

‘Beyond Practical Gender Needs - Women in North-Eastern and Hill States’

**Study for the *UNDP - Planning Commission National Research
Programme on Growth and Human Development***

Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi

June 2005

Preface

This study has been commissioned by the UNDP, New Delhi under the *UNDP - Planning Commission National Research Programme on Growth and Human Development*. ISST undertook the study in partnership with the following persons, and we would like to thank them all for their co-operation and contributions: Ms Anuradha Pande from Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan, Almora, Uttaranchal; Ms Monisha Behel and Ms Annie Sohtun from North East Network, Delhi and Shillong, Meghalaya; Ms Mary Beth from Rural Women's Upliftment Society (RWUS), Churachandpur, Manipur; Dr Aparna Negi, Kasho and Mr Subash Mendapurkar, Sutra, Himachal Pradesh.

At ISST, the project was co-ordinated by Dr Raakhee Bhattacharya.

Two seminars were held in the course of the project, one at the outset and the second upon completion of the draft reports. Reports on the workshops are included here.

It is our hope that these studies will help in developing policies that are sensitive to gender needs and that succeed in meeting the needs of those in the most remote areas.

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PART I

AN OVERVIEW ¹

Introduction:

Gender equality is an integral part of the planning for human development. However, in practice, it is not always easy to see how best to include and integrate gender perspectives in development planning. Despite the best of intentions, gender is often an aspect that is ignored, or paid lip service to, but not accorded a central place in either analysis or strategies for implementation.

This study, 'Beyond Practical Gender Needs – Women in North-Eastern and Hill States', was commissioned under the UNDP- Planning Commission National Research Programme on Growth and Human Development. The purpose of the study is to understand the best ways in which women's strategic needs can be advanced in selected hill states, where the achievements in standard indicators is often better than in the rest of the country.

Interventions intended to improve women's situation, reduce gender inequality, and allow women and men equally to have control over their lives, have been identified and designed in many different ways. Some have been more successful than others in enabling women as intended. The division of needs into practical and strategic is an extremely useful device for understanding the likely impact of various interventions. Essentially, it leads us to extend our enquiry from simply looking at specific outcomes, to examining the processes of change that might have been initiated, and what the potential future impact might be.

With this approach, in this study we have looked at selected areas in four hill states to understand the nature of strategic interventions that could advance us towards greater gender equality and empowerment of women.

The hill states in India share some similarities, and have many differences. Section I explains the context of the study. Section II suggests an approach to gender planning that could better advance women's interests.

Part II of this report contains the reports received from our partners in this study, which explore in greater detail the situation in areas where they work. Part III contains reports on two workshops held in the course of the study, one at the outset and the second upon completion of draft reports.

I. The Context

This study is based on an analysis of the strategic gender needs of women in selected areas of Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Meghalaya and Manipur. These four hill states share somewhat similar physical and topographical features. The economy of all four hill states was traditionally based on land and forest, with negligible industry or commerce and heavy dependence on natural resources. The states share borders with neighbouring countries.

To identify both the strategic (relating to gender division of labour, power, legal rights, domestic violence and control over bodies) and the practical (immediate perceived necessity, identified within a specific context, like inadequate living conditions, like health care and employment) gender needs in these states, the study has used a methodology which was primarily qualitative in nature.

In order to capture the field situation, we invited a perspective on each state from leading NGOs based there. The study has been conducted in partnership with the NorthEast Network (NEN) in Meghalaya, the Rural Women Upliftment Society (RWUS) in Manipur, SUTRA in Himachal Pradesh, and the Uttarakhand Sewa Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan in Uttaranchal.

Secondary data has also been reviewed and incorporated into these reports. The investigation has been selective in nature, examining key areas of intervention and capability, and with a focus on trying to understand what is needed to ensure that women's practical and strategic needs are both advanced. Our purpose has been to provide some suggestions to those who are engaged in planning for economic and human

¹ This overview is based on the four separate reports which are given in full in Part III of this report.

development, to better engender the approach and the impact of policies and programmes.

Data suggests that socio economic indicators for the hill states show a better level of achievement and lower gender gaps than in the country as a whole, for example girls' enrolment in schools and female literacy rate are above all- India averages, and the gender gap in work participation rate is lower than the all- India average. (see Annex I).

Numbers apart, what is the situation in respect of key aspects of well being?

Health

In the hill states, in the more remote areas, the combination of inadequate infrastructure and social conditions leads to health problems that have not yet been addressed.

It is known that there is lack of both infrastructure and staff in the remote areas. The cost of developing adequate infrastructure is high. In areas that are prone to landslide, flood, earthquake and snowfall, people are often cut off and remain unattended. Vaccination schedules are often not followed, given erratically. The supply of health services is poor because of absenteeism, non availability of medicines. Trained and educated doctors are unwilling to serve in hill areas. The situation is further complicated in the north east as the presence of militants sometimes prevents medical staff from attending at the health centres. PHCs may exist but often lack medicines and staff. Lack of roads, little vehicular movement and poor communication facilities results in people dying on the way to hospital

There is no special medical care for women at village level. Often even information is not being disseminated: PHCs have various posters etc hung up, but many women are illiterate, and doctors do not explain about spacing, nutrition, pre/ post natal care to the women. Women sometimes fall down on steep slopes while cutting and carrying heavy loads of fodder and fuel wood. Many of these cases go unreported. Women tend not to seek treatment until absolutely necessary, since their work burden is high and cannot be shared, there is general lack of information, and social norms as well as geographical conditions are such as to limit their mobility. With high male out migration, women are alone, and seek medical help only when the men come home. The absence of female

staff is another factor inhibiting women from seeking treatment. In addition, the focus of the health facilities tends to be on women's needs in pregnancy/ child birth. Other ailments and diseases are ignored. Often women do not access the health system even during pregnancy and after childbirth. Since a good wife is judged by how quickly she goes back to work after a delivery, women do not stop to get enough rest after childbirth. Women continue to get dais to help with delivery. If there is a problem then the ANM is called. The two systems have not been integrated. Gift of sari or money to the ANM is perceived as a fixed charge, and sometimes this is the reason for preferring to use the *dai*. Dependency on local healers is high, although the availability of herbal medicines is becoming more difficult.

Water, sanitation, and health care are inter-related but dealt by different departments and so there is inadequate co-ordination, and problems continue to grow. The field based discussions reveal that women are often unable to safeguard their sexual and reproductive rights.

There is evidence that sex selective abortion/ female infanticide takes place. This is more evident in places that are by the roadside or where access to urban centres is easier. At the same time there is scattered evidence that in the more remote areas the methods used are different, traditional ways, but the phenomenon does exist.

Incidence of tuberculosis is high and under reported in Uttaranchal, Manipur. Malaria incidence is especially high among women in Manipur. Cholera and dysentery are also reported in the rainy season. In Manipur, a majority of NGO interventions are focused on HIV/AIDS.

A special problem in the North East is that of high incidence of teenage pregnancy. Traditionally, it was acceptable for young girls to get pregnant outside of marriage and they can still continue to stay with their parents. But the impact of the Church as well as Hindu influence is to encourage marriage in case of pregnancy, and a sense of shame is now associated with pregnancy outside marriage. Young girls often discontinue schooling/ education as a result of pregnancy. They do not have adequate access to information, or counseling on these issues.

Education

In the hill states, literacy levels are higher than in the plains and the gender gap has been largely closed at primary level. But gender gaps at higher levels persist. It has been seen that the drop out of girls especially between the ages of 11-14 is closely linked to the work burden within the household; this itself is determined by a number of factors which include the number of animals owned, distance from water sources and forests. Work at home is influenced also by land size and the size of the family. Parental education, especially father's education, has a positive effect on children's schooling.

Since a major reason for girls dropping out is care of younger siblings, some ECCE centres have been opened near schools. But sometimes the school is too far and so younger children remain at home.

Involvement of community specially women is a neglected area. Issues of content and relevance, and the quality of education, are still under examined.

Distance to upper primary and higher schools is a major reason for lower enrolment of girls at higher levels. Gender based disparities are higher among SC children – and physical access to schools is easier for upper caste children because of the choice of location.

In Meghalaya, many girls drop out due to pregnancy. Women and girls migrate to urban centres for work. A few are able to continue schooling in non formal centres. Militancy also prevents functioning of schools. Little problem at primary level, but for further schooling have to spend more plus schools few and not very well equipped.

In Manipur, while both girls and boys receive equal opportunity for education upto high school, beyond that there is a preference for the education of sons. The drop out of girls is maximum between Std 8-10. Educational infrastructure in remote areas is poor. Many government schools don't function. Extortion by insurgents and appointment of proxy teachers is common. Most young insurgents are school dropouts. Private schools and mission schools charge high fees. But they have played a very important role in providing educational facilities and have filled gaps in the government system.

Political Participation

In Uttaranchal and Himachal, women are well represented in the Panchayat institutions as a result of reservations as per the 73 rd and 74 th Constitutional Amendments. However the central concern of the Gram Panchayats appears to be allocating resources for construction. Issues like health, quality of education, violence, drinking water, are not taken up. The ability to take up gender concerns or even issues relating to village needs is restricted because the money has to be spent as indicated by govt schemes, i.e. there is very little flexibility.

There is some evidence of women exercising autonomy in voting decisions. Women's groups have led movements around environmental and social issues. In informal institutions women display leadership and creativity in addressing existing problems.

In Manipur examples of women in social movements include the Nupilan, the Meirapaibi. Women have played, and continue to play, a critical role in times of crisis, but this does not develop into sustained political activity. Many issues are dealt with by the village council. Very often clan members in small groups take decisions. These traditional systems of authority play a powerful role. Because of reservations, women are represented in panchayats, but this is not equivalent to their having become a significant political force.

In Meghalaya (also Assam, Tripura and Mizoram) the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution enabled the setting up of District and Regional councils, building upon the traditional jury based legal system evolved by tribal societies. Participation in these traditional institutions is dominantly male.

Economic Status

In general, women's participation in economic activity is expected to be constrained by unequal education and training, biases in allocation of household responsibilities, inequalities in ownership of assets, gender stereotyping in jobs, wage disparities.

This is however not true when we think of agriculture, animal husbandry or other traditional occupations. Women play a significant often dominant role here. The out migration of men in search of work has accentuated the burdens on women. In addition to these traditional activities, some interventions (both governmental and non

governmental) have tried to 'modernise' the sources of income, introduce new sources of income earning. Experience with these is mixed.

Patriarchy seems to be a dominant mode for access to property except in tribal districts in Himachal Pradesh.

In Meghalaya, in the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo hills property is owned by women, especially the younger daughter. The level of actual control varies. Generally, consent of male members is required before decisions of sale or lease can be taken.

Violence

In trying to understand what leads to incidents of violence, alcoholism is mentioned. So is poverty. Other reasons mentioned are domestic discord, economy, social taboos, customs and traditions. In Himachal structural change (from joint family to nuclear family) seems to have been associated with high incidence of domestic violence.

Incidents of rape are frequently reported.

Access to law is limited.

Under reporting continues, of rape, violence and trafficking.

Armed conflict has exacerbated violence.

II. Beyond Practical Gender Needs

These studies of gender needs in the hill states bring out the fact that practical and strategic needs merge into one another. There are ways of meeting practical needs that could also advance strategic interests.

One point that emerges from the studies is that gaps still remain in the provision of basic needs, and **the 'gap between demand and supply' is what needs to be better understood; it is in filling this gap that the strategic needs of women will be advanced.** For example, a system of health practitioners has been set up and is expected to cater to the needs of men and women. Much has been said about the need to extend the facilities and for better implementation. The expansion of physical infrastructure is easier than filling the posts for trained medical personnel. Not enough thought has gone

into how one can make these facilities more accessible: the problems of access are both on the part of the supply side and also in the socio-economic situation which restricts the mobility, self confidence and information that women and some men have. Another area where a lot of effort is needed is in integrating the traditional health system and midwives with the modern system.

Similarly, while the demand for education is extremely high and there is almost universal primary schooling, the need to make upper primary and higher education more accessible still needs effort; here too there are questions of physical access and infrastructure as well as social access.

The voices of women are captured only partially and inadequately through the formal systems of governance, even though the representation of women is high as a result of reservation. But there are fora in which they have been able to exercise leadership, make their voices heard. These include women's groups of various kinds. In the North east, these groups also play a critical role in peace building. In Meghalaya, women are not very visible in the traditional councils. A question that needs much deeper study is whether the way ahead is to insist on reservation and representation in the councils, or whether we need to try and integrate better the voices and issues emerging from the informal women's groups if we want to engender political spaces.

Violence of many kinds, starting with violence against the unborn girl, is prevalent everywhere. From domestic violence to armed conflict, women are particularly vulnerable. While this has been recognized, the response and the best way to change social norms is not well understood.

The troubled question of economic livelihood, the traditional systems and the new initiatives, require deeper study. It is indisputable that environmental concerns and ecological integrity needs to inform development in these areas. At the same time, the hill areas are bound to be affected by the changing economic policies of the country. The efforts to strengthen women's economic status are closely bound up with this debate.

Some general recommendations for engendering development policies emerging from the analysis of the situation in the four states can be summarized here.

- 'walk with them, not work with them': a nice way of stating that if we wish to empower hill women and engender development strategies in the hills, we have to see the world through their eyes and walk step by step till the goal is reached. In other words, **shift attention from outcomes to processes**. This means respecting the environment, both physical and social, within which women live, and seeking ways of change that do not lead to backlash and alienation, but rather allow the community as a whole to move towards a situation in which the rights of all persons are given equal respect and equal status. Men and boys have to be involved in the process of changing women's lives. It follows that it will be counterproductive to try and force the pace of change.
- To allow the voices of women to emerge and to allow women to develop the ability to articulate their concerns and understand better the world in which they live, spaces are needed in which they feel secure. Women's groups have played an extremely important role in creating and nurturing such spaces. It needs to be understood that reserving spaces for women in Panchayats is not a substitute in any way for the role of these groups. **Resources need to continue to flow to supporting women's groups and activities outside of the formal structures and its supporting institutions and activities.**
- The studies suggest that engendering development is something more than eliminating the gender gaps that currently exist in various indicators of human development. It requires recognizing the diversity in lives of women in different situations, and finding ways of addressing the problems that exist without disrupting the binding forces of the society. While the measurement of gender gaps requires an aggregation of the situation of all women vs all men, gender sensitive policy requires that we disaggregate, and recognize that all women (like all men) will not have the same needs. **Priority needs to be given to the poorest, in the most remote areas**, whose needs are rarely met through market mechanisms.

Some specific concerns and areas recommended for greater attention that have emerged from the studies done by the partner institutions can be briefly summarized:

- **Improving access to secondary and higher education:** Demand for education is very high. But girls start dropping out after primary school because of lack of middle schools. Once girls hit puberty, parents do not want to send their girls far away because of the hilly terrain and dense forests, which are deemed unsafe. In the North East, gender differentials in education are seen after 10th and the 12th class, when mostly sons and children from well-to-do continue their education.
- **Quality of schooling:** There is a demand for improved quality in schools: qualified teachers and adequate facilities are the two main demands. Sometimes the teachers too assume stereotyped gender roles. Even educated women have such prejudices.
- **Dysfunctional schools in remote areas:** Girls are often sent to government schools; boys to private schools. Unfortunately, Government schools in the interior rural areas are often dysfunctional. Teachers are present in urban areas; remoteness, and in the North East insurgency, in rural areas, however keep teachers from rural schools. It is also difficult for teachers to actually reach their schools because of poor infrastructure. This impacts more severely on girls. Though private schools are functional, due to the high fees they are not affordable for most. Catholic missionary schools are doing well in Meghalaya. Also other Christian institutes like Presbyterian institutes and Ramakrishna Mission are doing remarkable job in this field.
- **Poor Outreach of Health Services:** Topography and hilly terrain, doctor absenteeism and unreliable medicine supply are the main factors responsible for the poor reach of health services. Primary Health Centers do not function well, which is complemented by the irregular visit of the doctors. Many instances exist of death of the patient en route to hospital (cases which often go unreported). The problem is both of physical and social accessibility.
- **Awareness, information and outreach:** While the problem of physical accessibility to health care is determined by the geographical and environmental factors, the social accessibility to health is determined by gender, lack of information and awareness, pointing to the need for much stronger outreach systems. Most women do not understand medicines which is a pointer towards a need for giving more information

and training. Obstetric care is also lacking. 90% of married women have gynecological problems, and have issues addressing these problems because they do not want to approach male doctors. Female doctors are needed. The health complaints themselves stem from hard labor or husband harassment. Safe childbearing is another issue. Nutrition for mothers and children is poorly understood. Deliveries are usually at home with a midwife. Even when women are aware of treatment, and want to go for treatment, they must go with their husbands. When the husbands decline to accompany them, the women are trapped at home without care.

- **Linking traditional systems to modern systems:** Due to doctor absenteeism as well as belief systems, herbal medicines are used and local/ayurvedic doctors are consulted.
- **Sex ratio:** Sex-selective abortion, reflecting strong son preference is seen in many places.
- **Specific health concerns:** AIDS/HIV is a big concern. Lots of mothers transmit to their children. Malaria plagues central rural areas, where women working out on the field are regularly exposed to infected mosquitoes. Tuberculosis is another problem, as is cholera and other waterborne diseases. There is a lack of hygiene in cooking, the drinking water is unsafe, and the pit latrines most use usually flood when it rains, further contaminating other water sources. White discharge, irregular periods, anemia and TB are the most common health related problems for women. Anemia among adolescent girls is predominant. Waterborne and fuel borne diseases are common; mining leading to water contamination is also a problem. Mental health is another issue. Agricultural workers deal with pesticides. Also heavy manual labor leads to chronic neck and back pain
- **Older Ages:** Plus-50 health care has been ignored – older women are vulnerable because they cannot work, and are often cut off from the family.
- **Domestic Violence:** Violence is reported from all over. Alcoholism has become an excuse for men to turn violent. Another reason cited is poverty. Due to scarcity of resources men often vent out their frustration through drinking and often beat their wives. Few interventions have been successful so far, although women derive substantial support from women's groups.

- **Legal Literacy:** Husbands often leave their wives, but women do not demand alimony because of lack of legal knowledge. There is discrimination in daily wages: women get Rs 30/- in contrast to men who get Rs 50/-. This happens partially because women are not legally aware. Also women are afraid of losing financial support of husband if they take any action.
- **Access to and ownership of property:** Even in matrilineal Meghalaya, women own land only in theory. In reality it is registered under husband's name, with the wife's name in brackets. (This is applicable in Garo Hills only) Usually the men make land-related decisions. In other words the maternal uncle or the brother is the executor and the planner of the land. Women are supposed to get permission to get even household items. Also they are not allowed to exercise their free will, without consultation, even with the issues regarding the property. Thus women don't have the decision-making right. As far as access is concerned, sometimes the father keeps the land for the daughter, which she can "retain," but cannot transfer or sell. In Himachal too, reserving some land for the use of an unmarried daughter was found to be a practice.
- **Globalization:** there has been adverse impact on many traditional occupations such as weaving.
- **Recognition and building up of traditional skills:** The substantial contribution of hill women to the household, through their work on the land and in traditional crafts, is unrecorded, unrecognized, and often not taken into account in discussions of livelihood. Building up on these skills would be a valuable way forward.
- **Symbolic vs Effective political participation:** At present, much of women's political participation is symbolic. In order to be visible in the political sphere women need a good political background, i.e. be from families with prior involvement of politics. In Christian communities, women's participation is considered ungodly. Women often don't vote for women because husbands overrule wives -- and often decide the voting pattern for the whole family – and husbands generally prefer men. Additionally, women themselves see female candidates as inferior. Booth capturing and armed conflict also hinder women's participation.

Finally, it should be noted that this study has been a quick one, and many of the issues raised will merit further and more detailed study.

Annex I: Profile of States and India : At a Glance

2001					
	Meghalaya	Manipur	Uttaranchal	Himachal Pradesh	All India
Population Profile					
Female	1138	1181	4163	2992	495738
Male	1168	1207	4316	3085	531277
Total	2306	2388	8479	6077	1027015
Sex Ratio	975	978	964	970	933
Sex Ratio (0-6)	975	961	906	897	927
Population Density	103	107	159	109	324
% of Urban Population	19.63	23.88	21.79	9.79	27.78
Literacy Rate					
Persons	63.31	68.87	72.28	77.13	65.38
Male	66.14	77.87	84.01	86.02	75.85
Female	60.41	59.7	60.26	68.08	54.16
Work Participation					
Female	35.02	40.51	27.09	43.69	25.68
Male	47.76	48.91	46.42	54.70	51.93
Total	41.47	44.79	36.93	49.28	39.26

Source: Census of India, 2001

PART II

Report on

Start up workshop ‘Beyond Practical Gender Needs – Women in North-Eastern and Hill States’

New Delhi, October 26 2004

The present project forms a part of the UNDP – Government of India *National Research Programme on Growth and Human Development*. As pointed out by Dr Seeta Prabhu, Head, Human Development Resource Centre, UNDP, in the inaugural session, UNDP and the Planning Commission have been supporting the preparation of State Human Development Reports. While gender is an integral part of human development, issues relating to gender concerns have not received adequate attention in all the reports. In this context, the present study which will examine both the practical as well as the strategic needs of women from selected hill states in India, could be useful in engendering the broader framework of human development policies.

The following note briefly summarises the main issues emerging from the presentations and discussions on each of the four hill states.

Meghalaya

Access to property

The state has three major tribal groups, Khasi, Jaintia and Garos, in all of which lineage and inheritance are matrilineal, with the youngest daughter inheriting property. However the property is managed and controlled by the maternal uncle. Thus while women have a high status with *de jure* ownership of property, in actual fact they lack real access to resources.

Political participation

The Khasi community has a local council/durbar, but women take part only marginally. Religious duties are performed by men.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure is poor, and health care facilities in particular are inadequate.

Observed status

In decision making, the power is wielded by men, with the maternal uncles playing a dominant role. High levels of domestic violence are reported. Patriarchal values generate inequality between men and women. Community attitudes are orthodox, and the Church has also had an impact in maintaining conservative attitudes. The more liberal tribal society on the one hand, along with lack of sex education, has contributed to the high incidence of teen age pregnancy. Although the child is socially accepted here, the male does not share responsibility for its upbringing. Church is against abortion. Unregistered marriages are highest in Shillong (source: North East Network). Rural

women are more empowered as the influence of the church and conservatism is less than for urban women, who are influenced by church education, middle class morality, attitude, mind set. Thus women are more vulnerable in the urban sector, and it has been found that education and domestication are directly related.

Manipur

Within the state, there are two distinct geographical areas, the valley and the hills. These are very different societies and hence the status of women and their strategic needs also differ. The hill areas are inhabited by various tribes including the Nagas, Kukis, Chins etc. most of whom have converted to Christianity.

Women and Armed Conflict

Over the last four decades armed conflict has been endemic among the tribal groups. Manipur has been under the Armed Forces Special Act since 1980. The consequences of this conflict have included violence, mass scale rape, mental traumas, killing and widowhood. Whole villages have been destroyed. Women have lost both family and property, and to sustain themselves have turned to sex work and drug trafficking. It is reported that in Manipur, there are around 900 to 1,000 girl soldiers fighting with armed groups, approximately 6-7 per cent of the country's child soldiers.

Women and health

HIV/AIDS has emerged as a major health problem. Inadequate attention has been given so far to the problems of women and children infected with HIV/AIDS. It is reported that there are 2000 affected HIV widows in the state.

Primary health centres are few and widely scattered. Missionary hospitals are expensive, and out of reach of the poor. The government hospitals have qualified doctors but lack infrastructure and the missionary hospitals have the infrastructure but not the doctors.

Women's political participation

Women are involved in political activities but there are few formally elected representatives. The Panchayati Raj Act is applicable in the valley areas. Women's groups have been used as tools by the underground groups.

Access to property

Women have no property rights. Property goes either to the youngest or the eldest son. An emerging dowry system can be seen due to increase in consumerism. Both systems, of dowry and bride price, can be observed.

Women and economy

Women play a very important role in agriculture as well as in trade and market. Vegetable vending is controlled by women.

General

Manipur has a thriving drug trade. These networks are associated with violence, and trafficking, contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Traditionally, polygamy has been practiced here. Divorced women are not allowed to keep children.

Extreme poverty is seen, a result of loss of property, family displacement, drug trafficking, poor economy of the state.

Uttaranchal

The economy

In the state, male out migration is very high, resulting in heavy pressure of work on women. The work model of the hills of Uttaranchal consists of four main components- forests, animal, humans and cultivable land. Village life in Uttaranchal is supported by forest which provides fodder and bedding for cattle, fire wood for houses and water. More than 70% of the population resides in the villages and draws its sustenance from agriculture. There is persistent degradation of land and environment, which has contributed to male outmigration.

Prior to British rule, the forests were freely used by the local people who controlled and managed it. With the reservation of forest areas restrictions were placed on use of forest produce by locals. A system of management that emerged was the 'Van Panchayat'. Women are worst affected by continuing degradation of the environment, as are girl children; it has been seen that girls are even withdrawn from schools to help with the task of fetching water, fuel and fodder.

Health

Due to such excessive pressure on women, both at home and outside and for reasons of poverty, women suffer from many ailments and health hazards for which they have insufficient health services. In general, the state has weak health care infrastructure along with poor sanitation and water quality.

Women are also victims of social norms, especially during post natal period. Women frequently suffer from malnutrition. Alcoholism is widespread, domestic violence is high. In areas where there is increasing community feeling and thanks to several women forums, the issue of violence is better tackled now.

Political participation

Access to political and legal institutions is limited for women.

Initiatives taken by the government include

- reservations in Panchayat
- special schemes for girls education
- female teachers to make schools girl friendly
- orientation and sensitization of government officials and policy makers
- Uttaranchal State Policy on women
- Focus on service provision and poverty alleviation rather than 'empowerment'

Issues that bring women together

- forests, irrespective of economic status
- alcohol abuse

- education

Experience suggests that empowerment translates into what women understand as their needs and what should be done by them to fulfill those needs.

Himachal

Female work participation rates are very high here, however, most women are classified as 'marginal workers'. Wage disparity between men and women is prevalent here. Despite the high income profile of the state, women have a high incidence of health problems. Of particular concern is the falling sex ratio, and the likelihood that this is due to female foeticide.

Rural women here are articulate and effective. Their source of livelihood includes agriculture and horticulture.

Environmental degradation and its consequences are very similar to those observed for Uttaranchal. The mining industry and tourism have contributed to this degradation.

Infrastructure in terms of road condition and its connectivity is still very inadequate and women have to travel a far distance to carry inputs for their lands. Violence exists here due to alcoholism. Women do not enjoy political empowerment here. Within the patriarchal framework, a women's main value lies in the capability of her body to produce male offspring and being a good uncomplaining manual labour for which she has very little recognition in the society.

Emerging common themes

The discussions and presentations brought out both the commonality and the differences across the states. In the proposed study, it was agreed that there is a need to select a few themes to be addressed in the context of each state. The themes should also have policy relevance. On this basis, four issues have been identified, as given below

1. Political Participation.

The passing of the 72 nd and 73 rd amendments has been noted as one of the main steps taken to increase empowerment through political participation. However much more information is needed to understand how the reservation for women actually works in practice, how far the process has been empowering, and what steps could improve the situation further.

In addition, women's participation in women's groups, or in customary forums and councils, will also throw light on the extent to which their participation has been effective and what are the conditions for effective participation.

The objective is to understand

- a. the extent to which women have been able to influence the issues that are on the agenda

- b. the extent to which their political participation has made a difference to their ability to address the problems they face in other spheres (eg within the household)

2. Violence

The level and intensity of violence in all forms against women, and the manner in which interventions (whether of the state or other agencies) have been able to address this problem effectively.

3. Health

While health issues have emerged as a priority concern across the states, it is also clear that health is linked to environment and infrastructure. It would be useful to see how each state has tried to address the issues of limited infrastructure and environmental degradation in relation to existing health problems, and what would be the policy implications.

4. Access to land and property

The situation of Meghalaya clearly illustrates the fact that de jure property ownership does not necessarily translate into de facto ownership and control. At the same time, in all the four states, the livelihood of women is closely linked to land and forest. The manner in which effective access translates into empowerment on the ground would provide important inputs into the on-going policy debates on giving women access to land and property.

5. Education and Literacy

The hill states are seen as 'high achievers' in this area. However we could explore how far education has helped to change mind sets, create an enabling environment to develop confidence and build-up self-esteem among poor women, and what kinds of strategies can be recommended.

**REPORT on workshop on
'BEYOND PRACTICAL NEEDS: WOMEN IN NORTH-EASTERN AND HILL
STATES'**

New Delhi, February 15, 2005

Vision of the Project

The project "Beyond Practical Gender Needs: Women in North East and Hill States in India" is one component of the UNDP-Planning Commission, National Research Program on Growth and Human Development. The project was originally conceived to look beyond the practical needs of hill state women --who live in isolated, rough terrain-- to more thoroughly analyze their strategic issues and needs. Eventually, discussions with the partner teams in October 26th, 2004 project start-up workshop produced the conclusion that hill state women are still far from their immediate daily needs, let alone their strategic needs. Thus, both PGNs and SGNs must be taken together to truly address all the needs of hill women.

Though women are integral to society because of their enormous socio-economic contributions, they do not enjoy equal and adequate rights. Their triple duties in productive, reproductive and community management are performed without adequate support. Thus it is important to incorporate issues like health and education which can be put under the premise of PGNs and violence, economy-livelihood and political participation which are in the domain of SGNs, while remembering that these are all highly correlated concerns. The state teams have thus made an extensive work through FGDs in various districts/villages in their respective states and their reports have tried to capture the grassroots situation, namely the expressions, anguish and requirements of the women there.

Inaugural Session

The one-day workshop on the 15th of February was meant to host a second and final round of discussion of the reports that the state teams had compiled after their fieldwork over the last three months. Themewise discussion took place, where each state expressed their views and experiences.

Ms Ratna Sudarshan, Director of ISST, welcomed the participants and the guests and made opening statements. Introducing the theme of the workshop as an attempt to understand the practical and the strategic needs of hill state women, she highlighted the urgency to study and discuss the gap between policymaking and its implementation, and the extent to which policies and programs have responded to the context specific needs of women.

This session was chaired by Dr Seeta Prabhu, HRDC, UNDP, India. Dr Prabhu underlined the relevance of studying practical and strategic gender needs in context of

hill state women. She mentioned that while overall social indicators and the status of women are considered quite good in these hill areas, there is a sharp visible gender gap in each of these states that needs to be investigated for appropriate policymaking. This investigation requires looking beyond the numbers and public domain to assess the status of women, to focusing more on women in the private domain, as it is often in the private sphere that the norms and cultural practices shape people's attitudes. Further, while the public domain has been opened up, the peculiar locale and milieu of the state might bar women from the opportunities which have been provided to them. Another aspect needing attention is the impact of the external environment/forces on the internal developments, and the impact in turn of the internal forces on the external environment. Another issue identified and left open for the discussion was that of livelihood and the out-migration of men. The issue of concern was its effects on coping strategies, i.e. the impact of migration on hill women and how women cope with new agricultural practices. Dr Prabhu concluded by saying that the main aim of the study is to enable the empirical insights to contribute to the development of appropriate theoretical perspectives.

Ms Ratna Sudarshan pointed out that the draft reports suggest that the successful implementation of programs is possible only when certain pre-conditions have been met. She reiterated the five thematic areas for the discussion, which were discussed at the October 26th 2004 workshop. These were education, health, violence, political participation, livelihood-economy.

Ms Rakhee Bhattacharya, Project Coordinator, ISST, made a brief presentation on the principal findings of the project. Taking the five thematic areas separately, she said that:

- Primary school enrolment is high. Emerging concerns centre on the issues of quality of education, and access to secondary schools.
- Health problems multiply in hills due to difficult terrain. Women suffer from both limited physical access and constraints on social access. There is the need for a support system to the hill women especially in remote areas, to counter these types of constraints to accessing health systems.
- Alcoholism has been identified as the major cause of violence against women in all the four states. Alcoholism is rooted in poverty, unemployment, armed conflict etc.
- Livelihood issues can be addressed by building income sources for women by focusing on existing skills and livelihood patterns. Also a new source of income could be introduced through new/alternatives occupations. The relative desirability of these requires analysis.
- It was found that the women participation in structured politics in all these hill states is low. For example, in Manipur, women have portrayed themselves as social protesters while their roles in the political arena remains low. Women are yet skeptical about the role of panchayats/durbars.

A brief presentation by Anuradha Pande on gender planning with emphasis on Uttaranchal clearly pointed out that a policy making framework should keep in mind the needs and desires of rural/local women. These women prefer sustaining their own local needs in an established, while informal setup of ecological harmony and indigenous skills. They are threatened when powerful hands from outside try to

empower them with their macro plan and vision. Highlighting the gap that exists between how rural women define their needs and how the planners visualize the needs of hill women, she said that unless this gap is bridged, discrimination against women would continue to exist. However she drew attention to the women's groups in Uttaranchal, which in some ways are trying to make a change vis à vis that of the formal structures.

She cited a field example of Vimala Devi, a rural village woman with an alcoholic husband, who was facing various hardships. However, other women from the community helped bring her child, who was suffering from tuberculosis, to the city facility some 40 km away. She said Vimala Devi's example is a case where systems of informal relationships help rural women. This also points to the loose structure of policy and programs, which do not initiate and accommodate the change between policymaking, its implementation and its physical – and social - accessibility to the women living in the remote areas of the hills.

It was decided that each state would take up the issues separately by focusing on each of the issue areas. The presentations were made by Ms Anuradha Pande from Uttaranchal; Ms Annie Sohtun from Meghalaya; Ms Mary Beth from Manipur and Dr Aparna Negi and Mr Subash Mendapurkar from Himachal Pradesh.

SESSION I

THEMATIC AREA 1: PRESENTATIONS ON EDUCATION

Uttaranchal

Some of the main findings on education in Uttaranchal according to Ms Anuradha Pande included:

- Demand for education is very high. But girls drop out after primary school because of lack of middle schools.
- Once girls hit puberty, parents do not want to send their girls away because of the hilly terrain and dense forests, which are deemed unsafe.
- Mothers are asking for improved quality in schools: qualified teachers and adequate facilities are the two main demands. Mothers are willing to handle providing their children's lunches.
- Girls are often sent to government schools; boys to private schools.
- Sometimes the teachers are the problem as they assume stereotyped gender roles. Even educated women have such prejudices.

Discussion

Mr Keshav Desiraju, Joint Secretary, Dept. of Education, pointed out that it is important to note how the formal and the informal systems work. Also he said it is important to highlight the lack of resources in the formal system as women do recognize the importance of formal education for their children.

Meghalaya

Ms Annie Sohtun made the following points about the Meghalaya education system:

- Gender gap in enrolment is 5.9% and there is not much gender disparity in enrolment up to Class X.
- Catholic missionary schools are doing well in Meghalaya. Also other Christian institutes like Presbyterian institutes and Ramakrishna Mission are doing remarkable job in this field.
- Government schools in the interior rural areas are dysfunctional.
- Teachers are present in urban areas; insurgency in rural areas, however keep teachers from rural schools. It is also difficult for teachers to actually reach their schools because of poor infrastructure.
- Medium of instruction in schools is also an issue in Meghalaya.

Manipur

Ms Mary Beth said her three months study in Manipur showed that:

- In the interior areas schools are dysfunctional.
- Though there are enough teachers, teachers do not go to their posted schools as insurgency is the problem in the interior areas. Citing the example of Senapati District, she said most of these abandoned schools were converted into chicken coops.
- Though private schools are functional, due to the high fees they are not affordable for most.
- Usually gender differentials in education are seen after 10th and the 12th class, when mostly sons and children from well-to-do continue their educations.
- The district literacy rates are 77.87% for males and 59.70% for females.

Himachal Pradesh

Ms Aparna Negi from Himachal Pradesh focused her discussion on the six districts of Himachal: Bilaspur, Chambha, Hamirpur, Kinnaur, Shimla, and Lahal and Spiti. She said two main factors responsible for high rate of education in Himachal Pradesh were parental motivation and state priority to education. She pointed out that discrimination is not visible in the school level between boys and girls, but dropout rates are higher for girls than for boys.

Absenteeism and proxy teaching are the main factors for the poor quality of education as teachers often draw salaries to teach in one area but actually live elsewhere. Also due to the mushrooming number of educational institutions the quality is being compromised.

Technical education is needed as the present educational input does not prepare one for the job market.

Though sex education has been recently initiated for classes 9 and 10, adequate training to the teachers needs attention.

Mr Subash Mendapurkar said in Himachal Pradesh though the transition has occurred, the teachers have not been able to keep pace with it, therefore a change in the attitude towards education is needed.

He added that as far external mechanisms are concerned, Himachal Pradesh needs support from the central government. Also mindsets and attitudes need to be addressed and focused advocacy by civil society is needed.

Discussion

Questions raised in the discussion were on the insurgency factor. A participant asked the effect of insurgency in the functioning of the missionary schools. The speaker said that private schools deal with insurgent groups via the church leaders. In contrast, government schools do not have a coherent government representative to deal with the groups. With regards to the valley and hill tribes identities in Manipur the participant talked about intra-ethnic differences with regard to Meitei and Naga identities. Introduction of environmental education and building up the informal educational set up to fill the gaps have emerged as important concerns. However, to ensure the effect of the insurgency problem is put in proper context, one participant recommended evaluating the pre and post insurgency scenario in Manipur both in terms of quality and number.

Dr Seeta Prabhu summed up Session 1 by pointing out the internal and external dynamics associated with the problem areas. She said though gender difference in education is not a prominent feature in states like Uttaranchal and Himachal, external factors do play an important role in determining the standards and accessibility of education. In Uttaranchal the external factors include geographical terrain and physical accessibility and in northeastern states of Meghalaya and Manipur it is the insurgency factor along with geographical terrain. Thus the conclusion that came out was that effort is needed to provide the pre-conditions and enabling conditions for higher quality of primary schooling and universal access to secondary schooling.

THEMATIC AREA 2: PRESENTATIONS ON HEALTH

The discussion on health was focused on the field discussions, which were carried out with women in the respective states.

Meghalaya

Ms Annie Sohtun covered five of seven districts. During the Focused Group Discussions it was found that:

- Topography and hilly terrain, doctor absenteeism and unreliable medicine supply are the main factors responsible for the poor reach of health services.
- Meghalaya has high infant mortality rate and women from 15-49 years are often anemic. Primary Health Centers do not function well, which is complemented by the irregular visit of the doctors.
- The factors 1 and 2 often result in the death of the patient en route (cases which often go unreported). Due to doctor absenteeism herbal medicines are used and local/allopathic specialists are consulted.

- Most women do not understand medicines which is a pointer towards a need for education and training.

Manipur

In Manipur there are 2000-3000 people per Primary Health Centers. Lack of doctors, poor infrastructure, and poor medicines are the main factors for poor health services. In the FGDs it was found that:

- The sex ratio has dropped to 970/1000 from over-1000. This is due to sex-selective abortion, as well as due to migration out (apparently more women are leaving). Finally, there might be counting issues (where men – who might be more mobile, for example – are counted twice).
- AIDS/HIV is a big concern. Lots of mothers transmit to their children.
- Obstetric care is also lacking. 90% of married women have gynecological problems, and have issues addressing these problems because they do not want to approach male doctors. Female doctors are needed. The health complaints themselves stem from hard labor or husband harassment.
- Safe childbearing is another issue. Nutrition for mothers and children is poorly understood. Deliveries are usually at home with a midwife.
- Malaria plagues central rural areas, where women working out on the field are regularly exposed to infected mosquitoes.
- Tuberculosis is another problem, as is cholera and other waterborne diseases. There is a lack of hygiene in cooking, the drinking water is unsafe, and the pit latrines most use usually flood when it rains, further contaminating other water sources.

Uttaranchal

- In Uttaranchal there are two problems: physical and social accessibility.
- The problem of physical accessibility to health care is determined by the geographical and environmental factors.
- The social accessibility to health is determined not only by gender but also by the wide gap that exists between the needs and interests of rural women themselves.
- White discharge, irregular periods, anemia and TB are the most common health related problems for women.
- As qualified doctors are lacking in Uttaranchal, ayurvedic doctors fill the need with questionable allopathic medicines.
- Doctors are mostly males and women are reluctant to approach them.

Himachal Pradesh

Mr Subash Mendapurkar pointed out the following issues about health in Himachal Pradesh:

- Women are largely aware of health care services.
- Another is the attitude to RHs (Reproductive Rights). Even when women are aware of treatment, and want to go for treatment, they must go with their husbands. When the husbands decline to accompany them, the women are trapped at home without care.

- Anemia among adolescent girls is predominant.
- In terms of government infrastructure, staff is again a problem: there are no women employed as doctors to cater to women with health problems. This exacerbates the problems, as women again prefer not to approach male doctors.
- Attitude to family planning was another question, shaping local views of selection.
- Women here are sterilized, and often by the time they are 24 years old. This often leads to menstruation problems.
- Waterborne and fuel borne diseases are common there. Mining leading to water contamination is also a problem here as well as in other states.
- Panchayats are not involved in health issues aside from drinking water supply and sterilization.
- Panchayats deal with visible violence, but not invisible violence.
- Plus-50 health care has been ignored – older women are vulnerable because they cannot work, and are often cut off from the family.
- Mental health is another issue. In Kerala and Nagaland, women have disorders left untreated because of a shame/fear of seeking help.
- Agricultural workers deal with pesticides. Also heavy manual labor leads to chronic neck and back pain.

Dr. Seeta Prabhu summed up the session by pointing out that the sad health status of women in all four states is a reminder to revisit the basics. She asked how we could move into the second-generation issues, when even the basics are not taken care of. She said these problems are results of the piecemeal approach, which though have been implemented, are not really taking the social and cultural milieu in consideration. She said that there are various levels to the health problems, which often impinge on each other to create a complex web confining women's access.

Mr Subash Mendapurkar pointed out the problem lay in the indicators, which he claimed are very Eurocentric.

Ms Preet Rustogi from CWDS said we need to study the context of development, which is impacting and impinging on the lives of women. She said there is a need for a shift in approach and a need to study and locate various linkages associated with the transition of policies. It might be necessary to change what are considered indicators of health status, in this ever-changing social and physical environment. It is necessary to take a life-cycle approach to health status. A balance should also be made between the traditional herbal care and the modern health care. And it is also very essential to find out the attitude and sensitivity of women towards the available institutional delivery mechanisms.

Dr Seeta Prabhu said that in the area of health, through the field presentations one could see the influence/play of internal and external factors. She urged the researchers to analyze the influence of external factors on internal ones and the internal on the external. Also she said one needs to study how these factors are interacting with the different levels of government.

Discussion

In the discussion the effect of pesticides on the health of women came up. Also old age issues, which were missing from the presentations at large, also came to the fore. One participant drew attention to the need of changing individual attitudes. Another participant pointed out that one should consider whether the standards for health and the gender issues per se are balanced. Another lacuna that was pointed out was that schemes are focused and the frameworks limited. Also one needs to question the visibility and the invisibility of health issues.

Dr Seeta Prabhu pointed out that the approach towards health needs to be changed and one needs to probe deeper into the causes. There is a mismatch between health infrastructure and the outreach of modern healers. She said the reports from each state could highlight the general issues but also retain the details, which are specific to the particular locale of the state.

THEMATIC AREA 3: PRESENTATIONS ON VIOLENCE

Meghalaya

In Meghalaya the reports of the police department 1993-2003 showed that the cases of rape have increased since 1999 and specific cases on sexual harassment and sex trafficking were highly reported. The points, which explicitly came out in FGDs were:

- Alcoholism has become an excuse for men to turn violent.
- The main reason for domestic violence is poverty. Due to scarcity of resources men often vent out their frustration through drinking and often beat their wives.
- Husbands often leave their wives, but women do not demand alimony because of lack of legal knowledge.
- Rape victims are often of 14 years or younger, while culprits are usually older males. It was found that once the culprits apologize, they often go scot-free.
- There is discrimination in daily wages: women get Rs 30/- in contrast to men who get Rs 50/-. This happens partially because women are not legally aware. Also the law is toothless partially because of their ignorance and a lack of will on their part to take action. Also women are afraid of losing financial support of husband if they take any action.
- Girls and women ignore eve teasing and therefore no action is taken against it.

Manipur

In Manipur rapes are common, but often go unreported. Rapes have increased in the environment of insurgency as often the rapists are army men or insurgents. In Manipur therefore the external environment plays an important role in exacerbating the vulnerability of women.

Uttaranchal

Problems of alcoholism among men are prevalent in the state which contributes largely to domestic violence against women. Though Uttaranchal has all women police stations, because of the limited reach they are not effective. Also, most of these so-called “soft stations” have become counseling centers for women and therefore are often avoided by the local people. Also the stations lack gender sensitivity to deal with cases.

Himachal Pradesh

Dr. Aparna Negi pointed out that as elsewhere, in Himachal Pradesh too in most of the lesser-developed districts there is relatively lower reporting on violence. Nevertheless, overall crime against women seems to have increased. The reasons could be: a) higher awareness leading to more openness in reporting, b) opening up of “women thanas” (police stations) and c) actual increase in incidence of crime. All these need further investigation. She further highlighted another form of crime against the girl child by reporting that the majority of abandoned babies that somehow make it to the crèche of the State Council for Child Welfare are girls. In Himachal Pradesh in most of the lesser-developed districts, there is low reporting on violence.

SESSION II

THEMATIC AREA 4: PRESENTATIONS ON ECONOMY AND LIVELIHOOD

Ms Krishna Bisht, Mahila Haat, chaired the session on livelihood and economy. She said livelihood is a pivotal point around which economy revolves.

Meghalaya

In Meghalaya, a key issue was women’s access to land. The institution of *Nokma* (under whose name the land is registered) is prevalent in Meghalaya. But during the FGDs the following points came out.

- Women own land only in theory. In reality it is registered under husband’s name, with the wife’s name in brackets. (This is applicable in Garo Hills only)
- Usually the men make land-related decisions. In other words the maternal uncle or the brother is the executor and the planner of the land.
- Women are supposed to get permission to get even household items. Also they are not allowed to exercise their free will, without consultation, even with the issues regarding the property. Thus women don’t have the decision-making right.
- Marketing is the main problem. Sometimes the father keeps the land for the daughter, which she can “retain,” but cannot transfer or sell.

Manipur

In Manipur most of the rural women are in agriculture, or are vendors of vegetables, charcoal or fish. Women also dominate the markets. Illiterate and divorced women’s participation is high. Weaving is also a big employer. However, despite contributions to the household income, women have no decision-making power or final say in spending. The head of the household – essentially the husband -- usually determines the decisions that are taken. Micro-credit is a very new phenomenon in Manipur and women generally face difficulty in getting money because of the legal formalities which go beyond their capacities.

Traditional women weavers, petty traders, vendors and other small business of women are facing problems in production and marketing due to the detrimental macroeconomic policies, political unrest and insurgency problem. Women who had strong trading partnerships with neighboring countries like Bangladesh and Burma find connections severed and their livelihoods in danger. In Manipur, many women (mostly

young girls) are out-migrating in large numbers to urban areas, in search of alternative jobs in the service sector. Finally, the impact of globalization has hampered the traditional weaving sector to certain extent.

Uttaranchal

In Uttaranchal, field estimates suggest that women's uncounted contribution to household income is high, and can be as much as Rs 30,000 per annum. Because this work is unpaid and invisible, it is often assumed that women are free and available for other work, and that they are currently non-contributing members of the household. Thus a women might be contributing to the family income but she may not be questioning the norms and values that govern the structure of patriarchy.

This perception needs to change. Ambitious efforts like the Swashakti Project (funded by the World Bank) aim to target women for credit, but have not been able to equalize norms in any way. The role of income generating programmes to meet the strategic gender interests lies on the conceptual deficiency of economic growth being portrayed as the means of empowerment. Thus along with the projects like Swashakti, many more large government policies, NGO programmes and macro policies should be incorporated to tackle with this problem.

Links to the market should be explored, as women's reach to the market is difficult. The women there support the view that the existing skills should be used to full capacity, their livelihood should be land and agriculture based.

Himachal Pradesh

In Himachal Pradesh, agriculture employs 99% of households, but land holdings are generally small, and such land fragmentation affects its fertility. Dr. Aparna Negi pointed out that visible work like ploughing and marketing are done by men, while women do other "invisible" work like irrigation and weeding which are intensive, backbreaking processes, often contributing to deteriorating health. Recounting the focus group discussions held at Chambha district, in the last 15-20 years, 1-2% women have started claiming their rights on their share property. In Shimla however women have traditionally been discouraged to ask for their own share and are often told that enough has already been spent on them during their weddings. The shift from agriculture to horticulture has led to an increase in household incomes leading many women to acquire a managerial status. In the event of independent enterprise such as weaving etc. the problems of marketing and middlemen plague these women. Additionally, not all women prosper: while the horticulture entrepreneurs hire are men, women may be engaged to perform domestic chores.

In Kinnaur district, an interesting fact was reported pertaining unmarried women and their land rights, in a custom persisting to this day. In accordance with the customary law parents may set aside a plot of land for use by the unmarried daughter during her lifetime, but she may not sell or dispose of it and it falls back into the family pool upon her death.

THEMATIC AREA 5: PRESENTATIONS ON POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Meghalaya

In Meghalaya there is no Panchayati Raj, and the tribals have set up district councils, which are functioning since 1952. Each district has a traditional jury-based system and five women are nominated to the councils. Out of 60 seats only three women are in the legislature, which is just 5%. Though women participate in the local darbars (the district councils) they only play the role of silent spectators, as they have no role in decision-making. Mobility of women is also restricted, limiting their reach when campaigning or contesting elections. Men are showing a lot of money power especially in this field, thus disabling the women from contesting the elections. There is no reservation for women to help improve their participation, involvement and representation.

Manipur

In Manipur between 1957-2002, only one woman was elected to the legislature and three women to the parliament. Panchayati Raj is just in four districts, in the other districts, women do not participate at all. The patriarchal influence of the church further hinders women's participation. Some of the points which came up in the focused group discussion were:

- In order to be visible in the political sphere women need a good political background.
- Money and male power are the factors responsible for women's subservience.
- In Christian communities, women's participation is considered ungodly.
- Women often don't vote for women because husbands overrule wives -- and often decide the voting pattern for the whole family – and husbands generally prefer men. Additionally, women themselves see female candidates as inferior.
- Booth capturing and armed conflict also hinder women's participation.

Uttaranchal

In Uttaranchal, women feel that there is something in the structure of panchayats that inhibit women not to pursue their interest, corruption can be one of them. In contrast *mahila mangal dals*/women groups have been highly successful in reaching out to women and in local initiatives that deal with problems faced. Women seem to be comfortable working in their groups. They work at their own pace and with lot of flexibility. While in panchayats the budget has to be finished within the time limits and targets set from outside.

Himachal Pradesh

In Himachal Pradesh political awareness is improving. However, Panchayats need to be more feminized as they rarely take up issues regarding women's livelihood, violence, and female feticide. Women also find that men will literally shout them down when they voice concerns. However women have their own communication mechanisms, for instance when one woman is being beaten she can signal other women in the village, in response other women will rush to the house to beat the husband.

Another common feature in Himachal is that of false promise, i.e. candidates (both women and men) do not deliver on the campaign promises they have made after they are elected. However on the positive side women have succeeded in getting all marriages and births registered.

To avoid a paper trail of grievances, most of the issues relating to women are not registered by Panchayats, who prefer handling complaints orally. A common perception in Himachal is that those women who do get power are voted in due to family connections, not through own merit. The presentation concluded with the comment that a remarkable systematic change is necessary in the Panchayati Raj system in Himachal, though collectives are making a great difference in addressing the needs of women.

SESSION III **CONCLUSIONS**

Dr Seeta Prabhu raised some key questions in the closing session:

- How do we address the issues?
- What are the nature of decisions that are taken --are they of a particular policy type?
- What is the leadership structure in the panchayats and what is the potential of the panchayats to raise the need based issues?
- Do people want to empower the panchayats?

She also made the following observations:

- It is very important to look into all these interrelated problems in a macro framework. This is needed since both PGNs and SGNs are correlated, thus a holistic approach is essential to deal with it.
- One should go beyond the standard indicators of development for hills and should adopt the place specific indicators to deal with the problems of women there.
- More emphasis should be given on the mobilization and popularization of support system in the remote areas. Also it is essential to optimize the available resources and situation for women.
- Policies should be futuristic while examining the current situation so that new avenues can be brought out for action.
- Policies for livelihood creation and strengthening need to be locale-specific.
- Last but not the least it is essential to evaluate the causes of policy failure so far in these hill states.

ISST March 2005

Himachal Pradesh (author Aparna Negi¹)

1. A brief profile

2. District level study of women's education and property related concerns

Chapter 1: Himachal Pradesh: A Brief Profile

I. Introduction

Himachal Pradesh is one of the ten States that makes up the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR)². Himachal Pradesh, located in Northern India, share its border with Jammu and Kashmir in North, Punjab in West and South West, Uttar Pradesh in the South East, Tibet in the East, and Haryana in the South and is located between 30° 22'4" – 33° 12'40" North latitude, 75°47'55" – 79°04'22" East latitude. Although a relatively small state within the Indian Union, it manifests wide ranges in altitude, climate and geology. The altitudes ranges from 350 m to 6975 m above mean sea level the area is 55673 sq kms.

Whilst significant areas of the State are mountainous and above the tree line, including the 'cold desert' areas, it also includes temperate and sub-tropical zones. The State may be divided into three broad zones: the outer Himalayas or Shiwalik foothills, the inner Himalayas or mid-mountain zone and the greater Himalayas or alpine zone.

In present times Himachal Pradesh has emerged as the socially most developed State of the Indian Union. To fully appreciate the success that is Himachal the story has to be told right from the beginning

II. History and Formation³

The earliest known inhabitants of the Himachal Pradesh were tribals called Dasas and later Aryans assimilated with the tribes. In the later centuries, the hill chieftains accepted suzerainty of the Mauryan Empire, the Kaushans, the Guptas and Kannauj rulers. During the Mughal period, the Rajas of the hill States made some mutually beneficial arrangements which governed their relations. In the 19th century, Ranjit Singh

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² IHR comprises of 10 States and hill regions of 2 States of Indian Republic. Geographically covers an area about 5.3 lakh km² accounting for about 16.2% of India's total geographic area. The region shows a thin and dispersed human population as compared to the national figures due to its physiographic condition and poor infrastructure development but the growth rate is much higher than the national average. The percentage contribution of its population has gone up to 3.86% in 2001 from 3.6% in 1991 due to the higher decadal growth rate (about 25.43%) as compared to national average of 21.35% during 1991-2001. According to 2001 census report (provisional) the Himalayan region states exhibit a widely diverse growth rate of population. In the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) only Jammu and Kashmir State contributes about 1% of population to the country's total. Rest of the states individually contribute less than 1%. But collectively the region contributes 3.86% to the country's total population.

³ This section draws largely on the profile for Himachal Pradesh drawn up as part of Ph.D Thesis titled: Cost-Benefit Analysis of Women Education in Himachal Pradesh: A Case Study of Kinnaur District of Dr. Aparna Negi, 2002

annexed many of the States. The British defeated the Gorkhas and entered into treaties with some Rajas and annexed other kingdoms. The situation remained more or less unchanged till 1947.

After India attained independence in 1947, and British paramountcy lapsed over the princely states, Himachal Pradesh was formed by merging together the erstwhile Shimla Hill States numbering over thirty. Himachal started out as a centrally administered territory on the 15th August, 1948 with four districts (Chamba, Mandi, Mahasu and Sirmour) and was raised to part 'C' State with a legislature and a ministry in 1952. Bilaspur was added in 1954, and Kinnaur, in 1956 to raise the number of districts to six. During 1961-71 Himachal Pradesh underwent major changes in its jurisdictional boundaries. The reorganization of Punjab State in 1966 saw the transfer of 4 new districts – viz. Kangra, Kullu, Lahaul-Spiti and Shimla from Punjab as they were Hindi speaking and contiguous hill areas, to the then Union Territory of Himachal Pradesh. On the 25th January 1971, Himachal Pradesh was upgraded to the status of a State. From the point of view of administrative convenience, districts in the State were reorganised in 1972, which resulted in internal adjustment of boundary to create Solan and to the creation of two new districts (Hamirpur and Una) taking the number of districts to twelve.

Himachal Pradesh has five major perennial rivers – the Beas, the Chenab, the Ravi, the Satluj and the Yamuna that form its valley system. These rivers have a large hydro-power generation potential for whose exploitation enormous capital investment is required. These rivers also provide fertile arable land, making agriculture the primary source of income for the people.

III. Himachal Pradesh Today

The total population as per Census 2001 is 60.77 lakh. It has an average population density of 109 people per square km. There are wide variations in area and population figures of the districts and the district wise density varies from 2 persons per sq. km in Lahaul and Spiti to 369 persons in Hamirpur district. Himachal Pradesh has 59 urban settlements and towns with a total population of 5,94,881 according to 2001 census and the largest is Shimla with a population of 1,42,161. According to 2001 Census, the overall literacy percentage of Himachal Pradesh is 77.13% (86.03% for males and 68.08% for females).

The population of Himachal Pradesh, therefore, is largely rural being engaged mainly in agriculture, and other land-related operations. Rural people comprise about 90 per cent of Himachal Pradesh's (HP) population.

Strides in development have not been piecemeal or haphazard and thanks to enlightened leadership, dedicated civil services and hardworking people Himachal Pradesh has, from modest beginnings, emerged as a model for hill development. The definite strategy for development adopted by the State entailed a focus on development of infrastructure. The focus was on broad sectors viz. roads, horticulture, power generation, health and education. The State also adopted an appropriate land use pattern.

The largest natural resource of the State is its thick forest cover. The most striking feature of these forests is the enormous diversity of plant species that range from soft wood conifers to hard wood deciduous flowering tree species. The forests perform

distinct ecological functions apart from which, they also have great economic, social and cultural importance for the region as also for the country as a whole. Most of the population of the State is dependent on forests to some extent (e.g. for fuelwood, fodder, grazing, construction timber, non-timber forest products). The Himachal Pradesh Forestry Department (HPFD) has formal control of forest use and draws revenue from timber and resin production.

The wide ranges of altitude, climate and geology have generated a rich and diversified flora in HP. Major forest types include moist tropical, dry tropical, mountain sub-tropical, mountain temperate, sub-alpine and alpine scrub. The Western Himalayan forests have been identified as one of the world's priority areas for conservation of biodiversity. National parks and sanctuaries cover 12 per cent of the area of the State. Whilst 66 per cent of the State is legally classified as forest land, just 22 per cent is under tree cover. Of that, only about one quarter is under dense forest (i.e. with a crown density of more than 40 per cent).

The State Domestic product of Himachal Pradesh, based on 1980 – 81 prices has grown from 722.73 crore to 1597.43 crore between 1980 – 81 and 1997 – 98. The per capita income, at current prices, has increased from Rs. 1704 (1980 – 81) to Rs. 10659 (1997 – 98). The sector-wise composition of Gross State Domestic Product reveals that though the primary sector was the prime contributor in 1980 – 81 (50.35% at 1980 – 81 prices) its share has declined to 31.92% in 1997 – 98. Over the same period there has been a sharp rise in the tertiary sector (30.96% in 1980 – 81 to 37.68% in 1997 – 98 at 1980 – 81 prices⁴).

Agriculture, the dominant economic activity is characterised by local cultivation technologies and traditional management practices – rendering this sector at around the subsistence level. Intensification of cultivation is further constrained by low intensity of irrigated cropping.

Horticulture development has proved helpful in supplementing the meagre income of the people of HP. It is reported⁵ that about 1.5 Lac hectare land, unsuited to traditional cultivation, can be put to horticultural usage. As part of its Mid Term Appraisal of the 9th Five Year Plan, the State has recognised that the key to increasing productivity is to increase area under high yielding hybrids of maize and vegetable cultivation etc. The plan outlay for agriculture and allied activities for the 9th Plan was 84280 Lac rupees.

The State adopted a land use pattern that pivoted on the development of forests and horticulture. Horticulture protects against erosion and also increases incomes. The area under fruit cultivation has increased from a mere 1000 acres⁶ in 1950-51 to 109050 acres in 1970-71 to 228490.58 acres in 1980-81 and to 421976.26 acres in 1990-91.

⁴ Source: Mid Term Appraisal of the Ninth Five Year Plan, 1997 – 98 to 1999 - 2000, Department of Planning, Government of Himachal Pradesh.

⁵ Khan, AR (1996), An Environment and Development in Himachal Pradesh, Indus Publishing Company, p. 102.

⁶ Source: Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Government of Himachal Pradesh various plan documents and 2.40175 acres = 1 hectare.

Horticulture, in the State, today encompasses a wide variety of fruit, vegetables and flower. The emphasis is on diversification so as to optimise natural resource use. The availability of roads too greatly enhances returns to producers.

In respect of irrigation and flood control the 1998 – 99 achievement levels expressed, as a percentage of 9th plan targets, have been 15% for major and minor irrigation; 63.21% for field channels and 20% for flood protection works.

III. Socio-cultural Moorings

The State is historically rich in folklore and folk music which centre broadly upon such themes as local deities; prominent personalities and religious themes. These two forms alone tell of all that society values. Patriarchy has always been the dominant mode and it continues to govern all aspects of individual's lives. This has largely translated into disadvantages for women that have in fact become institutionalized. Consequently, any effort to uplift women has to take cognizance of the social fabric on which the drama of hill life unfolds.

IV. Conclusion

As can be expected, the State manifests interregional differences⁷ in the levels of development attained and also in the socio-economic conditions. These differences can be examined at various levels of aggregation as also by various categories and sub categories. The most pertinent is a gender based examination of such differences. However, such an exercise invariably turns into a focus on women and this is because a) women constitute nearly fifty per cent of the population; b) both men and women experience development differently and c) women have suffered neglect in a socio-cultural milieu that promotes patriarchy and its attendant values. Consequently, the next chapter focuses attention on such aspects as education and access to property across six districts of the State.

⁷ HP HDR – 2002, Planning Department, Government of HP

Chapter II: Women in Himachal Pradesh: A District Level Study

1. Introduction

The present investigative study forms a part of the UNDP – Government of India *National Research Programme on Growth and Human Development* and has been undertaken in collaboration with ISST, New Delhi. The impetus came from the realization that while gender is an integral part of human development, issues relating to gender concerns have not received adequate attention. In this context, the present study aims to examine both the practical as well as the strategic needs of women from selected districts in the hill State of Himachal Pradesh. This exercise will be useful in engendering the broader framework of human development policies.

2. Methodology

a) Selection of Districts

Six districts were identified in consultation with ISST during the meeting at Sutra, Jagjitnagar in December 2004. These were, Bilaspur, Chamba, Hamirpur, Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti and Shimla. However it was possible to undertake field work in only five districts (i.e. Bilaspur, Chamba, Kinnaur, Lahaul-Spiti and Shimla) in the time available. Secondary sources were relied upon for the rest. Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti are tribal districts and two Blocks in Chamba too are tribal. Others are non-tribal.

b) Thematic Areas

The study confined itself to addressing the following two thematic areas which impact women's lives in more ways than one. These were: Education and Access to Property. Clearly a great deal has been said in literature about both the role of education in human capital formation and also the spill-over benefits of an educated woman. The issue of access to property, particularly landed property, has been at the core of the access – control debate.

c) Data/Information Type

The data/information have been generated from both primary investigation (through focus group discussions) and secondary sources (census reports, district gazetteers and other relevant documents). All sources have been duly acknowledged. Some statistics e.g. index of educational deprivation etc have been worked out.

3. Objective

The objective is to examine the thematic areas selected so as to raise strategic and practical issues and policy implications relevant to hill women.

4. Findings

As stated above, the findings of this study are based on both primary and secondary sources and are presented in two sub-sections as follows:

4.I Education**4.II Access to Property****4.I Education****a. Literacy, Enrolment and Educational Deprivation**

Some facts about the status of education in the state as a whole and in the districts under study are presented below:

Table 1 Improving Literacy Rates in Himachal Pradesh

Census Year	Age Group of Population	Overall Literacy	Male Literacy	Female literacy
1961	5+ years	21.26	32.31	9.49
1971	5+ years	31.96	43.19	20.23
1981	7+ years	51.18	64.29	37.72
1991	7+ years	63.86	75.36	52.13
2001	Excluding 0–6 age group	77.13	86.02	68.08

Source: Census Reports Various Years.

Table 2 Literacy Rate

(Excluding children in the 0-6 years age group)

DISTRICT	PERSONS		MALE		FEMALE	
	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001
BILASPUR	67.17	78.80	77.97	87.13	56.55	70.35
CHAMBA	44.70	63.73	59.96	77.22	28.57	49.70
HAMIRPUR	74.88	83.16	85.11	90.86	65.90	76.41
KINNAUR	58.36	75.27	72.04	84.44	42.04	64.77
LAHUL – SPITI	56.82	73.17	71.78	82.76	38.05	60.94
SHIMLA	64.61	79.68	76.65	87.82	49.12	70.68
HP	63.86	77.13	75.36	86.02	52.13	68.08

Source: Statistical Outline of Himachal Pradesh, 1998; Himachal Pradesh at a Glance: District Wise Statistical Overview 1998 and Census 2001 – Provisional Totals.

Table 3 Caste Based Gender Wise Index of Deprivation for Literacy

(Excluding children in the 0-6 years age group)

STATE	TOTAL			SCHEDULED CASTE			SCHEDULED TRIBE		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
HP	0.3614	0.2464	0.4787	0.4780	0.3502	0.5898	0.5291	0.3726	0.6882

NOTE: Index of deprivation for literacy (IOD) = (target – achievement) ÷ (target – minimum).

Where: target = 100 & minimum = 0 in the table IOD is the figure in () parenthesis.

Source: Index of Deprivation calculated on the basis of 1991 Census

Table 4 Index of Deprivation for HP

Decade	Category	Himachal Pradesh
1961	Male	0.6769
	Female	0.9051
	Persons	0.7874
1971	Male	0.5681
	Female	0.7977
	Persons	0.6804
1981	Male	0.4681
	Female	0.6854
	Persons	0.5752
1991	Male	0.2464
	Female	0.4787
	Persons	0.3614
2001	Male	0.1398
	Female	0.3192
	Persons	0.2287

Source: Index Calculated on the basis of Census Reports Various Years

Table 5

**Gender Segregated Index of Deprivation for Literacy: District Profile
(1991 & 2001 Census)**

SR. NO.	DISTRICT	OVERALL		MALE		FEMALE	
		2001	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991
1	BILASPUR	0.2120	0.3283	0.1287	0.2203	0.2947	0.4345
2	CHAMBA	0.3627	0.5530	0.2278	0.4004	0.5030	0.7143
3	HAMIRPUR	0.1684	0.2512	0.0914	0.1489	0.2359	0.3140
4	KINNAUR	0.2473	0.4164	0.1556	0.2796	0.3523	0.5789
5	LAHAUL – SPITI	0.2683	0.4318	0.1724	0.2822	0.3906	0.6195
6	SHIMLA	0.2032	0.3539	0.1228	0.2404	0.2932	0.4825
7	HP	0.2287	0.3614	0.1398	0.2464	0.3192	0.4787

Source: 2001 estimates calculated from Census data

Tables 1 – 5 above indicate:

1. Chamba and Lahaul-Spiti have shown relatively better performance over the period under scrutiny. The fact that these two were covered under the DPEP⁸ programme indicates that it has evidently made an impact.
2. Hamirpur has been the best performer not just among these six districts but is number one among all twelve districts of the State.
3. Successively improving gender based literacy profile across all six districts.
4. With female literacy attainment having lagged behind the greater jump in women's literacy is as expected.
5. The deprivation index has been presented to highlight the gap that has yet to be covered.

Updated data pertaining to enrolment, whether at school level or at higher education levels are not available. School level data are available for 1999. Though it is desirable that the very latest data be available yet the 1999 figures suffice to make my point.

Table 6 District Wise Index of Development and Pupil Enrolment

District	Index of Development	1999 School Enrolment
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⁸ DPEP = *District Primary Education Programme* that aims to improve the educational profile of those districts where literacy is very low.

		Statistics
BILASPUR	69	71.66
CHAMBA	46	56.63
HAMIRPUR	68	65.22
KINNAUR	49	73.94
LAHUL-SPITI	74	69.92
SHIMLA	128	68.79
STATE (HP)	75	65.65

Source: Index of Development adapted from CMIE and 1999 School Statistics, Ministry of Human Resource Development, GoI

Firstly, for these six districts the enrolment statistics and the corresponding development indices do not follow the expected pattern of the more developed districts having higher enrolments.

Secondly, the statistics on enrolment pertain to only those who are enrolled perhaps it would be more meaningful to obtain estimates of the 'enrolled as a percentage of those who are eligible for enrolment'. This would also serve to highlight the exact situation of women/girls.

Thirdly, it would be appropriate to keep in mind that the relatively better off districts (in the economic sense) are those that have a sizeable male population residing (working/studying) outside that district (e.g. Bilaspur and Hamirpur). In other words there is something to be said for the case of male out migration.

b. Initiatives to Improve the Girl Child's Educational Profile

(This section draws on information provided by the Department of Education, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh)

Fact: Some of the incentives being provided by the Department of Education are as under:

- The Compulsory Primary Education Act - 1997, provides for:
 - a) universalization of Primary Education in the State and
 - b) school committees comprising parents, teachers and local *panchayats* to look after the day to day activities, enrolment and retention and effective management of schools,
- Village Education Committees (VEC) with one-third women members have been made responsible for universal enrolment and retention of children in schools.
- A girl child scheme was launched on October 2, 1997 – involving a gift amount besides a scholarship at the age of six years being given to girl children born on or after August 15, 1997.
- Mother's name is now recognized as a sufficient condition on the admission form of the child
- Free Education:

- a) Exemption of tuition fee
 - b) Textbooks and writing material to all SC/ST and Other Backward Classes (OBC) children for the year 2000 – 01,
 - c) Textbooks to ‘general’ category girls in DPEP districts under DPEP programme,
 - d) Uniforms are provided to tribal girls,
- Mid day meal scheme from class I – V @ 3 kg rice per student per month with 80% class attendance for the month,
- Toilets :
- a) 1228 units of toilets for girls to be constructed in primary schools,
 - b) Under DPEP the 808 schools being constructed shall have separate toilets for girls and
 - c) Through DPEP programme an additional 612 schools will get separate toilets for girls.
- Ma-Beti Melas (mother- daughter fairs), and Bal Melas (children’s fairs) are held at the cluster and Block level,
- Competitive primary school sports have been introduced and these culminate in a state level tournament each year,
- Awareness campaigns for universal elementary education, education of the girl child use various media e.g. radio, slogan writing, press releases, children’s rallies etc
- Legal literacy programme has been initiated in eight districts of the state to make women aware of their rights. This is in addition to some individual initiatives being undertaken by NGOs.
- Scholarships:

Maharishi Valmiki Chhatervarti Yojna: To provide education to the girls whose parents are engaged in unclean occupation the department provides scholarship @ Rs. 9000 per student per annum.

Ambedkar Medhavi Chhatervarti Yojna: Under the scheme Ambedkar Medhavi Chhatervarti Yojna the meritorious students of SC/ST and OBC will be awarded scholarship of @Rs.10000 per student per annum

Swami Vivekananda Merit Scholarship: The Department provides scholarship to the meritorious students @Rs. 10000 per student per annum. This Scholarship is available to the general category students who score good marks in the 10th board examination and get admission in 10+1 and 10+2.

Thakur Sen Negi Merit Scholarship Scheme: Under the above mentioned scheme 100 boys and 100 girls from tribal area who top matric board examination and get admission in 10+1 and 10+2 will be awarded the scholarship @Rs.11000 per student per annum.

Scholarship for the Wards of Defence Personnel: Wards of Defence Personnel who attain martyrdom or disability in war time or peace time operations will be awarded annual scholarship 6th onwards @Rs.250 to Rs2400. All categories are covered in this scheme. Eligible students can apply through Head of the Institute. Under this scheme boys from 6th to 8th standard will be awarded Rs 500, and 9th to 10th standard boys will receive Rs. 300, while girls will receive Rs.600 and Rs. 800 will be awarded to 10+1 and 10+2 students. At the college level the hostellers will be awarded 2400, while others will be awarded 1200 as scholarship.

Grant of Financial Assistance: To the children of Defence Personnel, Border Security Forces Personnel/ Assam Rifles Personnel who have killed /disabled in Indo/Pak/China aggression/ Operation.

National Scholarship at Secondary Stage to the Talented Children from Rural Areas

- a) Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP),
- b) Poverty scholarship @ Rs 4/- per month
- c) Girls attendance scholarship @ Rs. 2/- per month (10 months)
- d) Special central assistance to Tribal students: Previously it was meant only for Tribal Girls studying outside tribal areas. Now this scholarship stands extended to all tribal students between classes 6 – 10, @ Rs. 30/- per month plus Rs. 100/- lump sum for the purchase of books, stationery, uniform etc subject to an income ceiling of Rs. 6000/- per annum.

Note In respect of the initiatives to promote the girl child's educational profile it needs to be pointed out that:

- a. Exemption from tuition fee is not significant in the dues that science students have to pay since the tuition fee is only a small component of the entire amount charged.
- b. Educational scholarships cover almost all children from deprived backgrounds yet it is a fact that if a child fails a final examination then the scholarship is withdrawn and the child's guardians have to bear the expense of education if they wish to educate their ward.
- c. Data on dropouts is not traditionally collected by the schools. The department did mention that it has issued a directive to all schools to maintain such records but such records will be available only in the future.
- d. During focus group discussions (in Chamba, Kinnaur and more so in Shimla) it was pointed out that dropouts do happen – the difference is that from school both boys and girls tend to drop out because they may join in the family business which does not require too much education or the parents may not be able to afford education. From higher levels of education e.g. college and University it was girls who were more likely to drop out due to reasons of matrimony. This of course requires validation.
- e. From personal experience as also corroborated by my colleagues at the university it was evident that during examinations it is common to observe married women taking the examination (Graduation and above) as private candidates i.e. girls do tend to

rejoin the education stream after marriage albeit in small numbers – just as above this too needs validation.

The above exposition points out that when referring to education:

- ✓ Only mainstream education is covered – this does not include informal learning. There is evidence to suggest that women are a reservoir of practical knowledge – i.e. indigenous knowledge which is not tapped into. Scientific validation (as is being undertaken by ICAR under its National Agriculture Technology Project (NATP) is needed – it may well lead to patents etc.
- ✓ The 6th AIES reported that over forty per cent of all educational institutions in the State (all 12 districts) are housed in semi-*pucca* buildings, *kachha* buildings, tents and out in the open. The position of science laboratories, library facility and playgrounds as per the above report leaves much to be desired.
- ✓ For all twelve districts of Himachal Pradesh, deprivation index reported in Negi (2000) indicates that:
 - inter district variation in both male and female deprivation exists and
 - there was a simultaneous occurrence of male and female educational deprivation. Rank correlation, between male and female deprivation has been reported by Negi to be $(r) = + 0.95$, $t_{cal} = 9.39$ and $t_{(0.05,10)} = 2.228$ i.e. the rank correlation is statistically significant.
- ✓ Estimates of the correlation coefficient (Negi, 2004) calculated on the basis of 2001 census corroborate the above result and yields $(r) = + 0.99$, $t_{cal} = 22.19$ and $t_{(0.05,10)} = 2.228$. In other words, just as for 1991 census data in 2001 too, literacy deprivation does not manifest gender bias as the calculation yielded a statistically significant rank correlation.
- ✓ In the case of women's access to education an additional aspects have been raised by Jean Dreze in the much quoted PROBE report. In the chapter on Himachal Pradesh Dreze has stated that two factors that have contributed to the success of education, particularly of the girl child have been : a) parental motivation and b) State's proactive role.

4.II Access to Property

(This section relies on focus group discussions held during field visits and also on various State Gazetteers for a historical perspective, I am thankful to the key persons who provided useful input)

- ☑ Districts covered: Five (Bilaspur; Chamba; Kinnaur; Lahaul-Spiti and Shimla)
- ☑ Locations: Panthera, Barathu, Kosarian, Dehalvin in Ghumarwin Tehsil and Majher, Pohni in Naina Devi Tehsil in Bilaspur; Bharmour, Mehla, Chili and Tissa in Chamba; Sangla Valley in Kinnaur; Udaipur Block in Lahaul-Spiti and Mashobra Block in Shimla
- ☑ Methodology: Focus Group Discussions and Review of Literature

- ☑ Historical perspective (source Gazetteers – refer to bibliography; Chamba and Bilaspur Gazetteers were not available and the History of Punjab Hill States mentioned only the Kings and their exploits)

Table 7 Historical Perspective

Sr No	Aspect	Districts			
		Chamba Bilaspur	\$ & Kinnaur [#]	Lahaul - Spiti [@]	Shimla [*]
1	Main occupation	Agriculture	Agriculture	Agriculture	Agriculture
2	Marriage		<p>“In the past the usual practice was for several brothers to have one wife. Sometimes, if the wife was barren, her sister was brought in. The youngest brother sometimes married separately if there was a significant age difference between him and the common wife.” Pg 94</p> <p>Marriage alliance is restricted by caste and socio-economic conditions of the parties pg 95</p> <p>No dowry exists pg 101</p> <p>Marital age=18 yrs for boys & 14 yrs for girls; the girl may be older than the boy in polyandry pg 102</p>	<p>Marriage is usually arranged by the parents pg 73</p> <p>Inter-caste marriages are rare pg 73</p> <p>Majority of marriages take place between the ages of 15 – 25 yrs pg 75</p> <p>Dowry is considered socially desirable and is in accordance with the parent’s ability to pay. If dowry cannot be paid at the time of marriage then a simple ceremony is held later – sometimes several years later when the couple may have children. Pg 74</p> <p>In Spiti the eldest daughter gets mother’s jewellery. It is not obligatory for the parents to give dowry for the younger daughter’s wedding. Pg 74</p>	<p>-“ Only among <i>Kanets</i> and lower castes has a girl any voice in the choice of her husband</p> <p>-Among <i>Kanets</i> except when the <i>Phera</i> ceremony is performed and among the less respectable families sexual licence before marriage is common</p> <p>- a man may marry as many wives as he likes the number, among <i>Kanets</i> is generally regulated by the amount of work he can profitably assign to them” pg 27.</p> <p>No age is fixed for marriage pg 28</p>
3	Divorce		Hindu marriage Act does not apply and a woman bent upon divorce seeks it through her parents. Pg 102 Marriage	If divorce is initiated by the man then he returns the dowry and pays an additional amount of Rs. 500; if the	“Divorce can be got at any time by paying the husband the cost of marriage & the jewellery given by him” pg

		expenses are paid to the husband's family and the divorce decree is prepared. The divorce is a simple ceremony Pg 102-03	woman wants to separate she pays an equal amount and the divorce is granted in a simple ceremony. pg 76	28.
4	Widow Remarriage	A young widow's parents pay the marriage expenses to her husband's family and can remarry her. Pg 102 A widow with issues & property may choose to lead an independent life or a life as the wife of the other brothers. Pg 102	No bar on widow remarriage. A widow is not looked down upon and in some cases can inherit the property of the husband. pg 76 A widow gets maintenance from the one who inherits the property. Pg 74	"Among <i>Kanets</i> and low castes a widow is free to remarry in or out of her husband's family" pg 28 "When a widow remarries whether in or out of her husband's family, is not entitled to his property" pg 28
5	Status Women of	Remarkable respect is given to the <i>Goine</i> , i.e. the wife whose decisions are respected. Pg. 104 Parents may set aside a plot of land for use by an unmarried daughter which is hers to use during her lifetime – she may not sell or dispose of it & it falls back into the family pool upon her death. The money collected during the wedding is to be utilized by the bride in any manner she deems fit. Pg 98 During the first marriage it is insisted by the parents that the in-laws earmark a piece of land exclusively for their daughter in case her husband(s) marry again. Oftentimes this assurance is kept in form of a document. Pg 98 Economically dependent pg 103	Inheritance by eldest daughter is common Women wield authority within the home. Pg 74	

6 Succession

Under polyandry property was inherited by other living co husbands/sons as the case may be in equal share & only legal heirs inherited. Pg 92

Succession is open to all male lineal descendants. Pg 68

If issueless then the widow inherits. Pg 68

In Spiti eldest son inherits during father's lifetime just as soon as he marries. Pg 68

When no son is born then the daughter inherits and a house husband is brought in from a family of equal social standing. Pg 69

Legitimate SONS inherit. "in some places legitimate sons get 2/3rd while natural sons get 1/3rd", pg 28

Sources: \$ History of the Punjab Hill States

District Gazetteer – Kinnaur

@ District Gazetteer Lahul Spiti

*Gazetteer of the Simla District

Present Access and Control Profile (format borrowed from Wilde, and Mattila, 1995) in all four districts

Resource/Opportunity	Access		Control	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
1. Land	✓	✓	✗	✓
2. Hired Labour	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Farm Equipment	✓	✓	✗	✓
4. Cash	✓	✓	✗	✓
5. Availing Employment Opportunity	✓	✓	✗	✓
6. Education/Training	✓	✓	✗	✓

Source: Focus Group Discussions

Common Features Reported

- All five Districts under study manifest a patriarchy as the dominant pattern.

- In decision making within households the women contribute towards decisions pertaining to social obligations, ceremonies, purchase of household appliances, daily rations, hired labour and also handle small amounts of cash needed for daily transactions. They however, do not determine the exact amount that has to be spent.
- However, in respect of decision making it needs to be mentioned that:
 - o 15 focus group discussion members (in Bilaspur) came from households where decisions (household and farm) were made by women – interestingly, these women had educational attainment of less than the matriculation level.
 - o it emerged that in large families decision making authorities are many and women fade into the background.
 - o men pursuing other occupations (e.g. government employees) leads to *defacto* women headed households and male influence is only indirect in such households.
 - o women married against her will – to keep her happy she was allowed to make decisions (specific Case of one woman from Chopal in Shimla – both she and her husband have married twice) – this is an exception!!
- Daily and seasonal drudgery on account of farm activities does not leave than with much time for other activities.
- An average work day for the rural women starts at about 6.30 AM and ends at 10.30PM.
- However, shift to commercial horticulture (in Kinnaur and Shimla) has elevated the position of women to a managerial status since now hired labour is engaged – because they can afford it and also because the operations in horticulture are largely handled by trained personnel.
- Except in Kinnaur, there was no interest shown in agitating for landed property. In Kinnaur, some women had raised the issue but more for political mileage and less for actual property inheritance. Incidentally, women in Kinnaur do not inherit landed property – but as reported in the historical perspective above provisions are made for them which exist even today and they actually own some property – especially if unmarried.
- In respect of their training needs several aspects pertaining to rural women’s non participation arose. The same are presented below. (*The sub-heads have been provided for clarity.*)
 - **Motivation:** The enthusiasm within women/girls to be achievers is greatly curtailed by the social milieu in which women/girls find themselves.
 - **Daily/Seasonal Drudgery:** Daily family chores of housekeeping, child-care, cooking etc place a time constraint on women/girls. Likewise seasonal

workload in a society characterized by male ownership of productive resources and male out-migration too limit time available for other activities etc.

- **Secondary Status:** Their inability to be in control over their time and their inability to take independent decisions is a deterrent.
- **Insensitive Interventions:** Trainings/Workshops etc organized to specifically provide input to women are usually guilty of being ‘unfriendly’ to a target population that faces a mobility constraint. In reference to women’s workload this could be on account of one or all of the following: 1. These are not location specific, 2. The timing is inopportune, 3. The duration is inappropriate, 4. The medium of communication is incomprehensible and 5. These are not need based.
- **Imperfect Information Flow:** This constraint pertains to the inadequacies of communication channels between the ‘agencies’ of development and the female ‘clients’. Resources are wasted.
- **Trainer’s Orientation:** a) the ‘agent’ i.e. the field functionary is concerned with meeting ‘targets’ rather than with the ‘quality’ of input and b) the agent’s own mental orientation is deep rooted in the ‘patriarchal mould’.

The mutually reinforcing nature of these constraints cannot be overstated.

Ownership of Property

- The discussions on ownership of property provided the following insights. In Bilaspur (Panthera, Barathu, Kosarian, Dehalvin in Ghumarwin Tehsil and Majher, Pohni in Naina Devi Tehsil discussants revealed that:
 - o Hindu Law of Succession is applicable.
 - o One case was reported where daughter has taken legal recourse to claim her share in property she is a housewife with low education but her husband is the chief perpetrator.
- In Chamba (Bharmour, Mehla, Chili, Sail and Tissa) discussants reported that:
 - o The overall the trend was that in the event of deceased parents the land is divided between siblings (boys & girls) on an equal share basis in the event that there was no will. This would account for about 10% of cases.
 - o Another 10% were cases pertaining to unmarried girls who too got an equal share in landed property.
 - o The remaining 80% were cases of married women who forsake their share in favour of their brothers since they go into another home. Such behaviour is encouraged – since “reducing” the brother’s share is frowned upon.

- However, over the last 15 – 20 years women have started asking for their share – hence the above profile.
 - One case of 6-7 years ago came up during the discussion wherein a woman had taken recourse to the courts and acquired her share of land.
 - The material gifts presented at the time of her wedding are given to the girl to use and the money collected goes to her father.
 - The elderly women in the focus groups opined that while there is no inheritance to girls and they do not ask for the same it is appropriate because a large sum is spent on their weddings and thereby they are adequately compensated. Moreover, land holdings are small.
 - 20 FGD members from Sail revealed that:
 - in 5 households girls were staying with their parents after marriage – for reasons of property
 - causes identified were: awareness, clever husbands, low levels of education of women themselves
 - result: conflict among siblings
- Focus group discussions in Sangla valley of Kinnaur yielded the following information:
- Hindu Succession Act does not apply. The Traditional Law that does apply is contained in the *Wajab – ul – Arz*.
 - Fathers can set aside some land for use by an unmarried daughter during her lifetime and it reverts to the family kitty upon her death. She cannot dispose of it.
 - Money collected at the time of her wedding in the *Udaanang* ceremony is given to her to use.
 - The father in law usually sets aside a plot of land for her to use as she deems fit.
 - Divorce is easily obtained as marriage is seen as a contract which can be broken by either party of course with good reason!
 - At the time of marriage the boy's family seeks the girl's family and a girl's wedding entails relatively lesser expenditure.
 - However, dowry has made an appearance and to do better than the Jones's people are spending beyond their means.
- In Lahaul-Spiti groups revealed that:
- The Hindu Succession act does not apply and inheritance is governed by customary practice as in Kinnaur.

- Women inherit property – in fact of the four districts considered the best provisions for inheritance by women are made in the traditional laws that are followed in this tribal district.
- Customary law provides even for the jewellery of the mother to be inherited by the daughter.
- However, despite this only 8-10% women own independent property.
- Focus groups pointed out that in Shimla:
 - The Hindu Succession Law applies to the district.
 - Girls are discouraged from asking for their share – after all their husbands will have property! Not more than 1-2% would ask for their share.
 - The area selected for the focus group discussions was not very far from the State capital. This meant that other livelihood options were relatively more easily accessible. This reportedly created disenchantment with land and its attendant hardships. Not just girls, even boys were reportedly not much interested in agriculture.
 - Increasing numbers of parents are encouraging their daughters to study and even opt for vocational trainings.

Other Occupations

- In Mehla (Chamba) there was a woman entrepreneur who was running a beauty parlour. She had been encouraged by her husband as the children were away and she had spare time at hand. Her husband was an employee and agriculture was not their main source of income.
- Women in the discussion groups lamented that there were no market avenues for them to market locally woven shawls (*Pattu*) – and this was an activity that kept most of them occupied during the winter months.
- In Kinnaur, some women, even from the higher cast have obtained trainings in weaving and have set up home based business ventures – here too marketing is the single biggest obstacle.
- Some women have sought employment in offices and schools locally and this is very helpful as small land holdings yield low returns. Some women from this district can also be found in paid employment throughout the State.
- In Shimla district it was reported that it was not uncommon for girls to be working. Locally in schools and crèches etc. Some girls commute to their workplaces substantial distances and can be found in paid employment in schools, offices, beauty salons, computer training centres etc.

In respect of the focus group discussions reported above, it must be borne in mind that these were issues highlighted by the women I was able to contact. Several issues that were raised need further corroboration. Such an exercise will provide a truer picture of ground reality.

5. Policy Implications

Based on the above exposition it is concluded that some basic ‘simple’ policy measures will have to be adopted. The same are outlined below:

- **Education – manifesting 2nd generation problems**

The overt focus on mainstream education is an appropriate starting point. However it needs to be recognized that: a) this does not include informal learning and b) there is evidence to suggest that women are a reservoir of practical knowledge – i.e. indigenous knowledge. Additionally, though dropout is not a gendered phenomenon i.e. boys and girls are equally likely to drop out (conversely, continue in education) it needs to be acknowledged that boys often drop out of schools to join family businesses/enterprises while girls drop out of higher education largely for reasons of matrimony. However, enrolments reflect inter district variations and male out migration has to be factored into explanations. Also the role played by parents and the State in the sphere of education have to be acknowledged. Consequently:

- **Consolidation phase:** This is now necessary to ensure that the quantitative gains are not compromised
- **Boys need attention:** This is a fact that needs to be grappled with lest this turns into the beginnings of ‘uneducated youth unrest’
- **Technical “type” education needed:** It is said about Himachal that the state is turning out unemployable youth – girls as well as boys – this needs attention. Ensuring ‘employability’ has to be a prime consideration.

- **Access to Property**

In respect of access to property it needs to be pointed out that patriarchy is the dominant mode except in the tribal districts (Schedule V areas). Here, traditional/customary law positions women relatively better – in as much as specific provisions give women access to landed property albeit with some restrictions. As such the following policy recommendations are made:

- **‘education’ of guardians/parents:** to promote non-discrimination among children – slow process
- **Uniform interventions not workable:** inter district variations mandate that uniform palliatives will not work. Cognizance will have to be taken of tradition/custom.
- **Focus on Women’s self esteem & economic independence:** This would allow for women to acquire independent means to property – e.g. purchase their own property and also may reduce the premium on landed property.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion it needs to be reiterated that in attempting to alleviate women's relative positions the need is to focus first on the socio –economic archetype that provides the frame of reference so that patterns of dominance are not perpetuated. The progressive incorporation of more and more gender focussed issues must be put on the centre stage and treated in a situation specific manner since women are not a homogeneous group. This would ensure a holistic understanding leading to the desired redressal.

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Report on Himachal Pradesh: SUTRA

Issues relating to health, violence and political participation

Himachal Pradesh, the northern state of India, is bounded in north by Kashmir Vally, in south by Punjab & UP, Haryana and in northeast by Tibet. The hilly state with altitude varying from 350 meters to 6500 meters attained statehood on 25th January, 1971. Due to varying altitude state has climate varying from tropical to arctic in the high mountains.

Geomprphologically state is divided into four zones:

- Shivalik Zone
- The lower Himalayan Zone
- The Higher Himalayan Zone
- Tethys Himalayan Zone

The index of gender equality measuring the attainments in human development indicators for females as a proportion of that of males, has rated Himachal Pradesh as number 1 in Gender Equality, while it was at no four in eighties, reflecting the positive trend in the empowerment of women in Himachal Pradesh.

Thus, a movement forward that is from practical gender needs to strategic gender needs were expected from the policy makers and implementers of Himachal Pradesh. Let us try to understand what is happening on the ground.

The most problematic area is that a state, which has shown steady improvement in the female indicators, does not have state women policy.

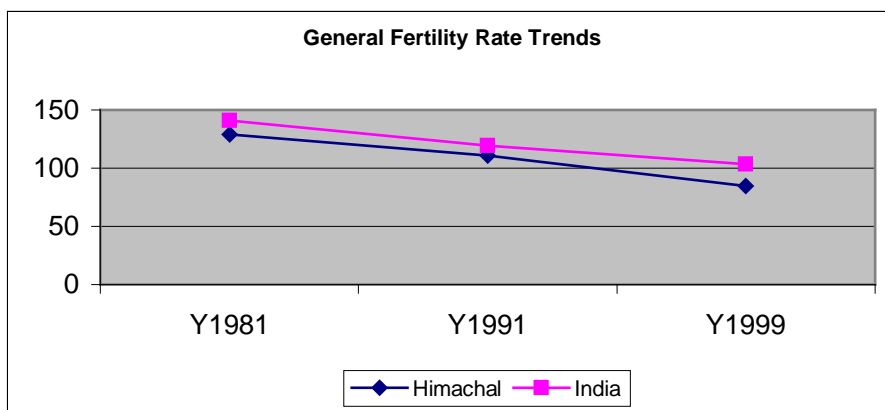
The problem lies in the inadequacy of the Policy makers and Implementers' ability to understand the strategic gender needs and create responses to meet the same.

This can be explained by giving following two illustrations.

1. The state has made great progress in bringing down the TFR.

General Fertility Rate

Himachal				India			
Year	Rural	Urban	Combined	Year	Rural	Urban	Combined
Y1981	3.9	2	3.8	Y1981	4.8	3.3	4.5
Y1991	3.2	2	2	Y1991	3.9	2.7	2.6
Y1999	2.5	1.8	2.4	Y1999	3.5	2.3	3.2



The current TFR is 2.4 which is ideal, but the spacing methods are mostly unused and terminal methods are used. For a pro-gender spacing methods, propagation and use of male contraceptives needed to be increased and this can be done by the motivated and well trained male health workers. But the state has silently declared male health workers as dying cadre. Thus, the burden of spacing and use of terminal methods is passed on to women.

The following table shows how men are keeping themselves away from spacing methods:

Percentage of men with their choice of family planning method for limiting by State/Union territory, India, RCH phase I&II

State / Union territory	Who recommended female methods	Fear of method failure	Fear of operation	Fear of weakness
H.P	19.2	1.3	39.7	87.1
India	25.3	6.3	12.9	72.0

2. The second example is of growing HIV in the state. There are 1038 (Sept. 2004) cases identified in Himachal Pradesh, out of which 72 % are male and 28 % are female. On one hand the State boasts of having one of highest per capita income (Rs 18,912 at current prices and Rs 11832 rupees at constant prices) but on the other hand instead of convincing men to spend money on condoms and use them, it keeps on supplying free condoms.

There are numerous illustrations that can be given to explain that the State is quite inadequate in responding to strategic gender needs.

The State's expenditure on women development is miniscule. Out of total expenditure of Rs 48990400 in 2002-03, it has spend only Rs. 134866 (0.275%) . The following table gives how there is steady decline in expenditure on women development over a period:

Year	Total Expenditure of State	Expenditure on women Development	Percentage
1993-94	13515000	87322	0.646
1994-95	157520000	121335	0.770
1995-96	19043500	127185	0.668

1996-97	21468700	139962	0.652
1997-98	26991400	153270	0.568
1998-99	33342600	197463	0.592
1999-00	38215400	175133	0.458
2000-01	43761800	230290	0.526
2001-02	45097400	131651	0.292
2002-03 (BE)	48990400	134866	0.275

(source: Analysis of Budgeted expenditure on women & CD during 1993-94 to 2003-04 by SC Sahai of SARED)

The above data clearly shows that the share of expenditure on women development to the total expenditure has practically come down to one third. With such a response how can one expect that the State have a pro-gender outlook?

The following table gives the expenditure incurred by the State on women empowerment during last 10 years:

Year	Plan	Non-Plan	Total
1993-94	13535	10809	24344
1994-95	16516	12698	29216
1995-96	16363	13834	30197
1996-97	21974	15020	36994
1997-98	26340	12640	38980
1998-99	29406	14905	44311
1999-00	14234	0	14234
2000-01	6131	0	6131
2001-02 BR	3182	0	3182
2002-03 BE	5397	0	5397

(source: Analysis of Budgeted expenditure on women & CD during 1993-94 to 2003-04 by SC Sahai of SARED)

The above table clearly shows either the State has concluded that all the Himachali women have become empowered and therefore there is no need to spend any more or the State has not been able to assess the needs of women after meeting the practical gender needs.

It has failed to undertake empowerment for women to safeguard their sexual and reproductive rights, which is clear from following table:

Sterilization:

Year	No. of Vasectomy	No of Tubectomy
1997-98	5964	61375
1998-99	5817	57961

1999-00	5932	59971
2000-01	6406	64919
01-02	6032	65535
02-03	6139	64183
03-04	N.A.	N.A.
04- Feb. 05	2449	25756

Source: Year Book – Directorate of Health Services, H.P.

From the FGDs and Household Surveys, it has also become clear that most of the women are aware about side-effects of Tubectomy as they have reported that most of the women after getting sterilized either have pain in lower abdominal parts or in upper parts of thighs, but it seems women are helpless, as men aren't ready to either go for Vasectomy or use condoms and it also seems women have less faith in other spacing methods – Oral pills or IUD – either of quality or regular supply. If one talks with ANMs, one finds that the department still insists on getting terminal methods used by people – there is a specific quota given to each of the ANM and whoever doesn't fulfill, gets ridiculed by the higher-ups. No wonder the NFHS (1998) gives a grim picture as follow:

Age →	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
Ever married Women							
Any abnormal Vaginal discharge	31.7	26.0	26.6	30.6	26.3	27.3	16.5
Itching or irritation	19.5	18.9	19.3	23.0	19.5	21.2	13.7
Bad Odour	15.6	14.0	15.7	17.2	16.3	17.9	11.7
Sever lower abdominal pain	19.9	14.9	14.5	17.6	17.3	16.4	10.9
Fever	5.8	1.6	2.4	2.7	3.5	2.5	1.4
Other problem	3.9	6.6	8.0	8.1	9.3	5.9	4.6
Symptoms of a UTI	16.6	13.4	15.3	14.6	16.6	13.7	09.2
Currently Married Women							
Painful intercourse (often)	26.7	11.5	9.4	8.4	7.5	6.8	2.7
Bleeding after intercourse (ever)	4.4	0.9	0.7	0.2	0.8	0.8	0.4
Any RH Problem	50.6	35.2	34.2	36.0	33.7	33.1	23.2

From the above table, what is most disturbing fact is that practically every fourth currently married youngest woman (age 15-19) has painful intercourse whilst every second woman from this category has RH problem, which clearly states that these women don't have healthy sexual and reproductive health.

How does the State responding to this? There are no special programs to empower women to safeguard their Sexual and Reproductive Health initiated either by the Health services or by Women & Child Development, though the WCD, is busy in organizing women into self help groups, but these issues don't figure into their Agenda. Nor the Health services are getting gender sensitized – as there are no programs / trainings for them.

The following table gives disease burden age wise which corroborates our argument:

TOP TEN CAUSES OF BURDEN OF DISEASES AMONGST FEMALE CHILDREN AND WOMEN

Rank	0-4 Years	5-14 Year	15-44 Years	45-49 Years	60+ Years
1	Lower Respiratory Infections	Iron Deficiency Anaemia	Iron Deficiency Anaemia	COPD	COPD
2	Diarroheal Diseases	Diarroheal Diseases	Other Maternal Conditions	Other Maternal Conditions	Asthma
3	Other Infectious Diseases	Other Unintentional Injuries	Other Unintentional Injuries	Iron-Deficiency Anaemia	Ischaemic Heart Disease
4	Other Maternal Conditions	Otitis Media	Maternal Haemorrhage	Other Unintentional Injuries	Other Infectious Diseases
5	Perinatal Conditions	Asthma	COPD	Tuberculosis	Tuberculosis
6	Birth Asphyxia & Birth Trauma	Dental Carries	Asthma	Dental Carries	Cataract
7	Iron Deficiency-Anaemia	Lower Respiratory Infections	Road Accidents	Ischaemic Heart Disease	Iron Deficiency-Anaemia
8	Measles	Upper respiratory Infections	Dental Carries	Other Cardiac Diseases	Diarroheal Diseases
9	Falls	Falls	Upper Respiratory Infections	Diarroheal Infections	Other Unintentional Injuries
10	Low Birth Weight	Other Infectious Diseases	Abortion	Other Infectious Diseases	Dental Carries

(source: Burden of disease study)

Other maternal conditions becomes second biggest disease burden for the women of 15 to 44 age group coupled with Anaemia as top one.

From the above table, one find that for the girls attending elementary education (age 5 to 14) and for the young and adult women (age group 15-44) the major problem is iron deficiency anaemia whilst the production of food has grown, domestic per capita income has risen, still the girls, young and adult women do not get enough nutrition.

Till recently, the State kept on refusing to provide mid-day meals in the primary schools on the plea that there is no drop-out and the nutrition level amongst the children is better than other parts of the state, it is only due to the pressure from the Supreme court which has made the State to provide the Mid-day meal. But the question of iron deficiency-anaemia has not been answered through the mid-day meals as it contents only Khichadi and one knows how much iron is available in Khichadi.

The whole issue of understanding the strategic gender needs and initiate processes to enable women to lead a life without discrimination and ensuring their Reproductive Rights is lacking in perspective of the policy makers as they feel very proud of accomplishing the Euro-centric development (enrollment of girls in schools, least drop-out rates, low TFR, Low IMR and low MMR) in much better fashion than their neighboring states. What is missed out is the gender gap. For example, in IMR, the gender gap in Himachal is 17 (next to Haryana), no wonder we have a constant decline in girl child sex ratio.

Gender based Violence:

Violence against women is increasing in Himachal Pradesh. The reasons given by women for this are multiple such as:

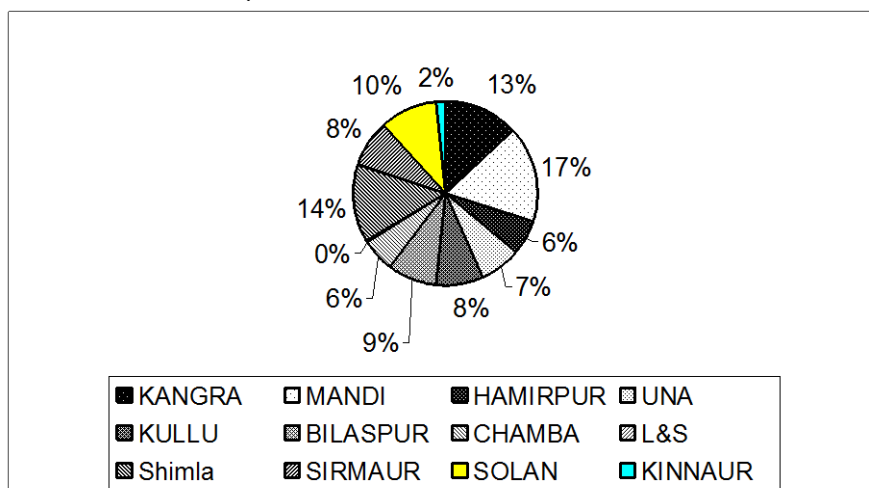
1. Domestic discord
2. Economy
3. Increase in consumption of liquor
4. Social taboos, customs and traditions
5. Media – especially, the increase use of TV and screening of blue films

One of the major reasons why women are suffering with violence according to women we spoke was changing family structures – from joint family wherein, men were watched by the elders, to nuclear family, where the young man is the master of the Home and woman had no support from other women of the family.

It is true that the structure of the family in Himachal Pradesh is rapidly moving towards nuclear one and it has consequences at two levels. One as mentioned above, women have no support within family to fight against violence and secondly the women of old age are loosing out on family support.

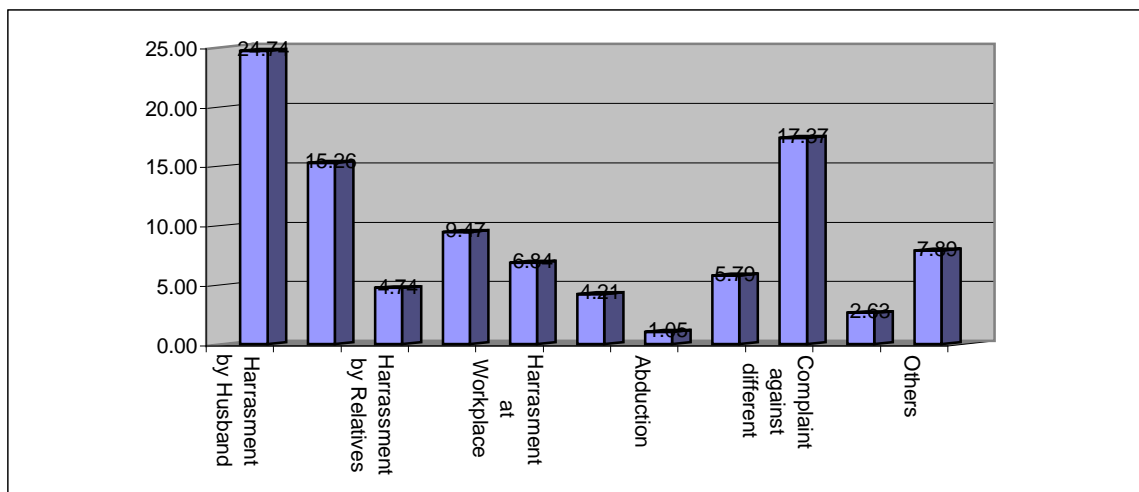
Following two graphs give us information on crimes committed against women as well as complaints handled by State Women Commission.

Percentage wise distribution of the crime committed against women districts from 1995 to 2003 in the year



The highest crime among districts in 2003 was reported in district Mandi (17%), followed by, Shimla (14%), Kangra (13%), and Solan (10%). The least crime against women reported in the remote/tribal districts Kinnaur (2%) and Chamba (6%). While in Lahaul & Spiti, no crime was reported. But this is just a tip of an iceberg. Most of the cases are not reported and reported figures are underreported figures. However there are no studies in the state, which can point out the exact or estimated number of under reporting. But the media reports, common incidences of eve teasing, which are overlooked, sexual harassment at workplace, the concept which needs sensitization are the issues which need to be tackled.

Analysis of complaints handled by State women commission suggest that majority of cases do go unreported. Domestic violence is the major issue in the state. Their husbands related 44.74 percent of all the cases, reported to state women commission in 2000, to harassment of women, in laws and relatives.



Nature of Complaints Handled by State Women Commission Analysis on year 2000 complaint data

As practical gender needs have been met by the state, most women don't feel compelled to accept violence without protest, but when and where do they go for protests and how are they treated?

Most of the women have felt that the Police Authorities and Panchayat Leaders (occupying the seat of Nyaya Panchayat) are gender blind and they side with 'man' of the family. Women also felt that the persons managing these institutions usually put the blame on women and the women are further victimized.

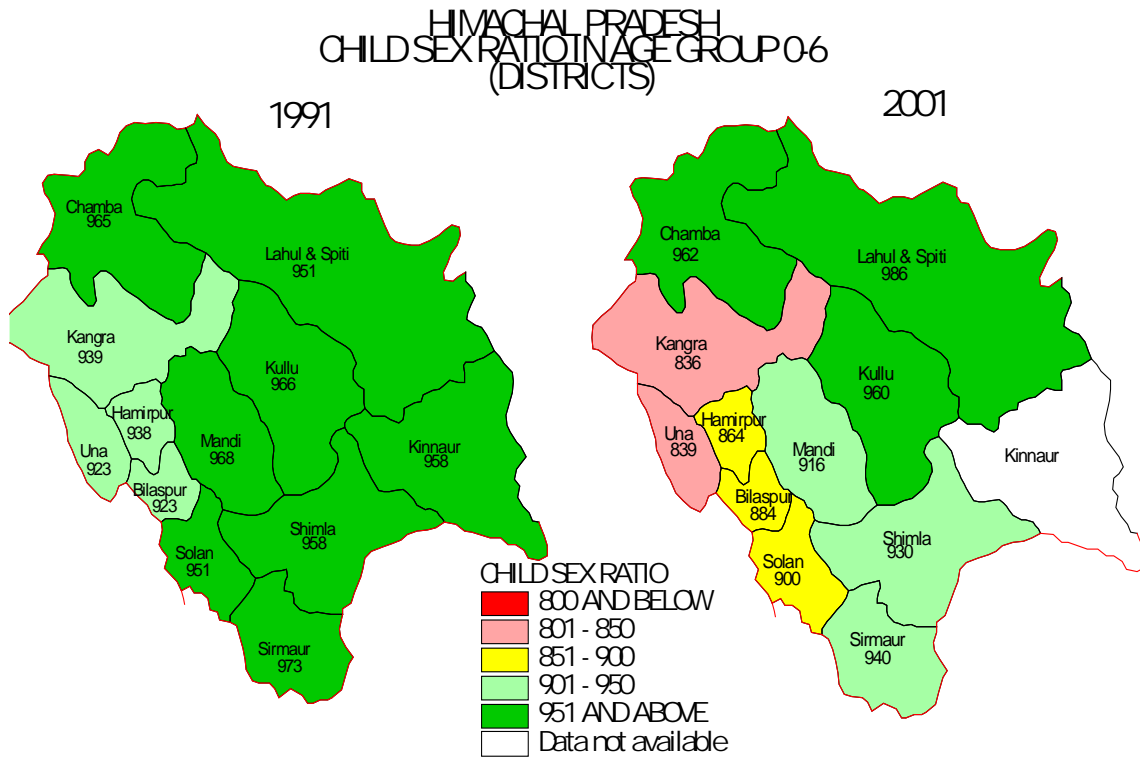
It is also true that the State has, due to lack of perspective as well as due to financial constraints, has not undertaken any Gender Sensitization program for Police as well as for the members of Nyaya Panchayat. In fact the training of police is still rooted into 19th century Victorian values – as one of the DGP said, there is a woman behind every crime that takes place in Himachal Pradesh.

Therefore, the question of moving forward to create enabling environment for women to live life with Human Dignity remains unresolved.

The most heinous crime that is taking place against women, is continious decline in the girl child sex ratio.

Though the NGOs working in Himachal Pradesh started protesting with the State for not taking action against the sex selection based abortions since 1996, the State woke up to the problem only after publication of Census 2001.

The following maps shows us the depth of the problem:



We have also collected data from the Registrar of Births and Deaths and we find that there is no arrest in declining girl child sex ratio:

Number of male and female children born and sex ratio according to the Registrar of Births:

Year	No of male children born	No of female children born	Sex ratio
2000	67379	57771	857
2001	71993	61607	856
2002	54712	46999	859
2003	70885	62177	877

Though one can claim that from the year 200 to the year 2003, there is improvement in sex ratio by 20 point percentage, but when one take into account the 971 sex ratio of 1981, one can find how much more one needs to do in this regard.

Though there is awareness about the sex selection based MTPs and PC-PNDT Act amongst the women, the problem remains. Women who are members of Mahila Mandal or Self Help Groups are the women who have either completed their families or have no further desire to have children. The inability of large number of NGOs to reach out to the newly married women and undertake campaign amongst them for not accept the pressure to go for sex selection MTPs is one of the major reason why the decline is not been arrested. The gender insensitivity amongst the front line health service providers adds to this. The Health service managers are satisfied with lower TFR and high number of women coming forward (?) for terminal methods to limit their families, adds to the complexity of situation. There is no concurrent monitoring of sex ratio at PHC or CHC or District level by the Health Authorities who can claim that they are able to reach out to women for prenatal services to the tune of 92%.

The propagation of small family norms added by the higher economic status and accessibility of technology adds to the whole situation.

The Health Department keeps on saying that `son preference` is the cause for this whilst they forget that son preference was in Himachal Pradesh for last 5000 odd years, but the sex ratio was as good as 971 girls per thousand boys till 1981.

Another consequences of the decline in girl child sex ratio across the North-west India is the growing incidences of `sale` of pahari girls to men from Haryana and Punjab. There are continuous media reports on this but the State is keeping mum. In fact there is a denial mindset amongst the policy makers – the Hon. Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh recently denied that there are such incidences (sale of girls) occurring in Himachal Pradesh. Once the policy makers and implementers get into denial mindset, finding solutions to the problem becomes very very difficult.

How does the Local self Governments are responding to the issue? Again there is a denial mindset – denying that either the sex selection based MTPs are occurring in their villages or sale of girls is taking place.

The Mahila Mandals and SHGs associated with NGOs have been able to raise the issue of declining sex ratio in Gram Sabhas and were successful in generating debate in Gram Sabha, but unfortunately their (NGO's) reach is very limited whilst the problem is very large. When an NGO like SUTRA undertook the campaign on declining sex ratio through nukkar natak, large number of adolescent girls and women came forward to confess the occurrences of incidences within their families or their life.

Thus, what is needed is a mindset which accepts that the problem (of declining girl child sex ratio) exists and strategies needed to be evolved to arrest the same. The Health Department must also accept that this is happening not only because of `son preferences`. It must accept that this is happening because the mindset of `small family` and insistence of low TFR and its inability to check the service providers (of sex selection/ detection).

Political participation:

Due to higher literacy as well as due to pahari culture (which allows women to be more mobile either due to their higher work participation or due to men out migrating leaving women behind to take care of private and public affairs of family) women are taking part in Panchayats in much greater way than their sisters from the plains. That is why we in Himachal Pradesh do not encounter the problems of Sarpanch Pati, Sarpanch sasur or Sarpanch Beta as much as one gets in the plains.

A study carried out by NGO shows the general profile of elected women representatives:

Age:

- Average age at Gram Panchayat level is 38
- Average age at Panchayat Samiti and Zila parishad level is 32

Education:

- 16% of the women representatives are illiterate
- 22% have studied up to primary level
- 20% upto high school
- 30% up to 10+2 & above

Occupation

- 77% of the women representatives come from a agricultural background
- 19% are housewives
- 4% are running /managing family business

Marital Status

- 93% are married
- 2% are unmarried
- 5% are widows

However, decision to contest, still in majority of cases is due to reservation criteria and because the decision is being taken by others on their behalf.

<u>S.No</u>	<u>Decision Taken by</u>	<u>%</u>
01	Self	19
02	Husband	07
03	Other male relative	04
04	Community	50
05	Self and husband	03
06	Husband and Community	03
07	Self, husband &Community	05

Some positive out comes of the increasing association of women in the PRIs have been

- 80% of the quorum is fulfilled in gram Panchayat meetings
- Majorities of women representatives use to attend G.P meeting regularly.
- They raised issues related to income & expenditure and development work other socio-economic issues
- Most of the women representatives have been elected for the first time. Lack of exposure has resulted in lack of awareness, knowledge and skills as well as self confidence (especially women ward members)
- 33% of the women representatives belong to families with prior or present political association.
- There is still a lot of dependency regarding official matter on the male guardian or up-pradhan.

Participation in Gram sabha:

- Hardly any representation of women in gram sabha meeting.
- Wherever women attended the gram sabha meeting, they used to raise issue related to their day to day life.
- In many cases due to the intervention of N.G.Os women are started coming to the G.S meeting.

Women elected representatives as leader:-

- In the case of Himachal Pradesh women are more active in the affairs of PRI. They try to shoulder responsibilities and able to exercise their powers to a large extent.
- Secondly as far as the accountability and transparency is concerned, women have really proved themselves the women of substance.

Hindrances: -

Nevertheless issues remain, while women have been influencing and making positive strides in all the three tiers of the PRIs, majority of them also encounter some common hindrances.

- Family acted as both hindering as well as enabling factors. In most of the cases it has been found that women representatives are able to exercise their power but due to family interference especially by the spouse and other male members of the family they could not able to effectively exercise their powers as elected representatives.
- Apathetic and indifferent attitude of Govt officials towards women elected representatives;
- Nexus between Panchayat secretary and the ex-male pradhan/Up-pradhan
- Social taboos like caste, class, *purda* (in Kangra, Una and Hamirpur districts), male domination etc.
- Poor exposure to the out side world.
- Lack of education, information and access to media limits their performance.

How has the State responded to this?

In 1995, when first time the elections were held under 73rd Amendments, there was a greater enthusiasm amongst women representatives, especially of Block development and Zilla

Parishad. But the State saw to it that these two bodies remain as much powerless as possible so that the leaders get discredited in the eyes of public.

Therefore, there was no devolution of power nor there were any efforts to make decentralized governance a reality. In the name of decentralization, what government done was bring out a Notification which spelt out the `responsibilities` of PRIs at all the levels without giving them any `power` / `authorities` to carry out these responsibilities, e.g. The Gram Panchayats were entrusted to ensure 100% enrollments in the school, but the Representatives of Gram Panchayats were not allowed to check the Attendance Register of school. No district authority was bound by law to respond to the complaints of the Panchayats regarding ill functioning or non-functioning of any government employee. The Block Development officers were given complete control over the fund distribution and there was no accountability mechanisms evolved for checking of fund distribution, resulting in few getting extra favours from the BDOs if they were able to keep themselves in the good books of the Officials or politicians of higher levels.

The Rural Development & Panchayati raj department organized the trainings in providing `skills` to the Gram Panchayat Pradhans in maintaining books and muster roles, but there was no training in perspective building , this resulted in having what one official commented “ after 73rd Amendments we have large Panchayat Pradhans in salwar-khameej, but there are neither women nor women’s perspective”.

In 1998, when UNDP provided funds for developing training manual and imparting training, though it was little late still the Department refused to accept `perspective building` as a part of training manual and also refused to involve larger NGOs in imparting training. The front line officials of the Departments were neither oriented nor given any training for dealing with women’s perspective.

It is to the credit that with all this gender blind environment, women not only survived in Panchayats but they tried to make inroads, though little.

The Gram Panchayats were not able to take up the issues which concerned women most – health, quality of education, drinking water and domestic violence.

This has happened because neither the departmental personnel were given Gender sensitization training nor the members of Gram Panchayats, therefore, the old traditions of Panchayats – dealing with bricks, mortar and muster roles – continued.

Gram Sabhas were rarely held and men never liked women’s participation in Gram Sabha as well as various standing committees though were constituted but made non-functional as non of these standing committees were empowered to take decisions. Instead of empowering these committees, every department tried (successfully) to bypass them and create their own Committees such as Parikas (parivar kalayan samiti) by Health department to undertake RH Planning under RCH -I program. Therefore the Panchayats as an institutions were kept away and front line service providers were made secretaries of these Committees resulting into strengthening the `power` of the front line staff and not empowering the people especially women. The glaring example is of Women and Child Development department. The WCD asked its all Anganwadi workers to organize the SHGs and the Worker was made Secretary leaving no space for evolving the local leadership, these SHGs instead of becoming a `watch dog body` on the functioning of Anganwadi, became an extension bodies.

It is also interesting to note that when the Panchayat (woman) Representative visits various government offices, how do the officials respond to them – it is reported that the responses of the officials depends upon the identification of women with political party – if the woman or

her family belongs to ruling party, the officials immediately attend to their complaints or requests but if it is not so, the responses from the officials is practically negative.

It is also interesting to note that if these women representatives visit offices in a group (of women) the officers immediately attend them. But the problem is how many times; the women representative can gather women to accompany her for the `visit` and who would incur the travel expenditure?

As most of women representatives belong to farming communities, they according to the traditions, have no access to `cash` and this one has created hindrances for the Ward Panches to become more active – as mobility requires `cash inputs`. Though the Pradhans have been given Honorarium of Rs 500/- per month, this amount is not sufficient for ensuring their mobility – they represent a Panchayat, which has hardly any income of its own to meet the travel expenses of Panchayat representatives.

The most Gender blind intervention by the Department of RD & Panchayats was the introduction of 2-child norm for Panchayati raj representatives. This move helped the State to get rid of younger women participating in election processes. Therefore in the year 2000, when there was second round of elections for the Panchayats, most of the women who got elected were in the later stage of their adulthood.

At the larger level of political participation, majority of the women have responded that their decision of voting, is not influenced by either family members or caste basis. At the same time, they have very little faith amongst the candidates contesting the elections for the State assembly as they feel, most of these candidates show greater solidarity with women's issues till they get elected, and after getting elected, women's issues get completely sidelined.

Over the years, more women have exercised their right to vote and choose the government of their choice for the governance. In the current elections, female voters turnout was more than their male counterparts. It is significant indicator to judge the women awareness and desire to be a part of decision making process. However number of women candidates is abysmally low, and even lower is their winning ratio.

Year	No of Male	Contesting Female	Total	Successful female candidates
2003	77	31	108	4
1998	344	25	369	6
1993	399	17	416	3
1990	436	18	454	4
1985	284	10	294	3
1982	432	9	441	3
1977	321	9	330	1

Thus, one can safely conclude that though women are trying to take greater part in electoral system as well as wanted to be part of decision making, the State has failed to create enabling environment due to its patriarchal attitude towards women.

Recommendations:

The Himachal Pradesh has done extremely well in meeting the practical gender needs of women in last 4 decades of its existence. Now it must move forward and undertake massive campaign to meet the strategic gender needs.

Two steps, which the State has recently announced, need to be applauded; one removal of 2-child norm and secondly abolishing the direct elections of Up-Pradhans of Gram Panchayat. These two steps shall go a long way in providing enabling environment for women to participate actively in Gram Panchayat affairs.

The first task before the State is re-orienting its staff – right from the top to down . It has to gear up its machinery to understand that the strategic gender needs are the generation-2 issues and approaches, which were adopted for generation-1 issues, shall not work. You need to refashion and re-strategize your responses so that the momentum that has been created in last 4 decades is not only sustained but also meets the needs of women.

Therefore we recommend:

1. A massive training program especially for its front-line staff of health and Panchayati Raj department must be undertaken on Gender sensitization as well as on quality of care
2. Strategies need to be developed for involving male in family planning
3. Male participation is required to deal with RH problems that women are facing - especially the younger generation of women (newly married one) and investigation must be undertaken why such a large number of women have painful intercourse
4. Gender based discrimination is evident as large number of girl children, adolescent girls are facing iron deficiency
5. As women have understood the importance of protesting the harassment, violence and crimes committed against them, the sensitive law enforcement machinery is required so that the women of Himachal can aspire to live a life with human dignity
6. Members of Nyaya Panchayat must be trained in attitudinal changes whilst dealing with women's complaints
7. Panchayat members and secretaries must be trained to deal with emerging scenario- women members becoming more and more assertive – in positive manner.
8. The State must gear up its Women and Child Development Department to initiate large programs for collective empowerment of women as more and more women are getting organized either through Mahila Mandals or SHGs.
9. The Health Department must shade away its attitude towards 'small family norms' and create enabling environment for having pro-gender family formation as well as strict implementation of PC-PNDT Act.
10. At least 2 Gram Sabhas for exclusively for women must be organized every year at Gram Panchayat level so that women can initiate discussion on the issues of their concern.

In short, the State must now move from Quantity to Quality in every aspect of services so that there is a Gender Just society in Himachal Pradesh.

This paper “Beyond Practical Gender Needs: Women in North Eastern and Hill States” was commissioned by the Institutes of Social Studies Trust (ISST), New Delhi to the Rural Women Upliftment Society (RWUS), Churachandpur, Manipur under the National Research Programme on Growth and Human Development supported by the Planning Commission – UNDP in 2004.

The primary objective of this study is to find out the strategic needs of women in selected hill states of Northern India viz. Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal and two North Eastern States of Meghalaya and Manipur.

This paper present an overview of the current status of women in Manipur by focusing various dimensions of gender-based choices, keeping in view the socio-cultural and ethnic differences which is a much needed information base to women in particular and men in general. It also stresses the need to rethink and redirect gender programmes and policies.

**Rural Women Upliftment Society (RWUS)
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Methodology:

During the course of this study, efforts were made to cover all the nine districts in Manipur. But we could cover only seven districts-Churachandpur, Bishnupur, Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, Chandel and Senapati. Tamenglong and Ukhrul districts has not been properly covered because of the unfavorable situation prevailing due to arm-conflict and others like frequent bands, curfews and blockades which has become a way of life here in Manipur. However, to bring out the perspectives and interest from various ethnic communities, some outline information's were collected through our partner NGOs from the two districts.

With an objective to focus various dimensions, both rural and urban, consultation, focus group discussions and personal interviews were held in the main towns and in 3-5 villages each districts between October 2004 to January 2004. Our Network Partners in United NGOs Mission-Manipur (UNM-M) Women Members has provided tremendous contributions to make our study a success. The overview report is based on the following programmes conducted and held during the course of this study:-

1. Consultation & Workshop in Saikot villages 30-50 age group women from 5 villages participated- October 2004.
2. Focus group discussions with 36 SHG members, church leaders, and women leaders from Bishnupur district – Kumbi, Ngairong, Lamlanghupi, district – Sangserphai, Mantak- November 3rd 2004
3. Consultation and discussion held with members of Bishnupur Bar Association, Panchayat members, Apunba Lup leaders, and NGOs workers in Keinou Bazar, Bishnupur district.
4. Focus group discussion with Kuki Women's group in Bethel village, Churachandpur December 8th 2004.
5. Workshop on violence Against Women held on 9th December,2004 where women representatives from various communities participated.
6. Focus Group discussion with Meitei Women -December 13th Imphal west district.
7. Personal Interviews with 2 Panchayat members in Imphal East - January 14th 2005
8. Personal Interviews with Zilla Parishad members from Imphal East on January 16th 2005
9. Consultation and collection of information from Senapati UNM-M District woman members.
10. Consultation and collection of information from Chandel UNM-M District Women Members.
11. Focus Group discussion &consultation with Meira Paibis UNM-M District Women Members, Thoubal.

The process of data collection has been a difficult adventure. We were unable to collect many of our required data's from Government Offices. The Statistic Department Office in Churachandpur district was burnt down during the ethnic conflict occurred in the past years. Such cases are to seen in other parts of the state as well. In one of the district I had requested a lady Advocate to get for me a district data on Violence Against Women. "I can request the clerk to compiled the records but I need to pay him Rs. 200/300 because this is going to be an extra work" She replied.

We thank all the Governmental, and Non Governmental Organizations and Women Groups and individuals for their valuable contributions in his study. On the whole, we also benefited in having the opportunity to have an in–depth study of women in Manipur and in working towards bringing out gender justice.

INTRODUCTION

Manipur is a hilly state, which lies on the North-Eastern border of India. It extends between 23° 85' and 25° 86' latitudes north and between 93° 03' and 94° 78' longitudes east. It covers an area of 23,327 square kilometers and is bounded on the north by Nagaland, on the west by Cachar of Assam, on the east by Burma (Myanmar) and on the south by Mizoram and Chin state of Burma.

The territory which constitutes the present state of Manipur, consists of a valley and a chain of hills which encircles the former on all sides. The hilly region covers about ninety- two percent of the total geographical area of Manipur. The valley as well as the hills have a slant towards the south. The valley is in reality a plateau which is at the level of 2567 ft. above the sea level. The state is divided into nine districts viz, Imphal West (capital), Imphal East, Thoubal, Bishnupur, Chandel, Churachandpur, Senapati, Tamenglong and Ukhrul.

The mountain system of Manipur consists of western ranges, northern and eastern ranges. The ranges in the west consist of Nungjaiband or Vangai, Kalanaga or Oinamlong, Ohakha Nungba, Khoupum and Koubru Laimaton. The old Cachar road, the new Cachar road and several trade routes pass through the western hills of Manipur. The northern ranges are the Koubru spur including Tenipu peak (9824 ft), Thumayon, Mayang khong and Leishom. On the east, hill ranges are Soramati or Ching Angouba, Kashom, Mipithel, Yomadong and Chin hills. In the central plain, Nongmaiching, Langathel, Longol Waithou and Thanga-karang islets within the Loktak Lake are the small hills.

The main rivers of Manipur are the Thoubal in the east i.e. Iril, the Imphal in the Central Imphal valley and Irang, the Barak and Maku in the western hills. The greatest river of Manipur is the Barak flowing from northern Manipur through western hills then to the Brahmaputra. The waters of several rivers in Manipur valley fall either in the Loktak lake or the Imphal river which passes through the southern hills of Manipur and flows into the Chindwin hills of Burma and becomes a tributary of the Chindwin River, a tributary of Irrawady river of Burma. The Barak flows into the Burma then to the Brahmaputra.¹

Manipur valley consists of a number of lakes, the greatest of which is the Loktak Lake. The Loktak is 8 miles long and 5 miles wide. There is a cluster of low hills in the lake forming a group of tiny islets known as the Thanga and Karang. This lake provides livelihood to a large number of people. To the south of the lake is Keibul Lamjao, the great floating swap, famous for its brow-entered deer known as Sangai found only in Manipur. There are also another important lakes namely Waithou pat, Kharung pat, Pumlun pat, Ekop pat and Lamphelpat etc having immense utility as fisheries. In the dry season most of them are dry and serve as grazing ground but full of water during the rainy season.

The hill of Manipur are covered with rich forest which is dominated by mixed types of forest. The total area of land under the forest in the state is 14,365 sq. miles. The inhabited area of the Manipur valley are almost covered with dense evergreen forest and bamboo jungles. In Manipur we find four types of forest. They are tropical moist semi-evergreen, Tropical moist deciduous, Sub-Tropical pine and dry temperate.

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1. S.A. Anari, *'Economic geography of Manipur,'* 1973, P.15)
 2. R.P. Singh, *'geography of Manipur,'* Delhi, 1982, p.33).

The state of Manipur is inhabited by various ethnic communities having their own distinctive cultural affinity. These ethnic groups can be broadly divided into Meiteis, Naga Tribes and Kuki-Chin-Mizo Tribes. There is also a sizeable Muslim population who are called Meitei Pangals. There are also the Scheduled Castes, Dhupi Dhobi), Lois, Muchi Ravidan), Namasudra, Patni, Sutradhar and Yaithibi.

The Meiteis are the dominant ethnic group of Manipur, who mostly live in the valley. Although they are genetically mongoloid and speak a Tibeto-Burman language like the hill tribes, they differ culturally from the surrounding hill tribes by following Hindu customs. The Naga tribes of Manipur are the Tangkhul, the Rongmei Kabui), the Mao, the Kacha Naga Liangmei), the Maram, the Maring the Anal, the Monsang, the Lamkang, the Mayon, the Zemi, the Thangal, the Angami and the Sema. The Kuki-Chin-Mizo Tribes who live mainly in Manipur are Kom, Purum, Gangte, Paite, Simte, Thadou, Vaiphei, Sukte Tiddim Chin), Hmar, Zou, Ralte and other Mizo Lushai) Tribes.

The hill areas of Manipur is inhabited by various tribal groups-Nagas and Kuki-Chin-Mizos. The Zemis, the Liangmeis Kacha Nagas) and the Rongmeis the kabui) live in the Tamenglong District. The Maos, the Marams and the Thangals live in the Senapati District and Sadar Hill bordering Nagaland. The Tangkhuls live in the Ukhrul District. The Marings, the Mayons, the Mousangs, the Lamkangs and the Anals live in Chandel District. The Kuki-Chin-Mizo Tribes have their Maximum concentration in and around Chandel and Churachandpur District.

The economy of the people of Manipur state is basically agrarian. About 70 percent of the people are engaged in agriculture for their livelihood. Both men and women have played an important role in the socio-economic activities of the state. Women also worked as important agents to promote socio-economic and cultural development of the state. In the field of political activities, the role of women was continued collectively resulting in the revision of some of the policy decisions of the ruling authorities, which affected society negatively.

The position and status of women in Manipur when compared with the women of other states in India is comparatively high. In this regard, S.K. Bhuyan observes, 'Manipur women have been enjoying a freedom which their sisters in India failed to attain. They were not confined to the four walls of their domestic life, they go out freely for purposes of petty trades mainly in the scale of products of their own hands. They weave fine durable textures where colors are assembles in the most attractive manner. At the same time Manipuri women have shown their gallantry valor in desperate and critical situations.³ Mrs. Grimwood also expressed her view, 'The Manipuris do not shut up their women as is the custom in the most parts of India. And they are much more enlightened and intelligent in consequence.'⁴

Women in Manipur, irrespective of their class and status, performed all the domestic works in the family and responsible for the maintenance of the family. They educate the children in matters relating to the social norms, values, customary laws, etc. They also contributed for the growth of the family income by doing handicraft, agriculture, small-scale industries and selling through their skillfulness.

The women of Manipur also like in other states are employ in professions like medical, engineering, legal service, administration, teaching, professions in active services, technical, clerical, and the many other ministerial jobs. There were many responsible factors for making women to take jobs. Among other responsible factors for making women to take jobs were education, economic development, social development and constitutional provision.

2. *Bhasan Khomjinba, Assam and Manipur; 1954, p.5.*

3. *Mrs Grimwood, my Three Years in Manipur, Cultural Publishing House, Delhi, 19975, pp-58-59.*

The economic compulsions had also been greatly responsible for making women to seek jobs. The limited budget of the family might be inadequate to meet the daily needs of the family and

The state of Manipur is a patriarchal society as in most of the other parts of India. In every society, women are governed by social norms, beliefs, practices, etc. handed down from generation to generation. Men and women are always treated differently prescribing gender rules in and outside the family system. With the dawn of democratic ideas and democratic form of government, especially after the Second World War, women had started to assert their rights.

The declaration of human rights by the United Nations in 1948 has added another dimension by granting equal rights to both men and women. But in many parts of India, the social reality is somewhat different. Majority of women especially in rural areas still remains traditional and continues to enjoy subordinate and inferior position in the patriarchal society. As the state of Manipur is also a patriarchal society, even though women play significant role in the society and enjoy a higher status than her counterparts in other parts of India, there are certain social restrictions deforming her social jurisdiction. For example, in Meitei society women are not allowed to eat the things, which was offered to family god at the time of Apokpa Khurumba (worship of family). Women should not put their phaneks (wrappers) in front of the house for drying in the sun because it is inauspicious for men, etc. In the hill areas of Manipur, as per their custom women are not allowed to inherit parental property. But they are given certain things like Almirah, suitcase, beds, clothes, shawls, and kitchen materials for their daily use at the time of their marriage. But in the valley of Manipur parental property are distributed among their sons and daughter. However in Manipur sons are always given preference. This proved that the social condition of women is in a subordinate position in Manipur society. The position of women in Manipur would be discussed in details in the following chapters.

Gender and Health

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease as per the definition given by WHO. Differences in male and female required gender-sensitive approach while addressing the health of a women because women has neither the time, mobility, childcare assistance, nor leisure to travel to health center for medicines or treatments. So, many poor women in the rural areas often ignore their health and do not visit the hospitals at advanced stages of illness. In addition, an ideology that glorifies self-effacement and suffering for women makes them more inclined to put up with pain and ill health, rather than demand attention and rest. Heavy workload is another factors that affect the health of women.

Health Services in Manipur

In Manipur, health services include that of government services, private services and interventions of NGOs. Majority of NGOs interventions are focusing on HIV/AIDS. In government sector there are two district level hospitals, which has 200 beds each. 101 Primary Health Centers, 440 Primary Health Sub-Centers and 16 Community Health. There are 5 private hospitals run by NGOs and churches and four nature cure hospitals. As per government policy in rural areas, the state government has implemented PHC per 3000 population and PSHC per 2000 population and Community Health Center per lakh population. According to Manipur Health Services Rules, 1982 and Civil list of MHS offices, total number of doctors is 500 out of which 120 are female. Nursing sisters as on 31-5-95 is 36 (female 33&only 3 male) staff nurse as on 1-10-95 is 242 (1 male) ANM/FHW workers under health and Family Welfare Department as on 31st August 1995 is 680 (all female) total list of pharmacists as on 31st August 1995 is 245. Malaria department and the Family Welfare departments are another health services available in the state. Integrated Child Development Programme (ICDS) has rendered valuable services for mother and child, reaching the interior parts of the state yet the practices need an in-depth investigation.

Despite the quantity in health services, especially in the government sector, infrastructure development and provisions of other facilities are still lacking that has a negative influenced in people's perceptions towards health care. Apart from this, due to the prolonged armed conflict, many of the doctors and nurses are not able to provide their services.

Health Issue's relating to women in Manipur.

(Based on focus group discussions and consultation with health workers both in formal and informal sectors.)

Sex Ration.

Many studies expressed serious concern over the decline in the sex ration in India as it indicates women's status. The sex ration decline in Manipur since 1971 but no attempt has been made much to examine this declining trend. Although there has been a little improvement from 958 in 1991 to 978 in 2001, the sex-ration is still a matter of concern to be made. Despite the death of many youths (male) due to armed conflict and drugs, the number of males is ever more than females. The table below shows the trend in sex ratio and district wise sex ration: -

Table 1

Sex Ration and Rate of Change in the Sex Ration in India and Manipur (1901-2001)

Year	Sex Ration		Rate of Change in PC	
	India	Manipur	India	Manipur
1901	972	1037		
1911	964	1029	-0.82	-0.77
1921	955	1041	-0.93	-0.17
1931	950	1065	-0.52	+2.31
1941	945	1055	-0.53	-0.94
1951	946	1036	+0.11	-1.80
1961	941	1015	-0.53	-2.03
1971	930	980	-1.17	-3.45
1981	934	971	+0.43	-0.92
1991	927	958	-0.75	-1.34
2001	933	978		

Table 2

District Wise Sex Ration in Manipur (1961-2001)

District	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Senapati District	1002	950	929	942	2001
Tamenglong District	1061	1016	975	935	928
C.C Pur District	1006	976	929	931	922
Chandel District	1008	975	935	913	923
Imphal East	-	-	-	-	1007
Imphal West	-	-	-	-	992
Bishnupur District	-	-	-	-	925
Ukhrul District	1033	969	917	884	943
State	1015	980	971	958	920

Discussion with women from different communities have indicated reasons for the decline of sex ration migration due to armed conflict, female selective termination of pregnancy, sex ratio at birth and death, progressive under count t of women and multiple counting of males. According to an informal reports received from a women NGO worker based in Imphal, dealing with Health Issue; *“Many new machines has been set up in the city private clinics which are operated by untrained persons. Many women in the capital city and even from other districts come and aborted female child there.”* Rural poor women do not received such kind of scanning facilities, but the practice of abortion is done by lady mystic called Maibi. In many cases method of Maibi does not work and the patient faced constant bleeding and even leads to death.

HIV/AIDS Virus- a serious concern in Manipur.

The first case of HIV/AIDS in Manipur was detected in September 1986. At that time people did not pay much concern about this diseases. But in the s of 18 years the numbers of HIV positive man and women were 18,8000. Alarmingly a large number of women have been exposed to the deadly HIV virus through their Injecting Drug user husbands. Now, while the rate of transmission of HIV/AIDS among the Intravenous Drug Users have been reduced and the rate of mother to child transmission on the increase. According to AIDS Control Society (MACS) the rate of HIV positive among the IDUS decreased from 76% in 1997 to 21% in 2004 while the rate of mother to child transmission rose from 0.8% in 1994 to 1.66% in 2004. Women became aware of their states only after their positive even as late as the death of their husbands. Further, the impact of the virus is more severely felt by the women in the poor family. For treatment, decision has to be made by the husband of other family members. In most cases, treatment is delayed partly due to priority given to the needs of the husband and child because the financial cost of treatment and care may be out of their reach. Above all, systematic gender-based discrimination inhibits the ability of women and girls to protect themselves from HIV infection.

Table 3

Age-Sex Proportion of HIV Positive Cases (Sero-Surveillance)

Age Group	Males	Females	Total	% of total Positive
0-19 Years	347	266	613	4.43
11-20 Years	802	205	1007	7.27
21-30 Years	5441	1683	7124	51.43
31-40 Years	3236	953	4189	30.24
41 & Above	668	251	919	6.663

Table 4

Break-up of HIV Positive Cases by Risk Category: (Sero-Surveillance)

Sl. No.	Risk Category	HIV Positives	% Out of total HIV Positive
10.1	Injecting Drug Users (Ides)	7299	52.69
10.2	Blood Donors	218	1.57
10.3	Blood Recipients	133	0.96
10.4	Antenatal Mothers	88	20.64
10.5	STD Clinic Attendance	2843	2.52
10.6	Suspected ARC/AIDS	381	2.75
10.7	Relative of AIDS patients	282	2.04
10.8	Prenatal Transmission	316	2.28
10.9	Others	2,292	16.55
	Total	13,852	100.00

Source: Manipur Aids Control Society,2004

Productive Health Problems- both Gynaecological and Obstetric.

Gynecological and obstetric have been identified as one of the common health problem experiences by rural women and young girls in Manipur. 90% of the married women who joint us in the discussion have reports that they have these problems. Reasons seems to be heavy workload, sexual harassment by husband, hospitals and dispensaries far away, feeling of shyness to complaint about owns health even to own husband. Above all, health facilities at the community level are poorly equipped to deal with gynecological and obstetric morbidities and lack of female doctors specializing in this field. *“Many women are reluctant to approach male doctors but they are the only available doctors here. We want a female doctors because we are more comfortable with our own sex especially for this kind of health problem”* said Mrs.Laltinkhumi, a local churchwomen leader during meeting at Saikot. Non-availability of women hospital, lack of female doctors specialist in this field and other social stigma is a serious constraint in Manipur

Safe child-bearing- access to appropriate Health Care Services.

Safe motherhood is still a dream for most women particularly is rural areas. Few women have access to arterial care. As a result, high-risk cases go undetected, anemia is widespread, and knowledge of health and nutrition needs during pregnancy and the post-natal period are poorly understood. Access to safe delivery is equally poor: 3 in 4 rural women of Manipur continue to delivered by untrained attendants in unhygienic conditions. As per records of Manipur Health Directorates %prevalence of anemia in 1999-2000 is 21.7 mild, 6.3 moderate and 0.8 serve. Through our focus group discussions with rural women, majority of the participants have said that they had child delivery at home with the help of a local midwife and do not necessarily approach doctors or hospitals. Reasons seems to be inadequate health care services in the village, lack of infrastructure in the health center, shortage of medicines, non-availability of doctors and nurses in time of needs, lack of health awareness. They furthered revealed that they did not take special diet accept 1 time chicken soup for sufficient milk for breast feedings.

They clean themselves, wash clothes and started collection of firewood, water, loin looming soon after giving childbirth for fear of losing favors from in-laws and other social norms.

This is because choice of a bride is based on the good health of the mother, which is basically measured in times of delivery. Mrs. Lalmun, 60 years in Bethel village reports, “ *Many of my friends who wanted to show their good health on child birth started collection of firewood soon (2/3 days) after child birth*” It seems that a women who lost her baby at the time of delivery is considered unsafe for others and so people especially pregnant women should not go near by her. This kind of belief and practices are openly diminished due to Christianity and modern education but the stigma is still prevalent.

Malaria and tuberculosis-a common diseases among the rural women

Through consultation with doctors and staffs from Churachandpur district and focus group discussion held, malaria is a serious problem in Manipur. The state government has taken measures for the complete eradication of malaria but all the sub divisions (interior areas) except main towns are still malaria prone areas. Records show that the disease infects more number of women than men because women work likes men in malaria infested area (mostly in agriculture). Their dress style is less covered and so they are more expose to mosquito bite. Women who have the responsibility of childcare are constantly out of mosquito net at night. Moreover due to extreme poverty, many rural families could not afford good quality mosquito net. There is a high incidence of communicable diseases like tuberculosis. Like malaria the number of women suffering from TB seems to be much more than men. Limited data is a constraint for addressing women’s problem. The government provided free medical care for TB patients, which help the patient for the initial stage. During our group discussions with the SHG members, it has been pointed out that when a women suffers from TB, it is very difficult to access complete cure because maintaining special diet for a mother is something like impossible and the case is more serious when the patient happens to be a housewife.

Cholera and other water borne diseases

In Manipur, cholera is a very common disease especially during the rainy seasons. As per records available, died of cholera in 2001. Unsafe drinking water, unhygienic practices in cooking might have caused widespread water borne diseases. Many of the rural areas are on the hill slopes and foothills. Most of them have been using pit latrines with usually open pits. The latrine portion is covered with gunny bags. In rainy days it overflows with the smell and flies coming out and cause nuisance while eating food.

Papau of Rengkai village makes his living by pulling a rented cycle-rickshaw in Churachandpur. His wife, Lalramzau is a vegetable vendor. They have seven children. The family lives in a house in an area where the houses are very close to each other. The minimal income with the large family size makes their life hand to mouth with hardly any money to spare for facilities like a latrine. They have been using pit latrine with open pit just in front of the house. They always had problems of bad smell and flies disturbing them throughout. It was nauseating when it smells while taking food. The complaints from the neighbors and quite often silent tolerance by them and were quite embarrassing. While using the pit latrine especially in the rainy seasons the water and dirty matters coming up is a worse situation.

The family was found quite happy when they got the bamboo pit latrine support from RWUS. The whole family was eager to see the latrine completed and put it to use. Each child was competing with each other in volunteering to complete the latrine construction. They were worried of who will use it first. When asked the mother any one of the family have been frequently suffering from

dysentery, “Yes, the youngest two are at present having dysentery, but this is a common disease in the neighborhood and it is not a very serious thing” she said not aware of the situation. This is the condition of typical living in the rural and thickly populated inhabitation.

Women’s access to health services is constrained by several factors:-

(Based on focus group discussion at Saikot village, Churachandpur.)

- The time spent on childcare, household work and in the occupational spare leaves the women with little time to think about their health, often resulting negligence of illness resulting in the early stages. “ I have been married with my husband for the last 31 years, since then I have never stop cooking and I have never seen him(husband) cooking ”- Lalhruoii, 51 years, Muolvaiphei village
 - The clinic and hospitals offer women no privacy. Men staffed many clinics and women show a great reluctance to be treated by them. “Many rural women are reluctant to approach male doctors but they are the only available doctors here. We are more comfortable with our own sex”- Tinkhumi, Saikot village.
 - The expense and time incurred in traveling long distances and in meeting clinics and drugs fees are also constraining influences. “ I knew my family budget is not enough for my medical care so I just keep silent and bear the pain in me, hoping that the pain will be alright soon ” – Ngaineng, age 40, Ngurte village.
 - Studies reveal that women continue hard physical labour till the last stage of pregnancy, in addition to their household chores. “ We feel uncomfortable to rest during pregnancy because we wanted to please our inlaws ”- Vanlalhang, Saikot North.
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Gender and Economic Status

Despite the importance of women's economic contribution and the trend of the work force the goal to achieve an economic equality among men and women may be an ambitious one. The factor that controls gender inequality has its root in many facet of life. These are gender biased in giving education, in training, in health care, in job opportunities, access to different resources and properties in payment of wages for the same labor, gender biased in economic decision where women participation is very much constrained. Despite women's economic contribution to household unit male authority as per household requirements framed their works. Although a few look female careers, which became independent craftswomen, the majority of married women worked in subordinate to men's needs

The unequal economic status of gender is shown by the disparity of economic activities. Study shows that work force of women is more concentrated in rural areas, in an organized informal sector, in self employment sector, micro enterprises, credits and as cultivators and agricultural laborers in rural areas. It is also manifested by the difference in wage levels.

Agriculture

Manipur is essentially an agricultural state. About 70% of the populations are engaged in agriculture. From the time of seed-sowing till harvesting women took an active part. Womenfolk mostly do seed sowing, weeding and harvesting. In the valley, the people practice two methods of cultivation – dry land cultivation and cultivation in wetland. In the hills, the hill tribes practice both jhuming and terrace cultivation. From the time of seed-sowing till harvesting women took an active part.

The present issue related to Agriculture in the state has been an extensive exploitation of nature due to the practice of shifting cultivation in the hilly areas, cutting down of trees for firewood, charcoal, etc. As a result of deforestation, women had to walk a long distance carrying firewood and other agricultural products. Apart from this, the presence of a number of insurgents and army pet-rolling in the forest has made the forest unsafe for women. For them, the insurgent groups and the Indian army are equally dangerous. Often we see women raped, attempted rape, and molested in the forest or agricultural land. In Senapati and Churachandpur district, while conducting focus group discussions we learnt that women no longer work alone without the presence of male in the hilly cultivated land. Many a times they could not work for 2/3 days or sometimes 1 or 2 weeks due to exchange of fire between armed groups or between army and armed groups. There are also times when their crops been damaged or stolen away.

Handloom Industry

Weaving which had been one of the important sectors of industry in Manipur play a crucial role in Manipur economy. Most of the people engaged in this field are women. Every grown up women were expected to know the art of weaving. In tribal society of Manipur, knowing the art of weaving was a good qualification for marriage. The women of Manipur wove different designs of clothes. The products is not confined in the state but are exported to the neighboring states. They supplement their family income by selling in different markets. As per national loom census, there are 2,70,261 looms of various types supporting a population of 2,84,205 in the state. During the last 25 years, the state government has taken a number of steps to develop the handloom industries through co-operative as well as individual sectors. The Manipur state handloom weavers Co-operative Societies Ltd. has affiliation of 1056 primary weaver co-operative society. Besides this, Manipur handloom and handicraft development cooperation and Manipur development society were also established for the development of handloom industries in the individual sectors. As a result of globalization, many handlooms industries have died do not function like before.

Marketing

The women of Manipur are hard working people. They traded with the various products of their agricultural field and industrial products. Women in the hills would take their agricultural products and sell it to the valley people. Sometimes they would go from doors to doors to sell their products. In Manipur especially in the valley every locality has its own market. The women run the market. Women solely do the transaction of selling and buying. They deal with different trades like vegetables, fruits, fishes, and handloom products. There are also other women whose business is to sell eatable things like meals, tea, pakora, etc. There are also some women who give loans to the needy women in the market and earn daily interest and thereby add to their family income. In the course of time, especially after Independence, with the change in economic structure of the state, women are exploring other means to maintain their families. There are also some unemployed women who are running weaving cooperative societies by employing young women and girls. They act as a link between the Government Funding agencies and the women weavers. Some educated women also have started their own business like establishing knitting, embroidery centers, etc. by applying modern tools and techniques with the impact of globalization, self-employed indigenous women weavers face a lot of problems in production and marketing. The rice of the thread and labour they put into doesn't allow the weavers to earn a profit. Many of these women now left their profession and become laborers. They are now engage in selling Moreh goods that comes from Burma. Manipur govt. adopted free trade policy with Burma since the last 2/3 years, since then Manipur started importing foreign goods. Grass root women are selling eatables and other household articles from door to door, walking 4/5 km just for a commission. This kind of earning becomes a new profession among the women in the small towns. This will probably led to losing of traditional skill and its value of traditional production. This is an area need to be concern. Some other started unfair practices like selling of drugs, cinema tickets, petrol by black, making of alcohols, engage in Moreh trades, smugglings, Pan Corner, sex workers, etc. which is becoming a social issue.

Work Participation of women and their status.

According to 1961 census, the workers and non-workers of both sexes were male – 1,83,127; female – 1,25,425; Non-workers male – 2,03,931; female – 2,18,186 of 7,80,037 total population. (Statistical Handbook of Manipur, 1961, The Statistical Bureau Manipur Administration, SBI Pub.6, Imphal.) It shows almost equal work participation of both sexes.

According to 1971 census, the workers and non-workers of both sexes were male – 2,45,435; female – 1,25,428; Non-workers male – 29,624; female – 4,06,650 of 10,72,753 total population of Manipur. (Statistical Handbook of Manipur, 1980, Directorate of Economics, Government of Manipur, Imphal). Again, according to 1981 census, we can study the female workers participation according to their area and work status. The work status may be divided as Main workers, Marginal workers, Non-workers. The main workers are those who had worked in any economically productive activity for a major part of the year proceeding the period of enumeration i.e. 6 months or more. The Marginal workers are those who had worked at least some time in the year preceding the enumeration but have not worked for the major part of the year. The Non-workers are persons who have not worked at all in the year preceding the enumeration. The distribution of female population by work status and place of residence was given in table no.1

Table No. 1

Distribution of female population by work status and place of residence.

Place	Main Workers	Marginal Workers	Non - Workers	Total
Rural	2,00,131	23,372	2,91,659	5,15,162
Urban	41,966	16,897	1,31,922	1,84,785
Total	2,42,097	34,269	4,23,581	6,99,947

Source: Census of India 1981, General Economics & Social Tables series 13, Manipur.

From Table –1 we may conclude that three-fourth (3/4) of the female population are in rural areas. As a result, it has a greater share as workers and non-workers 43% of them participated in their urban counterpart. Higher percentage of rural women participating in lab our force indicates the participation of women in household and agrarian economic activities. In any occupation women are in lower strata. Men hold most of the white colored jobs, administration expenses and managerial positions.

The work participation of women in rural areas and urban areas was given in table 2

Table No. 2

Work participation by women in rural areas and urban areas

Marital Status	Rural	Urban	Total
All Marital Status	38.85	22.71	34.59
Unmarried Status	19.13	8.03	16.24
Married	67.21	41.69	60.57
Widowed	47.93	35.96	44.30
Divorced/Separated	65.60	54.21	61.63

Source: Calculated from the same sources of Table – 1

The table shows that higher rate of work participation by women in rural areas than in urban areas in all categories, married, unmarried, widowed, divorced/separated women. The classification of work participation rate by marital status reveals that unmarried female has the lowest participation rate of 16.4% and maximum participation rate of 61.63% by divorced/separated women whereas 60.57% of married women participated in economic activities. This confirms to the nation that in Manipur unmarried women are less likely to be in the labor force that married, widowed and divorced women for whom work participation is often an economic necessity. The higher participation rate in the labor force by divorced and separated women indicates their low economic level in the society. Married women get support in the form of material or financial help from parents, husbands, relatives, etc. Widows get the sympathy and support from their children, parents, and relatives and enjoyed the property left behind by the husband. But, the women who are divorced/separated have to face different social problems. For this group of women, self - dependence became an absolute necessity for their survival in the society because of social segregation.

Now, we may examine women’s work participation according to their educational status.

Table No. 3

Distribution of female work participation rate by educational status.

Placeof Residence	Educational Status	
	Illiterate	Literate
Rural	57.03	26.96
Urban	43.16	11.26
Total	54.08	22.34

Source: Calculated from the same source of Table No. 1.

The above table shows the work participation in both Urban and Rural areas by literate and illiterate women. The participation of illiterate women is higher than those of literate women in both rural and urban areas. The female participation in rural areas is still higher than in urban areas. The work participation rate of illiterate (54.08%) is higher than the work participation rate of literate (22.34%). This indicates lack of opportunities of job for literate women. The worker and non-workers of Manipur by sex according to 1991 census was given in table no. 4.

Table No. 4

workers and non-workers of Manipur by sex, 1991 census

Sex	Main Workers	Marginal Workers	Non-Workers
Male	4,14,812	9,958	5,13,589
Female	2,99,471	56,669	5,48,646

Source: Statistical Abstract of Manipur, 1998, Directorate of Economic and Statistics.

According to Table No.4 marginal workers and non-workers of women is higher than men because women are mainly engaged in small internal trade and commerce household work. The total population of Manipur according to 1991 census is 18,37,149 and out of it 8,98,790 is female population (both hills and plains). 49.04 of the total female population actively participated in economic activities.

Government Policy for economic empowerment

Manipur has no State Women Commission and no women policy has been made by the state. But the Social Welfare Board has done much for empowering women with regards to economy and other aspects. The Board works with various NGOs through various programs. It facilitates and strengthens the role of women through education and trainings, collective mobilization and awareness creation, income generating facilities and other support services. Some of the schemes include – Short Stay Home for women and girls, facing violence, family counseling centers, working women hostels, assistance for education and training, assistance for economic empowerment, etc. Through our study, we could collect 26 numbers of training centers (all run by women) across the state. These centers impart training on a wide range of skills. However, all these centers are located in the state capital and main towns in the districts, in the interior areas all kinds of support services for women were extremely poor. The practice of self-help group has traditionally known by the Meitei women as “Marup system” and for the tribal Christians through local churchwomen’s group. However, the new trends of SHGs as per the norms and criteria of many financial institutions is a new economic movement in the state. Recently (2-3 years back), many SHGs have been formed. Most of these groups are in the initial stage and are not yet strengthen to its full growth. Women have difficulty in availing loans and other financial assistance. Certain criteria and process of bank linkages are beyond their capacity. Apart from this corruption practices in the state is hindrances for grassroots women to avail assistance from certain government schemes and develop their full potential. Micro Credit is another system where the overall economic activity of women evolves. The prevailing situation in the state- frequent bands, curfews and blockades is a constrained for women who are earning their livelihoods as vegetable vendors and other small trades. However, rural women in the interior areas still do not access micro finance.

In Manipur, women are the backbone of economy. Their role in the socio-economic and cultural life of the state is significant. Manipuri women do not lay behind the veil, they also do all the buying and selling of goods in the market. Women dominate the markets in rural and urban areas. This unique role in the market will be known if one visits the Ima Market, which is running in the heart of the city. They are greatly involved in the agricultural activities and fishing. They are artistic and creative which drove in the field of handloom and handicraft. One significant observation that we see today in Manipur is the increase in the number of women entrepreneurs and women self help groups. Manipuri women generally gets up at 3 in the morning, toil till 9:30 at night. They work 14-15 hrs a day. However, despite their major contributions in the socio-economic life of the state, they are not given their due position. Many of them do not have a share of family property and hardly involve in decision-making. This is indeed a matter of great concern, which we all need to ponder over.

Gender and Education

Education is an important aspect to demand one's right and thus it is essential for all. It is a key to making women self-reliance and giving them the confidence to pursue their goals and aspirations. The viewed in this context has been a life-long process and not a terminal point at the stage of people needed organic linkages between education and society. The Kothari Commission on education had stressed the need of such linkages in its report entitled 'Education and National Development' UNESCO's goal of 'Education for All' had to be made aware to all sections of community and the people irrespective of caste and creed.

Trends of literacy in Manipur

Women in Manipur started receiving education since 1899. But the percentage of literacy rate of women was than very low. However, with the changing of times, it has been increased rapidly. It has shown improvement from 2.36% in 1951 to 59.70 in 2001. Male literacy trends too, have shown improvements from 20.77% in 1951 to 77.87% in 2001. The improvements in female literacy rates have been faster. 0.23% The following table shows the literacy rate of male and female and the district wise literates and population and literacy rate in Manipur:-

Table 1
Literacy Rate in the state since 1951

Year	Total Population	Total P.C	Male	Female
1951	5,77,635	11.4	20.77	2.36
1961	7,80,037	30.4	45.12	15.93
1971	10,72,753	32.9	46.40	19.53
1981	14,20,953	41.3	53.29	29.06
1991	18,37,149	59.9	71.63	47.60
2001	2,388,634	68.87	77.87	59.70

Source: Census of India 2001.

TABLE 2
DISTRICT WISE LITERATES POPULATION
AND LITERACY RATE IN MANIPUR, 2001 CENSUS.

Sl. No.	District	No. of Literates			Literacy %(excluding age group 0-6)		
		Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
01.	Senapati	1,17,100	99,583	71,517	50.47	56.39	44.04
02.	Tamenglong	56,269	33,640	22,629	58.46	67.04	49.11
03.	Churachandpur1,	48,829	84,537	64,292	74.67	84.98	64.40
04.	Chandel	61,345	35,469	25,876	57.38	66.12	48.57
05.	Thoubal	2,08,464	1,23,372	85,092	67.90	80.50	55.34
06.	Bishnupur	1,27,667	72,751	54,916	71.59	82.25	61.09
07.	Imphal (W)	3,12,125	1,71,350	1,40,775	80.61	89.40	72.24
08.	Imphal (E)	2,60,573	1,47,617	1,12,956	76.38	86.44	66.30
09.	Ukhrul	83,284	47,625	35,659	68.96	75.40	61.91
10.	Manipur	1,429,656	8,15,944	6,13,712	68.87	77.87	59.70

Source: Statistical Handbook of Manipur 2002: Directorate of Economic & Statistics, Government of Manipur.

In 2001, the district wise rate of female literacy was highest is Imphal West. Imphal East registers second highest rate with 66.30. The lowest rate of female literacy was Senapati district being 44.04 only.

Policy on Gender and Education.

There are policies on gender and education for the disadvantage groups of children. Article 95 Directive Principles of state policy specified that the state shall provide early childhood care and education to all children until they reach the age of 6 years. Moreover, Article 21 of the Indian constitution stated that the state should provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group 6-14 years. Besides, there are national policies on education of girls to be able to achieve universal elementary education. Further, the national policy for empowerment of women, 2001 gives special attention to the need for provision of facilities to reduce gender, caste, class disparity I education, to eradicate literacy and to universalize elementary education. In spite of the policy taken up by the Government of India and various organizations for the improvement of education to many young girls and women are left behind and do not access proper education.

Table No. 3

ENROLLMENT ACCORDING TO FACULTY AND STAGE, 2000-2001
Gross enrollment in the schools/college by standard, 2000-2001

Class I to XII	Total	Girls	Boys
Total	4,87,080	2,31,860	2,55,220
I - V	2,85,580	1,37,340	1,48,240
VI – VIII	1,21,200	56,940	64,260
IX – X	64,680	30,710	33,970
XI – XII	15,620	6,870	8,750

	Total	Girls	Boys
(ii) General Education	32,197	14,594	17,603
Arts	18,218	9,051	9,167
Science	12,261	4,971	7,290
Commerce	1,718	572	1,146
(iii) Professional Education	2,564	864	1700
Engineering/Technical	630	127	503
Education	416	261	155
Medical	142	43	99
Agriculture	212	91	121
Veterinary Science	80	27	53
Law	930	278	117
Others	152	37	117

The above table shows that the enrollment of boys exceeded girls in all the faculties and stages. The over all enrollment of boys was 274523 and girls 247318. The difference between boys and girls enrollment in all the faculties and stages were 27205.

A focus group discussion had been organized in the main city of Imphal where the participants were a students, housewife and unmarried women. The discussions reveals that some of the girls had to leave schools or colleges due to death of their parents, failure in the examination, engaged in domestic works, sickness of parents, irregular attendance, having many brothers and sisters. When the father of a family expired the son or daughter attending school was to leave school, but when a mother died, generally the daughter was to dropout for looking after the household works of the family. Normally, if there were many children, the eldest daughter had to look after the younger ones to make their parents free to work. Thus irregular attendance led them to dropouts.

In another focus group discussion held in Churachandpur main town in the first week of February 2005 where participants were Pastors, leaders of churchwomen ministry, leaders of women community based organizations, and Government Schools Headmasters. Some reasons for the lack of women education were pointed out. This includes-the customary laws prevent women from inheritance rights which made many parents to prefer sons educations for family and social security, female from tender age are burdened with household work and so they could devote less time in studies, poverty and ignorance of parents. Moreover, some male participants were of the opinion that boys are more intelligence and better in studies than girls. Another reasons mentioned was lack of educational infrastructure in the state especially in the interior areas due to the negligence by those in power and corruption in all fields including government and NGOs and the problem of insurgency, which debarred all government developmental works. Some of their suggestions for the improvement of educations are, to up root the insurgent groups, sincerity and hard work with commitment to bring out reforms in the society. Many so-called educated women usually suppress the rights of women. Thus, a reform among the educated women is a must to bring about change in the society. The women organizations should work together to improve the present status of women. The widespread of drugs need to be checked. Communities in the interior areas should raise their voices for the improvement of schools in their respective localities and villages. Lobbying and advocacy is the need of the hour.

The group discussion reveals that parents prefer boy's education to girls. The participants are of the opinion that providing higher education for girl's means of helping other. Because daughter is get married and serve their husband's family. Where as sons are the owner of family property and they are responsible to look after their parents. Suggestions for improvement of educational system to ensure gender justice in the state are stated here belows:-

- Review educational system to ensure quality education.
- Improvement/establishment of infrastructures particularly in the remote hill areas.
- Awareness on gender related to women's education.
- Certain checks to be conducted in the schools and appointment of adequate number of teacher.
- The wide spread of drug among young girls and boys also leads to large number of school dropouts. As a result of drugs, many talented future pillars of the society/nation are wasted in their prime time. So, The widespread of drugs need to be checked. - Communities in their interiors areas should raise their voices for the improvement schools in their own locality and village. Lobbying and advocacy is the need of the hour.

The educational system in the hill areas of Manipur is often reflected in the daily newspapers. On 29th November 2004, one of the popular Daily papers, "The Sangai Express" has stated that UJB Primary School at Phuoibi village in Senapati district has turned into a Chicken Coop! This kind of school condition can be seen in many other places across the state. This is because pasting in the hill district is considered as a punishment. More over, most of the time teachers who are posted in the hill areas just do not want to go to their post in particularly in the interior parts. Thus, field survey in the hill areas reveals that gender-based disparities in education are much sharper in the rural areas

than in the urban areas. Financial constrained, ignorance and low educational status of parents are some of the other reasons. A awareness of gender to women's education among the parents could go a long way in reducing gender disparity in education in the rural areas. In general, women in rural areas got married at young age after becoming a mother; it is difficult to pursue higher education. Moreover, after the MOU reached between the state and the center government, state welfare budget including education has been immensely cut down. This had a negative impact on the people in general and women in particular.

Political Participation of Women

The meaning and concept of participation differs from situation to situation, from place to place and among different people with different attitudes and cultures. The plurality of the concept participation in a modern society is a viable theory of democracy. Political participation is a necessary ingredient of every democratic political system. Herbert Mac Closky has defined political participation as the extent to which citizens avail themselves of those voluntary democratic rights of the political activity to which they are constitutionally entitled and the measure is held by the political culture. According to Rousseau, 'Participation is the decision-making and that is, as in theories of representative Government, a way of protecting private interest and ensuring good Government. It has also psychological effects on the participants, ensuring i.e. continuing interrelationship between the working of institutions and attitudes of individual reacting with them. Political participation does not mean franchise only but it also means their active involvement in the decision-making activities.

In a democratic set up, the political road to decision-making usually leads to the parliamentary system via the political parties. Though the ultimate aim of various parties is to achieve power, they differ in their ideologies and programmes. The study of the role and participation of women members in various political parties shows the general attitudes of various political parties towards women. In general, the premises and the programmes they have for the empowering of women in their manifestoes, and to what extent they encourage women within the organization. In India, there is still a great hiatus between constitutional guarantees and the actual representation and participation of women in different decision-making bodies. Despite constitutional and legal provisions, women are not adequately and proportionately represented in the Parliament or the State Legislative Assembly. The constitutional empowerment of women to enjoy equal sharing with men in the country is already guaranteed under the Article 14 of the Indian constitution, which deals with the right of equality before law and protection before law. She cannot be discriminated in sharing power under Article 15, which forbids discrimination against any citizen on the ground of religion, race, caste and creed, sex and birthplace. Clause 3 of the same Article also authorizes the state to make any special provisions for women and children. But in actual practice, women, in general, have not been able to participate in the decision making process and sharing of power at the grass-root levels and in the state assemblies or at parliament. Women are found to participate marginally and not adequately in the decision making process at the national state levels.

The role of women on the development aspects of the family and the society at large has become an important issue, as female population constitutes half of the population. Women in all society developed and underdeveloped ones usually play important role in the decision-making process of the family. This aspect of women's role and participation in the family has to be taken into account when we discuss and study at the higher political level.

Women's Participation in the Social Movements

The role of Manipur women in social movements can be traced back to the Pre-British period—once was in 1940 (first Nupilal) and the second was in 1939 (second Nupilal) It was against the unjust British administration. Women leaders emerged in Manipuri's traditionally male dominated sphere of business. But all these movements were spontaneous and short lived. Meirapaibi (torch bearers) movement is a new women's movement in Manipur. It began in the 1980s and is still gaining momentum. Apart from the Meirapaibis, there are women organizations from different communities like Naga women, Kuki Women Union, Zomi Mothers Association, Hmar Women Association etc. They are actively involved in the socio political affairs in their, respective communities.

However, conversation with individuals, focus group discussions and election results have shown that despite their roles and contributions they seem to be excluded in the decision making. Ksh. Bimola Devi, Chairperson, Dean of Social Sciences, Manipur University in an interview with RWUS stated. “Whenever there is a crisis in the society, women are expected to be in the forefront to solve the crisis. In a collection force they are strong. But when the crisis is over their contributions are soon forgotten. This is because of the social norms based on patriarchy, they are dominated by their husbands and sons and so they could not come forward in the decision making process.”

Women Participation in electoral politics

The women of Manipur enjoyed universal adult franchise for the first time in 1948. In the pre-independence days, there was a strong demand from the people of Manipur to introduce democratic form of government in Manipur. In response to the demand of the people, the maharaja of Manipur framed the Manipur State Constitution Act, 1947 after independence. It was under this constitution granting adult franchise were held in 1948. Women who had attained the age of 21 years exercised their franchise in electing the members of the Manipur State Assembly.

Participation of Women as Voters

Women of Manipur have been participating in the political process of the state as voters in every election since 1952 held under the constitution of India. And women voters always outnumbered the men voters in every election held up to 2002. But out of 60 Assembly Constituencies, as much as 46 constituencies had large number of female voter's than that of male voters in 2002. According to the available records we may see the percentage of female voters in comparisons with that of male voters from 1972.

Table No.1
Percentage distribution of Male and Female voter
From 19972-2002 Assembly Elections

Year	Male electors who voted	Female electors who voted	Percentage of electors who voted	Total number of electors
1972	49.9	50.1	78.3	588962
1980	49.4	50.6	82.9	909262
1984	49.1	50.9	87.2	1013678
2000	48.7	51.3	90.6	1447772
2002	48.7	51.3	90.2	1418636
Source: Election Report, Legislative Assembly Election, 2002				

Participation of Women in Parliamentary Election

Records have shown that from the year 1952 till 1998 only four women had contested in the parliamentary elections. They were:– Ishwari Devi (1952, Lhingjaneng Gante (1948), Anne Mangshatabam (1996 and Kim Gangte (1998). Out of these four women only Kim Gangte came out successfully and represents Manipur in the House of the People.

Participation of Women in State Assembly

In 1957, in the territorial Council election Smt. Shabi Devi who played a very active part in the women's movement of 1939, contested as a communist candidate from Wangkhai constituency. But she was defeated. These were female members in the Territorial Council from 1957 to 1963 and in the Territorial Assembly from 1963 to 1969 of Manipur by means of nomination. They were Smt. R.K Mukhra Devi, Smt. Akim Anal, Smt. Lhingjaneng Gangte and Smt. A. Bimola Devi. The number of women candidates contesting Assembly elections had increased after Manipur attained its full-fledged statehood in 1972. In the Assembly elections held in 1972, there were three women candidates contesting from Keishamthong, Henglep and Heinang constituencies.

In the mid-term Assembly elections in 1974, there were again three women candidates – Smt. Lhingjaneng from Saikot, Smt. Aribam Bimola from Heingang, and Smt. T. Kholly from Saikot. But all these women could not get themselves elected. The number of women candidates increased in 1980 Assembly elections. There were eight women in both the valley and hill constituencies.

Table No. 2
Women Candidates in the Assembly Election, 1980

SI No	Name	Party	Constituency
1.	T. Kholly	Independent	Saikot
2.	S. Radhapriya	NCP	N. Pakhanglakpa
3.	Athing Lingjaneng	Janate	Saikot
4.	A, Bimola	Janata	Heingang
5.	R.K Mukkhra	Congress	Keishamthong
6.	Kh. Bilashini	Communist Party	Bishnupur
7.	A. Puinabati	Congress(U)	Thangmeiband
8.	W. Joimati	Congress(U)	Sangolband

Source: Election Result, 1980

The percentage of votes secured by the women candidates was not very high in both the valley and hills. The result might have been discouraging for women that in 1984 the number of women candidates was reduced to five only. And all four of the women candidates even lost their security deposits. We may assume that the female voters did not cast their votes in favor of the women candidates because female voters outnumbered the male voters. Again in 1990 Assembly elections, there were seven women candidates contesting in both the hills and valley constituencies. According to the election report, different political parties put up three women candidates. The electoral performance of the women candidates was improved as three candidates could secure more votes though not elected. Only three women candidates lost their security deposit and one woman named Hangmila Shaiza (wife of former CM) was elected from Ukhrul constituency. She was the first woman to be elected to the Legislative Assembly after Manipur attained statehood in 1972.

In the by-election held in 1992 from the Oinam Constituency, after the death of the sitting MLA, K. Bira Singh's wife K. Apabi Devi was elected on the congress ticket. Thus, the number of women members in the Legislative Assembly had increased into two.

Table No. 3
Women Candidates in 2000 Assembly Election

Sl. No.	Name	Party	Constituency
1.	Ratimanjuri	Nationalist Congress	Heingang
2.	Y. Shakhitombi	Independent	Singjamei
3.	Smt. Manishang	BJP	Konthoujam
4.	Ak. Mirabai	INC	Patsoi
5.	H. Mukhi	BJP	Langthabal
6.	W. Leima	Independent	Naويا Pakhang
7.	K. Apabi	INC	Oinam
8.	K. Damyanti	Manipur State Congress	Wabagai
9.	Grace T. Shatsang	INC	Chingai
10.	Hathopi Buansing	Federal Party, Manipur	Saikot
11.	T. Ngaizanem	Samata	Singat

Source: Election Result 2000

Out of the above 11 contested women only one of them Ms. Leima Devi was elected

Table No. 4
Women Candidates in 2002 Assembly Election

Sl No.	Name	Party	Constituency
1.	W. Leima	Independent	Naoriya pakhang
2.	AK. Mirabai	INC	Patsoi
3.	Th. Manishang	BJP	Konthoujam
4.	O. Bimola	D.R.P.P	Oinam
5.	T. Ngaizanem	SAP	Singhat
6.	Jubilee	MNC	Singhat
7.	S. Radhapriya	NCP	Naoriya Pakhanglak

Source: Election Result 2002

Out of the above 7 candidates only Mrs Leima Devi was elected. From the above Assembly election reports we may assumed that, till today only three women candidates were elected and these women were the wives of MPs, MLAs or Ministers. No other common women are elected. It shows that those who have the political background only could get elected.

Contributions from the participants during focus group discussions and interactions held in 5 districts with women from various communities between December 2004-January 2005.

- Women in Manipur could seldom come out successfully unless they (candidate) have a good political background. This means that the women candidates must be from either a minister's wife or relative of a minister. High handed male power and money has been involved which is a serious constrain for women.
- In rural areas especially among the Christian's women participation in politics is considered to be ungodly. (Need for correct interpretation of religious text)

- Because of the social norms based on Hinduism: Patriarchy, women could not come forward in the decision making process. They (women) are dominated by their husbands and sons even among the educated urban communities.
- As to why women do not cast their vote in favor of women because of many reasons – whom to vote is usually decided by husband who is the head of the family and that the choice often goes to male candidate, there has been a practice in certain areas that one member from each household casts the vote of all the family members. In such case, it is the male member from the family who goes out to cast the vote. The practice of Booth capturing at the time of election deprived women their voting rights. Rural women are generally ignorant and do not have the knowledge of the importance of women participation in politics. Women voters have no confidence in women candidates due to social norms that says women are inferior to men.
- Due to the prolonged armed conflict and large number of insurgents operating in the state, people especially women are reluctant to be actively involved in politics.
- Some educated women are of the opinion that seat reservation for women in the State Assembly and parliamentary will bring forth women to participation in politics.
- The society has a negative attitude towards women who are involved in politics especially as a candidate. So it is not very encouraging for women to take part in politics. Normally husband and relatives do not permit women to take part in election.

Panchayati Raj

In the four districts of Manipur-Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal and Bishnupur there are local bodies, like Municipalities and Panchayats especially after the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1992 and 1993, 30 % of the total seats were kept reserved for women. There are 7 Municipality Councils and 27 Nagar Panchayats (Small Town Committee). In 1995 election for Municipality/Nagar Panchayats were held. According to the election result of 1995, 40 women out of 90 were elected in the Municipality Council and 66 women out of 190 were elected in the Nagar Panchayats.

These women were elected on the basis of reservation. Again in 1997 the Zilla Parishad and Gram Panchayat elections were held. 166 women were elected as Pradhan and 1557 as Gram Panchayat member and 16 as Zilla Parishad members were elected. In 2002 Zilla Parishad and Gram Panchayat elections, 23 women out of 61 were elected in the Zilla Parishad and 699 out of 1707 were elected in the Gram Panchayat. The table below shows the results of Panchayat election 2002 and Zilla Parishad Result 2002.

Table No. 5
Manipur Panchayat Election 2002

District	Division Block	Pradhan		Elected	Member		Panchayat at Elected
		Contest	Uncontest		Contest	Uncontest	
Imphal (E)	I	26	1	9	162	35	107
	II	29	2	9	156	3	102
	Jirib am	17	x	2	49	6	25
Imphal (W)	I	29	2	9	150	30	107
	II	23	x	5	111	28	55
Bishnupur	Bishnupur	13	x	4	93	12	50
	Moirang	15	x	4	66	11	46
Thoubal	Thoubal	27	1	9	203	41	129
	Kakching	18	1	5	56	31	78
	Total	197	7	56	1046	197	699

Source: Pachanyat election result 2002

Table No. 6
Manipur Zilla Parishads Election 2002

District	Contested	Uncontested	Elected
Imphal (E)	34	-	6
Imphal (W)	27	-	7
Thoubal	14	-	6
Bishnupur	33	-	4
Total	108	-	23

Source: Zilla Parishal election result 2002

As to certain the actual positions and functions of the Local self government in the state, we have conducted focus group discussions with Panchayat members and personal interactions with some Zilla Parishad members in Bishnupur district, Imphal West district and Imphal East district. It seems the general nature of election of Panchayats in rural areas goes according to Sagei (clan wise). This means that the people from Oinam clan would usually nominate one candidate from his or her own clan and vote in his/her favour. Some of the women become a Panchayat members because they were insisted by their leaders (male) to contest the election. Through our informal interactions with women headed NGOs in the urban areas, the state government had implemented as per the reservation of women, yet many of the elected women members were uneducated and are not capable of addressing their issues. When personal interview conducted with the members, many of them were unable to give us our required information. Their husband, son or other family members mostly answer our questions. This reveals that the women members are under the male domination. Mean while some of them share their bitter experiences in working with the male colleagues, with the Zilla Parishad members and state government. Their problem includes irregular fund allocation, UGs interferences and others.

The nature of election of Zilla Parishad is little different from that of Gram Panchayat. The concern MLAs has a great influence. Majority of the elected women members are backup by the concern MLAs. A prominent Zilla Parishad member cited, “ *the womenfolk of my concern regards of me as a political leader and not as a women leader. I am concern with the welfare of the people as a whole and not women in particular.* ’ It is very surprising that outstanding leader in the heart of the city and also a wife of head of department in College is still unaware of gender issue. This

reveals the situation of political participation of women and the concept of women who are involve in politics in the state of Manipur. All the women Zilla Parishad members are fully engage in official activities. During our fieldwork, we hardly get 5-10 minutes to interact with them.

Village Authority in the Hill District

For the rural women in Manipur political participation is a far distant dream. There is no Panchayati Raj system in all the hill districts and the district autonomous council does not function properly. Although there are provisions for reservation of seats for women under the Village Authority Act, it has not been implemented. The Village Authority comprised of the chief and his councilors where women membership is totally nil. In most cases, the Village chief selects the Authority members, which is easily confirm by the government. I had asked the opinion of five village authority members from different villages for the inclusion of women as a member of the Village Authority. None of the five members agreed with the idea of women participation as a member. A member from Bethel village replied *“People will not except women as a member.” They are not qualified to be a member of the Village Authority because their status is so low. They have no yet participate even in the Local Church Committee.”* Truly the man had reflected the general attitude of the people in this regard.

On the other hand, the rural women in the hill districts generally are not concern with this problem except for a few enlighten women who discuss the matter occasionally in an informal discussion. Above all, women have not demanded their rights for inclusion in the village local decision-making body.

The prevailing culture in politics is generally male-oriented and derives a Political Philosophy that confines women and women’s concerns to the private sphere of domesticity. The ever-growing division between private and public life, as it becomes increasingly sectorised and hierarchical has become even more inimical to women. The conventional notion of politics projects the power play as an exclusively ‘male domain’ where masculinity synonymous with violent money and muscle power is cherished value. Thus political status of women remain low in spite of the participation of women in the local bodies as a result of the reservation provided by the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts of the Constitution of India.

Violence Against Women

Women and girls around the world are threatened, beaten, raped, mutilated and killed with impunity. The 1980s shows India making progress on rape and domestic violence law with women's groups pushing forward the reform agenda. And yet, protection and justice for women victims of violence today is far from improved.

According to Article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the term violence against women includes any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, several or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life (Declaration on the Elimination of violence Against women, Article 1, resolution issued by the General Assembly of the United Nations, December, 1993). The present study shall deal with violence against women on physical violence, sexual violence, psychological /emotional violence.

In Manipur, owing to the situation and the Patriarchal system prevailing, there has been widespread violence where women are experiencing mental, physical and sexual violence. Women are targeted both by state and non-state actors due to their status in society and their sex. The range of gender-based acts of violence is devastating. Manipur does not have a State Commission for Women to handle cases of crime against women and to lend a voice to the women in the state. There is no Women's Jail and very few women cells are poorly maintained. Many cases of violence and crime against women left unreported. In the valley, most violence cases of women are take up by the Women Civil Societies like Meira Paibis and other NGOs working on Violence Against Women whereas in hill districts, most violence cases are decided as per the customary laws and do not necessarily approach the courts or reports to the police. There is one Family Court which in the state capital. Number of women advocates seems to be very low.

To start with our study on Violence Against Women, consultation and group discussion has been conducted with the Bar Association of Bishnupur District where 11 numbers of Advocates participated. Raped, molestation, kidnapping, forced marriage, wife beating, divorced and other domestic violence were pointed out as common type of violence prevailing in Manipur. The District Bar Secretary cited that there have been so much violence against women but all those incidents were unreported.

The Bar Association has provided free services but people especially girls are reluctant or does not like to approach the courts due to certain social stigma and people lack awareness on Human Rights. Other participants have shared that women seldom comes to approach the court for owns case on her own will. The concern clubs, relatives and women leaders like the Meirapaibis, and other family members and relatives of the victims generally put up women cases. The largest number of cases in the district has been a divorced women or death of husband of a government employees seeking for maintenance of her husband. Kidnapping or forced marriage is common among girls below 14 years

TABLE No.1
STATISTIC ON CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

Nature of Crime	1999	2000	2001	2002
Murder	11	11	2	2
Rape	10	12	16	7
Molestation	14	29	36	24
Kidnapping	42	40	69	56
Assault	12	9	12	29
Suicide	8	11	4	
Women Burning				1
Others	8	7	8	15
Total	105	119	147	134

Source: Office of the CID, DIG Crime Branch, Manipur, Imphal

Table No 2
Total Number of Cases Filed at Family Counselling Centre
From July 1998 to December 2001

Sl.No.	Nature of Case From July 1998 to December 2001	Total
1.	Maintenance demand care	137
2.	Cruelty by in-laws	36
3.	Desertion	45
4.	Claiming of dowry goods after separation	5
5.	Drug related problems	12
6.	Dispute of family/Old age pensions	20
7.	Bride-price demand	2
8.	Child custody	19
9.	Property disputes	49
10.	Family maladjustment	64
11.	Mental	19
12.	Divorce cases	4
13.	Illegal separation	3
14.	Inter caste marriages	3
15.	Juvenile delinquent cases	4
16.	Destitute Women/Children	7
	Total	737

Cases successfully compromised/solved. Source: Dr. Romiobala, Senior Counselor

Table No 3

No. of Reported cases on daily newspapers from January to November 2004

Nature of Case	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Total
Rape	3	1	2	2	1	6	2	1	3	3	24
Murder	-	2	1	-	-	3	1	2	1	2	12
Rape after Molestation	2	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	4
Suicide	1	-	1	2	1	-	2	1	1	1	10
Assaults	3	2	-	4	3	1	-	2	2	2	19
Child Abuse	3	5	4	2	-	-	-	-	1	1	16
Burnt	1	1	-	1	-	4	-	1	-	-	8
Complaint	11	4	6	5	1	4	3	-	9	6	49
No. of lost girls	2	3	4	1	2	2	2	-	3	3	22

Source: Women Action For Development (WAD), Imphal, Manipur.

The crime branch record shows very less number of raped, murder and other act of violence against women. But many cases seem to be unreported. Ms Niangdeihching, age 30 from Zouveng (main town of Churachandpur) had gone out collecting firewood but never returned back home. On the 19th November 2001, her dead body was found and buried. She has no relative to take up her case. Till today the case remained unreported. – Reports Mrs Grace, Zouveng, during group discussion, 7th Feb. 2005. In the midst of tensions, conflict, and complex situation like Manipur, life has very little value. And it is always women and girls who are the victims in all forms of violence.

The fear of raped:

For the women of Manipur, the fear of rape is heightened by the situation in which they live. It stems not merely from the horror of physical assault, but from the subsequent social stigmatization and many raped cases are zone unreported. Women especially young girls often prefer to remain silent. Generally rapists are Indian armed forces deployed to curb insurgency, which has been imposed in the state for decades. In many cases, even when the victims reported openly, the rapist often escaped from punishment. A Manipuri woman has lost the freedom of movement. They are not even safe to work in the field without husband or sons. As per report received from the secretary Ima Leima ren Apunba Lup, Churachandpur:- Seilah (name changed) 30 years with the children lived in Gangpimoul (3 km. from Churachandpur town), went out working in the field and do not return home till dark. Her worried children who went out in search of their mother found her lying bruised all over her body. She was raped by 2 army personals. When she came to realize that she was being raped he refused to accept her as his wife. When she was sent back to her parent's home where she decided to commit suicide. This kind of incidence is after experience by the women of Manipur.

Gender Violence as a result of Armed Conflict and Armed Special Forces Power Act:

The ongoing-armed conflict in Manipur has intensified the violence faced by women, which takes the form of sexual, mental, physical abuse or killing and clashes. The armed Forces Power Act that has been imposed in Manipur has added gender violence in the state. The case of Manorama is a living example. However, most cases go unreported due to certain reasons like social stigma, fear, lack of Human Right awareness, and cases decided by relatives according to the customary laws.

A mission Hospital stands opposite to the Office where I have been working. Many poor villagers mostly victims of armed conflict frequently come when the hospital provides free medical care. It was during these times that many women drop-in to my office and begged me Rs 10/20. I took this opportunity to interact with them and listen to their bitter stories. And here I will note down some of their words which I feel are very touching to me:-

- *“During the conflict we mourned, we lived in fear and we could not sleep at night. Now the war is over and we are displaced, sick and hungry”- Tingnu, age 35, Vazing village.*

- *“ We, women do not like war, but when it occurs we also participate in the forefront to safeguard our sons and husbands”Deihlhing, age 42, Kholmun village. “ I lost my husband and children during the conflict. I have no longer life desire. But I have responsibility to take care of my grandson who lost his parents. Sometimes when I do not find a place to work we starved “ Tingjaneng, age 50, Tuilumjang.*

Apart from these we have conducted few focus group discussions with women from 3 villages – Khobpuibung, Muobem, and Valpakot. Many of them shared how the army's have utilized their husbands and sons. Sometimes their husbands did not return from the field for 2/3 days. The army had taken with them up in the forest for patrolling because the villagers are more familiar with the forest. *“ I could not sleep three nights when my husband was detained by the army”* said a woman from Khobpuibung village. Sometimes the army enforced them to fetch water. Another women reported that in such a critical situation like Manipur, *Mother and daughter are the one who opens the door at night and confronts the armies or insurgents and any other unknown visitors while husband and son are kept hiding in the bedroom.*

Polygamy is a common practice in the valley of Manipur.

The practice of polygamy however was adopted in the past by coincidence rather than by design where the lost of men in the Manipur Burmese war was significantly high. The unequivocal need for social security gave ways to elders sanctioning polygamy as a means of security and protection to women. This has however become a practice among the meitei community and is extremely discriminatory towards women.

According to the customary laws, divorce is an acceptable norm in Manipur. It can be initiated from both sides i.e., either by the husband or the wife. But, it is mostly the husband who seeks divorce. The husband initiates about 90% of divorce in Manipur. Moreover, in case of a divorce, the offspring of the husband and wife goes to the husband. The mothers have no right to claim her children against the wishes of her husband. It may also be noted that in the tribal society of Manipur, when a women committed adultery, her husband would send her out of the house with a single dress, and she lost all her properties. On the other hand, if the husband committed adultery, the wife could do nothing except to return to her parental home. Moreover, even though remarriage of widows and widowers are permitted, there is difference. For a widow to remarry she has to perform certain rites which was not needed in the case of a widowers.

Drugs is a menace for women and girls in Manipur:

Manipur, sensitive frontier of North East India get trapped into drug culture due to its proximity to “Golden Triangle”, which illicit poppy cultivation and opium production continue unabated. India share about 1800 kilometers of mountainous border with Myanmar on the eastern frontier from where the deadly Heroin enters into the hilly region. Along with this come other drugs like, Diazepam, Proxyvon, Antihistamine (cough syrup)etc. As a result, many growing youth, 8-18 years are deeply into the habit. The result is a wide spread HIV/AIDS virus which added to violence on women. Now, number of widows is increasing at an alarming rate. Their husband leaves behind many widows without any means for livelihood. In the society, widow is still taken as a curse, a burden in the family but the harsher reality is that if the husband happens to be a HIV/ AIDS positive man and died of aids then the widow experiences dual stigmatization-first as a widow and second of a positive man, Here I would like to put just one question – is there any women who wants her long journey of life end up as a widow? Does a woman want to lose her husband at the prime of her married life? Ask any women and the answers will be definitely a big “NO”.

In another group discussion held on the 14th December 2004, a 50 woman from Muolnom village had shared her problems with her addicted son. Everyday her son demanded Rs 30-40 for purchasing of heroin. *“When I have no money to give him (son) I got beaten. So, whatever little I earn is spent on drugs. I love my son but I cannot help him”* She sobbed and added, *“ We, the mother of a drug addicted son has gone through a desperate life that no others will never understand.”* The other woman remarked, *“The government and many NGO’s working on HIV/AIDS focus their programmed on the patient only. They have never realized or considered the pain and sufferings of mother “*

The patriarchal system in Manipur, traditional years of neglect and discrimination against women cannot be turned around in a day. However, to in force a positive society, all sections of the community have to launch a virulent attack on all forms of crimes and violence against women. This had be done with the combined effort of the people, NGO and political instruments.

Wife beating is common practice in Manipur

Wife beating is a very common practice in Manipur. Batter of and wife beating is often not reported to the police or to the community leaders because it is considered as family affairs. Focus group discussion has reveal that wife beating and insulting is common not only in the rural areas but also among the educated middle class. Woman/girls should not go out, should provide proper services to their in-laws, full time services in household work are acceptable social norms, which is strictly imposed by the head of the family. All these are may be the reasons that wife and girls are being beaten and insulted. However, the average rate of wife beating seems to be much higher among drunkards. The state government has prohibited liquor has been prohibited by the state government being made and sell by women – a way of earning a living for many people in Manipur. One of the Meira Paibi leader has shared during the group discussion- women prepared traditional wine. Their husbands’ drinks and when they are drunken, wife who prepared the drinks were being beaten.

Property Rights

As per the customary laws of tribal in Manipur, women are deprived of family property rights. The right of inheritance goes to either the eldest son or youngest son in the family. Generally among the rural communities women do not enjoy property rights. And no movement has been found so far. Women still have not clime family property right. During the course of our study, we asked the opinions and feelings of rural women regarding this right. Many of them seem not aware of their rights. *“I do not have the feeling of rejection nor discomfort for not getting the share of my family properties. Because this is a common practice since our forefather’s time. But if there can be such opportunity for women to have her share of family property, that will be a very good thing for us (women)”* – Mrs Darlienzo, a leader of Church Women Ministry, Sielmat. However, well to do families in the towns and cities and few educated enlightened arranged an equal of share of family properties by including daughters. However, well to do families in the towns and cities and few educated enlightened arranged an equal of share of family properties by including daughters.

Suggestions.

1. Adequate compensation to rape victims in the lower socio-economic profile to enable them to. Go for justice.
2. Effective legislation on feticide, sexual harassment and other atrocities on women.

It is important for women to reclaim their voices and the right to defend themselves against violence and harassment. Women must be encouraged to speak up, express their own truths and create solidarity networks. Only then will things change

**RESEARCH PAPER ON
' BEYOND PRACTICAL GENDER NEEDS:
WOMEN IN MANIPUR '**

COMMISSIONED BY:

**INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES TRUST,
NEW DELHI.**

Submitted by:

**Rural Women Upliftment Society
Sielmat, Box - 3, Churachandpur, Manipur**

Conclusion:

My conclusion and recommendantion to rethink and redirect gender programmes and policies has its genesis in the women themselves. Sitting an hour with them and listening to their stories and experiences by showing concerns will bring forth right-based approach towards gender justice and empowerment.

The present study has revealed the true picture of women in Manipur. How high handed male power, money, and the deeprooted social institutions deprived women from active participation in politics and other decision making bodies. On the othar hand, it further reflect the strength of women in a group and the need to intergrate various women organisations from different communities for peace initiative and development and to bring them together for a common perspectivies. In a complex situation like Manipur where there is a massive violation of human rights, women has to be aware of their rights and be capacitated to lobby and advocates in order to protect themselves against physical and mental voilence. Prolonged insurgency problem and the armed conflict prevailing in the state has added women's responsibilities and other work load. Health is another constraint for women to develope their full potential. Focus group discusions has also revealed that women in general are not gender sensitive. Religous and social institutions has deeply influenced the overall pespectives and attitudes of the women both in the rural and unban areas.

Thus, creating a space for women through guidance and support to community-based organisations, women organisations and women's group will enabled to address strategic gender interests and practical gender needs.

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A perspective from Meghalaya: North East Network

Introduction

When we talk of the north east region we do find that women have greater social mobility in comparison to women of north India. There are hill districts where women and men have a less disparate division of labour in the field. Yet, women throughout the region do not have decision-making power in local governance or local village matters. This, in some cases, is a part of customary law. Therefore gender relations vary in the sphere of public and private domains in the region. Yet, women's role is primary if we measure their work extent from childcare to food security. Hence, it is most important to link gender and poverty issues with production systems to understand development among rural populations and if we are to ensure well being and food security for people the key strategy would be in sharing of roles by men and women towards gender equity.

Because the roles of men and women in societies are often different, their needs vary accordingly. Caroline Moser makes the conceptual distinction between *practical* and *strategic* gender needs where the former are the needs women identify in their socially accepted roles in society. Such needs do not challenge the systemic subordination or discrimination of women but address only the mundane aspects such as the inadequacies in living conditions like water provision, health care and employment. The latter, on the other hand are the needs women identify because of their subordinate position in society. They vary according to particular contexts, related to gender divisions of labour, power and control. These may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages, and women's control over their bodies. Clearly, gender equality is a basic right for women and empowerment is the vehicle for assertion of identity. It is a platform from where one can struggle around issues of rights.

About the study

The study entitled *Beyond Practical Gender Needs- Women in North Eastern and Hill States*, was commissioned by the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST), New Delhi to North East Network under the National Research Programme on Growth and Human Development supported by the Planning Commission-UNDP in September 2004. The objective was to find out strategic gender needs of women in selected hill states of the country. As mentioned, NEN took on the responsibility of conducting this study. A total of four members from NEN were involved in preparing the report of this study. This entailed personal interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) to find out some of the major concerns raised by women on issues of governance, health, violence against women, access to land and property and education.

The team conducted five FGDs with different women groups including the youth from Jaintia Hills (Nartiang Village) Garo Hills (Tura), East (Shillong) and West Khasi Hills (Nongstoin). Secondary data was collected from administrative officials in the Government sector as well as the police.

Interesting as it was, NEN members found it difficult to cope with the study. For one, the time frame given to them for completing the study was too short. Given the culture of the area (Meghalaya), it was also difficult for respondents to adjust with the NEN team when focus group discussions took place. It is only natural that introductory meetings should precede interviews after which such exchanges can take place between both parties comfortably.

It is being increasingly observed that despite progress on the practical gender needs (PGN) women in these states experience deprivation in Strategic Gender Needs.

The following pages will take us through a journey of issues that deal with social, political, and health functioning of Meghalaya state vis-à-vis women's position in them. The issue of violence against women has been mentioned in this study because it has reached unprecedented heights in the state despite the general view that women reign supreme because of the matrilineal system practiced in the state. The short study brings light to the fact that Meghalaya state is no different to other states in the country where women's position in society is low and where patriarchal norms determine the daily societal functioning of the state.

Background of Meghalaya

Meghalaya is the homeland mainly of the Khasis, Jaintias (Pnars), Garos (Achiks). It was a part of the state of Assam but attained statehood on 21 January 1972. Meghalaya has a total population of more than two million (23, 18,822), according to the census of India 2001.

The Khasis live in the Khasi Hills, in the central part of the state. The three tribes of Meghalaya have a matrilineal society, where descent is traced through the mother. The women have a distinctively higher position and status, but also greater responsibilities (Syiem.1997:23). In such a society the child takes its mother's name and lives in the mother's social group. The uterine kins are the blood relations of an individual. Uterine ties are based on descent from a common ancestress IAWBEI, who is the ancestral mother of the clan.

The Khasis and Jaintias have strictly exogamous matrilineal clans, which they call 'kur' or 'jait'. They follow strictly the system of matrilocal residence and the youngest daughter of the family, locally termed as 'khatduh' inherits all the household property and she is regarded as the custodian of the family property. The role of the maternal uncle 'U Saidnia' however, in matters of property is quite dominant. Khasi women have a distinctively higher position and status with greater responsibilities than women of other societies. They can, to a large extent act independently. They equally share duties and responsibilities as well as decision-making, regarding matters concerning their home and children. But in matters outside the home, the father or the maternal uncles act as the representatives. So despite their higher status in society, there are areas where the women of Meghalaya do not play any role, and one such crucial area is politics and administration.

Political participation

When India was on the threshold of freedom, tribal communities of north east India made a number of demands on the basis of their distinct culture and varied social norms. For instance, in the earlier days, the council of *Basan* (representative of founding clan of a village) and *Longsan mansan* (representing *basans* and elders) were the most powerful bodies that governed the Khasi society. They were responsible for the administration of land, protection of clan interests and the conduct of other socio-cultural functions in the village.

Policy makers in the Centre devised an administrative machinery which they thought would be suitable to the people. This was done in the form of the Sixth Schedule (Article 244 (1 & 2) part X- Constitution of India), which provides for a separate mechanism for administration in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram and for the setting up of District and Regional councils in each of the autonomous districts and region. It also confers powers of legislation and administration of justice on the district councils apart from the executive, developmental and financial responsibilities. They have a traditional jury-based legal system evolved by tribal societies. This body has the right to own and dispose off property. Therefore the district councils and regional councils were established so that the Khasis, Garos and Jaintias may be able to look after themselves.

The district council and regional councils may be regarded as a special kind of local authorities, the special feature that they are being created by the constitution and not by an act of the state legislature. There are only three district councils and no regional councils in Meghalaya. The districts councils in Meghalaya do not prefer women for the posts of Chairman or Deputy Chairman. Interestingly, only five women have been nominated to the three district councils from the year of its establishment.

Female members nominated to the Meghalaya District Councils	
Year	Name
1952- 1957	Mrs L. Shullai
1972-1978	Mrs Estrice Syiem
1972- 1978	Mrs L.P. Lamin
1984- 1988	Mrs M. War
2004 till date	Mrs Irin Lyngdoh

Source: Secretary, office of the District Council, Shillong

Women's Political Participation in state legislature in Meghalaya	
Total number of seats- 60	
1993	2%
1998	5%
2003-	5%

Source: NEN Research

Khasi & Jaintia Hills

Political participation in the Traditional Institutions of the Khasi-Jaintia Hills is a male domain. Tracing down the ancient times that the Local *Dorbar* (traditional councils) were set up, women were never allowed to be participants. The only role that they play in the *Dorbar* is as silent spectators. They are allowed to observe the proceedings of the meetings but never allowed to voice their views and opinions. Most of the women consider this as a drain of their energies and a frustrating experience. Ironically the fundamental factor of discrimination has not been questioned and neither has there been any strategic move towards mitigating subordination by women themselves. If at all, their voices are raised in discussions while many prefer to stay away from these meetings. Even in cases where a woman is a victim of violence very little is discussed among women's groups and neither are they consulted. In some areas in Shillong, women's groups are never even told if such case of violence against women takes place. Clearly, the *Dorbars* have to be influenced to consider violence as a public health issue and not a private domestic matter.

There are few *Dorbars* in Shillong where women have been elected as members. However, it is unheard of for a woman to be the head of the *Dorbar*. The term *Rangbah Shnong* (headman) itself suggests the man as the head of the locality. There has never been a woman as the head. However, some women of Jaintia Hills (Nartiang) have realized the need for women to also be heads or chiefs of the village. They have done some thinking about it among themselves and feel they would be happy to have at least one female representative in their *Dorbar* as an initial step. They have even put forward their concern before the headman. Again there are contradicting opinions in this regard where some women feel the need to have both men and women in the *Dorbar*. The level of articulation on such views is very low and women perhaps do not find it worthwhile to speak out their feelings. At the same time many have expressed that the traditional norm, initiated by their ancestors is acceptable.

Case study: The *Dorbar* in Nartiang, Jaintia Hills.

Following is the case of a border dispute between Mawdop village and Nartiang in Jaintia Hills village where we found the participation of both men and women in solving the dispute unanimously. This is the only case, which has a positive result, in that the women

were consulted, and where decision-making took place among the men and women. This particular area happens to comprise a community where decisions are made on majority opinion. In such cases the participation of women is very high. Having said this it was found that the Doloï, (Doloï is akin to a king. He rules the entire *ilaka*), opposed the participation of women whereas the Dorbar supported and backed this women's group to take part in the decision-making. It is interesting to note that the Doloï was forced to step out of office for three years by the two sections. This is the only example, which reveals the strength and effectiveness of the Seng Kynthei (Women's Group) in Nartiang.

Case study: Ri Bhoi District

We have a slightly different example of women who are in the process of strengthening their group in an area called *Umsning* village, (Ri Bhoi). Women are not permitted (by the men) to attend meetings and proceedings of the *Dorbar*. They were never invited/ nor have the women tried to attend such meetings. Only at times of election of the Headman are the women allowed to exercise their right to vote. The women in this village set up a Seng Kynthei in 2004 comprising twenty four women to demand a place in the *Dorbar*. Though their organization is still very young, there is a strong need felt by them to fight against men's alcoholism in their village.

In the West Khasi Hills women would like to participate in the *Dorbar* as members because they feel that the men are not very sincere when it comes to issues relating to women. Therefore, the responsibilities and duties of such members, which include the mandate to look into women's well being, are not adhered to.

The Seng Kynthei or Women's body in the *dorbar* looks into concerns relating to water, cleanliness of the village and others. This is a clear indication of women having to look into practical gender needs and not the strategic ones. They cannot take decisions on their own but under the supervision of the *Dorbar*. The Seng Kynthei can only put up their grievances before the *Dorbar* and it is for the *Dorbar* to decide. The affairs of the *Dorbar* are multiple. Handling cases of gambling, rape, violence within the village are some of its main concerns. It is unfortunate that till now the Seng Kynthei have not been able to oppose any decisions taken by the *Dorbar*.

Women are happy to see that there are female representatives in the State Legislative Assembly, especially one who belongs to their district as they feel that they can be more open to the problems and grievances of the women. They are apprehensive to meet the men with their grievances. So far they have not got an opportunity to interact with the female representative in the State Assembly but they are sure that being a woman she will be of considerable help to the village as a whole and the women in particular.

Women's group of Nongmynsong (Shillong) wish to see many of their kind to take the role of representatives in the legislature and recommended for reserved seats for female candidates. However, though this section of women have expressed the need for their representation in the legislature they have not questioned the same need in the local decision making body i.e. *dorbar*.

There is an urgent need, therefore to encourage women in the state to be involved in electoral politics and as for the *dorbars* it is about time some changes are made which would provide a space for women to speak, think together with the men and make decisions together with them. If there is a reservation for women in panchayats why should there not be in *dorbars*, which are equivalent to the panchayats.

Garro Hills

The Institution of Nokmaship and the Village Council were the two traditional administrative agencies of the Garos. The Garos have entered the Garo hills in batches from different directions, each batch consisting of a clan and each clan settling in a particular area. The leader of the clan who has thus brought and settled them in a particular area was automatically recognized as their leader or headman called “Nokma”. With the passage of time, there evolved various types of Nokmas in the Garo Hills. Out of the five Nokmas there is one type of nokmaship, which is recognised by the District council i.e. the A’king Nokma. The A’king nokma comes from the word “A’ King” which means acclaimed land. Therefore a’king means an area of land to which a man holds title. The Garo hills district Council under Act No 1 of 1960 defined “A’King” as any clan held by a clan or ma’chong under the custody of the of the head of the clan or ma’chong called Nokma. The Garo Hills District Council, under Act No 1 of 1959, defined the A’king Nokma as the head who holds any land as a custodian on behalf of a clan. Thus a man becomes the a’king nokma by virtue of his relationship to the woman who is the head of the village community. Such a man is generally the husband of the woman who owns the clan land but other relatives are appointed for special reasons. So as the king nokma he is by tradition only the custodian of the land actually owned by his wife. This position makes the Nokma possess certain political and administrative powers.

Thus, unlike the Khasi-Jaintia set-up where the maternal uncle and the brother are the decision makers, the exercise of power in Garo hills, over land and property of the wife is in the hands of the husband. Women want to change their position from being mere nominal heads. They want to exercise their decision making rights.

There are very few women from Garo Hills in the political arena. A member of the Garo’s mother’s union stated “*Women find it too difficult to campaign in the rural areas and terrain. Mobility of women is also restricted. As men display a lot of money power especially in this field, thus disabling the women from contesting the elections. Needless to say the culture of ‘muscle power’ is practiced in all aspects of competition, be it the elections, the market, the forest or the land.* Women are of the opinion that allotment of tickets for contesting in the elections should be made mandatory for them in every party. The representation of women in the Assembly is a must, said the women in our FGD.

As mentioned earlier, women attend meetings in community meetings but are not allowed to make statements not share their views openly. This has irked women to a large measure and there has been evidence of their call for being included in sharing views and making decision together in such meetings.

On 33% reservations for women in the parliament- some felt that.....

Women should be included in all decisions making bodies to accelerate their development. If our society is not ready for 33% at the moment, then we should start with 20%. One difficulty may be that the law does not lay down any other criteria for the selection.

Mrs Margaret Mawlong, retired bureaucrat and active Community Leader, Meghalaya.

We should stick to 33% and not compromise for 20%. Perhaps the male candidates feel threatened. There is a need to ingrain gender equality in the new generation.

Theilin Phanbuh, President, Lympung ki Seng kynthei

There is need for reservation. Women should be allowed to participate in the administration to work for their own empowerment. A sense of security has perhaps prevented the bill from being passed.

Rev. W.C.Khongwir, Presbyterian Church of India

Source: NEN field study available in NEN's newsletter Tbeh Jingshai, 2004

It is evident that women's role in political participation is negligible because of their absence in traditional local governance and the larger formal institutions of political power like the Legislative Assembly of the Meghalaya government. In addition to this limitation we also find that women have not really made a collective move to address this issue except in the city of Shillong where women's groups did question the validity of the Meghalaya State Women's Commission where the Chief Minister of the State hurriedly made a few women members of it. The willingness to work collectively on such issues are not evident in other districts of Meghalaya. Practical gender needs can addressed though the need to discuss problems facing women, should be done collectively.

Health

Khasi-Jaintia Hills

The villages have the requisite number of PHCs or Sub-centres as per government policy but they lack adequate resources to function well. There are infrastructural problems and irregular visit of doctors and nurses especially in the rural areas. Medicine supply is erratic and insufficient in quantity. The situation in more interior villages is worse as the health facilities are almost negligible. This has made the villagers dependent on traditional health care systems. The traditional practitioners have expressed great concern over the severe cutting down of trees, which has resulted in the non-availability of medicinal herbs. Herbal healers fear that some of these herbs and plants are on the verge of extinction. It is a common occurrence among patients in the village to die on the way to the nearest hospitals either in Jowai or in Shillong. It is due to inadequate resources in the PHC/CHC and sub-centers which forces people to go to far off places like Jowai or Shillong in emergency and serious cases.

In the village of Nartiang, women had initially opposed the opening of the PHC, which they knew would not have adequate medical staff and provision for medicines. The PHC has been fully furnished with beds and mattresses but the purpose of the PHC would be

defeated if the above were not in place. Though the women groups opposed it the headman who had close ties with the local MLA stopped them. Eventually the women had to give up their efforts. Today there is only one resident doctor in the PHC. For any severe ailments they have to go to the Civil Hospital in Jowai, which is about 15 kms from Nartiang. The fare per head amounts to Rs.20/-. Several instances of death en route to the hospital have occurred in emergency cases. People in these areas want to have proper health care facilities developed so that they can access quality and timely health care. The women have expressed their grievances over not having special medical care for women in their village.

Health care for middle class people living in urban areas is not such a problem as they are able to afford private clinics and doctors. But those who have migrated to the towns in search of alternative livelihoods do not have accessibility to health care because of the affordability factor and also because the PHCs are not well equipped. The government hospitals do not always give free medicines.

It was during our interview that we were told about the practical difficulties of communicating with Doctors in the PHCs. According to them such doctors do not explain clearly about spacing of children, nutrition, pre/post natal care. While posters are hung in the health centres with instructions there is little that one can comprehend because most of the patients visiting the PHCs are migrants and illiterate.

Women are aware of the relevance of allopathic medicines as well as the use of herbal cure. They gave an example that in earlier times vaccinations were a must and forced on them. People would flee to the forests to escape the 'shots'. Today people have realized the value of vaccination and polio drops. At the same time the use of traditional healing is still prevalent in the village.

Coming back to the issue of health care facilities, there is one Community Health Centre (CHC) in Nongstoin, West Khasi Hills with only two doctors. The CHC is about 25 km away from the villages and there is no adequate supply of medicines. There are sub-centers in the villages but there too medicines are not available. In case of serious ailments the villagers need to go all the way to Nongstoin, the taxi fare being Rs.20/- per head. For still more serious ailments they need to go all the way to Civil Hospital in Shillong where they have to bear one-way conveyance amount of Rs. 500/- to Rs. 1000/-. Women have stated that patients have died on their way to the CHC or even to the Civil Hospital in Shillong. Transportation is the major factor they face. Due to the nonavailability of allopathic medicines people have no choice but to rely on traditional practice of healing.

It is worth highlighting the fact that family planning services includes counseling, legal aid services etc. NEN has, in its research found that there is a lack of knowledge about the rights of women as well as the obligations of law enforcement agencies. A wide gap also exists in the information available on the immediate and short-term support services available for women vulnerable to violence or survivors of violence. One has to be judicious about this component. As part of our ongoing interventions in the area of violence against women, and acknowledging the need for bridging the gap in the above

information, NEN brought out a Resource Directory on support services available to counter violence against women for the state of Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya.

The issue of teenage pregnancy has surfaced many times during trainings on Adolescent Sexuality.

ADOLESCENT HEALTH

Teen age pregnancies are a phenomenon that needs immediate attention and action as well. It is an issue in the rural areas too. Parents of these teenaged children need to know ways of doing away with the problem entirely. The issue is a challenge to both the parents as well as civil society because of moral and religious implications to it. The church also plays a big role in how unexpected pregnancies are finally played out. Some churches have a system of suspension and remedial classes for teens who face this predicament. This has prompted the practice of regularizing such instances of pregnancies by marrying the couple no matter what. The choice of abortion is seldom discussed. In fact it is not a choice at all.

Most teenagers get financial support and continue to stay with parents to the extent of their helping raise children borne out of wedlock. The combination of this 'acceptance' as well as the church's 'sanction' to procreation is a question that needs analysis. However, because the system follows matriliney where the maternal home gives space to support an unwed mother.

Secondly, because the family prefers to protect family honor. As a result we find, more often than not, the male counterpart taking advantage of this situation.

What is of greater concern is the inability of teenaged mothers (and fathers) to access information relating to issues of reproductive health, their rights and choices therein, such as contraception etc. This often leads to a teenager promptly getting a second and third child because she still does not know about contraception and still does not understand her body. By then everyone assumes that having got a child the person knows all there is to know about reproductive health. Hence the cycle of unexpected and unplanned pregnancies continues, further burdening the perplexed teen.

Another concern is that of young students in their 20's who drop out of school/college as a result of a pregnancy. There have even been cases where students who were in the final leg of their education drop everything although they could have continued through the eighth month of pregnancy at least. The reason is certainly because of the 'shame' attached to the pregnancy as well as the obligation of fulfilling societal norms of 'purity'. More often than not, it is the attitude of authorities/teachers/ fellow students, which is the most terrifying experience that the girl has to face. The end result is that of the young teenager becoming completely house bound, having no access to information or to those friends she would have got some support, to say the least. For this young girl going through these 9 months becomes traumatic because of her inability to comprehend the physical changes, limited or no access to choice or making decisions. For those who are employed or earning incomes meet the same consequences too. In addition to the trauma mentioned, there is heightened insecurity as a result of being unemployed etc. The following stage of having to look after

the baby is equally difficult for the young mothers in terms of actually having to raise a child. All these frustrations often get translated into child abuse and a total sense of disillusionment. Frustration of not knowing what to do in future, almost like a prisoner in ones own home has led to disastrous consequences. It is our surmise that violence often results where couples are forced into a marriage as result of the pregnancy

Garro Hills

The unavailability of resources in the Government Hospitals and PHCs are difficulties faced by the villagers. Presence or operation of militants in some of these areas is also a factor that is preventing some of the medical staff from attending the health the centre. Women health care workers have expressed their concern of delivery deaths of women due to lack of health care. There are no hospitals that cater to the health care of women.

Though family health centers are available yet access to the PHCs is limited as they are about 6-8 kms away from the village. Transportation is another problem faced by these people. Hence they prefer to go for local healings. Moreover the roads are not safe for them to go on foot to the PHCs. Deliveries are usually done at home by traditional midwives and never reported to the health centres.

Mrs Bridgette Sangma, retired officer of Social Welfare Dept., Tura stated that: *“Women themselves do not know the value of the medicines. I feel that they should be educated and an awareness programme should be carried out for the people in the villages”*.

There are several *Anganwadi* workers and helpers but these too have their handicaps as they are not adequately trained.

Violence Against Women

Khasi and Jaintia Hills

Contrary to the popular assumption, violence against women is prevalent in the predominantly matrilineal society of Meghalaya as well. Our study shows that the social structure under matriliney has not made women the dominant group. In fact, women face all forms of violence, physical, sexual and even psychological. The study has exposed the fact that it is a mere make belief and a misconception on the part of people to think that a woman does not need to fight for her rights as she has this power behind her. While conducting FGD in different villages on the issue of domestic violence we were given various reasons why it takes place. The following examples are given below.

In the village of Nartiang, (Jaintia Hills) domestic violence does take place but it is not talked about openly and there have been no known cases that have required medical aid. Such cases are solved within the family itself or by the clan members. The women in this village asserted that alcoholism is not the root cause of domestic violence. Men are allowed to go scot-free when they indulge in violence. Social conditioning over younger children is very much in the line of patriarchal norms and therefore the opinion shared by women in our FGD is that any form of violence committed by men is because of their nature. Alcoholism is a mere weapon used by the man to express his anger and also his power or control over the woman. Some incidences of domestic violence have taken place for the

smallest of 'faults' made by the wife such as serving him food late and so on. The women of Nartiang, however, concluded, "*We strongly feel that the root cause of Domestic Violence is poverty*".

The elderly women of Umsning (Ri Bhoi District) village termed Domestic Violence as an 'evil' to the individual, especially to women and the society as a whole. They attributed alcoholism as the root of domestic violence. One participant commented: "*The man becomes a devil once he consumes alcohol. Misunderstandings and suspicion occurs and these are revealed vociferously once the man is drunk.*" A wife faces other forms of violence apart from physical violence if her husband is an alcoholic. She undergoes a lot of mental trauma and pain. Domestic Violence often leads to desertion by the husband. When this happens it becomes almost impossible for the wife to claim for alimony. This is because she believes the husband will never compensate her. The reason is also because most women do not know how to access help. Thus, lack of knowledge about legal aid often leaves such women in a subordinate and vulnerable position.

Cases of rape are common in west Khasi hills. Most of the rape victims are children below the age group of 14 years and the abusers are elderly men. Such cases are reported to the police stations and arrests have been made but the accused is usually released after a few hours. He either leaves the village or returns after asking for forgiveness from the *Dorbar*. Usually such cases end with a compromise between the victim and the accused. Women feel that the deep-rooted arrogance of male superiority or male ego determines the course of action taken by systems of governance, be it the enforcement authorities or the *Dorbar*. Any discourse taking place often leaves women as mere spectators. Though it is a crime against a woman they have no say as to what should be done to the perpetrator. This shows a total disregard of women and their concerns. Yet another example of discrimination is in the daily wage of a woman, which is Rs.30 while that of the men is Rs.50. Moreover, earnings of the women are undervalued.

Domestic violence has taken different forms in cases that we have come across. Access to the law is very limited in the village. Most of the time they are not even aware of the type of legal aid that is provided to them. Other types of aid are not even known. The effectiveness of the law cannot be analyzed clearly as in most cases the accused are either absconding or the complainants themselves never take initiative to allow the police to further investigate the crime. This is due to the trauma and shame that the victim and the family undergo.

For many women adultery committed by their husbands is another form of violence. It is rare in Nartiang and a person who commits adultery is, more often than not, considered an outcast. Nonetheless, women still face discrimination. Because of her dependency on the husband for care and support the wife usually endures the mental torture. The main fear here is the threat of losing the husband and his financial support. Mental fear and anxiety are the result of violence and abuse of men over their wives. Women strongly support the view that every individual needs to be employed and financially independent to support themselves and their children in cases of desertion by the husband.

As members of the Seng Kynthei (women's group), women are strongly opposing any kind of violence, which are detrimental to women's dignity. They want to find strategic ways of articulating complaints to local authorities like the *Dorbar*. Women of the Seng Kynthei of Nongmynsong get to know about crimes only from the newspapers and local news channels. News or information does not reach them directly because all kinds of decisions related with the community are taken by the Headman and the members of the Local Dorbar, (who are men). Clearly, women have no channels of assisting those violated, nor are they approached for assistance. The attitudinal assumption (by men), that women are weak and hence, not capable of handling such cases, is evident throughout Meghalaya state. The Church too has a system, which has its own way of dealing with cases of violence. Here too, women's access to such matters is remote.

It is ironic that even when women know of cases of domestic violence they are helpless until and unless the victims come forward with their complaints and grievances. Police are effective only to the extent that complaints come to them on time. The reason for not complaining to the Seng Kynthei, in case of domestic violence is the fear that the husband, who is usually the sole bread earner of the family, may desert them.

Harassing and teasing women is evident in the city of Shillong, But complaints are not made. Young women or girls pretend not to hear or see and simply take a different route. The fact that this affects them tremendously has not been understood as a fundamental discrimination against women. Different counsellors who we interviewed have recorded stress and mental strain among women.

In a FGD with the youth, some of them from Umsning village are strongly of the opinion that the root cause of violence starts from home itself where the children do not get sufficient love and care from their parents. This according to them leads to a wide gap in the parent-child relationship. There is always a fear of sharing their grievances with the parents. Proper guidance from their parents and elders in the family, they say are not provided to them. The restrictions imposed on them by their parents have usually resulted in revenge on the part of the children. *"Some of us even take revenge on our parents for being very strict with us. To do so we purposely step into wrong paths"*, says one of the young participants. The other reason for violence is re-marriage of the mother. The stepfather sometimes forces himself and even rapes the stepdaughter. There are cases where the mother tends to neglect her own children because of the attention she gives to her new husband.

Some women said that the national media, which contain advertisements on television and newspapers, also contribute to violence against women. Such advertisements focus mainly on women as objects and as an inferior being of this patriarchal world. Clearly such advertisements do not portray the matrilineal norms that exist in some parts of India, such as Meghalaya. Thus an incidence of rape and sexual abuse is considered the inherent nature of man's lust. Young participants strongly stated that it is the nature of man himself to use alcohol as a medium of pleasure as well as wrath.

The Seng Kynthei of Nartiang village expressed a wish to have a women’s cell in the hospital. A women’s association may also be set up where destitute women may be provided with a job to support them and their children. Mrs. Shira, a DSP in Shillong, is in charge of the women cell of the police. The present number of women that was inducted into the police force is inadequate. She stated that the cell did not function very effectively. She had proposed that a special “Women’s Cell” be set up at each district headquarters. But the response of higher officials was that such cells are not needed since Meghalaya has a matrilineal society and cases of rape etc. are negligible.

At an interview with Mr. L.M. Sangma, Joint Secretary, Department of Law, Government of Meghalaya, he said that the functioning of Lok Adalat is limited with regard to specific cases of violence against women because of the very nature of the case. For instance, cases such as rape are of criminal nature where an investigation has to be carried out by the police only. Hence such cases are not referred to the Lok Adalats. In addition, counselors are not fully equipped to deal them. He also mentioned that such cases were settled within the clan and the community itself because Khasis belong to a matrilineal society where the use of traditional norms is still practiced. This had its own advantages as disputes can be settled within the community itself without taking legal recourse, which involve high costs and a lot of time.

Regarding the establishment of family courts, Mr. Sangma mentioned that the Act which is responsible for its establishment requires a population of 1 million (10 lakhs) or above in a city/town. The population of Shillong, which is the highest for any city in the state, had not reached the above mark and hence Family Courts could not as yet be established.

Land

Khasi-Jaintia Hills- FGDs

Type of Property	Property Right	Who decides/ manages
Private property	Youngest daughter Other daughters (if family is well off)	Brothers or Maternal Uncles
Public property	Community	Male members of the community

In the matrilineal societies of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills, ‘*property rights*’ belong to women, especially the khun khatduh (youngest daughter). Though other daughters get a share if the family is well off, the larger share of the property goes to the khun khatduh. However, though the men are not entitled to get any property, in effect they are the executors and managers of the land and property of their sisters (usually brothers or maternal uncles).

It is often argued that the matrilineal system that the Khasis follow inherently guarantees the woman a higher position in society where lineage is traced through her and the

youngest daughter is accorded with rights to inheritance of both the movable and immovable property such as land. However, the inheritance rights being spoken of are, in fact, mere custodial right.

“Even if the land is in the name of the woman it is always the male member like the uncle or brother who manages the land and property. The women do not have a right to decide on her own with what she wants to do with her land and property”. It is imperative for a woman to take the male members of the family as well as other clan members if she wants to either sell off the land or use it for some other purposes. She is apprehensive of taking the decision on her own. Moreover, patriarchal ideologies and practices operate and govern a woman’s experience even in this matrilineal set. In addition even the everyday working practices of this matrilineal system, like choice of friends, purchase of necessary but more costly house items, etc, deprive the woman of her bargaining power.

However, in the case of Umsning, the women stated that *“both ownership right and decision making lies with the woman herself. In case of leasing the land, she does consult her husband, father and uncle but the ultimate decision lies with her”.* The women also stated *“this set up differs from household to household”.* In the case of sale of land though the property is in her name yet she herself feels the strong need to get the ideas, opinions and views of her husband, father and uncle. The woman on her own, does not have the sole right over decision-making. But the women of the village feel that if they unite they could exercise their decision making power over their land and property.

Garro Hills- FGDs

While conducting a FGD in Tura, we were informed that disposal and lease of privately owned land by the women requires the consent of the male members of the family. Women cannot take their own decisions. Surplus of property enables the family to distribute land and property even between the sons. With regards to clan land the decision lies solely with men though in name it belongs to the woman, as she is the clan head or clan chief.

The Community land is run and managed by elected members and representatives of the community. *“Women’s property rights among the Khasis and Garos did not alter the overall gender division of labour domestic work and childcare were still a woman’s responsibilities. It does not guarantee women the same sexual freedom as men”.* (Agarwal)

Education

Literacy rate by sex and gender gap literacy rate

Area	Population		Literacy rate		Gender Gap in Literacy
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Total	1,176,087	1,142,735	65.4	59.6	5.8
Rural	946,999	917,712	59.2	53.2	6.0
Urban	229,088	225,023	89.0	83.5	5.6

(Source: Census of India: 2001)

Education for all in the state of Meghalaya is still to be realized. As in all states in India majority of the people live in *poverty*, especially in the rural areas. As such, most of the parents cannot afford to send their children to school or to complete their schooling. The Providence School at St.Edmund's campus, run by the Christian Brothers, was founded with the objective of helping children whose parents have a monthly income of about Rs 800, respectively. Most of those who fall under this category are women who earn their livelihood selling the local liquor and men who are daily labourers.

There is no evidence of discrimination in education for girls. However, many young girls drop out of school due to early pregnancies, a problem that plagues some areas of the state. There is a large migration of women and girls from rural to urban areas again due to *poverty* and they find work as domestic helpers in other people's homes in the city. Many of these girls and older women continue their schooling in the city where they also start earning wages. Some of them attend formal school in the mornings, while some go to morning/evening schools offering informal education. In the second category the girls/women receive free basic education as well as vocational training for a better earning capacities. The ones who complete their education in these informal schools are mainstreamed to regular schools where minimum fees are paid. But it may be mentioned that it is non- government institutions, which mostly offer this kind of education.

In many rural areas in the state there is still a lack of schools and the ones that exist are mostly primary schools only. Along the border areas of Meghalaya discontinuation in schooling has also been because of *militancy*. The presence of armed groups from within the state and from across the border has prevented functioning of the few existing schools. Source: (*Providence School, Shillong run by Christian Brothers, St Peter's School, Mawjrong village, Rynsan Jingshai School, Shillong*)

Mrs. Eleonor Basiawmoit
Vice President
Seng Kynthei Mawlai Pyllun

There are government schools, which cater to poor sections of the inhabitants. But the young people (particularly young girls,) who work during the day to support their own studies have insufficient access to schools. This is because there not enough evening/morning schools in the area, which provide free education or provide learning resources at subsidized rate to these poor girls and boys. The existing morning/evening schools that charge subsidized fees are private ones, run by religious organizations. So the young migrants (refer to health problems) have difficulty in attending schools even though they have come to the towns for this purpose.

Percentage of enrollments in schools:

Name of institution	Class VII		Class VIII		Class IX		Class X	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
St. Dominic Secondary School, Mawkhar, Shillong	101	28	125	30	98	15	54	14
Seng Khasi H. Secondary School, Jaiaw, Shillong	72	65	77	85	56	72	51	64
Shillong Academy Sec School	11	10	9	7	10	12	11	11
Pomlum Sec School, 7 th Mile Upper Shillong	37	31	37	44	25	36	7	23
Mawpat Sec School Mawpat, Shillong			12	25	11	9	7	11
H.L.Mizo Sec School Happy Valley	42	22	27	29	34	19	22	28
Hill View Sec School	19	23	18	15	14	16	20	22
Good Sheperd Sec School, Jongksha	19	45	26	56	28	47	17	34
Mawsynram Sec School, Mawsynram, East Khasi Hills	29	40	38	56	36	34	25	24
St Anthony's Sec School Pynursla, East Khasi Hills	58	70	56	71	45	73	38	38
R.K.M. Cherrapunjee	66	38	59	42	47	22	32	25

Source: Inspector of School Office, East Khasi Hill, Shillong.

The main reason for the low enrollment in the rural areas is generally due to the economic condition and lack of proper schooling facilities. Those parents who could afford to send their children after completion of LP/UP level send their children to nearby schools or to Shillong.

Access to schools: Children have to walk long distance to attend schools. At some villages there is only an LP or a UP school. For further schooling they have to spend more money and this is where the problem arises. From experiences in grassroots work NEN members found that parents spend their earnings first on food and health care and education is secondary. Most schools also lack in facilities like library, proper toilets and even proper classrooms.

While it is a fact that there is no discrimination against girls to access education in the state of Meghalaya, it is because of the above that many young children do not attend schools.

SUMMARY

Though women in Meghalaya are seen as more empowered than other women in the region and in the country as a whole, yet there is very little visibility of this in the arena of decision-making and there is discrimination happening in almost all the issues that we have looked upon. Tradition restricts women from active involvement in local self government (*dorbars*) as well as higher levels of decision making bodies. As these women bear the bulk of the responsibility, both in private and public domains, they feel that there is an urgent need to include them in such bodies so that equity and social justice is achieved. They do not want to be mere spectators or play nominal roles only in these decision making bodies.

Domestic violence is a controversial issue in Meghalaya. There is no acknowledgement that domestic violence is on the increase. Women strongly feel that in order to address such issue every individual needs to be employed and financially independent to support themselves and their children in cases of domestic violence or desertion by the husband. The other major concern is that of women's access to health care, to information relating to issues of reproductive health, their rights and choices which needs to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

There is a need to examine the space for women in institutions such as the *Dorbars*, Church and local bodies and to devise means of involving them in matters of governance and appropriate avenues where strategic planning and decision making can be made.

With the thrust on development for the region, tourism in the northeast would occupy a prominent place. It is important to protect women from the adverse effects of tourism and also to ensure that women are able to benefit from the tourism sector as crucial actors. Tourism should also be ecologically sustainable tourism along with *sensitivity to cultural ethos and gender specificity of the region*. Women's markets in Meghalaya should not be replaced by kiosks that acquire only MNC products. The worth of homegrown products and the existence of women-led markets should be appealing enough for tourists.

Using advocacy tools is very important for women's groups in the state of Meghalaya. This could be done by resisting unequal power relations between men and women at every level from the personal to public and from the family level to governance.

Women have to involve institutions of governance in order to empower their position as a strong body concerned citizens. The involvement of the community is important too. This could however be done if they have the capacity create 'spaces' within the system and change it. Since the study mentions the role of media in accommodating women's status through TV advertisements etc. it is worth spreading awareness of these aspects and does so through lobbying ad mass mobilization.

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1. Introduction

Gender studies have focused on defining needs as “*shared and prioritized needs identified by women that arise from their common experiences as a gender.*” (Reeves and Baden 2000). Two distinct categories of needs have been identified. Practical gender needs relate to immediate daily needs such as shelter, water, food, fuel wood, fodder, sanitation facilities, health care, child-care facilities etc. Strategic gender needs and interests relate to structural changes to reduce and eliminate inequalities and to increase participation in decision-making and control over reproductive choices by gender. Unlike practical gender needs that are for immediate satisfaction, strategic gender needs are addressed with long-term planning. Strategic gender interests require rethinking on existing policies and legislations to promote equality and justice.

Before going into details of what constitutes gender needs including practical needs and strategic needs and strategic gender interests in Uttaranchal, let us pause for a few minutes and try to visualize this scene:

USNPSS, the organization where I work, has organized a meeting of the rural women from remote parts of Uttaranchal with the Education Secretary, Government of India (June 7, 2003). Administrators and education department officials from the state capital are also present. Along with the women, female teachers and supervisors of pre-primary centres and health workers begin to voice their concerns expecting that articulating their needs before the *sarkar* (the government) might lead to some sensitivity towards women's needs and interests. Some women are polite while others are rather curt and blatant. Some of them speak Kumaoni and others speak Garhwali. The young girls and teachers speak Hindi unconsciously indicating a social transformation that is occurring in villages of Uttaranchal.

During discussions, a state government officer says to a young girl, “*You are very clear about what you want to do...what are your educational qualifications?*” Prema, blushing by now, says, “*high school.*” The officer remarks, “*why don't you study more...don't you want to go to college?*” Recovering from the initial shock of the intrusion into her life in a public meeting, Prema by now has composed herself. So, she gets up and replies, “*No, I don't want to go to school anymore because schooling can't give me what I want from life. I want to work with my own people in villages and when I work, I learn a lot. What do we do in schools... sit there...sometimes the teachers come to the classroom, often they don't... we mug up answers of some "important" questions and pass our exams... she pauses and continues, when I began working in villages, I realized that I had learnt nothing in school...I can read and write which is useful in its own way but all that information and knowledge I stored in my mind during school days is of no use. So, I am happy here*”, she is smiling now.

“*Certainly, no school will teach her to talk the way she is talking now,*” Nandi Devi of Rungadi village, district Pithoragarh, says, “*I have also never been to school but I can talk, am fearless and the whole village listens to me.*”

“*Had this meeting been in some government office, and not here, people might have asked us to shut up by now*”, said Bachuli Devi of Pauri Garhwal. The Education Secretary asks her why does she say so and her spontaneous reply is “*They don't listen to us... our views just don't match with theirs*”. “*But I am listening to you,*” the secretary says, and Anandi of Shama village, district Bageshwar, remarks, “*Will you incorporate these perspectives in your educational policies...*” and a candid discussion follows.

This frank discussion between the rural women and policy makers raises many questions and potential areas of conflicts on what planners, educators and development experts pursue for gender equality and what the women in remote villages are saying.

At one level, Prema's and Nandi Devi's voices reflect the limitations of opportunities and choices offered by the state for communities in mountain regions, especially for girls and women, but on another level this discourse unveils, or at least provides a glimpse of, women's views on the policy and thinking regarding education and development.

The education officer, as we have seen above, echoes the concern of the state that girls should go to school. Schooling of girls is seen by planners as a powerful tool for social welfare and change; not only as a means to an end in itself but also for its multiplier effects on economic and social status of women and their families. However, the women raise a more basic question of empowerment through education and press for reforms in planning and policies. Nandi Devi is not bothered by the fact that she has never been to school and she doesn't perceive much change in her life by being illiterate. Her undisputable command over the whole village and the power that she enjoys from that position acquires the centre-stage of her life and other interests become secondary. She says, *"I trust them (people in the village) and they have faith in me and we collectively try to improve our village. It is important for me that a sense of community prevails in my village and around. Collectively we can achieve a lot."*

On the other hand, Prema, acknowledges the power of being able to read and write, a quality that she has acquired through her schooling, but still unsatisfied by this achievement, she raises doubts about the role of education in making her a confident, competent person.

Prema's expectations from her school remain unfulfilled but at that stage she had not yet developed a critical perception of the reality either. Like other girls in her school, Prema was a silent person, obedient and seemingly content with the way things were. After coming back from school, she would wash her brother's clothes and serve him food. She would eat only when he had finished. With other girls in her village, Prema would go to the forest to collect fuel wood and fodder and help her mother in the agricultural fields during sowing, weeding and harvesting of crops and like other girls in the village, her attendance in school during the peak agricultural seasons would be erratic. Keeping the house clean and orderly was her responsibility as her mother hardly had the time to go into the details of home management. There was also an assumption in her mother's mind that as an educated person, Prema could do things better than her, although she always believed that Prema had to learn a lot from her about agricultural and cattle related work.

Believing that this was the way things were to be, Prema silently complied with all decisions the family made for her and internalized values and roles that the community fostered. In other words, her education failed to bring out her full potential. More generally, her fear of freedom (Friere P. 1970, 1996), continued to confine her in a shell that hindered her own critical discovery of self.

Another aspect of planning which generally remains submerged in the process of identifying or defining poor, marginalized women's needs is brought out by Bachuli Devi who stresses the need of creating and sustaining a familiar and secure environment where women do not feel intimidated or overpowered by the presence of the "educated", "experts", "professional development workers", "planners" and of course, the 'sarkar'.

Rural women want an atmosphere of a shared acquaintance with the planners and even hope for enjoying an intuited kinship between all partners. This notion of creating an enabling environment for them to let them talk about their innermost feelings with others is akin to weaving threads between their past (traditional roles, culture, indigenous knowledge, values etc.) and present (acquisitions of a different role as participants in development through various development schemes), in a sensitive manner. The feeling that restores faith and reassures women is that their needs as articulated by them will be taken care of and they must get it "right" from the beginning of the planning process.

The above mentioned example unfolds the reality and complexity of a specific government-led intervention, "education of girls", aimed at addressing women's practical gender needs and

strategic interests. While attempting to bring planners into the debate of empowerment through education, rural women of Uttarakhand also challenge interests of the state by putting forward their own strategic interests.

So, what is it that the women of Uttarakhand have been talking about? Four points emerge from the above discussion but later I will discuss more issues wrapping up analyses with my experiences in working with the hill women of Uttarakhand. I will trace the distinctions and interdependency between practical gender needs and strategic interests of women of the hill districts of Uttarakhand in terms of a vision of development embodied by rural women in their work to improve the quality of life. These points are:

- Need for competency (not just literacy, as articulated by Prema of Almora district)
- Need for Freedom, autonomy and power (as articulated by Nandi Devi of Pithoragarh and Bachuli Devi of Pauri Garhwal districts)
- Need for a fundamental change in thinking towards planning to ensure that voices of the poor women and men could really influence policies and programmes aimed at their development (as articulated by Anandi of Bageshwar district). Echoing the same concerns of the participants in the above mentioned meeting, a member of a community-based organization in Bageshwar district of Uttarakhand, once told me, *"I will stop working with rural women the day our planners would say the same things as a woman in Namik village, (the last village of Uttarakhand located near Namik glacier), is saying"*.
- Need to create an enabling environment, where women feel at ease, could talk about their problems, reflect on situations that shape their inner thoughts and action. Rural women need sensitive and sensible people with time and patience to listen to them, to be friends with them, to provide emotional support and courage during difficult times and provide help in a practical way. In turn, they also help the "helpers" understand and learn what the reality of rural life is. So, it is a mutually benefiting process, and not a unilateral flow of thoughts and energy from the donor to the recipient. However, building up relationships needs time and effort. Often, short-term projects led by development agencies with the help of "professionals" (who always are short of time!) altogether miss this aspect of human development, leaving limited impact on women and on communities.

2. Identifying gender needs in Uttarakhand

Any genuine effort to address gender needs should emphasize the inter-linkages between practical needs and strategic interests. However, before going into the details of gender needs, let's contextualize this discussion by familiarizing ourselves with the status of women (and men) in Uttarakhand in statistical terms.

The fact that women are the main workers in fields, collect fuelwood, fodder in forests, look after animals, children and the elderly at home in villages is against the notion of women being weak compared to men on the basis of their biology. The hill women work long hours in the fields and their productive (not reproductive) role in sustaining the home-economy has over the years contributed tremendously towards building up their identity as "visible producers" in contrast to women being generally perceived as "invisible workers".

Historically, social and environmental movements led by rural women in Uttarakhand have also contributed to their identity as active agents of change. The well documented "*chipko*" (hug the trees) movement led by women in Garhwal region of Uttarakhand, agitations against mining in Khirakot, Shama, Chaurasthal in Kumaon region, direct confrontations with the liquor mafia to ban selling of liquor in villages, often destroying the liquor shops, in Garur, Danya and Pindwali (Gairsain), and women's contribution in the recent movement for creating a separate state of Uttarakhand have brought to the fore the issue of changing gender relations in the political context and has definitely thrown light on gender needs and interests.

2.A. Statistical indicators: Current status of women and trends in gender planning

Uttarakhand, located in the north of India is bounded by China in the north and Nepal in the east. The total human population is about 8.5 million with women accounting for about 49% of the total population (Table 1). The state contributes 0.82% of the total population of the country and is the 11th most sparsely populated state in India. More than 70% of the total population lives in villages. The villages are small and the population is scattered over the hill slopes. With nearly half of the villages having less than a population of 200 and another 32% villages have 200-499 persons making the average number of persons in a village as 343 (Population Foundation of India 2000, Census 1991).

Haridwar, Dehradun and Udham Singh Nagar are the three districts in the lowlands that have more than one million people contributing to 46.67% of the total population of the state while Champawat, Rudrapur and Bageshwar districts in the hills collectively contribute only 2.8% to the total population (Census 2001).

The Hindu population in Uttarakhand accounts for 85% of the total population followed by 11.9% Muslims, 0.3% Christians, 2.5% Sikhs with Buddhists and Jain accounting for 0.1% and 0.1 % each.

Table 1. District-wise population distribution in Uttaranchal.

District	Population persons 1991			Population persons 2001			Population density per sq km	
	M	F	T (adjusted)	M	F	T	1991	2001
Almora	400900	435717	611273	293576	336870	630446	198	205
Bageshwar	--	--	228407	118202	131251	249453	99	108
Chamoli	227131	227740	325247	183033	186165	369198	43	48
Champawat	--	--	190929	110916	113545	224461	107	126
Dehradun	556432	469247	1025679	675549	603534	1279083	332	414
Pauri Garhwal	331371	351164	670859	331138	365713	696851	126	129
Haridwar	515434	609054	1143458	773173	671040	1444213	485	612
Nainital	823798	716376	574150	400336	362576	762912	149	198
Pithoragarh	285297	281111	416647	227592	234557	462149	59	65
Rudraprayag	--	--	200515	107425	120036	227461	106	120
Tehri Garhwal	281934	298219	520556	294842	309766	604608	128	148
Udham Singh Nagar	--	--	966054	649020	585528	1234548	332	424
Uttarkashi	124978	114731	239709	151599	142580	294179	30	37
Total	--	--	7113483	4316401	4163161	8479562	133	159

Source: Provisional Population Totals, Paper-1 of 2001, Census of India, Series-6 Uttaranchal

Bageshwar, Champawat, Rudraprayag, Udham Singh Nagar districts are newly created districts. Gender-based data of the population in those districts could not be found. Adjusted data on the total population are given.

Uttaranchal is better off than its parental state of Uttar Pradesh in terms of gender disaggregated variables (Population Foundation of India 2000).

- ✍ Female literacy rates in Uttaranchal have increased from 41.6% in 1991 to 60.3 in 2001 while U.P. records an increase from 24.4% in 1991 to 43 % in 2001. Female literacy rates for India were 54.2% in 2001.
- ✍ Crude birth rates, crude death rates and infant mortality rates and show better values than Uttar Pradesh
- ✍ About 15% of the women in Uttaranchal, are getting married before the age of 18 years against 49% in U.P.
- ✍ Around 45% of the eligible couples with wife in the age-group 15-44 currently use family planning methods compared to 28% in Uttar Pradesh and 64% in Himachal Pradesh
- ✍ About 72% of the children between the ages of 1-3 years receive basic immunization against preventable diseases compared to 43% in U. P.
- ✍ IMR (infant mortality rate) per 1000 live births is 52 as compared to 84 for U.P. and 70 for India

Thus, in terms of social sector development indicators, the hill state of Uttaranchal shows a remarkable advantage over the lowlands, although the cost of providing infrastructure in the hills is much higher than in the plains.

Table 2. Uttarakhand: at a glance

Number of districts		13
Area (sq km)		53,483
Total population	persons	84,79,562
(Census Of India 2001)	Males	43,16,401
	Females	41,63,161
Decadal population growth	(i) absolute	13,66,079
	(ii) percentage	19.20
Density of population		159
(per sq. km. 2001)		
Sex Ratio (2001)		964
(female per 1000 male)		
Child sex ratio (2001)		906
0-6 population	(i) Persons	13,19,393
(Census of India 2001)	(ii) Percentage to total population	(15.56)
(0-6 years)	(i) Males	6,92,272
	(ii) Percentage to total population	(16.04)
	(i) Females	6,27,121
	(ii) Percentage to total population	(15.06)
Literacy	(i) persons (absolute)	51,75,176
(Census of India 2001)	(ii) Rate in percentage	72.28
	(i) Males (absolute)	30,44,487
	(ii) Rate in percentage	84.01
	(i) Females (absolute)	21,30,689
	(ii) Rate in percentage	60.26
Health indicators (1999)		
Crude birth rates		
(per 1000 persons)		19.6
Crude death rates		
(per 1000 persons)		6.5
infant mortality rates		
(per 1000 live births)		52
Reproductive and child health indicators (1999)		
(percentage to appropriate denominator value)		
girls married before 18 years		14.7
birth order 3 and above		50.4
safe delivery among births		51.2
institutional delivery		16.7
minimum ANC		18.9
complete immunization (12-36 months)		71.6
children with no immunization (12-36 months)		12.0
Current use of to methods		45.3
Female sterilization		30.0
Economy		
		predominantly agricultural (women cultivators)
		Industrialization in the plains
Women employed in the organized sector		11.9%
Women in political institutions		
	Parliament	none
	Panchayat bodies	in thousands

2.A.i Gender and Health indicators

In recent decades, gender concerns in health have moved beyond the welfare approach to empowerment and right-based approach encompassing women's life spaces and gendered responsibilities to address health needs at different stages of women's lives as girls, adolescents and elderly. A gender-sensitive approach to health acknowledges both productive and reproductive roles of women and of men. Differences in male and female life spaces occur due to their ascribed roles and responsibilities and definitely affect their health within their gendered domains.

Though, reproductive rights and well-being have universally been accepted as the basic criteria for development in the health sector, interpretations vary both in theory and practice.

Complexities arising from looking into health with an integrated approach have brought to the fore the stark realities of the lack of the "practical minimum" in many areas in the state. Inadequate provision of water and sanitation facilities, for example, has raised concerns about health and well-being from a gender perspective. A sheer lack of health facilities and their inadequacy in terms of provision of staff and other resources has been striking, especially in rural areas, and is repeatedly reflected as lapses in the coverage and provisions. Poor families in remote villages, often ignore their health as the costs to access distantly located facilities are high. Both men and women are affected. However, women's access to medical facilities is constrained further by their work burden, immobility, lack of information, high levels of absenteeism of staff, presence of male staff, non-availability and poor quality of medicine etc. in PHCs/CHCs. Further, due to their work burden at home, women are likely to visit the hospitals at advanced stages of illness.

Table 3. Status of district-wise health facilities in Uttaranchal.

District	Allopathic medical institutions (as on 1.1. 1995)		No. of PHC/CHC (as on Dec 1996)	No. of Ayurvedic/Unani dispensaries and hospitals (as on Sept 1998)				Regd. Homeopathic hospitals (as on 31.3. 1999)		
	Medical institution	No. of beds	No. of health centres	Outdoor	Four beds	15-25 beds	Total	No. of hospitals	No. of beds	No. of doctors
Chamoli	73	536	110	2	57	--	59	7	4	7
Dehradun	108	1926	117	11	26	--	37	8	4	8
Pauri Garhwal	120	1009	156	6	32	1	39	7	--	7
Haridwar	53	864	25	5	10	2	17	5	--	4
Rudraprayag	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Tehri Garhwal	68	374	105	30	28	1	59	9	4	9
Uttarkashi	36	262	68	--	38	1	39	4	--	4
Garhwal division	458	4971	581	54	191	5	250	40	12	39
Almora	110	1045	127	7	37	--	44	7	--	7
Bageshwar	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Champawat	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Nainital	130	1793	202	7	30	--	37	7	4	7
Pithoragarh	85	724	106	--	55	--	55	5	--	5
Udham Singh Nagar	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	1
Kumaoun division	325	3562	435	14	122	--	136	20	4	20
Uttaranchal	783	8533	1016	68	313	10	368	60	16	59

Source: Jagaran Research Centre (2002). Uttaranchal and Uttar Pradesh: At a Glance, District-Wise Statistical Overview, Kanpur, India. Bageshwar, Champawat, Rudraprayag, Udham Singh Nagar are newly created districts. Separate data for these districts are not available.

The inadequacy of the "practical minimum" in Uttaranchal has prompted the planners to focus on provisions to meet the needs of the whole population with very little attention to gender based concerns. However, the tendency to trade-off quality against quantity in health services, especially in the government sector, has negatively influenced people's perceptions towards health and care. Though explicit gender inputs are included in policy documents, gender policies have not, or with very limited impacts, translated into the institutional activities (Table 4). Further, over the last few decades, interventions from the state have largely focused on family planning and welfare schemes and the state health extension system has not been able to

counteract this trend, in favour of health care, though at the national level, family planning approach has been set as “target-free”.

Table 4. Status of allopathic health facilities in Uttaranchal.

Serial number	Type of facility	Numbers in 2002-2003
1	District level hospitals	19
2	Primary health centres	53
3	Additional Primary health centres	175
4	Community health centres	36
5	Allopathic medical institutions	325
6	Women's hospitals	47
7	Tehsil/district level post-delivery centres	24
8	T.B. hospitals/clinics	18
9	leprosy hospitals	3
10	Women and child welfare centres	2
11	Women and child welfare sub-centres	1,525

Source: Director General, Health and medicine, Uttaranchal.

Statistical Diary Uttaranchal (2002-2003). Arth evam Sankhya Nideshalaya, Government of Uttaraanchal. Dehradun

Child nutrition programmes

The Integrated Child Development Programme (ICDS) for pre-school children adopts a holistic view of child development and intervenes at various levels of mother and child growth by extending facilities for improved nutrition, health check ups for 0-6 year old, immunization along with health education and supplemental nutrition for pregnant and lactating mothers.

Further, the state is supporting the mid-day meal scheme in primary schools under a multi-pronged approach to improve the educational, health and nutrition status of children, especially girls.

Health indicators

The health services in Uttaranchal include the government services, private services, interventions by NGOs and voluntary groups. The government services include the allopathic, homeopathic and ayurvedic systems of treatment and cure. The health care system under the private sector includes private professional practitioners, medical outlets, traditional health workers (*vaidyas*, *dais* etc.), traditional healers and home-based practices for self-care.

As the government services seem to be biased towards infrastructure development and provision of other facilities, the voluntary sector focuses more on preventive health care measures.

In general, there has been an improvement in provision of health care in Uttaranchal leading to reduced infant mortality and maternal mortality rates, lower birth rates, improvements in the use of family planning methods and higher life expectancy (Table 2). Indicators of health, measured by crude birth rates, crude death rates and infant mortality rates continue to be high.

Health needs are different for women and men, not just in terms of human physiology but also as consequences of gender-based roles, responsibilities and relations. Given the state emphasis on the aspect of biological reproduction and child-care as women's' prime health need, the primary health care centres largely focus on this aspect, while other practical needs remain unaddressed or under-stated. A gender perspective also brings into focus issues that remain hidden or submerged under the conventional approaches to health such as reservations expressed by the poor women to seek the modern health care vs. their preferences to traditional healing systems as their first choice for health care, inadequate attention of the health care system to certain ailments specific to women such as the prevailing silence on the problem of leucorrhoea, irregular periods etc.

Shortage of women's hospitals and of lady doctors and female staff in hospitals is a critical issue in Uttaranchal, both in government and private sector, and lack of outreach and erratic supply are repeatedly cited by the rural women as the major constraints influencing negatively their health seeking behaviour. However, accessibility to health facilities is further constrained by the following factors (Table 5):

Table 5. Accessibility to health in Uttaranchal.

Constraint	Causes	Effects
Geographical	mountainous terrain area prone to landslides, floods, earthquakes, snowfall	i. high costs of infrastructure development i. Difficulties in reaching the people, pregnant and lactating women remain unattended ii. erratic vaccination pattern
Social	small villages scattered population Lack of information and skills	i. Educated, trained doctors unwilling to serve in the hills ii. different norms for service delivery in government system iii. Child delivery by <i>dais</i> (traditional birth attendants) iv. Dependency on local healers
Environmental	thick forests, villages inaccessible during monsoon and snowfall	i. isolated, marginalized population, patients remain unattended ii. irregular vaccination
Economic	Poor population, high male migration health system focusing more on quantitative than qualitative aspects	i. women seek medical assistance when the men come home i. partially, practical gender needs are addressed, strategic gender interests remain intact (examples follow in this paper)
Planning and development to health	Lack of holistic approach to health (e.g. water, sanitation, health care, environment dealt separately by different departments) Lack of roads, communication Facilities, little vehicular movement	i. ailments and diseases persist ii. Problems continue to grow i. Death on the way to the hospitals

Source: based on open-ended discussions with members of rural women's groups at USNPSS Almora.

The percentage of villages not covered by *pucca* roads in Uttaranchal is 61.5% and around 20% villages are without any basic facility (toilets, electricity, safe drinking water). Rural areas continue to suffer shortage of health facilities, both in terms of infrastructure development and provision of staff and medical care (Table 6). Lack of doctors, pharmacists, auxiliary midwives and other staff is a serious concern but misbehavior, molestation and harassment of the male staff to women and girls is also reported.

Table 6. District wise distribution of sub centres, PHCs, CHCs, FWCs and doctors per lakh population for allopathic system, 1992.

District	Sub-centres		Primary health care centres		Community health centres		Doctors	Urban family welfare centres
	Number	Per lakh population	Number	Per lakh population	Number	Per lakh population	Per lakh population	Per lakh population
Almora	254	32.43	14	1.79	3	0.39	11.88	33.64
Chamoli	133	32.10	9	2.17	3	0.73	18.10	34.53
Dehradun	139	27.24	4	0.78	2	0.40	22.34	15.17
Haridwar	139	17.90	24	3.09	2	0.26	5.93	14.65
Nainital	287	27.67	12	1.16	3	0.29	18.22	22.07
Pauri Garhwal	223	37.08	15	2.49	2	0.34	19.96	35.72
Pithoragarh	179	34.14	11	2.10	2	0.39	14.88	37.99
Tehri Garhwal	159	29.05	10	1.83	2	0.40	19.19	27.36
Uttarkashi	69	31.02	4	1.80	1	0.45	26.07	28.97

Source: North India Human Development Report, National Council of Applied Economic Research 2003, New Delhi

The ANM, responsible for health and care of women and infants at the sub-centre levels are often perceived by communities as staff appointed to meet family planning targets. Physical as well as social distance between the staff at sub-centres and the women around is large. The general trend has been that the *dai* (traditional birth attendant) is sent for child delivery at home and in case of any complication that might develop during and after child-birth, the ANM is called. Very little attention has been paid by the state to recognize and integrate the traditional

birth attendants in health care, though the proportion of child deliveries at home far outnumber institutional coverage.

"The ANM charges around 500 rupees or a saree if the new-born is a male and around 300 rupees if it is a girl. SO, the poor people prefer a dai. The rich can, of course, go to a hospital or call an ANM at home."

Bhagwati of Rana village, Uttaranchal during a workshop at USNPSS Almora.

Reproductive health indicators

Recent decades have registered a remarkable decline in the total fertility rates in Uttaranchal but even then the birth orders 3 and above have been reported among 50.4% population in 2001 (Table 7). Haridwar, Udham Singh Nagar and Uttarkashi districts show the largest family size with more than half of the total married women having more than three children.

Currently, 30% of women in Uttaranchal have adopted sterilization as a means of birth control (Table 7). Tubectomy is more popular than vasectomy and women prefer to go for termination during winter seasons when the work in the agricultural fields is the minimum. However, vasectomy needs to be promoted as it is considered a relatively simple method.

Table 7. Reproductive health status: selected indicators 2002.

District	Total unmet needs	Women married before 18 years of age	Current use of FP methods	Birth order 3 and above	Female sterilization
Percentage to appropriate denominator values					
Almora	36.3	14	41.7	46.4	29.8
Bageshwar	36.3	14	41.7	46.4	29.8
Chamoli	29.6	7.8	51.5	50.6	42.7
Champawat	34.9	22.8	43.3	47.6	42.7
Dehradun	34.4	14.2	49.4	49.1	24
Pauri Garhwal	36.5	6.7	49.9	50.8	16.4
Haridwar	25.2	12.5	39.0	56.5	24.6
Nainital	41.3	9.5	40.5	50.9	31.1
Pithoragarh	34.9	22.8	43.3	47.6	34.3
Rudraprayag	29.6	7.8	51.5	50.6	29.2
Tehri Garhwal	23.0	13.1	41.3	50.3	29.2
Udham Singh Nagar	20.3	28.2	47.0	53.8	21.7
Uttarkashi	29.7	17.1	48.5	54.8	34.2
Uttaranchal	31.7	14.7	45.3	50.4	30.0
India	27.3	36.8	48.1	43.9	33.9

Source: Chart made by the Population Foundation of India, New Delhi, 2002 on the basis of data collected under RCH Rapid Household Survey, IIPS, Mumbai, 1998-99.

Bageshwar, Champawat and Rudraprayag are the newly created districts and no new RCH Rapid Household Survey has been done for these districts. Data collected for the parental district continues to be the basis of analyses.

The infant mortality rate for Uttaranchal is 52 per 1000 live births (SRS Bulletin, 2001). Antenatal care facilities remain poor as only about one-fifth of the women receive the standard package of three trimester checkups, iron tablets and the tetanus injection (Table 8). Safe child delivery also calls for attention as availability of trained personnel and physical and social accessibility to health centers remains a problem.

It is evident that very little work has been done in Uttaranchal to explore and understand women's health from ecological perspectives. In severely degraded areas, many women die following a fall on steep slopes while cutting and carrying heavy head-loads of fodder and fuelwood. Most of these cases remain unreported. Further, increasing distance to the forests and water shortage in rural areas negatively affects women's health.

Table 8. Reproductive health status: selected indicators

District	Safe delivery during birth	Institutional delivery	Minimum ante natal care
	Percentage to appropriate denominator values		
Almora	53.8	11.9	17.3
Bageshwar	53.8	11.9	17.3
Chamoli	43.8	11.8	17.1
Champawat	41.6	11.8	19.5
Dehradun	87.9	38.9	35.1
Pauri Garhwal	56.4	23.5	23.3
Haridwar	55.0	19.3	17.4
Nainital	55.7	18.6	16.9
Pithoragarh	41.6	12.7	19.5
Rudraprayag	43.8	13.2	17.1
Tehri Garhwal	43.5	13.2	15.6
Udham Singh Nagar	37.2	18.1	12.4
Uttarkashi	51.4	12.7	16.7
Uttaranchal	51.2	16.7	18.9
India	41.9	35.0	31.6

Source: Chart made by the Population foundation of India, New Delhi, 2002 on the basis of data collected under RCH Rapid Household Survey, IIPS, Mumbai., 1998-99

Bageshwar, Champawat and Rudraprayag are the newly created districts and no new RCH Rapid Household Survey has been done for these districts. Data collected for the parental district continues to be the basis of analyses.

Inadequacy of services to detect anomalies/problems during pregnancy and child-birth and at post-natal stages is a major deterrent to accessibility under mother and child health programmes (MCH) but accessibility is also influenced by socio-economic and cultural factors. Gendered spaces emerging from socio-cultural norms and values confine women in more disadvantages positions than men and negatively influence their health.

Sex Ratio

In 2001, Uttaranchal had a sex ratio of 964 as against 933 for India. Almora registers the second highest sex ratio (1147) in the country closely following Mahe district of Pondichery (1148). Rudraprayag, Bageshwar and Pauri Garhwal districts also appear among the top ten districts of India registering sex ratio of the total population as 1117, 1110 and 1104 respectively. Though there has been an improvement in sex ratio from 936 in 1981 to 964 in 2001, regional variations do exist.

In 2001, all the districts registered improvements in sex ratio over the previous decade. Eight districts registered favourable sex ratio to females and all these districts fall in the hill region of Uttaranchal. The lowest sex ratio is exhibited by Haridwar (868), Dehradun (893), Udham Singh Nagar (902), districts in the plains, which are also the most populated districts of the state.

Table 9. Ranking of districts by sex ratio and population size in Uttarakhand in 1991, 2001.

District	Sex ratio (females per thousand males)		Ranking by sex ratio		Percentage of total population of the state (Population size)		Ranking by Percentage of total population of the state	
	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001
Almora	1099	1147	1	1	8.59	7.43	5	6
Rudraprayag	1094	1117	2	2	2.82	2.68	12	12
Bageshwar	1055	1110	4	3	3.21	2.94	11	11
Pauri Garhwal	1058	1104	3	4	9.43	8.22	4	5
Tehri Garhwal	1048	1051	5	5	7.32	7.13	7	7
Pithoragarh	992	1031	6	6	5.86	5.45	8	8
Champawat	945	1024	8	7	2.68	2.65	13	13
Chamoli	982	1017	7	8	4.57	4.35	9	9
Uttarkashi	918	941	9	9	3.37	3.47	10	10
Nainital	881	906	10	10	8.07	9.00	6	4
Udham Singh Nagar	863	902	11	11	13.58	14.56	3	3
Dehradun	843	893	13	12	14.42	15.08	2	2
Haridwar	846	868	12	13	16.07	17.03	1	1
Uttarakhand	936	964			NA	NA		

Source: Provisional Population Totals, Paper-1 of 2001, Census of India, Series-6 Uttarakhand, Census of India 1981, 1991

Bageshwar, Champawat and Rudraprayag are the newly created districts and no new RCH Rapid Household Survey has been done for these districts. Data collected for the parental district continues to be the basis of analyses.

The child sex-ratio (age group 0-6) in Uttarakhand has registered a decline from 974 in 1981 to 906 in 2001. In 2001, 12 districts of Uttarakhand recorded child-sex ratios of 900-949 while one district, Haridwar, registered the lowest child sex-ratio (852) in the state (Table 9). In 2001, 4 districts registered a decrease of 50 points and above while 6 districts recorded a decline of 20-49 points over the previous decade.

In 2001, sex-ratio of population age 7 and above registered a positive trend of 7 districts registering an increase of 50 points and above and 5 districts recording an increase of 30-49 points over the previous decade while all districts showed improvements. In 2001, 6 districts of Uttarakhand had sex ratio of 1050 and above followed closely by 2 other districts in the range varying from 1000-1049.

Table 10. Population in the age group (0-6 years) and sex ratio (0-6 years)

State and Districts	Area	Population (0-6Years)			Sex ratio (0-6 years)
		Persons	Males	Females	
Uttaranchal	Total	13,60,032	7,12,949	6,47,083	908
	Rural	10,72,360	5,59,248	5,13,112	918
	Urban	2,87,672	1,53,701	1,33,971	872
Uttarkashi	Total	49,758	25,619	2,41,392	942
	Rural	47,017	24,082	22,935	952
	Urban	2,741	1,537	1,204	783
Chamoli	Total	55,710	28,794	26,916	935
	Rural	49,867	25,649	24,218	944
	Urban	5,843	3,145	2,698	858
Rudraprayag	Total	35,816	18,368	17,508	953
	Rural	35,585	18,212	17,373	954
	Urban	291	156	135	865
Tehri Garhwal	Total	98,524	51,116	47,408	957
	Rural	91,500	47,351	44,149	932
	Urban	7,024	3,765	3,259	866
Dehradun	Total	1,72,486	91,065	81,421	894
	Rural	93,595	48,776	44,819	919
	Urban	78,891	42,289	36,602	866
Pauri Garhwal	Total	1,01,255	52,468	48,791	930
	Rural	90,511	46,639	43,872	941
	Urban	10,744	5,825	4,919	844
Pithoragarh	Total	72,080	37,892	34,188	902
	Rural	64,685	33,839	30,846	912
	Urban	7,395	4,053	3,342	825
Bageshwar	Total	41,206	21,352	19,854	930
	Rural	40,129	20,776	19,363	932
	Urban	1,077	586	491	838
Almora	Total	97,368	5,0376	46,992	933
	Rural	91,799	47,415	44,348	936
	Urban	5,569	2,961	2,608	881
Champawat	Total	39,939	20,650	19,289	934
	Rural	34,823	17,895	16,928	946
	Urban	5,116	2,775	2,361	857
Nainital	Total	1,13,645	59,489	54,156	910
	Rural	77,413	40,326	37,087	920
	Urban	36,232	19,163	17,069	891
Udham Singh Nagar	Total	2,19,291	1,14,607	1,04,684	913
	Rural	1,52,742	79,416	73,326	923
	Urban	66,549	35,191	31,358	891
Haridwar	Total	2,62,894	1,41,151	1,21,737	862
	Rural	2,02,694	1,08,882	93,812	862
	Urban	60,200	32,275	27,925	865

Source: Census of India 2001

Higher female mortality in 0-6 age group could be related to female foeticide or sex-selective abortion for which there is some empirical evidence both in rural and urban areas. Discussions with rural women have indicated that scanning to determine the sex of the fetus is better known to women in villages located near the roads/towns and in urban areas whereas women in very remote villages hardly avail this facility (Table 10).

Women from villages go to the district headquarters for scanning and the female child is aborted there. Sometimes, the fetus is aborted at home by the ANM or the local dai.

A member of the women's group (during a meeting at USNPSS December 9-10, 2004)

Further, educated young women among better-off sections in rural areas seem to be in a better position to access scanning facilities than poor women. However, these conclusions were drawn through informal discussions with women and more detailed studies are needed to document

such variations in the sex ratio across varied age, caste, class and educational status in rural and urban areas.

The declining trends of child-sex ratio needs to be explored further by relating it to other variables such as sex-ratio at birth, migration patterns by gender and age, food consumption patterns, and sex selective mortality indicators. Studies are also needed to explore various home-based methods of child abortion in rural and urban areas.

There is a high incidence of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis (1225 reported cases, per 100,000 population, Census 2001). However, our experience is that the number of TB patients, especially among women, is much-much higher, than this data. The problem of under-reporting is because of a lot of taboos and social stigma associated with the disease which prevents people from talking about it openly.

Lack of differential information by gender, caste, class and age pose a constraint to the assessment of many other determinants of health for a more detailed study, but even the limited data make it apparent that the focus of the state interventions in women's health has been on their reproductive role as mothers and other needs of women and adolescent girls have largely been overlooked by planners though the recent policy documents have been emphasizing a more integrated approach to health through "community participation".

2.A. ii Gender and Education

In this section education is examined at two levels. The first part traces trends of gender and literacy followed by an analysis of gender desegregated schooling pattern in Uttaranchal, especially at elementary stages.

Literacy

Uttaranchal is one of the high literacy achievers in India. The overall literacy rates have increased from 18.93 in 1951 to 72.28 % in 2001. Female literacy trends, too, have shown improvements from 4.78% in 1951 to 60.26% in 2001. The improvements in female literacy rates have been faster, 55.48% points than that of the male literacy rates, 51.86% points during 1951 to 2001 (Census 2001).

In 2001, Uttaranchal registered a significant gain of 18.63 percent points in female literacy over the previous decade. The hill districts, Uttarkashi, Tehri Garhwal, Chamoli, Bageshwar, Rudraprayag, Champawat, Pithoragarh, Almora exhibited a gain of more than 20 per cent points in female literacy while the lowlands lag behind (Census 2001).

District-wise variations in female literacy rates do exist. In 2001, Dehradun district registered the highest female literacy rates for 7+ population (71.2%) followed by Nainital (70.98%) Pauri Garhwal (66.14%), Pithoragarh (63.14%), Chamoli (63.00%) and Almora (61.43%) (Table 11). Pauri Garhwal with 91.47 % literate men ranks first in male literacy while the lowest male literacy rates for 7+ population has been shown by Haridwar (75.1%).

Table 11. District wise effective literacy rates by residence and sex

District	Literacy rates 7+ population 1991			Literacy rates 7+ population 1991			Literacy rates 7+ population 1991			Literacy rates 7+ population 2001		
	Rural areas			Urban areas			T	M	F	T	M	F
	M	F	T	M	F	T						
Almora	78.95	37.31	56.63	90.85	80.04	86.37	59.8	80.8	41.3	74.5	90.2	61.43
Bageshwar	78.95	37.31	56.63	90.85	80.04	86.37	54.5	76.5	34.2	71.9	88.6	57.5
Chamoli	80.99	38.35	58.95	89.46	67.60	81.42	60.4	80.9	39.7	76.2	89.9	63.0
Champawat	78.35	35.69	56.88	90.85	80.04	86.37	55.8	77.6	32.6	71.1	88.1	54.8
Dehradun	68.27	44.39	57.34	86.96	73.71	81.04	69.5	78.0	59.3	79.0	85.9	71.2
Pauri Garhwal	83.12	47.08	63.85	78.80	72.09	76.11	65.5	82.6	49.7	78.0	91.5	66.14
Haridwar	50.50	21.74	37.43	78.45	62.76	71.34	48.0	59.3	34.4	64.6	75.1	52.6
Nainital	65.59	37.55	52.55	72.44	55.09	64.62	68.4	80.4	54.5	79.6	87.4	70.98
Pithoragarh	78.35	35.69	56.88	90.85	80.04	86.37	61.4	80.3	42.4	76.5	90.6	63.14
Rudraprayag	70.96	24.79	46.46	84.86	65.92	78.41	57.5	80.4	37.1	74.2	90.7	60.0
Tehri Garhwal	70.96	24.79	46.46	84.86	65.92	78.41	48.5	72.1	26.3	67.0	85.6	49.36
Udham Singh Nagar	65.59	37.55	52.55	72.44	55.09	64.62	49.3	60.5	36.0	65.8	76.2	54.2
Uttarkashi	66.76	20.66	44.50	89.60	67.62	80.93	47.2	68.7	23.6	66.6	84.5	47.48
Uttaranchal	73.62	37.00	55.23	80.86	65.76	74.23	57.8	72.8	41.6	72.3	84.0	60.3
India							52.2	64.1	39.3	65.4	65.9	54.2

Bageshwar, Champawat and Rudraprayag are the newly created districts and no separate census was done for these districts in 1981. Data collected for the parental district continue to be the basis of analyses.

Source: Provisional Population Totals, Paper-1 of 2001, Census of India, Series-6 Uttaranchal, Census 1991, Census of India, 2001.

Recent planning concerns and policy shifts on gender and schooling

In April 2000, the Dakar Conference of the World Education Forum emphasized the value of expanding educational coverage for children in early stages, especially for the un-reached, disadvantaged and vulnerable sections with a focus on providing better accessibility, free and compulsory primary education, gender equality and improvements in the quality of education to improve upon the overall educational achievements. Identification of these goals in the conference raised expectations worldwide, and in India, the 86th Constitutional amendment Act 2001 defined interests of 0-14 year old children into two separate categories. Article 21A described education as a fundamental right of each child and article 21 noted that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group 6-14 years. Further Article 45 (Directive Principles of state policy) specified that the state shall provide early childhood care and education to all children until they reach the age of 6 years.

No doubt, the whole thrust on early childhood care and education receives an impetus through National Policy for Children (1970s) and the National Policy on Education (1986). The National Policy on Education acknowledged the necessity of education of girls to be able to achieve universal elementary education (UEE).

Increasing concern for elementary education in general, and of girls' education in particular, at local, national and international levels has resulted in significant improvements in allocation of funds to elementary schooling in Uttaranchal. Specific target-oriented schemes to improve enrolment rates, continuation and achievements and to discourage non-enrolment and dropping out are underway with due recognition to equal educational opportunities in pre-primary and primary stages of schooling.

Responsibilities for the care of young siblings at home, a gender-based role, has been recognized as a deterrent to girls schooling and integration of ECCE centres with primary schools under DPEP is regarded as of strategic interest for women from two perspectives:

- ▶ Improvements in girls' enrolment, attendance and retention levels
- ▶ Improved efficiency in primary levels through provision of early child-care and education

"Community participation" is a major component of educational interventions and is reinforced by creating mother's groups under DPEP and village education committees in primary schools. Mamta groups (mother groups) have been constituted as model clusters in districts with greater concentration of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe populations with low female literacy rates. In 2003, 1461 mamta groups were operational in the state to facilitate accessibility to and provision of quality education for girls in schools.

The National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001 emphasizes the need for provision of facilities to reduce gender, caste, class disparity in education, to eradicate illiteracy and to universalize elementary education.

Other state supported programmes to promote education include non-formal education for out-of school children, 6-14 years of age, especially girls, *Mahila Samakhya* programme for women's empowerment etc.

Enrolment and dropout rates

Female gross enrolment rate, an important pointer to estimate gender disaggregated participation in education, has improved considerably in Uttaranchal in recent decades. Gross enrolment rates for girls were to be estimated as 100.48 for girls and 98.66 for boys at primary levels in 2001. Current estimation of gross enrolment rates for girls belonging to socially disadvantaged sections of society is 107.44 for girls and 105.11 for boys (SC) and 97.22 for ST girls with boys following closely with 95.40.

Table 12. District-wise primary school enrolment and dropout rates by gender and residence in 1991.

District	Enrolment rates						Dropout rates					
	Urban			Rural			Urban			Uural		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Uttarkashi	93.62	91.11	92.42	77.74	46.70	62.42	44.82	14.50	33.93	33.32	60.80	43.72
Chamoli	151.64	169.12	159.75	158.74	120.13	139.36	52.10	89.02	81.69	41.63	25.17	34.94
Tehri Garhwal	144.47	161.72	152.58	128.36	81.12	104.91	55.72	27.03	44.69	52.98	40.78	49.77
Dehradun	65.30	73.00	68.74	67.88	66.37	67.16	16.17	23.27	19.46	54.93	36.51	48.18
Pauri Garhwal	135.08	145.72	140.10	155.40	147.72	151.77	23.65	12.56	18.22	21.26	32.37	26.56
Pithoragarh	218.24	162.28	191.95	176.59	103.91	140.84	59.65	47.14	55.02	36.61	46.84	40.63
Almora	180.49	171.6	176.32	150.36	102.45	125.98	26.86	4.03	16.56	26.14	42.41	33.79
Nainital	68.99	47.86	61.89	76.43	66.87	71.84	12.11	19.86	15.46	4.030	20.31	10.56

Source: Census of India, 1991 and North India Human Development Report, National Council of Applied Economic Research 2003, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

The number of never-enrolled girls in the 5-14 year age-group is almost double that of boys. Dropout rates among boys are almost half those of girls. Though, differences are narrower at the primary level, inequalities persist at upper primary and higher levels of schooling (Pande 2001). The gross enrolment and dropout rates in Uttaranchal computed by National Council of Applied Economic Research on the basis of data obtained from the Directorate of Basic Education, Uttar Pradesh in 1991 are displayed in Table 12. Enrolment rates for both rural and urban areas are lower for girls than for boys. Drop out rates at upper primary stages are higher for girls than boys.

Elementary Education: some facts (2003-2004)

Enrolment of children in the age-group 6-14:

Total children (classes 1-8):	17.33 lakh
(a) Primary Level (1-5)	11.32 lakh
(b) Upper primary level (6-8)	06.01
Never-enrolled and drop outs (out of schools)	(27, 782)

Drop-out of children in the age-group 6-14:

6-11 years	4.5%
11-14 years	7.0%
Teacher-student ratio	1:40

Total number of schools (government and aided):

(A) Primary	11651
(B) Upper primary	4231
Ratio between upper primary and primary schools	1: 2.75

Source: *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Shiksha Vibhag, Pragati vivaran, 2003-2004, Dehradun, Uttaranchal*

The following section examines the reasons for continuation of disparities in educational achievements across gender, caste and age differentials.

Supply and demand constraints in education of girls

In response to the high demand for education in Uttaranchal, the government and the donor agencies have focused on provision of schools and other facilities under various educational schemes. Still the gap between the demand and the supply side persists.

Supply constraints

The general assumption that attaching ECCE centres to primary schools improves girls' accessibility to schools needs to be reviewed in detail, though there is a general feeling that this arrangement has created greater accountability among ICDS workers and now the centres open regularly. Village specificities, however, raise other issues. For example, in the hills, primary schools are mostly located outside the village making it difficult for the younger children to walk up to the centre. As a result, young girls continue to be at home. Further, physical accessibility doesn't necessarily lead to social accessibility. Caste, gender, economic status and other household/community variables are important factors influencing schooling of children especially in the low-lands.

A study by USNPSS (2004) has shown that involvement of community in education, especially women, is the most neglected component of the educational programmes in the state.

Girl's participation rate in education in upper primary levels is directly correlated with supply-side factors. In the hills non-availability of schools near or within the village is a major deterrent to education. Provision of middle, secondary and higher secondary schools at accessible distance from the village could go a long way in reducing gender disparity in education at higher levels of schooling.

Though, a lack of schooling facilities near the village, particularly at upper primary and higher levels, is a major factor influencing girls' education, there is some evidence in the literature to show that a majority of upper primary schools are located in areas more accessible to upper caste communities and the proportion of schools located near lower caste hamlets is relatively low (Pande A. 2001). Gender-based disparities in education are much sharper among scheduled caste children. Both physical and social inaccessibility to schools might negatively influence education of girls belonging to disadvantaged sections of society.

Inclusive education is another area where physical accessibility attains an important place. Bringing in special need children, especially girls, to schools requires easy approach but more than that a desire to care and facilitate learning of such children.

Demand constraints

The size of landholding, dependency ratio, parental education, family size, burden of household work and of animal care are some of the household characteristics that influence schooling pattern of children especially in upper primary and at higher levels. Non-enrolment and drop-out rates increase with age by increasing child participation rate in domestic activities.

Studies on elementary education with gender and environmental perspectives have noted the importance of common property resources as one of the determinants of schooling of children in rural areas (Agarwal 1993, Debi 2001, Pande 2001). The distance to the forest and to the water sources is positively correlated with drop-out and non-enrolment rates especially among girls in the age-group 11-14 years in Uttaranchal (Pande 2001). The steady increase in the number of non-enrolled children and in dropout rates with increasing number of animals at home has also been documented for both boys and girls (Pande 2001). Boys dropped out of school only when the number of animals exceeds six while dropout among girls is not only high but increases with increasing number of animals at home.

The participation of girls in elementary education varies significantly by residence, parental education and income. Data from rural areas of Uttaranchal show that the female share of dropout and non-enrolment decreases with father's educational level. Mother's literacy levels, though important once the child is in school, were not found to be sufficient causations to ensure female enrolment in schools (Pande 2001).

The belief that investment in a boy's education would bring benefits to the parental family whereas the girl would get married to another family contributes to the gender-based preference to education.

Though participation in vocational and higher education tend to be heavily biased towards male students, gender disparities are narrowed in areas where facilities do exist.

2.A.iii Gender and economic status

Economic equality is defined as the ability of men and women to support the same standard of living for themselves throughout their lifetime (Masika and Joekes 1996). Achieving the same standard of living, however, is an ambitious goal because gender inequalities are rooted and institutionalized in multidimensional, multicultural contexts of socio-economic and geographical peculiarities. Women's participation in economic decision-making is constrained by unequal opportunities for education and training, biased sharing of household responsibilities, unequal access to productive resources, perceived appropriateness of certain jobs for women and gender segregated patterns of payment for the same labour.

Unequal status of women in the economic sphere is manifested through trends in gender-based labour force participation rates, differential wage levels, concentration of women in informal sector and in self-employment related activities etc.

Table 13 shows that a majority of women in rural areas of Uttarnachal are engaged in agricultural work primarily as cultivators and marginally as agricultural labourers. The rural-urban disparity in engagement in economic activities is evident. Female work participation rate is higher in rural than that of urban areas. Engagement of more than 80% of rural women in agricultural work becomes a basis of intra-state disparities in engagements in economic activities among women themselves because the agricultural work in the lowlands is different from the hills.

Table 13. District wise workers in rural areas, main and marginal workers as percentage of rural population and cultivators, agricultural labourers, and workers in household industries in rural areas as percentage to total main workers in Uttaranchal. 1991

District	Main workers			Marginal workers			Cultivators			Agri. Labourers			In hh industries		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Almora	40.92	40.24	40.56	2.56	11.10	7.06	62.40	97.60	80.82	1.32	0.64	0.96	1.23	0.22	0.70
Chamoli	43.62	41.46	42.52	1.46	8.32	4.97	60.14	96.56	78.32	1.19	0.41	0.80	0.99	1.22	1.11
Dehradun	51.69	15.43	34.91	1.03	7.51	4.02	33.56	68.79	40.77	16.68	14.11	16.15	1.11	0.83	1.05
Haridwar	52.50	2.57	29.58	0.12	1.47	0.74	39.82	18.20	38.96	35.87	42.88	36.15	1.79	6.71	1.99
Nainital	50.68	15.72	34.28	3.44	15.10	8.91	50.45	73.99	55.51	22.74	18.86	21.91	0.78	0.72	0.77
Pauri Garhwal	38.74	25.48	31.74	1.57	14.62	8.46	52.37	95.92	70.84	2.47	1.39	2.01	0.79	0.71	0.53
Pithoragarh	45.51	38.27	41.88	2.21	13.60	7.92	61.17	96.30	77.25	1.07	0.43	0.78	1.67	1.40	1.55
Tehri Garhwal	41.82	37.58	39.60	1.44	10.13	5.98	66.84	98.17	82.40	1.54	0.39	0.97	0.58	0.05	0.32
Uttarkashi	50.77	47.16	49.02	1.29	4.34	2.77	67.23	96.79	81.00	1.88	0.80	1.37	0.92	0.40	0.68

Source: Census of India, 1991 and North India Human Development Report, National Council of Applied Economic Research 2003, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

The female participation rate in household industries is higher than those of men and this inequality needs to be matched with qualitative improvements for better returns (Table 14). Home-based workers in remote rural areas of Uttaranchal continue to be in economically disadvantaged positions due to very limited access to the markets and paucity of support to the local hand-made products. Gendered conditions to access to the markets aggravate the complexities of market-oriented endeavors.

Table 14. District wise workers in urban areas as percentage of urban population and workers in household industries for urban areas as percentage to total urban main workers in Uttaranchal. 1991

District	Main workers			Marginal workers			Workers in household industries		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Almora	53.06	10.87	35.18	1.92	6.79	3.98	0.80	1.54	0.90
Chamoli	54.24	17.56	40.15	0.33	1.45	0.76	0.47	8.11	1.75
Dehradun	49.66	6.12	29.96	0.14	0.35	0.23	0.50	1.95	0.63
Haridwar	47.30	3.70	27.38	0.08	0.53	0.29	0.85	6.56	1.20
Nainital	48.87	4.04	28.38	0.37	1.06	0.68	1.15	4.69	1.38
Pauri Garhwal	52.18	6.34	33.23	0.15	1.23	0.60	0.19	1.36	0.29
Pithoragarh	45.65	11.10	30.48	0.46	4.04	2.03	1.23	11.79	2.92
Tehri Garhwal	57.58	7.49	39.53	0.70	1.97	1.16	0.07	0.23	0.08
Uttarkashi	49.86	11.82	34.42	1.31	2.16	1.66	1.49	0.72	1.38

Source: Census of India, 1991 and North India Human Development Report, National Council of Applied Economic Research 2003, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

Self-employment

Though there has been an increase in global trade under globalization processes in South Asia, including India, manufacturing industries are largely concentrated in well-connected areas. There, women's employment opportunities, in some cases, have improved by creation of more jobs, but their concentration in lower-paid "women oriented" sectors such as garment and textile units persists.

Self employment or engagement in traditional occupations, still relevant and alive in rural areas of Uttaranchal, could be examined with a gender lens to assess the role and responsibilities of women and of men in home-based income generation activities (Table 15). However, this breakup of roles and responsibilities should be read cautiously because the share of work is more

unequally distributed in villages influenced by the modern market economy while the remote and poor villages enjoy a greater equitable share of domestic and community work between men and women.

Table 15. Involvement of men and women in self-employment

Type of activity	Item	Artists/workers
(i) Traditional clothes (for rituals and ceremonies)	Odhini, kusumia or pichhoray	women
(ii) Traditional clothes (from sheep and goat yarn) (for daily use)	hand-made cloth, drapes, coats, etc.	women and men
(ii) Woolen textiles (from sheep and goat yarn)	carpets, rugs, <i>ashans</i> , shawls,	women
	pankhi (long woolen shawl)	women
	thulma (thickly woven long haired blanket)	women
	gudma (soft, long haired blanket)	women
	patties for coats, trousers	men and women
	hand knitted scarves, pullovers, gloves, socks, caps	women
(iii) Wood carving	on doors, windows, ceiling, verandah	men
(iv) wooden pots and other items	drums (bhakars) store grains, seeds	
	pots to store curd, grains	
	nali (a wooden pot used as a measurement of the land)	men
	spoons, bowls and other items used in the kitchen	men
(v) bamboo and ringal work	Boxes, baskets, kandi (doka) lamp-shades and other decorative items floor covering (mosta), vases	men and women
(vi) fibre work	ropes, nets for domestic use, mats, bags, rugs, shawls, scarves, table mats, coasters	women and men
(vii) metal work (copper, brass, iron)	utensils, decorative items, vases, pots and boxes, pitchers articles for temples/ <i>pooja</i>	men (<i>tamta</i> by caste)
(viii) wood craft	statues, frames, replicas of many objects, birds, animals etc.	men and women

Source: Based on the focus group discussions with members of women's groups at Almora.

Women's participation in self-employment activities to some extent is based on gender division of labour emerging from ascribed roles and responsibilities. Though the growth of employment in traditional sector is marginal and under-rated by the modern market economics, it's compatibility in terms of timings, creativity and control over products and on income favours the women workers better than the externally designed market-oriented interventions. This is possibly because of a supportive social environment for self-employment in villages and ways of

manufacturing. Women monopolized many income generation activities. Increasing globalization, however, increases poor women's vulnerability and aggravates marginalization in social and economic terms, largely through devaluing women's and of communities' knowledge and skills.

Gender-division of labour, in recent times, has deepened due to social transition, increasing influence of modern market forces in villages and external interventions. An empirical description of an external intervention to reduce the drudgery of the women and to promote income-generation activities through women's groups and by men's committees is evident in Shama area.

Box - 1

An external intervention to reduce the drudgery of the rural women in Shama

A cluster of villages in Shama area, district Bageshwar, was known for many years for its high vegetable production, especially potatoes and cabbage. The communities involved in this business had an institutionalized pattern of marketing through collective transportation of the produce from the collection point to the cities. Mules were used to carry vegetables from the village to the common collection point. A well organized, tested, efficient and decentralized community-owned system of income generation was replaced abruptly by a drive to introduce rope-way trolleys to help women to reduce their drudgery of hard-work and to promote the local economy. The old system of the local livelihoods was destroyed and mules became redundant.

Playing cards and gambling the whole day, men would now spend cash to buy liquor. Physical violence against women at home increased temporarily but was brought down by some active members of the women's group, functioning in the village well before the project was introduced.

Some of the women, now report, that they were not consulted when the project came to their village. A majority of them, however, complain that the displacement of the local system has indeed increased their workload. *"Often, we carry the potato sacks on our backs to the road-head as boys refuse to do so and the trolley system requires that we individually put kerosene into the generator that makes the trolleys move. Further, an influential man in the village, used the trolleys to transport bricks and stones for house construction and others put loads beyond the capacity of the machine, so most of the time the system does not work."*

Reported a woman from Dana village during a meeting organized by USNPSS to discuss sustainability and economic development issues in Uttaranchal (January 7-8 2005).

Gender and livelihoods

Heavy work burden and concentration of women in agricultural work is caused by the sexual division of labour and male out-migration. The agricultural work in Uttaranchal comprises diverse activities including making compost for fields, animal care, provision of water for cultivation besides plowing the fields, sowing, harvesting and cleaning of grains and vegetables. Traditionally, all agricultural work except plowing was done by women. However, increasingly women are taking up plowing also, especially in female headed households, single-women homes and among nuclear families.

Very limited attention has been paid by the planners to the aspect of declining productivity of agricultural fields and hence increasing work of women due to environmental degradation in Uttaranchal. Soil productivity and thus grain production in the cultivated fields is dependent on the availability of compost and water, commodities that invariably come from the forests. It has been estimated that to support sustainable productivity of cultivated areas, the ratio between the

agricultural fields and the well-managed forests for the current population levels should be at least 1:2.

Gender planning with ecological perspectives brings to the fore deficiencies in conceptual divisions of productive and reproductive roles in male and female life spaces. The planners need to redefine the issue of gender division of labour in the context of sustainability and ecological security. Improvements in rural environmental situations such as forests, water, compost etc. relate positively to practical gender needs. Easy access to and adequate availability of natural resources near villages save women's time and energy and enhance the local productivity including food production which has a positive effect on women's health and security.

State supported programmes to enhance the economic position of the poor women

The current gender and empowerment paradigm nurtures women's participation in economic activities as a critical input for gender equality and development, though economic development is cited as not being the sole pre-condition for women's empowerment.

'Self-help groups' (SHGs) is an example of a state supported intervention driven by the assumption of the needs of capital accumulation for women to meet their requirements. This study has not explored the programme in detail but the assessment of SHGs in Uttaranchal needs to be studied.

Dairy development is offered by the state as a major step towards women's empowerment by engaging them in income generation activities. An externally conceived, capital-intensive structured development project, currently involves thousands of women.

Employment in the organized sector

Employment in the organized sector tends to be biased towards male workers. The number of women in organized sector is remarkably low (11.9%) than their male counterparts and varies between 5.2% in Udham Singh Nagar to 18.4% in Pauri Garhwal (Table 16).

Table 16. Employment in organized sector in Uttaranchal.

District/division	Number of people employed in public sector	Number of people employed in private sector	Number of people employed in organized sector	People employed (percentage)	
			Total	Male	Female
Chamoli	13,592	255	13,847	86.7	13.3
Dehradun	59,603	9,610	69,213	86.8	13.2
Pauri Garhwal	20,295	2,037	22,332	81.6	18.4
Haridwar	29,130	4,102	33,232	94.4	5.6
Rudraprayag	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Tehri Garhwal	14,052	758	14,810	91.4	8.6
Uttarkashi	9,983	205	10,188	88.3	11.7
Garhwal division	1,46,665	16,967	1,63,622	88.1	11.9
Almora	24,962	2,135	27,097	86.2	13.8
Bageshwar	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Champawat	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Nainital	27,658	7,965	35,623	84.8	15.2
Pithoragarh	19,641	318	19,959	87.7	12.3
Udham Singh Nagar	17,135	9,551	26,686	94.8	5.2
Kumaoun division	89,396	19,969	1,09,365	88.1	11.9
Uttaranchal	2,36,051	36,936	2,72,987	88.1	11.9

Source: Jargon Research Centre, 2002. Uttaranchal and Uttar Pradesh at a Glance 2003. District wise Statistical Review, Kanpur.

2.A.iv Gender and violence

Women, by their gender, experience physical, psychological and mental abuse at household, community and regional levels. However, women are not a homogeneous category and the nature and extent of violence tend to vary between rural and urban, educated and uneducated, economically well-off to poor women. Irrespective of these variations, violence related to the problem of alcoholism is widespread.

Alcoholism and violence against women

Though alcoholism and violence against women is an important issue in Uttarakhand, not many studies to determine the extent and the nature of violence have been carried out.

Table 16 shows the district-wise distribution of liquor shops in Uttarakhand. Unemployment among youth, especially boys, causes anxiety and stress in society leading to emotional illness and tension which often results in incidences of battering and abuse of young wives and mothers.

Battering and wife-beating by a drunk man is often not reported to the panchayat or to the police as it has been legitimized as a private home affair, not to be discussed in public. Children also suffer in those households that are poor and prone to repeated routine violence caused by alcoholic men.

Domestic violence is a neglected field in Uttarakhand. In the absence of any separate legal provisions on domestic violence, the problems remain un-addressed by law. However, there exist several informal networks of women, NGOs and individuals that provide counseling, organize women and children/youth to help the sufferers and to create a peaceful and healthy environment.

Table 17. Liquor shops in Uttarakhand.

District/division	Country liquor shops	Foreign liquor shop	Bhang shops
Chamoli	Na	11	na
Dehradun	34	28	6
Pauri Garhwal	Na	22	na
Haridwar	59	23	3
Rudraprayag	Na	na	na
Tehri Garhwal	Na	9	na
Uttarkashi	Na	7	na
Garhwal division	93	100	9
Almora	28	20	na
Bageshwar	Na	na	na
Champawat	Na	na	na
Nainital	36	27	4
Pithoragarh	29	10	na
Udham Singh Nagar	96	17	3
Kumaoun division	189	74	7
Uttarakhand	282	174	16

Source: Trade Tax Divisions, 1997-98.

Jagran Research Centre, 2002. Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh At A glance 2003. District wise Statistical Review , Kanpur

Table 18 shows reported cases of gender-based violence in Uttarakhand. Despite widespread under-reporting of incidents of violence against women, cases under 498 (A) IPC, eve-teasing

and harassment are widespread, especially in Udham Singh Nagar, Haridwar, Dehradun and Nainital districts. It is not clear, whether this trend of increased gender violence in the low-lands is due to high levels of crime or due to higher degree of reporting by victims or to an easy access to the police stations or some other agencies.

Table 18. Reported violence against women during 1 January to 30 November 2004.

Crime	Year	Alm	Bgr	Pth	Cpt	Ntl	Udn	Uki	Tgwl	Cml	Rpg	Pgwl	Dad	Hdr	Total
Murder	2004	00	00	1	1	7	12	00	00	00	1	00	9	10	41
	2003	1	00	00	00	5	4	1	00	00	00	4	3	12	30
	2002	1	00	2	2	7	10	2	1	00	2	00	7	12	46
Rape	2004	1	1	6	1	2	13	3	1	00	00	4	17	24	73
	2003	00	00	3	1	3	10	5	00	00	1	1	10	25	59
	2002	1	1	2	2	1	13	2	2	1	00	1	8	29	63
Molestation	2004	00	00	3	1	8	27	3	00	1	00	7	15	24	89
	2003	00	1	8	1	10	29	3	1	00	00	00	13	18	84
	2002	00	00	4	1	12	24	3	2	1	00	2	9	39	97
Kidnapping and abduction	2004	1	1	1	00	12	32	3	1	1	1	4	22	31	110
	2003	00	00	1	1	7	27	3	1	00	00	3	16	25	84
	2002	00	00	00	3	11	17	1	1	00	00	5	35	29	102
Eve teasing, sexual harassment	2004	4	00	00	000	1	2	1	00	1	00	7	44	41	101
	2003	1	00	2	1	3	20	1	1	2	00	2	21	33	87
	2002	00	00	1	00	00	16	2	4	7	00	4	28	28	90
Chain snatching	2004	00	00	00	00	1	7	00	00	00	00	00	18	10	36
	2003	00	00	00	00	2	00	00	00	00	00	2	24	11	39
	2002	00	00	00	00	3	1	00	00	00	00	00	26	12	42
Dowry deaths	2004	2	1	4	00	5	15	1	2	00	00	2	5	7	40
	2003	00	00	2	1	11	13	00	1	00	1	00	11	7	45
	2002	1	00	1	00	4	10	00	3	2	00	1	5	10	37
498 (A) IPC	2004	2	1	2	00	20	67	4	6	2	00	5	108	108	326
	2003	00	00	00	1	23	67	1	6	00	00	6	74	60	237
	2002	3	2	2	2	32	32	5	1	1	00	6	76	84	246
Prostitution	2004	00	00	00	00	2	00	00	00	00	00	1	3	2	8
	2003	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	2	00	2
	2002	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
Others	2004	1	00	2	2	2	37	00	2	00	1	00	2	23	72
	2003	00	00	1	1	3	31	00	2	1	1	6	3	00	49
	2002	00	2	5	4	00	21	00	00	1	00	3	2	00	28
	2004	11	4	19	5	60	212	15	12	5	3	30	243	280	899
	2003	2	1	17	7	67	201	14	11	3	3	24	177	191	718
	2002	6	5	17	14	70	144	15	14	13	5	22	196	243	761
Total	2004	11	4	19	5	60	212	15	12	5	3	30	243	280	899
	2003	2	1	17	7	67	201	14	11	3	3	24	177	191	718
	2002	6	5	17	14	70	144	15	14	13	5	22	196	243	761

Source: Police Headquarters Uttarakhand. 12, Subhash Road, Dehradun (Data obtained from the office on 28th December 2004).

Again, highest dowry deaths have been reported from the low lands while the remote villages in the hills seem to be less influenced and affected by dowry related problems. Murders of women, too, are the highest in the low land districts. Cases of murder might also be associated with dowry related problems because beating, mistreatment, threatening is often related to

discontent due to less dowry at the time of marriage or due to new claims and demands after marriage but there could be several other reasons for murder of women.

Cases of trafficking of young girls/women and of prostitution are highly under-reported, often due to their association with some other illegal activities or due to the notion of "shame" attached to such kind of professions. Tourist spots and populated areas may have more prostitutes while illegal inter-state trafficking might be more pronounced through isolated, inaccessible routes.

All-Women Police Stations

In order to increase accessibility of women to police, all women police stations (*Mahila thana*) have been created and made functional in two districts. Cases related to domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, wife battering, violence on women, eve teasing, dowry harassment and dowry deaths are registered under section 16 in *mahila thanas*. Counseling facilities are also offered to the victims.

HELP LINE, a telephonic facility to provide immediate assistance to women victims is created by the *mahila thanas*. However, very few cases are reported either due to lack of communication facilities in the hills or due to a lack of desire of women victims to approach the police.

The *mahila thanas* are perceived as "soft stations", appropriate for counseling and family reconciliation following domestic violence that is considered a lighter, private affair, except dowry deaths. Underutilization of *mahila thanas* is often also attributed to inadequacy of staff and other facilities, lack of training on gender sensitization to the staff to handle cases of domestic violence.

The State Commission for women

Headed by a woman chairperson and women members, the State Commission for Women was constituted in 2002. The commission makes recommendations to the government after investigating or pursuing inquiries into offences and atrocities committed against women. The commission also identifies lacunae in laws and rules in different departments and makes recommendations to the state for corrective measures to be taken with a gender perspective.

The women's groups, activists and NGOs in Uttarakhand, however, feel that the commission needs to play a more active and responsive role to reach the women in distress, both in urban and rural areas. Currently, the follow up of cases taken up by the commission is weak and often fails to make an impact on political or social arena.

2.A.v. Gender and Political participation

Though, women of Uttarakhand have led many environmental and social movements locally, some of them with greater connotation on gender issues, their participation in structured decision-making have been low both in terms of number and opportunities.

Political participation from a gender perspective could be examined as willingness of men and women to be informed and act in political decision-making and the impact of their involvement in the political discourse. However, Uttarakhand being a new state faces severe shortage of compiled data and other records for detailed work.

Acquisition of position and the ability and flexibility to exercise power is considered an important indicator of women's political status in the field of gender and development. Table 18b provides some statistical evidence to corroborate this hypothesis with ground-realities. Systematic sub-ordination of women by large political parties in parliamentary elections entails the prevailing attitude of non-recognition of women for their appropriateness and efficacy in politics, especially as ministers. Further, party preference to women candidates with fairly long involvement of their families in politics was apparent in the recent parliamentary elections.

The constitutional and political commitment to gender justice and equality through panchayati raj has made a shift towards new possibilities of women's participation in local governance.

Unlike, parliamentary elections, representation of women in all three levels of panchayati institutions is adequately achieved but opportunities to work are highly constrained by intrusion of bureaucratic control and resistance (invariably male dominated), lack of political autonomy and absence of strategic alliances in favour of women.

Though, it is difficult to establish simple and direct correlations between political participation and human development indicators such as economy, educational levels in general, Uttaranchal is widely regarded as a politically aware and active state, though the number of women actually involved in politics does not compare to their numbers in the total population. Inter-district and intra-district variations in political participation of women do exist at different levels and in varied forms. The physical dimension of participation of women in the political sphere is easily identifiable but socio-economic cultural and political characteristics due to unequal gender relations also demand attention.

Empirical evidence from the rural areas of Uttaranchal shows that higher female literacy, and better social-economic status does not necessarily mean an increased political participation of women and political behaviour is definitely determined by factors more than socio-economic indicators of development. A positive change that is occurring in the hills is the recognition of right to vote freely and independently during elections. Though, elections are fought on the grounds of caste, gender, amelioration of power and class differentials, there is a growing evidence of women, especially women's groups, exercising their right to vote with greater autonomy.

Formal representation

Women's participation in political processes is regarded as a means to achieve gender equality and justice. To increase women's representation in governance and to promote gender sensitive decision-making processes, various measures have been taken at the state and the local levels both through government and non-government initiatives.

Representation of women in governance is largely promoted through panchyati raj institutions though women's reservation and representation in the legislative assembly and in parliament remains almost non-existent.

In the recent *lok sabha* elections, against sixty two male contestants, eight women candidates filed their nominations for the seats of members of parliament (Table 19a). Applications of two women contestants from Haridwar constituency were rejected and a woman from Almora constituency withdrew her nomination, leaving only five women contestants in the field. Out of those, one woman was contesting elections on a reserved (SC) seat while the remaining contestants were under general category (Table 19b).

Table 19a. Sex-based break-up of nominations, rejections, withdrawal for parliamentary constituencies.

District	Nominated			Rejected			Withdrawn		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Tehri Garhwal	13	1	14	1	0	1	1	0	1
Pauri Garhwal	9	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Almora	13	3	16	5	0	5	1	1	2
Nainital	17	2	19	3	0	3	1	0	1
Haridwar	10	2	12	1	2	3	0	0	0
Total	62	8	70	10	2	12	3	1	4

Source: http://gov.ua.nic.in/election/loksabha_2004/2004-gen/nominations.htm

Table 19b. Gender and category based break up of contestants for loksabha elections in Uttaranchal.

District	Number of contestants	Sex		Category	
		Male	Female	General	Reserved (SC)
Tehri Garhwal	12	11	1	12	00
Pauri Garhwal	9	9	00	8	1 (male)
Almora	9	7	2	7	2 1 male, 1 female
Nainital	15	13	2	13	2 (both male)
Haridwar	9	9	00	00	9
Total	54	49	5	40	14

Source: http://gov.ua.nic.in/election/loksabha_2004/2004-gen/candidate.htm

The national and state level political parties showed more interest in supporting the male candidates and women were highly under-represented (Table 19c). Further, the female party nominees were either related to the local politicians or were other prominent figures due to their background or economic status. None of the women contestants got elected.

Table 19c. Breakup of candidates for the Lok Sabha elections in Uttaranchal.

District	National party			State party			Other state party			Regd.unrecognized party		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Tehri Garhwal	2	0	2	2	0	2	2	1	3	5	0	5
Pauri Garhwal	4	0	4	1	0	1	1	0	1	3	0	3
Almora	1	1	2	2	0	2	2	0	2	2	1	3
Nainital	3	0	3	2	0	2	5	1	6	3	1	4
Haridwar	3	0	3	2	0	2	1	0	1	3	0	3
Total	13	1	14	9	0	9	11	2	13	16	2	18

Source: http://gov.ua.nic.in/election/loksabha_2004/2004-gen/candidate.htm

Panchayati raj

The Constitution 73rd Amendment Act was passed in Parliament in 1993 to facilitate constitution of local government bodies in a three-tier system, one third minimum reservation of women in local institutions, reservation of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe sections of society, and increased autonomy at local levels. Local direct elections for panchayat institutions were specified. This Act was ratified by state assemblies with little or some amendments.

The gender and political participation perspectives in panchayats entail promotion of political processes and procedures to institutionalize gender-sensitive planning. Although it is important to feminize the political space by increasing representation, this does not automatically translates into gender-sensitive decision making. Simultaneous measures are needed to improve the quality of operations in related institutions to facilitate participation and to enable women to cope with practical difficulties during planning, and at administrative, managerial and implementation stages.

Recent panchayat elections were held in 12 districts of Uttaranchal. Reservation of seats on the basis of gender and caste were made in rotation amongst different constituencies. Four seats of chairpersons of *zila panchyats* (district level) were reserved for women. At the block level, out of a total 79 seats for chairpersons of *kshetra panchyat*, 39 seats were reserved for women. Reservation at the village level enumerated for 2341 seats for women ward members against a total of 6925 seats.

Reservation of seats for women is regarded by the government and many other organizations as a step towards gender equality. However, evidence from the villages shows that, often, women act as passive agents and their male relatives gain control of development planning and budgets. Further, the trend of upward mobility of women through representation is not adequately supported by horizontal linkages such as provision of knowledge and skills development for efficiency and efficacy within and outside the system. Caste, class and gender-

based complexities and vested interests of powerful pose constraints to both women and men representatives but women face them more severely due to prevailing social norms.

Due to their involvement in development schemes, panchayat members are perceived as government functionaries and subsequently attain some status in the community. However, often, their alliance with political parties leaves them with an impression of having political and economic interests.

Another constraint that is frequently related to panchayats by women representatives is the issue of rampant corruption and inefficiency in political and administrative circles. Often bewildered by the operational rules in practice, many women do not want to pursue their work through panchayats anymore. Conflicts also arise as active women representatives remain unwilling or refuse to execute government schemes but wish to build up programmes based on the village, especially women's needs.

The increasing expenses of election, criminalization, threats of and actual incidences of violence, corruption in the political sphere inhibit women's participation in political sphere both at local and the regional levels.

Development schemes in 29 fields, enumerated in the eleventh schedule of the Act, to be administered and managed by the panchayat institutions include health, family welfare, education, drinking water and sanitation, fuelwood and fodder, agriculture, minor irrigation, social forestry, poverty alleviation, public distribution systems, welfare of weaker sections of society etc. Out of these, schemes under nine fields have been transferred to panchayats in Uttaranchal. Currently, planning around environmental (fuel wood, fodder, cattle, agriculture) issues is non-existent while the focus of the panchayats seems to be on construction work.

Women in urban institutions

The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act integrates women into development concerns in the urban local bodies, municipalities and notified area committees. The rules for reservation of seats for women and socially disadvantaged groups are applicable during elections and beyond and the quality of participation is supposed to be strengthened through training and other supportive procedures.

Local women-led movement for self-governance

There is strong evidence in the villages of Uttaranchal that women feel more comfortable working in institutions that are informal, flexible and responsive to their needs. Village women's groups that provide space to women to plan and control processes and progress of their work, provide sharper accountability and ownership than panchayati raj institutions. I will take up this issue later in this paper while examining the issue of gender equality and political participation.

2.A.vi Marriage

Though under the Hindu Marriage Act 1955, plurality of marriage is considered an offence, non-registration of marriage, non-reporting of second marriage, delay and non-enforcement of law in courts lead to renouncement of earlier marriage and wife-desertion. Further, a male migrant may remarry in the city/town while the previous wife and her children continue to live in the village. Women, who live alone or have been deserted by their husbands/families, form a vulnerable group and are subjected to violence in different forms.

The percentage of women getting married before attaining the age of 18 years is 14.7 for Uttaranchal, and declining over time, while for the whole country the percentage is high, 36.8 in 2001 (Table 4). Marriages below the age of 18 years are not invalidated by society. The law stipulates a fine of Rs. 1000/- and imprisonment for 15 days for a man between 18-21 years and of 3 months imprisonment and fine for man above 21 years marrying a minor girl (Gopalan S. 2001). Due to some degree of social acceptability to marriage of girls below 18 years of age,

complaints are not made and the social pressure on such families is not enough to stop them from committing such a crime.

Polygamy is practiced in restricted pockets, and is decreasing over time, among communities with a distinct culture and socio-economic setup such as in tribal Jaunsar area of Garhwal where the men are permitted to remarry provided the wives are treated equally. Further, in very remote villages of Bageshwar district in Kumaon, Hindu men not only remarry but a married woman can also remarry provided the second husband compensates the previous man. After marriage, off-springs from the second wife have the same property and other rights as the children from the earlier marriage.

2.B. Qualitative aspects: voices from the villages of Uttaranchal

2.B.i Rural women's groups and the Uttrakhand Women's Federation

The core ideas, around which the following sections on identifying gender needs revolve, come through the work of rural women's groups in Uttaranchal. Active in the fields of education, health and nutrition, sanitation, water, violence against women, alcoholism, afforestation and nursery-raising across varied caste, economic status, age and educational levels, the women of Uttaranchal organize themselves in the form of women's groups with collective thinking and action being their main strength.

The point of departure from convention is that women want to help themselves and in the process get organized, learn, innovate, care for each other and express solidarity. It's not a smooth process as building up consensus means bringing women of different caste, age, economy, values together to agree to a common framework of development and in this process, specially in the earlier stages, some of the group members might feel sidelined or ignored. They may even argue and fight with each other, sometimes breaking up the whole group. However, they reunite after sometime for the common good. In their collective struggle to bring identity for themselves as active agents of change, and not as recipients of programmes, rural women struggle at the household level, within the group, at community and the regional levels. A few salient features of these women's groups are the following:

- All women of the village, irrespective of caste, class, economy, age are members of the group
- Institutionalization of the group activities is sought through regular village and regional meetings, selection of a president of the group through a democratic process
- Women's activities are integrated with the physical, socio-cultural and economic bonds of the community life
- Women value and sustain relationships guided by the view of mutual co-operation. Relationships that relate them to each other and to others in the community, to the land and to their way of life are reviewed, reinforced or rejected to achieve a better quality of life
- Organizing women in the form of groups is critically important from the perspective of eliminating inside-outside dichotomy in women's life spaces. Groups provide a forum to raise collective powerful voices for gender equality and justice
- The experience of the women provides several insights on a transformative educational vision to development with a distinct set of values and processes

In February 2000, around 412 rural women's groups of Uttaranchal, represented by around 12,000 women, came together to form the Uttrakhand Women's Federation. The largest network of the rural women in Uttaranchal, the federation aims at building up capacities through a transformative, educational, village-up approach to gender and participation. The process is outlined very briefly in the following section.

2.B.ii Rural women identify needs and work towards gender equality

The transformative approach to gender planning is locally sensitive, decentralized, participatory and builds up from below. Women's groups are formed spontaneously and instinctively. For example, USNPSS never approached the villages with an agenda of its own. No targets were set for coverage and budget allocation and the federation was formed as a response to demands from women's groups.

The women's groups were formed through informal talks on various issues, but with a focus on mutual learning. Rural women were encouraged to identify their own needs and priorities. Needs varied from education (day care and education of young children, teacher absenteeism in schools, quality of education), to health (provision and quality care) environmental (water, forest, agriculture, sanitation) related issues to social (alcoholism and gambling among men, battering and wife-beating) and development issues (roads, electricity, corruption in

bureaucracy) etc. This exercise, however, laid the foundation of a development paradigm that was later described as a women-led, transformative educational discourse on gender planning. Needs that usually remain submerged in the conventional development programmes were identified and later used to construct an organizational agenda that continues to be the focus of the Uttarakhand Women's Federation.

Under the pre-primary education programme, the women's groups took up the responsibility of selection of a girl from the village as a teacher. Going out of a village for training has in itself been a new and valuable experience for young girls but it also helped strengthen the women's network. Following the lead of young teachers, the women also began to come out to participate in meetings, orientation programmes and went to other places on exposure trips. The whole process synchronized with the rhythms of community life; activities/events were organized during agricultural lean periods and were short but frequent. This increased interaction helped to bring out more clarity among the groups and at USNPSS and its partner organizations with whom the women's groups were associated.

As women began to articulate their concerns with clarity, more needs were identified and instantly incorporated in the organizational agenda. Regular meetings in villages and at regional levels helped the women, the community-based organizations and USNPSS to clarify their ideas on gender and development. Taboos were broken and issues that were considered as "private" or "associated with sin or shame" began to receive attention during open discussions between women themselves or between the women's groups and the supporting organizations. It was apparent that though there was more receptivity among communities towards meeting practical gender needs, strategic gender interests too required attention.

The transformative educational approach to gender equality and justice allowed women to gain confidence by constructing knowledge and skills through a range of practical activities but this was supplemented by a continuous unfolding and revealing of gender relations in activities that the groups undertook. Table 20 presents a broad outline of the process involved.

Table 20. Meeting strategic gender needs: A village-up, transformative approach towards gender equality has evolved in Uttaranchal by maintaining an active interface between women's groups, community-based organizations and USNPSS.

Strategic needs/ interests	Strategic action	Women's inputs	Organizational support/inputs from the women's federation (USNPSS)	Indicators
Creating a space for women	Formation of women's groups*	Time, tea etc.	informal talks	Women coming together
Nurture an enabling environment and build up women's organization	Participation in regular village/regional meetings	Identify needs for collective action (women themselves identify and list priorities)	(i) Continuing awareness and knowledge generation (ii) resolving village rivalries, conflicts (iii) informal talks and meetings with other members of the community	(i) All women of the village participate in the meetings (ii) The group is cohesive and active (iii) Men supportive of women's work
Women initiating, participating and making decisions in community activities	Practical action (i) Pre-primary centres and (ii) Plantation, water, sanitation or any other activity as identified by the women	Women select the teacher, provide free mid-day meals to their children, free room for the centre and (ii) Time, labour for community work and take up responsibilities for monitoring, maintenance, future work	Training to the teacher of the pre-primary centre, meetings with the group and Immediate but partial monetary support to the group	Community ownership, transparency, self-monitoring and accountability
Shifting gender concerns from private to public domain	(i) Regular, frequent open discussions	Break down silence on household matters	Organize meetings, village visits for informal talks	Taboos begin to break down, confidence grows
Build up women's identities as active agents of change, creators of knowledge, emphasize their productive role (i) attitudinal changes (ii) action	Exposure tours, women participate in meetings outside their village (ii) Women themselves decide their path for action	Discuss, analyze and begin to act against practices that put them in disadvantaged positions (ii) a. at the community level • campaigns • activism • practical work b. regional level • organize and attend meetings, seminars • influence policy c. household level • challenge gender roles and responsibilities • increased decision making	Organize meetings, provide information, village visits for informal talks (ii) Monetary support, emotional support and a sense of security by being together and integrating groups into the women's federation guidance and supervision	Women voice their concerns clearly (ii) Expansion and increasing recognition of women's work
Influencing consciousness and attitudes of men and women for equality	Separate meetings for men followed by meetings with women and men	Increased dialogue with men, women Voice their concerns, demand and work towards gender equality	Create space for interface between men and women and youth	Men begin to understand how, what and why of women's work Extend support to the group activities
Participation and influence on political processes	meetings with policy makers, local administration	Increased interaction on political issues, demand for provisions and opportunities to women	Organize meetings, workshops with planners, policy makers	Integration of women's concerns in policies**
Move towards equality in the division of resources and responsibilities	Regular meetings, nurture and sustain the process of building up abilities and competencies	Increased representation in traditional village committees, contest elections for representation in the formal system (panchayats)	Providing information, training and support to female panchayat/committee representatives	Increased participation both in terms of representation and opportunities in formal and informal decision-making bodies
Influence policy, planning, funding patterns	(i) sustain the process of the village-up establishment of gender needs and responsibilities (ii) increase advocacy, networking	(i) Continue to work at household, community and regional levels, participate in national level meetings, seminars (ii) groups begin to negotiate for their own funds	(i) Creating space and processes to Increase exposure and participation at various levels (ii) Guidance	(i) Expansion of activities and new areas of interests (ii) Women on their own executing programmes

* In the beginning of the programme, more efforts were needed to break the ice and to form the groups. Later, looking into the work of women in the neighboring villages, women themselves began to approach the federation to involve them in group activities.

** The women's development programme is closely related to the pre-primary education programme in rural areas of Uttaranchal and for this reason and others has been adopted by the state as a model to improve ECCE programme under DPEP.

While working in the groups, women challenged the gender construct of patriarchy, bringing in a transformation in the thinking and behaviour of civil society. Why are these women not attracted by money-driven government and international schemes and programmes that keep coming to the state? What is it that motivates them to keep away and even refuse big projects and schemes, often, in direct confrontation with the project authorities? In more positive terms, let me rephrase this question. What is it that rural women, though poor, value more than money or fund-driven development programmes? It is difficult to imagine a simple straightforward answer. However, let us concentrate here on the thoughts that emerged during focus group discussions with 328 women members of the federation who gathered at Almora during December 2004-January 2005 to meet and share experiences on development thought and policy (Table 21).

Table 21. Elements of the top-down and village-up approaches to gender planning.

Approach	Mainstream development approach (top-down)	Local, process-based, transformative educational approach
Agencies	Adopted by the professional development institutions, governments, national and international organizations and supported by academicians, policy makers etc.	Created and sustained by communities, mostly rural women, supported by community-based organizations, local groups, voluntary agencies
Structure	Top-down, poor rural women come at the end	Bottom-up, all women from the village organize, plan and act together
Method	Specialization leads to compartmentalization of ideas, approaches	A holistic approach leads to a process of understanding and making connections between various aspects of village life
Sensitivity	Rejects or pays very little attention to the local knowledge, values, customs	Sensitive to the local realities
Partnership	Extends and reinforces external (professional) authority	Decentralized, working as partners
Programme design	Programmes are designed after data collection and analysis by experts	Evolves through a process of mutual learning and understanding
Scale	Often large projects managed by experts, staff at various levels	Small programmes thought and implemented by rural women's groups
Time and targets	Structured programmes designed to be implemented in phases over a pre-determined time frame	Not structured, flexible programmes, governed by the process, participants acknowledge the fact that paths of change are not linear and human aspect of life can't be pre-determined
Attitude	Sometimes annoying, often reflects collective arrogance on the part of experts, planners, implementers etc., probably because they are ignorant and look at things in isolation	a sense of humility motivates the participants to learn and to educate themselves

Source: Based on the focus group discussions held with members of women's groups at USNPSS Almora.

The question we were seeking answer(s) to, was related to women perceiving and prioritizing "something else" than money and top-down development schemes to meet their needs and interests.

Box 2.

Gaps left by health professionals correspond exactly to those areas that are necessary for meeting strategic gender needs

Vimla Devi of Maichun village, district Almora, has four children. Her husband, a daily wage labourer, is an alcoholic and suffers from tuberculosis. He would, often, come home drunk and beat his wife and children in the evenings. The neighbours would prefer to keep quiet assuming wife-beating is a private affair. Vimla Devi, too, would keep quiet and suffer as some other women in the village were treated the same way as her and they all kept quiet.

A woman's group was formed in the village in 2002. Women began to talk about their problems and organize themselves. The issue of alcoholism was discussed during meetings and slowly the group framed its own rules to impose fine on drunken men wandering in public places in the evenings. Use of abusive language to others in the village and domestic violence came under the purview of "not acceptable behaviour" and women began to be strict on that issue immediately posing fine on the misbehaving person. Vimla Devi, too, threatened her husband to take action against him and, though initially angry and resistant to change, he complied with the new rules.

Vimla's son, Kundan, 9 years old in 2003, suffered from malnutrition and tuberculosis. One evening in October 2003, when we were visiting Vimla at home to inquire why she had not come to attend the village meeting that afternoon, she informed us that Kundan was very ill. She said, *"Is ka samay aa gaya hai. Aaj ki raat bhi bachta hai ki nahin."* (His time has come. He may not even live through the night). She looked at us with her tearful eyes and something melted inside us. The child was whimpering and did not even seem to have energy to lift his hands or move his legs. We asked her to come to Almora, the next morning. "if only he survives", she said.

Next morning, Vimla Devi, came to Almora. Kundan seemed to be as weak and in agony as we had seen him the previous evening. We took him to a doctor and he was diagnosed with advanced stages of tuberculosis. His weight was just 9 kg and he suffered from anemia. The doctor prescribed him some medicine and advised us to revisit him in a week's time. Vimla Devi, listened to what the doctor said but couldn't understand much.

Back at USNPSS, we begin to describe medical terms in a language, she could comprehend. To her, tablets and capsules or syrups were all the same, unless we renamed each medicine based on its size or colour or texture. She took time to understand all that but was keen to follow our instructions.

Her visits to the doctor began. She herself used to bring Kundan to the clinic and remained careful about timings etc. On our next visit to the village, we advised her to have checkups for the whole family. She raised serious doubts about her husband but agreed to bring her daughters to Almora. Sunita, 13 years, was also diagnosed as suffering from the same disease. Her treatment also began.

In between, our informal talks continued. We asked her why she did not go to the doctor earlier, why she had waited for so long. Initially, her replies were related to the shortage of money but as she began to share her inner feelings with us (never did that with the doctor!), she mentioned that just the idea of going out of her village scared her. She didn't know where the hospital was, who the doctors were, where she would go within the hospital building and whom she would ask for help.

We continued accompanying her on her visits to the doctor. After, four months, we advised her to go on her own. She hesitated but after some words of encouragement did go to the hospital. Reporting back her own experience of seeing a doctor alone for the first time in her life, she seemed to be happy and proud. Subsequently she went to the hospital alone. However, she would always come to USNPSS before and after her visits to the hospitals and share her experiences and feelings. Also, she would leave her documents with us as she felt that they were safer here.

Kundan has recovered from his illness after nine months of treatment and goes to school. Sunita, too has finished her medical treatment and is healthy and cheerful now. However, the change the whole incident has made on Vimla shouldn't be ignored. She attends all the meetings of the women's group, takes decisions on village matters and has asked her husband to bring in regular income to the family. After considerable effort and pursuance, he has got a job in a shop, in a nearby town. Still doubtful about him, Vimla Devi has asked the owner of the shop to send half of his income directly to her, which she receives. She still has worries but now we see her laughing and smiling and helping other women in the village.

This incident, however, led to a series of discussions in village meetings about tuberculosis, a disease that people would not talk about in public. Looking at Vimla Devi, another woman of Maichun, too, decided to take her child to the hospital. She herself and her three-year-old son are currently under treatment for tuberculosis.

Controlling tuberculosis is of particular interest to the state and many other welfare organizations and to meet this objective, the health department of Uttaranchal has recently increased resources, improved diagnostic facilities and has been promoting the use of antituberculosis regimens. Medicines are available free in hospitals at the district levels and in primary health care centres (PHCs). Still, Vimla Devi in Maichun village, about 20 km from the district headquarters, remains unaware and excluded.

In other words, there exist some hidden, submerged constraints/factors that lie at the core of women's inability to meet their practical needs. While analyzing problems of credit for the poor, Kabeer and Murthy distinguish three distinct yet inter-related categories of gender disadvantage. These categories are *Gender-intensified disadvantages*, *Gender-specific disadvantages* and *bureaucratically imposed gender disadvantages* (Kabeer and Murthy 1996).

- *Gender-intensified disadvantage* relates to constraints that both men and women experience but women suffer more intensely than men. Vimla Devi's physical, social and economic constraints on accessibility to the health services could be grouped under this category
- *Gender-specific disadvantages* relate to gender roles and relations. Constraints on Vimla's mobility, dependence on her husband for money and other forms of resources come under this category of disadvantages
- *Bureaucratically-imposed gender disadvantages* refer to insensitivity towards Vimla's hidden needs and a sheer lack of acknowledgement of certain invisible yet influential constraints that inhibit her to know and make use of a health programme aimed at people like her

However, Vimla Devi, just by virtue of being a woman and the wife of an alcoholic man, receives a lot of informal support from other women in the community. Even before she became a member of the women's group, women used to exchange work and materials with each other. During crisis, Vimla Devi would get grains, money and help in other forms from the women of Maichun and from her relatives. This informal network helped her and her children to survive during difficult times.

Formation of a women's group, however, added an additional impetus to this process of mutual help and co-existence. Women, who used to network and help each other secretly or in private, began to discuss problems in open public meetings. The idea of "strengthening a sense of community through collective action" which reinforced the existing system of co-operation among women and men in the village helped but adding value to it through discussions in village meetings had a tremendous effect on women. They began to feel confident of their actions and slowly began to understand and challenge the notions that put them in disadvantaged positions. As a result, Vimla Devi who earlier used to get small shares of grains/vegetables from sympathetic families got the confidence to request for a leg of each goat slaughtered in the village and borrowed a cow (for milk) from one of her relatives to feed her children undergoing treatment. She got that help as the community felt that nutrition is important for the survival of patients suffering from tuberculosis. However, beyond this narrow focus on improvements in health and nutrition, Vimla Devi gained confidence to motivate other women in the village to go for health checkups. As a result, treatment of other children began in the village.

The policy response for eradication of tuberculosis, however, does little to initiate or even accommodate these transformations that a woman (or women) might experience while accessing the programme. It is the network based on the social capital and relationships between the local people that sustains and nurtures the survival strategies and creates an enabling environment for Vimla Devi to seek a service. Thus, the state intervention might end up fulfilling a practical need of women and their families through a narrow, uni-disciplinary approach whereas the strategic gender interests are addressed better by some other informal bottom-up arrangements. This story on gender and health points towards two trends:

- The state intervention on controlling tuberculosis tends to address practical needs of women and their families by developing infrastructure and providing other facilities. The state might view this

programme as a part of its strategic interests for welfare and development but the causes positioning women in a disadvantaged status remain intact

- An informal network of women themselves emerges as an effective means to address the issue of helping women take advantage of the government infrastructure and facilities. A part of community life, this informal network, when organized with long term planning, becomes an effective tool to provide support and security and build up confidence among poor women

The above example shows that gaps left by health professionals exactly correspond to those areas that are necessary for meeting strategic gender interests. In other words, the current development discourse does not challenge or threaten the values, practices that govern the system but reinforces it by centralizing power in a few while the poor women, for whom the programmes are made, remain excluded. The issue of centralization of power is strengthened as medicine and health care become the fields of competitive professionalism. Vimla Devi would have to seek help and advice from a hierarchy in different departments and laboratories governed by people with professional authority and power, if she wants to know more about herself and her children. Alone, she has no money and power to do so, and thus continues to be alienated and marginalized.

Like Vimla Devi, other women of her village and of other villages in Uttaranchal continue to be isolated and un-reached by the mainstream development but their quest to know more about themselves, to learn and to grow is fulfilled to some extent by a network of community-based organizations including women's groups. Here, women come first. They are not the last in the list of beneficiaries, as they often are in conventional, top-down development programmes. Their perceptions, their ideas, their actions are valued and nurtured. It is their views that shape programmes at conceptual and action levels. It is because of their capability that they begin to understand and involve themselves in village/regional matters and gain confidence.

The global and the local contexts

It will be wise to make a distinction between gender needs and interests at the global and national/state levels and at the local level. In the discourse of planning for women's strategic interests, these aspects are treated as one, thus subverting policies on gender in a direction which may not be received by women of a particular region as being in their interest. Intermixing gender issues to falsely represent them as one not only masks the reality that people strive for in local contexts but also aggravates discontent. The example of the mid-day meal scheme in Uttaranchal provides a clue to the level of discontent that has been accelerated by a programme based on the idea of universal application.

The problem emanates from the fact that in schools preparing and eating meals under the mid-day meal scheme assumes primary importance while learning becomes secondary. Inadequate staff, high level of teacher absenteeism, and little monitoring in remote villages adds to the problem. There have also been complaints about the quality of food distributed in schools. But above all, rural women's groups of Uttaranchal raise a much more fundamental question of decision making. So while leading a series of demonstrations resisting the scheme; women shouted a slogan coined by them; in the block offices, during meetings of panchayats in blocks, in villages, in market places and during their meetings with the education department officers at local and national levels. The slogan, "*bhiksha nahin, shiksha dou*" reflects on the conceptual and empirical problems associated with the programme.

The rural women have repeatedly requested the officials of the Department of Education, Government of India and the Education director and the State project office, Education for All, Uttaranchal to withdraw the scheme and invest the money they have been spending on the mid-day meal scheme to appoint "good" teachers. "*We can feed our children. Don't waste money on that. We want teachers who are regular, sensitive to rural realities and interested in teaching/learning*" the women say. In the context of inadequate provision and the poor quality of education in government schools, women's demand for more and "qualified" teachers is not ill

founded. However, at the local level, their regular demonstrations are often met with responses such as, "*the government has no budget to appoint more teachers, why do you raise this issue...go and work in the fields...you don't know anything...it is on the order of the Supreme Court that this scheme is launched...you will be sent to jail...other development schemes will be stopped in your village*" from the local administration.

Further, this demand gives an indication of the way women's values are developing in Uttaranchal. Rural women perceive themselves as "active agents of change" while the state tries to project them as the "recipients of programmes." Further, rural women have a far more hard-eyed realistic vision of the limits of this type of intervention than "the experts on development" seem to comprehend. The demand for "good quality education" is linked to the regular and efficient functioning of schools. Provision of relevant and meaningful education for children is another issue. Geared towards preparing students to get jobs in cities, the current education system, tends to alienate children from their land. Aware, jobs in the market are limited and only a few top rural students would get them while the remaining would struggle either in slums in cities or back in the villages, women are forced to prepare their children for a future that is based on the land. Of course, the young boys and girls do aspire for government jobs or women too like to have remittances from the city to substitute their family income. The reality, however, is that unable to find jobs in cities the young boys are coming back to their villages and are getting married. Unemployed, frustrated and insecure, they tend to become alcoholic and violent to their families.

So, while resisting the scheme, women not only point to inadequacies in our education system but also exhibit their desire to participate in the creation of the future based on what they want and don't want for themselves and for their children.

I am aware that the feminist groups, intellectuals and critics would really be tempted to slot this observation as not enough evidence to show that these women are "empowered". One of the indicators of women's empowerment is her ability to understand the self to pursue ideas and choices that she decides for herself, independently, (Nussubum 2000). However, clearly, women of Uttarnachal make a distinction between the *standard of living* and the *quality of life* (Gormley J. 2000). They understand that the complexities of human life cannot be solved by simply pouring down schemes and money in villages. They also understand that the dream of economic growth by itself can not achieve gender equality. Thus, by transforming their villages to improve the quality of life through a gender perspective, women not only struggle for equality within the community but also resist the forces that make them "beneficiaries of outside interventions" rather than "agents of change".

3. Deficiencies in thought and action in gender planning: Demystifying gender myths

The liberal worldview of development, economic growth and societal transition in modern times, is filled with concerns such as women in development (WID), women and development (WAD), gender in development (GID) and gender and development (GAD) (Kabeer 1994). This discourse on development has had a mixed impact on women per say. It brought into the limelight issues that were ignored, assumed to be non-existent, or perpetuated under sex-role theories of conventional development practices and thus helped scholars, critics, planners and practitioners to shift policies and practices from gender neutral to gender sensitive approaches.

This shift, however, relied on creating certain images of women and of men. Generally, women were portrayed as marginalized, submissive, weak, invisible workers confined to household activities left out of development planning while men were shown as aggressive, objective, rational and outgoing (Jolly S. 2004). An example is the portrayal of the problem of alcoholism at household and community levels (men drink and beat their wives while women suffer). Although, this approach to gender and development did very little to change gender stereotypes at household and community levels, it succeeded in creating awareness about distinct roles and relations between men and women at different levels of society. But, the tendency to reinforce gender identities on the basis of ideologies that were no different from the conventional norms and values influenced macro planning and development interventions in a wide variety of programmes. For example, the phrase *padhi likhi ladki, roshani ghar ki* was coined to promote girls' education in India but with little thought about why the girl should be educated. Was she to be educated for herself or to perform her work at home more efficiently?

Another feature of the contemporary development paradigm is that economic development is a necessary precondition for gender equality. This view advocates and suggests ways to figure out causes and consequences of subordination of women on economic grounds and advocates equality on the basis of income-generation programmes as well as employment opportunities for women.

Thus, understanding gender in the contexts of cultural symbolism and of economic development has influenced gender planning in two ways:

1. Target and mobilize resources **exclusively** for women (programmes focused on women's empowerment, income generation, self-help groups for women etc.)
2. **Inclusion** of women (and men) in development programmes (for example, in forestry, water related programmes, panchayats etc.).

However, the limitations of a development discourse focusing exclusively on gender asymmetries with very little understanding of the locale specificities has done very little to challenge gender identities at the grassroots but created certain gender myths which have had a remarkable influence on macro-planning on gender and development.

Gender myths created by feminist movements in their pursuit to achieve gender equality elsewhere in the world are being debated and documented (Jolly S. 2004). However, we focus here on Uttaranchal to see how the ideology and practices of a centralized universal model of development has not only contributed towards creating gender myths but also marginalized the poor women and men in villages. The following gender myths can be identified:

3.i. Myth 1. Gender is a women's issue

An exclusivist approach to address gender issues has relied on articulating and bringing into fore theories and practices of social, economic, environmental inequalities and injustice inherent in traditional and contemporary societies with women as a focus. Subordination and discrimination that women face due to their biological difference from men, becomes a critical

aspect of enquiry and thus women emerge as a homogeneous “deprived off” category as against men. The first and the most evident shortcoming of this conceptual deficiency is that it fails to acknowledge divisions among women themselves. Further, it does not recognize the fact that a poor, old man of a socially disadvantaged section of society might be as helpless as an educated, well-off woman belonging to the upper caste section in the same community.

Gender needs and gender interests of men and women vary and are constructed by social determinants and not by their biology. An exclusive focus on women’s needs and interests, however, creates a myth that the men’s needs and interests need not be changed; they are identical, natural and unquestionable. This discourse, thus, perpetuates the idea of men being the norms and women as followers consistently adjusting, adapting and polishing themselves to achieve what men have already done. The risk to women, however, is quite apparent. For example, they might contribute to the family income by engaging themselves in some income generation activities but without challenging the structural patterns of gender-distribution of roles and responsibilities that maintain inequalities between men and women, between the rich and the poor, between the rural and the urban and so on.

A deeper probing in the context of Uttaranchal also reveals that by perceiving and projecting women as the deviation from the norm, it actually undermines their capabilities, autonomy and power. My informal discussions with the women of Uttaranchal have made me believe that on a very rough basis, women cultivators on an average contribute around 30,000 rupees at home, not as cash but in the form of fuel, cereals, vegetables, milk etc. but neither women nor the society acknowledges this contribution as valuable. Now, the question that arises from this observation is: should gender planning focus on building up from what women’s contribution to the local economy is, or on imposing projects that help them earn some cash, usually for a short period?

In my organization, we take the first route and work with women to highlight the point that their contribution to the family income is substantial and should not be undervalued either by themselves or by other community members. Valuing women’s work is a part of meeting strategic gender interests while project-bound cash income meets the practical gender needs. However, realization to this effect is not enough, if we do not follow it up with rigorous efforts to build up the land-based economy and to help women and men realize the importance of having good forest cover (fooder, compost), adequate water (drinking, irrigation) for improved agricultural production. Here, the women’s work in agriculture is not regarded as a reproductive role but as productive work.

Both men and young boys need to be sensitized to this approach on gender planning to make them realize that they are not the sole providers to the household income (so that they shed the pride that often is related to the notion of masculinity) and to make them learn the value of women’s work. Precisely, at this juncture, gender becomes an interest of the whole community, though in early stages of group formation we concentrate on women.

3.ii. Myth 2. Money will solve the problem

The assumption that introducing a set of income generation activities with access to modern markets is an important intervention to bridge the economic gap between men and women has increasingly been criticized by community-based organizations and women’s groups in Uttaranchal. Economic inequities need to be understood not only in material forms but also in the relationships between men and women leading to uneven distribution within the household. Many income generating activities targeted at women tend to benefit men. At the community level, too, projects tend to benefit relatively affluent and powerful households more than the poor women and their families.

3.iii. Myth 3. Cash-cropping improves agricultural yields and thus provides better returns to women's labour

Traditional agricultural practices in Uttaranchal are largely seen as a deterrent to development and cash crops are widely promoted by government and multinational agencies both independently and through non-governmental organizations.

Since technology and resources to generate ideas, experimentation, research and implementation of large-scale programmes acquire the centre-stage it would be interesting to see how the human factor, especially women's needs and interests are addressed. The following story was first related to me by a group of women from Dhauladevi block of Almora district in Uttaranchal. Later, similar experiences were narrated by women from many villages in Kumaon and Garhwal. Haripriya said,

Box 3.

A rural woman's perspectives on cash-crops

"A scheme on promotion of cash-crops was launched in our village (Danya) through the block office at Dhauladevi. Seeds of soyabean and chemical fertilizers were available at the block headquarters at subsidized rates. My son persuaded me to try the new variety which he said was "very productive, nutritious, easy to cultivate and promoted by the government to eradicate poverty from the hills of Uttaranchal". We can sell it at a good price and earn some cash", he informed me.

Men wanted to immediately switch on to the new crop but some of the women in the village resisted. Women were more rational and argued for an assessment of the quantity and the quality of the produce.

I agreed to give one of our best plots for this new crop but continued the old method of farming in the rest of our fields. Later, we were surprised to see that we could get one and a half sacks of soyabean from the plot, which usually produced half a sack of the local food grains. I raised this issue in the meeting of the women's group and slowly we began to realize two strands of commercial agriculture:

1. The local crops would provide us with a lot of fodder but now women in our village were spending more time and energy in fodder collection from the forest for cattle at home
2. Since, the whole area had switched on to this crop, prices of soyabean dropped in the market. The nearest market, where we had hoped to sell the produce, was Almora but when my son went there to inquire about prices, he was disappointed. He asked me to wait for a few months assuming that the off-season would be a better time. So, I did wait for 7-8 months but the price remained low.

Later, I told him that buffaloes at home could eat soyabean...it is nourishing for them too...but decided to never plant it again. Like me, many other women of the village reverted to our old methods of farming. Some families didn't...their fields are unproductive now...soil is hard...they were using chemical fertilizers but had no irrigation facilities. After 7-8 years of steady use of fertilizers they are regretting their decisions now. Luckily, not much harm was done to our fields...we continue to nourish them with compost."

What does this story point to, especially in relation to gender and development concerns? Discussions with members of the Uttarakhand women's Federation have led us to the following understanding of the situation:

- ☞ Traditionally women of Uttaranchal have enjoyed powers of making agricultural production related decisions. In the absence of their men and also when men were in the village, women used to decide the timings and priorities on seed sowing, harvesting and local-trading (within the village and with acquaintances outside the village). Women sell the produce based on their own needs and freely negotiate with the consumers while in the market the prices are determined by some external forces over which they have no

control. Thus, this intervention undermines women's position in rural agricultural society by displacing them from the core of autonomy to the periphery of self-sufficiency

- ☞ Women save and preserve a wide variety of their own seeds
- ☞ Seeds and fertilizers are produced in the market, outside their village, with the assumption of improvement in grain production, later to be consumed by the market itself, completely overlooking the long-term consequences of such interventions in sensitive agro-ecosystem like the Himalayas
- ☞ It depletes women and land. As a result, poor women are marginalized and local sustainability threatened for which there is a lot of evidence across villages in Uttaranchal

3.iv. Myth 4. Financial support for women in distress is necessary

Let me cite here two different situations. In one case, a legal camp on women's rights was used. This was brought to my notice by a local NGO in Pati, district Champawat. He said, "*a public hearing on women's rights held at Pati by the local court and a group of activists brought into light a case of providing pension to widows. An aged woman in the below poverty line category (total annual income below 12,000 rupees) if not looked after by her son(s) is eligible for that pension. However, hearing this condition, two women from different villages, who had applied for that pension, immediately wanted to withdraw their applications. The reason for their withdrawal was purely patrilineal. Their sons and families were not looking after them well, and although in dire need for some financial support, they didn't want to accept the fact in a public meeting (though the village residents were aware of tension in their families) that their son(s) did not look after them. They believed that home affairs were to be discussed in private. Further, going against their sons or challenging their intentions was just incomprehensible.*

The other incident was related to me by two women from Dunai valley, Garur, district Bageshwar, in a meeting organized by USNPSS for women's groups of Uttaranchal. The same case of getting pension for widows was taken more radically by these women. The local *gram Pradhan* (village head under *panchayati raj*) was approached and pressurized to sign the documents without any bribe. For these women, the issue of being mothers of able-bodied sons was not as important as in the case of women of Pati. They believed that any assistance or support to poor women should be viewed on the grounds of rights of women themselves, as productive farmers.

These contrasting views on planning for women's needs can be seen in the light of what I have earlier described as providing an enabling environment to women to bring out their innermost feelings. The women of Pati, have had very limited experience of the world outside their villages and were inhibited by the presence of *sahibs*, who had come there to listen to their problems. On the other hand, the women of Garur are members Uttarakhnad Women's Federation. They work for the common good. They value their labour, raise voices against injustice and inequality and take action for improvements in current situations. The ability to see their own well-being as distinct from the well being of their sons, even though in joint families, and take action to get their rights is an example which could probably only be developed through a long process of understanding the self, the surroundings and gender relations within the household and in the community.

3.v. Myth 5. Participatory development automatically takes care of women's concerns

Though gender studies and participatory development have a common goal of capacity building and empowerment through bringing in hidden voices into planning (Chamber 1997), women often remain excluded from programmes. For example, the rural poor women are the most dependent on natural resources. Yet, very limited efforts are made to involve them in planning and execution of natural resource management programmes.

3.vi. Myth 6. Political participation is the key to gender equality

Empirical evidence from the hills of Uttarakhand shows that social capital (trust, willingness to co-operate and help, respect, local norms, sympathy, cohesiveness, networks etc.) is negatively influenced by external attempts to bring robustness to democracy through village-based institutions especially under state control. For example, elections of panchayat representatives under the panchayati raj, the first step towards promotion of democratic values for local self-governance, repeatedly bring-forth issues of hierarchy, political alliances, class, caste and gender division at village levels, depleting social capital.

The recent panchayat elections in Uttarakhand were fought aggressively on caste, class, gender divisions in society, often along with party lines, leading to an eruption of conflicts unknown to the peasant women earlier. In many villages, women themselves got divided on the basis of caste and class or along party affinities, sidelining solidarity and cohesiveness that constitutes the core of community life in small isolated villages. More research is required to understand issues of relationships between social capital and political participation but my limited interactions with rural women have shown that caste, class divisions were more pronounced in villages with relatively new and, therefore, not very strong women's groups. In contrast, women who had been working in their villages for the last 10-15 years have shown a remarkable commitment to solidarity and group activities. Local governance, to these women, had to be based on the solid pillars of unity, transparency and reciprocity. They conceptualized self-governance in the same way they work in villages involving all village residents in development programmes, with a flexible approach guided by the zeal to grow and develop collectively, not necessarily in terms of infrastructure or economic growth but more in relation to human, especially women's, development.

Box 4.

Rural women oppose the current values, practices in panchayats

During the recent panchayat elections, the president of the women's group of Chaura village, Durga Devi, Dwarahat, district Almora was approached by a political party to contest elections under the party banner. The party representatives offered her money to become a party convener and promised her help during canvassing for panchayat elections. They also assured her help to contest from a "definitely winning seat". "Would I be able to resist, interpret and choose programmes for women's development the way I do now in the group," she asked them. When told that her priorities might change in view of the priorities of the state and central governments and as she gained "some experience in politics", she refused to join party politics and contested elections with the support of the women's group.

The issue of participation of women in panchayati raj is an important concern of decentralization and democratic institutionalization processes. With 30% reservation for women in panchayati raj institutions the state tends to promote democratic processes of governance with gender sensitivity. On the other hand, if the trends in the gender and political participation, as noticed in this paper, are of some value, they point to two ways of understanding the conflicts between the panchayats and the women in civil society:

1. Rural women acquire their strength and voice through their sense of collectivism, solidarity and unity. Both practical needs and strategic interests are positively associated with this trend of gaining collective identity to resist the undesirable, unworthy or unsubtle. However, the election process for institutionization of local self-governance seems to be acquiring a slightly subverted twist by not recognizing the fact that social capital, not money, is a necessary pre-condition for democracy
2. In case of having doubts on theories of collective women's thoughts and action, scholars/planners might prefer to promote women as individuals above the boundaries of socio-cultural identities, as capable beings free to exercise democratic choices to stimulate changes for common or general good. Will it be possible to construct rural women's identity on that basis which stipulates

individuality first? My feeling is that, given the socio-political reality in the hills of Uttaranchal, isolated individuals are equally powerless too.

This evidence gives us a basis for theorizing about issues of gender equality not only between men and women but divisions between women themselves and here the discussion about women's participation in panchayati raj moves onto a different track. Women who believe in and have faith on collective thinking and action, for example, members of women's groups active in development activities for a decade or more, repeatedly assert themselves as agents of socio-political change but with a different set of values. For these women, conventional development programmes focusing either on economic development or on cultural gender aspects provide a limited vision of women's development. They also believe that though political divisions influence communities, there are some other human values strengthened by social capital that help them pursue their interests. Thus, resistance towards structures and processes that accelerate socio-political divisions in villages is strongly registered at various levels.

In Naini village, district Almora, the women's group associated with Uttarakhand Women's Federation has been active for the last seven years. The women of this village are thinking not only of their household work but also about village issues.

Box 5.

Solidarity helps women to retain power, to resist and "coorrect" development intervention through panchayats

In 2004, a scheme on construction of check dams through block headquarters under the panchayati raj was to be implemented in the village. Without consulting the village residents, the *gram Pradhan* (village headman elected under panchayati raj) began to implement the scheme. A few men were employed and construction work started. The women of the village thought that the chosen sites were not appropriate for check dams because it was on the way through which the cattle used to go to drink water to a small outlet, everyday.

The women's group organized a village meeting and the matter was discussed. The women made a collective request to the *gram Pradhan* to consider their concerns but in vain. Another village meeting was convened and the women's group took a decision to report the matter to the block office. This didn't work either. The block office received the complaint but took no action.

Women were angry and agitated in the next meeting of the women's group. The group decided that all the women would go together and break the check dam. Soon after the check dam was broken, the *gram Pradhan* made a complaint against three women of the village in the *tehsil* in Ranikhet. The *patwari* (administrator who keeps the land records and listens to disputes at village level) came to Naini and summoned the three women against whom the complaint was lodged.

Soon, all members of the group gathered and asked the *patwari* to inspect the disputed site. They also made a strong point to register their discontent on action being taken against three women only. "We all went to break the check dam. Why should you take action against three women only?" The members of the group said. The *patwari* threatened them by saying that he would send them to prison, if they continue to do what they were doing. The matter could be solved, he said, "if the women compensate for the damage they had done to the check dam." The women, however, decided not to do so.

Later, the assistant development officer (A. D. O.) from the block headquarters visited the village to solve the problem. He, too, threatened the women but the group remained united and the women expressed their wish to go to the court, if he would agree to that. "There are 12,000 women with us and we would fight collectively," the women said.

The astonished officer, now, told the *gram Pradhan* that he should have convened a village meeting in the beginning of the scheme and taken the advice of the women's group. Having not done this he could be in trouble, "if the women pursue the matter".

A new check dam is now under construction with the consensus of all village residents and the local administration.

Another example of looking into resistance to external top-down approaches to development, with very little sensitivity to the local specificities, is the whole movement towards creation of a separate state of Uttaranchal. This demand, supported and almost led by the local women, not only raises questions of relevance of development programmes for the hill women and men but also confirms a struggle towards achieving cultural identity. Still, four years after the creation of the state, agitations and protests on the issue of location of the state capital are being organized and nurtured by women. In this context, the issue of cultural identity becomes a tool for women to raise issues of the local control over development processes versus larger political interests at stake.

4. Conclusions

1. This study, following the format of the larger study of which it is a part, analyses and discusses the challenge of meeting the strategic gender needs of rural women in Uttaranchal in terms of health, education, economic status, violence and political participation. Over and above this an attempt has been made to depict the inter-relatedness of all these issues. It is argued that present fragmented thinking and action prevents us seeing the “bigger picture”, and so of really coming to grips with the challenge of improving women’s lives. A holistic view of women in the context of their physical and cultural setting is needed. In practice this holistic vision means a focus on community. The women of each village community jointly articulate their own agenda for change and set about implementing it. This is a community learning exercise. Those of us, policy makers, programme administrators, who wish to participate in this process must become learners too, participating in these community learning exercises on the same footing as any other member of the community. It is from these exercises that realistic guidelines will emerge for the formulation of policies that will support, rather than hamper women’s efforts to improve their lives.
2. Planners have failed to understand the way women's values are changing in the hills. Members of women's groups associated with Uttarakhand Women's Federation see themselves as active “agents of change”, rather than “passive recipients of development programmes”. They are mistrustful of the way development is done and they move beyond this stage of critical reflection on development policies and show an alternative way.
3. The village-up, women-led, educational, transformative approach to gender planning creates an enabling environment for women to pursue their own interests. Here, rural women come first. They are not the last in the list of beneficiaries of development programmes. Their perceptions, their ideas, their actions are valued and nurtured. Women’s views shape programmes at conceptual and action levels. It is because of their capability that they begin to understand and involve themselves in village/regional matters and gain confidence. With growing confidence, they resist the top-down approaches to gender planning and insist that it is their society and they will decide what needs to be changed, what is acceptable and what is not. They understand that the norms and values that govern the structure of patriarchy need to be changed but they fundamentally disagree with the current vision of the solutions.
4. The life of the rural women in Uttaranchal is still rooted in and governed by human values that relate to trust, a sense of belonging to the land, co-operation and community cohesiveness. Together these values are important and essential for human survival. This aspect of women's life in traditional communities is either not clearly understood by planners or portrayed as irrational and unscientific, needing to be changed. This change, however, relies on and comes by devaluing culture, the work of rural women (and of men) and local norms and practices. The current model of development is violent and oppressive to women and to local communities. It imposes certain sets of ideas and a value system on rural women which in practice create conditions in which they can not develop an identity of their own.
5. While tracing out the dichotomy between practical gender needs and strategic interests, this paper has shown the intricacies of the village-up approach to gender planning that has evolved in Uttaranchal. There seems to be a complex progression from women gaining recognition and control over community decision-making processes to increasing decision-making ability at home. Women’s groups have gained the confidence to

challenge gender relations at home by actively engaging themselves in community work. Thus, participation in community work under women's control, though an end in itself, could be conceptualized as a prelude to increasing decision making at home.

6. This study unfolds the complexities and limitations of the current education system as a means to empowerment, even though macro indicators show that the situation in the hills is much better than the lowlands. Issues that point to the discontinuity between schooling, autonomy and empowerment have been raised. It is concluded that contemporary school education does not necessarily build up abilities to challenge gender inequalities nor does it lead to greater autonomy. Tensions arising from increased dowry and marital disharmony among educated women are some other dimensions that need to be understood. In other fields too, there is further evidence that the approach adopted by the state to address the issue of development with gender as an "add on" item is highly inadequate to meet the complex and growing challenges.
7. Meeting strategic gender needs of women requires certain preconditions as in their absence poor women cannot pursue their interests. The experiences of women related in this report show how women's lives change dramatically when they organize themselves for collective action. Thus, Prema (whose concerns I have described in the opening paragraphs of this paper) could never have thought of a form of education that would lead her to a more meaningful search for herself, fulfilling her own preferences and choices. Her life changed when she joined a group of people who supported her. In other words, opportunities for empowerment that Prema missed in school were offered by an alternative arrangement of community-based networks so that her dreams became real to her. In the same way, Nandi Devi and other women of her group, some of them illiterate, now enjoy the power to put forward their own needs and interests and by doing so gain confidence. Further, the story of Vimla Devi shows that gaps left by health professionals exactly correspond to those areas that are necessary for meeting strategic gender interests. The current development discourse does not challenge the values, practices that govern the system but reinforces it by centralizing power in a few while the poor women, for whom the programmes are made, remain excluded.
8. This study has shown how current macro-policies with their obsession of large scale projects directed towards increasing incomes have failed to address strategic gender interests, particularly in remote villages. The current model of gender planning is oppressive to rural women because it enforces the idea of improvements in the "standard of living" (by constant economic growth) as the desired outcome of development interventions and ignores the idea of improvements in the "quality of life". The mainstream development paradigm insists on the growth of incomes (as cash) not of the growth of ecological sustainable productivity to which women's life patterns in the hills of Uttaranchal is related.
9. The issue of ecological and economic sustainability is important for rural women not only in the context of livelihoods but also from the perspectives of health and emotional security. Improvements in rural environmental situations such as forests, water, compost, fuelwood etc. relate positively to practical gender needs. Easy access to and adequate availability of natural resources near villages save women's time and energy and enhance the local productivity including food production which has a positive effect on women's health and security. Further, valuing women's work is a part of meeting strategic gender needs.
10. This study has shown that though physical violence to women by men under the influence of alcohol could successfully be addressed by women's groups at the community and the household levels, the state needs to be more responsive in addressing other forms of violence such as physical harassment, rape etc. Further, the issue of mental

distress that women experience because of their gender, problems of deserted women need to be understood and addressed more seriously by the state.

11. The gap between political participation and political control is examined and shown to be rooted in socio-economic hierarchies, manifested overtly as caste, class, gender and educational differentials and more covertly in gender relations. The long and deep-rooted process of institutional exclusion of women in decision-making makes their participation notoriously slow but clearly there are other constraints that inhibit women's participation in the political sphere.
12. There is strong evidence in the villages of Uttaranchal that women feel more comfortable working in institutions that are informal, flexible and responsive to their needs. Village women's groups that provide space to women to plan and control processes and progress of their action, provide sharper accountability and ownership than panchayati raj organizations

5. Recommendations

On the basis of the foregoing conclusions, our recommendations to policy makers, donor agencies and professional development workers are simple and straight-forward.

All policy formulations should proceed from a holistic vision of development and women's concerns. Piece meal, discipline based policies and programmes have failed. In Uttaranchal, women are taking a lead and are giving practical shape to development with gender equity. This is a viable model. This implies the following:

- a. Listen to the varied voices of the rural and poor urban women, especially women's groups, not just as a formality, but to seek reality in gender planning and to spread optimism
- b. Do not dismiss and undervalue traditional rural communities, such as in Uttaranchal, by labeling them as "oppressive to women". To date, very little effort has been made to understand how informal community networks help the poor women survive within such societies
- c. Initiate and promote village-up gender planning by increasing support to whole village women's groups and community based organizations to enable them to nurture and sustain the processes of village-based gender planning
- d. Build up synergies between the state/centre and the women's groups/community-based organizations to inform and integrate lessons to upgrade policies on gender and development.

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Beyond Practical Gender Needs: Women in North-Eastern and Hill States

Uttaranchal

A study by the
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for the
Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST), New Delhi

National Research Programme on Growth and Human Development
UNDP-Planning Commission, Government of India

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Abstract

The core idea discussed in this paper is that the ideological shift among rural women of Uttaranchal as “being active agents of change” and not as “recipients of programmes” needs to be addressed with a new framework on gender analysis. The conceptual and practical flaws in gender planning through a macro-perspective are examined and shown to be gender myths. The village-up, transformative educational approach to gender planning relies on women identifying practical gender needs and strategic interests and unveils the usually “hidden and disempowering” concerns. The paper stresses the need to rethink and redirect gender programmes and policies.

Abbreviations

ADO	Assistant Development Officer
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CHC	Community Health Centre
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
FP	Family Planning
FWC	Family Welfare Centre
GAD	Gender and Development
GID	Gender in Development
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Programme
ISST	Institute of Social Studies Trust
NGOs	Non Government Organizations
PHC	Primary Health Centre
Rs.	Rupees
SC	Scheduled Caste
TB	Tuberculosis
UEE	Universal Elementary Education
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USNPSS	Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan
WID	Women in Development
WAD	Women and Development

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Background

This paper was commissioned by the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST), New Delhi to the Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi Paryavaran Shiksha Sansthan (USNPSS) Almora under the National Research Programme on Growth and Human Development supported by the Planning Commission-UNDP in September 2004.

The project "Beyond Practical Gender Needs: Women in North-Eastern and Hill States" aims to look into the strategic gender needs of women of some hill states of Northern India viz. Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal and two North Eastern States of Meghalaya and Manipur.

This paper presents an overview of the current status of women in Uttaranchal by focusing on various dimensions of gender-based choices, opportunities and action that confine men and women in distinct domains. Spaces that are created between men and women due to their gender and among women themselves are examined. As rural women of Uttaranchal establish an identity as active agents of change, they unmask inequities at household, community, regional and macro-levels. Five themes were identified jointly by the project partners as of particular interest. These are political participation, violence, health, access to land and property and education.

This report raises several issues from a gender and development perspective, and outlines specific issues for detailed studies.

Methodology

Undertaking this study has meant a review of published and unpublished reports on Uttaranchal brought out by the state and the non-government sector including NGOs and other institutions. Drawing on earlier ideas, frameworks and policies on gender planning and relating this to the ground-realities, this paper suggests some points of departure from the conventional approach to address practical gender needs and strategic interests and beyond.

The empirical evidence is largely drawn from the villages of the hills of Uttaranchal where an innovative movement for gender equality and justice has been kept alive by a network of community-based organizations and active women's groups for more than fifteen years now. The extent to which this movement has been able to translate strategic gender interests into practice is examined.

During the course of this study, six workshops, 2 days each, were organized by USNPSS in Almora. A total of 328 persons (323 women, 5 men) including members of women's groups, teachers and supervisors of pre-primary centres in villages, and members of community-based organizations of Uttaranchal participated. In the first workshop (9-10 December 2004), 61 women from 5 districts participated. The second workshop (Dec 12-13, 2004) involved discussions among 23 women representing 3 districts. In January 2005, 3 workshops were held Jan 4-6 (39 women participants), January 7-8 (69 women participants), January 10-11 (77 women and 5 men). Age of the participants varied between 22 and 68 years. Conclusions of focus group and open-ended discussions with members of the women's groups are incorporated in this report.

A state level meeting was organized by USNPSS on 29th November 2004. A total of 93 persons, which included 81 women workers and activists, rural and urban, from all over Uttaranchal and the members of the National Commission for Women, New Delhi participated.

The author (of this paper also made field visits to 14 villages in the months of December 2004-January 2005 for in-depth discussions with women and men in their own settings.

This paper incorporates the views and experiences shared by women of Uttaranchal during the above mentioned workshops/meetings. In addition, this paper draws heavily on our experiences of the last 15 years of work in Uttaranchal. The author would like to express her gratitude to all her colleagues in sharing and discussing their work and experiences.

(Report written by: Anuradha Pande, USNPSS, Almora)