could solve this problem, which is particularly acute in hill areas where there is considerable out-migration of men, who leave for cities in search of waged work leading to a 'feminisation' of agriculture.

Recently, the Govt. of India has taken several steps to help women overcome handicaps arising from gender bias and discrimination. Thus, the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2005 gives

daughters entitlement to land ownership. NCF has also recommended that there should be gender mainstreaming of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). To some extent, this has been done by reserving at least one-third of the work spaces for women. What is equally important is to provide appropriate support services to working women, such as creches, drinking water, toilets and other essential facilities.

Women in agriculture also require appropriate credit and insurance support, taking into account the multiple calls on their time. Ms. Sujaya has rightly emphasised the need for skill development and capacity building, since rural women are both overworked and underpaid. What is urgently needed in the case of women is reduction in the number of hours of work and addition to the economic value of each hour of work. This will call for a paradigm shift from unskilled to skilled work. There is also need for capacity building and mentoring centres for women Self Help Groups engaged in non-farm enterprises. Multiple livelihood opportunities are essential to ensure household nutrition and income security.

Nations which undervalue the human resource and overvalue material resources tend to remain poor. Also, the larger the proportion of the rural population engaged in the routine operations of farming, the greater is the prevalence of undernutrition and malnutrition. Maternal and foetal undernutrition today is resulting in a high incidence of babies characterized by low birth weight. Such children have inherent disadvantages in brain development and cognitive abilities. This is why a holistic approach is needed in dealing with the problems confronting women in agriculture. I congratulate Ms. Sujaya on this timely, thoughtful and carefully researched review and hope that it will stimulate action and help to accelerate progress in reaching the end of "the long road" to a gender-just society, where both men and women can lead happy, healthy and productive lives.

M.S. Swaminathan
Chairman, National Commission on Farmers
and Chairman, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation.

PREFACE

The Uttara Devi Resource Centre for Gender and Development at the M.S. Swaminathat Research Foundation (MSSRF), which was set up in 1996-97, has a two-fold mandate - on the one hand, to work at the interface of research and development as regards gender issues, and on the other, to bring a gender perspective into all the programmes and activities of the Foundation. This has involved both taking up specific studies and activities to address the external mandate, and working closely with colleagues in all projects and programmes at the Foundation to fulfill the internal mandate. In both cases, because of the Foundation's goals and concerns, the Centre has naturally focused on the thematic areas of gender in relation to livelihoods, agriculture, biodiversity, and natural resource management.

Since 1999, the strategy has been to invite a leading scholar in some field of gender studies to be a Visiting Fellow, and work for a certain period in an area of mutual interest, either to carry out a piece of field research, or to write a paper, or work on a book. This has proved to be a most fruitful and rewarding policy, resulting in several good publications, one of them being a course curriculum on gender in agriculture and rural livelihoods for undergraduates in agricultural universities and colleges. Ms. C.P. Sujaya, the Visiting Fellow for 2005, is the fifth in this distinguished series.

As the tenth year after the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women, 2005 naturally marked the moment for women's organisations and movements to take stock and reflect on progress made during the ten years. The Department of Women and Child Development of the Government of India has, indeed, brought out a comprehensive review of the progress of Indian women during the decade, particularly with reference to the goals specified in the Beijing Platform for Action, which was the outcome of the deliberations at the Beijing Conference. Marking what popularly came to be known as Beijing + 10, numerous seminars, workshops and conferences were held in the course of the year to assess progress on different aspects of women's development during this period.

To mark the decade, and in keeping with its own areas of interest, MSSRF decided to focus specifically on women in agriculture in the broader sense, that is, including occupations based on natural resources, such as fisheries, dairying, livestock rearing, forestry and horticulture; and to organize a consultative meeting on the theme **Beijing + 10: Women in Agriculture in India – What Next?** Ms. C.P. Sujaya was invited to be the Visiting Fellow for 2005, and prepare a review paper on the subject **Women in Agriculture in India — 1995-2005**, as a basis for discussion at the meeting. The draft version of the paper which forms this publication, was the basis for discussion at the meeting which was held on November 11-12, 2005, at MSSRF, Chennai

All of us at MSSRF are deeply indebted to Ms. C.P. Sujaya for her comprehensive, insightful and analytical review of the subject, especially because it was done in the short time of about three months. This was only possible because of her vast knowledge of the subject and her long involvement with women's studies and the women's movement, as well as her uncanny ability to source data in ways which would have been difficult for many a less intrepid scholar. Above all, it is her deep commitment to the cause of the millions of poor women of India that shines through the paper, an indication that both heart and brain have been at work.

We are happy to have the opportunity to offer this publication to a wider public, in the hope that students of several disciplines, as well as analysts, policy makers and field workers will find in it a state-of-the art introduction to the status of women in agriculture in India today.

I also take this opportunity to thank Ms. R.V. Bhavani, who is in charge of the B.V. Rao Centre for Food Security at MSSRF, which was a partner in this exercise, and to acknowledge with gratitude the cooperation from all colleagues at MSSRF in organising the workshop and bringing out the publication.

Mina Swaminathan
Adviser
Education, Communication, Gender
M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai, for giving me an opportunity to work with them on this assignment. I would specially like to acknowledge the unstinted support I have received from Professor M.S. Swaminathan in my work. I greatly appreciate MSSRF having arranged a well planned visit to Chennai including a field visit to Pondicherry that enabled me to interact with the headquarters as well as the field staff and get introduced to the working of the organization and its many achievements.

I wish to specially mention the consistent support I have received from Ms. Mina Swaminathan at each and every stage of my assignment, from its initial planning to the completion of the paper. I owe her a big debt of thanks for having taken such keen personal interest in my work, and for having arranged my meetings with the staff of MSSRF, even within the short time at our disposal. Ms. R. V. Bhavani at MSSRF has been a ready source of information and a constant support. I also wish to place on record the help received from all the staff.

I have been able to access many reports and documents of the Government of India by using the good offices of those working in the concerned ministries and departments. In the Ministry of Agriculture, the Directorate of Extension was the source of many documents and papers – including internal and unpublished documents – for which I acknowledge the help and contribution of Ms. Neeraj Suneja, who is the Joint Director as well as in charge of the Gender Cell. Others from whom I have received similar help are Ms. Reva Nayyar, Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development and her officers, especially Ms. Anjali Goyal, Under Secretary; Shri K. M. Sahni, Secretary, Ministry of Labor; Shri P. S. Rana, Secretary, Department of Statistics and Program Implementation (along with his colleagues in the Central Statistical Organization); Shri P. K. Jalali, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Ms. Upma Choudhry, Joint Secretary, Department of Animal Husbandry. I am grateful to the Member-Secretary of the National Commission on Farmers, Shri Atul Sinha, for his help and support.

Others whose help and encouragement I wish to acknowledge are Dr. Syeda Hamid, Member, Planning Commission, Dr. Vandana Dwivedi, Joint Adviser, Agriculture, Planning Commission, Dr. Indira Hirway, Ms. Madhu Sarin, Ms. Rugmini Rao, Ms. Reema Nanavaty, Ms. Priti Bhatt and the late Ms. Viji Srinivasan. I am specially grateful to Dr. Indira Hirway for allowing me to quote from her paper on the Time Use Survey.

As always, I remain indebted to the Centre for Women's Development Studies for being able to draw on their resources - human as well as material - for completing this work.

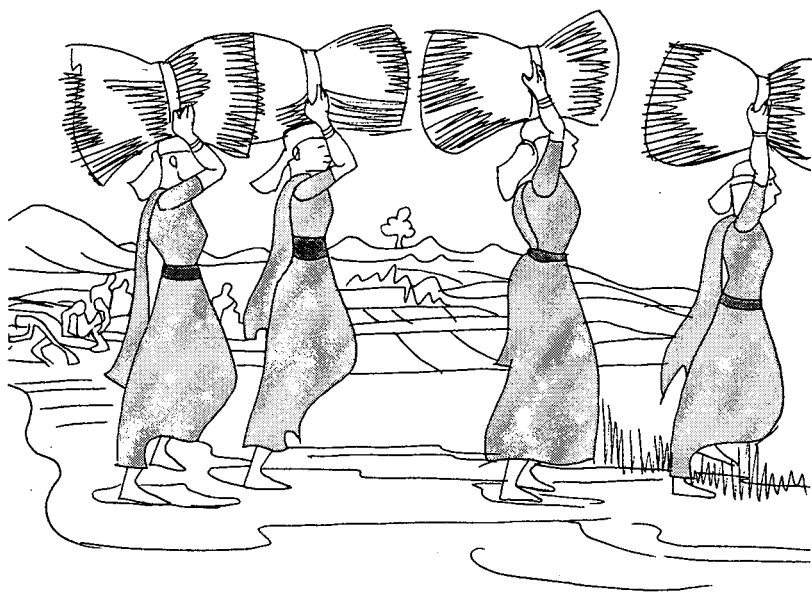
C.P. Sujaya

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

C.P. Sujaya, a member of the Indian Administrative Service, has, before she retired in 2001, worked in Himachal Pradesh for about three decades in administration, and was Joint Secretary in the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India, for four years. Her main area of interest is policy, relating to women in particular, and to the social sector in general. She has been working with women's organizations - on research, action and policy - for nearly two decades, as well as with NGOs, and networks. Closely associated with the Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi, of which she is a Life Member as well as member of the Executive Committee, she is presently a Visiting Fellow there. She has recently been elected Treasurer of the Indian Association for Women's Studies.



INTRODUCTION

In 1995, the World Conference on Women held at Beijing adopted the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). This paper reviews the progress of women in India from the perspective of the BPFA, which provided the framework 'to move issues of gender equality to the top of the global agenda' (United Nations 1996a). The paper has a special focus on *women in agriculture*, interpreted broadly as *women engaged in land and water-based occupations, natural resource management and rural livelihoods in general*. Therefore, of the BPFA listing of twelve critical areas of concern, the paper has taken up a few connected areas for deeper scrutiny, while attempting to look at the issues synergistically and inclusively.

The decadal period covered in this paper has seen far-reaching changes in the Indian economy and polity, starting with the introduction of economic reforms in 1991, paving the way to liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG). This forms the backdrop against which the paper assesses the

progress of women. It looks at women in their multiple roles and settings, as gendered citizens of India, subject to the discriminatory sex-based division of labor within the household and outside it.

The following areas have been selected as they are closely connected with the livelihoods and working conditions of women dependent on the agriculture and rural subsistence sectors. These thematic areas are also interconnected.

Women and Poverty (BPFA Critical Area of Concern A)

Women and the Economy (BPFA Critical Area of Concern F)

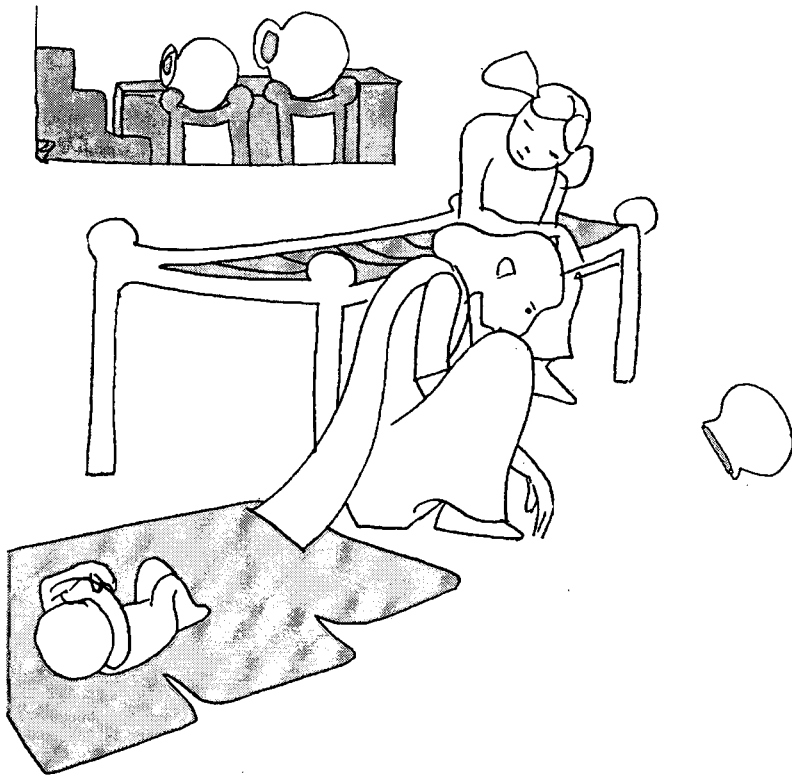
Women in Power and Decision Making (BPFA Critical Area of Concern G)

Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women (BPFA Critical Area of Concern H)

The World, Women and Poverty

In 1995, one billion people were living in unacceptable conditions of poverty, *the great majority of whom were women*. (UN 1996b). The number of people living in poverty increased disproportionately in most developing countries, particularly the heavily indebted countries. (UN 1996c)

Today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, half the world – nearly 3 billion people – lives on less than two dollars a day (Wolfenson, 1998). 30,000 children die each day due to poverty (UNICEF 2005). The majority of people living in poverty are women. The gap between women and men caught in the cycle of poverty has continued to widen in the past decade, a phenomenon commonly referred to as “the feminisation of poverty”. Worldwide, women earn, on an average, slightly more than 50 percent of what men earn. The Beijing Conference has created the ground for a wider definition of poverty, one that takes into account not only minimum basic needs, but also the denial of opportunities and choices (UN 2000).



1. WOMEN AND POVERTY - THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

The BPFA mandate can be summed up in the following words: Governments are to link macro-economic policies and development strategies to the needs of women in poverty, with the full involvement and equal participation of women. It is required to review and modify these policies if their impact on women and family well-being is adverse. This impact is to be analyzed from a gender perspective. Governments are to address the structural causes of poverty and encourage broad-based and sustained economic growth. At the same time, they are to provide safety nets to enable women living in poverty to withstand adverse conditions and preserve their livelihoods in times of crises (UN 1996d).

Feminisation of Work, Agriculture and Poverty

Poor women's ability to find sustained work and earn a fair wage is perhaps the most revealing index of their well-being. Terms such as "feminisation of work", "feminisation of agriculture" and "feminisation of poverty" are often used to signify many interlinked trends in the current situation of women. Investigations into women's work reveal many complexities. National labor surveys reveal a declining trend in both male and female work force participation rates, but smaller studies show a different picture. Better probing brings out hidden details of economic activities that women perform piecemeal which may not have been captured in larger exercises. Flexibilisation of work may increase work opportunities for women, but women still find it difficult to sustain work throughout the year.

Poverty may increasingly push women into the labor force, but their earnings remain low in almost all kinds of work. Economic crises often force women to support the household by seeking waged work outside the home, yet increasing female-headedness, especially among below poverty line (BPL) women, may increase workloads and decrease their potential for earning income. Real wages may fall and women may take the place of men in the labor market; but with subsidies on basic goods and services removed and health and education services increasingly privatized, household insecurities increase. The majority of women workers are based in the agricultural sector, but the number of days of work in a year, especially for women labor, are very few. Open unemployment may be quite high for BPL women (Rani, Uma and Unni, Jeemol 2004).

Feminisation of Agriculture

Feminisation of agriculture is not unique to India or South Asia, but the Indian case is different from that of say, East Asia. Feminisation can take place due to out-migration of males from low paid agriculture to higher paid industry. But in India, it has been induced by casualization of work,

unprofitable crop production and distress migration. Incidence of work-related migration for less than a year is as low as 3.6 percent for rural women as compared to a high 33.7 percent for rural men. (NSS, 2000) Women's work participation is mostly related to available local work or family enterprises, which restricts their upward mobility. To this extent, increase of women's work in agriculture is due to out-migration of male partners. Casualization and marginalisation of the work force has occurred in the last decade and now one-third of all rural workers are agricultural labor (2001 Census). This may have forced men to opt for higher-paid casual work in the agriculture and non-agriculture sectors, leaving women to take up low-paid, casual work in agriculture. Unlike women who work on their own farms, female agricultural workers are visible and their numbers cannot be hidden. In rural India, about 33 percent of cultivators and about 47 percent of agricultural laborers are women (Vepa, Swarna S. 2005).

This type of feminisation process is not a positive feature as it builds on women's relative inferiority in remuneration and working conditions. Hence, the feminisation of work need not be a cause for unqualified celebration (Ghosh, Jayati 2004). (Box 1)

Women's employment in the informal sector in the emerging labor market is increasing, due to factors connected with globalization such as export-oriented industrialization, and relocation of industries into developing countries. In the gendered workplace, women tend to be clustered around low-skilled, repetitive work that leads to specific insecurities

With the opening up of new markets or the expansion of existing markets, opportunities for women's employment increase, as in the case of the craft sector. Women are preferred for some types of work, as in the export processing zones, because of their docility and quick work. Globalization has led to greater stratification, with increasing numbers of underpaid, overworked, poor women at the lower end and

Box 1: Implications of Feminisation of Agriculture

A study of five rice-producing villages in the Philippines reveals a sharp decline in the share of rice income, especially in rainfed villages, where it was noted that land is no longer the only decisive factor determining rural household income. A key role is played by college education in enabling access to remunerative non-farm activities. Experience from Malaysia shows that increasing feminisation of landed property relations in rural areas takes place in the context of a general decline in the rural economy. Women's land rights, in a way, represented the cultural valuation of women as the 'conservers' of the rural sector, and yet women's base in the community was undermined by the state focus on industrial investment, out-migration, women's disadvantage in the labor market, and religious revivalism. Younger women in Malaysia had already started looking for more preferred socially valued work in the industrial sector – rather than staying in the villages and tending the land. In the Peruvian Andes, a visibly growing feminisation of landownership is seen as being linked to the land losing its value as a source of income and power.

Source: Rao, Nitya. 2005. "Gender Equality, Land Rights and Household Food Security: Discussion of Rice Farming Systems". Economic and Political Weekly. June 18-24, Vol.XL, No.25. 2513-2521.

fewer numbers of professionally qualified women following economically successful careers at the upper end. Education, skill development and training of women and girls have suffered because of the negative economic drift of households (Kalpagam, Uma and Narayan, Binod 2004).

Flexibility and Difference

Feminisation and flexibility of the labor force are emerging features, but the gender-based division of labor does not change. The social construction of gender places women at the lower levels in the job hierarchies, as an extension of the division in the family, which is reflected in the labor market. There is a pre-market and a post-market discrimination, one that denies access to skills, training and experience and the other that denies equal wages for similar work. Access to

income does not lead to improvement in women's status when factors such as location and process of work are considered. Documents such as Census 2001 and the 1998 Time Use Survey of Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) reflect processes of marginalization of the female work force, casualization of work, gender wage differentials and the continuing burden of economic and non-economic work done by women and men.

According to Census 2001, more than 11 crore women are engaged as workers; in rural areas, 36.5 percent of them are cultivators and 43 percent work as agricultural labourers. Female agricultural workers are subject to the worst forms of poverty. Women with lower access to productive resources and skills sell their labor cheap. Forty percent of the female work force in the rural areas is casual. Female casualization is three times higher than that of males in the rural areas.

A survey (conducted by an agricultural workers' union) of 5 districts in Andhra Pradesh shows employers' preference for women labor, because they could be hired at 30 – 50 percent lower wages than men (besides being more industrious and working without breaks). The survey found more women agricultural labor working on crops such as tobacco, chillies, turmeric, cotton, flowers and paddy. Landowners also cut costs by engaging women, because they generally lack organized forums for negotiation and campaigning. Women in home-based work earn the least.

The gendered nature of work division builds on 'difference' and equates women's work with both 'light' and 'unskilled' labor. This completely negates not only the backbreaking nature of the tasks carried out by women, but also the highly skilled nature of tasks such as transplanting of paddy. Though it calls for a high level of knowledge and skills, no State Government has placed it in the highest wage bracket. (Paul, Tinku 2004).

Feminisation and Migration

Fifty three percent of all male workers and 75 percent of all

female workers are in agriculture, while 85 percent of all rural female workers are in agriculture. An estimated 20 percent of rural households are female-headed due to widowhood, desertion, or male out-migration, and are managing agriculture and providing family sustenance with little or no male assistance (Agarwal, Bina 2004)

A study in Chhatisgarh showed that the men are generally away to the cities for six months for construction and other work, and come back in time for the next sowing season (Hardikar, Jaideep, 2004). Most of the men who move out are marginal farmers or landless laborers. What happens on their farms is a process of feminisation of agriculture. That women work on farms is nothing new, but their having to virtually become custodians of their land in the absence of men, is. The Sarpanch of a village says that nearly 80 percent of men move out for work every year, with the women left to do the ploughing, sowing and all other work. Sometimes large landowners come to the village demanding these women to work on their farms as agricultural laborers, as women work more and demand lesser wages. While male migration has been more or less accepted as a good avenue to earn money, the feminisation of agriculture that takes place as a result has not been anticipated or responded to by the State authorities. (Box 2)

Many villages in Chhatisgarh have more than half the population in cities such as Nagpur, Chandrapur, Bhopal, Karimnagar, and Hyderabad. The city contractors line up in the villages seeking laborers for construction work. Farmers at home, they work as construction labor in the cities. "If the village loses its quality workforce to the cities, it is disastrous for us and the government does not understand this" observes a local farmer.

What do women do in the village then? Oh, they're the ones who are doing the farming now, the men say. Women then have to do both farm and off-farm activities, coping with problems such as inadequate irrigation facilities, and pests.

Box 2: Male Migration and Feminisation of Farming: A Case Study of Chattisgarh.

Eighty percent of the population in Chattisgarh is dependent on agriculture. Migration is a major option here, not only for marginal farmers and agricultural laborers but for landed families as well. Women belonging to landowning families are increasingly becoming farm managers. Radhikabai Advani, a tribal woman, has a large landholding of 15 acres, but her husband has gone to nearby Nagpur to look for work. The income from the farm would be just enough to repay the loan that he took during the three previous years of drought. So he chose migration as his best option to earn extra money, leaving the responsibility of the farm to his wife. But the farm would not fetch a good return during the year, as the crops have been attacked by pests, and she could not get timely labor to deal with the pest problem. Labor is in short supply, and erratic, because huge numbers of workers have migrated to towns. A day's delay in plucking the grain would mean its loss, as pests would have invaded the field. She has not only to search for labor and negotiate with them for wages, but also ensure that her land-owning neighbors do not get them first.

She says that in a village that supplies cheap labor in abundance to cities like Nagpur, finding agricultural labor is becoming a big problem. The problem is compounded because agricultural implements are not woman-friendly. She is one of the three families in the village to own more than ten acres of land.

Source: Hardikar, Jaideep "Migration, agriculture and women"
<http://www.indiatogether.org/2004/may/wom-farmers.htm>

The absence of micro-level planning at Gram Panchayat level and a policy framework on the recruitment of local population for development works adds to the problem.

The massive exodus of men that causes labor shortage also affects agriculture yields, and renders huge tracts of land barren, forcing the women in the absence of labor, to abandon the farms.

A Chhatisgarh-like situation exists in many other States of India, where adequate work opportunities do not exist at local level and women have to take on new survival roles in terms of both production and care to enable men to migrate for better income.

A review of the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) in Maharashtra shows that in terms of family strategies, men are first given the option for migration or alternative employment as a means of improving the family's economic status, while women hold the responsibility for basic survival strategies. The woman-friendly EGS program offered employment opportunities to rural women close to their homes – within a radius of eight kilometers (five kilometers in hilly areas) of the village. This proximity became the most attractive feature of the scheme for women (Parikh, A. et al 2004) In terms of the BPFA this can be termed as a program strategy that directly addressed the needs of poor women.

BPFA and the Ground Reality in India

The situation of women in agriculture described above raises the question of how close the Indian State is to complying with the BPFA mandate. The current agrarian crisis is in fact framed within the parameters of the new economic policies. The reversal of the earlier belief – which underlay policy – that national agricultural production required protection to achieve self-sufficiency in food was reversed with the era of economic policy changes and reforms. Liberalized food imports, the coming into force of global patent systems, mandated reductions in agricultural support and protection have hit small and marginal farmers hard (Krishna, Sumi 2004).

Speaking in the context of the developing world at the plenary session of the Sixth World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference at Hong Kong, the Union Commerce Minister described the multilateral trade regimen as having thrown millions of people who were on the edge of subsistence into the 'chasm of poverty and unemployment'. He said that

it was in agriculture that the structure of international trade was most distorted. Indian farmers could deal with trade flows, but not with 'an avalanche of subsidy flows' from developed countries (*The Hindu* December 15, 2005).

The situation of women in agriculture is doubly vulnerable within this generally bleak setting of Indian farming. BPFA specifically requires policy-making to be cognizant of the likelihood of such adverse impacts and to make effective interventions proactively in order to prevent them. The following questions can be asked in this context to test the Indian scenario: To what extent are the policy-making processes and their outcomes in this country gender-sensitive? Are there built-in safeguards and mechanisms that enable the decision makers to take into account the possible repercussions of State policies on women? How are these repercussions measured and analyzed? Are women involved in decision-making at these levels and are their voices heard?

The BPFA quotes (Critical Area of Concern A) underscore that the status of poor women and how their work and livelihoods are affected positively or negatively, are outcomes not only of investments and interventions in women-specific programs, or in women-specific strategies or women's empowerment policies, but of the entirety of socio-economic planning and governance. Women, who have always been outside the macro-planning framework and relegated to the residual sector of social welfare in the earlier era, and then to the Women in Development (WID) paradigm in a later period, now have to be linked with the mainframe of planning as both subjects and participants. How certain policies might affect them has to be factored in while formulating the macro-economic framework of national Five Year Plans.

The restructuring of India's policy framework started in 1991, when the balance of payments crisis was taking place. The stabilisation and structural adjustment programs introduced the new era. The new policy umbrella was liberalization and a greater role for the market, which also meant the retreat of

the State from many of its earlier commitments. Introduction of similar regimes in countries of Africa and Latin America in the eighties had brought adverse effects to vulnerable groups including poor women and children. These have been studied, documented, discussed and debated (Cornia et al 1988).

Critical Policy Documents

A scan of the following policy and plan documents of the Government of India can provide some insights into the interface between macro-policy formulation and women's planning needs.

- The India Country Report for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995)
- The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007)
- The Mid Term Appraisal (MTA) of the Tenth Five Year Plan 2005
- The Beijing Plus Ten Report 2005

The India Country Report for the Fourth World Conference on Women 1995, was prepared at a time when an assessment of the impact of these reforms could not yet be made. Many of the new policies were still unfolding, and data on the effect of the change had not yet started flowing in. However, this report contains a chapter "Macro-Economic Policies and their Impact on Women". It acknowledges the critical role of public expenditure in the previous decades, especially in rural areas, and the commitment to social services that had contributed vitally to the quality of life indicators. While it examined the ramifications of the new economic changes and their possible impact on women, it was not clear at that point in time, whether women could use the new opportunities or whether their unemployment would increase, with women bearing the brunt disproportionately because of their household roles. There were apprehensions whether any possible reduction in social services – through contraction of government budgets – would further affect women's time allocation.

In dealing with these apprehensions, the Country Report raised some social and gender concerns. One related to the question whether, in a period of stabilization, when costs have to be borne, poor women could benefit from the social safety nets being put in position by the Government. The second concern was whether the benefits of the new liberalization regime, when they began to materialize, would necessarily trickle down to poor women. There was also concern that even if employment opportunities for women expanded in certain sectors such as export industries, services, cultivation of cash crops, and agri-business, women might increase their labor contribution, but with little effective control over cash income, which might be detrimental to their long-term interests. Also, there were possibilities that expansion of women's work in some sectors would be more than offset with declining employment in traditional sectors, which employ women in large numbers.

The Country Report noted that women under economic pressure are likely to resort to many difficult survival strategies, and that feminisation of work may be one of these. It could throw up challenges and opportunities, but empirical studies and data are needed for analysis before coming to any pre-conceived or definitive conclusion about the direction and impact of policy change (DWCD 1995a).

The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) devotes a chapter to the employment macro-perspective. Referring to the potential of the agriculture sector to create employment, it noted that for the past three decades, the food security perspective had guided the agricultural sector policies and related programs and this had ensured rich dividends in agricultural output and food prices. Employment was an incidental objective and except for areas benefited by rice and wheat production, growth of employment in agriculture had decelerated to a very low level in the nineties. "Having more or less achieved the objectives of food security, the development perspective towards agriculture needs to undergo a change ... The two important issues from the point of view of employment

creation in this sector are diversification of agriculture and removal of control on storage, movement and marketing of agricultural produce" (Planning Commission 2002a).

The Tenth Plan document also identified labor intensive sub-sectors within the agriculture sector, such as oilseeds, pulses (by switching from cereals), horticulture, farm management, agri-clinics, seed production, regeneration of degraded forests, watershed development, development of medicinal plants, minor irrigation, collection and cultivation of bamboo and wasteland development (Planning Commission 2002b).

The Mid Term Appraisal (MTA) of the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) devotes some space to the links between macro-economic performance and projections related to the sector of agriculture. "Agriculture was seen as the key sector of the economy for two important reasons: *to generate adequate employment opportunities and thereby reduce poverty*; and to provide the necessary level of domestic demand ... for sustaining the high level of growth in the longer term. But the experience of the first three years of the Plan suggests that both the overall growth target as well as the agriculture target will not be achieved ...in such a situation, *the employment and poverty reduction objectives are also likely to slip* and there is therefore a strong case for *measures that can mitigate the consequences* of non-attainment of the targets" (emphasis added) (Planning Commission 2005a).

A Gendered Framework?

The question that might be legitimately raised at this point is whether the macro-employment framework for the Tenth Plan has mainstreamed gender in its employment and poverty reduction projections and, within it, the needs of women in poverty. Conversely, the question might be raised, whether better achievement of the projections of agricultural performance would translate into a more favorable impact on women in poverty? Would the MTA of the Tenth Plan have then gone in for assessing the progress achieved in

poverty reduction and employment creation from a gender perspective?

Simply put, would the framework be designed to look at men and women differentially in their gendered situations and locations or would it be a continuation of the gender-undifferentiated approach to poverty? The answer to the first question seems to be in the negative, since the Tenth Plan (like the earlier Plans) looked at poor women only as a sub-set of the BPL households.

Since there are less than two years left for the Tenth Five Year Plan to conclude and the MTA has not raised the issue of the absence of this link, it is doubtful if the Tenth Plan period would be able to flag the issue. The preliminary exercises for the Eleventh Five Year Plan are about to begin.

Policy Gap: Women's Unpaid Work

One of the glaring gaps in the macro-policy making area is the complete absence of any reference to the unpaid work of women. The Time Use Survey 2000 (CSO) points out that macro-economic policy should include unpaid work in its scope of enquiry, formulation and appraisal to achieve greater efficiency in the economy. Making the links between the paid and the unpaid economy can lead to a better assessment of the effects of changes taking place in the global economy through trade liberalization, technology change, and rapid capital flows on men's and women's well-being and long-term economic growth, employment and welfare. Shifts in employment patterns, for example, have a significant impact on both the supplies of unpaid care services and/or the total work time spent by women. There is substantial evidence showing that the cost of childcare has a significant effect on women's labor force participation, with has important implications for minimum wage legislation and employment policies. A bigger and more comprehensive picture of the economy helps in policy making and monitoring of the economy as it provides insights into how social and economic

systems operate, and measures and explains the impacts of policies on households and people (CSO 2000a). Sometimes, evaluations of costs of a program/project involving women's work arrive at a conclusion that it is a 'low cost' or a 'no cost' program, but also add a rider that opportunity costs are disregarded in making this conclusion! (Danish Institute for International Studies 2004).

The global importance accorded to the status of women in the wake of the UN Decade for Women in 1976 did, however, signal the importance of women's income generation, though not the circumstances in which poor women work, or the nature of this work. The Tenth Plan chapter on employment perspective contains a separate but very useful paragraph on the importance of not only increasing work opportunities for women, but also of increasing the productivity of women farmers. It quotes the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) survey showing high rates of female employment and suggests increasing women's access to productive land by regularizing leasing and sharecropping of uncultivated agricultural land by women's groups. It also suggests wasteland development by women, and providing policy incentives to them for input subsistence agriculture, which will benefit household food security as well as create employment (Planning Commission 2002c). The MTA however, has not responded to this, nor assessed the performance. This is a serious omission.

Significantly, the gender-undifferentiated identification of labor intensive sub-sectors under the broad umbrella of agriculture, such as regeneration of degraded forests, watershed development, and wasteland development, are precisely some of the work 'sheds' where women are most active, but most invisible to planners. Insufficient attention to gender analysis has meant that women's contributions and concerns remain ignored by institutions as well by professional disciplines. As a result, many policies and programs may continue to contribute to inequalities between men and women. Where progress has been made in integrating gender

perspectives, programs and policy, effectiveness has also been enhanced (UN 1996e).

Women, Employment Creation and Poverty Reduction in 'Mainstream' Planning

While the potential of the agriculture sector for providing employment has been identified (on paper at least) in the current macro-perspective of planning, land-based economic activities have not figured in any major way in the poverty reduction program of the Government of India, launched in 1975. The only exception is dairying, where distribution of milch cattle became one of the main activities for increasing household income. The accent on self-employment in these programs and the dependence on bank credit have meant that poor women, who are mostly landless, were not eligible for assistance for land-based activities beyond the rearing of animals for income.

Poverty reduction (or poverty eradication or poverty alleviation as it is differentially termed) is a three-decades-old priority agenda in Indian planning. Every Five Year Plan sets targets for reduction of poverty and surveys take place at regular intervals to measure the current levels of poverty. This major program has also allowed some space for women by earmarking a percentage of the 'beneficiaries' as women belonging to the 'below poverty households'.

So, though there has been a special focus on women in poverty households even prior to 1995, these have been mostly by way of 'quotas', in the shape of the 'component' approach, more of affirmative action rather than of looking at differential effects of poverty on men and women and building interventions based on these differences. Intra-household gender relations have not been taken into account when designing these quotas for women. Issues of women in poverty moreover, have not been linked to development strategies in general or specific terms, just as poverty alleviation programs have not been linked to macro-economic planning. They are

more in the nature of an "add on", especially after the era of economic reforms, when they were visualized as part of the 'safety nets' that the international funding organizations were keen on seeing in place in the developing countries that had started the journey towards LPG.

Even as the deterioration in poor women's lives and working conditions in the last decade (1995-2005) has been acknowledged, it has not led to meaningful changes in the anti-poverty program regimen. Words such as "alleviation" or "reduction" of poverty (or 'anti-poverty') continue to be used in the old context. Higher agricultural performance may have contributed to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, but there is no consciously planned link with better outcomes for women in poverty, in terms of work or economic opportunities.

The Two Plan Documents

The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) has set a monitorable target of reduction of poverty ratio by 5 percentage points to be achieved by 2007 and by 15 percentage points at the end of the Eleventh Plan (by 2012). Other monitorable targets include providing quality employment at least to the addition to the labor force during the Tenth Plan period, and a reduction in gender gaps in wage rates by at least 50 percent by 2007 (Planning Commission 2005).

The MTA does not provide any information on the extent of actual reduction of poverty up to the mid-point of the Plan, but states, "While there is a consensus that there has been a decline in the incidence of poverty during the nineties, it is difficult to assess the extent of this decline". It relates this difficulty to the problem of lack of comparability of data arising from changes in methodology adopted by NSSO from time to time (Planning Commission 2005b). The target of 5 percentage points reduction of poverty ratio set in the Tenth Plan is not given a gender dimension. This type of targeting remains a symbol of the older gender-undifferentiated approach to

poverty, built on the belief in the 'trickle down' theory as applied to the household.

Thus, neither in the Tenth Plan nor in the mid-term review is poverty looked at differentially through the gender lens. The 'official' unit of measurement of poverty being the household, the only concession made to women in poverty is the affirmative action of reserving a percentage of benefits of anti-poverty programs for BPL women.

These special benefits for women in anti-poverty programs are almost the only references to women in the first part of the MTA's chapter on poverty elimination and rural employment. The only exceptions are a small paragraph on land rights for women and another on the role of women in natural resource management. This MTA chapter makes a statement that India's anti-poverty strategy has three broad strands – promotion of economic growth, human development; and targeted programs to address poverty. But having said this, most of this 25-page chapter dwells on the third strand of targeted programs only (Planning Commission 2005c).

Besides the self-employment programs, these targeted programs include those which provide wage employment to the needy, who are ready to do manual and unskilled work in and around their villages in a self-targeting mode. Since women are amongst the neediest, the proximity of the work site to their homes makes it an attractive proposition for them, and more women could therefore, benefit. But while 30 percent of these work opportunities are reserved for women, the concurrent evaluation of the Swarnajayanthi Grameen Rojgar Yojana (SGRY) quoted in the MTA, reveals that only 12 percent of the beneficiaries are women. The evaluation also reveals that the average number of days of wage employment generated is 30.52 days. (Planning Commission 2005d).

Feminisation of Poverty

Feminisation of poverty is however, referred to elsewhere in the MTA, in the chapter on women and children. The document

refers to it as “an important concern” and points out that women casual workers in urban areas are more vulnerable to poverty compared to male workers as well as workers – both male and female – in other employment categories, as brought out by the NSS 55th Round (1999-2000). While even this bare acknowledgement of the link between gender and poverty is welcome, there is no further discussion.

The chapter is more concerned with the “glaring gaps and inconsistencies” between the monitorable targets set for women and children in the Tenth Plan and the commitments made in the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) and the actual achievement on ground. To respond to this gap, it suggests the formation of a high-powered inter-ministerial review under the Prime Minister “to bring the Tenth Plan back on track regarding its commitment to gender justice” or alternatively, the setting up of a Prime Minister’s Mission on Women, Children and Development. (Planning Commission 2005e).

These monitorable targets relate to school enrolment, reduction in gender gaps in literacy and wage rates, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR). Universalization of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), the declining sex ratio and women’s reservation in Parliament are the other (non-targeted) concerns. Out of the many programs for women reviewed in this part of the MTA, none specifically addresses the issues relating to feminisation of work/agriculture/poverty. There are references to income generation and credit schemes such as Swayamsiddha, Swa-Shakti and Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK), which use the self-help group (SHG) mechanism to reach credit to needy women. But there is no information about their performance vis-à-vis women belonging to poverty groups such as women agricultural laborers, for example, even though Swa-Shakti is specially targeted to this group. In other words, their performance and contribution to the achievement of BPFA objectives on women and poverty have not been reviewed in the MTA (Planning Commission 2005f).

The Two Country Reports for Beijing - 1995 and 2005

The Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) has in fact, been raising the issue of feminisation of poverty since long. The India Country Report for Beijing 1995 has a full chapter devoted to this issue. It points out that the percentage of women among the extremely poor is disproportionately large, but that gender has not been mainstreamed into the complex of "development structures" to address those women who are doubly disadvantaged, being poor and being female. There have been efforts by the State to refine the methodology of measuring women's work by changing the key question in the 1991 Census questionnaire "Did you work at any time last year?" to include the clause "including unpaid work on farm and family enterprise", in an effort to reflect women's work participation in a better way. Yet, the Country Report 1995 does not echo or carry over this concern for women in poverty in the accompanying chapter on "Women's Contribution to the Economy – Focus on Women in Agriculture". In other words, feminisation of poverty is not linked with sectoral concerns in agriculture.

This is even more surprising because the data quoted in the 1995 report show a higher percentage of economically active women (78 percent) than economically active men working in agriculture (63 percent). Data also show *that almost half of rural female workers* (43 percent) are classified as female agricultural laborers and 37 percent as cultivators, whereas the data on rural male workers shows an almost reverse position (55 percent as cultivators and 24 percent as agriculture labor). There are also references in the chapter to landless families and to small and marginal holdings. The sub-sectors in which poorer women workers are more active such as livestock, fisheries, and forestry are also named. Even the fact that lack of women's entitlements (such as access to land, technology and credit) prevents their inclusion as 'beneficiaries' in major sponsored programs in these sectors is underscored, as is the basic fact that agriculture continues to

be a major field for women's employment (DWCD 1995b). Obviously, the Country Report of 1995 remains more of an advocacy document, strong on gender and poverty data and on gendered analysis, but not providing for the investments and inputs into programming.

Such fragmented approaches and unevenness in documenting women's status as workers and contributors are a good example of what the chapter on women in poverty in the Country Report refers to as failure to mainstream poverty and gender issues simultaneously into the complexity of development structures. It also shows how important (besides gender) socio-economic differentiation and disaggregation is to expose women's vulnerabilities. The chapter on women in agriculture is in fact, more concerned, at an operational level, with women farmers, with training and extension for them, and with group approaches to optimize the impact of research and extension on women farmers.

The most recent Beijing plus Ten Report (2005) has confirmed the apprehensions expressed in the 1995 Country Report for Beijing on the impact of the new economic policies related to globalization. It admits that an adverse impact of globalization on women's livelihoods, such as in agriculture, has been reported from different parts of the country. Women of small subsistence farming households, garment and textile workers facing competition after the phasing out of the Multi-Fibre Agreement, women displaced by new technologies from sectors such as construction - which had earlier absorbed large numbers of women as workers - are amongst those who are at risk. At the same time, urban and educated women have benefited from new opportunities for employment in avenues such as information technology. This differential impact of globalization on women of different groups underscores the vital importance of upgradation of skills to counter poverty and marginalization.

This Report shows that the Government response to this emerging trend of feminisation of poverty is restricted to

initiating programs in different sectors such as literacy, education, primary health care, safe drinking water and nutritional security to address women's needs. The Report states that these initiatives have an impact on reducing poverty by strengthening economic security and income generation of the poor. The key strategy is to organize self-help groups. The Kudumbashree program in Kerala is the State Poverty Eradication Mission launched in 1998-99 with assistance from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). It aims to eradicate absolute poverty from the State within a period of ten years. Again, as in the other reports, there is no data on the extent to which poverty stands eradicated through the micro-credit movement in the State of Kerala. The status of the program is reported only in terms of data on savings made and loans given (DWCD 2005a).

Self-Help Groups - the New Mantra

The last decade has witnessed an incredible growth in the number and spread of self-help groups (SHGs) dealing with income generation through micro-credit, the majority of which are women's groups. It has led to a strong public perception that it is an effective means of empowering women through savings and credit. The MTA stresses that poverty issues, such as lack of food, housing, potable water and employment can be addressed by forming strong organizations of women whom the Government can help in catalyzing, registering, providing seed money, and funding for training in legal awareness.

Admitting that the SHG strategy has increased women's work, the MTA warns that the micro-credit programs cannot afford to ignore the implications of women's compounded burden of carrying on both roles – productive and reproductive. It calls for a re-launch of a very focused and intense literacy campaign, especially for adolescents and young women, in the backward districts, which will bring the women together in a catalytic process (Planning Commission 2005g).

The Tenth Plan outlay for Swayamsidha (a recast version of the Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) has an outlay of Rs. 200 crores, meant for mobilizing women into SHGs, providing them training, capacity building, promotion of thrift and access to micro-credit. Swa-Shakti, another credit program for women, has an outlay of Rs. 75 crores during the Tenth Plan, besides funding from the World Bank and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The RMK has a Tenth Plan outlay of Rs. 148 crores. It extends credit to SHGs through the non-governmental organisation (NGO) route. While Swayamsidha has promoted more than 53,000 groups, benefiting more than 9 lakh women, Swa-Shakti has mobilized about 18,000 groups with 3 lakh women members. The MTA suggests (even while it sees the need for a shift in the approach to micro-credit for poor women) merging the various micro-credit and training schemes into one substantial program of SHGs for women. DWCD has also fixed targets in terms of coverage of blocks and number of groups to be formed for micro-credit schemes (Planning Commission 2005h).

Positive and Negative Features

The following questions have been raised in the context of SHGs and women's empowerment.

- To what extent do they reduce poverty?
- Who stands to benefit from SHGs?
- What needs to be addressed in order that SHGs can effectively respond to poor women's needs?
- What are the learning opportunities SHGs provide to women?

The strong and positive features of SHGs include the providing of space to women to come together collectively and work towards social and economic justice. But on the flip side is the risk of their being sucked into one agenda only – credit. Here, the ideology of the sponsoring organization – the government agency, the donor or the non-governmental organisation – is

crucial. State-sponsored SHGs do not provide services or inputs other than credit access. There is also a gendered perception that micro-credit is most appropriate for women. This is because women are viewed as disciplined, docile and responsible.

The way in which the SHG is designed to function as a group lacks movement towards collective mobilization of women. The centrality of credit can (and does) crowd out other options or possibilities, and limits the environment to one of saving, borrowing and repayment. Women do use the group mechanism to bring up other issues – social and rights-based - but there may be no proactive step in the program to encourage women to think for themselves.

While poor women do need credit, and SHGs have been largely successful in decreasing women's dependence on moneylenders, it is only one of the basic needs of women, and not the only solution. The general economic and social situation places women in extremely vulnerable positions in the fight for survival. SHGs are not designed to enable women to understand and negotiate patriarchy, unequal distribution of resources and other forces. The interventions do not address women needs as farmers or agricultural laborers. Most important, the poorest of the poor tend to be excluded, which has serious implications for the dalits, tribals and marginalized groups of women.

The centrality of micro-credit in programming for women should not absolve the State from its responsibility towards investing more in the poorly resourced social sector. Members of SHGs find themselves disseminating development messages and sustaining State action. They sit on committees carrying out activities and performing responsibilities that are an extension of their domestic roles. Political parties in the country have also used SHGs as vote banks.

What is needed is more investment in broad-based capacity building of SHG members. The State should provide more

information as well as learning opportunities for SHGs. Creation of SHGs by itself is not the end, nor is an instrumental view of benefit to women. The groups should have more inclusive agendas that provide more focus on gender and poverty issues (Nirantar 2004).

The MTA of the Tenth Plan critiques the Tenth Plan for emphasizing SHGs only as vehicles for savings and credit. It points out that the SHG strategy has increased women's workload and made them more vulnerable to stress. It suggests that the concept of SHG should be extended to mass-based organizations of women, the vast majority of whom are legitimately concerned with lack of food, housing, potable water and employment. The initiative taken by the Rajasthan Ekal Nari Sangathan (RENK), a 16,000 strong organization of low-income widows and separated women, who help each other to reclaim land rights and stop atrocities, is specifically mentioned as a model. Here, the MTA envisages a new model of SHG, more as an agency for building up the self-confidence and the knowledge base of women, rather than a conduit for credit and savings only (Planning Commission 2005i).

Conclusion

In conclusion, one may make the following statements.

- Looking at women and poverty differentially, through a gender lens, by the State is still confined to the conceptual realm. Where it is to be concretely translated, it is understood and interpreted as making special allocations within the existing stable of anti-poverty programs for BPL women and/or initiating the SHG movement.
- Macro-economic policies are not framed keeping poor women or women in general or women in agriculture in view, and neither are sectoral policies.
- Women's participation in designing and monitoring these policies is also negligible.

- Broad-based, sustained economic growth is not taking place.
- The structural causes of poverty are to be addressed, but are not. The strategies are actually aimed at *alleviating* poverty though they are understood as eradicating poverty. They are claimed to be successful to a certain extent, but gender-based inequalities are not getting reduced.
- The State, along with financial institutions, perceives micro-credit and self-help groups as the main strategy for poverty reduction. Much more data is needed to be made available by the State on the impact of SHG programs on women in terms of levels of poverty and changes in status. The indicators used to measure these changes also need to be clearly spelt out.



2. WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY IN AGRICULTURE AND ALLIED SECTORS

A wealth of research material is available on women's contributions to agriculture and related fields – both paid and unpaid, but mostly the latter. What do these findings say?

- In rural India, agriculture and allied sectors employ as much as 89.5 percent of the total female labor. Women work extensively in livestock production, forest resource use and fish processing. Women provide one half of the labor in rice cultivation. In the plantation sector, women are the crucial laborers. Depending on the region and the crop, women's contributions vary, but they provide pivotal labor, from planting to harvesting and post-harvest operations.

- The pattern of women's participation in the labor force varies across the country, depending on the geographic region, caste, socio-economic class and formal and informal sectors. No simple or uniform gender division of labor in crop production exists in the extremely diversified Indian context. In certain areas, women play key roles as seed selectors and seedling producers. Their knowledge of seeds and seed storage contribute to the viability and sustainability of agricultural diversity and production. As weeders, women contribute to farm management. They prepare and apply green and farmyard manure.
- Livestock plays a multi-faceted role in providing draught power for the farm, manure for the crops and energy for cooking, besides food for household consumption as well as the market. In animal husbandry, women have multiple roles, ranging from animal care, grazing, fodder collection, and cleaning of animal sheds to processing of milk and livestock products. In livestock management, indoor jobs are done by women in 90 percent of families, while management of male animals and fodder production are looked after by men. Given regional variations, women take care of animal production and account for 93 percent of total employment in dairy production. Depending on economic status, women perform the tasks of collecting fodder, collecting and processing dung and carrying it to the fields. Women prepare cooking fuel by mixing dung with twigs and crop residues. Though women play a significant role in livestock management and production, their control over livestock and its products is negligible. The vast majority of the dairy cooperative membership is male, with only 25 percent for women (DAH, 2004).
- Rural women work on a number of activities related to forest resources – gathering, production and management. They are the major gatherers and users of a much more diverse range of forest products than men. While men collect timber, women gather non-timber forest products. Large proportions of the population depend on these non-

timber products as their main source of livelihood. These production activities are managed in small-scale enterprises as well, in which women are largely involved. This includes basket, broom, and rope making, tasar silk cocoon rearing, lac cultivation, and oil extraction. Apart from fodder and fuel, women collect food, medicinal plants, building materials, material for household items and farm implements. It is the women who primarily collect sal and tendu leaves.

- The nature and the extent of women's participation in fisheries vary across the States (Box 3). Fish drying, curing and marketing, hand-braiding and net-mending are the main areas of women's involvement in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. Women are also involved in shrimp processing in these States. In addition, in Andhra Pradesh, women engage in mollusc and shell collection on seasonal basis along the coast line. However, marine fish capture is a man's domain. Among the mangroves of Bhitarkanika on the Orissa coast, both men and women fish in the fresh water estuarine areas. Men cast their nets and women and children catch fish with their hands. But fishing by boat in the flood tides is essentially performed by men. In contrast,

Box 3: How Many Fisherwomen?

At the national level, about half a million women participate in fisheries both in pre-and post-harvest operations, out of a total workforce of 1.2 million. The Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE) estimates that 25 percent of the labor force in post harvest activities consists of women, 60 percent in export marketing and 40 percent in internal marketing. The involvement of women in post-harvest activities is further categorized as those employed in the work force of the fish export processing industry, those who engage in micro-business as fish vendors, fish traders and in traditional small-scale fish processing activities.

Source: FAO (2003) "Report of the National Workshop on Best Practices in Micro Finance Programs for Women in Coastal Fishing Communities in India" Panaji Goa July 1-4 2003 FAO Fisheries Report No.724

women's participation in small-scale fisheries is very limited in West Bengal. Even ancillary industry which, in the other Indian east coast States is a women's domain, is dominated by men, as a relatively low number of days in a year is spent on actual fishing. In the fishing villages, fish drying/curing is performed by both men and women who do not belong to the fishing community. In coastal aquaculture, women are involved in prawn and seed collection to a very limited extent.

- Women play a key role in both land use and management by supplying inputs from the forests as fertilizer to the soil and fodder to the cattle. In Mizoram, women have the knowledge of animal ecology that male hunters acquire. Women-led movements for forest protection such as Chipko and Appiko have been sources of knowledge relating to matters such as conserving and maintaining the quality of water. Women in different areas of the country have varying degrees of involvement with water resources. In the island eco-system of Lakshwadweep, women are more conversant with the resources around their homes and along the reef and shore, while men go farther afield to fish and collect coconuts and are more knowledgeable about land, lagoon and sea.
- The nature and the extent of involvement of rural women in agricultural activities differ on the basis of the variations in the agro-production systems. The mode of female participation varies with the landowning status of the households, from managers to landless laborers. In overall farm production, women's average contribution is estimated at 55 - 66 percent of the total labor, with percentages much higher in certain regions. In the Himalayas, a pair of bullocks works 1,064 hours, a man 1,212 hours and a woman 3,485 hours in a year on a one-hectare farm, a figure that illustrates women's significant contribution to agricultural production.
- Women play a key role in the production of major grains and minor millets, illustrating their invaluable contribution

to national and household food security. In addition, women play a crucial role as food vendors and post-harvest processors of livestock and fishery products. They are the major buyers of family food, the primary providers of nutrition and the major decision makers in ensuring nutrition to the next generation. (<http://www.fao.org/sd/wpdirct/wpe0108.htm>)

This almost overpowering wealth of information culled out from many sources reveals the extent of women's involvement and contribution to the country's economy. It shows that there is hardly an area in the rural land and water-based livelihood sectors, which is not dependent on women's work to varying extents, depending on the geographic locale and other factors.

Women are also active at every point in the food chain and are often responsible for protecting the integrity of food and ensuring its wholesomeness and safety. (<http://www.fao.org/Gender/en/nutr-e.htm>)

The Invisibility of Women's Contributions

Most of this information remains at the level of facts, figures and statistics and does not translate into specific strategies for women in poverty or changes in existing methodologies of netting women's work and vulnerabilities. The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (2001) uses the term "economic empowerment" (along with an associated phrase "social empowerment") as a general strategy to ensure gender equality and equity. There is an inherent contradiction between the role and contribution of poor women to the economy and their marginalized status as poor and unpaid workers. In crisis situations, women's roles and contributions to household survival tend to be overlooked and at the most, taken for granted.

In a future where threats posed by the possibility of future disasters, fluctuating fish catches and encroaching development loom large before the fishing community, the continuing undervaluation of fisherwomen puts a question

mark on the survival of the community. "Fisheries development may be salvaged only if women's rights are taken seriously" says Nalini Nayak (Krishna Kumar, Asha 2005). (Box 4)

Box 4: The Tsunami and the Fisherwomen of Chennai

In the wake of the tsunami destruction in the coastal villages along the Chennai sea coast, rehabilitation efforts have been stalled by the marginalization of fisherwomen and their vulnerability. The tsunami has exposed the contradictions that make up the status of these women – economically essential, yet politically powerless, and excluded from economic decision-making. Apart from fishing, these women did everything else to support the households – processing fish, mending nets, caring for children and the elderly, and even arranging finance and loans from middlemen and money lenders for consumption and business. In the aftermath, when men feared to go to sea, it was the women who provided almost 100 percent of the household income for Chennai's 40,000 fishing families. They worked as domestic servants, boat painters, net menders, shop-minders and tailors.

In the first days after the tsunami struck, women's self-help groups were key to the relief and recovery efforts. Yet they remain second class citizens, with little credit for their work or input into decisions relating to rehabilitation. The temporary shelters put up by the Government were so far away from the coast that women found it impossible to travel the distance to reach the fish buying and selling points and still manage the household and care for the children and the elders. Women's membership of the fish workers cooperative has been opposed by the men and the Panchayat. It would have given them access to all the benefits that are now available to male members.

Source: Krishnakumar, Asha. June 2005 "Women's Vulnerability exposed by December Tsunami" <http://www.prg.org/template.cfm?section=PRB+template=conte24>

On the one hand, work does not translate into status, because of the nature of women's work, which renders it invisible and difficult to measure. More significantly, the unpaid work of women is seldom recognized, precisely because it is not

measured and recorded. On the other hand, there is now a general belief amongst policy-makers and planners that there are automatic connections between economic empowerment of women (through work) and enhancement of their status. In other words, it is assumed that women's greater involvement in economic activities, such as income-generation through self and waged employment will transform women's lives and empower them. This belief is uniformly extended to all categories of women – irrespective of socio-economic context. The harsh truth that needy women are already deeply involved in economic activities for their own and their household survival, but without commensurate returns, is seldom part of this thinking and planning – this is a major gap.

Even before Beijing, the Government of India (like most developing countries) had been influenced by the WID approach and accepted the need for women to be 'integrated' in development through planned interventions for economic activities. The space provided for women in anti-poverty programs is an outcome of this thinking. But most of these plans did not correlate with the reality on the ground. Without taking into account the traditional knowledge, skills and experience of the women and building on these, the tendency in many government programs is to teach new skills that are not based on the women's working milieu or their livelihoods. Certain crucial gaps such as the lack of access of women to resources, like entitlements to land, production credit, and technology needed to be given more attention, but were not. Production credit and titles to land still remain main barriers to the economic empowerment of women in agriculture. The other unrecognized but critical gap is the need for support services to enable women to combine household and community work with productive and paid work.

Urban biases of the program designers and planners are also responsible for inappropriate choices of vocational skills and training for women. State efforts to involve poor women (marginal workers, agricultural workers, subsistence farmers or workers, and share-croppers) in such new training and

income generation activities generally have the effect of adding to their work burden, but again, without proportionate return. Prepared on a distant drawing board, these plans and programs do not build on women's existing strengths and skills, nor fill in gaps in their existing capacities, nor make up for their work loads and levels of stress. Healthcare facilities are seldom tuned to women's working hours, nor are counseling services available. Productive losses because of women's own poor health are a neglected area, as is violence. The immense potential of translating and enhancing poor women's existing labor to more productive, remunerative and empowering work still remains untapped.

Women's Access to Land

India has 60 million landless households in addition to 250 million rural population belonging to households owning less than 0.2 hectares of land. Landlessness is by far the greatest predictor of poverty in India, even more so than caste or illiteracy (World Bank, 1997).

It is within this grim situation that rural women's land ownership status has to be seen and discussed.

"Mainstreaming gender concerns in agriculture will receive particular attention. ...the approach to rural development and land reforms will focus on the following areas ...recognition of women's right to land" (MOA 2000).

The UN has asked member countries to revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources. Among the actions recommended are legislative reforms to give women full rights to inheritance and to ownership of land (UN 1996f).

Women's lack of entitlements to the most basic resource of all – land – turns a woman farmer into a 'farmer's wife' and deprives her of the right to an identity that her work entitles her to. It blinds the policy maker to the need for capacity building for women, as well as scientific-professional

institutions to the need for providing them timely and adequate credit for land-based activities, and access to new and emergent technologies (Box 5).

While lack of access to productive resources in general is one of the disempowering aspects of women's lives, especially women of the poorer communities, the major resource for rural Indians is land. Women comprise a disproportionate share of the landless, because of age-old social and legal impediments. The current situation shows a tragic contrast, with more women engaged in agriculture than men, but with very little substantive access to land. Yet most of their labor is related to land and land-based activities. Improvement of women's status by providing economic and social security to them is hardly possible in this bleak scenario.

Three decades ago, the Committee on the Status of Women, while touring the rural areas in the country, had observed

Box 5: Farmers' Suicides - A Gendered View

It is only in the last two months that the suicides of women farmers are being counted as such. For several years, there have been large numbers of women farmers committing suicide. These have not been recorded as farmers' suicides for the simple reason that women are not counted as farmers. In the official and even in the societal understanding, a farmer is a male having a patta. No woman has that – at least in Andhra Pradesh and in most States; In the year 2001 alone, the number of women suicides in the district of Anantpur alone, coming from mostly farmers' backgrounds, was over 300 ... none of these suicides in official reckoning counts as a farmer's suicide. They are at best, suicides of farmers' wives. But most of the(se) women were farmers, who were very largely responsible for organizing and running the production work on their farms ... So if you are denied the minimal recognition of being a farmer, despite being so central to that production process, then a lot of other consequences automatically flow out of that" (Sainath, P. 2004).

Source: Sainath, P. 2004 "Gender Concerns and Food Security Issues in Rice Livelihood Systems" MSSRF

the steep decrease in the numbers of female cultivators in the previous decades (as evidenced in the Census figures from the 1950s) and a corresponding increase in the number of female agricultural labor. The Committee commented that all attempts to "scratch at the problem of rural poverty" were futile without the one measure that can help this asset-less class – land reform. No substantial improvement in the condition of women agricultural workers is possible without effective steps to redistribute land (MESW 1975).

Steps towards Land Reform

Even in Kerala and West Bengal, the only two States to have seriously undertaken land reform since Independence, women's legal rights have been neglected. While land reform has destroyed the class divide in Kerala, it has not touched the gender divide, because the reform process never entered the family. Women are left struggling to manage the family farm or business, when their men migrate abroad to seek employment. These women are hampered by lack of access to those resources to which ownership of land titles provide entry. (Swaminathan, Mina 2004)

"Traditionally, it was accepted that agricultural land would be inherited by sons even though in some States, the inheritance law did not stipulate such a provision. In many States, the tenancy laws provide for devolution of tenancy to male descendants and only in their absence, women can inherit, but then also to a limited extent. Hence it is necessary that States should amend their land and inheritance laws... There has been some progress in Southern and Central India. ...Many of the States have improved women's access to land and landed property. States like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have amended the Hindu Succession Act 1956 to formalize issues relating to property, including land. Some like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have provided that issues related to property, including landed property, would be dealt with in accordance with appropriate personal laws. However, serious anomalies continue to persist" (DWCD 2000).

“One of the commitments made in the National Common Minimum Program ... concerns women’s equal rights in ownership of assets like houses and land. Access to land could be through inheritance ... or through the market. The DWCD has requested State Secretaries to consider initiatives that could be taken in their respective States to promote effective land rights for women. The Government of Tamil Nadu has already taken steps ... The Comprehensive Waste Land Program initiated in 2002 allows the allotment of land to federations of self-help groups and self-help groups with a minimum of one year track record. Preference is given to exclusive women’s groups”(DWCD 2005)

The three main avenues through which women, potentially, can obtain land are through direct government transfers, through the market by purchase or lease, and through families, as inheritance or gifts. Government land transfers are mainly made to male heads of households and women’s market access is limited, since few have the funds to purchase or lease in land by themselves. Inheritance laws are unequal and are poorly implemented. Appropriate policies and action are needed on all three fronts. (Agarwal, Bina 2004)

The recent passage of the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005 has successfully addressed some of the basic gender inequalities in the original Act, one of which related to inheritance of agricultural land. The deletion of the discriminatory provisions in the 1956 Hindu Succession Act (Section 4 (2)) brings all agricultural land on par with other property and makes Hindu women’s inheritance rights in land legally equal to those of men across the States, overriding any inconsistent State laws. This can benefit millions of women dependent on agriculture (Agarwal, Bina 2005)

Direct Transfers of Public Land and Assets to Women

The Sixth Five Year Plan introduced policy changes to improve women’s entitlements to public assets, including land. The policy directives include allotment of revenue land, wasteland and ceiling surplus land on the basis of joint pattas in the

names of husband and wife and/or exclusive titles to women. At least 40 percent of land pattas are to be given to women and the remaining pattas in the names of husband and wife. The Seventh Plan and the National Perspective Plan for Women (1988 to 2000) also took up and reinforced these ideas.

Since land is a State subject, implementation lies almost exclusively with these agencies. Implementation on the ground has been uneven. More significantly, there is little public awareness of these policies and of their potential for women. Women themselves remain in ignorance of these policies and their entitlements under them. This lack of public education programs and awareness campaigns becomes apparent when women are questioned about the extent of their knowledge on their rights to land.

The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) Government of India Annual Report for 2000-01 shows that by 2000, States had distributed more than 5 million acres of ceiling surplus land and over 14 million acres of wasteland to selected beneficiaries. Men received title to the vastly greater part of this land because they were deemed to be the heads of households or the cultivators of the land. The Ministry reported having approximately 1.2 million acres of ceiling surplus land left for distribution (MRD, 2001). Even when women were in fact, heads of households, title was often given to a male family member (Gupta, Jayoti 2002; SDD-FAO).

The Reality on the Ground

A study of several States conducted under the auspices of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration's (LBSNAA) Center for Rural Studies at Mussoorie found that in UP, none of the rural households surveyed (in two districts) understood the meaning of the phrase "joint pattas". They expressed their ignorance of the government directives that land would be allotted in women's names.

Neither did they know of a single case in which government land had actually been allotted to a woman individually or

on joint patta basis. The UP Government had issued directives to all district magistrates to allot government land under Section 126 and 198 of the Zamindari Abolition Act. In other words, these were statutory instructions and not just administrative guidelines. The underlying intention was that it would help to improve the socio-economic conditions of women and children and reduce poverty. The study also found large gaps in the women's knowledge on the laws of succession applicable to their own communities. Only a little more than half the respondents were aware of laws of inheritance of agricultural land that were applicable to them.

In Orissa, the study found that payment of compensation for land acquired from female heads of households often found its way to middlemen who invariably cheated the women of their money. In other cases, the money was paid solely to the male heads of households; the wives did not get a share. On paper, Orissa had issued its first directive on grant of joint land pattas as far back as 1989. In October 2002, the Government of Orissa further directed that 40 percent of the Government wasteland allotted for agriculture, ceiling land and bhoodan land may be allotted to widows, unmarried women, victimized women and women living under the poverty line, 'as far as practicable'. But the study team could not get any consolidated information about the actual progress achieved. Even when the team found some evidence of title transfers on joint patta basis in a few places, the local officials told them that they had started it on "experimental basis," even though the directives were almost two decades old!

Even in landowning families, where greater awareness and knowledge is presumed, the absence of women's names in the land records is a common feature. Generally only men's names are listed and women's names often go by default in the ownership or possession columns. The Government of Assam took a policy decision (as a part of its Land Policy of 1989) to include the name of the wife in settlement pattas. This marked a complete departure from the earlier position, which did not even mention women by name. The State

Government followed this up by issuing patta passbooks with specific columns for naming shareholders of the property. Though the implementation of these directives leaves much to be desired, it remains as an example of how new policies of land ownership accompanied with structural changes in basic-record keeping can lead to positive change in women's lives (Centre for Rural Studies LBSNAA 2004).

Thirty four families were given 34 acres of ceiling surplus land in 1983 by the Orissa Government for a social forestry program. When the women raised casurina seedlings on the entire land, they started getting threats from vested interests in the area, who wanted to grab the land and the trees. The 34 families were then on the verge of losing the land and the fruits of their labor. The local law enforcement officials actually sided with the groups attempting to grab the land. Women are generally ignorant about laws relating to land rights and there is no effective communication system to channelize the information to them (CWDS 1993).

West Bengal issued instructions requiring government land to be issued jointly in the names of husbands and wives, or to women individually, in 1992 "to the extent possible" 14 years after the land distribution program began. These instructions did not require retroactive application of the policy, as a result of which joint titling was not a requirement for the majority of land distributed. Officials did not implement the new instructions uniformly even after its adoption (SDD/FAO).

The above shows a picture of almost complete lack of monitoring by both Central and State Governments of the implementation of the policy directives on access to land by women. Although in the total picture, the quantum of government land available for allotment is miniscule, it is still a valuable asset as well as a strategic advocacy tool to further women's land rights. There are still a number of implementation issues to be sorted out at ground level, such as the terms of lease or allotment and the convergence of other productive inputs.

The Role of Intermediary Organizations

Where intermediary organizations step in to help women's groups to access land, using the same State-provided entitlements, the story can be very different (Box 6).

Box 6: The Story of the Vanlaxmi Tree Growers' Cooperative

Initiated with Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) support in Mehsana district Gujarat, this approach has some novel features added to the basic model of direct transfers of Government land to women. Though SEWA started its activities as an urban-based trade union of women, it now has 2.19 lakh women agricultural laborers, small and marginal farmers as members, with identities criss-crossing these categories. The mediation of SEWA between the Government and the women provides much-needed support to the women. The second feature of this initiative is that, in keeping with SEWA philosophy, the women get mobilized into groups for greater strength and bargaining power as well as more effective planning for production activities, so as to achieve economic security.

After SEWA mobilized the women, it helped them to get both revenue land as well as government wasteland allotted to them. The administrative procedures took long, as the legal position was very complicated, with different laws containing contrary positions. Cooperative law required ownership of land by the members as a pre-condition for forming a cooperative society, whereas the revenue law required the reverse. It took two and a half years to sort out the issues and finally it was registered as a tree growers' cooperative rather than an agricultural cooperative. Throughout this waiting period, SEWA played a supportive and handholding role, providing legal, technical and information inputs to help the organization to stand on its feet. Finally, the land was allotted on a 15-year lease.

The members of this cooperative were women landless laborers who had seen their chances of building land-based sustainable livelihoods dwindling on account of rapid industrialization, reduction in water table by excessive irrigation from borewells and loss of their own land and assets. Now, with an organizational base, the women took up scientific agriculture with the

collaboration of research and technical institutions - using new techniques such as drip irrigation, rainwater harvesting, and nitrogen fixation, as well as using new equipment like power tillers. The organization has become a licensed seed distributor of the Gujarat State Seed Corporation. The women have been able to rejuvenate the economy of the whole area, which had been degraded by over-use. Today it stands as a model of how the landless poor can successfully implement collective agriculture

Source: Nanavati, Reema. "Organising Agriculture Women Workers: SEWA's experience" SEWA 2004.

The role of intermediary organizations can be very significant in enabling women, through various mechanisms, to access private land as well. Landless dalit women in Medak district Andhra Pradesh, organized into sanghams, were able to lease privately owned land that was degraded and lying unutilized, through the support and agency of the Deccan Development Society (DDS). The community organization program of DDS mobilized the women into sanghams with the objective of achieving economic self-reliance, by helping them to lease land on a sustained basis. The sanghams entered into lease arrangements with the landowners and details of lease rates and period of the lease-in period were mutually discussed and agreed upon. Both sides benefited from the arrangement, the landowners from the rental/leases and the land improvements – and the women from the fruits of their investment in labor, by increased land productivity and food security. The women also benefited from the low lease rates. The legal framework in the Telengana area lays down a minimum of five years for tenancies – with rent set at a maximum ranging from three to five times the land revenue. The women were satisfied with the arrangements and reported increases in both household and food security.

In concrete terms, members of the sanghams get the required number of wage days, food grains, fodder for their cattle and leafy green vegetables. They get 70 kilograms of food grains

Box 7: The Remarkable Women of Medak

Half a dozen village women took us to some lush green fields which they are cultivating. 28 dalit women, both Hindu and Muslim, have been assisted by the Scheduled Castes Commission to consolidate 24 acres of land. They are now growing about 11 crop species on this land, some like jowar with several varieties. The cultivation mix and rotation is highly sophisticated, designed to maintain the fertility of the soil without having to use chemical fertilizers, to ward off pest attacks without having to use pesticides, to optimize the productivity of biomass including grains and fodder - and even to provide distraction for small children that the women have to bring along with them during agricultural operations! The strategy has been so successful that neighboring farmers, some of them very large land-owners who had once converted to chemical-intensive farming, have requested the women to help them switch back to organic farming so that the natural fertility of their soils can return (Kothari, Ashish 2002)

Source: Kothari, Ashish. "The Remarkable Women of Medak" Janmanch January 2002.

and 25 kilograms of pulses per member working in an acre of leased land in a year. Other positive features of the program include collective decision-making by the women, irrigable land not being kept fallow, and members working together in a spirit of cooperation. Women have decided collectively not to cultivate commercial crops and to apply farmyard manure in a big way. The members are assured of getting 10 varieties of traditional food grains (Rao, Rugmini 2005). (Box 7)

Women from very poor dalit families with support from DDS set up village grain banks to provide food for the village communities, to cover the lean season when people face hunger. The initiative came from the women in the sanghams who wanted to work towards increasing food production in their own fallow land, and set up grain banks that would reach all the poor in the village. 1765 women spread over thirty villages in the Zaheerabad region started the venture

and 800 women joined them later. They were the most vulnerable to hunger. Started in 1994 for a five-year period, the program still continues with their own funds and some donor support. Grain banks have been set up in 32 villages, with the poorest families getting access. Wealth rankings were carried out to identify genuine beneficiaries to access the grain banks. The grain banks have challenged the government public distribution system, where food is stored in granaries while millions go hungry (Rao, Rugmini 2004)

Several of the DDS groups of women went on to buy land through a land purchase program of the State-run Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation (SCSTDC) and reported that their experience with leasing helped to build their farming and farm management skills and their confidence to pursue the land purchase opportunity (SDD-FAO). The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Corporations in various States have been facilitating access to land through subsidized land purchase for many years. Such land purchases for the landless dalits and adivasis is a strategy for enhancing the quality of livelihoods. Eligibility is restricted to the landless BPL belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST). Andhra Pradesh has the longest running program, followed by Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Agencies such as NABARD and the State Bank of India have also adopted small land purchase programs. In Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the land purchased under the program is required to be registered in the name of the women alone.

Limited research done by the Rural Development Institute (RDI) in Andhra Pradesh found that a landowner who is aware of the program and wishes to sell his land usually initiates the process. Defects noticed in the program include failure to target the neediest, lack of technical assistance back-up, absence of an integral component to improve the land, and the overall implementation being landowner-driven rather than by beneficiary demands and needs (SDD-FAO).

From Sharecroppers to Cultivators

The NGO ADITHI's Mahila Vigyan Kendra (Women's Science Center) in Muzaffarpur district Bihar is ADITHI's response to the existential realities of the poor Scheduled Caste women of the Bhusura area. Large-scale migration of men to north-west India and other areas for work, leaves the women responsible for a range of farming tasks, from transplanting to harvesting on land that their sharecropper husbands had earlier been tilling on 'batai' or 'mankap' (local tenancy arrangements) basis. Women now had to work as the 'invisible' yet real sharecroppers and had also to sustain the family with very little cash income. While the men and the landlords invariably bargained and fixed up the terms and conditions for undertaking batai or mankap before the former migrated annually, the women found that the produce from it provided family food security for only half the year. The women therefore, wanted other options.

ADITHI, after a period of trial and error, introduced a cash lease system for land and for animals in place of the current sharecropping system. A viable mix of activities, including plantation of trees, nurseries for saplings, and processing of natural resources was introduced. This broadened the options for women and minimized the risks. One hundred Scheduled Caste poor women formed groups and leased land from local landlords for three years' cultivation. ADITHI ensured that all ten groups were provided with technical, financial and organizational assistance for crop planning, cultivation and marketing. An evaluation showed that the productivity levels of paddy had increased, the physical and social confinement of women had reduced, group savings, loan disbursement and repayment had improved and systematized.

In addition to helping women in leasing in land, ADITHI helped 100 fisherwomen from four villages – who had articulated the same need for 'other options' – to lease out 100 acres of pond from the government agencies for ten years. With the help of a commercial bank, the women received

technical training, helping them to assume responsibility both for feeding the fish and for ensuring that stealing and poisoning of fish did not take place. Further examples of 'other options' that ADITHI was able to find for the women included bee keeping, leatherwork, carpentry, and low-cost housing, all of which answered the same felt need of the women, in a situation where farming activity could not ensure year-round household food and economic security. ADITHI faced major constraints, such as the incidence of natural calamities, especially floods – endemic to North Bihar – compounded with lack of insurance cover; lack of infrastructure such as irrigation facilities, agricultural equipment and storage capacity, all of which made the viability of such projects problematic. The lack of insurance coverage still remains a major deficiency.

In addition to seeing it as a gender and poverty issue, ADITHI has flagged the problems of women sharecroppers also as a major challenge to increasing agricultural productivity in the country. With increasing feminisation of agriculture, the skewed ownership of landholdings and the high incidence of absentee landowners, the burdens of livelihood and survival fall unequally on women of particular groups who are poor, have low social status, lack entitlements and access to productive inputs, organizational back-up and technical knowledge, but keep on working on land with no social or economic security. ADITHI points out that sharecropping agriculture provides a large number of livelihoods, but is essentially a loss-making activity, though it provides some food grains for the family to survive for part of the year. The need for better interface between farming and other types of rural livelihoods for such categories of women comes out very clearly. (Sharma, Sujata undated)

Alternatives to Sharecropping

Sharecropping is legally banned in most State land statutes, except under certain conditions. These legal orders however, have little social sanction - there are no better alternatives for

sharecroppers within agriculture alone. ADITHI asks for a better package of services to be designed, (with sharecropping as the main activity) and for attitudinal changes on the part of State agencies to enable them to recognize the importance of sharecropping, and that even landless women can be farmers. It also asks for more attention to be accorded to the gender division of productive and reproductive labor, the present status of which is quite disadvantageous to women. At present, State agencies do not accord priority to the development needs of large numbers of people dependent on non-viable sharecropping agriculture. They look at them as poor, underemployed or as oppressed castes, but not with respect to their primary occupations (ADITHI undated).

An umbrella project titled the "Government of India - United Nations Development Programme (GOI-UNDP) Food Security Program" implemented through Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) provides women's groups' access to croplands through long-term lease of dry land. There are three women-specific sub-programs under the umbrella, being run in Andhra Pradesh (sustainable dryland agriculture), Orissa (strengthening natural resource management), and UP (women farmers for food security). The projects provided flexible funding to women for purchase of land either individually or as a group. Funds are also provided to them to repay loans to moneylenders to get their land back, provided the fresh registration is done in the names of the women or in the joint names of husband and wife. The projects sought to get the support of the men in these families to the proposed action and were able to get it in many cases. It is important to see to what extent women have been able to release lands mortgaged to money lenders and to what extent the released land could either be registered jointly in the names of women and men or exclusively in women's names. Though such cases were few, they did mark an important beginning.

But there were negative outcomes as well, such as men choosing to leave the land with the money lenders rather than

face the 'humiliation' of transferring it to women's names; cases of land transferred to women's names being fewer than cases of joint registration; more cases of transfer of land of poor quality than of good land to women's names; and the question of who would inherit the land after the women remaining undecided. Problems arose with banks, district officialdom and local government officials. Banks would refuse funding for collective leases; funds were not forthcoming for land-based activities or for marginal lands; local officials were reluctant to register land in women's names (Burra, Neera 2004). The struggle is an uphill one, with slow and limited progress.



3. SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

BPFA mandates that women should be enabled to benefit from an ongoing acquisition of knowledge and skills beyond those acquired in youth. This concept of life-long learning includes formal education and training as well as informal learning, embracing volunteer activity, unremunerated work and traditional knowledge (UN 1996g).

Unskilled Women Workers in an Era of Globalization

Reporting on the impact of lack of skills, training and education on the quality of women's work, Government of India points out that women constitute the largest group of unskilled workers, who are found concentrated in the informal

economy as casual or piece rate workers. While liberalization has improved market access and labor participation in a number of export-led sectors and industries, automation and technological advancements have adversely impacted unskilled workers. In view of the pace at which technology and markets are advancing today, it is crucial that women be given all opportunities to undergo skill training and skill up-gradation in new and emerging sectors (DWCD 2005aa).

One of the basic constraints to providing opportunities to women to undergo skill training/up-gradation of skills is the abysmally dismal picture of their levels of basic education. The Tenth Plan describes the country's performance in the field of education as "one of the most disappointing aspects of India's developmental strategy" (Planning Commission 2002e). The justified anxiety of the State over poor school enrolment, retention and learning achievement has pushed the question of adult literacy, especially female adult literacy, out of focus. The snowballing effect of the last five decades of educational under-achievement has resulted in a huge backlog of female adult illiteracy. This has not only colored our general perceptions of women in agriculture as illiterate (and poor) but also prevented the emergence of a more dynamic approach to the question of skill up-gradation.

Images Old and New

Conventional images of women workers in the unorganized and informal sectors of work in India still persist. These are created and recreated by the media, of women hammering or cutting stones, standing knee-deep in water transplanting paddy, moving on construction sites with heavy loads on their heads, winnowing the harvest, and carrying home stacks of firewood. It is presumed that these women are working to their full capacities and potential. Not so very long ago, even these images looked fresh, strange and new, as women were not looked at as workers at all. What they did was not considered as work and hence the media had also ignored them. Only women who worked in offices, hospitals, schools, shops, and telephone exchanges were understood to be

women workers. A memorable snapshot of large numbers of women busy working on building a road near a board showing "Men at Work" says it all. (Box 8)

Box 8: Invisible Women Workers

When a woman official heard that the Ela Bhatt Commission members (National Commission on Unorganised Women Workers and Women in the Informal Sector) wanted to meet poor working women in the unorganized sector, she said, "There are no women in any unorganized sector in our State. There are no groups of women who are suffering from any health hazards". Then the Commission members had to probe, "Are there any women in the rural areas who go to the forests to collect firewood? Do any women in the rural areas have cattle"? She said, "Of course. There are many women doing that kind of work"

Source: SHRAM SHAKTI Report of the National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector 1988a.

In the last three decades, the work and presence of these once invisible laboring women have intruded on the national consciousness and now, in turn, is in danger of being stereotyped, as a set of static images.

The general public as well as public agencies associate lack of literacy and skills, knowledge and technology with these women. Drudgery, backbreaking and repetitive work, long hours, lack of modern skills and learning consign them to the bottom of the pyramid, and the discriminatory wage system is often justified on this account.

But perceptions about women and work are also slowly changing with the passage of time – and most of all, the change is taking place in the minds of the women themselves, especially the younger women. As the informal sector is getting acknowledged as a major 'sector' in the country (in terms of the sheer numbers), women are also getting organized, creating forums and platforms for negotiation. They use these opportunities to make demands on many issues, including

access to better skills, to information, knowledge and technology.

Next to equal access to education for women and eradication of women's illiteracy, BPFA puts highest priority on women's access to vocational training, science and technology and continuing education. BPFA responds to the situation in developing countries (like India) by recommending recognition of non-formal educational opportunities for girls and women, as the formal system is able to reach only a tiny fraction of the population (UN 1996h)

In agriculture, BPFA lays stress on the promotion of women's central role in food and agricultural research, extension and education programs as well as on increasing training in technical, managerial, agricultural extension and marketing areas (including fisheries) to increase income-generating opportunities for women (UN 1996i)

The Constraints to Skill Development

As new types of work emerge in response to new labor demand in the country, new skills are needed; and as women workers seek identity and dignity, one of their demands is the opportunity to move to better work by enhancing their skills. Women in the informal economy do not have easy access to newly emerging employment opportunities as they do not have the skills, and there are no opportunities to meet the market demand by learning or upgrading. In India, perhaps more than in most countries, there is a division of workers at highly unequal skill levels. At the upper end, there is an array of sophisticated skills, especially after liberalization; and at the lower end, workers tend to learn their skills from each other or from within their families. They tend to have a level and type of education which offers them very little in terms of learning, and almost nothing in terms of employment. There are very large educational disparities that exist between these two levels, both by education and by technical skills. (Sinha, Shalini and Jhabvala, Renana 2006).

In spite of the investments made in school education, especially for girls, Census 2001 figures show heavy drop-out of girls at primary and especially at middle levels of schooling. Most formal courses of technical and vocational training need at least a high school or a secondary school certification. An overwhelming majority of girls and young women today are not qualified to enter these institutions. (Box 9). Not surprisingly, the women who register in employment exchanges are mostly educated. In 2002, nearly 75 percent of the total women on the live registers in the employment exchanges were educated. The number of such women is 107 lakhs, about a quarter of the total number of those registered. (MOL 2004).

Box 9: Unemployable

Uneducated unemployment is the major concern in India. Being unemployable is more serious than being unemployed. Only 5 percent of the persons in the age group of 20-24 years have access to vocational training in India as compared to 28 percent in Mexico and 96 percent in Korea. India's problem is not lack of employment but lack of employable skills. Skills create employment and self-employment opportunities.

Source: Devakanni, S. "Uncommon Opportunities: a Road Map for Employment, Food and Global Security" WFP/NCR 2004

About 50,000 women receive training in Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), including exclusive women's ITIs, and women's wings in general and private ITIs. (MOL, 2005) Government admits that compared to the phenomenal expansion in technical education facilities in the country, the participation of girls in the program has not kept pace, in spite of special efforts, such as conversion of boys' polytechnics to co-educational facilities, along with increase in hostel facilities. The National Vocational Training Institutes for Women (as well as Women's ITIs) cater largely to skilled and semi-skilled job market in industry or to the demand for jobs as instructors, besides avenues of self-employment in these

trades. The program of Community Polytechnics has a focus on women and other weaker sections, where science and technology applications and skill-oriented non-formal training aim at improving rural and community development. Though the Government reports that women account for 43 percent of the total number of 'beneficiaries', there is no information as to how many of them are working in agricultural and allied sectors (DWCD 2005bb).

Looking at the availability of vocational training institutions for women in the country, the inescapable conclusion seems to be that there are no dedicated facilities for training women in agriculture. Existing facilities cater to a tiny minority of educationally qualified youth who aspire to enter the formal job market.

Existing facilities for training in agriculture available at college/University level respond to a very different kind of demand. There is a basic mismatch between the kind of work that women in farming and allied sectors actually perform in their day-to-day lives in primary sectors such as agriculture, fisheries, and dairying, and the type of training opportunities being provided by these formal institutional training centres in the country today.

The Agricultural Universities cater to educated and better-off sections of men and women, who generally enter at managerial and technical levels in the professional cadres of agricultural establishments. There may be no tailor-made solutions in training for farm women working on the land at the macro-level. What is available are programs aimed at enhancing women's economic security through income generation, responding through individual programs to the challenges presented by the gap between women's existing levels of knowledge and what is needed according to program requirements. The following examples show that attaining skills need not be equated with formal education, or with qualifications and certificates obtained from professional institutions or State agencies.

Tailor-Made Training Programs for Women

Many departments and Ministries of the Government of India and the State Governments include *short-term training* as part of their programs of income-generation for women. Such training is largely informal and not delivered in institutional settings or in a blueprint format with a specific curriculum. The training is generally tailor-made to suit the choice of skills and vocations that are part of the income-generation program. The status of such training programs lies in between the formal structured courses of institutions such as the Industrial Training Institutes for Women, and the informal apprenticeship and learning experiences which village women go through within the family, household and community settings.

A very old example is that of the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) started in 1953, which organizes programs in rural, backward and urban slum areas through voluntary organizations in both 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' trades. DWCD is another agency that runs many such training programs. It launched a program in 1987 that provides skills and updated knowledge to poor and assetless women in livelihood sectors such as agriculture, dairying, small animal husbandry, handlooms, and sericulture.

DWCD has benefited nearly 5 lakhs women under this program through various projects in different states. The latest Annual Report (2004-05) shows that the women are not only given skill training to enhance income, but are also given non-formal education, legal literacy, education, gender sensitization, and gender awareness. Some of the 'non-traditional' trades that women are taught in these programs include medical transcription, electronics, and computer programming (DWCD 2005aaa). Such programs need to be evaluated in terms of knowledge and skill content as well as in the teaching methodologies used, so that the possibilities of wider replication and outreach can be explored for greater employability. They also need to be publicized more widely.

Innovative Training Strategies

Some programs have specifically addressed the training needs of women working in agriculture from the extension perspective and also enabled the training to reach a wider audience. The objective was to enhance the performance of women as agricultural producers and increase productivity and income from their farms. The training is offered in simple agricultural skills and technologies, such as soil testing and preparation, seed selection and testing, preparing compost, vermi-composting, bio-pesticides and bio-pest control. The basic training sessions were for less than a week and the trainings were village-based in most of the projects. The village women came from small and marginal farmer households. The four Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) – funded projects offered training in simple agricultural skills and technologies focusing primarily on crop production. They were mainly seed selection, seed testing, seed treatment, compost preparation, organic pesticides and pest control (Danish Institute for International Studies 2004).

In Tamil Nadu, the project identified 600 of the trained women as link workers, with communication skills training, who then trained other farming women in agricultural techniques. Some of the link workers then started offering training for payment to any farm women who were interested. To be selected as link workers, women had to show potential as master trainers and had also to accept other work-related demands, such as travel from home. Wider exposure and interactions provided in the link workers' training included attending district meetings with officials from the Collectors' offices, bankers and community organizations. This developed self-confidence in the women and gave them greater ability to take decisions related to their own lives. One of the women link workers said, "I feel very good, because now people call me a teacher".

The innovation of village women link workers was part of the project design in other programs relating to rural livelihoods. In integrated livestock projects, a man and a woman were both identified for training in basic veterinary

skills, such as vaccination, de-lousing and de-worming for poultry and small ruminants. In certain cases, a husband and wife team was selected as link workers, while in others, individuals were chosen. In one particular State – Orissa – the project decided to recruit older women (including widows) as link workers, but this did not succeed for health and social reasons. On the whole, the link worker concept succeeded in reaching the objective of making basic veterinary assistance available to all villagers on a regular and affordable basis. In spite of their smaller numbers, the women did succeed in playing their non-traditional roles, both inside and outside their villages. However, the gender-stereotyped division of labor that prioritized women's household responsibilities over other work continued to stand as a deterrent to making women more effective link workers in many places.

Some projects have trained women as hand pump mechanics, power pump operators and sanitary masons. These are considered 'non-feminine' jobs and there are hurdles in their getting social acceptance by the village community and of the women getting paid regularly for their services. But still, there have been a few cases in which the trained women have become master trainers, providing training to other women. In one case, a woman master mason and her woman assistant function as a team, commanding the market rate for services, and have constructed over 400 latrines and taken on other jobs connected with house construction. A trained woman hand pump mechanic now trains other women as well as men, and does not accept contracts that give her less than the market rate. Her quality of work ensures constant calls on her time. Her comment is, "Being a hand pump mechanic is even better than being a Gram Panchayat President, because our skills will last while the job of President will not". The tool room projects, implemented in six centres in the country, provide state-of-the-art technical training to women in traditionally male-dominated trades, with the help of supports such as hostels for girls, links with students in girls' high schools to raise knowledge and awareness of the project and developing courses within the trades specially designed for

women, such as electronics and communication engineering (Royal Danish Embassy 2001).

Drudgery Reduction and Technology

The theme of drudgery reduction through the applications of new and emerging technologies finds place in agricultural programs for women in research as well as in extension. A large number of improved tools are now available that can be used at different stages of the agricultural cycle – ranging from hand or pedal operated cleaners, solar dryers, and metallic storage structures, to power operated mills. But improved tools and equipment need provision of better skills and training to women. To transfer skills to farm women, extension workers (both men and women) have to be specially trained and oriented. Depending on the proportionately yet-miniscule numbers of women extension workers is not practical for achieving substantial success. The other constraint is that of women's time availability – a running theme in this paper – especially women working in subsistence sectors. More significantly, ample instances have been pointed out of new technologies not bringing any significant change in lightening women's drudgery. In many cases, these technologies have resulted in enhanced risk potential. There is also the 'displacement' effect of some of the new technologies, where women find themselves substituted by machines (National Commission for Women 2004a).

An MOA publication provides some insights on the training interventions made through the efforts of women who are already working on land, but did not have adequate skills, information or know-how. The publication gives separate details of training in sub-sectors such as crop husbandry, floriculture, apiculture, animal husbandry, poultry, vermi-composting and food processing. The publication recounts not only the individual women's successes but also the successes of women's groups/mahila sanghams/self-help groups. The barometer of success in these success stories is higher production from the land, resulting in higher income. Nearly

150 stories of successful women (including women's groups) are described. The stories invariably show how one trained woman is able to train other women in the village or to motivate the entire village to adopt improved practices. (Department of Agriculture and Cooperation 2002).

The large variety of activities that women carry out in the primary and subsistence sectors related to land and agriculture makes the creation of a viable and effective set of vocational training and skill development programs a truly formidable challenge. The diversity of such activities across different agro-climatic regions makes it doubly difficult to grapple with the institutional and structural features of such a set-up. Women of these groups, with their low levels of formal education, learn their skills as they grow up within the family and community. Seed storage and preservation, use of natural pesticides, traditional crafts and skills related to water storage, purification and usage, herbal medicine, and health care are examples of skills that women (and men) acquire by imbibing them from a young age, within the family or community. But the market needs workers who can adapt, refresh and upgrade, in response to the need for upward mobility of the work force.

Responding to New Demands

At the same time, the learning and teaching environment and the methodologies used should be relevant and appropriate to women's needs. SEWA found that training for cattle care, including artificial insemination, was taught mainly to men through written materials, though it was the women who looked after the cattle. In Pakistan, the AURAT Foundation found that information on improved agricultural techniques was available mainly to men through the extension service. They developed a radio program aimed at transferring agricultural skills to women, who then came to the listening centers all over the country. (Sinha, Shalini and Jhabvala, Renana 2006). These initiatives show the way forward. Yet a futuristic perspective demands that we plan effectively at national as well as local levels, not only in terms of increasing

women's productivity through knowledge and communication, but also to foster a feeling of ownership of such programs by village communities of women (and men) such as can be glimpsed in the success stories quoted. Gender analysis should be an integral part of such planning. The increasing trend of female literacy in the rural areas should be taken advantage of, so that skills and capacity building in agriculture-related sectors become an essential part of all vocational training programs for women.

It is necessary to have a much broader definition of skills than obtains at present, in order to first identify skills that people have, all of which may not be marketable in today's situation. It is necessary to do this in a localized and decentralized manner, dividing the skills by levels. Women's skills should be classified separately and with more care, as these are often not regarded as skills – embroidery, paddy transplanting or knowledge of herbs, for example. Directories of skills can then be prepared at the local/Panchayat level and a system of upgrading these skills should then be worked out – the measurement of the 'supply side'. Mapping the 'demand side' – the employment opportunities – is not an easy task, as there are few instruments available for such measurement and besides, large shifts in demand are taking place. Even within the formal sector, there have been changes in demand. Many jobs that were earlier performed in the formal sector are now outsourced to firms in the informal sector. At the same time, employment potential exists in the informal sector, which can be linked to and recognized by the formal sector. There are also opportunities in the informal sector that can be upgraded (National Commission on Labour 2002).

Women Workers and ICT

The arrival of the information age with its transformational potential raises the question whether the ICT revolution can become a powerful vehicle for gender equality, or whether women will find themselves caught on the wrong side of the digital divide. The answer to this question depends on the

policy environment. Proactive policies and strategies are needed to ensure not only women's participation, but also ownership, education and training. While ICT offers many new opportunities for women, the old biases will continue to persist unless these strategies are put in place. An International Labour Organisation (ILO) Report warns that as teleworking is emerging as an important mode of working in the information economy, existing social inequalities - particularly gender inequalities - will be reinforced unless proper policy measures are implemented. Work in the information economy can be an effective tool for enhancing gender and social equality, but only if direct intervention is undertaken to remove existing inequalities.

The gender digital divide has therefore to be placed in the context of other social and economic divides. Promotion of women's education and literacy is necessary for women's digital literacy, but within the existing context, there can be linkages between information, poverty reduction and women that can be further strengthened and carried forward. The examples of in situ vocational training described in the preceding paragraphs show that very often, it is the lack of information that makes the difference between women workers who are underpaid and forced to work in deprived working conditions, and those who are able to command their own price for their labor. SEWA was one of the first organizations in India to realize early on the potential of harnessing ICT for the productive growth of the informal sector. By organizing computer awareness programs and imparting basic computer skills to its team leaders and association members, SEWA has enabled many of its members to launch their own web sites and to sell their products in the global virtual market place.

This example illustrates how technology can improve the lives of poor women by opening up opportunities they were previously excluded from. Electronic networking between women has led to new social and economic phenomena, such

as e-inclusion, e-campaigns, e-commerce and e-consultation. The empowerment of women via technology in this way enables them to challenge discrimination and overcome gender barriers (<http://www.clo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/index/htm>).

M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) has demonstrated the effectiveness of these linkages between information, poverty and women through programs that have used access to information as the key to holistic rural development with the involvement, participation and ownership of local women. In 1998, it started the Village Resource Centre (VRC) Project, with information centres – later renamed Knowledge Centres – in three villages near Pondicherry, from where it has now spread to many parts of the country. With no existing or previous model to draw upon, the progress was slow initially, especially as the project aimed at greater social as well as gender inclusiveness.

Information of various types is purveyed through the Village Knowledge Centers (VKCs) to the rural clientele, such as fishermen, farmers, job seekers, or people wanting to access services such as health, nutrition, education, medicine, or commerce. The project went beyond the communication of information by linking it with the means of using information. Though information may be the key to development, mere provision of information is not enough. MSSRF built several other initiatives and programs round the Village Knowledge Centres in each one of which information plays an important role. Poverty will persist as long as a large proportion of the rural population is engaged only in unskilled work and ICT can be used to bring about a paradigm shift from unskilled to skilled work, and from routine on-farm to value-added non-farm activities.

From Pondicherry, the concept of the Knowledge Centre has traveled to other places in the country. MSSRF feels that taking the benefits of ICT to every village in India is an idea whose

time has come. Most of the knowledge workers (3/4ths) and operators providing primary information are women, who derive status and influence from their work. (Box 10)

Box 10: Mission 2007

India's "Mission 2007: Every Village a Knowledge Centre" has been recognized by the International Telecommunication Union as the flagship of the "Connect the World Movement". Launched in 2005, it aims to provide knowledge connectivity to every village of India by August 15, 2007. Following this launch, a number of Government agencies have joined in the movement to provide knowledge and skill empowerment to rural families and to close the rural-urban digital divide. The Department of Information Technology, Government of India has decided to establish 100,000 ICT community-based service centres within two years, which will provide reliable broad-based connectivity to remote villages. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) is setting up Village Resource Centres at the block level to provide a wide range of services including tele-conferencing facilities. The Ministry of Panchayati Raj plans to establish internet-connected ICT centres in all the 240, 000 panchayats and local bodies in the country within 2 years to provide public space in each of these local bodies for Village Knowledge Centres so that all sections of society can have access.

What is important is to ensure that all such initiatives designed to help rural and tribal families are pro-poor, pro-women and poor livelihood in both design and implementation.

Source: Swaminathan, M.S. "Every Village a Knowledge Centre" The Hindu December 20, 2005

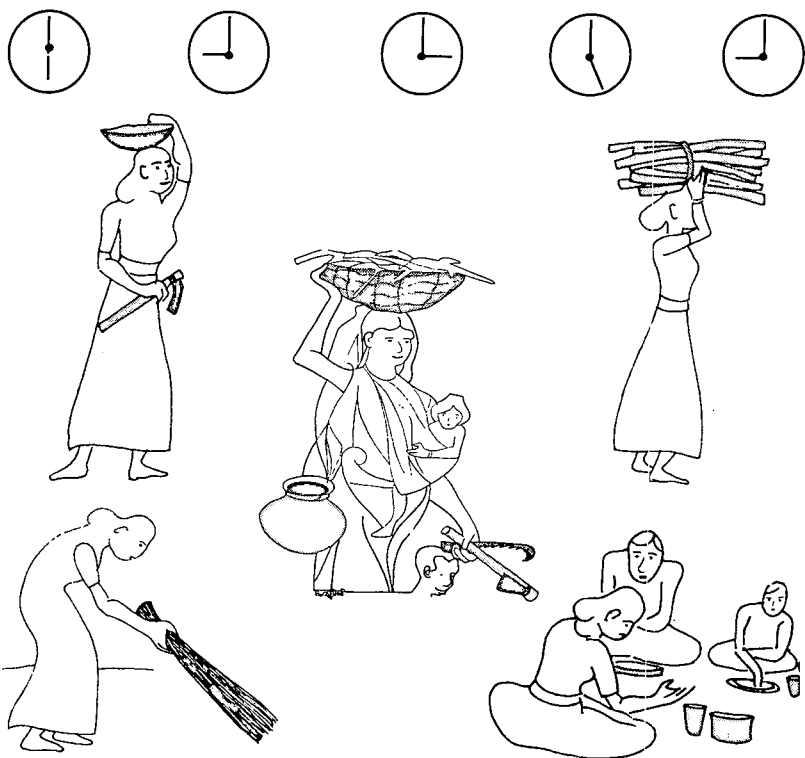
Post-tsunami, the emphasis has shifted to give connectivity to coastal areas for long-term rehabilitation. A Village Knowledge Centre is the best conduit for disaster preparedness. MSSRF is prioritizing coastal systems research. It was the coastal mangroves that saved several villages from the tsunami.

At the start of the project initiative, some farmers barred their wives from participating in the centre, located inside the

village temple. Then there were fears that the experiment would not succeed. Today, the village women keep track of the auction prices in the commune (Block) markets and alert the village farmers when the prices of the product are the highest. The women are proficient in using the computer and train the villagers, especially the youth, to get the latest information on prices and farm-related schemes and subsidies. They also get information about the latest weather forecasts. While some women are in charge of the computer kiosks, others work at producing the communication material, for which they are the reporters, editors and publishers. The 'Village News' is circulated among villagers on a daily basis and wraps up all farm-related news. (*The Indian Express*, Mumbai 29.09.05).

The reasons for the success of this initiative include the following .

- Community ownership and community endorsement. The program is people-centered
- The program takes into account the local context and information needs, which enables it to provide demand-driven services.
- The program is not meant to demonstrate the power of technology, and its usefulness to people is seen as more important than use of state-of-the-art technology.
- The program is not associated with any one group or caste or gender, allowing everyone to take part. It is located in a public place to ensure social inclusion (MSSRF 2004a; MSSRF 2004b; MSSRF 2005).



4. MEASURING WOMEN'S WORK - THE TIME USE SURVEY

The need for improving statistics and indicators specifically concerned with the situation of women was recognized at the international level in the World Plan of Action adopted by the World Conference of the International Women's Year in 1975, followed by later World Conferences on Women.

Official statistics do not reflect the actual roles and contributions of women in society. There are two main elements of gender differentiation: the roles women and men play, and the different impact of development process on each. Gender specific statistics are needed to *understand these differences* and inequalities, *promote awareness* of the situation of women and the extent of the inequalities, *provide a basis for*

policies that take into consideration gender-specific aspects of development, and *evaluate and monitor* the impact on women and men of policies and programs.

Irrespective of their level of development, all countries face problems in the production and use of gender-specific statistics. These include lack of adequate concepts, definitions and methods that reflect the different roles and contributions of women to society; cultural stereotypes that contribute to making women less visible and prevent both enumerators and respondents from providing correct and reliable information; lack of communication between producers and users of data, and under-utilization of existing data by gender (FAO 1992).

Paragraph 68 of BPFA requires Governments to collect gender- and age-disaggregated data on poverty and all aspects of economic activity, and develop indicators to assess economic performance from a gender perspective; to make visible the full extent of women's work and contributions to the national economy, including their contribution to the unremunerated and domestic sectors; and also examine the links between the unpaid work of women and their vulnerability to poverty.

Women's income is becoming increasingly necessary to households of all types, but they continue to perform the greater part of unremunerated domestic and community work, such as caring for children and older persons, preparing food for the family, protecting the environment, and providing voluntary assistance to vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals/groups. This work is not measured in quantitative terms and is not valued in national accounts. Women's contribution to development is seriously underestimated and its social recognition is limited. Family responsibilities are not shared either by men or by society. The full visibility of the type, extent and distribution of this unremunerated work will also contribute to a better sharing of responsibilities. (UN 1996j).

The CSO initiative*

During the last ten years, one of the most important initiatives (if not the most,) of the Government of India towards implementation of paragraph 68 of BPFA is the pilot Time Use Survey (TUS) conducted by the CSO in six States of India (Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Meghalaya) involving 18, 600 households, with field work spread over a whole year, during 1998-1999. This survey, for the first time in India, (and also perhaps in the entire developing world) collected a wealth of data on how men and women dependent on subsistence livelihoods including agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, fisheries, natural resource management, and collection of fuel wood and fruits, spent their time differentially through the seasons of the year. The survey included questions on all types of activities, including work relating to the household, family, and community. Information was collected on daily and weekly basis in terms of hours and minutes, using the recall method.

In the last few decades, a need was felt to measure the 'invisible' unpaid work of men and women in order to estimate the contribution of unpaid work to human welfare. Feminist groups in industrialized countries first expressed this need. With the increasing political importance given to the developing world, time use studies received a new thrust in these countries. They were found useful in netting the economic work of women and thereby improving workforce statistics. (Box 11)

With the increasing importance given by country governments to the women's issue in the developing world, time use studies answered the urgent need to make visible what had hitherto been accepted as the 'invisible' work of women.

* The author is indebted to Indira Hirway for permission to base the following section on Time Use Survey almost exclusively on her *Employment and Unemployment Situation in the 1990's - How good are NSS data?*; Economic and Political Weekly. May 25-31. 2002 Vol. XXXVII, No. 21. 2027-2036).

Box 11: Earlier Time Use Surveys in India

Several scholars in India have experimented with small time-use surveys covering a small number of villages and households. Prominent among these are:

1. Time Allocation Study in some villages of Rajasthan and West Bengal conducted in 1982 by Jain and Chand
2. Time Allocation Study in Tamil Nadu conducted in 1996 by Directorate of Economics and Statistics
3. Time Use Study by NCAER in a few villages during 1980s;
4. A study on the time use of children by Ramesh Kanbargi in the survey of classification of activities;

The first named study by Jain and Chand, the most important of them, observed interesting results about the time use of women, showing that their participation in economic activities was higher than that presented in the Population Census and the NSS statistics. Though these studies made interesting observations, they had several methodological lacunae and could not present any results relevant at the regional, state or national levels, due to their small size, and therefore could not be used for correcting labor/ national income statistics or for formulating macro-policies in the economic or social fields.

Source: Central Statistical Organisation 2000b Report of the Time Use Survey 2000 Ministry of Programme Implementation.

Time use survey is a technique, the only one available at present, that provides comprehensive information on how individuals spend their time and other details of daily life, with a combination of specificity and comprehensiveness not achieved in other types of social survey. Data collection under the time use survey does not have any socio-cultural bias, as the information asked for refers only to how individuals spend their time. Since the information is collected about the entire 24-hour period, no activity is likely to be missed out. It can also help remove conceptual hurdles.

The TUS provides data on allocation of time by men and women between System of National Accounts (SNA),

extended SNA and non-SNA activities, details of participation of women and men in activities classified in the survey, and time spent on them. Extended SNA activities consist mainly of unpaid services, which are mostly carried out by women, and therefore, an analysis of this data would throw more light on the time that women spent on unpaid work.

Besides, the Time Use Survey 2000, CSO also conducted research exercises on 'Valuation of Unpaid Work' and 'Estimation of Work Force' using the results of the TUS and also organized a National Seminar on the Application of Time Use Statistics in 2002.

Overall Findings

Some important overall findings of the Time Use Survey are:

- Larger numbers of men participated in unpaid SNA activities (for a very short time) than in paid SNA activities. The time spent by men on unpaid SNA work is on an average half of the time spent on paid SNA activities.
- The *numbers of women* engaged in unpaid SNA work as well as the *time spent* by them on this work are higher than the *numbers of women* engaged in paid SNA work as well as the *time spent* by women on paid work. There is considerable inter-State variation.
- The conclusion is that the share of unpaid SNA work is significant in India in terms of the number of persons engaged in it, as well as the time spent by them on such work. If such work is not captured adequately, as is likely in the conventional surveys, estimates of the work force are likely to be underestimated.

The results of TUS also indicate that women's work is likely to be more underestimated in the primary sector as compared to other sectors, while men's work is likely to be underestimated more in the tertiary sector than in the primary and secondary sectors.

Market-Based Work and 'Caring' Work

Activities such as food processing, cooking, and childcare easily enter the market when a family decides to use market services to meet these needs. With economic development, more and more domestic services enter the market, increasing the national income and the size of the work force in the process. Conversely, if some of the market-based services enter the domestic unpaid sphere, there may be a decline in the size of the work force. If the public expenditure on social sector declines, with less medical facilities and services being available, families may shift from market services to non-market domestic services. If inflation or economic crisis affects families, they may leave the labor market and depend on coping strategies that may generate food and services outside the labor market. It is not possible, in the absence of time series data, to state whether such shifts are taking place from SNA to extended SNA activities in India, which affect the size of the work force in the country.

What the Time Use Survey does show is that extended SNA activities are very significant for India, as these 'care' activities (childcare, care of the aged, the disabled, and household upkeep) are all unpaid services carried out mostly by women and young girls. The data shows that women share a higher burden of such work, in terms of time spent, than men. Men spend 5-7 percent of their total work time (SNA plus extended SNA) on extended work and about 90-95 percent time on SNA work, while women spend from 30-40 percent of their total work time on SNA work and about 60-70 percent work on extended SNA work. This implies that 60-70 percent of women's time, which is spent on the family's well-being, is not counted in national accounts.

If markets through hired labor deliver any of these services, they would be counted in the national accounts. It is quite likely that some of these services move in or out of the market, depending on the specific economic conditions of the family, or the overall economic environment. It is possible that workers

have shifted from SNA work to extended SNA work in the nineties in India, but there is no strong supporting empirical evidence. But one could conclude that the low growth of formal or organized employment has encouraged some people at least to withdraw from the labor market and take up activities outside the SNA boundary, which contribute to family well-being.

Paid work and unpaid work do not operate independently of each other, but are closely inter-related. The division of the total labor force in a household into paid and unpaid work generates a hierarchy within the household that is reflected in the lower status of women. The roots of gender inequity lie to a considerable extent in the division of paid and unpaid work in the household. In order to address gender inequality, data on paid as well as unpaid work in society is needed. (Box 12)

Box 12: Some Inter-State Variations the TUS

- In some States, *more women spend time* in unpaid work than in paid work. In Haryana, about 1494 women were engaged in unpaid SNA work as against 215 women in paid work.
- In some States, *women spend more time* on unpaid work than on paid work. Women in Haryana spent on an average, 25.34 hours in the reference period week on unpaid work, but only 4.13 hours on paid SNA work.
- Women in Meghalaya spend the *highest time* – 35.39 hours – on unpaid work.
- Tamil Nadu women are *at the top in paid work* by spending 21.8 hours in a week on paid SNA work, but they spend only 10.32 hours on unpaid SNA work.
- These variations need further careful investigation, as there are no clear explanations that emerge.

Source: "CSO 2000 Report of the Time Use Survey" Ministry of Programme Implementation.

Conclusions

Some of the conclusions drawn by Hirway are:

- Conventional surveys are not adequate to net the economic work of the population. National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) concepts and methods are not able to capture the work in subsistence sectors, home-based work or the informal sector, the so-called 'difficult to measure' sectors. The validity of the available labor force data is therefore, in question.
- The TUS is able to net work and workers in a much better way than conventional surveys. The work participation rates based on the former are significantly higher than those shown by NSS.
- It is possible that the decline in the work participation rates shown in the NSS surveys is a result of the increased share of the unpaid component or the informal sector of the SNA in the nineties. Decline in the work participation rates may also have taken place due to a shift of some activities from SNA to extended SNA, caused by withdrawal from the labor market by those who have lost out due to the globalization process, causing their market-based activities to shift to the non-market, non-SNA sphere.
- The increase in the work rates in the 'difficult to measure' sectors of the SNA and extended SNA indicates deterioration in the quality of employment. The former indicates an increase in employment, with low productivity and low wages, while the latter indicates an increased burden on women who are primarily responsible for carrying out unpaid domestic services.
- It is important that India incorporates TUS in its regular data collection systems. The concepts and methods of TUS should get standardized, which process is already taking place, helped by the UN Expert Committee's work. The Technical Committee set up for the TUS in India has been able to evolve suitable concepts, classifications and methods and the Indian experience has contributed significantly to the standardization. (Hirway, Indira, 2002).

Follow up of the TUS

Following up on the Time Use Survey, the Government of India has constituted a high level Expert Committee on Applications of Time Use Statistics in 2003 with specific terms of reference:

- a. To review the classification of activities used in TUS
- b. To build a classification of activities for TUS that is comparable with the existing classification, as well as taking care of specific problems of data collection on time disposition.

Within the Government of India, the mission to maintain statistical standards and reorient processes and priorities in the realm of official statistics in tune with the changing environment, is that of the CSO, located in the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation. CSO collects, collates, coordinates, and disseminates credible and timely statistics for informed decision-making and debate, both within and outside the Government.

In 1995, for the first time, CSO brought out the publication "Women and Men in India", which continues to be regularly published ever since. The initiation of this venture is the direct consequence of an Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) project on "Improvement of Statistics on Gender Issues" during 1994-95. The 1995 publication has 45 tables, arranged under broad heads such as economic status, decision-making, crimes, health, education, population and vital statistics. This was the first step by the Social Statistics Division of CSO to sensitize society on the prevailing gender bias, backed by hard data, and it received immediate recognition. The most recent issue (2003) has 97 tables, arranged under the same broad heads, with a separate section on Time Use Statistics. (The 2004 issue can be seen on the Ministry's website, but hard copies are still not available).

CSO held two workshops in the context of the ESCAP project at the beginning of the Beijing decade, which ultimately led

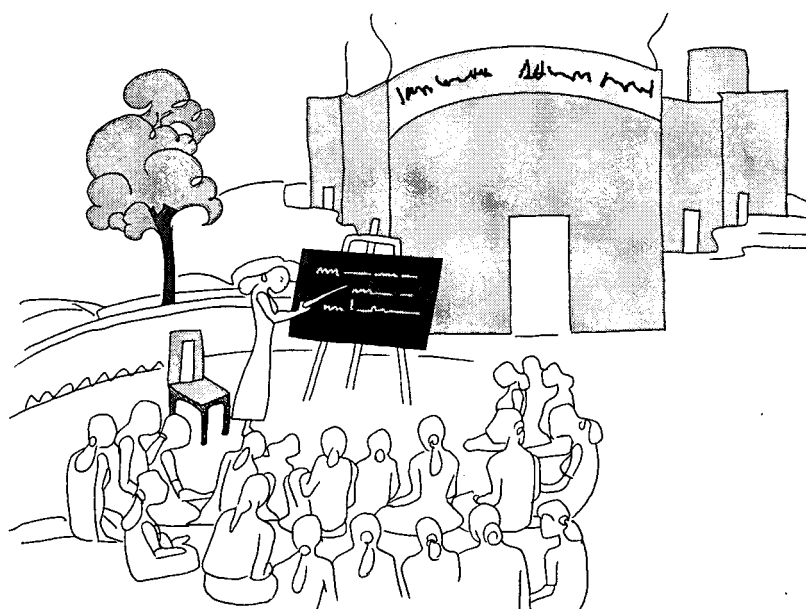
to a National Plan of Action (NPA) in 1998 to bridge the identified data gaps. This was finalized after extensive consultations with data producers and data users. The NPA identified possible ways of making the data available and the possible agencies to collect the data. The identified indicators (the data gaps) are more than twenty in number and some are shown below.

- Distribution of employed women by type of training
- Data on women not in labor force by reasons and age
- Educational status of mothers
- Employment status of female-headed households.
- Proportion of women migrants having employment at the place of migration.

CSO subsequently drew up a comprehensive status report indicating the current implementation of specific recommendations made in the NPA by the agencies responsible for taking action on each part of the Plan of Action (CSO 1998).

Discussions with CSO officials reveal that up to 1995, this Division was basically busy organizing and attending seminars. However, after observing the Year for Women in the year 1975, the development of gender statistics received a momentum, and a need was felt to develop a data bank on different aspects of 'womanhood'.

CSO has also contributed to the ongoing improvements of the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gender Development Index (GDI) by developing methodologies for identifying indicators at the district level, for which it set up a Technical Advisory Committee, and identified eighteen such indicators. This can fill the present gap in the preparation of the Human Development Reports, which yet has no standard methodology of ranking states in HDI/GDI across the country.



5. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

BPFA, like the outcome documents of earlier World Conferences on Women, gives high priority to the setting up and strengthening of institutional mechanisms that enable the member governments to implement the system-wide agenda for women's equality.

The functions expected of these institutional mechanisms are *designing, promotion of implementation, execution, monitoring, evaluation, advocacy, and mobilization of support* for gender-responsive policies. Another commitment that Governments have to make is the integration of gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programs and projects (UN 1996k).

The BPFA mandate

The BPFA mandate for women's equality concerns the working of the entirety of Government systems and sub-systems. Accountability to women and to gender equality and justice is not docketed in or confined to any one agency or organization. All issues are women's issues; women are half the population of the country and are not circumscribed as being only *the subjects* of development planning or of state policies and strategies; women have *agency*. They contribute to and impact on State policies and agendas as much as they are impacted by State policies and agendas. The exigencies of working as a huge Government apparatus may require a degree of centralized policy making, as well as coordination between different functional units, but a holistic and integrated view of women is a *sine qua non* of each and every part of a Government functioning under a democratic set-up. This is essential to avoid fragmentation of perspectives.

Very crucial challenges facing the State are to understand, take in and absorb the experiences and responses of organizations, movements, campaigns and groups working with women outside the Government. These institutional mechanisms that BPFA talks about also include processes that facilitate decentralized planning, better implementation and monitoring, including non-governmental organizations and community organizations from the grassroots level upwards. This signifies a more inclusive perspective within which the accountability framework is to be placed, a set of partnerships and relationships rather than a centralized structure or set of structures in a hierarchical mode. BPFA specifically asks Governments to encourage and promote the active involvement of the broad and diverse range of institutional actors in the public, private and voluntary sectors to work for equality between women and men (UN 1996l).

The Indian State and Women

The State has an onerous range of responsibilities towards women, from better allocation of public expenditure that targets women's economic opportunities, ensuring equal

access to productive resources and strengthening safety nets to enable women living in poverty to withstand economic crises, to equitable distribution of food within the household. With the growing power of the market and the increasing tendency in the public realm to depend on macro-changes, (such as growth in employment) or to anticipate equitable growth outcomes from it, (such as reduction in poverty) the State is placed in an invidious position vis-à-vis BPFA commitments to women. The decade after Beijing (which partly overlaps with the period of economic reforms in India) has witnessed this new ambivalence, where earlier national, regional and international commitments made to women by the State are now being compromised in the wake of newer commitments to other global interests and actors.

The Government has acknowledged that while urban and educated women have gained employment in new avenues as a result of globalization and structural adjustments, an adverse impact on women's livelihoods, such as in agriculture, has been reported from different parts of the country. It also acknowledges that, as reported by the National Commission on Labor (2002), key areas of concern include women in small subsistence farming households, women workers in garments and textiles, and women displaced by new technologies in sectors such as construction that have traditionally absorbed large numbers of women (DWCD 2005c). The efficacy of institutional mechanisms for women's advancement in India has to be evaluated against this emerging background.

How different agencies of the State view women is an important aspect of the discussion on institutional mechanisms. The State is not a monolith, least of all in a country such as India, with its federal form of government, its regional diversity and its plurality of cultures, languages and religions. Since the early nineties, Panchayats and urban local bodies have been made responsible for governance relating to a variety of activities listed in a Constitutional document. In the public arena, however, it is necessary for all actors to have the closest semblance to a common vision or perspective, so as to prevent any ambiguity in what constitutes the women's question.

The MOA and Women

Women in agriculture, the focus of this paper, constitute the vast majority of women in the country, especially if we look at rural women. The State apparatus is generally ordered along sectoral divisions – the sectors could be thematic, subject matter-wise or based on political alignments or groupings. A particular agency, department or ministry could be responsible for all matters relating to oil seeds, another for Scheduled Castes and a third for ocean development or science and technology. There is a systemic tendency within all bureaucracies and other large structures to privilege sectoral (or sub-sectoral) goals and objectives, since these are fundamental to the creation and continuance of these agencies. These sectoral or sub-sectoral goals in turn, may derive their importance from the exigencies that the country may be grappling with during particular periods of time.

Enhancement of production and productivity is the main goal of the Ministry of Agriculture. It sets all systems to achieve “rapid agricultural growth and development through optimum utilization of the country’s land, water, soil and water resources” (MOA 2005a). Similarly other Ministries/ Departments/agencies have other sectoral or sub-sectoral goals and objectives. These determine not only their policies, programs and strategies, but also influence their working environment, how the human resources are to be placed and utilized and in what light the officials view and value their employment, their work priorities and work culture, as well as their individual career goals and options.

The goals of BPFA are a national commitment to action, as the document was accepted and ratified by the Government of India in 1995. While these commitments to women in agriculture, subsistence sectors and rural livelihoods may cut across many Ministries and agencies, the working systems within the Government invest the MOA with a special set of responsibilities vis-à-vis women in agriculture.

In view of its overall mandate, goals and objectives, the natural tendency would be to ensure that women contribute

effectively to agricultural productivity and production - what has been often termed as an 'instrumental' approach to women. This would tend to leave out of the picture - to take one particular aspect - the whole question of landlessness or of unpaid labor or subsistence farming where women do not engage in crop husbandry alone, but have to depend on other livelihood options both inside and outside the farming sector, to sustain them and their families. To take another aspect, it would leave out the necessity for support services, such as childcare, water, health and education in enhancing the quality of women's work and their well being. A third aspect would be to not attach significance to women's awareness and knowledge of land rights or of other rights to her bodily integrity or health, that also have a direct connection with her worker status.

The Landless out of Focus

An evaluation (May 2004) of the DANIDA-funded agricultural training projects for women running in four States found that, though the target group for the projects was to be restricted to women from small and marginal farms, one of the States had almost half of the sampled women falling outside the target group, while another had half the sample outside the target group and the remaining two had more than three fourths falling outside the target group. These women fell outside the target group primarily because of larger land holdings (Danish Institute for International Studies 2004b). (Box 13)

Box 13: The Lessons of Evaluation

- The requirement in the original project design of Tamil Nadu Women in Agriculture (TANWA) demanded that only households deriving their main income from cultivation of own land or under share-cropping arrangements would be included. A 1997 evaluation of the project found that a change in focus had resulted in a portion of the selected women with husbands who earned a relatively high income outside agriculture (Ministry of Foreign Affairs DANIDA 1997).
- Issues of access to land for landless farmers have been de-linked from issues of agriculture and have focused on micro-

enterprise in the non-agricultural sector. Landless workers have been almost completely marginalized in the agriculture sector.

- “Farmers” are defined by ownership of land and most forms of government support are linked to land ownership. Women constitute the majority of landless farm workers and are doubly marginalized. They are not recognized as farmers though they perform more than 70 percent of agricultural work (UNDP 2001).
- While trying to address the issues of farm workers in such varying agro-climatic zones, it became apparent that in the eyes of the Government, agriculture universities and researchers, agriculture is narrowly defined as cultivation. Moreover, it is compartmentalized even further into agriculture, horticulture, floriculture and so forth. In direct contrast, the reality of the small farmer demands that agriculture be seen in an integrated manner. In the context of limited resources, a creative approach is needed to integrate agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, aquaculture, dairying, compost, vermiculture, and other activities, in order for a small piece of land to be used optimally to generate year-round employment (Nanavaty, Reema 2004)
- A narrowly defined view of agriculture can also result in standardized formats in training and information. Such a ‘package’, especially when it is delivered in a top-down presentation, reduces its relevance for local applications. A more differentiated approach based on individual and contextual need assessments would be preferable. The effectiveness of the project is hampered by excessive reliance on the Training and Visit (T&V) approach, with its narrow crop and individual focus and top down propagation of pre-determined messages. A more participatory and broad-based group-based extension approach in the later years of the project was found to be an improvement. (Danish Institute for International Studies 2004c)

Source: Danish Institute for International Studies. “Farm Women in Development - DANIDA Evaluation - Impact Study of Four Training Projects in India” Department of Development Research, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DANIDA Denmark 2004 and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DANIDA, Denmark. “Review Report (Draft) Tamil Nadu Women in Agriculture Phase II Ramboll 1997”

Support Services and Basic Needs - A Persisting Gap

Working women in the rural areas need simultaneous and effective access to basic needs such as water, fuelwood, fodder, sanitation, and healthcare. Most important of all, childcare, including early childhood care and education, are an integral requirement of working women's lives. All these support services have to come together in an integrated fashion, so that families dependent on women's work can be advantaged by women seeking work options outside the home. This convergence of supports is also critically necessary for ensuring that working women's stress levels do not increase with heavier work loads, leading to ill health, lowered productivity and status. Interventions in support services have to be not only integrated but also well-targeted. They should not be delivered piecemeal nor scattered across the needy areas or beneficiaries.

BPFA points out that while women are working more and more outside the household, there has not been a parallel lightening of responsibility for unremunerated work in the household and community. The lack of a family-friendly work environment prevents women from achieving their full potential (UN 1996m). BPFA requires Governments to promote the sharing of family responsibilities as well as provide high quality, flexible and affordable childcare services. (UN 1996n). The promotion of harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women is a specific Strategic Objective in the BPFA (F.6), for the realization of which all member-States and their governments are accountable.

In the ten years since BPFA, the absence of these supports continues to remain a serious concern. The gap is not only in programming or in resource allocation, or in the quality of implementation, but also at concept, policy and planning levels. That poor women's work is critically dependent on these services has not been meaningfully acknowledged up to now. When most of women's work is itself invisible in development planning, this myopia is not surprising. It often results in a set of fractured program strategies, where only one set of needs are looked at, (i.e. 'productive' work

opportunities, skill training, extension, and income earning,) but not the other set, which is so very crucial to the success of the former. Programming priorities for women are set within sectoral grid lines and sectoral accountability systems decide what women's needs are and to what extent these needs are to be met in program design. Women's entitlements (guaranteed to them by nationally and internationally endowed rights and treaties) as workers with gendered roles and responsibilities – dictated by their day-to-day realities – are still mostly unrecognized, and lie outside the mainframe of planning priorities. Neither can women workers (with very few exceptions) access these services from the market, without further deterioration in the social and economic stability of the family. In the case of health services, for example, the near-collapse of the rural primary healthcare system and the absence of a stable health insurance system has left the poor with no option except to buy healthcare from private providers, leading to heavy indebtedness. This is only one example illustrating the way that institutional mechanisms should be working, but do not. In the absence of meaningful and genuine devolution and decentralization to local bodies, most of these services are still being delivered vertically, by line departments, which at the village level have no convergence or integration.

Gender Mainstreaming, Gender Budgeting and Gender Analysis of Budgets

Based on the experiences gained in administering training and extension programs for farm women in half a dozen States from 1982 onwards, the Ministry of Agriculture has now adopted the policy and strategy of "gender mainstreaming" across the entire agricultural establishment. The phrase, though in wide use and sanctified by inclusion in the BPFA, is understood differently in different situations.

BPFA observes that Governments should consciously mainstream a gender perspective in all policies and programs so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men respectively (UN 1996o).

Gender mainstreaming emerged in the early '80s as a concern of the women's movement to move women's issues from the periphery to the centre of development decision-making. ... "The Tenth Plan reaffirms the major strategy of mainstreaming gender perspectives in all sectoral policies, programs and plans of action. Women-specific interventions will be undertaken to bridge existing gaps" (DWCD 2005e).

The definition of gender mainstreaming adopted by Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is as follows –

- Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in any area and at all levels
- It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic, and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated
- The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality (United Nations Economic & Social Council ECOSOC 1997).

The Government report for Beijing Plus Ten describes gender-responsive budgeting or gender analysis of budgets, as useful tools to promote gender mainstreaming. The GOI budget for 2005-06 announces its intention to "gradually introduce gender budgeting", which is in line with the basic principles of governance to which the Government is committed under the NCMP. A whole section is devoted to this in the budget document. Henceforth the Government would present budgetary data in a manner such that "the gender sensitivities of the budgetary allocations are clearly highlighted". An Expert Group on Classification Systems of Government Transactions contributed to the process by outlining the issues involved (Ministry of Finance Budget document: 2005-2006).

DWCD and National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP) have been given the task of conducting a review of the public expenditure profile of listed GOI Departments/Ministries (Family Welfare, Elementary Education, Rural Development, Labor, Small Scale Industries, Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation, Social Justice and Empowerment and Tribal Affairs) "through the gender lens, conduct beneficiary incidence analysis and recommend specific changes in the operational guidelines of various development schemes so as to improve coverage of women beneficiaries of public expenditures". "Village women and their associations will be encouraged to assume responsibility for all development schemes relating to drinking water, sanitation, primary education, health and nutrition" The Ministry of Agriculture and its sister Departments are not included in this review. (Ministry of Finance Budget document: 2005-2006)

The document does an initial listing ('an initial and maiden effort') of budget provisions that are *substantially meant* for welfare of women and children. While certain Departments/Ministries are included in this listing, many others are not. The criteria for such inclusion and exclusion have not been made public. The listing is demand-wise; ten demands, with details of schemes, are presented. The only possible rationale for inclusion and exclusion of Departments/Ministries is provided by the phrase underlined above, '*substantially meant*', even while Statement 19 admits that women also benefit from other programs, "but that is not presently segregated or quantified" (Ministry of Finance, Budget document: 2005-2006).

It could be pointed out that the logic of gender mainstreaming requires that all agencies should be accountable to women and not only those traditionally and conventionally associated with social welfare, social justice, income generation, education, or health. However, demands falling under the MOA and associated Ministries and Departments have not been listed.

Gender Budgeting Processes

Dissection of the Government budget is important because its gender-differentiated impact can be established, though this can be done only *ex post facto*. But over a period of time, this can lead to pro-active steps being taken to translate gender commitments into budgetary commitments during the preparatory stages of the budget. For the last several years, at an informal level, women's groups have been meeting the Finance Minister during this preparatory stage, to convey gender priorities. The initiative of the Finance Ministry in institutionalizing the gender budgeting process – looking at the budget 'through the gender lens' – has to be further refined. The categorization of the Ministries and Departments may need a second look.

The concept note on gender budgeting constructs three categories of public expenditure, namely,

- expenditure specifically targeted (100 percent) to women and girls
- pro-women allocations, with a significant women's component, and
- residual public expenditures that have gender - differentiated impact (NIPFP & DWCD 2005).

Also, the processes of budget preparation and securing approvals from the Parliament are still shrouded with a high degree of security and confidentiality. It is still a very top-down procedure, though the number of pre-budget consultations with different interest groups has increased over the years. There is a near complete absence of a systematic attempt at decentralized budget-making from the village/gram panchayat upwards, except for a few pilot initiatives such as the "Building Budgets from Below" initiative in Karnataka by the Singamma Srinivasan Foundation. Such efforts can look not only at funds earmarked for women, but at all other expenditure in terms of their impact on social and gender equity. Elected women

in the panchayats, along with other women in the community, can become part of an effective institutional mechanism as well as of an interactive process.

Significantly, the concept note quoted above, also cautions that "gender sensitive analysis begins with categorizing expenditure but it does not stop there. The categorization has to be followed by a number of exercises that examine what use has been made of expenditures and what impact this has had (that is, from the financial inputs to the gendered outputs and impacts)" (NIPFP & DWCD 2005).

The Women's Component Plan

Another institutional mechanism that the Tenth Plan is committed to is the Women's Component Plan (WCP). The WCP is a mechanism by which Central Ministries and Departments as well as State Governments quantify as well as earmark funds (and benefits) for women, and devise special programs that directly and exclusively benefit women. Introduced in the Eighth Plan, it provided that not less than 30 percent of funds available in the budget are to be earmarked under the various schemes of "women-related" Ministries and Departments. However, most of the Ministries and Departments designated as "women-related" have not separately provided the women's component.

A review of the working of the WCP mechanism shows, among other things, that the Ministry of Agriculture (which had earlier reported on the WCP in their sectoral budgets) has stopped doing so. There are some Ministries which have the potential of going beyond 30 percent of funds under WCP, as well as of devising and administering "women-related" programs, of which the Ministry of Agriculture has been named as one (Planning Commission 2005j).

The Tenth Plan envisages tying up WCP and gender budgeting to ensure both preventive and post-facto action in enabling women to receive their rightful share from all women-related general development sectors (Planning Commission 2005k).

“These two effective concepts of Women’s Component Plan and Gender Budgeting play a complementary role to each other. Gender Responsive Budgeting or gender analysis of budget is a very useful tool used in India to promote gender mainstreaming” (DWCD 2005f).

These new initiatives and mechanisms for ensuring adequate public resources notwithstanding, the Mid Term Appraisal 2005 makes an honest confession of the reality that women still remain largely untouched by gender-just and gender-sensitive budgets as well as by the mechanism of the Women’s Component Plan. It observes that the Component Plan “seems an after-thought simply added on to pre-existing development programs and projects” (Planning Commission 2005i)

Institutional Mechanisms in the MOA

The MOA has set up a Gender Resource Centre (GRC) as a focal point for convergence of all issues related to gender in agriculture. Currently, the Women’s Cell of the Directorate of Extension in MOA is coordinating the work of GRC. A concept note has been prepared, in which the GRC’s road map has been laid down.

The GRC will ensure that policies in agriculture reflect the national commitment to the empowerment of women. The GRC would not only undertake and support training, research and advocacy on gender issues in agriculture and natural resource management, but would forge effective functional linkages with other related departments and institutions. GRC would identify critical gaps in order to bridge them along two paths – through both the ‘strategy of mainstreaming’ and the ‘strategy of agenda setting’. Mainstreaming, the note says, simply means that women must be given opportunity to fully participate and benefit from all types of agricultural programs. Agenda setting means that women farmers may be provided with structural and material resources so that they can participate and benefit at par with male farmers in setting their development agenda (Department of Agriculture & Cooperation 2004).

Earlier decades witnessed the almost complete concentration of women's programs in MOA within the extension fold. The concept note denotes a shift to a more 'across-the-board' approach. It also visualizes the GRC as a focal point working for convergence of all gender-related issues within the Department. This will broaden the mandate or the terms of reference of the Centre to one of coordination and bringing together different actors, for which it will need new skills and adroitness. In other words, it will not remain a purely program-implementing agency. It will become a nodal point for women, not only within MOA but also vis-à-vis other Ministries and Departments of the GOI. Effective and functional linkages with other Ministries/Agencies on the theme of women and gender will help to build better accountability within each of these agencies. MOA has undertaken to ensure that GRC will review, monitor and assess the gender content and impact of various on-going programs of MOA and make recommendations on appropriate improvements in their strategy and design (Communication 2005 to DWCD). MOA has also acknowledged that GRC would ensure continuous flow of gender-disaggregated data (Communication 2004 to DWCD).

Gender Budgeting Cell

In addition to the GRC, MOA has also set up a Gender Budgeting Cell (GBC) (again, located in the Extension Directorate) and identified Gender Coordinators for carrying on the gender budgeting process from within the various Divisions of the Ministry that have a focus on women. The process is ongoing and discussions between MOA and DWCD add to the process of dialogue and decision-making. For example, in one of the recent meetings, it was decided that the Credit Division of MOA should have a Gender Coordinator. This need (to have a mechanism for gender coordination) was not seen earlier.

One of the decisions taken in the Gender Budget Cell was to identify 'qualitative output indicators' in terms of women's participation in training, income generation, change in number

of working hours/days, and employment generation. Another decision taken was to undertake periodic reviews of actual expenditure being incurred on women so as to assess the quantum of resource allocation actually being used. Yet another decision was that one scheme in each Division would first be identified to ascertain "qualitative and quantifiable output indicators for women as a model" and that this exercise would first be taken up for Watershed Programs, which were seen as having good scope for involvement of women.

Some other decisions taken and suggestions made, include the following.

- Gender budgeting would be a part of the Annual Report and Performance Budget,
- All reports/returns for each program would be redesigned to provide for gender-disaggregated information,
- The Annual Report should have a separate chapter on 'Gender in Agriculture' listing the efforts made by each Division during the year.

The Gender Budgeting Cell has carried out an analysis of the schemes/programs of the various Divisions of MOA and has suggested possible areas for further involvement of women and where a proportionate amount of budget could be spent. A comprehensive table containing the analysis as well as the suggestions has been circulated by GBC to all the Gender Coordinators for their comments and views, in terms of fixing physical and financial targets for women and identifying further areas of activity.

Moving Away from 'Women Only'

Sixteen divisions of MOA and about thirty schemes have been listed as being important for gender mainstreaming. Though the Extension Directorate has the largest number of schemes, other 'non-traditional' Divisions such as Agricultural Census, Trade, Marketing, Macro-Management, and IT also figure in the list. This broad sweep of the MOA Divisions (with the

possibility of further increase in the numbers) indicates a congruence with one of the tenets of gender mainstreaming, by making a conscious shift away from the earlier pre-occupation with extension and the identification of farming women with extension and training only (Record of meeting on Gender Budgeting MOA 2005b). (Box 14)

Box 14: 'Women Only' Programs in MOA - Budget Allocations

- TANWA (Tamil Nadu Women in Agriculture) Phase I Rs.4.13 crores Phase II Rs.33.92 crores
- TEWA (Training and Extension for Women in Agriculture Orissa) Phase I Rs. 3.22 crores Phase II Rs.11.85 crores
- WYTEP (Women Youth Training & Extension Project Karnataka) Phase I Rs.4.9 crores, Phase II Rs.18.89 crores Phase III Rs.45.93 crores
- MAPWA (Madhya Pradesh Women in Agriculture) Phase I Rs.6.24 crores Phase II Rs.13.12 crores
- UNDP-GOI Food Security Programs in A.P, UP and Orissa Rs.33.36 crores
- Central Sector Scheme of Women in Agriculture Eighth Five Year Plan Rs.164.27 lakhs Ninth Five Year Plan Rs.496 lakhs
- TWA (Training of Women in Agriculture in Gujarat) Rs.4.98 crores in Phase I, Rs.12.13 crores in Phase II
- ANTWA (Andhra Pradesh Training of Women in Agriculture (ANTWA) Rs.5.87 crores

Source: National Gender Resource Centre in Agriculture 2005

However, a deeper look at the 'suggestions for incorporating benefits for women' in each of these schemes, reveals a clear and obvious tendency to limit these to 'earmarking' benefits, in terms of reserving a percentage of funds for women out of the total funds budgeted, numerical quotas for training of women, organizing specific all-women training programs, or reservation of seats for women in such programs, and giving preference to women extension workers in programs. This seems to be a regression to older stereotypes of programming for women.

There is also a palpable anxiety within this whole exercise to correlate earmarking funds/slots for women with the fixation of targets of achievement in quantifiable terms. The targets are to correspond with the allocations made for women. What is missing is a fresh approach to evaluate benefits and costs, using gender analysis and related methodologies. There is no evidence that the unpaid work of women is an issue that the MOA or the GRC/GBC is planning to take up as a major policy issue. It has not built on the methodology or the results of the Time Use Study, nor attempted to link the ongoing programs or projects with such findings.

In a few cases (as in Agricultural Census) it is also proposed to give women preference for appointment as enumerators. Under the scheme "Kisan Call Centres", the suggestion is to report calls made by farmers on gender basis. Under the schemes of Information Support/Management Information System, the suggestion is to report numbers of beneficiaries (members of the public who receive information) on gender basis (Communication to all gender coordinators MOA 2005c).

This exercise at present is part of an ongoing process, and it is apparent that a lot more work is to be done in a consultative mode within MOA Divisions as well as with DWCD and other related Ministries. The effort to move away from 'women only' extension programs to a broader canvas should not again relapse into a routine earmarking of percentage of funds for women out of larger 'mainstream' programs.

The end of 'women only' programs may also raise questions of follow-up of the lessons and experiences of the women's extension programs of the last three decades. The details of budget allocations for these programs, given below, show that the investment in these programs has been considerable. The advantages and disadvantages of 'women only' programs will have to be more critically evaluated before the exigencies of gender mainstreaming put an end to them. The future of the many cadres of women extension and other workers built up over these decades will also have to be looked at *in terms of* their future prospects and involvement in new kinds of planning.

The National Research Centre for Women in Agriculture (NRCWA)

This institution was created by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) in 1996 as a result of the recommendations made by a Working Group on Agricultural Research and Education set up for the formulation of the Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97). It is located at Bhubaneswar (with a sub-centre at Bhopal) and carries out a range of activities, ranging from research to training, mobilization, advocacy, and income generation, with focus on women in agriculture. The official website claims the Centre to be the only one of its kind in Asia for research, training and extension activities on gender in agriculture and allied fields. NRCWA mandate is to "identify gender issues and test the appropriateness of farm technologies and policies for promoting gender mainstreaming in research and extension for empowerment of farm women and capacity building of scientists, planners and policy makers to respond to the needs of farm women" (<http://www.nrcwa.org/about.htm>).

NRCWA has initiated projects on almost all aspects of the roles of women in agriculture, several with a focus on Orissa.

- Improvement in storage practices of seeds and grains of important crops with women perspective
- Reducing drudgery of women in agricultural operations through use of improved equipment
- Management of coastal agro-system affected by super-cyclone in Orissa
- Mission Mode: National Agricultural Technology Project (NATP) Empowerment of Women in Agriculture
- Involving rural women in aquaculture
- Promotion of vermiculture by women farmers
- Training of trainers, training of farm women, extension programs including Kisan melas, exhibitions, exposure

visits, Mahila Goshtis, including training by Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK),

- Organizing self-help groups of women through KVKs, training programs on income generation activities, arranging innovative marketing outlets, women in cyber extension.
- All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP) on Home Science for Women's Empowerment (<http://www.icar.org.in/anrep/200304/12-WOMENpercent20INpercent20AGRICULTURE.pdf>)

The NCRWA has taken up a project on development of database on gender in agriculture to generate data on crop, animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry and agro-processing. The creation of an accessible data base on women in farming systems is a specific need.

The NRCWA projects listed above are indicative of strong technology, knowledge and information content. The difference in levels of skills, knowledge and expertise between men and women, especially in the modern context, which is one of the critical gender disparities that are responsible for the low status of women, is tied up with the low status of women's literacy and education, which in turn, is a product of women's socialization under a regressive and patriarchal social climate. NRCWA accords importance to upgrading women's technical proficiencies and capabilities. This has always remained a strong strategy plank of development extension activities, irrespective of the women's literacy and general educational status.

Technology, Women's Work and Training

The relationship between technology and women's work status is not merely linear but is also mediated through the socio-economic and gender framework. This is especially true of women belonging to asset-less and asset-poor families. At a very basic level, these socio-economic and gender factors

may constrain women's capacity to attend training programs and classes, depending on age, marital status, number of children, asset ownership, logistical considerations, time allocation, seasonality and many other aspects of familial setting. Providing women better access to new and emerging technologies has to be backed up with a better understanding of these factors and how they impinge on the process of what is now commonly termed as "technological empowerment of women". Enhancement of skills and the knowledge base may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for the enhancement of the status of women as productive workers, especially in their own eyes. Research needs to be directed at these 'other' factors constraining women's optimum use of technologies. For this purpose, the use of gender analysis frameworks and methodologies are needed. (Box 15)

Box 15: Technological Empowerment

Only the concerted action of the agricultural research system and policy makers can lead to meaningful research on issues concerning women. Technological Empowerment of women in agriculture is not simply a matter of research or extension. There are issues which invoke policies, which require support for taking those technologies to the field. Hence one must look at the issues in a holistic manner. *There is a need for direct interaction between scientists and women farmers and labor.* The country is rich in traditional technologies, which need to be better understood. Development research must ensure the participation of actual users. There is a greater need to improve the land to lab and people to lab effort. Care must be taken not to impose non-viable technology, e.g. indiscriminate use of toxic pesticides, which have resulted in high levels of contamination of water bodies. The heavy use of chemical fertilizers has driven over 35 percent of prime land out of cultivation. Technology of water conservation and protection is very useful for women, as providers of the resource. So are technologies of energy conservation and food safety

Source: National Commission for Women 2004 "Report of the National Task Force on Technological Empowerment of Women in Agriculture"

Drudgery reduction through application of new technologies is often identified with work done in agriculture. An evaluation of the DANIDA-funded projects found that most of the agricultural methods and technologies pursued through the project, while environment-friendly, increased women's workloads (Danish Institute for International Studies 2004d). But a very polluting environment exists in another site of drudgery – the kitchen – especially of subsistence farmer households. The exposure to smoke from childhood makes women prone to many disorders, including congestive heart conditions. The cooking environment in hot, cramped and poorly ventilated kitchens also causes exhaustion and dehydration, especially in hot summers. However, this kind of drudgery is not given attention by many scientific application programs in the agricultural sciences, perhaps because it is not associated with the public sphere of work in agriculture (i.e. drudgery in the work place) but with the domestic realm (Swaminathan, Mina 2004).

Institutional mechanisms that are mandated to identify gender issues in the specific areas of technology (inclusive of new knowledge) would find it advantageous to look at these interfaces. Collection of basic information on women - especially on women in agriculture who belong to certain well-defined economic and social categories - should be a strong ingredient both in the training and research context, as much to assess their skills and knowledge levels as to understand their constraints in upgrading them. Issues such as the statistical purdah behind which the majority of women workers remain hidden, and their dominance in the unpaid sector, are integral to a better understanding of the equation between women and technology. Such issues pinpoint the need to make women more visible through documentation and dissemination of their roles and contributions to agriculture. In turn, this requires that institutions adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of women. New and emerging fields of learning such as women's studies, or older disciplines such as sociology and anthropology, are relevant to a more well-rounded and comprehensive understanding of women in agriculture in the context of gender relations and roles.

In a situation where the trainee women and the trainers belong to diametrically different classes and life styles, it is essential that concrete steps be taken to increase the women's sense of participation and involvement. Training in this context, when it is conducted as a uni-directional process, becomes one that merely conveys information from one level (higher) to another (lower), assuming that the women lack information and that the main (if not the only purpose) of the training is to add to the information and knowledge levels of the trainees. This is exacerbated by the gendered nature of the process, where the trainers are mostly men and the trainees are all female.

Interface with Intermediary Organizations

The role of intermediary organizations, which could act as channels of communication between the village/grassroots women and scientific agencies can be viewed as "institutional mechanisms or processes that facilitate decentralized planning, implementation and monitoring, involving non-governmental and community organizations from the grassroots upwards" (paragraph 201 of BPFA). These organizations, who work with women at the grassroots level, are familiar and conversant with the realities of women's everyday lives, not only concerning their knowledge levels and their work in agriculture, but also intra-household issues and general social and economic environments, all of which contribute to their capacity for absorbing and benefiting from the training.

A conference held in the nineties on the management and regeneration of the natural environment on the theme of a wider role for peasant women, deliberated on the importance of intermediary organizations and made the following (Box 16) a part of their recommendations.

NRCWA could usefully forge linkages with such intermediary organizations and in the process also sharpen its own multi-disciplinary focus. Another suggestion is to constitute a broad-based advisory group at the institutional level on gender issues that would draw on a wide range of expertise and backgrounds.

Box 16: Peasant Women Speak Out

1. The women must have complete knowledge of available training programs
2. Training must be adapted to the specific problems of the area and the people's needs and must not be cast in too general terms. This calls for preparatory consultations between the trainers and the trainees or their representatives. The trainers must understand the field situation.
3. There should be collaboration between women's groups and scientific institutions to develop new types of training activities on these lines.
4. Educational institutions and teachers must be involved in activities at the local level so that they can function as information and dissemination centres.
5. Training and information should be given to women's groups on land laws and laws pertaining to water and forests
6. Public display of ownership records and government circulars on such matters is essential to improve women's access to information. Posters and other visual aids should be used in areas where literacy is very low.

Source: CWDS 1991 "Voices of Peasant Women" Report of National Conference on Role of Peasant Women.

An important question is that of possible linkages that can be forged between NRCWA and the Gender Research Cell in the MOA. A strong and synergistic association between research and policy would be advantageous to both. This also raises the larger question of coordination on gender issues within the larger macrocosm of the agricultural establishments, both at Central and State levels.

Redesigning Agricultural Training Curricula

Re-designing agricultural training curricula to include women's concerns is an important component of mainstreaming women's concerns in agricultural education. The M.S.Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) and the Centre for Studies on Gender Concerns in Agriculture

(CSGCA) of the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) have collaborated in producing a course curriculum for undergraduates in agricultural universities. Titled "Gender Issues in Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods", it has as its overall aim the sensitisation of students to the issues of gender in rural India. The course has the following specific objectives:

1. To build perspective by providing an overview of the social construction of gender and gender inequality
2. To create skills by identifying gender roles, rights and responsibilities and their bearing on gender relations
3. To bring about attitudinal change, creating gender sensitivity and helping students internalize equity concerns as fundamental human rights

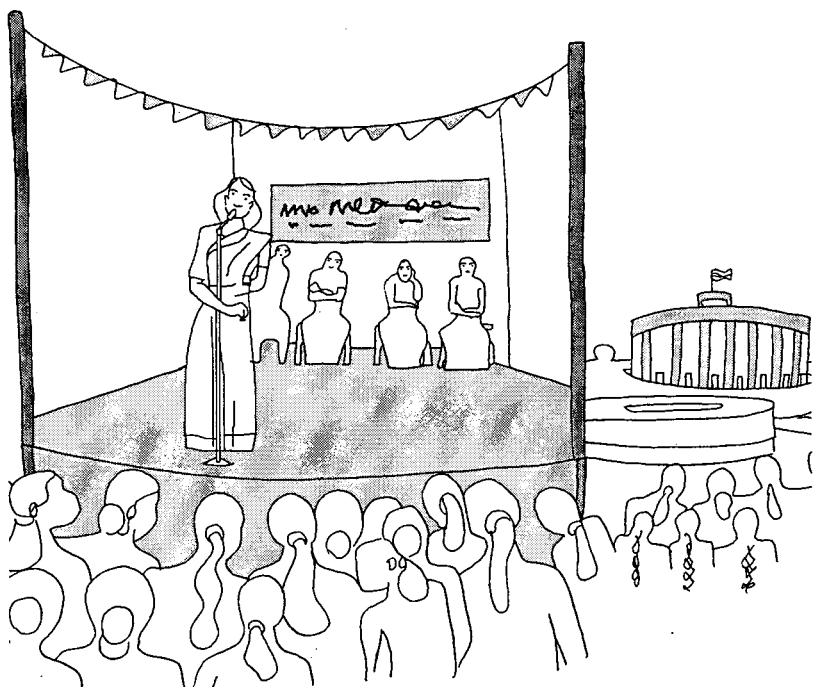
The course consists of two modules, a) Gender Relations and b) Rural Livelihoods and Gender Issues in Different Agrarian Sectors. The former covers policy approaches, land rights, micro-finance, livelihoods and other topics. The latter covers four sectors – irrigation, forestry, fisheries and livestock (MSSRF and KAU undated).

The institutional mechanisms and the back-up that were responsible for the creation of this 'first' course curriculum are very relevant. The actors and the processes are described below in a step-by-step format.

1. After a series of meetings, first on the technological empowerment of women (MSSRF 1997) and then through a national-level Task Force supported by ICAR on Women in Agriculture, an undergraduate course mainstreaming gender concerns was mooted.
2. Vice Chancellors, Deans and faculty from 15 agricultural universities, gender specialists, representatives of ICAR, NGOs and academics came together in 1999 to identify themes and topics (MSSRF 2000).

3. MSSRF and Kerala Agricultural University began a collaborative process in 2000 and decided to evolve a gender-sensitive curriculum at both the under-graduate and post-graduate levels, in late 2002.
4. A consultant specialist in gender and development, was identified and invited to develop a core module with the support of MSSRF and Kerala Agricultural University.
5. A feedback workshop held after the draft outline was prepared and circulated, took certain key decisions, one of which was to opt for a generic module rather than a Kerala University-specific one, thus giving all the Universities the option of adapting the module to their context.
6. Another key decision was to keep it as a core course at the undergraduate level, with optional segments, which could also be extended to the postgraduate level if needed.

The agricultural research and teaching establishment has now to carry this initiative forward into practice.



6. WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION MAKING

BPFA requires the member states to ensure equal access to women and their full participation in power structures and decision-making, so as to increase women's capacity in decision-making and leadership (UN 1996p).

Vision and Reality

The priority conventionally placed in this part of the BPFA is on the power structures of the government (legislative, executive and judicial) and on women's participation in all aspects of its functioning. The BPFA emphasizes the need to provide a balance in this area of political power that more accurately reflects the composition within society of the two sexes. For women's interests to be better taken into account within Government, it is necessary for them to move towards

more equal participation in decision-making. More women in politics signals a shift towards redefining political priorities by addressing women's gender-specific concerns and moving them into the political mainstream. But in reality, women are largely under-represented at most levels of government, in the legislature, ministerial and executive bodies, in spite of ECOSOC having targeted the reaching of 30 percent representation of women globally in positions at decision-making levels by 1995 (UN 1996q).

Simultaneously, the BPFA also presents another perspective by highlighting women's leadership in community and informal organizations. Women have obtained access to power through alternative structures, particularly in the non-governmental organizational sector and in grassroots organizations, where they have been able to articulate their interests and concerns and place women's issues on the national, regional and international agendas (UN 1996r).

Two Perspectives

Women's participation in political power and decision making can be seen in two modes.

The first is the formal entry of women into decision-making positions within structures such as political parties, government hierarchies of power and influence, other elected bodies such as trade unions, high-level committees and boards, and services, professions, business ventures, and corporations at different levels. Here status largely centers around the extent of women's representation in these structures; improvement of women's status is signified by the decreasing disparities between men and women in terms of numbers in such representation. Though the underlying rationale is that of increase in women's capability and capacity to access power, it is often seen as trying to "catch up" with men, in terms of numbers. A comparative picture in quantitative terms provides a key to studying the trend of changes in women's status over time. Thus, the increase in the number of women in Parliament or in State Assemblies and the general trend over time indicates

the entry of more women into the political field, and therefore of improved status. Numbers of women in the cadres of police, lawyers, judges, Forest Officers, and other professions vis-à-vis men, likewise provide a measure of women's progress in decision-making at the professional levels. The comparatively small numbers of women in the country with access to literacy, education, influence, resources and skills, options and opportunities restrict the scope of this model of participation to a very small number of women. The emphasis then becomes placed more on individual women who successfully pursue a political or professional career, than on the collective strength of women in these organizations or groups.

The second mode refers to the much wider and larger representation of women – especially rural and poor women – across the country, in mass action, local struggles, and networking across regional divides, in which many women have learnt not only to mobilize and plan, but also to build organizations, very often with the help of intermediary organizations. The aim of many of these middle class organizations is not so much to organize poor women as to help poor women to organize (CWDS 2002a).

Grassroots organizations, their larger formations, and local movements, which tend to be shaped by the development discourse, call themselves 'development organizations' and are seemingly antithetical to 'politics' as it is conventionally understood. They tend to be identified as 'organizations of civil society' rather than as political formations in embryo. But every action that questions and challenges existing social and economic norms that discriminate against and subjugate women should be understood as political action, as the old feminist slogan of 'personal is political' would serve to show. This is the contention of this section of the paper.

From this point of view it could be said that, however important it is that more and more women enter formal politics, it is equally important that informal political action is promoted and strengthened at all levels. Unless women

are both visible and assertive at all levels, their views and perspective will continue to be cosmetic; this is especially true of poor women in the context of the aftermath of the economic reforms.

Adding further to this argument, it is often held that representation cannot be equated with political participation, though the United Nations has privileged political participation in terms of numbers as an indicator of human development through the HDRs. But the presence of large numbers of elected women by itself does not result in restructuring and redistribution of power and resources. To make women's representation really significant it is important to choose allies.

The Panchayats and Women

The entry of over one million elected women into the Panchayati Raj bodies (units of local governance) is a distinctively new feature in India. This landmark initiative of the early '90s has brought in a mass of rural women, many of them with minimal or no education, with no previous experience of politics or local management, or even of working in any capacity in a predominantly male environment. This miracle has been made possible by affirmative action, through the strategy of reserving seats for rural women, specifically by including women belonging to the excluded or socially and economically marginalized groups. This new wave has the potential of creating a new cadre of women leaders, from the hitherto excluded constituencies (in terms of gender, caste and class/ethnicity) that could lead to a social churning and upturn the present hierarchies along which political and economic power has been ordered in the country since Independence. Both the models of political empowerment of women could be harmonized in this new paradigm. The formalization of women's entry into local bodies of governance helps to catalyze a new type of leadership from below. It has helped to expand the democratic base of the country and to foster

support for fighting local campaigns to protect women's rights, especially in the context of backlash by vested interests.

Yet, this anticipated socio-political revolution has not really got off the ground. Women elected to panchayats are still fighting for their basic rights to recognition in a male-dominated governance structure, though more than a decade has passed since the 73rd amendment became part of the Constitution. What is more discouraging is that there are no signs of the State taking a proactive approach to bridge the gap between the letter of the law and its spirit, between the de facto and the de jure. A Working Group on Decentralized Planning and Panchayati Raj institutions was set up for the Tenth Five Year Plan to assess the adequacy of legal and executive provisions for the empowerment of women and socially disadvantaged groups, and to suggest measures for strengthening their participation. This Group could have really gone into the roots of the problem and drawn up a charter of action. But after providing a trite, negative and discouraging picture of the elected women representatives and making an observation that the women themselves initially lacked confidence in their abilities, all that the report piously (and tautologically) observes is that the ultimate hope for these groups lies in their ability to "build coalitions that support processes to lessen the disabilities that plague them". It further goes on to say that "the forces that support empowerment of these groups need to be encouraged" without clearly spelling out the role and accountability of the State in the matter (Planning Commission 2001).

Affirmative action through the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution has resulted in over a million women entering the local bodies. Most States have at least 33 percent elected women in Panchayats as a direct consequence of reservation, with some States exceeding this figure. Karnataka's representation is as high as 45 percent, 42 percent and 38 percent in the village, Taluk / Block and District Panchayats respectively. Other States with high figures of participation of women in panchayats (at various levels) include Kerala

(36.4 percent elected women), West Bengal (35.4 percent elected women), Tamil Nadu (36 percent of the Chairpersons of the Gram Panchayat), and Uttar Pradesh (54 percent of the Chairpersons of the Zila Parishads). Several States that had less than one-third women at the Gram Panchayat level in the first tenure had performed well in the second by exceeding the mandated proportion (DWCD 2005cc).

This high visibility of women in Panchayat bodies contrasts, in turn, with the poor status of devolution of powers from the government agencies to the local bodies. Panchayats have not been given full financial, legal and administrative powers to function independently. Twenty-nine subjects (ironically, agriculture tops this list) have been devolved to these institutions by law. In theory, the Presidents of the Gram Panchayats, Block Panchayats and District Panchayats are responsible for prioritizing the development needs of the villagers and allocating the grants. In practice, the level of responsiveness and manner of functioning of the Panchayats varies considerably across States (DWCD 2005d).

Except for a few states such as Kerala, Karnataka, and West Bengal, where some promising starts have been made, devolution of funds, functions and functionaries have not made any significant progress on the ground. While the political elites at national and state levels do not want to share political power with the grassroots representatives, (whom they see as potential threats to their future) the bureaucracy is unwilling to work under what they see as 'the new masters' and be accountable more directly to the people.

Assessing Women's Political Participation

It is within this overall bleak scenario that women's access to political participation and leadership through Panchayati Raj is to be appraised. The moot point to note is that when Panchayats themselves are crippled in their functioning, they cannot be expected to act as vehicles of strengthening women's political status. The weaknesses are of two types at least, – one, the weak structure of the present set-up of the Panchayats

themselves, which affect the elected women as well as the men, and the other, the gendered discrimination affecting the elected women. Added to the gender dynamic are the caste, class and ethnicity factors. Elected women belonging to these groups are doubly discriminated against.

Elected women entering the public arena for the first time lack confidence and feel isolated, as they have no previous political experience. They seldom get opportunities to develop leadership skills. Ninety five percent of the elected women representatives in the country are first-timers in politics. Lacking skills, they are not taken seriously by their colleagues. Where sustained training and networking efforts are being made, women have emerged as articulate and motivated leaders. Increased networking and formation of federations have helped the women to improve solidarity and collective consciousness.

It is therefore, important to assess women's access to political participation and decision-making from several perspectives and not to insulate it within the context of women's entry into politics at national or state level or the 'formal' institutional structures such as political parties, Parliaments and Assemblies, or even within the formal functioning of the Panchayati Raj local bodies. Political parties are still unwilling to share opportunities for political participation with women. This unwillingness is more visibly apparent at the higher levels of political power. It is brought out starkly by the fact that the plan for affirmative action at the Panchayati Raj levels (Districts and below) did not rouse much controversy or backlash, but the proposal to reserve seats for women in the Parliament and State Assemblies continues to meet with stiff resistance for the last decade. Male members of many political parties bonded together to sabotage the Bill. Though political parties in India have women's wings that are ostensibly meant to encourage women to join politics, they generally serve only to strengthen and replenish vote banks and not to strengthen women's roles and contributions in the political arena.

A View from the Grassroots

Political freedom and the right to vote are inadequate for poor women, when it is economic freedom or empowerment that they need for themselves and their families. The poor want a voice and to vote is not enough. Bringing women workers into the mainstream is the bedrock of political empowerment and it requires organization building and garnering of collective strength. Organization building takes place through women's organizations, trade unions, cooperatives and other groups. SEWA is the largest primary sector labor union, with a membership of nearly seven lakhs. It fights for the rights of women and has an agenda for providing full employment at the household level. It looks at household employment and not employment at the macro level. This ensures food security, income security and social security. SEWA discerns a vital difference between *organizing* and *mobilizing*. Issue-based forums are short-lived, but building organizations of the poor is critical (CWDS 2002b).

There are examples of grassroots action that may have started in the mode of mobilization of the excluded on a particular issue or a set of issues, but have gone on to mature into staunch organizations with a longer-term agenda, including building of identities in a representational idiom. Koraput region in Orissa has historically been known for its self-sufficiency, for the quality and diversity of rice as well as other millets, as also for its forest resources, yielding some of the best quality timber. Now it is riddled with all the miseries of mal-development – ecological fragility, severe imbalances and environmental stresses, frequent droughts and floods, mass migrations, and sale of children. Tribal women have “a culture of work and a culture of silence” that is very difficult to penetrate. The historical processes of extortion and exploitation had left the women petrified of strangers and they just vanished indoors or ran away to the hills through the back doors. An intervention by the NGO AGRAGAMEE took long years to establish, first winning the trust of the entire community (not only of the women) and then hand-holding with the women through long and interminable struggles with

local officialdom, contractors, private companies, money lenders, and politicians. These were lessons in 'political' action, linked to locally sustainable development strategies and plans.

The material conditions of the tribal women impelled them to demand improvements on a collective platform. The first part of this tribal women's story saw the NGO using different strategies (when winning community support was more crucial) from those it used in the second stage. Once there was solidarity on the ground and consciousness had been raised and the NGO, by dint of hard work, was able to effect communication, win confidence, and give advice and support, the scenario shifted from 'activism to enterprise management', while sustaining political action. The women, mindful of their legacy of generations of exploitation were in pressing need of finding ways of sustaining livelihoods. Various kinds of organizational innovations, changes and adjustments had to be made. Women needed to understand the working of the market, to come to terms with it and become familiar with the world of commercial transactions. Managerial capacities as well as training and skill development had to be introduced. Women had to learn how to compete (CWDS 2002c).

Addressing the question of why it is important to organize poor women, Vina Mazumdar says "Poor women's organizations like SEWA, Working Women's Forum (WWF) or Annapurna Mahila Mandal had demonstrated *far greater political dynamism* and a desire to *bring about broader changes* than middle class women's organizations, whether before or after Independence" (CWDS 2002d). (emphasis added)

Grassroots action of the type described above is a movement that builds up solidarity and attempts to transform the community, privileging the collective over the individual, even while it results in building effective leadership from below. These attempts cannot be measured using the conventional formulae of women's political participation, such as those found in the Human Development Reports. This gap is one of measurement and perception.

Women in Politics - Formal and Informal

In India so far, 14 General Elections have been held for the Lok Sabha. The percentage of women Parliamentarians during this period has fluctuated between 8 percent and 12 percent (Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation 2005). Between 1997 and 2004, women's participation in positions of power in both houses of Parliament, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, did not exceed 9 percent. In the 2004 Parliamentary elections, the number of women elected to the Lower House (Lok Sabha) declined from 49 (out of a total of 543 members) to 44 (out of 539 members). In the Upper House, their numbers increased from 20 to 28 out of a total of 245 members.

The numbers of women out of these elected members holding positions of power is very low. The same situation is found in the State legislatures. Women have limited access to human and financial resources and do not enjoy support from political parties. These reasons have been advanced by the Government to justify their poor political performance and participation in public life at the level of the national and State bodies of the legislature (DWCS 2005dd).

Women are under-represented in the process of formulation and implementation of the Plan itself. (Planning Commission 2005m) Though women constitute 6 percent of the total members in decision-making committees of the different political parties, they have little or limited power in decision-making. Women account for a small percentage in the prestigious all-India services, such as the Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service, Indian Audit and Account Service, Indian Statistical Service, and Indian Economic Service ranging from less than 4 percent to 23 percent (DWCD 2005ee).

Poor Women and Political Action

These minuscule fractions are always quoted in government documents and receive publicity at national and international forums, blanking out the larger picture. Women, especially

poor women, have always organized around issues, asserting themselves, articulating needs and bringing themselves to the forefront of the nation's consciousness. Women have organized themselves into unions, associations, cooperatives, chit funds, local credit societies, and other local groups, articulating common concerns and spearheading campaigns. The small mutual credit societies that women form, including self-help groups, are more sustainable than other forms of women's organizations, and are found all over the country because of their economic rationale.

Besides forming their own organizations and groups, history shows that women have participated in larger general movements along with men. Examples are the nationalist and the freedom movements, the Salt Satyagraha and anti-alcohol campaigns, where women fought for equality and leadership. More recently, fish workers struggles saw women visibly mobilizing themselves and going out in demonstrations even before the men, campaigning against unjust market taxes and lack of proper facilities in the markets. Other examples are the Chipko Andolan; peasant uprisings such as the Bodh Gaya struggle for land; agitations by agricultural workers' unions on land issues; the tobacco workers; agitation in Nipani for increase in wages and other demands; and the uprising of tribals in Maharashtra's Thane district to regain ownership of their lands that had been taken over by the non-tribals. Many of these local struggles are over land-based issues such as redeeming of mortgaged land (by women in Orissa, who formed themselves into a sangathana); freeing bonded labor in Andhra Pradesh; and struggles for Minimum Wages by forest produce collectors in Gujarat, as well as by tasar spinners and leafplate workers in Bihar. In each of these struggles, – whether general movements or issue based struggles – women were at the forefront (SHRAM SHAKTI, 1988b).

Gail Omvedt and Nalini Nayak have catalogued women's contribution to the struggles of peasants, agricultural workers and fish workers. The male participants in these struggles testified that in the rural upsurge in Maharashtra, women

were the most militant, in the forefront of the marches, the first to break through the police lines and the most tenacious in arguments. Gail Omvedt calls women the inventors of new forms of struggles, adding the edge of the issue of gender oppression to class struggles. Nalini Nayak observes that while it is true that women were also obliged to play service roles, it was obvious that the militancy of the fish workers' struggle was a result of their active and committed participation (SHRAM SHAKTI, 1988b)

In cases such as the Chipko, localized problems were transformed into national issues or received national focus in policies. In spite of reverses, the Bodh Gaya struggle did result in women getting some land, and became an important road marker in further struggles by women for land. Women's localized struggles against liquor shops impacted at the national level, as well as brought about changes in the structure of many trade unions, with the formation of women's wings. The women's movement that started in the seventies created new groups, including both poor rural women and urban middle class women, progressive women, self-employed women and mass-based movements. Organizations of self-employed women bring women's entire being into focus – economic, social and political – working from localized issues to a realization that these were of national import, then expanding and networking across the country.

What do these various instances prove? That women have the ability to mobilize and organize for change, that they understand the issues that affect them, that they can unite, under the right circumstances, to change them. But most of these movements have not been sustainable. Confined to a specific issue and a specific place, they do not lead to an ongoing organization, which would take up one issue after another and include, gradually, many different interests of women workers in its fold. They have potential, but these short-lived struggles and campaigns do not crystallize into a movement.

Most importantly, these struggles have highlighted the importance of organizing. It is a process whereby the individual has to break out of her isolation and consider herself part of a larger group which acts cohesively, creating a united group of people acting together on issues of mutual concern. Such group formations break down divisions and lead to sustainable outcomes. (SHRAM SHAKTI, 1988c).



CONCLUSIONS

This paper has attempted to draw attention to issues concerning the interface between public policies and the realities of poor women's lives in the broadly defined areas of work and entitlements, with special reference to rural women and agriculture. The paper has chosen to focus on poor women, not only because that is at the top of the post-Beijing agenda, a path-breaking priority vis-à-vis earlier World Conferences on Women, but because the under-privileged status of the majority of the women in this country demands such a focus. The paper has looked at the connects and disconnects between BPFA and State policies, but has not studied in depth similar gaps/congruence between policies/programs and their actual implementation on the ground.

There are still some issues of concern and a few of promise, which are mentioned below.

- The response to the globalization paradigm falls far short of the requirements laid down by BPFPA. The impact on women, especially poor women, in terms of the persistent and increasing burden of poverty, has not and does not influence macro-economic policies or development strategies. The BPFPA emphasis that the impact on women of poverty must be an ingredient of macro-planning and must influence how economic policies are determined, is not visible anywhere in government planning. Post-economic reforms, mitigation of poverty through safety-nets is being talked of. But the nuts and bolts of the anti-poverty programs remain unchanged since the mid-70s, when they were first launched. The limitations of the approach are rarely aired in public discussions. Only better implementation is emphasized. The absence of a gender perspective is cloaked by an affirmative action strategy that is flawed, as it only aims at achieving coverage in terms of numbers. Women are still a residual category in planning in spite of many advances in concepts, planning strategies and overall commitments to gender equality at the national, regional and international levels. The small successes that have been achieved are not substantial even for women in general, and more especially for women in poverty.
- The contributions to the national economy of women belonging to the subsistence sectors, to the informal and unorganized segments of the work force and the national economy, continue to remain unrecognized and unmeasured in national statistics. The wealth of information on women's unpaid/unremunerated work that has come out of Time Use Surveys has not been utilized in taking the issue forward at the policy level with sufficient alacrity, though some follow-up at the technical level is under way. It is difficult to envisage how the various deficiencies in the current development planning scenario for women can be attended to, at concept, strategy and operational levels, unless this reality of women's everyday lives is accepted and integrated in macro-plans.

- Certain movements for change are in evidence, but the direction, in many cases, is top-down. The valid experiences of grassroots women and their collectives are distilled and then re-served in a top-down manner from the center to the periphery; in the process, much of the value and the truth is lost or distorted. The high-profile aura being invested in micro-credit as a panacea for women's economic progress cloaks a number of disquieting features that have a bearing on issues of social and economic justice for poor women. This form of outsourcing cannot dilute the State's immediate and direct accountability towards women, especially poor women, in terms of the BPFA as well as other national and international commitments.
- The absence of genuine decentralization and devolution of powers to the local levels is perhaps one of the most serious setbacks in the last decade, after the Constitutional amendments were passed. This perhaps, more than any other feature, marks the continuance of the center-periphery paradigm of power in the country. Added to this is the continuing gender discrimination to which women are subjected within the local governance structures, especially women of the socially excluded and economically marginalized groups and communities. In the women's context, the term "political participation" should be interpreted in a much broader perspective, so that representation of women in local action of various types, fighting for their rights and building up their own enterprises and organizations to improve their lives, can also be included. Seeing women's inclusion in politics merely in terms of numbers in the context of formal institutions, misses out a large number of vibrant movements taking place in different parts of the country. As suggested in the Mid Term Appraisal of the Tenth Plan, the actual experiences of women in empowering themselves need to be first understood, and those experiences used as a benchmark.
- The inability to look at working women (all poor women are working women) and their needs holistically is one of

the greatest disservices to them. This approach unfortunately, is entrenched in most Government programs for women, the objectives or terms of reference of which vary in tune with the overall goals of the implementing agencies. Most of these are couched in terms of higher productivity and efficiency. The entire domain of women's unpaid/unremunerated work is not taken into account, thus not only adding to women's total work burden, but also leading to dysfunctional situations in areas such as childcare. In the name of support services, a program initially termed the Minimum Needs Program was launched many, many years ago, but it was not based on study of women's specific needs. In totality, this program is also now a shadow. In the absence of genuine devolution and decentralization, the vertical compartmentalization of the working of the line Departments ensures that whatever little services are available are not delivered in an integrated way.

- The Ministry of Agriculture is now at a stage when it is moving from a 'women only' project focus to a 'gender mainstreaming' approach. New institutional mechanisms such as the Gender Resource Centre, the Gender Budgeting Cell, and Gender Audit are now being taken up, along with older ones such as the Women's Component Plan. Gender issues in both research and policy-making are said to be receiving attention. The issue of women's unpaid work however, is not on the MOA agenda. The issue of broadening the agriculture agenda to make it more inclusive, in tune with the farm production patterns of small and marginal farmers is also an important priority. Better coordination and collaboration, both intra-Ministry and intra-GOI sister Ministries and Departments dealing with women workers, as well as between the Gender Resource Cell and the National Centre for Research on Women in Agriculture can be thought of as positive institutional mechanisms. Special inputs on women in agriculture on a broader and inter-disciplinary basis can also facilitate better outreach to poor women working on land-based activities.

- Lack of effective entitlements to land has been the most stubborn constraint to improvements in women's status and roles as producers in the economy. Women themselves feel that land ownership is the most important ingredient for their own self-respect, independence and dignity. Inheritance laws for Hindu women have been recently amended but ground-level realities are that women are not always aware of their own rights, of land laws or revenue procedures, nor do they get the supports and resources to cultivate their own land. A number of salutary initiatives have been taken by the Government of India and State agencies for allotment of revenue/waste land in the names of poor women, where the role of intermediary organizations in helping the women to access productive resources such as credit and technical knowhow have been acknowledged.

- On the positive side, it would be safe to say that the women's issue in 2005 has claimed just a little more of political space than it did a decade ago. There is certainly more awareness of women's issues than there was ten years ago. The State has made many efforts and launched many initiatives for greater gender justice. Awareness of the existence of the women workers of the unorganized and informal sectors is much higher, though they are now being sucked into the new global paradigms. The strength of the movements from below is in direct contrast to the still top-down direction of state power. The dynamics of the interactions between the two will shape the history of the next decade.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AICRP	All India Coordinated Research Project
ANTWA	Andhra Pradesh Training of Women in Agriculture
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CIFE	Central Institute of Fisheries Education
CSGCA	Centre for Studies on Gender Concerns in Agriculture
CSO	Central Statistical Organisation
CSWB	Central Social Welfare Board
CWDS	Centre for Women's Development Studies
DAH	Department of Animal Husbandry
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DDS	Deccan Development Society
DWCD	Department of Women and Child Development
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EGS	Employment Guarantee Scheme
ESCAP	Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FYP	Five Year Plan
GBC	Gender Budgeting Cell
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOI	Government of India
GRC	Gender Resource Centre
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
ICAR	Indian Council for Agricultural Research
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation

IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
IMY	Indira Mahila Yojana
ISRO	Indian Space Research Organisation
ITI	Industrial Training Institute
KAU	Kerala Agricultural University
KVK	Krishi Vigyan Kendra
LBSNAA	Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration
LPG	Liberalisation, Privatisation, Globalisation
MAPWA	Madhya Pradesh Women in Agriculture
MESW	Ministry of Education and Social Welfare
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MOL	Ministry of Labour
MRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MSSRF	M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
MTA	Mid Term Appraisal
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NATP	National Agricultural Technology Project
NCAER	National Council of Applied Economic Research
NCF	National Commission on Farmers
NCMP	National Common Minimum Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIPFP	National Institute of Public Finance and Policy
NPA	National Plan of Action
NRCWA	National Research Centre for Women in Agriculture
NSS	National Sample Survey
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organisation
RDI	Rural Development Institute
RENK	Rajasthan Ekal Nari Sangathan
RKC	Rural Knowledge Centre
RMK	Rashtriya Mahila Kosh
SC/ST	Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes

SCSTDC	Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Development Corporation
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
SGRY	Swarnajayanthi Grameen Rojgar Yojana
SHG	Self Help Group
SNA	System of National Accounts
T&V	Training and Visit
TANWA	Tamil Nadu Women in Agriculture
TEWA	Training and Extension for Women in Agriculture
TUS	Time Use Survey
TWA	Training of Women in Agriculture in Gujarat
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VKC	Village Knowledge Centre
VRC	Village Resource Centre
WCP	Women's Component Plan
WID	Women in Development
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WYTEP	Women Youth Training & Extension Project

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