

MEMORANDUMS

BY

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7. Women and Planning Methodology - Comment on the Sixth Plan - September 1981
8. Report of sub-group on women's employment
9. Note for Panel 11th January, 1975.

~~to *interim* *was* *subject* *of* *the* *discussion*~~

ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINISTRY OF LABOUR

(Note on women workers prepared for the
Advisory committee on the implementation of
the equal remuneration act, 1983.)

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Advisory Committee
Ministry of Labour

Devaki Jain
August 1, 1983

Note

Introduction

The Institute of Social Studies Trust has been involved for the last eight years in

- (i) examining the statistics on women workers from official statistics - as well as gathering new data on various types of female workers in order to improve the quantification of female workers, their work patterns, wages, hours and needs;
- (ii) designing employment strengthening projects for women workers mainly in the non-farm sectors e.g. chikan, beedi, zari, lifafa workers, spinners;
- (iii) designing rural development projects mainly through district and block level plan intervention exercises;
- (iv) convening national and district level seminars on women workers - both public as well as limited to economists and statisticians.

Further, I personally and the Institute has been closely involved with the development of SEWA in Delhi - of zari workers in Jamma Masjid and of lifafa workers in the Turkman Gate area - as well as the development of several such SEWAS all over India especially Lucknow, Bharatpur, Kashmir and Belgaum.

1.1 This experience has led the Institute to identify the following points for the consideration of the Committee:

- 1.2 The issue of discrimination in employment and wages; the need to have special arrangements at all levels - policy, legislation, training and establishments to ensure equal opportunity and reward for women, is common to all categories of workers.

However there are significant differences between labour that is unionised or works for organised industry i.e. wage and salaried workers and all other types of workers such as labour as found in agriculture, the self-employed producers who are mainly engaged in non-farm activities and so on. Hence I would submit that the consideration of this issue and the brief given to this Committee may be done under at least two categories of labour. In the note that follows I shall be mainly concentrating on the second category of labour namely workers who are not in organised industry, who are not wage or salary earners in any regular way.

2. Displacement

2.1 Women amongst the poor are also in the lowest paid, lowest skilled occupations and are the first to be disemployed as a result of any technology change. For example new technologies for agricultural growth usually provide certain inputs like pesticides, weedicides apart from fertilisers, credit and water. The majority of India's female agricultural labourers are engaged in part-time work, weeding fields or harvesting crops such as groundnuts, vegetables, berries, fruits, etc. The introduction of weedicides in fields displaces them from the only wage work that is often available to them.

2.2 Similarly in non-farm employment the introduction of changes in processing such as for example a new machine to blend tobacco; the licensing of textile mills to do screen printing, the expansion of powerlooms and handloom, the licensing of woollen spinning into the mill sector have all resulted in heavy losses in terms of female employment. The figures of displacement range between 6000 women in tobacco to lakhs in spinning. The question is how do we safeguard against losing even those employment opportunities that are available to women?

Recommendation (2)

2.3 The most important action necessary here is to have a scrutiny of decisions on technology changes in the manufacture of various products. This may require a scrutiny even of the licensing policy, decisions taken by technical organisations like the Directorate General of Technical Development (DGTD).

2.4 It may require scrutiny of projects being supported by the Planning Commission.

2.5 The critical issue is that the Ministry of Labour has not been given the kind of power and roles that it needs to have. Its functions have been in the field of ensuring safeguarding workers' interest, implementing protective legislation. But the Economic Ministries and the Development Agencies hold in their hands the power to employ as well as to dis-employ. It is essential that, some stronger links are forged between the Labour Ministry and the employment creating Ministries.

2.6 For example, a representative of the Labour Ministry incharge of preventing displacement should be invited to be present in the Licencing Committee during the discussion and decision on licensing of new capacity, import of new technologies etc; similarly in the project appraisal and project clearance cell of the Planning Commission; similarly the IRDP Programme Cell and so on.

2.7 At the district level the District Labour Officer's powers are reduced to look after the employment exchanges, which again can only reflect the unemployment problem of those who register; as well as to arbitrate labour disputes which again are limited to the organised sector and the organised labour unions.

2.8 This pre-empts the Labour Ministry's role from the real needs of the workers including female workers in India as especially amongst female workers more than 80% are outside this net.

2.9 For the Labour Officer at the district level as well as all the way up to the Central Ministry level to be able to play the kind of role that is visualised in

the terms of reference of this Advisory Committee the first step would be that the Labour Ministry Committees to be given greater participation in employment decisions. It is not enough to have the Labour Ministry represented only in the working groups that are set up in preparing the plan documents.

3. System of hiring

3.1 Another characteristic of female labour is that all the sectors which are providing the maximum amount of non-farm employment such as Beedi rolling, Dairing, Weaving, Garment making come under the system of work distribution called put out work. In other words, there is an intermediary between the final manufacturer or trader and the labour. This is the contractor. The contractor gives raw material and picks up the final product and pays the women worker on a piece rate. It is often the case that laws on minimum wages cannot be exercised on this kind of worker because the employer does not consider himself responsible, and the contractor not being a registered employer also absolves himself.

3.2 It is unfortunate that this kind of intermediary contractor has grown even in the Government's programmes such as the National Rural Employment programme as well as the government's major construction work in road building, dam construction etc. Labour is mobilised through contractors who then elude wage legislation.

Recommendation (3)

3.3 The only solution that seems to be practical in this situation is for labour to be organised either through labour cooperatives or associations or unions to be able to negotiate their own hiring terms. This becomes very difficult in a situation where the employer such as say the landlord or the building contractor offers employment for such labour only for short periods in the year. The NREP offers employment during the agricultural lean seasons only. Similarly, construction is not a full-time perennial activity.

3.4 Hence labour itself is engaged, in multiple occupations over one year. In other words the same worker especially

woman worker could be an agricultural labourer in the beginning of the year, a poultry grower any part of the year, a handloom worker in another part of the year and unemployed in a further part of the year. This kind of multi occupational profile of poor labourers especially women makes it difficult for them to be brought in any form of association where they can negotiate with different employers in different sectors under different wage acts.

3.5 Yet it may have to be the first step especially if they can form cooperatives of their own labour rather than on the basis of occupation. They may then exercise some collective power in each of their potential occupations.

3.6 The multi occupations of a woman is not the only issue. Within a household there are multi occupations distributed between males and females and children. For example a father may be a handloom worker, a mother a part time agricultural labourer and a child a waste picker in a family of poor. The programme such as IRDP which is oriented towards poverty alleviation would provide a loan to one member of the household in order to strengthen the earning capacity. Usually, the male worker is chosen for this support. Frequently amongst the poor the male income earner tends to be less regular, more prone to drunkenness and migration than the female such that female worker becomes the main bread winner if not the sole supporter. Her need for a loan would be as great if not greater than the male worker. This occupational variation within the household is neither recorded in statistics nor taken note of by the Development Officer nor the Bank. This need has to be articulated by this women's forum.

3.7 For this to be implemented it will be useful to have a scheme meant for helping women to associate themselves as labourers to which applications can be invited both from social organisations such as those that implement schemes for women and children as well as development organisations which provide the majority of employment for women in the non-farm sectors such as handloom board, khadi board, silk board, handicrafts board and so on.

3.8 For this it may be useful to have a non-farm employment board consisting of the Chairmen of the above mentioned development boards including Central Social Welfare Board and those who are working with poor women such as the SEWA in Delhi, Ahmedabad and other places to work out a scheme as well as the possible training and expansion programme that may be necessary in order to make the scheme work.

4. Expansion of Employment

4.1 We have already mentioned that as much as it is necessary to prevent the loss of employment to poor women it is also important to find new avenues for employment. Reservation or quota systems, representation of women on recruiting boards, preference to women over men when other things are equal are some of the ideas that are prevalent and acceptable.

4.2 However, another important area for reservation is reservation of product and of market in different sectors.

4.3 It has been noticed that there are certain sectors such as electronics in which there is an increasing demand for female labour and therefore these are identified as sectors in which women's employment can be promoted. However it is extremely important to look at the form of organization of work in these sectors. The experience in South East Asia especially in Korea and Taiwan with electronic and garment industry expansion and the experience in Sri Lanka with the same industries in the export zone production has been documented by research scholars as well as United Nations. It has revealed acute exploitation physical hardship, danger to security. It has also revealed that many of these opportunities are somewhat insecure depending as they do on export markets. It has been shown that women who get displaced from these temporary opportunities often enter what is euphemistically called the entertainment industry.

It has also been found that when social organisations like women's organisation undertake production programmes such as ancillaries to large industry like telephones, there is a discrepancy between the wages being earned by the employees of the main industry and the ancillaries.

Hence many industries welcome women's ancillaries through voluntary organisations.

However there is a serious issue here of "black leg" i.e. cutting the wages of the unionised labour and there can be unethical conflicts between the dominant labour force of men and the ancillary labour force of women. It is important to look into these issues before going blindly into some of the occupational opportunities.

4.4 Expansion is also noticed in what are called the service sector. It is common to notice that in the initial stage of development there is an increase of women in what is called the tertiary sector. This sector includes teachers, nurses and such like as well as domestic servants. Many national programmes such as for example the adult education programme or the ICDS or the idea of a community health worker for every village straightaway creates large employment sheds for women. However in domestic work though there is an increasing demand for it very little work has been done in setting up some minimum organisational as well as legal arrangements for relationship between employer and employees. The Catholic Bishops conference had called a national conference on domestic workers which has identified many issues. The work initiated by them should be noticed as well as further expanded to see in what way labour department as well as social organisations can make domestic employment a stronger and healthy source of work for women.

4.5 In order to promote employment, a suggestion was made by me to the National Commission on Employment Promotion, through fiscal policy, that those establishments that employ increasing number of women would be given tax exemption at a lower level than others.

5. Equal Remuneration Act

5.1 If equal wages are paid for equal work a premise is that the work which is being done by the women is different from and less heavy than the work being done by the men.

5.2 While it is true that there are differences, in the physical endowment between men and women, it is now clearly proven that women are in fact doing what are called hard jobs even though the traditional perception is that these are light jobs.

5.3 Women in transplanting of rice bend themselves double and steadily plant the seedlings for hours standing in wet paddy fields. Men stand up right holding the string to guide the tidiness of the planting and also to supervise the women. The men's wages are double the women's because the tasks have been evaluated as such.

5.4 Similarly in public works norms have been set as light and heavy work usually defining women's as light. Yet any visitor to any construction site could see women walking up and down precarious slopes carrying earth or bricks while men may sit and lay the bricks. Women are neither perceived therefore as working equally hard nor due to various traditional reasons given access to these better tasks such as brick laying.

5.5 Further many of the tasks in which women are engaged are piece rate and punish women in the sense that they do not allow leave for sickness, time in child and household care or even in delivering of babies.

Hence much greater concern and consideration and thought has to be given to:

- a) levelling of wage with work i.e. reappraisal of the value of female tasks in agriculture and construction especially. Equivalence exercises have to be made.
- b) implementing the ERA on for example road building sites. The contractor perceives females as contributing less than males. Hence if the female wage is raised he would find it more worthwhile to retrench the female and hire male in her place. Children and females are often hired as they are cheaper.

This issue of comparative cost of labour - male and female - in terms of production per unit of wage has to be studied occupation by occupation.

There are many other issues which require further probing and research and some recommendations from this Committee. The identification of the women worker and the drawing out her profile has to be improved in the decennial census as well as in the agricultural labour enquiries. In order to do this the United Nations Statistical Office in collaboration with the ILO is planning to set up a steering committee to look into the statistics on women and children. This steering committee has drawn up an agenda preparing on what are called the plans at the international level by the data collecting organisations. Apart from influencing the 1980-81 census all over the world there are plans to influence the ILO guidelines for household and labour enquiry, the FAO guidelines for quantifying rural labour. The occupational classification system tends to ignore the differences in occupation within household as well as to ignore the further breakdown of occupations in the developing countries.

There is already a steering committee on statistics on women and work in the Planning Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. K.C. Seal, the Member Secretary of that committee could be a member of this Advisory Committee.

6. Operational points

1. Perhaps to separate the action agenda for this Committee between the women in the regular employment, organised industry, organised labour, association sectors and those in the casual employment, self-employment, unorganised labour sectors.
2. To support a series of consultations as follows:
 - i) consultation with major employment Ministries concerning themselves with the poor such as the Rural Development Ministry for IRDP; the Development Boards such as Handloom, Handicrafts, Khadi, Silk, Dairy etc. It will also

be important to look at the ICDS and health package programmes as they are absorbing large numbers of females as functionaries. This could be the beginning for some kind of employment Board where the hands that are given employment and the hands that protect working condition within employment and the hands that take away employment would come together and look at the scene dispassionately.

- ii) Consultations on specific issues such as technology, multiple occupations, work wage equivalence, institutional support that is required.

3. It may be important to have a research and development cell in the Ministry of Labour in the initial period fully servicing this Committee or an OSD in order for the work of the Committee to be brisk and effective. It may be necessary for this cell to call consultations, working groups, commission papers, experimenting with pilot action research programmes.

03

Note for circulation to Consultative
Committee/Workshop to design a scheme
for organising unorganised female workers

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NOTE

I Introduction

It is well known that less than 10 per cent of the women workers in India are associated in any form - be it a society, cooperative or a trade union. Yet it is a well recognised aspect of societal behaviour that some form of group activity, collective can be a source of strength to those who are its members, an efficient form of economic and social functioning. This paper puts forward a case for strenuous efforts to bring women workers into various forms of association.

The association may provide them with any or all of several economic and social services. But the particular type of association being discussed here would focus on either

- i) strengthening of existing employment

or

- ii) providing of employment i.e. creating of employment.

II Characteristics of female labour in the unorganised sector:

61 per cent of India's workers are self-employed. While in certain classes self-employment may mean running small businesses, running a professional service (small factories, boutiques, hair dressing saloons, etc.). For the majority of the 61 per cent self-employment means irregular vulnerable earning.

Self-employment as perceived by, for example, SEWA-Ahmedabad, could be casual workers, domestic workers, cart pullers, cotton pickers, garment makers, bidi rollers, milk producers and so on.

The critical aspect of the definition is that these persons own their own means of production, and work for themselves. In some cases, as in the case of casual workers, the only means of production they may have is their own pair of hands. In other words, they hire themselves out. In other cases they could own a skill; in another case they can actually own their means of production like the cart or a sewing machine. However, the majority of those who are purchasing through the inter action of their labour on a small piece of capital like a sewing machine or a handloom do not own their means of production. They have either borrowed the machine i.e. hired it or are hired as labourers to work on the machine.

In that sense self-employment embraces most of the workers who are neither working for regular wages or salaries such as those employed by the establishments, small or big, which come under the Factory Act, nor are they in occupations which are well unionised where even if the employer is not one person, the union is able to claim certain regular wage rates at least (e.g. Bidi workers in Mangalore).

However, apart from this aspect another important characteristic of these workers is that work or employment itself is extremely irregular. They may get work for less than 100 days a year; they may work in 4 or 5 different occupations per year with varying wages. They do not have a committed annual income. The majority of the poor are working in this fashion.

How does association help them?

III

Taking the first aspect i.e. STRENGTHENING OF EXISTING OCCUPATION, most of those who belong to this category of workers are already engaged in some form of income earning activity. However, it is low paid, intermittent and vulnerable. Sometimes they can increase the wages they earn by collectively negotiating with the traders;

contractor or their employer. SEWA-Ahmedabad and SEWA-Delhi have successfully engaged in this activity. In SEWA-Delhi paper bag makers of Himmatgarh and zari workers of Jama Masjid have increased the piece rates by collective bargaining without necessarily having union status.

Another aspect of strengthening employment is to make it more regular. Irregularity comes in this kind of occupation due to the seasonality of the demand for these products. For example, zari products are in demand during wedding season and during the Dassera.

IV How to make this demand steady?

Large firms have a technique. Firstly they find alternative markets for the lean season. Hence zari workers might like to explore other parts of India or the export market for the lean months. In other words, these workers need market intelligence and market development.

Once they are associated and have increased their wages and earnings, automatically they are ready for collective savings. The next step is to be able to produce without necessarily being contracted to only the trader which has seasonal demand.

They have to produce stocks. This means having working capital of their own, raw material stocks. In the lean season when the shopkeeper or the contractor does not give raw materials or orders, they would produce and either hold it or try other markets. Through the collective savings they would create a deposit, obtain back loans and try to procure raw materials.

The role of intermediary agencies:

Facilitators like intermediate agencies such as emporia, social institutions, federations of such organisation can start identifying alternative markets, once it is possible for these collective associations to have their own uncommitted stocks.

A third possibility is for the collective association to own a shop of its own.

In other words, these are techniques for keeping the demand steady and not seasonal and thereby increasing the days of employment.

V The other aspect of organisation is TO CREATE NEW EMPLOYMENT. For illustration, women in West Bengal have been quite drastically displaced from income earning opportunities by the mechanisation of paddy husking (Mukul Mukhopadhyay, Economic & Social History Review 1983, Volume I, Number I). Similarly tobacco workers have been displaced in Andhra due to introduction of machines for planting tobacco. This kind of massive technological displacement, even though it ought to be prevented, is taking place quite extensively in India.

The numbers displaced are usually large running into the hundreds if not the thousands.

Associating these "displaced persons" who are already skilled in a particular economic activity (hand pounding or tobacco planting etc.) and finding the collective form of occupation for them is cheaper and more economically viable than trying to provide several hundred individual loans. It is more efficient, more manageable for a bank to lend to a group against the production and sale of one commodity than to several individuals especially when they belong to the unskilled illiterate classes.

There may be areas which require labour. There may be other classes of production or products that require similar if not identical skills. The aim of the group would be to observe or to avail of some such opportunities.

Again, facilitators and intermediary organisations require to do a scan of the environment in a particular area, for identification of the resources, the consumption patterns, the gaps in consumption: especially to identify what goods are in great demand in the area "imported" from another area. Then these displaced persons could enter into this market gap, if training is provided.

VI

Hence there are at least two advantages in going into the field and associating women around occupations for strengthening of existing employment, for being able to voice a resistance to being displaced; and if possible for rehabilitation.

Having made this case for grouping or associating or unionising of women workers who are not in the regular wage or salaried employment, it seems necessary to work out a grant-in-aid scheme and the Labour Ministry could facilitate this process.

VII

The Scheme

There are many schemes current in the Indian Development scene today which are attempts to organise women especially rural women. The earlier Mahila Mandal which was usually registered and became the implementing agency or receiving agency for the development programmes of the Department of Social Welfare; has now also become the implementing agency for rural development.

It is common now to form Mahila Mandals around the mothers of the children who come to the ICDS Anganwadis. It is also common now to try to associate the women into Mahila Mandals in order to have collective income generating activities through the IRDP. We hear of Mahila Mandals being formed for family planning, for adult education and so on.

However, most reviews of Mahila Mandal programme have found that these societies have tended to be acceptable and absorbed by female non-workers in the rural areas. Their activities such as sewing, embroidery, basket making etc. are useful skills for housewives and women of the farm households who have time to spare. However, they have not been able to provide an attraction for the labouring women - for example the agricultural labourers.

The usual reason given by these busy women whether they are cotton pickers, rice transplanters, weeders is that between their household chores and their income earning activities they have no time to avail of the services offered by Mahila Mandal.

What is being proposed here is therefore something which is not a recreation, for a woman to be upgraded in their extra housewifely skills: but the bringing together of women who are already at work or displaced from work for the main purpose of strengthening their employment. The model here is closer to the trade union than a women's organization. A trade union could be born out of this association depending on the nature of the work, the solidarity, the leadership etc.

Hence the Labour Ministry scheme would not have any conflict with the Mahila Mandal scheme. We could even use another word which is closer to Guild, trade association or trade union. The word "Rozgaar" or "Mazdoor" might be included to specify the nature of this association.

What then should be the items to be included in a grant-in-aid scheme? What should be the criteria by which the scheme would be sanctioned for particular organisation or individual? How far could it be decentralised? At the State and District level who would be responsible? These are some of the questions that this meeting could help to illuminate.

However, for the sake of providing a basic anatomy over which it can comment, a draft scheme is enclosed.

*

DRAFT SCHEME

1. A survey (census, if the group is small, sample, if the group is large) of a certain occupational cluster in a particular geographical area.

Presuming that the survey covers a minimum of 200 workers it could require the following:

i) Time 5 months

One month : for familiarisation.

Second month : trial of a survey technique

Next two months : survey

Fifth month : analysis of results.

ii) Personnel

For survey, it is best to use women workers from the same occupation and area. Usually, the second generation has minimum literacy. SEWA-Delhi has identified several women between the age group of 18 and 25 who are also workers, but are matriculates.

Since these women are workers, the wage at which they would do survey has to be equivalent to the wage they earn in production.

iii) Salaries

For a survey of 200 households for the peak period of 2 months when the survey will be conducted needs a minimum of 4 workers at a cost of not less than Rs.200/- per month per worker.

For the remaining 3 months, 2 of the same workers are sufficient.

2 workers for 2 months (2 x 2 x 200)	Rs. 800.00
2 workers for 5 months (2 x 5 x 200)	Rs. 2000.00
Transportation for them for survey: Rs.100 per person per month approx.	Rs. 1400.00
	<hr/>
	Rs. 4200.00
Paper, services of somebody who can analyse and write a report, stenographic assistance etc. which amount to about	Rs. 3000.00
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Total	Rs. <u>7200.00</u>

Phase II

Calling a group meeting to present survey findings,
to discuss ideas emerging from the survey.

4 meetings of 100-200 persons each TA + DA Rs. 10000.00

Retention of two persons for the
survey for this work (2 x 7 x 200) Rs. 2800.00

Rs. 12800.00

Phase III

Capital to provide the necessary input, whether
it is credit, raw material, machinery, shop, market
development, market visit, etc. Rs. 5-10,000.00

Phase IV

Infrastructure for 12 months for any institution
at a minimum of Rs.1000 a month (for 1 year) Rs. 12,000.00

Total = I

$$7,200 + 12,800 + 10,000 + 12,000 = \text{Rs. } \underline{42,000}$$

The attempt at associating any group takes not less than 3 years and, therefore, the maintenance grant to the facilitating institution should be for a minimum of 3 years and should include the employment not only of the office staff but the field cadres starting with 2 but possibly expanding to 4 for a catchment of 200 workers.

After the third year, if the project is able to enhance income, it is possible to start collecting subscriptions from the women workers to provide at least the salaries of the cadres.

Thus, a 3 year grant-in-aid scheme with a budget per grant of approx. Rs. 1.25 lakhs could be provided.

Who would be able to avail of this grant?

It seems that it is an activity which is best suited to grass root non-governmental agencies in the first instance. It requires persistence, flexibility and complete decentralised management.

In the initial round about 50 agencies could be chosen who would be able to avail of the scheme. This could be for at least the first half of the Seventh Plan. If the scheme turns to be successful then during the mid-term appraisal a review could be made of the scheme and it could be expanded.

Separate Budget should be set aside for co-ordination, "purchase" of training facilities, consultations, opportunities for collective marketing, collective buying, federating of the association.

For this an intermediary organisation could be utilised and grant given to them to provide this kind of support services at a regional or a national level. A budget of 8 lakhs may be set aside for this.

Therefore, Total budget to start	
50 such associations	62.5 lakhs
@ Rs.1.25 lakh each	
Co-ordinating agency	8.00 lakhs
	<hr/>
	70.5 lakhs
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SWCW - Sanitation/Water/Child/women Complex

Most of the Anganwadis and other women's and children's centres expressed the need for water and toilet facilities. Otherwise health hazards accumulate wherever there are concentrations of children.

Most of the Anganwadi workers as well as Mahila Mandal office bearers interviewed mentioned lack of independent space as the most serious problem in implementing their programmes more effectively.

Presenting the class problem, namely institutions becoming stronghold of better off households is also because free space can only be provided by larger richer families who can dominate the schemes. The ICDS Anganwadi worker has to collect free fuel to cook the children's meals. Like free space, free fuel is deemed to be essential for community participation. However, such a policy on fuel in tree-hungry districts like Gulbarga is an impossible task.

We suggest a building complex which could house or provide space for

- Community toilet with Bio-gas plant
- Drinking water, and washing water
- Women's meeting place (or Mahila Mandal) and
- Balwadi creche or Anganwadi.

The generation of bio-gas for water pumping, light and cooking at the centre would help maintenance/avoid need for collecting fuel.

Recently a scheme called Sulabha Sauchalya (community toilets for the urban poor) is gaining popularity in all the cities of India. Of late a technology

has been developed using the Khadi and village Industries dome by which bio-gas is generated from the community soak pit. This gas gives enough energy for pumping water as well as for lighting the building as well as cooking within it.

Funds for such a scheme could be a pooling of NREP., (EAS), and Minimum Needs Package as well as DWCW or Social Welfare as the case may be.

INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FOR WOMEN WORKERS (IDSW)

There are thousands of women workers engaged in a variety of occupations e.g. fisheries, quarry, bidi making agricultural labour, weaving, hawking. They face numerous difficulties in carrying out their respective tasks. Some of these difficulties are specific to each occupation and even within each occupation the extent and nature of problem vary according to area. There is no occupation-specific scheme presently which seeks to tackle their problems. As a result their earnings, health and education are suffering. In these cases, the development programme is not required to identify "avenues" of income generating activities for women but merely to provide supporting infrastructure and services to enable them to get adequate rewards for their labour. While also improving their health and education. The removal of impediments will also enable them to take better care of their children.

Take for example, the case of women workers in fish carrying and marketing in Dakshin Kanada. They have several specific problems affecting their work and life. Most of that were acknowledged in the Integrated District Development Plan 1974, to 1983 formulated by the district planning Office, South Kannada. But the subsequent chapters in the same district Plan development relating to Fisheries Development Programme and allocations completely ignored these problems.

A recent case-study of these workers by Roshini Nilayam (on behalf of ISSI) reveals (a) that their problems identified in 1974 still continue to effect them and (b) that between 1974 and March 1982, no development scheme has been launched to tackle these problems. To tackle these it is necessary to have a special scheme for providing IDSW to large streams of women workers. The scheme will aim at:-

- i) Identifying large streams of women workers occupation-wise and by concentration in specific areas.
- ii) Identifying main problems of such women workers by occupation and by areas of concentration.
- iii) Identifying existing general development schemes which can be proposedly tapped to ease some of the problems; and provide for such supplementary inputs and support to ensure utilisation of these schemes for the benefit of the identified occupation groups. For example, NREP can be used to (a) about 199 days work during off-season (b) approach roads from coast to the main road (c) construction of fish marketing yards/platforms. Similarly, ICDS Mahasw Mandal, drinking water, adult education schemes be tapped for such groups.

- iv) Provide requisite inputs (supports) not available from existing schemes (for example, providing
(a) washing and sanitation facilities
(b) tempos.
- v) Support existing or new institution of the women workers and those working for their development and welfare in respect of other activities, involving study and/or action or monitoring of programmes relating to i) toiii) above. As also identifying programmes or policies which are in appropriate and harmful to the interests and women workers and their occupations and periodic reporting be developed and planning authorities.

Provision:

An experimental scheme may be undertaken. During 1983-84 a provision of Rs. 5 lakhs each be made in the Annual Plan by Dakshin Kannada, Gulbarga and Bangalore districts.

The powers for approval of specific schemes and their implementation, within the aforesaid broad objectives, be entrusted to the Deputy Commissioners of the districts who may each constitute an advisory committee to assist them in implementing the scheme. ISSST will be glad to provide technical consultancy to these experimental districts.

Note for Technical Committee 38th Round NSSO

Devaki Jain
6.1.1982

The basic issue being raised here is based on the premise that the enumeration of workers, as emerging from the existing investigation methodology as incorporated in NSSO rounds is not accurate, especially in relation to women and child workers.

The probing questions which were added in 32nd Round were based on a similar hypothesis and were attempting to find ways and means to explore the grey zone of domestic work and identify those within the zone who could be classified as workers or in the labour force.

The argument on the basis of which these probing questions were incorporated was based on a deep understanding of the NSSO's techniques and limitations. As discussed in the meeting on the 6th, and as mentioned by Mr. Paul of NSSO, the investigator basically relies on the information provided by the head of the household whether it is about those who have gone migrating, seeking work or the work of the women and the children. In other words, much is left to the perception or knowledge of the head of the household, and the investigator.

This leads us to the fact that there is some shadow of inaccuracy in the data collection and this is quite natural and common to all surveys.

A further point that came out from the NSSO personnel on the 6th is that even in the probing questions of the 32nd Round those who report that they have done some work in poultry or animal husbandry should have already appeared in column 12 of block 4 as being economically active. In other words not as domestic workers. So the issue that the investigator would discover a page that somebody whom he recorded as a domestic worker in fact is in the labour force arises even in the probing questions.

This casts some doubt in the earlier concern expressed by the NSSO that if block 5 was expanded to include all persons there would be wastage - the wastage would have taken place even in 32nd Round probing questions.

The question therefore is whether probing questions and the tabulations that not only have emerged but can emerge are the best method of improving the measurement of the employment, unemployment of persons especially women and children.

It is argued here that the question of how time is spent between say a list of activities and the recording of this gives a more objective picture of labour force participation than the declaration by the head of the household whether a person is economically active or not. Too much it seems is left to the judgement of the respondent.

Thus in block 5 if all persons are asked their time disposition and even in half day intervals some people who did not report as economically active i.e. gave the code 92, 93 in column 12 may in fact turn up as doing a half day which according to the NSSO definition of gainful activity, - is gainful activity.

Why should this question only be limited to those in the labour force? Those who declare that the half days have been spent in domestic work fetching water and fuel would automatically emerge as 92, 93 and endorse the decision taken in column 12. This was the suggestion that I had made first.

When this suggestion was rejected as still tampering with the old schedule this new block has been designed to replace the probing questions. The probing questions have given data like _____ percent women who are declared as domestic workers in fact do sowing or other work which is "gainful". Apart from the fact that again these ask specific questions related to sowing or collection of wood but do not ask what they do and leaving them free to answer and therefore miss out the real issue of perception by respondent including women and children of the nature of their work. It does not show the weight of this participation in terms of how close it is to the half day or full day concept of employment.

The other advantage of the time module is that the time spent on household chores which have become a very big issue amongst poverty households with growing population and receding access to fuel and water can also be reflected. This kind of data would have as important a role to play in policy making as a data that is being gathered on migrant labour.

The resistance to the capturing of time in less than half day intervals is that it would give inaccurate data because people do not have a sense of time. But it really becomes a question of one inaccuracy against the other in that the identification of those who belong to the labour force being a dialogue between the investigator and a head of household is also inaccurate.

Here the people ask what they are doing does get a realistic response. If time is a problem one can just put it as a priority case what you do most of the time or have it as less than half a day, half a day and more than half a day. But these questions should be asked prior to coding a person as belonging to the codes 92 and 93.

Then those who report still as 93 or 92 could be asked probing questions about willingness to work etc.

Somewhere the system has to give especially when we recognise that comparability has a value if the base is in some way reliable and useful. If the base is not itself giving accurate data then we build error.

Trying out something on women and children is a separate model may give some experience for future redesigning of rounds not only for women and children but all labour force.

Therefore I humbly suggest that we try this change in block-5 in the pre-test and/or we take this new block which I have suggested, change the intervals to less than half a day, half a day and more than half day and try it out on all persons.

No. 697

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Note for Steering Group of Planning Commission on Work and Employment,

Devaki Jain
December 21, 1981

Pursuing the suggestions of Dr. K.C. Seal, Chairman, Steering Group on Work and Employment that many of the issues relating to the improvement of the data base on women's work and employment as well as on the technological and social infra-structure needs of women and children, are discussed adequately in the paper:

"The Importance of Age and Sex Specific Data Collection in Household Surveys - paper presented in Seminar on Household Surveys, Bangkok"

that paper is being circulated to all the members of the Group.

The working Group was set up in the recognition that new sets of data as well as better quality data are required on both economic as well as social and institutional roles of men, women and children especially the latter 2. The Steering Group was to identify:

- I
- 1) What are the areas or issues on which the data is most urgently required.
 - 2) Who would collect this data, against a uniform format.
 - 3) How it could be linked to the official data collection system.

II Some of the territories needs to be explored by the all India coordinated project seems to be:

- 1) Improving the information on economic behaviour of women and children, as well as men working in the nonmonetised more socially constrained sectors and groups.
- 2) the relationship between poverty, family size, culture, location and access to development benefits.
- 3) The designing of practical methodology to capture more sensitive high quality data in such a way that it may be incorporated in macro surveys.

- 4) Children's participation in economic and social needs of the household so that a more acceptable educational and social services could be designed for them.
- 5) The relationship between fuel, water access - [amount, quality, distance, ~~the~~ price and the productivity of labour supply, ~~opportunity~~, its ~~aspect~~ on income, nutrition, health of the family. ^{impact}
- 6) The relationship between the ^{importance of} women in institutions such as cooperatives, Panchayats etc. and the benefits to the households especially women and children.

III It would be useful for the members of the Steering Group to list their priorities in terms of what they think needs urgent attention. This could be followed by an attempt to design a format which could be given out to the implementing research institutions.

IV Some other items for discussion and decision:

- i) The identification of these institutions in a regionally dispersed manner.
- ii) The identification of the coordinating group
- iii) The setting out of the time frame
- iv) The budgeting.

In selecting priority areas for survey, sample frame, locale etc. the Group may consider the choice of the subject for immediate action in such a way that it facilitates the improvement of national surveys whether being conducted by NSSO, Labour Bureau, CSO or the Registrar General or the Ministry of Agriculture, Health etc. This would ensure that the micro studies could have a link, including in terms of the timing of the survey, with the macro survey. As data used for planning tends to be macro official streams, it seems important to link the all India coordinated project to the macro official survey.

~~This is being proposed as an Agenda for the meeting.~~

Hence it would be important to have before the Group the future Agenda of the other large surveys being planned under different subject heads.

An illustration is the 38th Round of the NSSO, currently being designed, to be launched in the field in January 1983. The Group wish to consider how far their deliberations can influence 38th Round; the NSSO's own ideas on pilot methodological survey and the supplementary work of other agencies.

This is being prepared as an agenda for the meeting

Women and Planning Methodology

Comment on the Sixth Plan

Devaki Jain
September 1981

The question of Integrating women into the Plan, at the formulation-document level, still evades a satisfactory answer. The Sixth Five Year Plan 1980 vividly reflects this gap, between the intention and the design.

The Plan has a Chapter (Chapter 27) which is a strong, supportive analysis of the situation of women, their neglect, their importance for nation building. It commits itself to provide for women, access to education, employment and health. The total budget for social welfare which is one of the strong sectors for women and development has been increased from 65.55 crores in 1974-79 to 150.40 in 1980-85.

Responding to the strong recommendation of representatives of women that child care facilities must be intensified and expanded as a priority need for women, the outlay on the Integrated Child Development Programme otherwise known as ICDF has gone up from 7.40 lakhs in 1974-79 to 45 lakhs in 1980-85. Alongwith this 4 crores are being given from the rural development sector to the NDDB (National Dairy Development Board) for implementing the ICDF. Thus apart from covering more blocks with ICDF, the Plan is also attempting to follow the strategy of giving social inputs such as child development services where there are women intensive economic programmes such as the dairy programmes. This certainly is an innovation which should be welcomed and which can be imitated by other large economic programmes like NREP and IRDP.

Following the recommendations of the working group on rural women's organisations, the Plan has put in about Rs. 2 lakhs to promoting and strengthening grass root women organisations. In the strategy it is also mentioned that the concept of funding Mahila Mandals for socio-economic programmes will be to give seed money rather than fixed grants so that the Mahila Mandal can then canvas with other financial institutions for making their programme viable. This is a response to the recommendations by the same committee.

Some other pertinent statements in Chapter 27 are:

"In the Plan, the basic approach is of the family as a unit of development. But for sometime in future, women will continue to be one of the most vulnerable members of the family. Hence, the education of children and family planning will constitute the three major operational aspects of the family centered poverty alleviation strategy. (Para 27.15).

"Separate cells have a limited role. It is more important to create a general awareness and understanding of the problems of women's employment in all the top policy and decision making and executive personnel." (Para 27.17).

"The statistical data of physical achievement in beneficiary-oriented programmes will have to be collected by sex. The implementation of programmes would be reviewed from time to time". (Para 27.18).

"Areas and sectors where women's employment is either low or on the decline would be identified and corrective measures initiated to promote additional avenues for employment. Effort would be made to offer larger employment for them in the schemes for public distribution system, rural godowns, Operation Flood II, Dairy Development and Social Forestry and in armed forces. Modernisation of traditional occupations of woman such as spinning and weaving, match-making, coir, cochen, rural marketing, agriculture, animal husbandry and fishery, etc., would be selective and would include simultaneous development of skills for alternative employment for them". (Para 27.22).

"Creches will have to be designed for regular establishments as well as for agricultural, construction and migrant labour families. In rural areas this would be linked up with the scheme of NREP". (Para 27.25).

A most interesting table is given on page 128 giving labour force participation rates as well as unemployment amongst women as revealed by the NSSO 52nd Round (1977-78).

This table shows that while the share of the illiterate women (perhaps coincident to the poorest assetless) is 88 per cent, comparative rates for men are 55 per cent and 62 per cent. Another interesting statistic is that the unemployment rate amongst women throughout the four categories of literacy is greater than men, increasing with education. For example the unemployment rate amongst illiterate rural women is 4 per cent compared to 0.5 per cent for men and 46 per cent amongst women matriculates compared to 15 per cent for men.

However, as can be expected there is little reflection of the concerns and strategies express in Chapter 27, in the chapter that handle employment (Chapter 15) or training in science and technology (Chapter 19) or in Chapter 8 on Plan Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation or in Chapter 14, social infrastructure like minimum needs.

In the Chapter on Employment and Manpower Planning, in the analysis of data though many categories are identified and emphasised of employed and unemployed, one of the striking features of unemployment among females especially, as it is given on page 428 as attachment to Chapter 27, is noted. What is constantly mentioned is that the female figures are not comparable because of definitional problems. Why not give the female figures showing the kind of phenomena as is done in Chapter 27?

For example while in para 27.35 the linking up the scheme with NREP mentioned between pages 175 and 176 but where NREP is discussed where benefits reaching the weaker section (para 11.54) is mentioned, there is no special mention of the creches. It merely notes that "specific attention will also be paid to promoting women's participation in this programme" and this is a good beginning. While in para 27.8 the need for data disaggregated by sex is mentioned and in para 27.1 that women will be the most vulnerable within the family and therefore special attention will be given to them in poverty alleviation programmes as well as in para 27.32 that areas and sectors where women's employment is either low or on the decline would be identified etc., there is no mention of any of these in the chapter on Plan Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation. Its absence is particularly noted in para 8.12 anti-poverty programmes and 8.15 Monitoring and Implementation and in para 8.23 Programme Evaluation and para 8.32 Information System, Data Base for Planning.

In Chapter 15 (Chapter on Manpower & Employment) there is no reference of the concerns expressed in chapter 27 that training facility should be especially strengthened for female labour. Similarly in chapter 14 on Minimum Needs Programme or on the discussion of Minimum Needs under the different heads of Environment, Education or Health, Family Planning and Nutrition.

In short it has not been possible for the Plan to transfer the concern and strategy expressed in Chapter 27 into meaningful operational instrument whether in terms of budget or in terms of sectoral and institutional linkages.

Another striking feature of the 1980-85 Plan is the allocation to the Central Social Welfare Board. Allocations for both the condensed course for women and socio economic programmes have been doubled. The Plan also says: "The programme of the Central Social Welfare Board and those of individual developments will be functionally integrated so as to optimise the benefits from all programmes intended for women". (Para 27.22). "There is lack of coordination between the State Governments and the State Social Welfare Boards in Programme Planning and Implementation". (Para 23.17).

During the consultations with the Planning Commission in drafting the Plan a strong case had been made for using the network of the Central Social Welfare Board which ideally should have non-official representatives of voluntary organisations as an Advisory Committee at the State level and down to the District level since most of these persons would be representing some experience in delivery of development with special reference to women and children. It was felt that these councils could be set up by the Board with additional support from the Central Government for strengthening their capabilities. These local councils of women would be able to perform some of the roles, establish linkage of social inputs into district development programmes as well bring women's voices and needs into programme and policy identification and design. These points are also not being spelt out in the Plan though a very important first step is mentioned, namely that there should be more connection and coordination between the State Directorates of Women's Welfare and the Social Welfare Advisory Board.

It is difficult to perform this task of putting women in the warp and weft of the Plan document. There have been many serious discussions within the country, as well as in the region and the globe to design the methodology, without necessarily making it look like a reservation policy.

In formulating the 1980-85 Plan several consultations were held with specialists in the field of women's advancement. A challenge was thrown to spokesmen for women, to examine the strategies investments, structures, schemes in the various sectors and suggest other schemes, structures through which women's interests and roles can be safeguarded. Since this would be a pioneering and time consuming task, to scrutinise every sectoral plan outlay - and comment it could not be done in time for the 1980-85 Plan. However, the Women & Development division of Social Welfare Department has initiated these exercises in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. The detailed exercise of analysing the building up of a State Five Year Plan and intervening wherever it seems there is a case, formulating atleast re-designed annual plans through study and dialogue with departments, development delivery institutions and data collectors in the local level, would reveal it is hoped - what the issues are where they were relevant, and how to incorporate the relevant issues.

It is hoped that these exercises will provide an input into the next national five year plan - but that is a hope.

One of the techniques which have been used by planners for ensuring the reach of development benefits to "difficult" population groups is to design beneficiary oriented planning. A target population is identified and certain schemes are designed which will only reach that particular population. Examples of this are; women and child welfare schemes, special housing or education schemes for scheduled castes, apart from economic programmes such as SFDA/MPAI, Antyodaya.

Another technique which has been evolved to give a special push to "difficult to reach" groups is the sub-plan such as the tribal sub-plan. One

hurdle which planning techniques attempting to fully incorporate women's needs and interests have not been able to overcome is to get this kind of budgetary provision or decentralized funding or decentralized quantified goals across the board into a plan document.

Why? Because women cannot be separated like for example tribals in a particular geographical area, into a category which is different from say the employed/unemployed, the rural/the urban, the landless/the landless and so on. The female population of India is as stratified and heterogeneous and unequal as the rest of the population and whatever the 'target' of planning, whether it is based on caste, class, topography like hill area or performance like forward-backward, they would fall into it. Hence when it comes to allocating funding within the plan for specially reaching women, the usual course is to add more maternity and child-care centres, more girls' hostels and hostels, more crèches and Mchla Mandals and nutrition programmes.

If allocations are reserved on the basis of sex within economic, social and political programmes, the issue will always arise of "which women" and degenerate into controversies around reservation.

Time and time again it is said that within the existing framework it is possible to reap more benefits to women if the operational mechanism is created, strengthened, made articulate. Othya, it is said, are meant to reach men and women - so the task is to strengthen the ability of women to utilise, in which case the plan need not be modified.

However, as studies and evaluations as often done by the PEO (Project Evaluation Organisation) of the Planning Commission as by Universities and other academic institutions have clearly revealed, no development input is ever neutral across class and caste. Those who have the capacity to seize the new opportunity rise faster than before. So gaps increase. The case of women is a graphic and poignant illustration of the biased impact of well intentioned development. The plan is if the glaring and risks are taken in advance, development need not be an easy.

Safeguarding women and their interest in a national development programme is a matter of perceiving the differences, and taking steps to accommodate its consequences.

The critical difference between males and females whether young or old hinges around access. Access is as much a function of mobility, which in turn is a function of biology. A young girl is immobilised because if she travels alone whether it is to school or bank extension, to shop or to participate in meetings, she can be molested, raped, defamed, ruined. A mother of young children cannot move about except at great sacrifice in terms of leaving children to neglect or carrying them to work also adding to their neglect, and certainly cannot stay for meetings or training. Yet without access to services to opportunity to knowledge, to institutions which discuss and decide, women will not only remain dependent but deprived.

It is natural to perceive the family as a homogeneous unit, where each member provides security to the other and thus even if there is dependence of the women on the men, there should be no deprivation by complementarity. Unfortunately culture and tradition biology, as well as economic stress has tended to generate disparity between males and females ^{with} the family, in the utilisation of the benefits of development. It is not the fault of the men of the family. But it is the fault of development that it has not designed itself to improve the access of those who are less easy to reach so that they may not be deprived.

It is the responsibility of the planning machinery to overcome this disability of the family and capture the needs of women and children especially female children, amongst the poor, so that the burden of their neglect is not put on the family. This is ~~social~~ planning and seems to be necessary to integrate women into the plan, the development process.

Some illustrations are given below on the types of issues that arise, and the types of re-arrangements that seem necessary.

For example a command area project (or any other area development project) is promised to be sex and class neutral. It irrigates areas and acres and hence increases outputs and incomes. More intense labour utilization as more employments; more food, as more all round nutrition.

There are all the known issues of inequality generated by farm size, relative advantage between classes, caste quality of land, location, etc. There is also some debate whether irrigation always leads to a cropping pattern that increases utilization of labour increase in man-days of employment. Certain crops/certain varieties of seed, use the same heads of labour but is short intense spells and others extensively. There are issues related to hiring systems, conditions of work which have begun to question the more irrigation more employment hypothesis - and ask whose employment? at what human cost?

Within this there are unequal benefits to male and females - both as agricultural labourers as well as domestic workers. At the economic level irrigation, if it leads to substitution of a cash crop for a subsistence crop, threatens to remove women's access to actual food grains and hence has often led to a drop in family nutrition levels.

Again change in technology of agriculture changes demand for labour not only in the aggregate but on the basis of sex. Tasks in Indian agriculture are demarcated according to sex. Ploughing, digging - male; transplanting, weeding, cutting grass - female and so on, varying for different crops.

For example if irrigation brings with it other changes like weedicides, the employment as weed pickers will be lost only of females.

If a new variety of cotton is introduced which makes the hand picking of seeds from the cotton pods unnecessary then it would be only the women to lose employment.

It is known that mechanization of agriculture displaces both males and females, however again there is also a female specific or sex specific displacement because of the sex specificity of task. For example recently the

machine that was to be imported by the Indian Tobacco Company in Andhra would displace only women as they were concentrating in that process. Similarly in Indonesia a cigarette rolling machine to be imported from Sweden displaced only women as they clustered in Kretek, an Indonesian bidi rolling. Mechanisation can accompany improved agriculture associated with irrigation.

Coming to the non-economic aspects of irrigation, water has also to be used for washing and drinking. Women are the main activists in these tasks which are associated with household chores.

It is well known that irrigation water is almost invariably also picked up for domestic use. How often does this aspect of irrigation benefit get perceived in the design such that women are given some support? The current Sixth Five Year (1980-85) Plan has budgetted Rs. 11,114.9 crores to be spent on irrigation in the next 5 years. Similarly 5307.60 crores have been budgetted for drinking water supply and sanitation for the same period. If we perceive water from the point of view of women another rationale will follow.

Firstly in mapping out the agricultural production plan as part of the irrigation plan, some scrutiny may be made to see the impact of women both in terms of employment, household, access to nutrition, access to water. In designing drinking water location outlet, wherever possible there should be an obligation and budgetary provision to derive from it a satisfactory water outlet - some not purified when it is for washing of animal and some purified for drinking. The 5308 crores could then be used only when there is no irrigation.

Another illustration can be taken from the NREP for which Rs. 5000 crores have been budgetted in the next 5 years.

Two examples of the implementation of the NREP are given by the NREIS in Maharashtra and the RAS in Karnataka. If the difference between male and female economic roles as well as non-economic roles is perceived and built into the NREP then the following changes would be required:

It cannot be a programme limited to what are called the peak and lean agricultural seasons in the respective areas. The difference in task as mentioned earlier implies that the demand for female labour does not coincide with the demand for male labour. They follow each other. Further at no time even in the peak seasons is there enough demand for female labour to mop up those females seeking work (MWS). Whatever little data is available supports this view.

Looking at the sex ratio both in Maharashtra and Karnataka of registered workers, women dominate, showing the great pressure for employment and income faced by women from these social classes. Therefore sites may have to be kept opened throughout the year in some areas.

Certain schemes may have to be designed which are annual and are associated with women's needs and skills. For example serving of cooked food, running of first rate creches, balwadis and shelters, packaging of food, development of nurseries, processing of forest products, preparation of grain which would later go into distribution. In other words there may have to be a shelf of "female only" schemes to keep the women employed while the men are absorbed in the agricultural season at higher wages.

There may also have to be some relaxation of PWD norms on male-female ratios for certain jobs. For example for building canal or desilting a tank or raking a bund - most PWD personnel have a pre-fixed notion of light and heavy work which they divide between males and females. If the availability of one gender of labour is greater than this proportion, they would have to be kept waiting or let go for lack of the other.

In Maharashtra very many women reported that when they asked to be registered, they were asked to go back and bring a gang of the right mix of males and females. One case was reported where an all female gang was allowed to work and that was because of the insistence of some strong women.

It would not be enough to say that these reforms should be incorporated by the States. That it is upto the social welfare, nutrition and other departments to ensure that the services are supplied to the beneficiaries and that this programme is only taking care of the economic aspect. This would again leave women where they are.

This quality would have to be included into the design and budget of the NREP. In the NREP guideline there may be a condition that a certain percentage of the budget should go for providing the services to female workers. Or it may be necessary to expand the size of the budget. It may be necessary to change the staffing pattern and include many more social workers. It may be necessary to invest in retraining of engineers. It may be necessary to put the Mahila Mandal programme into the NREP with special financial support that wherever there are these women workers there should be women institutions which services them whether as mothers or as adults or as workers. These are possibilities but they cannot be left to operational phase in the States to be perceived. They should be perceived by the planners at the national level themselves.

MNP could be said to be the most useful package for women whose components include Elementary Education, Rural Health, Rural Water Supply, Rural Roads, Rural Electrification, Housing assistance to landless labourers, Environmental improvement and nutrition. However, while the responsibility for generating these services is being put on local development Institutions such as the panchayat, there is no incorporation of women's institutions or women's perceptions. A careful scrutiny of the users of MNP specially if the intention is to overcome women's unequal access to social benefits, might have suggested that the budget on this package should be in the hands of a Mahila Mandal - to be created if it did not exist. The same institution could run on EAS (Employment Affirmation Scheme) programme or an NREP programme and so on.

These illustrations have been deliberately provided from different types of schemes, projects. Similar inroads can be made into the science and technology if not the industry, energy and other schemes.

One important first condition that has to be explicitly stated in our kind of country is to clearly and unqualifiedly identify women from the poorest, social and economic classes as the focus of this planning; take note almost only of their concerns, needs, difficulties. Once this is clearly stated then the usual debate that women are homogeneous is nullified.

The next point would be to specify/identify the abilities and disabilities of these women - against the stated goal of an improved standard and quality of life. Each project whatever it is, however, remote it looks from people, should have a scrutiny for direct and indirect effects on women, within the poor, the scheduled caste, the tribes, the areas.

As has been said earlier, targeting women as a sub set of beneficiaries in economic programmes, comprehending women's needs as part of beneficiary oriented programme, linking institution's budgetary heads, structures in such a way that women's disabilities are reduced requires a great deal more back room exercise to be fitted into the existing methodology of planning. This has yet to be done and therefore it cannot be made into a fair critic of this particular plan as it would be a critic of all Indian plans.

The real question of designing procedures and processes of planning to make development less unjust lies outside this paper and is yet to be done, not only for women but for the population. But within the existing framework and cluttered pipe lines, if women have to be given a better deal it still requires far greater effort on the part of planners and those who interest ^{themselves} on behalf of women - than a chapter in the Plan, and an expanded budget in women's welfare.

Let unless and until these specifications are built into the subject chapters, the national Plan which becomes the blueprint for action not only of centrally sponsored and centrally funded schemes but for State Planning exercises could not bring to the perception of the subject specific Ministry, departments and corporations, - the very perception, that is so sharply and sympathetically laid out, in Chapter 27.

Report of sub-group on women's employment

It is widely accepted that the labour market as it is operating in India today - and perhaps in other parts of the world too - is not neutral between men and women. In other words due to differences in the characteristics of male and female labour both on the supply side and the demand side employment strategies need to differentiate their response to the needs of men and women in the labour market.

This difference is nothing due to the difference in the responsibilities men and women take for family survival and care, but also due to certain customs and attitudes which have enforced a segregation based on gender even if economic tasks.

The employment situation of women

Whether one uses the female work participation figures thrown up by the census or takes the adjusted trends using the national sample survey figures, - which are considered to be more accurate, between 1961 and 1981 there is a slight increase in the participation of women in the work force.

	Census 61	Census 71	27th R NSSO 72-73	32nd R NSSO 77-78	81
Male					
Female	31.4%	12.06	32.5%	32.7%	13.99

While this is to be acknowledged and further stimulated by policy certain other aspects of the female employment situation needs to be highlighted.

For example consistently greater percentage of women than men are "seeking work" - and women's share in unemployment has been in the range 45 to 51%. Other data especially that women are the majority of those reporting on public construction sites; that 10 to 35% of women are sole supporters of their families, and that this percentage increases as we reach households below the poverty line, indicate the pressure on women for employment, for bringing in a wage into the household.

There are also disturbing reports of the disengagement of women from employment due to the introduction of new technologies whether in agriculture, allied or industrial sectors. This problem is often posed as one of those areas of policy conflict i.e. between the economy's employment goals and its goals for higher productivity, higher export earnings.

Given the immense pressure on women in low and poverty households for survival it is to be considered whether this conflict of objectives cannot be resolved in favour of women's employment.

The household conceals several differences within it.

For example just as only women perform most of the household chores such as fetching water & fuel, cooking and cleaning, most of the child care - women are also uniquely employed in e.g. paddy transplanting, tea leaf picking, hand spinning and so on. In each process of production this task differentiation takes place and it is universally found that women cluster in the most monotonous, least skilled least paid jobs.

Under enumeration of women workers adds to the invisibility of women - not only in their capability to receive benefits such as bank loans but also in the awareness of policy makers and programme implementors of the occupations that women are in fact engaged in.

An exercise done by the National Sample Survey with the data emerging from the 32nd round shows that 50 percent of the women who reported as house wives were also making economic contributions to the household by the collection of free goods and services as well as kitchen, gardening, poultry keeping, tailoring. (NSSO report No.298).

Loans are given according to occupational identification of the household even though there may be two different sources of livelihood within a household requiring different types of support. Trade Unions also tend to neglect this aspect of poor families.

Recently there has been serious discussion regarding the nutritional deprivation of females from infancy to adulthood. It has been found that female morbidity and mortality rates are unusually greater than male rates throughout the life cycle except at the upper end of the age bracket. Women's work burden requires greater calorie intake than is acknowledged by the international standards set in the basis of urban advanced economy energy norms. While attitudes have to be changed, at the same time physical inputs of higher nutrition, as well as reduction of energy use in hard household chores is a necessary input to ensure women's full participation in employment.

Thus the household, while it provides a unit for planning of development also conceals the separate needs and handicaps of males and females within it. Thus development benefits get unequally distributed within the household, leading to family stress.

In the Indian situation of poverty & unemployment, a programme to improve the employment of women both in quantity (in numbers) as well as quality (better wages, working conditions, infrastructural facilities) has to take note of the following phenomena.

Women's main source of employment is still primarily agriculture and secondarily construction. While the analysis of trend data shows a slight upward trend in the percentage of women employed in organised industry and this needs to be further stimulated, the bulk of the unemployed can only be absorbed in these two sectors.

Implications
for policy

To absorb the large unemployed female labour force, it is necessary

1) to further strengthen and develop the rural employment public works programme. However, since this is predominantly a women's employment programme, it is essential that certain social inputs are built into this programme. Though according to the regulations creches and drinking water facilities should be provided to the women workers on the sites, this is not usually done by the contractors and Government departments such as PWD who had basically implementing this programme.

A component that necessary cadres or functionaries can be built into this programme which provides covered shelters on the sites where women can leave their children as well as find water and even the mid-day-meal. In fact, it has been suggested by many evaluations of the employment guarantee and NREP programmes that certain schemes which in fact will provide these social inputs could be made part of the schemes identified for public works.

It is also important that since women are the majority for those seeking work and they may not all have only seasonal unemployment but come for prenniel these employment sites and schemes could be opened through the year with a nutritional component.

out

A scheme may be designed and funded either under the budget to be aside for massive employment or separately and a link established between the departments and agencies providing social inputs and the employment programme.

2) Second aspect of policy for absorbing this large unemployed labour force is to further strengthen the minimum needs programme. According to the minimum needs programme, health, education, drinking water, roads, which means a good amount of construction work is necessary. This construction work could provide a very large source of employment for women.

Alongwith participation and construction for the unskilled labour there is a large employment potential for women to be employed as teachers, health workers, drinking water providers apart from food distributors and workers in the child care centres. The free feeding programme for children in Tamilnadu has provided employment for more than one lakh women who are incharge of the feeding centres. Thus the basic needs programme can provide employment both for labourer as well as trained women.

Self-employed

The number of women amongst self-employed has grown by 33 per cent between 1964 and 1974 according to the rural labour enquiry compared to 12 per cent for men.

Self-employed women workers need specific support programmes in order to make their source of income secure and steady. Conferences of self-employed women workers have identified these needs as (i) seed capital for developing alternative production systems to bypass the middlemen, (ii) trade outlets such as shops to be able to have direct contact with the consumer, and (iii) protective legislation to ensure their rights to sell in different bazaars. The social security covers such as child care, maternity benefits, health and death insurance and most important of all credit and access to the banking facilities. All these services are absorbably by the self-employed women workers if they are initially organised into a group. There is no scheme for pure organisation.

Another group of women who would need special attention are those who are displaced from employment due to various strategies associated with technological change. These could be agricultural workers as well as industrial workers. While the main aim should be to prevent this kind of displacement by proper scrutiny of projects, it is also necessary to have a scheme for rehabilitation and provision of employment to the displaced workers. The scheme is given in Annexure 'B'.

Women are almost uniquely engaged in the household chores such as fetching water and fuel, cooking and cleaning as ~~in order to allow women to be~~ well as in child care. Apart from the indent this makes on their energy which needs to be assessed and fully compensated with nutrition, it also prevents them from regular and continued participation in durable employment programmes. In order allow women to be able to have equal opportunity with men in availing of employment opportunities a second essential input is the provision of easily accessible water and fuel, child care facilities as well as access to nutrition especially amongst the poorest adult females. Thus it is recommended that provision of the basic needs or revised minimum needs programme

be specially integrated into the women's programme both in terms of recruitment of functionaries, recruitment of labour for construction as well as beneficiaries of the programme. (attached scheme)

Institu-
tional
Structure

The women's bureau at the centre needs to be strengthened with the research and development wing which can also provide the kind of technical liaison with those sectors which are preparing projects with inbuilt technological change. These technical personnel would have the skill to scrutinise projects for differential impact on male and female workers especially negative impact. The research and development wing would be useful to keep itself informed of problems and opportunities available to women in the field of employment.

Women's development corporations are suggested for promoting the employment of women. These corporations could be more useful in specifically identifying implementing agencies from the non-governmental sector, building their capabilities to develop skills both to safeguard women's employment as well as to strengthen it. They could provide training to personnel of NGOs, in project preparation and liaise between them and the existing services. The women development corporations could be facilitating agencies between field agencies such as women organisations and the Government's development machinery. Such State level corporations would provide necessary infrastructure for the central women's bureau to promote and strengthen the status of women.

January 11, 1975

NOTE FOR PANEL

At the first meeting of the Committee held on December 1974, an 18 point agenda was placed before the members. Of these, 9 items need further consideration and discussion. The other 9 are matters which can be easily decided at a simpler administrative level (for example, stamp, essay, etc. - Agenda items 2 & 3).

These 9 which need more thought and which can be drawn together towards giving a massive focus to the organisation of Women's Year in India cluster around the following points -

- 1 The identification of the most critical areas where women as a group need further attention (items 1 & 9);
- 2 The collection of information which could be used in formulating policies and programmes (items 9 & 12);
- 3 The promotion of programmes which would attend to these areas (item 16); and
- 4 The organisation of interest in the subject of women - their role, their potential power, their problems - both through the use of all classes of media and through the administration and other institutions. (items 4-7 & 16)

Though it can be said that economic progress is in itself a solution, a process that takes care of most ills, - in the context of women's position, such a statement can be misleading.

(Statements such as those made in Population Year - "Economic development is the best contraceptive" should not be acceptable.) Because, the issue is that even given poverty and the slow, inadequate progress that is being made in the key variables like health education, wages, employment and other institutional services for men, women and children, women and girls are lagging far behind men. Women are bearing a greater share of the pains of poverty than men - why should they?

This phenomenon of unequal progress is most sharply prevalent among the weaker sections of the population. The women agricultural labourers, including plantation labour, who form more than (%) of the female working force of India are the most massive example of this phenomenon. If to this percentage is added their sisters in the cities - the building and other casual labour - they form (%) of the women in the working force. Together these women form % of the total female population in the age group 15-45. This is an underestimate as many women who actually work outside their home, do not qualify as "working women" - and hence do not report. It can be estimated that these women form % of all women in India. If to this number is added the girls in the age group 11-15, the percentage swells to .

Could we gear all our efforts - financial, administrative, intellectual and promotional - towards this class of women and their needs?

If this objective is acceptable to the Committee (that is, concentrating efforts on the reduction of disparity, removal of degree of distress from the weakest sections of our women population), the programme for Women's Year in India could be set out this way:-

Theme

Women and girls from the weaker sections

Task

To level up the disparities in

- Health
- Education
- Wages
- Working conditions.

Strategy

Identify the size, location of this class of women and girls. Develop a demographic and economic profile of their condition showing trends in their progress in comparison to men and boys from the equivalent social group in the last 25 years;

Investigate the reasons for lack of parallel/equal progress. - cultural, sociological, administrative, reasons should be considered.

Examine the on-going programmes and calculate what additions/changes have to be made to make them level up the women more effectively; and

Awaken interest, canalise all energy onto this class of women and their needs - by the use of media, conferences, state activities, essays, exhibitions, stamps, addresses, etc.

The argument

There are some disadvantages in selecting such a theme.

Firstly, it tends to highlight the misery and conceal the achievements by women in India, as well as progress that is being continuously made in their position through the activities of governmental and non-governmental agencies.

Secondly, it neglects other very serious needs of women. For example, the problem of working women in cities - their need for accommodation, their need for change in social attitudes. It neglects the problem of dowry, legal aid, etc.

The world knows and acknowledges that in India women have always held prominent positions, given a unique degree of accommodation in all spheres of life. The only dark corner in the picture of women in India is the physical reality of this class of women and girls. Very often foreign observers notice this contrast between the magnificence of the leading women and the dismalness of those at the hardship level. World and domestic opinion can only admire an effort where because choices have to be made, a concerted galvanised effort

is made to lift these women one or two rungs up the ladder of progress.

So often commemoration of a particular subject - be it population, women, child, etc. - gets ensnared into cerebral, activity alone - into seminars, distractions into many spheres.

In a large country like India with financial constraints even the most strenuous efforts for economic progress appear like drops of water in an ocean. If a many-sided programme of economic and social development, addressed to many layers of social groups, is attempted, then by necessity its impact is insignificant. On the other hand, if a programme can be evolved in 1975 which has a sharp discernible focus, a shorter time period, a manageable financial and administrative load, it may yield concrete, praiseworthy results.

Further, throwing emphasis on the physical aspect of women's lives could illustrate that in India the issue is not one of emancipation, of constitutional rights, of opportunities to participate at all levels of leadership. In these spheres the country is as advanced as the most advanced.

A bold confrontation with inequality, and a practical attempt to overcome it can only add to the image that in India there is a serious attempt all through the ages to enlist the full parti-

icipation of women. All the issues about status, legal provisions, problems of the unemployed educated, the middle class, etc. can be held over for the year and discussed with renewed vigour after the exposure to these hardpressed women. The perspective with which Indian women see themselves may change and for the better, as a result of this emphasis.