

Dossier No. 1

**Institutional Mechanism for
Women's Advancement**



INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES TRUST
Women's Studies Resource Centre

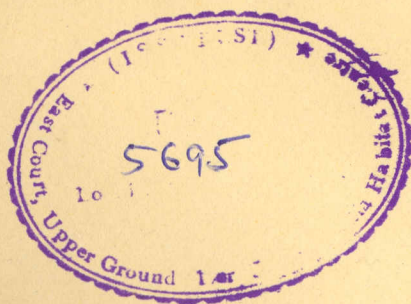
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Preface and Acknowledgements

In recognition of the leading role played by the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) in the area of Women's studies, the Royal Netherlands Embassy provided generous financial support to this organisation with a view to strengthening its information servicing activities under a three-year project titled the 'Women's Studies Resource Centre'. The project got off the ground in April 1991 under the dynamic leadership of Ms. Devaki Jain, who was the Director of ISST until April 1994. The basic objective was to develop the in-house expertise at ISST so that it may strengthen its position as a major focal point and platform for women's studies in the country, to upgrade its bibliographical and reference services, and to facilitate networking and information dissemination. It was envisaged that a series of dossiers on important areas of concern will be published by the organisation as a part of this project. This particular dossier is the first in the series of dossiers produced under the project. We would like to express our deep appreciation to the Royal Netherlands Embassy for the generous support they have provided to enable us to publish the series.

This particular dossier is, the first in the series, has been written by Ms. Devaki Jain. Extensive comments were provided by Ms. C.P. Sujaya. The support staff at ISST has assisted in the production and Ms Anomita Goswami has done the copy-editing. I would like to place on record my appreciation to all of these people.

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Swapna Mukhopadhyaya
Director, ISST

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Abstract

In a broad sweep of the canvas, this first of the dossiers in the series contextualizes the institutional arrangements for the advancement of women in India. It traces the history of such arrangements, investigates the available alternatives, and links it up with the women's movement and developments in research in women's studies in the country. In the process of doing so, it looks into the implications of the analysis for possible reorientations in the larger body politic.

Introduction

India offers a useful laboratory for the study of institutional arrangements to support women's advancement. As a nation, India has kept in step with almost all the suggestions made by the UN and other frontline agencies providing support to women. There are also widespread and growing non-governmental mechanisms for women's articulation.

India maintains a Parliamentary democracy, with liberal traditions such as freedom of association, political plurality (a multi-party system), as well as freedom of press, the women's movement is also a heterogeneous pluralistic presence in the national scene—reflecting the diverse political and economic perspectives. Interplay between the 'State' (its limbs namely Parliament, the Judiciary, and the Executive), and the "public" (namely the press, the women's wings of political parties and the many types of women's formations) has yielded a rich harvest of experience.

The Indian landscape offers a variety of experiences to draw from,—ethnic, religious, ideological and economic. It is possible also to offer a variety of 'models'—at least for the south countries—if not the world.

It is hoped that this study of the Indian experience in the area of institutional support for women's advancement, recording the milestones, describing the structures, processes, and circumstances under which they operated, will provide useful insights for future strategies.

Beginning with a discussion on concepts and definitions and their geneeses, the paper goes into analysing the emergence of pre decade instruments, and assesses the national machinery in the context of the Indian political and economic framework.

The study is divided into six sections. Section one discusses concepts. Section two, three and four, describe the Indian landscape in terms of pre- and post-decade efforts in structuring women's advancement; the autonomous women's movement; and the contribution of women's studies. Section five discusses change—or its absence—in Indian women's lives, and tries to account for it. Section six provides strands from the debate on structures. Section seven reviews the whole subject, and section eight proposes a mechanism appropriate for the South countries.

Section I

Concepts, Definitions and their Genesis

It would have been normal or conventional to refer to the subject of this paper as 'National Machinery'. This is a term that is being used within the UN system, within countries and in most of the literature relating to mechanisms for supporting women's advancement. However, the choice of the title of this paper is deliberate. It is this paper's argument that by denoting or describing the intention of supporting women's struggle for advancement with institutional mechanism such as a national machinery, the objectives have been thwarted. We might go even further to say that the term 'national machinery' is misleading.

National machinery as a concept, has not only been defined, but differentiated and distinguished from 'focal point' in a paper prepared by the Secretariat of the Centre for Women's Advancement located in Vienna. In this paper, the Secretariat says,

Two different concepts need to be distinguished—a national machinery and a national focal point. National machinery is a complex organised system of bodies often under different authorities but recognised by the government as the institution responsible for issues relating to women.*

Further, in the literature on national machineries, there are

* Extracted from a paper entitled "National machinery for monitoring and improving the status of women—a holistic approach", prepared by the branch for the advancement of women, Centre for Development and Humanitarian Affairs, 9 September, 1987 for a seminar on similar subject, Vienna, 28 September, to 2 October, 1987.

certain assumptions based on the above definition of the concept. For example, it is assumed that this is a *central structure*. 'National level' would mean that there would be a central office or a central headquarters. In that sense, it is a centralist concept. This concept of a central mechanism is further emphasised by the argument that it is necessary to have a centralised or a central structure which in turn would interact with other central structures like the sectoral ministries. This central structure would mediate in policy, again on the assumption that ultimately policy is determined at a central point. The role, then, of this central structure is to participate in such centre-based activities and to ensure that women's questions are drawn to the attention of all other central and therefore powerful structures.

There seems to be some debate on the *location* of such a central structure. There has been an analysis in the literature, a debate on whether it is more effective when it is brought right into the President's or the Prime Minister's office, "the highest authority in the land" rather than being in a Ministry usually Ministry of Welfare or Human Resource Development which tends to be the case. Another suggestion is that it should be located in the central planning body like the Planning Commission in India.

Thus the debate on location also moves along the same track—based on a hidden assumption that ultimately power lies at a central point. The closer it is to a concept of centralised power, the more effective will it be.

The third characteristics of the conceptualisation has been the postulate that there will be a *women's Bureau*. Thus we see in many countries the development of a women's Bureau as part of the achievements of the decade 1975-85. The UN system has directed the development of a Bureau of women's

affairs within governments as a goal and its achievements as one of the positive milestones of progress in countries during and after the women's decade 1975-85.

An attempt will be made, in this paper, to trace the roots of this concept of National Machinery and to debate whether conceptually it has been a facilitator or otherwise, in the overall goal of providing support of institutional support for women's advancement.

The second point in the area of definition and concept, which would be discussed in this section, is the criteria by which to judge 'advancement' or improvement in the position of women. The thrust of this paper is to look at changes in women's positions and trace back the factors responsible for this change and how far these factors have been the outcome of the industrial support mechanism including the national machineries. To this end, it is important to look at the index of change.

There are many types of indicators of change that are conventionally referred to. This paper would presume the indicators to be economic participation, literacy rates, health characteristics, political participation and so forth. That is, the quantifiable changes in the straightforward economic, political and social fields.

Broadening the scope of this set of indicators would be to separate them on the basis of certain social categories like class, caste, minorities. Further broadening would include the move from private to the public domain, such as the shift from home-based work and self-employment, and unpaid family work to wage work, work in factories, work in what are called the modern sectors. Similarly, in social groupings, the move from seclusion to participation in public activities such as public forums. So there could be a discussion on

change from "traditional domain", to what could be called the "modern domain". Even on this, there could be some debate whether such a movement or transfer should be given positive values.

A third dimension of looking at change, it could be argued, will be to see the change in 'visibility'. How far has there been a recognition of women and women's issues? In this case, the change cannot be measured in terms of actual changes in women's lives, but the change could be measured in social perception or perception of policy-makers or data-collectors on women's roles and capabilities.

It is important to list various approaches to recognising improvement. The reason this is being elaborated at this stage is because all of these three will form a part of the approach that will be used in this paper.

We return then to the first issue, namely the assumption or the premise that underlines the literature or the debates that we have had access to so far.

The concept of a national machinery, it seems, emerged out of the culture of the UN system. Most large bureaucracies tend to believe that in order to bring attention to any subject, it is necessary to have a bureaucracy. A secretariat, cell, or Bureau, to look after the section, collect the information, disseminate it, and safeguard the sector. Thus it is quite natural that when women become a subject of international interest leading to a UN decade, a mechanism had to be developed within the UN to handle the decade. The first step within the UN itself was to have a cell or a bureau. These Bureaus found it easier to work with counterparts. Their counterparts would be other women's Bureaus located in the heart of national governments. In that sense, the national governments would imitate the international model. Thus as

long as the Bureau in the UN could find a single place through which it could pass on the various mandates, issues, declarations that were the output of the international system, they would feel, in a sense, at sea. They would like to send them to a home in the national governments. Thus the UN system could not rest till it found its counterparts. This seems to be one of the reasons why the Bureau or the national machinery became such a significant part of the governmental structures around the globe.

What is the alternative? Some of the alternatives are certainly worse than having a Bureau. For example, the alternative of having the ministry for welfare as the receptacle. If the political system of that country is insensitive to women's emancipation, but argued that the whole ministry has the arrangement for women, then the Women's Bureau in the international organisation, whether it is in New York or Vienna, would find that its outpourings are lost in an "uninterested" receptacle. To that extent it is much better to have a receptacle specifically focused on women.

The tendency to ask for field organisations, branches all over the world to provide a platform or assistance, still persists in the international organisation. Recently the UN Voluntary Fund, commonly known as UNIFEM, has developed a similar arrangement. The UNIFEM feels that it must have an UNIFEM officer in every regional UNDP office. These officers, in turn, feel that they must have UNIFEM field officers even within each country. Today UNIFEM has regional officers as well as national program officers. In a sense, this is contrary to what UNIFEM was conceptualised to be. UNIFEM was to be different from the UNDP. The UN system has a special Bureau for women's affairs which works through the governments. The UN Voluntary Fund (UNIFEM) was

supposed to provide an alternative instrument to women's organisations which were not necessarily the government's bureaus, to have access to funds, and an international framework. UNIFEM was expected to play a catalytic role to facilitate non-governmental organisations not only to do a task which they were doing or which they wanted to do, but to make it visible to the official system.

Thus it was supposed to uncover, teach, catalyse mainstream small projects, and exclusive work with the non-governmental organisations. Today however, while the part of funding non-governmental organisations continues, it has not developed an innovative system of functioning within the countries and in the field. It still uses its own branch system. The example of UNIFEM shows that there is a compulsive tendency, for centralised controlling and regulation of information-communication methods, which are such that they require a central office, to regulate, conduct, retrieve and report. The UNIFEM concept has become model to follow, in the trend of funding. This trend has not been a response to the kind of needs that women have, in trying to bring visibility, recognition and transformation.

It is important to look at this aspect of the genesis of the structure of national machinery, if we intend to make an appraisal of its performance.

Section II

The Indian Landscape

(a) Pre and Post decade structures

As has been stated earlier, India has been one of the most dynamic and energetic countries in following through various mandates and processes of the International Women's Decade and its aftermath. As a result of the Resolution of the General Assembly, India set up a Committee called the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI), to do a complete review and bring out a report on the status of women in India. Thus, as 1975 dawned, India already had on its table, a report called 'Towards Equality', and could bring it to the World Conference in Mexico. Again, in anticipation of the International Women's Year, namely 1975, India had commissioned a book through its Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, which was released as the first event of the decade in 1975. This book, called "Indian Women", was a collection of essays by distinguished scholars dealing with every aspect of the evolution of women in the Indian historical context.

Following the report of the CSWI as well as the various recommendations of the international organisations, India initiated many steps towards setting up a full fledged national machinery. The description of the Indian national machinery, its inception, establishment, evolution, etc., are given in section (b).

What would be interesting is to look at the structures and processes that existed in India, before the evolution of the

more conventional national machinery, whose appearance, as stated earlier, was the exact result of the UN initiative.

In December 1945, Hansa Mehta announced in her presidential address that an "Indian Women's Charter of Rights" should be formulated. This was done by an All India Women's Conference (AIWC) sub-committee consisting of Hansa Mehta, Amrit Kaur and Laxmi Menon in 1946. The charter called for equality of the sexes as basis of citizenship, health, work, property rights and the family.

In 1953, the Indian government set up a National Board called the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB). The first chairperson of the board was an eminent woman leader, Durgabai Deshmukh. The Board aimed at networking with the various women's groups that were scattered all over the country, engaged in providing services specifically to women. Simultaneously, the new government set up two more "economic reconstruction" boards, the All India Handicrafts Board (AIHB) and the Khadi & Village Industry Commission (KVIC). These structures were "empowering" instruments not bureaucracies. For example the first chairperson of the AIHB was a famous woman revolutionary Kamladevi Chattopadhyay. The Board was composed of crafts people, designers and skilled workers. The chief executive was also a social and political worker. The government functionaries provided a secretariat to the Board, assisted at the grassroots—setting up exhibitions, design centres, skill transfers from master craftsmen, and so on. It was a network. The CSWB worked hand in hand with these economic boards, often with common Board members, offering grants to social institutions.

Many women's organisations became part of the AIHB & KVIC structures—a form of mainstreaming. There were

other large national structures such as the All India Society for women's Education, the Family Planning Association of India (which was largely a women's organisation). These were membership organisations with all-India dispersal. This approach and this network has over the last few decades, been marginalised for many reasons.

First, it has been argued that the network of agencies that the Central Social Welfare Board was fostering and supporting, were dealing with welfare and not development. It has been argued that the concept of social welfare, of women being instruments of providing charitable services, services which deal with women's gender specific, problems like maternity, child health, leisure activities, etc., is not as pugnacious as what is called development which hinges largely around women's productive role. The various "schemes" which were funded by the Social Welfare Board specifically dealt with women who are victims of social customs. It dealt with groups such as widows and orphans. It sought to bring women dropouts into the fold of education. It dealt with raising awareness for women on community activity and helping to organise very poor women to take up what today is called 'income generating activities', in the old days these were called 'socio economic programmes'.

The network had some of the ideal characteristics. The individual organisations were left free, they could go to the Board for grants, but the route was through state-level Boards, who scrutinised the proposals. The state-level Boards were composed of women from women's organisations dispersed throughout the state. No bureaucrat could become a member. At the central level also, the Board was composed entirely of social workers and public figures. There were hardly any political women or women from any party or the legislature.

The budgetary sanction for the Board's operation came from the Government, but the Board remained autonomous. Every year a conference was held at the national level where the chairpersons of the state-level boards and the central board members met to discuss issues and future programmes. Both at the central level and at the state level, there was a small secretariat, composed of what could be called 'government functionaries', appointed by the Board but paid for by the Government. Thus Government and the 'voluntary sector' had found a way of partnership, where the decision making and power rested with the voluntary sector and the Government provided technical support. For example, when a small voluntary agency applied for a dairy project, the state board had to find a technical department which would clear the proposal. Thus the Dairy Department, the Small Scale Industries Department, the Village Industry Department would be obliged to scrutinise and guide the Board's projects. For reasons which could be called encroachment, the Board's work increasingly got marginalised, as the decade moved forward.

It is interesting and ironic that by the end of eighties there was an increasing recognition of the fact that to facilitate the woman's progress, especially of those from the poorest sections of the society, a social package was a critical input. Thus, in the seventh and eighth Plans, there was greater emphasis on convergence of social inputs. There was far greater emphasis on the need to provide basic amenities such as water, nutrition, child-care centres, health facilities, literacy, etc., along with, if not, even before, beginning work. Most poor women were working but they were being ground into illness and death due to lack of proper support from the social/basic needs sector.

It could be argued that over enthusiasm to make women's productive roles the focus of the "new movement" as well as the domination of the international concepts such as setting up Bureaus and giving a major role to government, could be responsible for the erosion of these "indigenous" pre-1975 structures. It can also be said that with the entry of Government in the area of planning for women's development, along with the beginning of the IWD, the autonomous women and their structures began to take a backseat. Many all-India structures got marginalised with the advent of the concept of machinery and the concept of the international system of management of women's programmes.

(b) Decadal and Post-decade arrangements

This Section extracts liberally from a paper presented by Nandini Azad for the Commonwealth Asia Workshop on National Machineries for Women, called "Is Woman a Consumer or a Producer in the Development Market?" The women's Bureau at the crossroads in reintegrating women into the development process (India).

To set the context for a review of the process that led to the formation of the Women's Bureau, it is crucial to analyse briefly the history of the development process as it related to women. This analysis leads back to the period of the freedom struggle in which the constitutional struggle for women's equality was first articulated. In the decade of the 1920s, leading freedom fighters such as Sarojini Naidu, Margaret Cousins and Muthulakshmi Reddy voiced the need for women's constitutional Rights. In 1929, Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy opted for election to the legislative council as an independent candidate and emerged victorious. During this period,

organisations such as the All India Women's conference articulated the need for educational training as a critical input for women to gain access to constitutional rights/positions of power. Iravati Karve in Bombay and Vidyasagar in Calcutta advocated the need to train women for employment. In 1932, the Lucknow session of the Indian National Congress tabled the fundamental rights resolution stressing the equality of women.

The framing of the Indian Constitution particularly the Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Rights reflected the outcome of women's struggle for Constitutional guarantees. Freedom of speech, protection of life and personal liberty, equality before law and equal protection of the laws, equality of opportunity relating to employment/or holding of office, equal pay for equal work, adult franchise, maternity relief, etc., were assured in the constitution of other laws.

Three major development periods can be identified in India's planning process—(a) the period of community development (1950s) (b) the period of intensive agricultural development and emphasis on growth strategies (1960s) (c) the period of growth and social justice (1970s).

Mahila Mandals, or women's forums, were set up as the instruments to bring women into the institutional framework of Rural Development. There is a great deal of variation in the substance and performance of these "women's clubs". Some were registered, federated, some informal, most of them became part of the rural elite organisations with very few representatives of the working classes. The disillusionment with growth strategies led to the debate of growth vs social justice in the seventies and the formulation of poverty alleviation programmes.

Specialised agencies were set up with 'the last first approach' of targeting landless labourers and marginal farmers. The Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) made a comprehensive review of the situation and status of women. The major areas of concern provided as a framework of reference, were the early age of marriage for girls, high rates of female mortality and illiteracy, low rates of female participation in the labour force, internal migration and its impact on the employment status. The critical outcome of the CSWI report was the recommendations in 1976 for the establishment of a Women's Welfare and Development Bureau in the Department of Social Welfare (Ministry of Education and Social Welfare). The same year witnessed the drawing up of a National Plan of Action for women that would serve as a guideline not only at the national level but also at the state levels.

The Plan identified areas of health, family planning and nutrition, education, employment, legal provisions and social welfare and called for planned intervention for improving the conditions of women in India in these sectors.

The Women's Welfare and Development Bureau is charged with the nodal responsibility of (a) coordination and collaborating with other central government ministries (b) initiating policies, programmes and measures (c) collecting data and serves as a clearing house (d) monitoring programmes for women's welfare (e) coordinating the implementation of programmes at the State Government level (f) Servicing the national committee, the Steering Committee, Inter-departmental coordination committee etc. (g) following up on the recommendations of the CSWI the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies and other important reports. (h) Administration of legislative enactments or prostitution, dowry, *sati*, etc. (i)

liaison with multilateral/UN agencies in the field of women's welfare (j) monitoring 27 beneficiary-oriented programmes for women.

The Bureau functions under a Joint Secretary in the Department of Women and Child Development of the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The Joint Secretary in charge of the Bureau is designated as the Bureau Head, who reports to the Secretary in the Department of Women and Child Development and through the Secretary to the Minister of State for Women and Child Development.

To intensify efforts and measures needed for ensuring participation of women in national development, periodic coordination meetings are organised by the Bureau. These are with the representatives of Women's Voluntary Organisations, Ministries/Departments concerned, Central Social Welfare Board, etc., to review the progress of women's welfare programmes and to discuss various issues related to the exploitation of women and atrocities committed against them.

Women as a target group were originally part of the social Welfare Ministry, with a combination of programmes for reduction of physical disabilities, isolation and vulnerability such as old age/widow pension, working women's hostels, prostitution, vocational education, women were clubbed with the handicapped, children and other socially disadvantaged groups as targets. In January, 1985, for the first time 'Women' were emphasized as a special component of a newly formed department i.e. the Department of Social & Women's Welfare. Women still were linked with disadvantaged and handicapped groups. In September, 1985 the pressure of the Nairobi closing decade conference (July, 1985) and the awareness generated by it, led to the creation of a separate Depart-

ment of Women and Children. Particular emphasis was on the 'Women's Bureau' and its role as a coordination planning unit and an advocate of women's programmes and consciousness.

The WWD/Bureau also functions as a complaint cell, wherein complaints related to dowry demands, non-transfer of dowry" to the bride on divorce or death, dowry deaths, etc., are being dealt with. As a nodal point the WWD Bureau takes up various types of grievances. These include non-implementation of social legislations, non-compliance of policy decisions, guidelines or instructions relating to posting of husband and wife at the same station by government, Public sector undertakings, retrenchment of ad-hoc female employees, provisions relating to maternity leave, bigamy committed by Government employees violating the provisions of the conduct rules, cruelty towards the wife, desertion, unfair treatment or harassment of women employees, etc.

The Monitoring Cell of the Women's Bureau set up in 1985 has 27 programmes in 8-10 departments to monitor. The emphasis has been on reviewing targets and in a limited way assessing the quality of services (motivation, training and self esteem). The monitoring cell has no technological inputs to facilitate its activities through computer terminals or quality based studies. 80 per cent of the posts in the cell has not been filled up.

The second type of projects relate to (a) employment generation as a single goal (b) utilization of employment generation with backward and forward linkages. They also visualise an overhaul of production relations as a major goal. Under the first category are the five women's development corporations.

Since 1986, some efforts have been made to "mainstream"

women. The most dynamic of the programmes of the Women's Bureau in terms of ideology/approaches is the Support to Employment Programmes (STEP) initiated in 1986. The effort is to integrate women in the eight mainstream employment sectors namely agriculture, small animal husbandry, dairy, sericulture, fisheries, Khadi and Village Industries, Handicrafts and Handlooms. The idea is to take the need and context of each state (sectorwise) and create large scale employment programmes for women. Organisations of women producers have been visualised as critical to the success of this programme. An integrated and sensitive approach to implementation is adopted. Non-governmental agencies are involved in the organisation of women, sectoral agencies (such as the National Dairy Development Board are utilised) for skill training, and overall co-ordination is done by the state-level sectoral federations. STEP has major policy implications for Women's Projects in developing countries particularly in the implementing of the learning process approach to programmes within large bureaucracies.

In 1991, two more such "programmes" were planned by the Women's Bureaus. A 50-Backward-District Programme where the goal was to achieve female literacy, and the other an area plan which integrates women and children into development.

The Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) draws its funds through the Bureau. Some changes in approach and policy have taken place. Particularly, the awareness generation camps are now focused on building local leadership among women. However, follow up is rather limited. The health/education employment component have been linked to these camps. The other schemes that show considerable promise are the restructured condensed courses. They show a clear

focus on field level functionaries i.e creche workers, nutrition organisations, non-formal education and anganwadi workers. The approach is clearly to service rural-based organisations. The scheme of training of creche workers, also has added a critical input i.e. health practices. This scheme of training workers can be perceived as moving closer to the concept of the multipurpose worker at the grassroots.

At the Women's Bureau, all but the NORAD schemes for employment and STEP follow the schematic approach. None of these other major schemes have viably contributed to mainstream economic activity for women or have considered integration of women in the major sectors as crucial. The heavy emphasis is on blueprints and targets tied down to specific activities i.e. 'the planner' is the most significant variable in these projects. The flexibility of the process or changes at the local level cannot be dealt with in the blueprint approach to planning or development. The learning process approach is participatory—planning/action initiatives in implementation is upward, flows of information about problems are encouraged, and there is responsiveness to the demands from below (clients) as opposed to mere delivery of orders from above.

Section III

The Women's Movement

This chapter draws heavily from Kumud Sharma, 'Shared Aspirations, Fragmented Realities Contemporary Women's Movement in India: Its Dialectics and Dilemmas; Centre for Women's Development Studies; New Delhi, 1980.

The women's role in the national liberation struggle gave birth to several women's organisations which articulated the debate on the women's question and its essential outcome was constitutional equality and the legislative amendments in Hindu laws in the fifties. The Women's question and the implication of the principle of gender equality adopted in the Fundamental Rights Resolution of 1931, represents one of the most important of these unresolved debates.

The issues and areas that women's groups have taken up are wide ranging such as health, law, access to land and other productive resources, environmental degradation, media, rape, violence, dowry deaths, sati, wife beating, alcoholism, trafficking, police atrocities, prostitution, devdasis, women prisoners, communal and caste conflicts and gang rape of tribal and dalit women. Wide ranging issues provided space for participation to different groups of women. Agitations since the seventies on issues such as dowry/rape/crime and violence against women, have also shown the vital role played by information generation, sharing and dissemination by the women's movement and the media and the need for joint action. Acts of violence against women (Mathura rape case, Sudha Goel dowry murder case, Deorala Sati incidents) have drawn so much attention and emerged as

rallying points for women's groups, rather than day to day oppression of millions of women in their homes and work places. A sustained campaign against the 'sexist media' and finding new and alternative ways to create messages, to communicate and mobilise is an important aspect of issue based agitation such as street plays, skits, poster campaigns, songs and mobile exhibitions, newsletters, women's studies journals, etc.

Several factors have contributed to the widening of the debate on women's issues in India. The reassessment of the challenges of growth, development and equity shared from women's perspective has generated interesting debates on dimensions and causes of gender inequality. Growth of women's studies, the women and development debate, reconstruction and reinterpretation of 'her own history' her identity, her subjectivity, have all influenced the dialectics of the women's movement and its agenda for action. The connections between knowledge and practice are always problematic particularly within a complex and diverse society. However, the construction of social reality of women as an oppressed group, provides a point of departure.

The debate on development crisis and crisis in key social institutions, and a critique of growth models and their national and international dimensions, and analysis of new inequalities generated by the pattern of development and new forms of exploitation emanating from world economic systems, have given a new direction to the women's movement. The 'women in development' literature which began exploring and explaining the realities of women's lives and interconnections between macro-processes of development and women's disadvantaged situation, found many areas of common interest, such as the impact of technological change on

women's work and income, women and migration, female-headed households, women in the informal sector and in home-based production, impact of industrialisation strategies (particularly in export oriented industries) on women, women and environmental degradation, etc.

The official ideology of a 'soft state' committed to women's equality and development, occasionally gets expressed in various policy statements, however, the social reality of the majority of women presents a sharp contrast to stated policy objectives.

The concern for issues of marginalised groups such as tribals, landless and poor rural and urban women, women in the informal sector and mobilising them around survival issues such as fuel, fodder, water, forest dwellers' rights, minimum wages, working conditions, sexual exploitation by rural rich, bondedness, indebtedness, etc., separates the contemporary movement from the earlier movement by taking women's issues into new areas of concern. In the process, the relationship between educated articulate middle-class women acting as 'catalysts' and mobilisers in rural and urban areas, is also changing.

The concept of 'grass root organisations' of rural and urban poor women as participatory and mobilising mechanisms has emerged from the critiques of development models and the blindness to gender dimensions in development policies and programmes. Women's research and action groups have brought to focus the administrative bottlenecks and leakages in the benefits reaching to the poor, corruption, delays, etc. and the need for vigilant and strong administration of producers and beneficiaries.

The crisis of rural and urban poverty has generated several responses from voluntary action groups and provides an

interesting picture of the roles and perceptions of such groups relating to form, content and methodology of grassroots organisations. Do such organisations whose critical role is being recognised now by both the bureaucracy and the social action groups, besides increasing women's visibility to development planners and administrators, also 'empower' them? Do they equip women better to understand their in better understanding their oppression and to combat pressures from the family community and the exploitative power structure? It is also argued that while women share many of the problems of the poor in general there are many issues which are female-specific and to deal with such issues, women need to organise separately.

There are two distinct viewpoints about middle-class 'catalysts' mobilising the rural and urban poor. Some women's organisations believe that mobilising women for economic development is critical as it is likely to help them challenge the forces of oppression. They also believe that search for more effective strategies and instruments for women's development, has opened up a line of communication between the government, researchers and activists. The process of interactions has helped to improve the conceptualisation of women's needs, problems, roles and potentialities within the government, although it is highly uneven and there is still a lack of clear understanding, lethargy and misinformation at the conceptual as well as the implementation level. Insufficient understanding of the complex relationship between the achievement of policy objectives and women's active participation has hampered formulation of effective policies and programmes. The strategy of involving voluntary agencies in the implementation of Anti-Poverty and Minimum Needs Programme definitely assumes that such programmes should

build on people's initiative and participation. Government's recognition of and development assistance to grassroot groups creates a dilemma for such organisations as they are faced with a contradiction between their interests and state policies.

Some advocates of 'participatory development' have a negative view of the role of bureaucracy. There are social action groups which believe that "grassroot participatory organisations" are not something which the Government can promote. They mobilise women for self initiated collective action. Some of them combine mobilisation with development action and see such action as 'empowering strategy' by enabling women to sustain such struggles, while others support women's mobilisation for struggle but do not support the idea of women forming a separate forum to articulate their problems as women, and believe that women's issues need to be raised within all social and democratic movements. There is no doubt that there are distinct differences between grassroot organisations, promoted by the Government, by women's organisations who want to 'do something' for the deprived women, and grassroot organisations promoted by committed catalysts.

The role of such 'catalysts' has also come in for considerable scrutiny and criticism. The question of perspectives, leadership and their relationship with local organisations and leaders, funds (from both national and international agencies), issues of credibility and accountability, have been intensely debated. It is argued that in order to play the catalysts role, such organisations need to be independent of government and yet influence policy matters. NGOs receiving foreign funds face an added problem of being vulnerable to adverse propaganda. To be effective, catalysts need to have

credibility and trust of the people. While several of these issues related to 'grassroot experiments' remain unresolved, the growth of such pressure groups has definitely contributed to the debate on mobilisation strategies and the role of such organisations as a counter-force. There are, however, some dissenting voices.

The National Commission on Self Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector constituted by the Government of India, submitted its report with a focus on unprotected women labour in the poverty sector. In the preface of the report the Chairperson of the Commission, Ela Bhatt, writes,

"I learnt that these women are better fighters against poverty than their men, have more calculative, stable, forward looking strategies to deal with their own environment, yet the women remain poorer. Awareness has spread, though slowly. The new opportunities are gradually catching their attention. In every group that we met, there were one or two bright, articulate, defiant young women ready to act as catalysts for a better future. If left to women's groups and to poor women's own efforts, it is unlikely that such organisations will come up that soon and in large numbers to make a significant dent on the situation of these women. That is why the Commission has recommended to the Government to actively help initiate and maintain a network of grassroot level organisations. It is ironic that one is asking the State to support a machinery to promote action for change in state policies, but we have done it with great hope on the strength of the Foreword of our Seventh Plan stating that development is basically about people.

For many of these questions facing the women's movement, we have to find our own answers. Today we see ideologically disparate organisational forms, visible and

invisible movements confronting the concept of a *laissez faire* State and the manifestation of its various policies. Desai says that "at the end of the Decade a new scenario is visible in the Indian Women's movement. There has been a sea change in structuring of women's groups, in mobilising of women and in focussing on issues that concern women". Can we call it a women's movement? While agreeing that one of the major problems in the Indian women's movement is that of widening the base, she thinks that we would be ignoring the reality to say that there is no women's movement or that it is an 'urban elitist thunder clap' or women's groups are 'merely instruments of bigger political power brokers'

Section IV

The Women's Studies Movement*

The Women's Studies movement in India has set the basic tone of women's studies as being a continuous crusade in the cause of women. It has also obtained from the State a formal commitment of support to the cause of women. While the state has certainly not launched any major movement to restructure Indian Society and while its support to the cause has also sometimes been subverted by other political compulsions, it has at least been fairly generous with research funds for women's studies. Official data collecting agencies too have made considerable efforts to make sensitive their enquiries and tabulation programmes sensitive to women's concerns. Thanks to such efforts, India today has perhaps one of the most reliable and comprehensive data base in this field among all developing countries.

The women's movement is essentially a political movement which potentially involves all women regardless of their caste, class or other alignments.

This politicisation in women's consciousness of what was long regarded as personal has given women's studies an extra dimension which is not often shared by other academic disciplines. Therefore most researchers start as activists in the women's movement or become drawn to it in the course of their work. Most people, at least most women engaged in this field, have a sense of direct personal involvement in the

* There has been considerable contribution to this Chapter from the note entitled "Women's Studies in India Today" prepared by Nirmala Banerjee, Professor of Economics, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

process they are studying. Therefore, sooner or later most researchers get involved, in the women's movement. Activists too often feel an urge to understand the background of the discrimination against women. As a result they too try to systematise the information they collect and analyse it with a view to bring out the basic patterns underlying their observations. For both groups, there is therefore a heightened sense of participation in the lives of the subjects they are studying. This involvement no doubt reduces the objectivity of their analysis, and to that extent vitiates their efforts. At the same time, this kind of participatory observation is often more accurate, and perceptive; their hypotheses also can become more imaginative and bold. In the initial stage of a new discipline, such as women's studies at this juncture, these qualities can be particularly useful for highlighting its potential promise and therefore attracting new scholars.

What are the achievements of women's studies in India? One must first and foremost point to the impressive corpus of research generated over the past few years. A large section of this research has been devoted to finding and collating factual information about various aspects of the relative situation of women. This preoccupation with facts was partly because results of the long standing gender-based discrimination in India were so palpably obvious and readily measurable and yet had been so totally neglected by mainstream academics. To bring these facts into academic discourse was perhaps a fairly heady game. The initial framework given to research by the Committee on Status of Women in India had also been fact oriented.

A further reason for the preoccupation with fact finding in these initial stages could be the worldwide interest in the issue of women and development. Following Esther Boserup's

pioneering work in this field, the issue had become the main focus of the 1975 UN conference at Mexico for initiating the international decade for women. Following the resolution adopted by the conference, the Government of India, several UN agencies as well as other aid giving groups had allocated considerable funds towards research for investigating several crucial aspects of the existing situation of women and for designing specific projects to alleviate it.

In trying to analyse this data on a systematic disciplinary basis, researchers in women's studies have come to pose some challenges to standard concepts and models used by several academic disciplines. A major example of such a challenge relates to the concepts of work and workers as defined in Economics. While investigations at the practical level indicated that an average woman bears an enormous load of work and contributes significantly to her household's real resources, official estimates of work participation rates, i.e. percentage of economically active women in India were surprisingly low. Specially in some parts of India, official records indicated that not more than three to six percent of women were in the labour force. This apparent contradiction could not be resolved until two basic points were accepted: one, that at least in a developing country, the concepts of work and workers, if defined strictly in terms of their market orientation, are not adequate for covering the entire gamut of productive activities in the economy, especially those of women within the households. Secondly, however, objectively conducted standard official enquiries regarding work cannot but reflect the gender biases prevailing in our society because the concept of work is itself not value neutral. It is subject to various interpretations according to the ideologies prevailing within households regarding the image of women.

Similarly, standard formulations regarding labour market behavior and class formation have had to be modified to accommodate gender as a relevant factor. Not only is it a very important criterion segmenting both the supply of and demand for labour, it is also a valid consideration for determining a person's access to productive assets. As such, poverty and other vulnerabilities of assetless working people have been found to affect women to a relatively greater degree than men. This is due to not only class contradictions and uneven distribution of economic power within the economy but also to the intra-household notions about the status and appropriate roles of women.

In fact studies relating to the essential nature of households and families have become an increasingly important field of study in India. Here too, standard notions have been found to belie the reality. Households, are often portrayed as socialistic units where each member is nurtured to an equal degree and provided with his or her requirements to the best of the household's ability. Members too are all assumed to contribute voluntarily to their best for the household's well-being. Reality, however is quite different from these myths. Relations between different members within a household are far from being benignly complementary as is usually assumed. They are in fact dominated by gender and age-based hierarchies. Decisions regarding deployment of household resources reflect the uneven weightages given to the welfare of different members by authorities within families. These systems of weightages, moreover, are found to systematically discriminate against specific groups like girl children and young wives. These findings have given a strong impetus to women's movements to agitate against the State and welfare agencies urging them to dismantle their family oriented

programmes in favour of others directed more particularly to vulnerable specific groups of persons even if it is at the cost of undermining the authority and solidarity of households.

Another thrust of women's studies has been in the rewording and reinterpreting of social and political history with a fresh focus. Writings in Indian history have so far been mainly related to happenings in the public domain. And since women were by tradition excluded from that sphere, historical accounts by and large did not recognise the existence of this half of human society. The few women who found a place in historical legends or accounts were those who had broken the moulds and entered public life. Here too, records and judgments were strictly from the male point of view. In order to rectify these omissions, researchers in women's studies have been freshly examining standard sources, of historical material. These sources, of course are far from adequate since our traditions had given little space to women in social perceptions. Therefore historians have ventured further and further into exploring non-standard sources of information like oral reports, newspaper records, autobiographies, traditional songs and sayings, rituals and myths, women's portrayal in various art forms etc. Apart from setting the historical records straight, this work has contributed exciting findings regarding the evolution of ideologies in India and the uses they have been put to in social movements, formations, etc.

Cultural studies and literacy analyses are the new areas in women's studies where the tempo of work is picking up steadily. These scholars have drawn on several new developments in various disciplines starting from Philosophy and Hermeneutics to Political Theory, Sociology, Literary Criticism, Social Linguistics etc. Their work broadly fits in within

a few theoretical frames recently developed in the Social Sciences of which discourse theory and subaltern studies are some of the more prominent examples. An exciting mixture of concepts and methodologies borrowed from several disciplines combined with use of various non-traditional source materials have created in them a rich potential for analysis of social structures, artifacts and hierarchies. Special emphasis is also being given to the study of language as a source material. A related area of particular importance in India is of Comparative Literature and Language Studies, because they provide a methodology for exploring the variations in interpretations between regions within India of what appear to be ideologies shared by all: one example of this kind of problem could be the ideology of motherhood which, though common to most parts of India still has several different connotations in different regions.

For women's studies in India, these kinds of approaches can be particularly useful in analysing and demystifying the true nature of our gender relations. The process of women's subordination in India is loaded with insidious myths about women cast in such glorious images as Shakti the Goddess of power, Laxmi the Goddess of wealth or Annapoorna the Goddess giving food. These images are constantly reinterpreted from the standpoint of diverse ideologies and designed to obfuscate the long-standing traditions of men dominating over women. Fed on the beautiful myths from childhood onwards, and pursued by their constant reinforcement through the mass media, most women in India find it very difficult to cut through layers of obscurantism and face up to the vulnerability that is built into this gender-based power structure. It is only through systematic efforts to reconstruct each myth and popularising of that understand

ing that we can hope to build up a strong defense against this insidious process.

Women's studies in India is now poised to enter a new stage, a stage where generating adequate theoretical frameworks is going to be the need of the day. These studies now have a fairly large and reliable data base. There is an increasing perception among the people involved, of the various complexities and of the need for tools suitable for the field. Since most of the phenomena being studied are inter related, with multiple variables of diverse characteristics, there have been many experiments with interdisciplinary studies. No doubt the field has grown too fast for most researchers to fully master the concepts, tools and models of the several disciplines they draw on: these experiments therefore have sometimes left a lot to be desired. Nevertheless, examples of such successful interaction between disciplines are not hard to find. Notwithstanding these achievements, women's studies is still hovering at the periphery of the academic world.

Section V
Measuring Change

Women's status or position is made up of many diverse dimensions - their health, their educational achievements, the role they play in social, political and economic activities, their legal rights, and so on. So far, it has been customary to examine each such dimension separately as for example was done in the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India in 1974. This exercise was once more repeated in 1985 both by respective government departments and several groups of individual researchers. But a comparison between the results of those two sets of exercises only helped to highlight the inherent difficulties in judging this issue. On some aspects, there was a distinct improvement in women's achievements over the decade. In others, the change was not always positive or not as marked. Again, even when women had made some gains in a particular dimension, these gains were not always comparable with the gains made by men. Therefore, in spite of all this research, no conclusive answer could be given to the simple question as to whether or not at the end of the women's decade, Indian women were better off than they were at its beginning.

Also, although the publicity given to the women's decade in India was quite remarkable, few would claim that it was matched by purposive actions on the part of either the government or society. Therefore we are, in fact, concerned not just with what happened in this brief period of one decade but with what has been happening to Indian women over the entire period of development for which we have some sys-

tematic data. And, even a cursory examination of this data indicates that over this entire period of the twentieth century, these kind of inter dimensional contradictions and problems of aggregation were very marked. A few examples would perhaps make this point clear.

Firstly, on several aspects, women's position has moved in a direction tangential to the general trends that came about through development. For example, after 1921, the general standards of health began to improve in the country and life expectancy at age zero started going up; it went up from 19.4 years in 1911-21 to 26.9 years in 1921-31 and then to 41.9 years between 1951-61 (figures are for male population). Women's life expectancy was also rising over this period but in every decade it fell increasingly below that of men. Similarly, between 1921 to 1961 the all India employment of men increased both in absolute terms and also as percentage of total employment. But for women, this figure fell continuously in absolute numbers between 1911 and 1961.

Secondly for women as a group, different indicators of relative well being have been moving in different directions. For instance, between 1931 and 1971, disparity between men's and women's literacy and educational performance had been slowly going down (Sopher 1980) but over the same period, the relative position of the girl child within the family does not seem to have improved very much (this is discussed later in some details). In another respect, while women's civil and political rights have improved considerably, incidence of malpractices such as dowry and violence in marriage have certainly continued unabated.

The third set of inconsistencies becomes evident when one looks at regional differences in women's position. One finds that areas of similar rates of economic growth do not show

similar rates of improvement in women's condition. For example, in the last two decades, while economic growth rates of Haryana were comparable with those of Punjab and Maharashtra, life expectancy of women in the former region was significantly below those of the other two regions. Another example would be from a recent study of Rajasthan and Bihar which showed that in spite of a higher level of achievement on most aspects including female literacy, Rajasthan continued to have significantly higher rates of total fertility than Bihar.

What happened to women in different parts of India could not thus be explained only in terms of the level of economic development. In the pattern of distribution of the costs and benefits of development, gender had played an important but varying role in each region.

Multiplicity of variables affecting women's position is not the only reason why analysis of the issue of women and development has not been very fruitful. The approach from which this analysis is initiated is also vitiated by questionable assumptions regarding the relation between the two processes, viz women's subordination and economic development. One group of analysts consider women's subordination as a cultural phenomenon, determined wholly by past traditions. Economic development is then regarded as an extraneous variable which changes some parameters of the economy and society and hence also women's condition. But because no allowance is made for a possible interaction between the two processes themselves, there is no explanation as to why women of some societies respond more positively to economic stimuli or why some kinds of development policies are more effective in reducing women's subordination.

On the other hand, another group of analysts assumes that

women's subordination is entirely a function of economic development and each particular stage of the latter can be with particular forms of women's subordination. In this kind of analysis by Marxist feminists, attempts are made to link today's subordination of third world women with the experience of women of the developed world in earlier periods and stages of development. Others take note of the discussions introduced in the classical pattern of the impact on women of capitalist development countries of by the first world through multinationals (Decry 1976). This analysis errs on the side of over generalisation and makes no allowance for cultural specifications and burdens of traditions that affect the way in which women can be utilised by capitalist forces. After all if there is any truth in the much touted image of "nimble fingers" of the South East Asian women, then one must acknowledge the fact that the fast economic growth of countries like South Korea and Thailand on the basis of export industries sponsored by multinationals at least partly depended on the availability there of a large pool of women who were docile but hard working and who enjoyed full societal sanctions for participating in production work outside their houses. On the other hand, though labour was probably even cheaper in South Asia, absence of similar traditions of women working for wages outside agriculture must have inhibited setting up of similar foot-loose export industries there.

Actually in order to understand what happens to women's position in development it is essential to realise that the process of women's subordination is also a political one like that of economic development. The extent to which development can affect women either positively or negatively itself depends on the initial position of women—their capabilities respond to and to avail of new challenges and opportuni-

ties; The ease with which older traditions controlling women's social and economic responses can be altered also has a bearing on the pace and character of development. On the other hand, nature of development and the speed with which it takes place can also make significant inroads on traditional controls over women. Therefore neither socio-cultural traditions nor forces of economic change can claim primacy over the other as an explanation of women's position in a given society. Nor can one subscribe to the viewpoint which regards women as *Sarvamsaha Dharitri* (the all suffering earth) passively absorbing the impact of development.

Some indicators

(i) *Sex Ratio*

The figures show that in the first 80 years of the twentieth century, there was, in fact a continuously increasing deficit in the relative number of women in the Indian population. Experts (Visaria 1961; Mitra 1980) agree that this deficit is not related to biological differences in male and female birth rates or any systematic under-enumeration of women, but that it reflects serious differences in male and female mortality patterns. Since being alive is a precondition of well being, this higher proclivity towards death of women has to be considered a primary indication of their relative well-being.

A significant part of this deficit is not merely an incidental result of the many relative disadvantages that are generally the lot of poor women during early periods of development. Admittedly Indian women are subject to relatively higher morbidity and mortality rates due to a deliberate and vicious discrimination against the very vulnerable group of female

infants and young girls. Also, average age at marriage of women, their fertility rates, maternal nutrition levels, or access to contraception are all themselves fairly closely related to the social position of women in a given society, and therefore these factors too cannot be dismissed merely as indicators of economic backwardness.

For India, as is argued in the next few paragraphs, regional differences in the sex ratio exhibit a very marked pattern which has remained steady over a long period. This in itself suggests the possibility that the less than even sex ratios of India and its subregions are an important indicator of institutional factors.

An examination of the details of relative levels of age-group wise sex ratios and changes in them between regions and over time appears to suggest that economic development is in certain circumstances, capable of removing some of the handicaps and problems faced by women. These circumstances, however, are not neutral to the prevailing socio-economic traditions. Therefore, sex ratio as an indicator of women's position appears to be sensitive to both cultural and economic forces and to the ongoing interaction between these two in each society.

The number of women as compared to that of men in Indian population, or its sex ratio, is remarkably low and contrasts sharply with that of many developed and developing countries. In 1981 it stood at 935 women per 1000 men. Comparable figures for other countries are: 1058 for the USA (1981), 1034 for Japan (1980), 1053 for U.K. (1980). Or to cite examples from developing countries closely comparable with India in many other respects: sex ratio stood at 1008 in Thailand (1980), 991 in Malaysia (1979), 1011 in Indonesia (1981), 1016 in Burma (1983), 1066 in Ethiopia (1984).

This ratio, however, had been falling throughout the twentieth century. Officially it has been claimed that the figure for 1981 was an improvement over the earlier trend, which fell steadily from 1901 to 1971 to reach an all time low of 931 in 1971. However, some experts have argued that the very sharp fall from 941 in 1961 to 931 in 1971 was due to serious undercounting of females in the latter year. In that case, if we ignore the 1971 figures, the 1981 results still fit in with the secular trend of decline.

The latest 1991 census has revealed that the female-male ratio has declined from 933 per thousand in 1981 to 929 per thousand in 1991. The ratio has declined steadily in every census, save one, in this country. Does this indicate a further decline, an assault on women?

The statistical handbook released at the time of the Census results gives data for 1975-84. In this period female mortality dropped from 16.3 per thousand to 12.8 per thousand. Even if we look at female children below the age of 9, mortality dropped from 62.9 per thousand to 47.6 per thousand. In sum, women and small girls are not being killed in ever larger numbers through neglect. On the contrary they are surviving at a better rate than ever before.

Between 1975 and 1984, male mortality declined by 3.1 per thousand but female mortality dropped faster by 3.5 per thousand. The trend is even more dramatic in data for children under the age of 9. For this age group, male mortality fell by 13.7 per thousand but female mortality dropped by 15.3 per thousand. While more females die than males, the gap between them has narrowed.

If indeed women are faring better than men in terms of mortality, if indeed dowry deaths and amniocentesis have had no impact, why has the all-India female ratio fallen? The

question has been addressed by some academics, and they offer a number of possible explanations.

First, there are errors in data gathering. The data say that the female ratio rose from 930 per thousand in 1971 to 933 per thousand in 1981 and then declined to 929 per thousand in 1991. But given the inaccuracies inherent in collecting data, it would be more sensible to say that the female ratio has remained at around 930 per thousand from 1971 to 1991, and that the upward and downward variations should be neglected since they fall within the range of statistical error. This is the position taken by Prof. Pravin Visaria.

A second possible explanation is that there is a systematic undercounting of females in every census which is increasing with time. Prof. Mahendra Premi theorises that many census enumerators, do a perfunctory job. Some enumerators may simply fill in their forms on the basis of their recollections of a locality instead of making a house-to-house inquiry, they are more likely to recall the names of all males than all females, given the high visibility of males (especially male children) in our society. This will result in an apparent fall in the female ratio even if it does not exist.

Another explanation preferred by Prof. Premi is that the male-female ratio at birth may have gone up for unexplained reasons. Demographers in India have assumed 105 males per 100 females at birth from Independence onwards, and there is no hard data on trends. However, some data collected in 1965-67 suggest a rural ratio of 107.5 males per 100 females at birth, a distinct rise. Prof. Premi says that an increase of 6 per cent in the ratio of birth will translate into an increase of 6 per cent in a period of thirty years. If indeed there has been a slight increase in the male birth ratio, this could be part of the explanation for the falling female ratio. But we need to know

why more males are being born (the 1965-67 data predates amniocentesis). Much more data needs to be gathered and research done to solve this puzzle. It could be suggested that new born female infants are being killed, even before being reported and since born infants survive generally more males "appear" in the statistics now.

The number of females per thousand in 1985 was around 950 in Nepal, 940 in Bhutan, 940 in Bangladesh and 910 in Pakistan. In other words there is nothing peculiarly Indian or Hindu about a low female ratio. It is a cultural problem affecting the whole subcontinent with its mosaic of religions. There is no problem of dowry in Pakistan, yet females remain unwanted. The same is true of China, which has a female ratio of around 940 per thousand. Looking further afield in the third world, we find that it is around 930 in Papua New Guinea, 940 in Turkey, and just 840 in Saudi Arabia (this last figure is probably depressed by the presence of male immigrant workers). Christian areas seem to have the highest female ratio, which is highest of all in Botswana (at 1,100 females per 1000 males).

(ii) *Work Force Participation Rates (WFPR)*

In the entire elaboration of the hypothesis of work giving women worth, one finds little or no curiosity about what actually constitutes women's work and whether or not it could at all give a woman any worth. However, it has been shown by several studies that in India, though the line dividing men's jobs from women's has shifted very dramatically between regions over time, nevertheless it has always been discriminating. In each situation examined, women were allotted poorer and more primitive tools, and their work was therefore of less productive value. When tasks were

allotted to women, they soon became socially less valuable and came to be paid at relatively, poorer rates. Also, their tasks were generally repetitive laborious and physically exhausting (ICSSR 1983, Banerjee 1985a, 1985b, 1989). In addition, it is generally acknowledged that, being a part of the work-force did, not and still does not, absolve Indian women from the burden of housework which in many cases not only includes standard tasks of cooking, cleaning and childcare but also a lot of preparatory work and assistance in the family's economic enterprise. This extended concept of housework claims a significant part of most women's working hours. Therefore it would not be surprising if Indian women abstained from the generally poorly rewarded economic work assigned to them unless it becomes absolutely imperative. They would prefer to withdraw from the labour market whenever possible.

Moreover, apart from the consideration that in India and elsewhere, women's domestic work is crucial for the reproduction of the family labour, it is also a very common tendency in India to do equate a family's sense of well-being with the amount of time devoted by its women to domestic chores. Therefore, it seems logical to assume that families would withdraw women from the labour market and replace them by other labour whenever the latter is available cheaply and readily.

Furthermore, in the case of women, work is not considered as status-promoting since it is traditionally identified with women of lower social orders. Factually, too, it is the women of relatively lower social status who account for the overwhelming bulk of Indian women workers. The scheduled caste and scheduled tribe women have significantly higher WFPRs in all regions of India. Women's work and sexual

division of labour in India are therefore not of the sort that can enhance the ideological status of women through work, even though it may do so in real life.

This tendency to consider women's work as detrimental to family status exists to a greater or smaller degree in all parts of India and particularly societies in Punjab and Bengal.

It is found that even when women had worked all their lives and so also had their mothers, they did not favour teaching their daughters skills for the job market. Their ideal or dream was to get the girls married so that they did not have to do any productive work. Similarly, in their study of the garment industry of Delhi, Rao and Hussain found several unmarried girls working who were desperately anxious that their community should not find this out, since that would reduce their chances of making a 'good' marriage. Some of them were working to meet future dowry demands in their own marriages; but they felt that if the fact that they were working got known, this dowry demand would go up further.

Amniocentesis first caught the attention of the people of Bombay, when one advertisement supposedly claimed "Why not spend Rs 500/- now and save Rs 50,000/- in future? Indeed a frequent reason given for bias against a daughter is said to be that she is likely to create a financial problem for the family at the time of her marriage on account of the dowry demands and high costs of marriage imposed by the groom's family. Again, the incidence of dowry and other expenses to the brides family, varies widely between different communities within any region and also between regions.

Some argue that "lower female participation in agriculture and other economic activities—in the 'north' more than in the 'south' lowers the economic value of the women (and hence raises the compensating need for dowry) in the former

regions than in the latter". (Bardhan 1988, p. 479).

In the case of dowry, this kind of explanation is of even less relevance. Dowry, in fact, is usually much more prevalent in upper caste/upper class sections of a society. And, since throughout India, there is a strong observed negative relation between the family income/status and women's participation in economic activities, one can assume that for explaining the greater incidence of dowry in some societies rather than others the issue whether or not there is a tradition of women's work in that society is of not much relevance.

The spread of dowry to additional communities has been noted by many people, though as yet there is little systematic information about it. The point was brought home dramatically by a report in India Today on a section of the Kallar community of south Tamil Nadu. In this community women have always worked as agricultural labourers along with men. But suddenly in the last few years, the customary brideprice has come to be replaced by steep demands for dowry by the grooms. This traumatic change has resulted in many families killing their newborn daughters. One mother confessed to have killed four daughters in the last ten years. The report is being investigated by some college teachers of the neighboring town; their preliminary findings have confirmed these reports.

Culture determines social attitudes which in turn impedes the operation of legislative and other pressures to improve the status of women. If the question is asked as to what have been the real changes as a result of the activation of the women's question, and how far can they be attributed to the machinery or the women's Bureau, the answer would be that where there has been change, it has been part of an overall flow of change.

For example, if there has been positive improvements in literacy and health in the state of Kerala, it is not because of the women's decade, but because Kerala had a political ideology, namely socialism, backed by a history even before the advent of Independent India, where the social base had been made strong by monarchs and social reformers. The economic organisation also was built in towards minimum social security because of fragmented peasant holdings which was itself insufficient for the basic needs of nutrition.

If a decline in socio-economic status is noticed, again it is not for the presence or absence of a Women's Bureau but because there has been a general trend. For example, whether land use patterns and cropping patterns have pushed cultivators into the status of landless agricultural labourers, the push has been for both men and women, but stronger towards women because there were fewer of them as cultivators in any case. The Census of 1991, in spite of the doubt cast on the sex ratio trend did show that there is a decline if not a lack of improvement, in the status or the regard that is given to the girl child even today in India and in South Asia. This is in spite of the decade and the enormous awareness campaign pushed forward by organisations like UNICEF. There is a hard-heartedness in these societies which has not yet been melted

(iii) *Class*

The next indicator, namely class, caste and minorities. Most people would suggest that there has definitely been an improvement in the position of the middle class women in India. They are emerging as strong participants in media, in business, in the fields of public policy. But the same cannot be said of the masses. There, has been a decline in the intake of nutrition, or to put it in the other way, an increase in hunger

and death. In terms of minorities and scheduled castes, it can be stated that there has not been any improvement at all. Attempts to mainstream women against these castes and minorities have backfired because of the politics associated with the hegemony of these groups.

iv Visibility

In the indicator of visibility, certainly India has moved a great deal forward. There is a widespread understanding and awareness of women's productive roles. No programmers or policy statements could be issued without reference to the importance of women. Political campaigns are also tuned to evoke the sympathy of women and so forth. However, it would be nobody's argument that this has been the result of the Government machinery. This is directly the outcome of an articulate women's movement on a democratic framework.

Political Participation

The data on formal political participation shows a decline. Yet the data in terms of those states in India which have had elections to local bodies, namely, village level and district level councils where there has been reservation for women, there has been a burst of women in public life. In Karnataka, there are 12,000 women elected to bodies which are in charge of 100 villages (the Mandals). Again, this has not been the result of either national machinery or women's advocacy, but part of an approach which believes in people centered development and recognition that women as well as the subordinate castes need to have a quota in order to redress the historical imbalances.

Thus, whichever set of indices are taken, whichever layer is uncovered, the attribute does not necessarily lead to specific

ic women's machineries but either to an overall policy or to the women's movement.

It is for this reason that the Indian Women's Movement has been somewhat resistant in easy acceptance of what looked like an extremely professional document The National Perspective Plan on Women (NPP). An important illustration is the method by which women's movement across all parties would not allow this document to become the official policy statement. They resisted, it because it did not take into account the consultative method and the opinions and participation of a large body called the women's movement. Similarly, there was active resistance to the attempt to make the National Commission on Women a totally official structure with tentacles into research and grassroot organisation. This resistance, both indicates the historical development of the Indian women's movement and also the wisdom that no bureaucracy can deliver a subordinate group from its shackles

Section VI

The Indian Debate on Structures

India provides an interesting example of the debates on "structure". As the national machinery evolved and as India was responding to the signals given both by the UN and its specialised agencies, there was a debate on what kind of establishment would best yield results. The Bureau was established and at the same time, an attempt was made to establish Bureaus or Directorates of women and child welfare in all the states.

The National Committee on women was formed, but unfortunately met only once in 10 years. This committee was supposed to be representative of all regions and issues and the Bureau was supposed to act as a secretariat for that Committee.

With the recognition that women were an important element in the productive process, just as in the case of commodities like cocoa, coffee and handloom, an idea emerged that there should be a Women's Development Corporation which would be a public sector body with finances to fund economic projects. Once again, an attempt was made to set this up in all states with finances, with a Board of Management and a full servant as Chairman and Managing Director. This prototype was adopted from the Forest Development Corporation and other such "commercial" organisations. While these structures were being set up, there were several kinds of states.

First, at the level of the States, the question was raised in what way the Corporations would be different from the state Welfare Advisory Board which in turn would be differ-

ent from the Directorates of Women and Child Welfare? The State level Social Welfare Advisory Boards were trying to identify viable economic products for women and taking it to technical service sectors. The Women's Development Corporations were also trying to find groups of women to strengthen their economic role. The Directorate of Women and Child Welfare also wanted to show its ability in advancing women's economic roles. All of them were fishing in the same muddy pond of poor women, with limited resources.

A fourth layer consisted of the Rural Development Programmers, which had a mandate to identify poor rural households and provide them with credit - the universally known IRDP. There used to be some concern that many hands were trying to reach the same "handicapped" person, and as a result, either the same voluntary agencies were providing information to all the four limbs of government or all the four limbs of the government were pushing each other at the ground level. Thus, at conference after conference, the issue was, which is the domain of operation for each of these bodies? There have been phases where one or the other was in the vanguard, but as it stands today, neither the Social Welfare Advisory Board, nor the Corporation, nor the Directorate, has any specific achievement to show in the field of advancement of poor women, by way of either tangible changes in their lives, or in innovative approaches, or advocacy related to recognition of visibility.

The second area of debate was on the method which would be more effective—a cell in each of the different sectors, ministries, or a very large board with sufficient technical help, representing the various subjects. There was a further dimension to this debate, which was whether to have advisory boards attached to the cells or a body of all the cells in the

various ministries, called the 'Inter Ministerial Coordinating Committee', or whether to have the advantage of having advisory committees with the cell serving as a secretariat. The difference of opinion was between those who felt that within the civil service or bureaucracy, the hierarchies were so deep, that the status of the official who operated the cell would determine how far her interests or concerns and her suggestions would travel up the ladder of hierarchy and bureaucratic power. Those who were skeptical about the power of a functionary within the system suggested that if there was an advisory committee composed of women of some eminence and status in the public life, their advice would reach the higher echelons of administrative power, or even the political layers which supersede executive layer. Thus it was argued that if an MP was a member of the advisory committee and she found that the cell was not being taken note of by the higher layers in the administrative hierarchy, she would have more clout and better access to higher authority, the minister, or the chief executive, or the secretary to the ministry, than a young junior civil servant if she were in charge of the cell.

There are others who felt that within the system, coordination, and the fact that the administrative system had a certain amount of homogeneity and know-how to listen and react to their own officials, would be far better than having these advisory committees. Thus as usual it became a debate between a strong executive working within itself and those who had doubts about the power of the executive to enter areas such as women.

It is important to notice that these debates in India are a reflection of the character of the Indian polity. The presence of articulate women's groups, the newspapers which are a democratic phenomena, associated with the freedom of the

press which permits and provides a forum for articulating these differences.

As a result of these continuous debates on strategies curiously, India's attempts at developing various systems of national machinery has not emerged in any clear way. Assessments of the machinery, are usually negative. For example, in a paper written for the Commonwealth Secretariat, on integrating women in development and national machineries, an official of the ministry has stated at the end of the paper that the Women's Bureau in India has not been a success.

Similarly, attempts at assembling committees and structures within ministries to use government's clout to push forward programmers, have been turned on and off without any specific reason, except perhaps that they were never taken seriously. For example, the Ministry of Labour had an Advisory Committee on the Equal Remuneration Act, which was composed of trade unionists, women activists and women from the development research centres. This Advisory Committee not only met frequently to make suggestions to the Labour Ministry including its welfare funds, but it also set up sub groups and task forces, to specifically look at the statistics of women in the organised labour and also to look at recommendations for the Plan in terms of women's employment. This committee has withered away. This committee was replaced by a Committee for Women Workers, which took up the task of funding projects for women workers'—a kind of substitute or alterego for the earlier programme of the social welfare board. This committee also ceased to function after a few sittings. The Standing Committee on Women Education was dissolved into a national programme to raise the consciousness of women towards education, which has

built itself more on dispersed groups and particularly on non governmental mode.

In spite of this experience, even today, the Indian debate on national machinery continues to hum around the same concept of a central point. The long term demands of various national committees such as the Committee of the Status of Women in India, as well as Shram Shakti, the Commission on self-employed women was to have a National Commission on Women. The idea, was that a National Commission on Women would be an autonomous body which would continuously play the role of a watchdog, disseminating information, scrutinising policy and providing the basic promotional mechanisms. The Government which came into power in 1980 November had made a political pledge that it would set up this Commission as one of the responses to the demands of women. As a result, there was a draft Bill on the National Commission, placed before the Parliament. The Women's Movement debated every consideration of the National Commission on Women, the difference of opinion being between how much should it be in the model of an establishment, a bureaucracy, and how much should it imitate an autonomous women's organisation. Grave reservations were expressed by many experienced women leaders that such a commission could do no more than providing lip service to the cause of women.

Many of these women leader quoted the examples of other National Commissions meant for neglected or oppressed classes such as the Scheduled Castes, and showed that though reports of some of these Commissions were informative, critical of the government and often serves as indictments of the functioning of the State and society, the condition of those

classes had not changed. Neither had they received more attention nor greater security. It was feared that the National Commission of Women would have the same fate and that since the government would have felt a sense of gratification for having set it up, there would be no more need for the government to "look at women".

The misgivings about the role that the commission would play and how far it would fall short of the ideals with which such a Commission has been recommended have been increasing over the last year. These doubts were an incident where the caretaker government knowing that it would have to be dissolved, as there would be general elections in India at the end of May 1991 still proposed a panel of names for the National Commission, chosen to suit the government's purposes of patronage. Thus the case of those who conceived of the National Commission that it be a body representing the interests of women, and that the experience accumulated in the development research on women was to be pushed aside and this became more political platform for the party, rather than one for the cause of women.

The possibility of this distortion had occurred to those women who were debating the concept and who feared that once it was established, many of the codes of conduct and the dreams with which it had been conceived would be pushed aside by the political system. And indeed this is what is likely to happen.

The third perspective on the same experience can be provided by looking at categories of interest which are similar to the women's movement. For example, it is conventional to compare the cooperative movement, the environmental movement and the movement of Dalits, that is the subordinated castes in India, with the women's movement. These are movements which are basically demanding a redressing

an old order which has given second class citizenry which goes across in some sense the horizon of what is moral and at the same time, attract people's participation. They contain the elements of people centred development.

Environment and the cooperative movement, it has been observed by many analysts, have fallen by the wayside. None of the official organs have any convergence of interests with the movement today. The cooperative movement has become a government movement for cooperatives and the SC/ST Commission which was set up to safeguard the interest has become a separate government structure, whereas the movement is distanced and has a different voice.

It can be asked why it is that the women's movement has not yet reached that kind of "exalted" position - a hard structure without social support? It could be suggested that the women's movement has not become a heavy structure because it concerns women and the male dominated system is not bothered to take interest or to bring it to the mainstream as it has done with the caste or the cooperative movement. It is suggested that the reasons for it not emerging as a large-scale structure lie in the phenomena of female subordination and the lack of interest in winning as an important or a power oriented issue.

While on the one hand, using one set of indicators, it could be argued that because a clear national machinery has not emerged in India, it is a failure, on the other hand it could be equally well argued that it is a blessing in disguise, as it has affected the processes and the position of women from becoming the symbolic fortress.

But donors and the UN system want a National Commission. It is a simpler link to pour in the funds. It does not require a lot of work.

Section VII Review and Analysis

When Indian development is analysed at the macro level and when the question is asked as to why Indian development has not been able to deal with poverty and inequality and that even after 40 years, both poverty and inequality have deepened. Across all ideologies, the response that emerges is that the method or the process through which the transformation was sought, was not adequate. That, for a dispersed heterogeneous community like India, institutional framework required to design and implement development had to be at much more micro level, responding locally to both the genesis of the problems as well as resource and solutions. With this analysis, India proposes to go in for a decentralised system of local development management. This is called the Panchayati Raj. Within this decentralised system, a local development management, women have been given a reservation of 30 per cent of the seats. It is at this level that women can wield an influence on the allocation of resources, dealing with local issues of discrimination including violence. It is no safeguard for women to have a Bureau in New Delhi when there is a case of rape in a village in Maharashtra as had happened in the Mathura case. It is local politics and local political effort that will resolve the issues. Most of the issues and most of the experiences and the reasons for gender subordination are what could be called political.

The demand for a National Commission for Women is the result of a general feeling that we women need a body that is fully concerned with women, which ensures not only that information is given but interests are safeguarded, which

would provide for redressal of grievances and initiate the creation of arrangements to ensure justice and equal opportunity.

There is no shortage of issues that the National Commission could deal with. However, the effectiveness of its functioning depends greatly on the manner in which it is structured. The main thrust of this section is to argue for the central importance that organisational structure has for the Commission, and the need to reflect upon this aspect.

In one sense the formation of a central body might appear to contradict the moves being made for democratic decentralisation in the country today. The Panchayati Raj and other local institutions like the Nyaya Panchayats reflect the fairly widespread feeling that centralised structures need to be dismantled and local processes strengthened. Experience suggests that real change is brought about by making arrangements that provide an opportunity for people to articulate their opinion as well as to have that opinion translated into action. The success of many local NGOs can also be seen as the consequence of autonomy.

At the same time, it is apparent that there is a link between macro policies and local or micro-level happenings. If the Commission is to fulfil its objectives, it will need to find a way of getting in touch with what is happening all over the country, to intervene only where macro policy can be seen to be the cause of the problems. Very many local issues will be best solved locally. The mechanisms of signalling will have to be considered and evolved. The links with Panchayati Raj institutions need to be hammered out. The provision of institutional child care centres, could be left to these representatives, but a national policy on child care could be the work of the National Commission of Women.

Today there is also a widespread appreciation of the work done by local NGOs. Very often government programmes try to interact with NGOs as a result of their contributions to development activities. However, the problems of overlapping spheres of government and NGO work are immense. Two different cadres with different "ideologies" are being asked to do the same thing for different salaries, benefits, levels of security, etc. It seems preferable that there should be non-encroachment on NGO spheres. For similar reasons the way in which the National Commission hopes to interact with NGOs needs to be reflected upon.

Some safeguards have to be built into the structure to avoid the creation of an inward hardcore establishment. The Central Social Welfare Board which was designed to be a totally informal consultative body with non-officials all over India and then mobilised into State Boards, and with a funding pattern which is to have deep and broad extensions, has not found it possible to maintain the character that was visualised. The centrifugal process that centralises power seems to be almost a biological characteristic of institutions. This process is only strengthened when there is a limited availability of professionals—if the Commission draws from the given market it would also be drawing into itself the skills of dispersed institutions which are in fact working for the same outcome. There is the additional consideration that this individual expertise would lose the supportive skills of the home institution.

The challenge before the Commission is to evolve a method by which existing skills can be utilised without losing the local base and credibility that they have at present.

It might be possible to have a small core secretariat for the National Commission which would perform the role of

networking, information exchanging, and facilitating station, with access to committees of experts who are people drawn from the women's movement whether from professional institutions or activists, according to the special areas of expertise and experience needed. The Commission could then benefit from their experience and knowledge without stunting local initiative. If a large number of issues are locally resolved, on matters where national policy decisions are concerned, the appropriate committee could scrutinise documents and policy statements for comments and suggest alternatives. The central body then needs to consist only of a few people—a general coordinator with an information officer and focal point type personnel. The general coordinator should be drawn from the women's movement because a prior sensitivity to the kinds of issues that will be raised is essential.

It is necessary to devise a structure that would remain outward looking and responsive, and which would also respect the rights of women to determine local solutions, as far as possible.

Section VIII

An appropriate mechanism for south countries

The discussion on structures, namely the review leads to the pointer, that the most effective national machinery for a country like India might not be so much of a centrifugal structure, but a dispersed structure, heavily drawn from the women's movement, including the women elected on local bodies, with the state providing what could be called secretarial services, including a facility for networking as well as a clearing house of information.

This type of approach of providing institutional support to women in their quest for advancement, for redressing the social and economic structures which have traditionally been discriminatory, would perhaps be more appropriate for the developing countries than the kind of Women's Bureaus which have become the mode during the Decade and after.

The reason this is being stated is that the nature of the economy and society, including the nature of the State in most of the developing countries are similar. The major production and trade takes place in the "informal" structures of the self-employed, the small-scale industries, the home-based production. Often marketing routes and structures are both homogeneous and heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity, religion, levels of education, and urbanisation. Governments are, in some sense yet to settle down with a system.

Most of the governments are searching for a form of political system which provides the libertarian characteristics which all societies would aspire for, but at the same time the regulatory mechanism to prevent inequity as well as

poverty. The various experiments with types of democracy and types of regimes in the continents ranging from Latin America to the Pacific could be considered to be a search for a government which fulfils the various tasks which normally is expected of the State. However, it has been an unsettling time for the newly liberated countries. Even India which started off with one of the most solid structures, drawn from the British Parliamentary System, with what was called the 'iron frame', namely the Indian Civil Services, is now cracking. The Indian debate on politics now hinges around the question whether the parliamentary system of democracy is in fact appropriate in expressing the aspirations and getting back the fulfilment to the population.

Tanzania, Nepal and Pakistan tried various other styles of democracy—village democracy, basic democracy and so forth, but most of them have ended with one-party systems of military regimes. At the same time authoritarian States have not been able to either fulfil people's aspirations or even hold the people from protest. The most colourful recent example of this is Bangladesh, which recently came out of a period of military dictatorship to multiparty democracy.

In these circumstances, to expect the machinery for women to be not only launched in what could be called a nebulous State, but even more, to assume that this will provide a kind of vehicle to resolve issues which would impinge around neighborhoods and work arrangements which are usually local, seems to be like an implant which is not taking to the body.

Thus it could be argued that for the rest of the developing countries also, the machinery could be built from the grassroot organisation towards a federated voice whenever necessary, but providing a signalling system across micro or small-scale

organisations. The inappropriateness of the existing structure seems much more obvious when the root of the concept is traced to international systems which do not have the uncertainty and short history of evolution that the southern countries are suffering from. Further, most of the concepts and structures as well as the functioning of the international systems have emerged from the North which, relative to the South, has had a longer history of durability not only in the political systems, but in a more organised economic structure with citizens in greater communication with a reasonable base of social security.

The environmental conditions for making what we would like to call a networking instrument or a instrumentality for women which supports their struggles for redressing historical discrimination cannot be developed in isolation. It would require that the basic approach to social and economic change would also have to be pledged to people-centred development. The South Commission in its report "The Challenge to the South" has this to say on a vision for the South.

Development is a process of self reliant growth, achieved through the participation of the people acting in their own interests as they see them, and under their own control. Its first objective must be to attend to basic needs of all the people, any surplus, being fairly shared. This implies that basic goods and services such as food and shelter, basic education and health facilities, and clean water must be accessible to all. In addition, development presupposes a democratic structure of government, together with its supporting individual freedom of speech, organisation, and publication, as well as a system of justice which protects all the people from actions inconsistent with just laws that are known and publicly accepted. (pp. 13-14)

A people-oriented development strategy will have to take much greater note of the role of women; a nation cannot genuinely develop as long as half its population is marginalised and suffers discrimination. Women, who invariably bear a disproportionate share of poverty, also had to bear the major burden of adjustment to the crises of 1980s. Yet, in almost all the countries of the South, they play a vital role in productive activities and in maintaining their families and households. Thus, on the grounds of both equity and growth, development programmes must give due prominence to the specific concerns of women and ensure that ample resources are marshaled to satisfy their needs and aspirations. (p. 81)

A measure of decentralisation in economic management is needed to promote self-reliant and people centred development. In the past a paternalistic approach to planning has inhibited participation at the grass-roots levels, in both the design and the execution of development programmes. As the State, rather than society as a whole, is seen as the main agent of development, the result has been widespread apathy. Participation by the people can help to ensure that development activities, and the technologies, services, and inputs involved, are appropriate to the resources, skills, or environmental situation in the areas and communities they are meant to benefit. Without popular involvement, the absorption of new processes or the use of new facilities is likely to take longer, even where these are appropriate.

It is also evident from past experience that a 'top down' approach to planning modernization can meet with resistance if it neglects to take account of local and traditional knowledge. Most countries possess time-tested reserves of indigenous knowledge and practices whose continued application, where necessary with adoption, can enrich develop-

ment and secure wider popular mobilisation in support of development efforts. Through devaluation and decentralisation development planning should build upon the reserves of knowledge and experience at the grassroots level". (p. 121)

Without such an approach, the poorer countries of the world will not be able to either move forward economically nor contain their societies from complete breakdown. Thus the countries of the South come together to pledge an approach which starts from the people, the institutional arrangements for women to participate would have the kind of environment within which they would flourish. And a structure as described in Section VII would be appropriate.

It can also perhaps be argued that even if the overall economy does not accept people-centred development, women as a force, by setting up systems which challenge the top down approach and which are developed out of the local strength of women, could show the way. They could be the layer to build up a more democratic and more efficient system of government for the developing countries.

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Dossier No. 2

Statistical Base for Gender-Sensitive Local Level Planning: A Review



INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES TRUST

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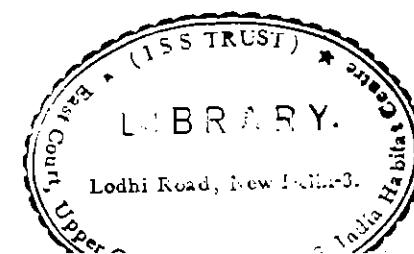
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Preface and Acknowledgements

In recognition of the leading role played by the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) in the area of Women's studies, the Royal Netherlands Embassy provided generous financial support to this organisation with a view to strengthening its information servicing activities under a three-year project titled the 'Women's Studies Resource Centre'. The project got off the ground in April 1991 under the dynamic leadership of Ms. Devaki Jain, who was the Director of ISST until April 1994. The basic objective was to develop the in-house expertise at ISST so that it may strengthen its position as a major focal point and platform for women's studies in the country, to upgrade its bibliographical and reference services, and to facilitate networking and information dissemination. It was envisaged that a series of dossiers on important areas of concern will be published by the organisation as a part of this project. This particular dossier is the second in the series of dossiers produced under the project. We would like to express our deep appreciation to the Royal Netherlands Embassy for the generous support they have provided to enable us to publish the series.

An earlier version of this dossier was prepared by Ms Devaki Jain and Ms Arpita Chattopadhyay. The present revised version has been written by Dr Mukul Mukherji. The support staff at ISST has assisted in the production and Ms Anomita Goswami has done the copy-editing. I would like to place on record my appreciation to all of these people.

March 31, 1995

Swapna Mukhopadhyay
Director, ISST

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Abstract

Dossier 2, "A Statistical Base for Gender-Sensitive Local Level Planning", attempts to identify the gender-specific gaps in the existing statistical system. It emphasises the need to fill up these data gap at different subnational levels such as district and block level. This will improve planning and designing of the development programme for women.

The dossier is divided into four sections. Section I presents the rationale for having gender-specific data. Section II lists the different sources of data. Section III presents and analyses the various census data available, and identifies the major lacunae in the system. Section IV suggests purposeful use of the available data.

Section I

A Rational Approach towards Development of Statistics on Women

The significant role that women play in the socio-economic development of Third World countries is now recognised, but unfortunately this awareness has not been translated into planning practices in most societies, including ours. Much of this is due to the inability to satisfactorily capture women's multiple roles as producers, consumers, mothers, family-heads, etc. and the consequent lack of appropriate statistical systems and data banks which take gender as an important variable and analytical category.

It has been stated almost too often that adding gender lines to statistical presentations has to be a thoughtful and discriminating exercise. Merely adding 'F' to a column or row is of little use. In addition, stressing the need to be selective in adding a gender content to data streams, feminists have challenged the values, concepts, and classificatory systems as well as the organisation and method of collecting statistics.

It is on the lines of such a critique of the status quo that this paper builds its appraisal of the existing streams of data, and presents its recommendations with reference to a universally accepted instrument of efficient and equity-building development, namely the local planning and development body.

Food, Fuel, and Fodder—the three Fs—are the main domains of women, both as producers and users. The food chain has many layers and sequences—vertical as well as horizontal—ranging from food production to food storage, food processing and food consumption. Fuel and fodder are land-

based outputs—fuel from energy plantation, fodder from grass/trees. What crops are grown, directly affects women both nutritionally and physically in terms of drudgery. What trees are grown affects income and physical burden. Choices of land use, technologies of production, even methods of distribution, affect women. Thus, if all the data necessary for decision-making in favour of women, or at least to not neglect women, has to be marshalled—starting with their time disposition and going on to land types and crops—one would run into unmanageable volumes. Therefore, drawing out the threads of data into a space relevant to a context, becomes a critical determinant for the development of a statistical system for women.

Guidelines for the generation and presentation of gender-sensitive statistics have to be addressed to a specific gender advocacy receptacle. This is true of all areas where there is an interest group and where the group is also 'subordinate' or 'less visible'. It is also necessary to link the data flow to an appropriate mechanism/process for its effective utilisation.

This paper presents a case for starting from one such mechanism—the decentralised local body or Panchayati Raj, as it is popularly known—and then drawing existing as well as potential data to facilitate the functions of this mechanism or instrument. The Panchayati Raj mechanism, which may also be called the Democratic Decentralisation of Planning and Development (DDPD), constitutes a base for improving women's power and participation in planning and development.

Recent amendments to the Panchayati Raj seek to empower women by reserving for them a third of the total seats in the grassroot political bodies. It is estimated that if all the states were to implement these provisions, almost eight lakh

women will be associated with local-level decision making. The Panchayati Raj system can thus provide the base for empowering women and for improving their participation in local level planning and development.

The instrument of a local institution can be fully utilised by women only if they can function as well-informed participants by way of articulating their perceptions and needs, preparing project proposals, running programmes, conducting evaluations, etc.

In this context, some basic questions arise with regard to the nature of the data, its periodicity as well as its link to other streams of data, such as macro-level data. These questions need to be addressed in order for these local bodies to successfully safeguard the interests of women, and to enhance their role in society and in the economy. These questions form the background for a preliminary mapping of the official data sets, in this paper.

The following section makes a columnar presentation on data availability regarding selected aspects of women's lives, and is confined mainly to official sources.

Non-availability of suitably cross-classified data at the lowest administrative units often becomes a major constraint in decentralised planning and development. An attempt has been made to construct a disaggregation profile of the data streams, wherever possible, showing distribution by age, sex, education, marital status, industrial category, sector (rural/urban) and region (state/district/village), and also by social groups (scheduled castes/tribes).

A brief commentary on data sources is provided in Section III and the last section discusses issues related to a more purposive use of data for equity-based social action.

Section II

Data Availability on Women

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Coverage/ Disaggregation Profile</i>	<i>Additional Data Required</i>
1. Demographic characteristics			
1.1 Fertility	Decennial Population Census (Fertility Tables)	Currently married women by present age and births during last year, by birth order	
	Currently married women by present age, number of surviving children: disaggregated by districts, sector (Rural/Urban), level of education, occupation, social groups (SC/ST)	Sub-district level information	
	Sample Registration System (SRS): Office of the Registrar General of India (RGI)	Age-specific fertility rates, medical, attention at birth	Sub-state level data
1.2 Mortality	SRS	Age-specific death rate, neo-natal, peri-natal and post-natal mortality rates, infant mortality rate (IMR), child mortality rate, type of medical attention before death	Local-level data; gender-specific data on medical attendance at death

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Coverage/ Disaggregation Profile</i>	<i>Additional Data Required</i>
1.3 Morbidity	SRS	Survey of causes of death: percentage distribution of deaths by major causes and sex	Local-level data
	National Sample Survey (NSS): 28th & 42nd	Utilisation of medical services	
1.4 Nuptiality	Population Census	Ever married and currently married women by present age and age at marriage: disaggregated by districts (educational and occupational disaggregation by states)	
1.5 Sex Ratio	Population Census	District-level data available	
	NSS : 43rd Round (July 1987 - June 1988)	Sex ratio for female headed households (FHH)	
1.6 Migration	Population Census	Disaggregation by age, sex, reasons for migration, industry, occupation, sector (U/R)	Local level data

Subject	Source	Coverage/ Disaggregation Profile	Additional Data Required
2. Labour Force and Employment			
2.1 Labour force participation rates (economically active population)	NSS 43rd Round	Disaggregation by age, sex, sector R/U, employment status (usual status/ weekly status/ daily status)	
2.2 Work participation rates	"	Disaggregated by age, sex, sector (R/U), education	
2.3 Industrial classification of workers other than cultivatory and agricultural labourers	Population Census (Economic Tables)	Disaggregation by sex, districts, sector R/U, divisions and groups of National Industrial Classifications (NIC)	
2.4 Industrial Classification of workers in household industries; non-household industries; trade, business, professions and service	Population Census (Economic Tables)	Disaggregation by sex, districts, sector (R/U), divisions and groups of National Industrial Classifications (NIC)	
2.5 Occupational " classification of workers other than cultivators and agricultural labourers		Disaggregation by sex, age, sector (R/U)	Local-level data

Subject	Source	Coverage/ Disaggregation Profile	Additional Data Required
2.6 Unemployment rates: number of persons in the labour force (employed and unemployed taken together)	NSS 43rd Round	Disaggregation by age, sex, sector (R/U)	
2.7 Non-workers seeking/ available for work, classified as worked before or never worked before	Population Census	Disaggregation by age, sex, sector (R/U)	
2.8 Employees in the organised sector	Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGE&T): Employment Market Information (EMI)	Disaggregation by states, industry (3-digit level), sex, sector (public/private)	
2.9 Employment in factories	Central Statistical Industrial Statistics Wing	State-level data on average number of workers, number of mandays worked	Sex-specific data
2.10 Employment in the unorganised sector	Economic Census	Disaggregation by type of enterprise	Sex-specific data on owner

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Coverage/ Disaggregation Profile</i>	<i>Additional Data Required</i>
2.11 Employment in fishing	Livestock Census	Disaggregation by sex	Sex-specific data on persons deriving livelihood from other livestock
2.12 Job-seekers on live registers employment exchanges	DGE&T and Labour Bureau	Disaggregation by age, sex, occupation, education	Local-level data
2.13 Wages	NSS 43rd Round	Disaggregation by industry, age, sex, for all states.	"
	Agricultural and Rural Labour Enquiries, Agricultural Wages Series (Ministry of Agriculture, GOI)	Agricultural (and non-agricultural) wages by sex, agricultural operations	
2.14 Maternity benefits paid to women workers in factories	Chief Inspector of Factories	State-level data available	

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Coverage/ Disaggregation Profile</i>	<i>Additional Data Required</i>
3. Health and Family Welfare	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare	Utilisation of material and child health services, immunisation of mother and child, family planning statistics disaggregated by family planning methods, couple protection rates, etc..	Sex-wise data for immunisation of Children
	NSS 42nd Round	Percentage of mothers receiving pre-natal and post-natal care disaggregated by states	Local level data
		Percentage of domiciliary births disaggregated by type of attention	"
4. Nutrition	NSS 27th, 28th and 32nd Rounds (Oct.72-Sept.73; Oct.73-June 74 and July 77-June 78)	Per capita intake of nutrients, morbidity, etc.	Sex-specific data
	National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau: Report	State-level data on average daily food intake disaggregated by population groups; anthropometric measurement and nutritional deficiency disaggregated by age and sex.	

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Coverage/ Disaggregation Profile</i>	<i>Additional Data Required</i>
5. Education	Population Census	Literacy by age, sex, industry; persons attending school/college by completed level of education disaggregated by age and sex; villages and towns with educational facilities	
	Ministry of Human Resource Development	Enrolment by classes and sex; enrolment in professional education; Gross Enrolment Ratio at different levels, by age and sex; Drop Out Rate by classes; Retention Rate by sex; enrolment of women in adult education centres	Sex-wise data on drop outs, with causes
	National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT): All India Educational Survey	Enrolment by age and sex, habitation/population by distance to primary school	
6. Assets, access and participation in decision making	NSS Debt Investment Surveys: 37th Rounds (Jan-Dec 1982)	Asset-holding and indebtedness by house-hold type, assets and liabilities of rural households; duration and purpose of loan.	Data on female headed households

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Coverage/ Disaggregation Profile</i>	<i>Additional Data Required</i>
6.1 Assets (and indebtedness)		Disaggregated by sector (R/U), social groups/ (SC/ST)	
6.2 Landholding	Agricultural Census	District-wise data on tenancy, number of holdings area operated and average size. (Data on SC/ST available)	Land and agricultural inputs held by female headed households
	NSS 37th Round	Different aspects of household ownership and operational holdings	
6.3 Credit	Department of Rural Development	Rural credit by NABARD commercial and cooperative banks	Flow of Credit to female headed households.
	State Departments	Type-wise number of cooperative societies in different states including women's cooperative societies	Number of women members and facilities. extended to them; local-level data
6.4 Membership of Trade Unions	DGE&T	Aspects of trade union activity	Information on women's participation in Trade Unions at the local level

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Coverage/ Disaggregation Profile</i>	<i>Additional Data Required</i>
6.5 Women's participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions	Administrative Intelligence Division, Dept. of Rural Development	Details of elected and nominated women members in local bodies	Village-level data
6.6 Programme Statistics	Evaluation Reports on important social welfare/poverty alleviation programmes such as Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Integrated Child Development Programme (ICDS), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), etc.	Details of benefits/services offered to recipients and their socio-economic background	Information on women beneficiaries

Section III

Commentary on Columnar Presentation

Population Census

Until 1951, the decennial population census was the single major source of data on the size and socio-economic characteristics of India's population. During these censuses each Indian household was visited by census enumerators with questionnaires, on an individual as well as household basis. Thus, the census provides universal coverage and also considerable geographical disaggregation. A large volume of data is available at the district level and some even at the town or village levels. The scope and cross - classification of census tables have increased appreciably with the passage of time as is evident from the tabulation plan of the 1991 census.

The village directories contained in the District Census Handbooks useful information on land-use patterns, availability of amenities (drinking water, medical unit, school, communication, etc.) and industrial classification of workers disaggregated by sex. These village-based data could be more intensively scanned to meet the requirements of micro-level planning with a special focus on the needs of poor women in rural areas.

Census data, however, have their own limitations. Apart from the problems of comparability arising out of changing concepts and definitions, a major concern now is the inadequate visibility of women in census statistics, particularly as economic agents. The census definition of 'work' applies only partially and narrowly to women's work which is typically spread over a variety of family support activities

including non-market and un-remunerated production. Up to 1981 the only category of unpaid work recognised by the census was that associated with cultivation. According to the 1991 census, 'work' connotes participation in any economically productive activity and includes unpaid work on farm and, for the first time, in family enterprises.

Sample Registration System (SRS)

An efficient vital registration system can yield important indicators to aid planning and evaluation of health programmes—an area inextricably linked to women's welfare. Our civil registration system being woefully inadequate for the purpose of generating quick and reliable estimates for vital rates, an alternative agency has been evolved by the office of the Registrar General of India (RGI) in the shape of the Sample Registration System (SRS) which came into being in 1964-65. With its initial sampling frame based on the 1961 population census, the main constituents of the SRS are: (i) a base line survey of the resident population of the sampling unit, (ii) continuous (longitudinal) recording of birth and death rates by enumerators; (iii) independent periodic (half-yearly) surveys of vital events by supervisors; (iv) matching of vital events noted in longitudinal and periodic surveys and (v) field verification of discrepancies between the two sets of observations, if any.

The SRS also generates additional measures/indicators related to demographic characteristics of the population which are published by the RGI, an important data source being the *SRS Bulletin*. These additional indicators include age-specific death rate, infant mortality rate, fertility levels, medical attention at birth etc. all of which have a direct bearing on women's situation.

A notable advantage of the SRS is its dual recording procedure which builds in self-checking. At the same time there is a growing realisation that the system needs to be closely evaluated in order to make it more effective. Important areas where improvements have to be made relate to the maternal mortality pattern, cross-classification of infant mortality rate by parity and age of mother and gender disaggregation of persons receiving medical attention at death. Again, though the RGI releases a host of yearly data on various aspects of birth and death rates through the SRS, such data do not exist at the district level—a serious lacuna that has to be in order for the SRS to be able to make its contribution to policy formulation at the local level.

Survey of Causes of death

Information on causes of death is an important element in any vital statistical system. Morbidity statistics being scarce, planning and administration of health services have to depend largely on mortality statistics which also reflect the prevailing pattern of morbidity. Since 1958 data on causes of death are being brought out by the RGI in its annual publication *Vital Statistics of India*.

National Sample Survey (NSS)

Since its inception in 1950, the National Sample Survey Organisation has been conducting nation-wide surveys on a sample basis for collecting different categories of socio-economic statistics. These multi-subject integrated surveys are conducted in successive rounds, each round investigating issues of current interest. The NSS generates a much wider variety of data than the census, and at more frequent intervals, but these are not disaggregated below the state level. A

large number of household and population characteristics are estimated, including consumer expenditure, landholding, activity and employment status, industrial and occupational classifications, etc. The NSS uses a stratified two-stage sampling design, and covered about 14,000 villages and urban blocks and about 1.3 lakh households in its 43rd round.

There have, so far, been four National Sample Surveys on employment/unemployment: the 27th Round (1972-73), the 32nd Round (1977-78), the 28th Round and the 43rd Round (1987-88). Labour-force data from these special surveys are presented under three heads which also constitute three alternative measures of employment, unemployment and under-employment. The number of persons usually employed is shown by the usual status approach, which takes into account the activity (or inactivity) on which a person's major time is spent during a reference period of 365 days prior to the survey. The current weekly status data show the number of persons employed in a week under the priority-cum-major time criterion, the reference period being seven days prior to the survey. In the current daily status approach the unit of classification is not the individual but labour time so that "the aggregate of person classified under the different activity categories for all seven days of the week divided by seven days of the week divided by seven would give the distribution of person/person days by activity category on an average day out of the survey period of one year". In other words, this approach shows the average number of person-days employed per day.

Like the census NSS data too suffer from problems of comparability, as coverage and concepts often vary from Round to Round, limiting the validity of long-term trends. Data are usually available after a time lag

and some times only at the all-India level, reducing their relevance for policy making at lower spatial units.

An innovation introduced by the NSS relates to canvassing of certain 'probing questions' which shed light on the gamut of activities undertaken by women classified as 'engaged in household duties' i.e. non-workers. These questions elicit information on the types of income-generating activities preferred by women respondents, as well as the resource needs perceived by them (training, credit, raw materials etc.) Significant as they are, such state-level data have limited utility at local-level planning. It has been suggested, therefore, that the NSS can make a valuable contribution to existing data banks by enlarging its sample size and generating selective statistics at the district level.

Agricultural and Rural Labour Enquiries

There have been four special household surveys focussing on agricultural/rural labour, conducted by the Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour, Govt. of India. The first two, known as the Agricultural Labour Enquiries (1950-51 and 1956-57) were followed by the first and second Rural Labour Enquiries (RLEs) (1964-65 and 1974-75). Besides agricultural labour households and those self-employed in agriculture, the RLEs also include other rural labour households and provide a wealth of data highly relevant for rural development in general and women in agriculture, in particular. Regrettably, there is hardly any evidence of this body of data being utilised for policy/programme formulation. The last RLE focuses on four specific aspects of the rural economy: (i) indebtedness; (ii) wages and earnings, (iii) employment and unemployment and (iv) household income and expenditure. It also contains detailed information on consumption expenditure

patterns for the various types of households including female-headed households. The household approach of the RLE, however, conceals intra-household disparities that primarily affect women and require remedial action.

Economic Census

The Economic Census is a recent but valuable addition to mainstream data. It was initiated in 1977 to fill the serious data gaps in the unorganised segments of the non-agricultural sector of the economy. This scheme envisages detailed sample surveys of such segments, and collects information on the nature of enterprise, its location, type of ownership, number of persons employed, type of power/fuel used, etc.

Data collected in each product category is at a 4-digit level of National Industrial Classification (NIC) and includes practically all agricultural services (e.g. harvesting, threshing spraying insecticides, etc.) as well as processing of agricultural produce (such as grinding, milling of grains, etc.) The Economic Census, therefore, provides vital information for policy and programme formulation with respect to the unorganised sector.

However, a fairly simple procedure—introduction of a column showing 'sex of owner' after the column on 'social group of owner'—would enhance the utility of data by generating crucial insights on the characteristics of female-owned enterprises in the unorganised sector. Agricultural enterprises with a large presence of women workers could then be included for monitoring and planning for rural women. The follow-up surveys of the Economic Census for more detailed information concentrate on a particular type of enterprise (trade, manufacturing, etc.). As these surveys are not conducted for agricultural enterprises, parallel informa-

tion on this vital sector is lacking. Another drawback of the Economic Census is that it leaves out of its domain economic activities undertaken for the purpose of our consumption. Poor women workers in rural areas are most often engaged in processing agricultural produce for household consumption or work in family farms which do not yield any surplus food. The Economic Census approach to economic activity, thus overlooks a critical section of women workers.

Agricultural Census

India has a long history of conducting census-type surveys in the agricultural sector. The items of information collected through the Agricultural Census in the recent decades are extremely important in the context of agricultural development. Since women have a distinct and important role in agricultural production and processing, it is essential that Agricultural Census data are disaggregated by sex. This would only require purposive tabulation of routinely collected data since information on the sex of the landholder is already being recorded. The Agricultural Census should also compile detailed information on ownership of agricultural implements for a proper assessment of the linkage between land holding and technology. Further, keeping in view the significance of the local context and the need to safeguard the interest of the vulnerable woman cultivator, all these data require to be generated for much smaller spatial units, for example, Panchayats or Blocks.

Livestock Census

The Livestock Census covers a very critical and important aspect of the rural economy. It presents information on full-time and part-time employment in fishing and allied activi-

ties disaggregated by gender. This is undoubtedly useful but lack of gender-sensitive data on related aspects of the same sectors such as those concerning marketing facility and access to new technology, limits its relevance for women's development planning.

The Livestock Census generates data on employment in livestock and poultry rearing. Sex disaggregated statistics on employment and ownership patterns in these livelihoods, however, are a prerequisite for expanding female employment in rural areas.

Land, Livestock and Debt Investment Surveys

These surveys are periodically carried out by the National Sample Survey Organisation, and cover cultivator, agricultural labour and artisan households. Though containing information not readily available otherwise, these sources do not provide adequate sex - differentiated data or separate tabulations for female-headed households. In their present shape, their utility lies mainly in portraying the broad trends in access to resources, across different income classes.

Employment Market Information (EMI) and Employment Exchange Data

The EMI Programme of the Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGE & T) is a very important source of data on employment in the organised sector. Under the Employment Exchange Act of 1959, all public sector establishments, all factories and certain non-factory establishments in both public and private sectors, are required to submit quarterly reports on the number of employees classified by industry (3-digit level) and gender, and biennial

reports on occupational distribution of employees according to the National Classification of Occupations. The industry-wise employment data cover almost all major sectors except agriculture and are presented by states in the Annual Employment Review published by the DGE&T.

EMI provides valuable indicators of women's employment in the public sector and in different branches of organised industry but much larger segments of women workers are excluded as EMI coverage does not extend to self-employed persons and those engaged in agriculture and allied occupations in the private sector, and in household enterprises.

The National Employment Service, with its country-wide network of employment exchanges, constitutes a major source of unemployment statistics. The data flow from the employment exchanges relates mainly to registrations, placements and cumulative number of applicants on the live register of the exchanges and is routed to the DGE&T through the various State Directorates. Data on job seekers are also analysed on the basis of age, sex, education and occupation and are published in the Annual Employment Review (DGE&T), Annual Labour Statistics (Labour Bureau) and the monthly Indian Labour Journal (Labour Bureau).

Employment exchange statistics have certain deficiencies as indicators of unemployment chiefly because registration is voluntary and has a pronounced urban bias. Their catchment area, therefore is limited and hardly conducive to satisfactory disaggregation of job seekers at the sub-state level. The missing factor again, is the reorganisation of relevant data at district and sub-district levels so that work opportunities can be matched with skills and resources available at the local level.

Nutrition

Some NSS Rounds as well as the Rural Labour Enquiries present data on per capita consumption expenditure from which average nutrition levels can be derived for rural households. Household schedule 10.1 used in RLE II (1974 - 75), for example, contains information on consumption of more than 300 goods and services.

The National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) was set up by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) at the National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, for collecting data on food consumption and nutrition profile of selected populations on a continuous basis. However, for operational feasibility the coverage is usually restricted to 10 States. But it is necessary that all areas of these states are covered and the sample size of the NNMB surveys increased to ensure validity of the data. Further, nutritional morbidity statistics need to be disaggregated by sex for all age groups i.e., infants, pre-school, school-age, adolescents and adults. Nutritional status of pregnant women and nursing mothers need to be projected separately.

Section IV

Purposive Use of the Database

We have one of the most extensive formal data collection and dissemination systems of long standing (see related documents on India's statistical systems). The coverage is national and sub-national, through censuses or sample surveys'.

- of sectors e.g. industry, agriculture and animal husbandry, and social sectors, etc.
- of units like enterprise/household;

There is also a tradition of professional statisticians working in research and development, as well as educational institutions generating scientifically collected data in all sectors. Alongside this, there is data generated by programmes, on their execution as well as evaluation, be it in the area of large-scale development, e.g. irrigation and power, or small-scale, e.g. with poverty alleviation, or development of special categories, such as women and children.

We can take this range of professional data collection as a given stock on the left side, namely the supply side, and the women's movement as representing the right side, the demand side—not only as users but also as those who wish to safeguard and ensure the economic and social well-being of women, especially of poor households. In this case, we are defining the women's movement as containing the whole range of lobbies for women starting with departments and cells in government, going all the way to grassroot activism. The important questions are whether there are appropriate

transactions between these two sides. If so, how adequate are they? What other information is already available? Does it only require organisation and presentation, or is it a question of new collections with new methods, in the special context of agricultural and rural development?

There have been several national and international reviews of this question of statistical needs for highlighting the profile of women in all domains. These have been both general as well as specific to agriculture and rural development. They have almost always identified the need to focus on equity, on poor women or women from low resource households.

Another, fairly serious constraint is imposed by ethical questions posed more recently by feminists. How does this research and data collection provide any new paradigms for social and economic transformation. Evaluation of existing development or structural change with special reference to women, i.e. bringing gender into the classification, might only endorse the situation. Data and research have often been used to perpetuate unequal power relationships. Unless far greater retrospection is done on what this galaxy of statistics is leading to, this kind of advocacy is not worthy of an emerging force, such as women.

The UNSO Meeting of Expert Group on Improving Statistics and Indicators on the Situation of Women, took note of both these sentiments. It is for this reason that they decided to have a preamble where it is very clearly stated that the purpose is to move towards equality. Hence the focus should be to illuminate the condition of women, children and the aged, amongst the poor, and provide statistical frames which will help to analyse the reasons for their situation, and to identify the doors through which equity-building changes can be introduced.

These documents thus "focus on indicators relevant to major social and economic issues and women's role in development. They emphasize the fundamental importance of distributive justice and of economic, social and political autonomy for women in both developed and developing countries."

A paper at a national meeting of women's studies professionals in India stated: "The mere breakdown of existing data into male/female would not help to improve the statistical visibility of women for whatever that is worth. The whole design of data collection, starting from the substance of the universe for sample, the stratification plan, the tabulation plan—various elements of sample design—going down to questionnaire design, sex and training of investigator and sex and knowledge of respondent, would have to change for the data on women's work to reveal the reality of women's work in the context of data on all other workers. The details of these changes, their reasons and illustrations were discussed in a paper entitled "Importance of age and sex specific data in household survey", presented at the ESCAP Regional Conference on Household Survey. The Conference in its recommendations accepted the entire argument, and proposed changes cutting deep into the statistical design for the global household survey programme.

However, in spite of this strong awareness of data needs, there has been neither any substantive progress in the data production and presentation, nor any significant change in the socio-economic conditions of women.

Further, a scanning of the policies and programmes for women in India through interviews with officials holding senior positions in the Ministry of Rural Development and the Department of Women and Child development reveal that hardly any flows of data are used systematically in policy

and programme making or in raising issues or increasing attention to women.

All these considerations seem to point to the need for evolving a mechanism which can ensure a more purposive use of data for policy and programme making for women. The mechanism envisaged will have to be given concrete shape after due deliberation at different levels but there can be a consensus regarding its three-fold responsibility: first, coordinating with various ministries and departments involved with women's welfare and in the process serving as a forum for sharing their experiences; second, strengthening the statistical base in the light of perceived needs. This task is eminently suited for the envisaged mechanism as better quality statistics is likely to follow the dissociation of data collection from programme implementation. Thirdly, such a mechanism may serve as a nodal agency for evolving guidelines to mould the entire statistical framework into a truly gender-conscious system.

It is hoped that with the emergence of panchayats across the country in the wake of the 72nd Constitutional Amendment, these local self-government institutions will put the data streams into more purposive use as well as provide continuous feedback to the coordinating agency mentioned above, so that there is perceptible progress towards the goal of gender-sensitive planning and development.

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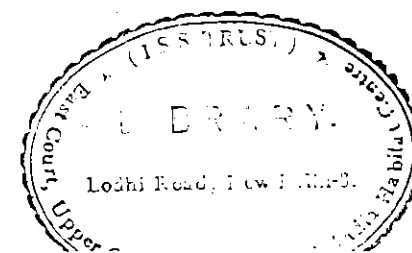
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Women's Studies Resource Centre



Preface and Acknowledgements

In recognition of the leading role played by the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) in the area of Women's studies, the Royal Netherlands Embassy provided generous financial support to this organisation with a view to strengthening its information servicing activities under a three-year project titled the 'Women's Studies Resource Centre'. The project got off the ground in April 1991 under the dynamic leadership of Ms. Devaki Jain, who was the Director of ISST until April 1994. The basic objective was to develop the in-house expertise at ISST so that it may strengthen its position as a major focal point and platform for women's studies in the country, to upgrade its bibliographical and reference services, and to facilitate networking and information dissemination. It was envisaged that a series of dossiers on important areas of concern will be published by the organisation as a part of this project. This particular dossier is the fourth in the series of dossiers produced under the project. We would like to express our deep appreciation to the Royal Netherlands Embassy for the generous support they have provided to enable us to publish the series. The third dossier on the 'New Economic Policy and Women' has been published in 1993 by the Indian Association for Women's Studies in the form of a book.

This dossier is based on the findings of a study done by ISST's research team in Bangalore. This version of the dossier has been written by Ms. Devaki Jain and Dr Sonalde Desai. The support staff at ISST has assisted in the production and Ms Anomita Goswami has done the copy-editing. I would like to place on record my appreciation to all of these people.

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Abstract

Research on the relationship between maternal non-domestic work and child welfare has identified two mechanisms—decline in mother's time with children, and increase in resources available to children—through which maternal work influences child welfare. Results, based on a household survey in rural South India, suggest a need for grounding this research in a wider institutional context. When pervasive poverty and lack of access to modern conveniences are taken into account, results presented in this paper show that mothers who do not work in the market, in fact spend a tremendous amount of time in domestic activities such as fetching water, taking meals to the family members working in the field and fetching firewood. Hence, regardless of maternal employment, most children experience substantial amount of care from older siblings or grandmothers. Thus, the view of maternal employment as an agent in exposing the child to inferior quality alternate care is incorrect. Similarly, although the literature assumes that women's access to cash income (independent of their families) increases their control over family resources and thereby increases the resources directed towards children, our results show that in a climate of crop failures and seasonal fluctuations in income, many families rely on women's work in the family farm and men's work in wage labor to stabilize family income. Thus, by concentrating on work in family farm, women may in fact be choosing between increased access to resources and increased control over resources, both of which benefit her child. Hence, the view of maternal employment in non-familial enterprises as increasing resources available to children may also be incorrect.

Section I

Introduction

A variety of studies and policy documents suggests that "Status of Women" in a society influences demographic phenomena such as fertility, mortality and investments in child health. These studies end in a plea for government intervention for improving women's status in order to reap the benefits through improved child health and reduction in mortality as well as reduced fertility. Many of the policy prescriptions such as investing in female education and increasing women's access to credit are affirmative of women and improve the quality of life for large segments of the population. Hence, regardless of the demographic consequences, these interventions deserve serious consideration.

However, when we seek changes in different dimensions of "women's status" as means of achieving demographic goals, better understanding of how different dimensions of women's status influence demographic phenomena is undoubtedly required (Mason, 1984; Oppong, 1980). In particular, greater attention needs to be directed to the way in which class and gender inequality interact in influencing demographic phenomena. In the absence of this, we are likely to view women as being divorced from their social milieu.

A vast majority of demographic literature examining women's economic status focuses only on women's status vis-a-vis men, i.e. gender inequality, and precludes attention to other forms of inequality within a society, particularly inequality due to social class. In an overview of the relationship between fertility and mortality and women's status, Mason (1984)

attributes this to a weak grasp of stratification theory by social demographers, something that has led to a confounding of class and gender stratification, and to a confusion between access to resources and control of resources.

Unfortunately, sociological research on class and gender stratification does not necessarily provide a unified paradigm for studying issues and gender inequality. One popular approach in this line of research is to argue that since gender inequality exist within all types of households and all classes, the predominant form of social inequality is between social classes.

"Female status certainly carries many disadvantages compared to that of males in various areas of social life including employment opportunities, property ownership, income and so on. However, these inequalities associated with sex differences are not usefully thought of as components of stratification. This is because for the great majority of women the allocation of social and economic rewards is determined primarily by the position of their families and, in particular, that of the male head. Although women today share certain status attributes in common, simply by virtue of their sex, their claims over resources are not primarily determined by their own occupation but, more commonly, by that of their fathers and husbands. And if the wives and daughters of unskilled labourers have some things in common with the wives and daughters of wealthy landowners, there can be no doubt that the differences in their overall situation are far more striking and significant. Only if the disabilities attaching to female status were felt to be so great as to override differences of a class kind would it be realistic to regard sex as an important dimension of stratification."

Following this line of argument, much of the conventional

stratification literature tends to take the family as the unit of stratification and the occupation of the chief breadwinner as the defining characteristics for allocation to a class position (Goldthorpe, 1983; Goldthorpe, 1984; but see, Stanworth, 1984). Thus, it is assumed that macro forces influencing inequality across individuals operate mainly through life chances associated with social class position.

In contrast, some of the studies on gender inequality within households adopt a micro approach, and assume that inequality between men and women operates at the household level and exists within all social classes, though social class position may modify the degree of inequality within the family (Papanek, 1989; Mencher, 1989; Firestone, 1979). This focus on the role of family ideology and a vision of gender stratification systems as cutting across class stratification supports the approach of examining the role of gender inequality within each social class, often within multivariate analyses by holding social class constant.

Interestingly, although these two lines of literature differ in the primacy they assign to the division of labour based on class and gender, they also complement each other in one sense. Class stratification is seen as being rooted in macro forces, while gender stratification is seen as being rooted within the household.

Unfortunately, this relegation of gender inequality to the household domain also tends to obscure the relationship between macro forces and women's status in the society. The central thesis of this paper is that macro forces have a substantial influence on issues of gender inequality and the way in which this inequality operates within specific social contexts. We argue that the consideration of wider political and economic institutional context is even more salient to research on

the relationship between women's economic status and demographic behaviour since its cope is broader than to simply study gender inequality. We illustrate this by examining some of the existing arguments regarding the relationship between women's participation in economic activities in non-family enterprises and child welfare. Data from rural south India presented in this paper show that consideration of a broader institutional context substantially alters our view of the relationship between maternal work and child welfare.

Section II

Maternal Work and Child Welfare

Research on the relationship between women's economic roles and child health and mortality in developing countries offers an interesting example of ways in which issues of class and gender are confounded. Two dimensions of women's economic roles have received a great deal of attention in two divergent streams of literature; the first focuses primarily on the hazards posed by maternal absence, while the second focuses mainly on the positive consequences due to increase in mother's control over resources.

The focus of this paper is not to examine whether these assumptions are accurate. At this juncture, we accept the possibility that mother's time and increased availability of resources connected with non-domestic employment both have beneficial consequences for children. However, we show that the anticipated relationship between women's participation in non-domestic work and either her time spent in child care or resources available to children is modified substantially by the nature of village economy in rural south India. In particular, the prevailing notions regarding nature and value of women's domestic and non-domestic work are significantly altered once we examine in the context of pervasive rural poverty, and lack of access to modern conveniences.

Maternal Employment and Time Available for Child Care

Much of the literature on the relationship between employment and child welfare implicitly focuses on the conflict between women's familial roles and market activities. It is argued that for mothers of young children, participation in

income-generating activities diminishes the time available for child care, which in turn results in poor health outcomes and higher mortality for children (Basu and Basu, 1991; Khan, Tamang and Patel, 1990).

This focus on women's reproductive role has a number of serious implications for social sciences theory as well as public policy. In particular, the concern with child welfare persistently conflicts with any endeavor to promote greater female employment (Leslie and Paolisso, 1989). In developing countries this issue has sometimes been approached by promoting programs which emphasize "traditional" skills such as sewing, knitting or cooking and promoting home-based or part-time work. The programs continue to operate despite the fact that frequently they are very time-consuming, bring little or no income to women participants and cannot be easily upgraded to higher earnings (Buvinic, 1983).

In this paper we argue that although responsibility for young children is an important (and at times central) feature of women's lives, by excessively focusing on this issue we tend to ignore other domestic responsibilities of women. Domestic responsibilities take up a tremendous portion of women's time in poor areas and affect both their care of young children and participation in the labour force.

A large number of studies in India as well as in other developing countries shows that poor women tend to spend considerable amount of time in activities such as fetching water, collection of firewood, preparation of cow dung cakes or cleaning grain in order to support their families (Jain, 1985; Kain and Banerjee, 1985). These activities are rarely considered economic, either by the national accounts system or by the women themselves (Jahan and Papanek, 1979). Although

"domestic work", "marginal economic activity" or "expenditure saving activity" (Anker, Khan and Gupta, 1988; NSSO, 1980). We argue that in developing countries, in fact it is this domestic drudgery (as opposed to child care responsibilities) which poses a greater impediment to participation in other activities which may yield higher income (for a discussion of policy implications of this observation see Jain, Singh and Chand, 1979).

Much of the past research on the relationship between women's work and child care seems to take the nature and existence of women's domestic work for granted. It is assumed that housewives have the time, resources and inclination to provide a high quality of care for children (for example, Basu and Basu, 1991). And if women cannot afford to withdraw from the market activities, work in family enterprises or family farms will provide greater flexibility to provide a better quality of care for their children (Khan, Tamang and Patel, 1990). The nature and relevance of women's participation in expenditure-saving domestic activities has also been largely ignored. Somehow the focus is consistently being directed toward the matter of *choice* between domestic work and caring for children as opposed to income-generating work. Thus, issues of domestic work, and physical demands on women due to lack of investment in infrastructure and technology are taken for granted, and the implications of women's allocation of time between the two types of activity for national productivity or for social equality are ignored. Hence, in this paper, instead of following the traditional approach of focusing solely on the tradeoff between women's childrearing responsibilities and market work, we study the whole gamut of women's work and study it within the context of pervasive rural poverty in south India.

Women's work and Control over Resources

Many scholars, particularly western scholars rooted in the tradition of social anthropology, have drawn attention to one particular feature of South Asian society—a strong normative preference for female seclusion (Sharma, 1990). Although actual veiling of women or "purdah" varies tremendously across different regions and religious groups and is more prevalent in the North than in the South (Committee on the Status of Women in India, 1974), a preference for confining women to the domestic sphere persists to some extent in most groups and is viewed as forming the lynch pin on which the dichotomy between male and female, "public" and "private" spheres of activities, rests.

It is frequently argued that women's concentration in the private or inside sphere of activities leads to their loss in power within the family by reducing their opportunity to earn income which is independent of their husbands or other kin (Acharya and Bennett, 1983; Omvedt, 1980). However, the preference for limiting women's activities to the domestic sphere is surmounted by economic necessity and women in lower economic strata are much more likely to be employed than women in the higher economic strata. Thus, women in lower economic groups have lower status in the community but higher status in the family, whereas the converse is true for women in higher economic groups (World Bank, 1991). It is also argued that at any given economic level, the greater the portion of income under women's control, the greater the amount devoted to children's consumption (Mencher, 1989). A combination of these two observations has led to a very strong recommendation for increasing women's opportunities for wage earning activities in a World Bank report on gender

tion in "outside" economic activities (*vis-à-vis* participation in "inside" economic activities) is seen as a key to reduced child mortality, increased nutritional adequacy and declining fertility.

We argue that although this focus on relative powers of men and women within households addresses an important dimension of gender inequality, by identifying the households as the primary source of gender inequality it overlooks the complex relationship between different types of inequalities within the society. Additionally, this focus on male:female, outside:inside polarity also tends to underestimate the permeability between the "inside" and "outside" work involvement for women (Das, 1991).

Focus on the roles of men and women *within* different social classes gives priority to social class and ignores women's importance in the determination of social class and family survival strategy. As a result, research in this tradition consistently examines the impact of external social structures (such as social class) on women, ignoring the fact that women are active participants in complex hierarchies and their role is critical to the formation and functioning of the larger social system. For example, in a very interesting discussion titled "What we have learned about the triple intersection of economy, family and gender stratification", Blumberg (1991, p. 22) argues that "the further down the class structure, the higher the proportion of women who are economically active". Although this statement conveys the role of economic necessity in pushing women into the labor market, it ignores the importance of women's labor in determining the economic status of the family.

In this paper we argue that women's labor forms a crucial economic resource for the family as a whole. It is possible that

the concentration of women as unpaid workers in family enterprises such as family farm or business may serve as a symbolic act of status production, "sanskritization". "Geoffmanian labor" as is argued by some (Srinivas, 1966). But in addition to the symbolic value of women's concentration in the private realm, there is a strong economic rationale behind women's concentration in family enterprises. Thus women's concentration in the "private" realm is shaped by household level as well as economy wide forces.

In rural areas, economic as well as social status of the family is closely linked to land ownership (Bardhan, 1985). Families who own land usually have greater incomes than landless agricultural wage labourers. Additionally, land also serves as an insurance against unexpected catastrophes such as illness or unemployment. However, given droughts, crop failures and other seasonal fluctuations, subsisting on farm income alone can often be precarious, particularly for marginal farmers with very small plots of land. Hence, many families attempt to stabilize their incomes by diversifying. Some family members work on the family farm, others as wage labourers. Given higher male wage rates, from a family's perspective, women's labour on the family farm releases men to work as wage labourers or to engage in petty trade. Thus, women's concentration in domestic or non-wage activities as opposed to wage work is not simply a function of the family's placement in class hierarchy. It can also be a cause of the family's upward mobility and hence a contributing factor to the class position. Interestingly, research on family based micro enterprises also shows that one of the mechanisms for the survival of small family is to rely on the labor of the female members within the family (Greenhalgh, 1991).

This suggests that exploring the *two way* linkages between

class and gender hierarchies is crucial to a better understanding of the relationship between women's economic roles and demographic factors, particularly in South Asia since the nature of women's work influences both the family economic conditions and women's control over income. Additionally, these influence may sometimes operate in opposite directions. Women's work as an unpaid family worker may reduce their direct control over resources but may increase access to resources by increasing total family income.

Section III

Data

Information on the nature and the extent of women's work in rural India, as in many other parts of the developing world, tends to be extremely sketchy. Pointing out the methodological difficulties in measuring women's work, Bose (1979) makes an interesting observation that data on women workers does not give a correct picture of women's work. This is because a great majority of women in rural India are engaged in home-making and agricultural and household activities which are mostly unpaid and frequently uncounted (Sen, 1982; Sen and Sen, 1985). Although agricultural and dairy production for own or family consumption is considered gainful economic activity by most standards, census enumerators or indeed women themselves frequently consider these activities simply as extensions of their domestic work. Thus, a number of studies has documented a "statistical purdah" with respect to counting the number of economically active women (Jain, Singh and Chand, 1979; Jose, 1989).

However, some types of activities—such as working for wages, engaging in petty trade, etc.—are more likely to be captured fully by national statistical systems or by micro-surveys. Thus, women who engage in economic activities in non-family settings are more likely to be captured in national statistics than women who work on the family farm or in the family business and women laborers are more likely to be counted than women cultivators. Since women's participation in wage labor is related to absence of land ownership and lower social class, statistics on employed women overrepresent

poorer women and women from scheduled castes and tribes.

In order to avoid this underestimation of women's work, we focus mainly on actual time use patterns of men and women in rural Karnataka. The results presented in this paper are based on a household survey conducted by the Institute of Social Studies Trust in 1989-1991. This survey was conducted as a part of a project funded by the Ford Foundation studying the relationship between maternal employment and child welfare.

The study was conducted in eight villages of Kanakpura Taluk, approximately 60 Km. from Bangalore in Karnataka state in south India. The sample consists of 292 families with at least one child between ages of 0 and 4. The selection criteria also included initial screening to screen out families with very high income (caused mainly due to the preponderance of sericulture in the area). Hence, nearly 14% households with yearly income of 10,000 Rs. or more were omitted. However, it should be noted that in spite of this initial screening, the income information in the initial census appears not to be totally accurate since the sample does contain several families with yearly income exceeding Rs 10,000. (about \$250). This study was conducted over a period of 18 months and each family was visited several times to collect information on family structure, time use of the family members, family income, child's health and morbidity etc.

The results in this paper are based primarily on the time use data collected for the index mother and her husband at two points in time. Two rounds of interviews were conducted between December 1989 and January 1990 and between May-June of 1991. In each round, the interviewer enumerated a number of activities (such as cattle grazing, wage work, land preparation for family cultivation, etc.) and asked all house-

hold members whether he/she did this activity in the previous four months, frequency of the activity and typical time spent doing this activity when it was done. In addition, the interviewer also asked about the time spent caring for children by all family members (excluding the mother) in the previous 24 hours as well as in the previous week. Children were weighed and measured at each interview. Data on immunization, illness and treatment were also collected.

Since our sample is fairly small and has relatively few cases of infant mortality, we focus on health producing behaviour, such as immunization, experience of serious accident and access to food and health care as measured by child's anthropometric status. We argue that by focusing on different types of behaviour (seeking preventive medical care, providing good nutrition, and guarding against accidents or poisoning) in fact provides a better guide to the causal mechanisms linking maternal employment and child welfare than a focus on child mortality alone. These villages were chosen for their proximity to at least one primary health care facility. This allows us to examine family based factors in child health without having to deal with the issue of health care availability.

Section IV

Empirical Result*

Our sample for this study consists of families with relatively young children. The mothers in the sample are fairly young with mean age of about 23 years. A sizable proportion tend to live in extended families and nearly 35% live with their mothers-in-law (although a small proportion live with their mothers). About 28% of the fathers in this sample have obtained some kind of schooling but only 13% of the mothers attended school. At the initial survey, women were asked about their labour force status. In response to the question, 40% of the mothers in the sample indicated that they were either wage workers or worked in own business, another 41% were family workers working on the family farm, and approximately 18% considered themselves housewives.

Government of Karnataka has made special efforts at developing sericulture industry in this area. This involves growing mulberry leaves to feed silk worms, buying silk worms and raising them until the cocoons are ready for sale. Hence, many of the families in this area buy or lease small plots of land to grow mulberry leaves in addition to other crops for sale or family consumption. Nearly 70% own or lease at least some land, though many of the plots are quite small. Farm incomes are subject to substantial variability given the seasonal nature of agriculture production and sale and vulnerability to climatic conditions. But sericulture poses

* This section is based on the data collected for the study conducted by a team of researchers of the Institute of Social Studies Trust during 1989-91 in Karnataka.

additional risks. Silk worms may contract a disease and die, leaving the farmer saddled with his initial start-up costs. In our data, the farm families show a great deal of income fluctuation during the year. Less than half the families have more or less same quarterly income (plus or minus a thousand rupees) at the two interviews, conducted approximately six months apart. Hence, in most of our analyses we include two measures for the family income, total family income (average of income from two interviews roughly six months apart) and a dummy variable indicating income stability.

Maternal Employment, Child Care and Child Health

Consistent with results on child mortality by Basu and Basu (1991) we also find that children whose mothers report themselves as being wage workers or engage in petty trade-categories of employment which dominate formally enumerated rural working women - are less likely to be immunized and more likely to suffer from poor nutrition than either of the two other categories of women. However, the difference in health outcomes and behaviour for children whose mothers work in the family farm and those whose mothers are housewives is relatively small. Note that since Basu and Basu (1991) rely on census categories, unemployed mother category in their analysis consists of women who are at home as well as a large proportion of women who work as cultivators on family farm.

However, it is not possible to conclude from an analysis such as this that maternal participation in wage work causes poor health outcomes for children. Women's labour force activities are strongly correlated with the family income and socio-economic status. Wage workers are more likely to belong to the scheduled castes and tribes, are likely to have

low education, and have lower family income as well as consumption. Hence, the apparent negative correlation between mother's wage work and child health is quite likely to be caused by the family socio-economic circumstances and may have little to do with maternal work status. In fact, in multi-variate regression (not presented here), after controlling for family income, maternal education and caste, we found little relationship between maternal wage work and either child's weight by age or absence of any immunisation.

Much of the concern regarding maternal employment is based on the notion that the mother is the natural caretaker for young children. Hence, when the mother is employed, particularly when she works away from home, children are left either without any caretaker or left in care of other siblings or grandparents. These children may not be fed appropriate food or may be more vulnerable to other health hazards such as accidents. This is particularly true when the alternate care provider is another child such as an older sister (Engle, 1989).

Implicit in this argument is the assumption that mothers who are not involved in economic work are available for child care. Based on actual time use patterns in rural Karnataka, we argue that this is far from true. The business of day-to-day living in rural areas is extremely demanding of women's time. Most rural women spend nearly 6 to 7 hours per day in household activities which include cooking and cleaning home, fetching water, taking clothes to a river or pond outside the village for laundry, and taking meals to their family members in the fields. Many of these activities are conducted away from home and involve carrying large loads (firewood, water, clean laundry etc.) and are not easily compatible with carrying a small child. On average, in our sample, women spent roughly 1.5 to 2 hours per day in above mentioned type

of domestic activities, away from their homes and neighbourhoods. In addition to these domestic activities, women also spend a substantial amount of time in expenditure-saving activities such as cleaning, dehusking and grinding grain, fetching firewood from nearby forests and stitching clothes. Women's time in these activities declines with their hours of economic work, but this decline is not very large. Hence, regardless of their economic participation, most women spend a substantial amount of time in domestic activities which are not necessarily compatible with caring for young children. As a result, almost all women rely substantially on older children, older women in the family and even neighbors to look after their children.

Mothers' time in child care mainly measures the amount of time each mother spends in specific child care related activities such as feeding or bathing children but excludes the time spent watching children while performing other activities, holding and playing with the child. Time in alternate care measures all types of care including playing with, talking to, feeding and holding the child. Our findings are very similar to the results from two other Asian countries, the Philippines (Ho, 1979) and Malaysia (Da Vanzo and Lee, 1983), which also show very little decline in mother's time with children as her time in economic activity increases, though they do show substantial decline in mother's leisure time and sleep. Additionally, we found that regardless of mother's participation in economic work, children spend substantial time (nearly 3-4 hours per day) under the supervision of other adults and/or children. Thus, if exposure to alternate care poses any risks to children such as increased infection or accidents, these risks exist regardless of mother's involvement in economic activities, within or outside the home.

The results suggest that the question regarding the relationship between mother's participation in economic activities and child's exposure to alternate care (which is frequently assumed to be inferior to the care given by the mother) is frequently framed in a way that is not sensitive to the realities of village life. In fact, if there is any policy concern regarding the nature of care children receive, rather than focussing on women's economic activities as a cause for concern, focus should be directed towards the tremendous domestic burden on rural women since this "domestic drudgery" reduces time available for both child care and for income generating work.

Women's Work and Resources Available to Children

Literature on the relationship between women's work and resources available to children focuses mainly on the differences in men's and women's preferred expenditure patterns. It is frequently argued that women are more likely to spend their income on food (Thomas, 1992) and other household necessities than men (Mencher, 1989) and hence, increase in women's control over resources is associated with better health outcomes for children.

However, children's access to resources depend on the incomes and expenditure patterns of all family members and not just their mothers. Results of a multiple regression analysis done with the data show that in addition to sex and caste, family income and income stability have large and statistically significant effects on child's weight-for-age. Even controlling for family income, income stability significantly increases child's weight-for-age, an index for the nutritional and health care resources available to the child. This suggests that from a child's perspective, both total family income and stability in this income are important. Families with moder-

ately high incomes may have some savings to tide them over temporary income fluctuations but among our sample of mostly low income families, variability in income seems to increase children's vulnerability to malnutrition through reduction in health care and/or in food intake.

However, we argue that controlling for family income, or even just father's income within multi-variate analysis and then including mother's wage work as just another regressor, underestimates the impact of mother's work on the resources available to the child, particularly in developing countries. In addition to affecting the distribution of resources within the family, women's economic activities have a tremendous impact on the total resources available. The impact of mother's work on total family income goes beyond just her income from the wage work or business and influences her husband's income as well.

Our data suggest that family income increases with the size of the landholding and women's participation in wage work declines. At first glance, this seems to support the argument presented in much of the literature (cited earlier) on women's work in south Asia that this indicates the preference for women's withdrawal from outside work. However, although women are less likely to work for wages or in petty business, their total workload does not decline, in fact it increases with such withdrawal. This observation is very similar to the results presented in Sen (1983), which also show that with the exception of landlords, there is little decline and even some increase in women's hours of work with increased land ownership, though much of this work is concentrated on the family farm instead of in wage labour. Interestingly, these data also show that women's classification in any category of work status is far from rigid. Women who were wage work-

ers at one interview, were employed in the family farm at the next interview a few months later, and vice-versa. In fact, when we examined women's actual employment behavior in the previous four months with their self-reported status, we found that wage workers continue to work in the family farm and current housewives report some farm and wage work in the near past.

Ethnographic research on North India by Sharma (1980; p.88) also documents similar phenomena and provides a very interesting interpretation.

"What the female role demands is the subordination of the individual woman's personal inclinations to the needs of the whole group, whether those needs be primarily for prestige or for cash. If suitable work is available, there is no reason why she should not fulfill her role as dutiful wife or daughter by going out to work and in this respect her attitude to work is likely to be rather different from that of many British women who see their work role as something either conflicting with or subordinate to their roles in the family.

The role of an Indian village woman as paid worker is only 'marginal' in the family in the sense that she is likely to be paid less than men of her household. Her work is certainly not regarded as 'pin money'. Even richer families have not yet reached a standard of living where extra income brings much scope for choice in expenditure. Women's earnings are not different from men's in this respect. So whilst in the community women are devalued, to the extent that they are offered less money than men for the same or similar work, within the family they are valued in the same way as a male earner in the sense that her contribution is taken seriously."

This observation suggests that the gender role ideology of female subordination does not necessarily dictate women's

withdrawal from domestic work. In fact it may be perfectly compatible with the woman earning income for the family. Hence, we must look deeper to see if there may be any other explanation for women's withdrawal from wage labour with increased size of family farm.

Our results though not conclusive, suggest an interesting hypothesis for women's concentration in the work on family farm, that of economic rationality. Looking at the relationship between land ownership, total family income and income stability, it can be seen that although total family income increases with the amount of land owned, stability in income declines. Land ownership provides a potentially high income, particularly through participation in sericulture in this area, and hedge against inflation or unemployment. But it also leaves the family more vulnerable to crop failure or to loss of income and investment through the death of silk worms. In order to deal with this uncertainty and to obtain some kind of income smoothing, many of the families in our sample worked as wage labourers in addition to the work on their own family farms. However, this diversification seems limited to male members of the family.

In particular, one frequently observed strategy seems to be for the husband to reduce his hours of work the family farm and to increase participation in wage work. At the same time, the wife continues to work on the family farm and assumes greater proportion of farm responsibilities. Typical agricultural wages in our study area are Rs 15 per day for men and Rs 6 per day for women. Additionally, women workers are much more likely to suffer from seasonal unemployment than male workers. Given this wage differential between male and female agriculture workers it makes greater economic sense for women to take over greater burden of farm

work instead and for men to increase wage work. At almost all levels of land ownership, families in which women worked for wages have lower total family income than the families in which women did not work for wages. In contrast, assumption of primary farm responsibility by women is consistently related to higher family income. In families where primary farm work is done by wives, husbands are likely to work longer hours at wage work than in families where primary wage work is done by husbands. Additionally, these families are also more likely to achieve income stability.

Thus, our empirical findings suggest that women's concentration in work on family farm may have two opposite impacts. On one hand, by releasing men to participate in wage work, women increase the overall family income and hence, their own access to resources. But at the same time, if wage income is related to the bargaining power within the family, women may in fact be trading off their control over resources for access to increased overall level of family resources.

Section V

Discussion

Results presented in this paper show that any research on women's economic work and the welfare of her child must take into account the social context of this work. Macro-level forces impinge on this relationship in a variety of ways:

- (1) Irrespective of women's participation in what we traditionally refer to as economic activities, rural women in poor areas rarely have time to be full-time caretakers of their children. Given the mother's involvement in activities such as fetching water and firewood, taking meals to family members working on a farm outside the village etc., most young children experience several hours of care per day by other family members, frequently older siblings. Thus, the relationship between mother's participation in non-domestic economic activities and child care is frequently governed by requirements of the job of a housewife in poor areas.
- (2) Although some preference for women's confinement to domestic sphere seems to exist in much of India (though to a much greater degree in Northern India), economic rationality at the family level also seems to provide an impetus for women's specialisation in work on the family farm or in the family enterprises. Thus, women's specialisation in the domestic sphere is seen not merely as an outcome of micro level ideology of gender discrimination within the family but also as a result of macro level

inequality in wage and opportunity structure as well as vulnerability of rural poor to income fluctuation.

These observations suggest that any micro-level policies directed at changes within the household (such as increasing women's access to credit and to wage work) must be rooted in the context of the macro forces impinging on the household. Increasing women's access to wage work, without modifying institutionalised inequalities in the occupational and wage structure between men and women is unlikely to change the family rationale of increasing male participation in wage economy by transferring a greater share of farm work to women.

These observations also argue for a greater recognition of the economic importance of rural women's economic activities which are typically dismissed as being domestic in nature or as being expansions of their domestic role. Their work on the family farm not only contributes to the family income, it also releases male workers to participate in the cash economy. Paradoxically, women's concentration in work on family farm which is undertaken as a part of family survival strategy at the individual level, has a long term impact of reducing the "visibility" of women's work in the society as a whole and may indirectly exacerbate the existing gender inequality at the micro level by devaluing female children.

Section VI
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Dossier No. 5

Employment Opportunities for Women in Village Industries



INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES TRUST

Women's Studies Resource Centre

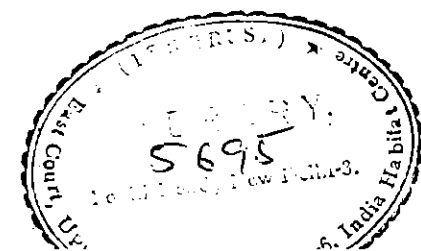
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Employment Opportunities for Women in Village Industries

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Preface and Acknowledgements

In recognition of the leading role played by the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) in the area of Women's studies, the Royal Netherlands Embassy provided generous financial support to this organisation with a view to strengthening its information servicing activities under a three-year project titled the 'Women's Studies Resource Centre'. The project got off the ground in April 1991 under the dynamic leadership of Ms. Devaki Jain, who was the Director of ISST until April 1994. The basic objective was to develop the in-house expertise at ISST so that it may strengthen its position as a major focal point and platform for women's studies in the country, to upgrade its bibliographical and reference services, and to facilitate networking and information dissemination. It was envisaged that a series of dossiers on important areas of concern will be published by the organisation as a part of this project. This particular dossier is the fifth in the series of dossiers produced under the project. We would like to express our deep appreciation to the Royal Netherlands Embassy for the generous support they have provided to enable us to publish the series.

This dossier is a condensed version of a study undertaken by the research team of ISST in 1991-92 on employment opportunities for women in village industries in a few districts in the states of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The first draft for this dossier was prepared by my colleague Dr Rina Bhattacharya. The support staff at ISST has assisted in the production and Ms Anomita Goswami has done the copy-editing. I would like to place on record my appreciation to all of these people.

March 31, 1995

Swapna Mukhopadhyay
Director, ISST

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Abstract

An overwhelmingly large proportion of women in rural India, far above the numbers suggested by our official statistics, engage in seasonal non-farm activities in order to meet the requirements of daily survival. The situation is worse for the average rural woman in rain-fed, hilly or desert areas, where farm work is available for only a small part of the year, and where infrastructural facilities are still appallingly inadequate. This report, based on the findings of a field survey conducted by the Institute of Social Studies Trust in 1992 in ten districts spread out in the hills of Uttar Pradesh and the deserts of Rajasthan, investigates the nature of activities of the women and makes some policy recommendations.

Our findings suggest that women from these relatively disadvantaged areas depend almost exclusively on traditional non-farm activities to supplement the family's earnings from farming. In the absence of developed marketing facilities, by and large the products are marketed locally, catering to local demand and to self-consumption. The major governmental support programme in this area, if not the only one, is the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), which itself is strapped for funds, although some voluntary agencies working in the neighbourhood provide much-needed support.

The study suggests that there is an urgent need to upgrade the existing support structures for traditional rural non-farm activities that can be easily accessed by the women. Specific activity-wise suggestions have been made in the report that can facilitate operations. These relate to creation of bufferstocks of raw materials, improving the marketing and distribution networks and provision of training and skill development to women workers. It is important that these be conceived and implemented, not as ad hoc stop-gap measures, but as integral components of an area plan under the overall supervision of local level administration.

Section I

A Background

The Concept of Khadi

Khadi is not just an economic or social concept, it epitomizes a philosophy, a way of life. Mahatma Gandhi propounded *khadi* as a weapon for economic amelioration, for '*gram vikas*' and '*gram swaraj*'. He wanted that every Indian should do something for the advancement of *khadi*. While writing about village industries, Gandhiji emphasized the need to develop a true national taste in keeping with the vision of a new India in which starvation and idleness will be unknown. To him it was necessary that everyone should make it a point to honour the use of village articles whenever and wherever available. Gandhiji did not look upon Khadi and Village Industries as merely instruments for attaining political freedom.

Khadi and Village Industries were given an important place in Gandhiji's economic ideas. He projected *khadi* as an instrument to augment the earnings of the rural people engaged in agricultural operations, by providing seasonal and part-time work. For Gandhiji, *khadi* was a unique idea to develop cottage industries. Through this both men and women could become productive and add to the national income by working at home with locally available raw material.

This idea was widely accepted and even the National Committee (1938) gave an important place to the development of cottage and village industries. The first industrial resolution of 1948 stated that cottage and small-scale industries had a very important role in the national economy. These industries were

particularly suited for better utilisation of local resources and for the achievement of local self-sufficiency in respect to certain types of essential consumer goods such as food, cloth, and agricultural implements. The healthy expansion of cottage and small-scale industries would depend upon a number of factors—the provision of raw material, technical advice, organised marketing of produce and wherever necessary, safeguards against intensive competition by large-scale manufactures.

The subsequent development of *khadi* and its status today are the implications of policy measures undertaken in the different development plans. Some of the plans are particularly important from the policy point of view, and need special mention. The following are highlights of some of the policy measures outlined in the various plans.

Industrial Policies: A Brief Review

The family of small industries comprised many industries which differ from each other in terms of scale of investment, individual characteristics, structures and problems and the role played by them in the Indian Economy. The main characteristic of Khadi and Village Industries (as distinct from more value-added handicrafts products) is that they are based on locally available raw materials in the rural areas. These industries engage labour mostly on a part-time, seasonal basis providing subsidiary or supplementary employment. Work can be carried out either in cottages or in common worksheds, and capital investment is low. The major weaknesses of these industries are: low income generation in relation to the labour input, and weak market linkages. The products are mostly costly and/or qualitatively inferior.

The main threat to these industries comes from both the large-scale and the modern small-scale industries. The products

manufactured in urban large and small-scale industries are flooding the rural markets. The modern small sector is growing, and there is an increasing competition for raw materials as well as for markets. Indian development plans, from the beginning, made special provisions to support such industries, unemployment and under-employment problems.

It was mentioned in the First Five Year Plan that a programme of village industries was to be supported by specific measures of assistance as well as an appropriate state policy. In addition to the emphasis on technical improvements, research and other measures for improving efficiency were also considered. The primary objective of the policy was to provide a field within which each cottage industry might be able to organise itself. Wherever there is competition from a large-scale industry, the appropriate course would be to adopt and formulate a common production programme. The common production programme, should take into account the factors that affect efficiency of the large-scale and small-scale productions, the scope for development through small-scale methods, the extent to which the social needs are to be emphasised, and the value of any particular course for increasing rural employment. The aspect of employment would naturally receive special emphasis in considering the details of any common production programme.

Although the First Five Year Plan itself initiated discussion on the common production programme, the Second Five Year Plan, which was based on the Mahalanobis Model, emphasised rapid growth of village industries manufacturing articles of utility at low capital cost. The measures taken under the common production programme to enable small industries to fulfil the targets fall in two groups (i) to provide a degree of preference or assurance of a market for small units. (ii) to provide positive assistance, through supply of raw materials, technical guidance, financial

assistance, training, research, organisation of marketing to promote cottage and village industries.

During 1977 and 1980 two resolutions were issued by the Government of India, both reflecting the government's continued concern for this sector. Again, the main thrust of these policies were to promote cottage and small industries in widely dispersed rural areas and small towns.

The Industrial Policy Resolution (1980) emphasised the need to create cottage industry and small industries in the country. Promotion of suitable industries in rural areas would generate higher employment and higher per-capita income for the villages in the country, without disturbing the ecological balance. It was clearly mentioned that handloom, handicrafts, *khadi* and other village industries would receive greater attention to enhance the rate of growth in the villages.

The Sixth Five Year Plan also needs mention because of its 20-point economic programme designed for poverty alleviation which had direct relevance to the rural sector. The following measures were outlined in this plan.

- i) Integration of the promotional programmes in the sector with other area development programmes, and adoption of the cluster approach particularly for the traditional industries.
- ii) Restructuring of the organisational base at the district level to make it more effective and result oriented.
- iii) Development and extension of appropriate technologies and skills, and effective transmission.
- iv) Increase the availability of raw materials and the creation of buffer stocks particularly of raw material.
- v) Accelerate flow of institutional funds specially in favour of artisans, village industries and tiny units and rationalisation of the interest-rate structure.

- vi) Organisation of producer oriented marketing both within and outside the country.
- vii) Selective reservation of items for exclusive production and purchase from the cottage and small industries.
- viii) Effective promotion of ancillaries.
- ix) Strengthening and extension of the co-operative form of organisation particularly for cottage and tiny units.
- x) Building up of a sound data base to facilitate proper policy formulation and evaluation.

The current, i.e. the Eighth Five Year Plan has set a target of covering 3.62 lakh villages under the Khadi and Village Industries (KVI) programme adopting the cluster approach. Its aim is to create 2.25 million additional job opportunities for rural workers in the non-farm sector. To strengthen the KVI, a Marketing Development Corporation will be established by (a) appointing necessary staff possessing the required expertise, and (b) allocating financial resources. It would also try to establish at least 100 block level multi-disciplinary artisans' training centres by connecting up with voluntary agencies and other active organisations. However, the allocation by the Government of India for the KVI sector for the Eighth Plan period was only Rs 900 crores. However, the actual outlay was reduced and with the reduced outlay KVIC has identified the specific strategies for development such as systematic identification of rural artisans from the non-farm sector and selective approach in the expansion programmes assigning priority to backward areas which have high employment rate.

One has to wait and see how successful the Eighth Plan will be in achieving its target. However, in terms of actual growth of this sector not much has been achieved so far. One of the reasons for this is resources. The relative allocation of outlay towards

small industries is 2-4 per cent of the total plan outlay from the first Five Year Plan to Seventh Five Year Plan (Sandesara, 1988).*

Constraints of Developing KVI

The concept of common production has not worked out in the case of Khadi and Village Industries. KVI has not been able to get many purchase preferences. Even government institutions do not make bulk purchase of *khadi*, although it was given in the budgetary allocation that a sizeable portion—including subsidy in lieu of interest on government loans, interest subsidy or bank loans, and sales rebate on *khadi*—should be included in the plan outlay. These releases also included amounts for R&D training, promotional activities, etc. In other words, the actual resources for capital expenditure and working capital were inadequate. Very little effort has been made to update technology, though updating of technology alone cannot help without a regular supply of raw material and constant financial support. Above all, there is a need to create a market for KVI products. Even today, KVI faces these problems. Time and again these problems have come up as major hindrances in the growth of these industries, and in creating opportunities for employment. The conditions of the workers—both men and women—deteriorated to such an extent over the years, that they no longer want to work in these industries as they have become low paid jobs with no security. These problems have been recorded in a study by the Institute of Social Studies Trust, details of which are given in a separate section of this dossier.

* 'Modern Small Industry, 1987-88: Aspects of Growth and Structural Change' EPW. February 6

Section II

Women as Workers in the Khadi and Village Industries

This section mostly deals with the issues raised by Vina Mazumdar in her book entitled *National Specialized Agencies and Women's Equality*. This clearly identifies two objectives of *khadi*—the political, and the socio-economic. The political objective has, no doubt been taken into consideration and fulfilled, but the socio-economic objective has either been ignored, or not understood in its real perspective.

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), which is the apex body, does not have any special reference to women in its original mandate. The only occasion when women were specifically mentioned was the parliamentary debate on the KVIC, in 1978. Inclusion of the production of poly-vastra into KVI was justified by the government on the grounds that it would generate greater employment for women. The type of industries supported by the KVIC can be classified into three categories:

1. Crafts and caste-based industries: e.g. pottery, leather work, oil-crushing, carpentry, etc.
2. Other traditional occupations: e.g. spinning, *kattha* processing, shellac processing of other minor forest produce, such as non-edible oilseeds, etc.
3. Relatively modern industries: e.g. aluminium, utensils, match-production, poly-vastra, workshed-based spinning through New Model Charkhas (NMCs), etc.

Within the KVIC itself, part-time work seems to have been relegated to women. This perpetuates home-based production, with all its negative consequences: overburden, distance from collection centres, and the lack of support services. These women continue to be in a state of semi-bondage, deprived of all opportunities to develop awareness of their rights and responsibilities, thus defeating Gandhiji's primary objective. It is also found that the KVIC programme for women's employment restricts them in their homes with only one skill. There is no scope for exposure to the existing market forces, which leaves women vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous agencies or persons.

Even the move towards increasing full-time work in worksheds, is not adequately supported by essential services, such as child-care, mandatory under the labour laws. Workers in KVIC-supported institutions are neither governed by the minimum wages laws nor by the special protection laws, and do not receive maternity benefits, or child-care facilities. Nor has the conversion of part-time to full-time employment improved the workers' share of earnings in the total value of production in any perceptible way.

Section III

Employment Opportunities for Women in the Khadi and Village Industries

This section, presents some of the findings of a study undertaken by the Institute of Social Studies Trust, on employment opportunities for women in the village industries located in the districts of Kumaon, Garhwal and parts of Rajasthan. The study looked at facts, such as the number of industries employing women, the nature of operations that take place in the units, types of employment provided to women, kinds of problems faced by them, conditions under which these women work, the duration for which they are given work. The industrial units were analysed in terms of their resources, raw materials, production, marketing linkages and demand.

Data on khadi and Village Industries: Some Gaps

In each district, the District Industries Officer was contacted and a list of industries was procured from them. The KVIC-funded institutions were located easily and relevant data was collected from them. The Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB) extends loans to individual entrepreneurs, or an institution, or a co-operative society. A list was collected from the KVIB office too. However, it was found that very few women entrepreneurs received loans under any of these categories. Many of them who were given the loan were no longer involved in that activity. In Jaisalmer and Barmer districts no such list was available. Also in Garhwal it was difficult to even find the list, as well as locate the women entrepreneurs. In Pauri Garhwal, some of the women who

were shown as having given loans from the District Industries Centre (DIC) were contacted, but the loan transactions were found to be fictitious. In some cases women were found to have taken the loan but not utilised it for the purpose for which it was given.

In Almora district, in spite of several requests made by the research team to the officials of small-scale industries, it was difficult to procure a list of industries owned by women. Even in the case of districts for which we received the list of industries, it was difficult to obtain the number of women employed in an industrial unit, or units owned by women. In other words there was no gender-based data available on employment in the small-scale industrial sector. To a certain extent at least in the *khadi* sector, the name of units owned by male or female is clearly given in a booklet which is published every year. Even the lead Banks were not able to provide gender-based data on loans provided to the beneficiaries.

One of the aims of this study was to assess the scope for stepping up women's employment in the industrial (non-farm) sector of the selected areas. These are hill and desert areas which suffer from multiple constraints inhibiting development of modern non-traditional industries. Traditional industries on the other hand suffer from institutional and input constraints which are, however, not insurmountable. The work and income such industries offer, are uncertain and inadequate. In the objective conditions of the terrains, and present state of industrial and infrastructural development, the options available to the people are limited. However, there is considerable scope for improving earnings from traditional industries, at low cost and in the short run.

Field visits to all the places reflects that most of the existing rural industries are traditional industries. Also, the indus-

tries visited are functioning manually i.e. without the use of power energy. The *khadi* units which are supposed to have village industrial activity show hardly any progress towards it. Most of the available units are engaged in the production of woollens and few are engaged in *ringal* and bamboo work. Only in Nainital, block printing units are available in large numbers which at the time of data-collection were closed down. *Lisa* is another industry which was also found to be in existence in Kumaon and Garhwal. In Almora a leather industry was started but had to be closed down, due to the shortage of skilled labour. In Jaisalmer, the sole rural industry seems to be that of woollen items. In the case of Barmer, there are industries engaged in *kashidakari*, mirror work and leather work. Women are engaged only to do the embroidery on leather purses, footwear, bags, etc., and males do the rest of the work.

Specific Perspective of the Study

In the given situation, if one has to think of alternative industrial activities which will generate employment for women, one has to keep in mind are following considerations.

1. To improve upon the existing rural industries providing necessary supplementary help which would create employment for women.
2. To utilise the local resources—human and material—already available.
3. In setting up Non-traditional industries in which women can be employed, the need for attention to basic facilities, such as power supply, many considerations infrastructural facilities, transport, etc.

Analysing the life style of hill women, it is clear that women find very little time to work their homes. They also prefer to work at home than to go to a factory or elsewhere. From this standpoint, 1, 2 of the above-mentioned considerations seem to be more suitable to women in these areas than the third. Furthermore, in the hill and desert areas studied, there is shortage of power, poor communications and infrastructural facilities, which restricts the scope for venturing into new industrial activities. Given these objective conditions, any plans to expand industrial employment for women seem somewhat restricted to the improvement and optimisation of traditional industries, in the foreseeable future.

The distribution of units under different categories, in different districts indicated that most of the 82 units are supported by NGOs, followed by the District Industries Centre (DIC), the KVIB, the KVIC and Private Industries. Furthermore, looking at each district it appears from the table that in Kumaon and Chamoli, *khadi* and allied institutions are the largest sectors providing employment to women. In Barmer district of Rajasthan, not many *khadi* institutions are in existence. However, there are private industries which are run by middlemen who throughly exploit local artisans. There are no other units in Barmer district.

The employment figures for women, reported in the study indicate that NGOs alone employ 46,643 spinners of which 75% are women. Similarly the direct units of the KVIB and the KVIC employ 1494 spinners of which 75 per cent are women. It is evident that *khadi* is the only sector providing employment on a large scale. Small-scale industries have hardly any role to play as far as employment is concerned in the selected districts of Kumaon, Garhwal, and Rajasthan.

The study reports that while a majority of the units—53.6 per cent provide 'seasonal' employment for 3-9 months as many as 46.4 per cent of the units provide employment for about a year. Most of the units attributed the cause for such difficulties to non-availability of raw material. Some of the units are using outdated *charkhas* and lack of new designs as the factors causing delay in production.

The major findings of the study

1. Most of the industrial activities in the area studied are confined to the domain of the Khadi Commission/ Board and the institutions operating in the areas are those supported by the KVIC or the KVIB. The small-scale industry sector as such has failed to have an impact in the far off rural areas in the districts under study.
2. The industries working in the areas studied are facing multiple crises—of raw material, credit, marketing—which leads to low production, thereby creating underemployment/partial employment among women.
3. There is a lack of proper monitoring and evaluation of the industrial activities funded by the Khadi Board.
4. Rural artisans are primarily dependent on middlemen who play a dominant role in marketing products of the home-based industries such as woollens and ringal products, in Kumaon and Garhwal, or carpet, mirror-work and patch-work in Barmer district. Socially-oriented marketing institutions are fewer, compared to the KVI sector. This affects the net earnings of the artisans.
5. Low wages prevents workers from staying for a long period, for example the weavers in the woollen industry.

6. One of the reasons for backwardness in the districts of Tehri, Pouri and Barmer, is the lack of institutions which have the potential to carry out income-generating activities. In Almora, Pithoragarh, Nainital, and Jaisalmer NGOs are successfully functioning towards providing employment to the rural women.
7. There is a shortage of gender-based data available at the lead banks on the loans given to women under the poverty alleviation programme.
8. While taking a stock of home-based industries located in different villages of various districts under study, the local resources have been identified which could provide a useful basis for setting up new industrial activities.
9. One major problem is the marketing of products produced by rural women. Unless there are proper and direct linkages between the producers and the market, this problem will continue. The data reveals that the problem of marketing is due to the following reasons:
 - a. Untimely production
 - b. Poor transportation facilities
 - c. Difficulty in procuring raw materials
 - d. Non-availability of artisans
 - e. Poor-design of the products.
10. The lack of awareness and low literacy level among women are the added reasons for their low participation in the industrial sector.

Section IV

Recommendations

This section presents the recommendations that emerged out of the study conducted in the selected districts of Kumaon, Garhwal and Rajasthan. The recommendations that emerged have been divided into two parts. Part I outlines the requirements for improving the employment situation in the existing rural industries. Part II provides some recommendations for new industrial activities to generate employment for women.

Part I: Strengthening of Rural Industries

1. a) In order to ensure better availability of raw material there is a need to keep a buffer stock in each block or district which would control the distribution of wool to the woollens industries.
 - b) Private distribution of wool needs to be regulated.
 - c) NGOs can participate in a big way and organise the distribution of raw material to these institutions to maintain a constant flow of raw material. This is true for many industries such as woollens, *ringal*, wood-carving, etc.
2. a) In view of the fact that 60 per cent of the wool (marino) used in the industry is imported from New Zealand and Australia, there is a need to develop this variety indigenously. The climatic conditions necessary for the growing this variety of wool reportedly exist in Kumaon and Garhwal regions.

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- b) The local people should be encouraged to take up micro projects for rearing sheep.
3. There is a need to assist producers in understanding the market trends.
4. There is a need to provide relevant information to the artisans and, where necessary extensive training to the producers to enable them to produce products that can stand competition.
5. Income can be improved by providing modified *charkhas*, such as the six-spindle *charkhas* which can spin at a faster rate.
6. There is a need to develop a mechanism to ensure regularity in production so that there is employment for the spinners and the weavers throughout the year. Targeted production is generally too small to provide adequate employment to local artisans.
7. Gender sensitivity training needs to be organised for officers responsible for implementing rural programmes, so that they are able to convince women to participate in the development activities.
8. The role of middlemen in the industries of Barmer need to be minimised so that women are less exploited and are able to get proper wages for their work.
9. There is a need to have strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms so that the amount of money given as grants gets utilised for the purpose it is meant for.
10. In order to revive the trade of wood carving there is a need to motivate the younger generation through training camps, workshops etc. Institutions such as the Hand-

Employment Opportunities for Women in Village Industries 17

ircraft Board or NGOs can create support structures for providing raw material and credit facilities.

11. There is a need to reopen the block-printing units in Nainital which can provide employment.

Part II: New Activities

The new activities that can be taken up for generating employment are:

1. **Angora rabbit rearing:** This facility could be provided in at least Almora, parts of Nainital, Pithoragarh and Dehradun and also in the districts of Garhwal, since the climate here is conducive to rearing rabbits. Along with this there is a need to provide veterinary facilities to the rearer and also training to upgrade the skills for extracting wool.
2. **Food processing and preservation:** Many villages in the regions of Kumaon and Garhwal are abundantly rich in citrous fruits, which can be utilised for the preparation of pickles, jams, etc. A food processing and preservation industry can be set up in Pharsali Pali in Almora which will be able to provide employment to many women. If proper training in the areas of food preservation and storage is imparted, some possible avenues can be opened up. Cassia and cinnamon are products that can be easily grown and marketed. These products are not easily available in the market and their production can be converted into a profitable venture. In the upper regions of Dehradun, mushrooms can be grown on a commercial scale and can be utilised for preparing pickles which would in turn create opportu-

nities for women's employment. The same can also be done in the Pipali village in Pouri Garhwal.

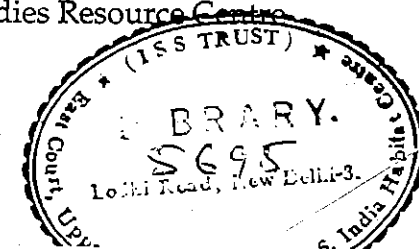
3. **Plantation of cotton (*biglu*):** In Tehri Garhwal a plant which grows in the form of a shrub and is locally known as *biglu* is used as a substitute for cotton. This plant has soft leaves that can be carded like those of cotton and be used for making pillows mattresses, etc. These trees can be grown commercially to provide employment to women.
4. **Tea plantation :** Tea plantation is another income-generating activity which can be carried out in Utrakhand. It not only has a growing demand in the region but is also an eco-friendly crop. Installation of tea manufacturing unit will generate local employment for women.
5. There is a need to revive the medicinal variety of onion and garlic plants in the Kumaon region. A processing unit can be established which will generate employment for local women.
6. In Pauri, there is a need to open a unit for manufacturing polythene bags; many women have already undergone training programmes on it conducted by the DIC. This will not only generate employment but help other units located in the nearby areas which are forced to procure bags from Delhi.
7. In Jaisalmer two indigenous plants (*kumat* and *gugal*) are available in plenty which can be used in preparing ayurvedic medicines and *agarbatti*. A processing unit can be established which will generate employment for local women.

8. The Himalayan ranges are suitable for raising mulberry trees to enhance silk production.
9. Hill areas are equally suitable for pasture development which will not only make a firm base for dairy development but also check the growing menace to ecology, due to soil erosion.
10. Floriculture is another activity which can turn out to be a flourishing business and generate employment for women.

Dossier No. 6

**A Study of
Women's Development Corporations
in India**

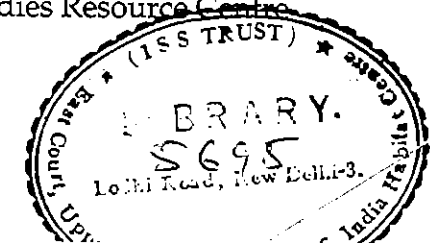
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL STUDIES TRUST
Women's Studies Resource Centre



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Preface and Acknowledgements

In recognition of the leading role played by the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) in the area of Women's studies, the Royal Netherlands Embassy provided generous financial support to this organisation with a view to strengthening its information servicing activities under a three-year project titled the 'Women's Studies Resource Centre'. The project got off the ground in April 1991 under the dynamic leadership of Ms. Devaki Jain, who was the Director of ISST until April 1994. The basic objective was to develop the in-house expertise at ISST so that it may strengthen its position as a major focal point and platform for women's studies in the country, to upgrade its bibliographical and reference services, and to facilitate networking and information dissemination. It was envisaged that a series of dossiers on important areas of concern will be published by the organisation as a part of this project. This particular dossier is the sixth in the series of dossiers produced under the project. We would like to express our deep appreciation to the Royal Netherlands Embassy for the generous support they have provided to enable us to publish the series.

This is a condensed version of the findings from a study undertaken by the research team of ISST on Women's Development Corporations in four states of India in 1993-94. My colleague Dr Rina Bhattacharya prepared the first draft for this dossier. The support staff at ISST has assisted in the production and Ms Anomita Goswami has done the copy-editing. I would like to place on record my appreciation to all of these people.

March 31, 1995

Swapna Mukhopadhyay
Director, ISST

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Abstract

Women's Development Corporations have been conceived as integral components of the national machinery for advancing the status of women in the seventh Five Year Plan. They are envisaged as structures playing a catalytic role in facilitating income generating opportunities for women. This report on the functioning of Women's Development Corporations (WDCs) in India is based on an evaluation exercise carried out by the Institute of Social Studies Trust, of state level WDCs in four major states of the country. These are Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. The study was carried out in 1993-94 under the sponsorship of The Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India.

The report highlights certain lacunae in the planning and conceptualisation of the WDCs which stand in the way of efficient functioning of these organisations. Inadequate co-ordination between the WDCs on the one hand and line ministries on the other, emerges as one of the major constraints. Frequent turn-over of staff, ill-defined staff responsibilities and paucity of resources, financial as well as human, are some of the other common problems.

Section I

Women's Development Corporation in India: A Background

Background and Genesis

The International Women's Year (1975) was devoted to intensified action (a) to promote equality between men and women; (b) to ensure full integration of women in the total development effort, especially in economic, social and cultural development at the national, regional, and international levels. "The decade (1976-1985) was devoted to the advancement of women and the need for multiple strategies to achieve the equality of men and women."

The First World Conference on the International Women's Year was held at Mexico in 1975 and a Plan of Action was adopted which reads as follows.

The establishment of interdisciplinary and multisectoral machinery within government, such as National Commissions, Women's Bureaux and other bodies, with adequate staff and budget can be an effective transitional measure for accelerating the achievement of equal opportunity for women and their full integration in national life. The membership of such bodies should include both women and men, representatives of groups of society responsible for making and implementing policy decisions in the public sector. Government ministries and departments (especially those responsible for education, health, labour, justice, communication and information, culture industry, trade, agriculture, rural development, social welfare, finance and planning as well as appropriate private and public agencies should be represented on them.

Such bodies should investigate the situation of women in all fields and at all levels, establish priorities and make recommendations for necessary legislation, policies and programmes. There should be follow-up programmes to monitor and evaluate the progress within the country, and to assess the interaction of the recommendations into the national plans. This system has been adopted, fully or partially, in many countries. In September 1985, a Department of Women and Child was established in India because of the pressure generated as an outcome of the decade-closing Conference in Nairobi. Particular emphasis was laid on establishing a 'Women's Bureau', which would function as a co-ordination/planning unit and an advocate of women's programmes and needs.

The Bureau of Women's Welfare Department under the erstwhile Ministry of Social and Women's Welfare, started functioning as Women's Bureau in the department of Women and Child and continued to be the national machinery/nodal agency to guide, co-ordinate and review the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organisations working for women, and to formulate policies and programmes for the advancement of women.

Due to this change of structure, for the first time 'women' were emphasised as a special target group of a newly formed Ministry of Human Resource Development. Women as a target group were originally looked after by the Social Welfare Ministry with a combination of programmes for reduction of physical weakness, isolation and vulnerability. Problems such as those of old age, widow pension, working women's hostels, prostitution, etc., were some of its concerns. Women were given the same status as other target groups such as the handicapped and the SC/STs. Women's Bureau as the national machinery/nodal

agency was entrusted with the major responsibility of implementing the following programmes and for releasing funds to the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB).

1. Hostel for Working Women.
2. Setting up of employment and income generating production units with the assistance of the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD).
3. Training Centres/Institutions for the rehabilitation of women in distress.
4. Short Stay Homes for women and girls.
5. Women's Development Corporations.
6. The scheme of Support to Training and Employment Programmes for Women (STEP).

The Bureau has also been releasing funds to the Central Social Welfare Board for the implementation of the following major schemes for the benefit of women:

1. Socio-economic programmes with the objective of providing opportunities for employment to women who are economically backward, destitutes, widows, deserted and disabled.
2. Development of a curriculum for education, and vocational training programmes for adult women.
3. Training of Rural Women in Public Corporation.
4. Family Counselling Centres.
5. Creches for children of working and ailing mothers, supplementary nutrition programme/integrated pre-school projects.

In India, constituents of the national machinery in terms of structures have changed and been modified according to the demands. Some structures, such as the National Committee

on Women, the State Committees on Women, The National Steering Committee, etc., have come and gone. The Central Social Welfare Board along with the 31 state level branches to encourage voluntary effort in the field of Women's Development, has been a part of it since long. Structures such as Women's Development Corporations, the National Commission for Women, are recent entrants to the field.

The scheme to setup Women's Development Corporations (WDCs) in all the states and union territories was formulated in 1985-86. The outlay for the plan was Rs 16.00 crores and the annual plan in 1985-86, was Rs 50 lakhs.

According to the scheme, the central Government was to assist the state governments by providing upto 49 per cent of the total capital cost of each corporation. Fifteen WDCs have been set up so far in different states and union territories. Some of the Corporations were established much before the announcement by the centre to set up WDCs. These include the Maharashtra, Mahila Arthik Vikas Maha Mandal Ltd. (1975), Punjab Women and Children Development and Welfare Corporation (1979) Chandigarh Children and Women Development Corporation (1982); Gujarat Women Economic Development Corporation (1981), Tamil Nadu Development Corporation (1983) and Andhra Pradesh Women's Cooperative Finance Corporation Limited. The rest of the WDCs were set up under the scheme in the states of Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, among others.

The objectives of the WDCs, as outlined in the guidelines, emphasised the need for providing employment to women from the rural sector and poverty households, so that they may become economically independent and self-reliant. The other important objective was to identify women entrepre-

neurs, provide technical consultancy services and facilitate availability of credit through banks and other financial institutions.

The WDCs operating in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu were set up by the respective state governments. The objective of setting up of these Corporations was to provide assistance to the state governments in promoting women's employment by providing technical support. Reviewing the performance of these five Corporations Azad, (1987) pointed out that these five Corporations have had varied records and as such there are no common parameters to assess relative performance. The Tamil Nadu and Punjab Corporations have recorded higher profits than the other three Corporations. The Andhra Pradesh Corporation has a Women's Finance Corporation, while the Tamil Nadu one has an electronic assembly unit, a printing press as well as a new scheme for agricultural and technological extension in the districts. Further, she identified three issues that were not clear from the guidelines and implementation of the Women's Development Corporations: a) the target group intended to be reached by the Corporations; b) clear specifications of the size and nature of the undertakings, i.e., whether they were to be micro enterprises, or relatively bigger industrial units; and c) operational role to be adopted, i.e., co-ordination or implementation.

Many structures set up with such optimism and enthusiasm to address the multifaceted problem of women's unequal status, have not addressed generic issues such as gender subordination, stereotyped and unequal power relations within the household, discrimination at work, violence inside and outside home, etc. Some, of these structures have been bogged down by excessive schematisation of project

details. There is a tendency to look on women as beneficiaries, rather than agents, of change. This has taken place in many set-ups such as the Women's Development Corporations (WDCs), the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB), the State Boards and in many of the cells set up within major ministries of the government, as well as in the structures at the state level. Very often the civil servants who man these structures are unable to grasp the 'essentials' or the non-negotiable elements, of their organisational mandates, because of a lack of gender sensitivity and skills in gender analysis (Sujaya, 1994). Sometimes, these mandates are not even clearly spelt out. The civil servants therefore, concentrate on what they see as concrete programmatic objectives and goals, like the number of women trained, number of camps held, number of women employed, etc., and lose sight of more fundamental issues.

Current Debate: The WDCs were envisaged as part of the state level machinery to facilitate the national machinery to achieve its goal towards empowering women. However, there is a debate as to whether these structures (WDCs) should be continued or whether there is a need for an alternative 'Institutional Mechanism' which will address women's issues in a more holistic manner.

The appropriateness of the word 'machinery' itself has been questioned. It tends to give the picture of a mechanistic, as well as a static body (Sujaya, 1994). The concept of a 'mechanism' goes beyond a finite number of organisational structures within the government. Mechanisms could constantly innovate, bond different types of structures into new patterns (government, voluntary organizations, educational institutions, grass root groups, local government units, etc.) and could prioritise methods and processes over procedures.

In view of the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution, whereby 1/3 reservations have been made for women in Panchayats to facilitate, women's participation in the local planning, what should be the role of the WDCs? Should they restrict their role in training women for upgradation of skills to create opportunity for employment primarily in the unorganised sector? As a nodal agency in the state level what other roles should the WDC play towards advancement of women? What mechanisms do they adopt for better implementation of programmes? What type of co-ordination do they require, with whom and at what level? These are some of the issues addressed in the study entitled Women's Development Corporations: An Assessment, conducted by the Institute of Social Studies Trust.

Section II

Profiles of Women's Development Corporations

Andhra Pradesh Women's Co-operative Finance Corporation

The Andhra Pradesh Women's Co-operative Finance Corporation was registered in 1975 with the head office at Hyderabad. The objectives of the Corporation were to provide employment opportunities to women and encourage cooperative movement among rural women.

Organisational structure: The management of the Corporation is vested with the Board of Directors. The Board consists of eighteen persons of whom six are elected by the General Body from among the delegates of affiliated 'A' class share holders and the rest shall be nominated by the government from various government departments, an eminent person is appointed as Chairperson by the state government. The structure of the organisation is extended to the different levels such as district, block/mandal and village levels.

Activities of the Corporation: The activities of the Corporation can be categorised into four heads:

1. Financial assistance in the form of providing margin money for bank loans.
2. Running Training-cum-production units.
3. Construction of buildings for working women's hostels.
4. Setting up and running two Telugu Bala Mahila Pragathi programmes.

The Chandigarh Child and Women Development Corporation Limited

The Chandigarh Child and Women Development Corporation Limited was set up in April 1980 and began functioning since 1982. It is registered under the Indian Companies Act, 1956. The registered office of the company is situated in the Union Territory of Chandigarh.

Organisational Structure: The Company consists of seven member board. Two of the seven-members are non-official. The Chairperson of the Corporation is an IAS officer and the Managing Director is from the Provincial Service Commission (PCS). The Chairpersons as well as the Managing Directors also holding other posts in the Chandigarh Administration.

Activities of the Corporation: The activities of the Corporation fall under three main groups:

1. Financial assistance through Nationalised banks.
2. Training in tailoring, knitting, embroidery, shorthand and typing.
3. Production Centre.

The Corporation has so far been concentrating on providing financial assistance to the destitute and women for self-employment. Mostly women had been given loans for non-traditional projects such as book and stationery, shop video games, Leather bags, and leather belt making, etc.

The Corporation runs training programmes in various trades like tailoring, knitting, etc. It provides loans to the trainees in case they want to purchase machines to set up their own enterprises. The corporation is running one tailoring unit at Chandigarh, which undertakes sewing and embroi-

dery work from general public and government institutions. It receives bulk orders from hospitals, universities, police department etc. for preparing uniforms for their employees.

The Gujarat Women's Development Corporation Limited (GWEDC)

GWEDC was set up as a registered society in March 1981, under the chairmanship of the Social Defence Minister.

The major objectives of this corporation have been:

- a) Economic development and integration of women into the mainstream.
- b) Social justice and equality for all women.

The Corporation became a 'company' in August 1988 under the Companies Act, 1956, and started functioning effectively since January, 1989. It was previously working under the Department of Social Welfare but that too, has been replaced by the Department of Industries and Mines. The idea was that the Corporation could avail the subsidy and other financial facilities under the department. However, even in the current year, the budget has come under the heads, as directed by the Department of Social Welfare.

The Corporation has a total share capital of Rs 10 crores from the Central and the State Government at the rate of 49:51, respectively, of which it has received an amount of Rs 277 lakhs from the State and Rs 170.05 lakh from the Central Government. Like other Women's Development Corporations, it is not getting anymore assistance from Central Government since 1992. It has no individual shareholder to contribute in the share capital. The entire fund comes from the State Government for the annual budget. The proposal pre-

pared by the corporation is sent to the Commissioner, Cottage Industries, the controlling authority for any grant from state government.

Organisational Structure: The Board of Directors consists of official/ex-officio members out of the 8 non-official members, Chairperson is politically nominated. Managing Director is an IAS officer who looks after the overall activities of the Corporation, below him is the General Manager.

Activities: In order to achieve the objectives of economic development of women, the Corporation has taken up schemes for income/employment generation. For social justice and women's equality, schemes for awareness generation, holding of workshops and seminars, etc., are being implemented. Details of the on-going programmes of the corporation are as follows:

- (i) *Training Schemes:* Training schemes for women are implemented through voluntary organisations. Recognised organisations, with proper infrastructural facilities are entrusted with training course. Duration of these training courses varies from 3 to 6 months. Each batch comprises of 15-25 trainees. The aim of these training courses is to generate income through self employment. The corporation supports such courses by providing:
 - a) Stipend @ Rs 100/- per month to each trainee except for the courses in computer, type writing, tailoring and beauty parlour and,
 - b) Assistance to the organisations @ Rs 75/- or Rs 200/- (for technical courses) per month per trainee.

The Corporation has stopped providing stipend for the courses in type writing, tailoring and beauty parlour because it has experienced rush for these courses.

In case of the computer courses, the training expense is very high. So, instead of giving stipend to the trainees, the amount goes to the organisation to meet the expenses.

- (ii) *Loan and Subsidy for bankable schemes:* This is meant for the individual beneficiaries who receive training under various training schemes and are interested to develop entrepreneurship with the help of loans and/or subsidies from the Corporation. The Corporation sponsors applications of eligible women to scheduled banks through any of the bankable schemes, approved by the Director of Cottage Industries. Against the loan sanctioned by the bank, the Corporation provides subsidy. On scrutiny of the applications loans are given. The bank charges interest from the beneficiaries at the rate of 12.5% per annum on the loan amount.

The following table shows the loan amount with the rate of subsidy for different purposes and to different groups of women:

Loan amount	Subsidy		
	S.C.	S.T.	Others
Upto Rs.10,000/-	50%	50%	33.33%
Above Rs. 10,000/-	30%	40%	25%
For business purpose	Upto Rs. 25,000/-	-	
For profession	Upto Rs. 40,000/-	-	
For cottage industry	Upto Rs.60,000/-	-	

There is a new addition in this scheme from the current year. Margin Money to women entrepreneurs for cottage industry, which requires investment of above Rs 60,000/- will be given subsidy @ 10% of the loan amount or Rs 15,000/-, whichever is less.

- (iii) *Margin Money Assistance to co-operatives and women's groups, registered by the department of cottage industries:* The society or group submits audited accounts and claim assistance of 20% of the cost, incurred for raw materials in the previous year. The assistance is further limited to Rs 400/- per member (of society/group) whose annual income is below Rs 9000/-. This scheme is available only to the existing co-operatives. The corporation does not encourage women's groups to form the co-operatives.
- (iv) *No Tender Scheme*—This scheme has been undertaken to provide a assured marketing facility to the women producers. Under a resolution of the state government, the departments of government and semi-government organisations such as hospitals, jails, public undertakings, etc., are allowed to purchase goods from women's co-operative societies and organisations (recognised by the Directorate of Cottage Industries) without calling for quotations or tenders. Director of Cottage Industry fixes the prices of items periodically. The Corporation acts as the "Central Marketing Agency" to facilitate the supply of goods by women's organisations, to the Government bodies.
- (v) *Demonstration of fruit preservation/cottage industries:* Cottage industries to make products like chalk, candles, bakery items, soap, detergents, sweets, pickles, etc., are considered suitable economic activities for rural wom-

en of low income groups because the capital required is low and the know-how can be imparted through demonstration. Preservation of fruit and food articles provides supplementary income, and reduces wastage of food. The corporation together with the Gujarat State Khadi Gramudyog Board organises three-day demonstration programmes on cottage industries for groups of women in different parts of the state. These programmes are organised on demand from women's organisations.

- (vi) *Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan*: The Corporation in collaboration with the Gujarat State Handloom and Handicrafts Development Corporation and Janvikas (a voluntary organisation) has set up Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (a society) for the holistic development of women and families of selected villages of Kutch, under the central Government's Border Area Development Programme. The project now covers 20 villages. It envisages total human resource development, and has components of education, health and hygienes, skill formation, awareness building and income generation. This programme is supervised by the Development Officer of the area concerned.
- (vii) *Awareness Generation Schemes*: The Corporation organises seminars, workshops, etc., related to women's issues, rights and opportunities, for building awareness of the public. It also, in collaboration with the Centre for Entrepreneurship Development, Ahmedabad, arranged workshops for the newly-trained beneficiaries to educate them about the facilities and opportunities available for them to start enterprises on their own. Exhibitions, sponsored by the Corporation, also help to

market the products of the women's groups and to supplement the awareness building effort.

- (viii) *The Retail Outlet Scheme*: To facilitate the marketing of the products of the women's groups, a retail outlet scheme has been introduced as a pilot project. The Corporation assists organisations of women producers by subsidising rents of shops/retail outlets.
- (ix) *Survey, Research*: The Corporation has carried out surveys on female-headed households in rural areas, scavengers' households in Kheda and Rajkot districts, and the employment potential of poor women in urban areas during the last few years. Surveys sponsored by the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA) and other such organisations are being taken up.
- (x) *Sericulture*: This is the only programme sponsored by the Central Government under the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD) scheme. This was implemented in Dang, Valsad and Panchmahal districts by developing some farms.
- (xi) *Nucleus Fund*: If the Corporation wants to undertake a programme, which doesn't come under any of the mentioned heads, it is generally implemented under the nucleus fund. Under this scheme grant can be given to any programme depending on the need.

Haryana Women and Weaker Sections Development Corporation Limited (HWWSDC)

This was established in 1982 as Haryana Economically Weaker Section Development Corporation. In 1987 it was decided by the state government that a 'women' wing would be created in the existing Corporation, and it was renamed HWWSDC.

Organisational Structure: The Corporation has a non-official as the Chairperson, a full time Managing Director and a Board of Directors comprising officials, and the regular administrative infrastructure at the head office in Chandigarh. The Corporation reaches out to the districts through District Project officers who work in close liaison with the DRDA. The district managers of the Corporation are ex-officio Assistant Project officers of the DRDA.

Activities of the Corporation: The Corporation provides financial assistance to economically weaker sections under the following sectors:

- i) Agriculture and allied sectors
- ii) Industry Sector
- iii) Trade/Business sector
- iv) Professional and self employment sector.

Training courses are offered in motor car driving and for laboratory technicians jobs.

Mahila Vikas Nigam, Himachal Pradesh

It was established in 1989 under section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956. The main aim of the Corporation is to promote socio-economic development of the women of Himachal Pradesh.

Organisational Structure: The Nigam is headed by a Chairman, the Board of Directors consists of the Managing Director, an IAS officer and a few ex-officio members. The Managing Director also looks after the day to day activities of the Himachal Pradesh Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Corporation (HPSC/STDC). However, the Board of Directors of

the Nigam passed a resolution in 1991 transferring all its activities and functions along with funds and staff to the HPSC/STDC. Since then the Nigam has been functioning as a special wing of HPSC/STDC.

Activities: It helps women to procure loans from the bank at a low rate of interest, for self-employment. Under the Women Development Programme, women are eligible for loans upto Rs 50,000 with interest subsidy. Preference is given to widows, destitutes and educated unemployed women.

Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation Limited

Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation Limited was incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956, with an authorised share capital of Rs 5 Crores, of which 51 per cent was to be held by the Government of Karnataka and 49 per cent by the Government of India.

Recently, the Corporation got permission to convert itself into a non-profit co-operative society, under Section 25. This exempts it from paying income tax. The net profit earned will not be distributed to shareholders. In a way the profit earned is a source of income and same can be invested in such a way that it will generate interest. This will help the organisation to become self reliant. The organisation as a society under Section 25 will be able to survive even if it does not receive the grant from the Central Government. Already Government has withdrawn the grant for the financial year 1993-94.

Organisational Structure: The Corporation directly comes under the Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resources. The Board of Directors consists of the Chairperson, Managing Director and other members.

A detailed description of the various activities of the Corporation is given below.

Activities:

1. *Stitching of School Uniforms:* School uniforms are stitched as per specification under the *vidya vikas scheme* launched by the State Government during 1988-89. It was also ordered by the Government during the 92-93 that 75 per cent of the work of stitching of uniforms in all districts shall be entrusted to Karnataka State Women's Development Corporation (KSWDC) Ltd. Through this scheme, the KSWDC helps women tailors by providing them an opportunity to earn about Rs 20 to Rs 30 per day for a period of about 3 months. During 1992-93 the Corporation has provided employment to 8000 women under this scheme by spending Rs 19,84,348.
2. *Grihakalyana Scheme:* This scheme which was originally implemented by the Department of Women & Child Development, has been transferred to the KSWDC for implementation from the year 1991-92.

This is a scheme which combines subsidy (25 per cent) with bank finance (75 per cent) to enable women to take up income-generating activities, such as purchase of sewing machine, petty business, dairy, readymade garments, preparation of and selling sweets, tea stall, fish business, and kerosine oil business, etc.
3. *Skill Development Programme for SC Women:* This a scheme to enhance the skills of SC women to take up income-generating activities or jobs.
4. *Devadasi Rehabilitation Programme:* The programme for

the all-round development of devadasis in the districts of Belgaum and Bijapur has been entrusted to KSWDC. It is proposed to impart skills for income generation to devadasis and their families. The following schemes have been taken up in these two districts.

- (i) *Handloom Weaving:* The KHDC has prepared a project to train 2000 devadasis in handloom weaving to ensure regular and sustained income. After completion of this training programme, these women will be given individual living cum-work-sheds.
- (ii) *Training-cum-Production Centres:* Under this scheme, leather, rubber and sandal manufacturing units are set up to benefit the Devadasis.
- (iii) *Educational programme for children of devadasis:* To improve to education of children of devadasis, an incentive of Rs 25 per month per child is provided if 80 per cent attendance is achieved. So far 500 children have been covered under this scheme.
- (iv) *Awareness programme:* Awareness camps have been organised in both districts to create awareness amongst devadasi on avenues of income generation, importance of education and training for themselves and their children; on the fact that the system they follow has no religious sanctity. The focus now is on interaction with smaller self-help groups.
 - a. *Self-Help Groups:* The most important feature of the devadasis rehabilitation programme is its approach, to creating awareness among the devadasi women and others. The approach adopted is that of a self-help group. Devadasis are identified and formed

into groups in their respective villages, and meet once a week or once in a fortnight to discuss their problems. It is a socially functional group and homogeneous with regard to concerns, needs and interest. Membership is voluntary with no political motivation, and the nature of discussions, and action programmes is participatory. Members of these groups also subscribe money towards savings at each meeting, and the amount is put in the bank. The group members take loans out of this saving. About 84 self-help groups have been formed with 1399 members and a savings of Rs 23,000.

- b. *Social Programmes*: The devadasi system is an age old practice and cannot be eradicated just by providing economic help. Therefore regular awareness campaigns organising groups and group meetings, street plays, thematic songs, display of posters, TV shows, exposure trips, non formal education, incentive allowance for school-going children of devadasi women, compulsory enrolment of their wards at schools and health programmes are being implemented. As a result, devadasis have been motivated regarding their health and their children's education.
- (v) *Income Generating Activities*: Devadasi women have been encouraged to take up income generating activities like poultry farming, dairy farming, petty business etc. The Corporation give 60 per cent subsidy for this activity on loans secured from banks.
- (vi) *Health Camps*: Health camps are being organised in collaboration with the Health Department. In De-

cember 1992 an intensive aids detection camp was organised in Belgaum district to check 2500 devadasis in association with local medical college, department of health, Zilla parishad. An amount of Rs. 23,600 has been sanctioned for this purpose from the corporation.

5. *Training-cum-production centre*: One of the objectives of the Corporation is to promote schemes for sustained income generating activities to suit the targetted women's groups. A training cum production centre scheme to help women to acquire necessary skills through training and later engage themselves in production, is envisaged.
6. *Miscellaneous Training Programmes for Women*: To promote skill development of the women belonging to lower income groups in order to take up income generating activities for supplementing family income or to improve their economic status the Corporation has taken up training programmes.
7. *Awareness Campaign*: The corporation has organised publicity campaigns at the district level to give wide publicity to the schemes approved, to identify suitable beneficiaries, voluntary organisations and Mahila Samajams to take up the programmes, activities. The Corporation has provided an amount of Rs 1000 for each district for conducting these publicity campaigns.
8. *Entrepreneurs Awareness and Development Programmes*: Training of women entrepreneurs through Women Development Corporation is a new scheme launched by State Government to provide basic inputs on need and awareness of self employment opportunities suitable for women below the poverty line or marginally above the poverty line, slum dwellers, etc. This programme motivates, assists, identifies potential entrepreneurs by

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extending financial support to take up income generating activities.

During the awareness programme, the concept of over all development in respect of food, nutrition, family planning, sanitation, health, hygiene, legal support, status of women, assistance from various departments, schemes available for women, etc., are covered to up date the information on both of rural and urban women.

Kerala State Women's Development Corporation

Kerala State Women's Development Corporation was set up in 1988 under the Companies Act 1956 with an aim to formulate, promote and implement any scheme for the welfare of the women from the poverty household and enable them to earn their livelihood. It receives funds from both the state and centre on a 51:49 ratio. It has a Board of Directors comprising one Chairman, and one Managing Director and five other members. The corporation is located at Trivandrum.

Organisational Structure: The Board of Directors of the Corporation consists of six members who are nominated by the state government. The secretary Social Welfare to government of Kerala is the part-time Chairman of the Corporation and Director Welfare Department is the part time Managing Director of the Corporation.

Activities of the Corporation: The Corporation conducts workshops, seminar and awareness building programmes. It undertakes research on women's issues. On the basis of the recommendations, development programmes are designed and implemented. The corporation runs a training-cum-

production centre. Women have been provided training and are employed in the trade like manufacturing envelopes, file boards, book binding etc. The products are supplied to the stationery department of the state government.

Madhya Pradesh Women's Economic Development Corporation

Madhya Pradesh Women's Economic Development Corporation was established as registered society in 1988. The main aim of the Corporation is to uplift the economic status of the poor and needy women.

Organisational Structure: The Corporation consists of a 11-member board, out of which one is the chairman and five are ex-officio members, and the rest are officials.

Activities: The Corporation provides loans to women to start petty business. To start with, the women are given a loan of Rs 500 and a very small amount towards repayment of loan. It organises entrepreneurship development programmes and provides marketing facilities to the producers group.

Mahila Arthik Vikas Maha Mandal, Maharashtra

This was established in 1975. The MAVIM was established to facilitate the economic advancement of the poor women of Maharashtra.

Organisational Structure: The MAVIM has an ex-officio Chairman. The Managing Director, a senior IAS officer appointed by the state government, looks after its overall management. The head office is located in Bombay but has district level offices which are looked after by the regional managers.

Activities: Explores avenues for generating employment for women. Undertakes different types of surveys in the consumer market to identify types of services and commodities that are in great demand.

Develops projects for income generating activities for women. Acts as a facilitator to develop entrepreneurship among women by providing various support seminar such as vocational consulting, financial assistance through banks marketing linkages, etc.

Implement various development programme sponsored by government of India for women. Organises women into cooperative societies or registered groups.

Mahila Vikas Samabaya Nigam, Orissa (established in 1991)

Organisational Structure: The organisation is headed by its Chairman. The Managing Director, an IAS officer looks after overall management of the Corporation. The Corporation has nearly 20 staff at the headquarters. At the District level, the cooperation is managed by the District Rural Development Agency and the District Manager. At the block level it is managed by the Block Development Officer and at the village level by women's societies.

Activities: The activities of the corporation can be classified into three main activities.

Training: The corporation conducts training programmes for women in various trades, such as manufacturing of electronic items, food processing, carpet-weaving, the management of fast food units, auto-rickshaw driving, gem cutting, leather bag manufacturing, etc.

It organises training programmes for the elected women representatives of the panchayat to make them aware of constitutional provisions, various administrative procedure, etc. Also, it is engaged in gender sensitization programmes for the elected representatives and in developing leadership qualities among them.

The Corporation provides marketing support to women's organizations involved in production. It provides facilities or working capital to the producers if the product are of light quality. It participates in tenders on behalf of women's organisation. It facilitates the participation of the producers in different exhibition to promote sales.

Other Activities: The Corporation organised workshops on legal rights of women, on the SAARC Decade of the girl child.

The Punjab Women and Children Development and Welfare Corporation

This was established in the year 1979. Some of the salient objectives of the corporation are: to survey and assess the economic and welfare needs of women and children, specially those belonging to the scheduled caste and backward classes in the state. To develop training programmes for women in different locations to help them become economically independent.

Administrative Structure: The Board of Directors of the Corporation consists of a Chairman, Managing Directors and five ex-officio directors. The Corporation has a complete staff at the district level with project officers and field staff who are responsible for identification of beneficiaries and provide them training for self employment.

Activities of the Corporation: The Corporation has undertaken a number of schemes for encouraging prospective entrepreneurship amongst women and creating employment for them in diversified sectors and fields.

The Corporation runs training centres in various trades so that women could take up self-employment on completion of training. The training is given on handicrafts, knitting and in tailoring. Also, it runs an Anganwadi training centre under the ICDS programme of government of India. The curriculum includes training in health, nutrition, child care, social work, art and craft for the benefit of expectant mothers and children under the age group of 0-6 years.

The Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Limited (DeW)

The Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women Limited became a company in December 1983, under the Companies Act, 1956 with an authorised share capital of Rs 100 lakh.

Since its inception, this Corporation has taken up a wide range of activities for providing various income-generating activities for women. This Corporation has formulated these schemes and has also mobilised the resources from the various financial agencies such as Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD), Support to Employment Programme (STEP), Special Central Assistance (SCA), Special Programme Funds, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), etc.

Organisational Structure: The Corporation directly comes under the control of the Directorate of Social Welfare. The Board

of Directors consists of the Chairperson, the Managing Director and a few ex-officio members.

Activities: The following are the different categories of programmes implemented by the corporation:

- a) Units set up by the organisation
- b) Schemes implemented by the organisation
 - through voluntary organisations
 - directly by providing employment to individuals and groups of women
- c) The Tamil Nadu Women's Development project
- d) The Industrial Promotion Cell

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) project implemented by WDC, Tamil Nadu

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Project of Tamil Nadu Women's Development Corporation was conceived in October 1989 in Dharmapuri district of Tamil Nadu. The Principal Objective of the Project is the Economic and Social upliftment of women to enhance the welfare of their families and to improve their status in the family and community. Improvement in their economic position would be achieved through increasing their income earning potential by integrating them into the regular delivery system for credit and technical support services. The objective of social advancement would be achieved through raising women's level of awareness and fostering the confidence to strive for social change through the development of strong, cohesive groups as a source of mutual support of the women". Some of the important objectives of the project are as follows:

Economic Development:

- i) Doubling of income :
- ii) Control on income and better income management, whereby
 - a) the woman beneficiary has control over her earnings, and is aware of the income and expenditure of the activity for which she has taken economic assistance.
 - b) Judicious expenditure and saving habits are developed.
- iii) A tangible increase in Assets:
The activity taken up must lead to a tangible increase in assets.
- iv) Change from worker status to Worker-Manager status:
- v) Continuous access to the regular credit delivery system:

The following functionaries are responsible for project implementation:

1. PIU : Project Implementation Unit of Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women at Dharmapuri.
2. NGO : Non-governmental Organisations. MYRADA/PLAN and thirteen other NGOs.
3. Line Departments : Departments of Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, Animal Husbandry and Department of Khadi and Village Industries.
4. Commercial Bank : Indian Bank.

Uttar Pradesh Mahila Kalyan Nigam Limited (UPMKNL)

The UPMKNL was established in March 1988 under the Companies Act, 1956. It comes under the department of Women and Child Development, Directorate of Human

Resource Development of the state government. The objectives of the Corporation are:

1. To enhance economic development of women.
2. To impart training for income generating activities.
3. To promote setting up of cottage industries by providing financial support.

The Corporation has a total share capital of Rs 5 crores, of which it has got Rs 1.09 crores till date from the Central and State Governments, at the ratio of 49:51, respectively. The general public is not at all involved in contributing towards the share capital. Since 1992, even the Central Government has stopped giving its contribution. The corporation is not facing any problems, because the entire responsibility is of the State Government to collect the total amount of money for it. It is also trying to generate money on its own through various programmes, which should be able to meet a major part of its expenses in future.

Organisational Structure: The Board of Directors consists of official and ex-officio members. The Chairperson is an ex-officio member, the Managing Director an IAS officer, below whom is the General Manager.

Activities: The Corporation has undertaken five programmes in order to achieve its objectives. The programmes are:

- (1) Kaushal Sudhar Yojana: Training-cum-Production Centres are being established for the following products under this scheme:

- a) Chikan
 - b) Leaf Plates
 - c) Readymade Garments
 - d) Cotton Carpets
 - e) Applique Work
 - f) Artificial Gem Cutting and
 - g) Fibre Glass Moulding
- (2) Margin Money Loan Yojana: The Corporation gets money from the State Government for this scheme. Beneficiaries send their applications to district-level officers, who sanction the amount of loan to be given. The beneficiaries receive the loan from the bank. This scheme is implemented jointly by the Corporation and the bank.
- (3) Construction of Elak Shramajivi Mahila Chhatravas: Working Women's Hostels are under construction in different places of the state. The rooms will be allocated on a first-come-first-serve basis. A nominal charge will be fixed for stay in the hostels, and all working women will be entitled to stay there.
- (4) Vipanan Sahayata Yojana: This scheme takes care of the marketing of products. Centres located in the hills and interior areas do not have facilities to sell their products. The Corporation helps the producer by selling their products through its sales counters.

Apart from this, the Corporation has sent a proposal to the government for a mobile sales counter. It has been able to make a profit of 15% of the total amount spent through this scheme.

- (5) Organising exhibitions in other states: The Corporation organises fairs, exhibitions-cum-sale, etc., with a view to increase outlay, publicise itself and to build awareness amongst other women's groups. These exhibitions are organised with the help of grants from the Directorate of Cottage Industries.

It is mentioned in the NIPCCD report (vol. 2, no. 5 and 6, April-June, 1989) that the Corporation planned to set up an educational aid manufacturing unit to help *anganwadis* in the ICDS blocks. But nothing has been developed so far.

Section III

The Functioning of WDCs: Summary of a Study

This section presents a summary of the findings and analyses of the functionings of the Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh corporations. It is based on a study undertaken by the Institute of Social Studies Trust to understand the structures of Women's Development Corporations as they exist, and their operational roles.

It was felt necessary to suggest some appropriate mechanism which would address the broader issues of women's equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment, rather than limit itself to programmatic and delivery aspects.

Objectives

- To analyse the objectives specified for WDCs namely
 - a. Tapping of institutional finance.
 - b. Identification of women entrepreneurs (both individuals & groups).
 - c. Promotion of marketing.
 - d. Provision of technical consultancy services.
- To study the structure of the WDCs in terms of recruitment policy, staffing pattern, qualifications, commitment to women, professional skill and managerial expertise.
- To analyse the problems and constraints faced by WDCS as implementing agencies.
- To study whether WDCs have been able to play a catalytic role in reaching out to women by forming linkages and collaborative mechanisms with other agencies.

- To study whether the emphasis of the programmes has been primarily on poor women in both rural and urban areas.

Methodology and Procedure

Any assessment of an organisation's success in achieving its goal would require information about the structure of the organisation and its administrative set up. Therefore, in this study a priority has been given to understanding the structure and the functional potential of the organisation. The major indicators considered for analysis are the size of the staff, job tenure, recruitment, group process, resource management, the mechanism of programme implementation.

To pursue the objective for the present investigation, the four WDCs located in the states of Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and UP were visited and data was collected from records maintained on the programmes. Managing Directors, along with other responsible staff were interviewed. Also some of the project areas were visited and interviews of the trainers, officials of the collaborating agencies and the beneficiaries were recorded and analysed.

As mentioned, the primary objective of these Corporations has been to provide economic opportunities to women following guidelines of the Government of India. These Corporations would provide training to women for skill development to facilitate self employment, provide viable projects, establish linkages with financial and technical institutions and provide technical services to women. During the Seventh Five Year Plan there has been a general shift in emphasis from welfare to development objectives in women's issues and WDCs are expected to widen their scope to include somewhat broader perspectives. Overall development of women is seen

to include such process such as awareness-raising in order to make women self confident and self-reliant rather than simply enabling them to acquire some skills to take up income generating activities.

However, it is not easy to develop quantifiable indicators to measure the extent of success. It is easy to work out the number of women trained to take up income generating activities the number of women given loans for self-employment, and so on. But if it is the quality of services that is to be assessed, there are no easily quantifiable measures. Yet it is important to know if the implemented schemes had really provided sustainable incomes to the women and whether they had helped in raising their status in the family.

In order to draw a comparative picture of the four WDCs in terms of physical and financial achievements, we have taken their performance for the year 1992-93. This indicates the number of women benefitted along with the corresponding financial outlay during the year under the various schemes implemented by these corporations. The year 1992-93 has been chosen for the purpose since complete data for the year was available for all the four Corporations. It must be noted however that such data can at best give broad indication of the level of performance rather than its quality.

The Tamil Nadu Development Corporation spent Rs. 670 lakhs on 7353 beneficiaries whereas Karnataka Development Corporation spent Rs. 118.5 lakhs on 15,990 beneficiaries. Is it good to spread one's resources thin? Should one reach out to as many deserving candidates as one can or should one concentrate on a smaller number providing each with more per capita assistance, thereby raising the possibility of sustainability?

The activity wise analysis shows that Tamil Nadu Development Corporation spent Rs 582.58 lakhs for the IFAD project to benefit 6672 beneficiaries. The IFAD project has been assessed to be the most successful project encountered by the ISST team, but mere numbers, will not convey this information. Similarly in case of Karnataka Development Corporation the maximum concentration of beneficiaries is under the Devdasi programme and the stitching of uniform scheme. The stitching of uniform scheme provides work for three months, so sustainability of income is not ensured. The Devdasi programme also has its limitations. Similarly, the Gujarat Women's Economic Development Corporation (GWEDC) covered 7357 beneficiaries with financial outlay of Rs 48.37 lakhs followed by the Uttar Pradesh Mahila Nigam Limited which benefited 258 beneficiaries by spending Rs 3.50 lakhs. Numbers provide the backdrop against which qualitative assessment of relative performance can be made.

The following is a summary review of the functioning of the four WDCs studied.

(i) *The Gujarat Women's Economic Development Corporation*

The Gujarat Women's Economic Development Corporation (GWEDC) was set up as a registered society in 1981 became a company in 1989 under the Companies Act. The major objectives have been economic development of women by integrating them into the mainstream of economy, and provision of social justice and equality for all women.

It has a Board of Directors consisting of many senior officers from different departments and a full time Managing Director. At the field level it has district level officers, who coordinate the projects. Also it takes the help of NGOs whenever

er possible for the implementation of the projects. Out of the 27 staff members, only 12 are the Corporation's own staff and 15 are on deputation.

CONSTRAINTS

Lack of dedicated staff, lack of professionalism and lack of resources were identified as the major constraints. In spite of the fact that it has so many field officers to supervise the project, beneficiaries are not satisfied with the services. Most of the field officers are on deputation and are not interested in visiting interior areas.

The GWDEC has failed to tap any other resources besides government assistance.

LACUNAE IN THE PROGRAMMES

1. the margin money scheme has a major lacunae—they provide loans only to co-operative and registered societies. Individual entrepreneurs do not benefit from this scheme.
2. Under the bankable scheme there is an exhaustive list of activities for which loans can be sanctioned. This list needs to be more specific and realistic. Otherwise loan can be given for activities that may not be viable.
3. Awareness among the entrepreneurs is low. Many of them do not even know the procedure for taking loans and the very purpose for which loans are given to them.
4. The follow-up mechanism is very poor.
5. Marketing of products are often a problem for women entrepreneurs. Though the corporation itself acts as a central marketing agency, it has not provided much help to the women.

6. The corporation fails to provide technical services to the women entrepreneurs.
7. The corporation does not take the help of Mahila Mandals or panchayat members to implement the programmes.

However, the corporation has been able to seek co-operation from Gujarat State Handloom and Handicraft Development Corporation for the holistic development of women. Some of the reasons for its success are: autonomy in taking decision to continue or discontinue a scheme; it implements schemes with the help of NGOs; it has been able to form many co-operatives of women to provide sustainable income.

(ii) *The Karnataka Women's Development Corporation*

The Karnataka Development Corporation was established in 1987 under the Companies Act. It follows the objective given in the guidelines as they are. The administrative structure comprises a Board of Directors, Chairperson, Managing Director assisted by two General and Development managers. At the field level it has two field officers for the implementation of the Devdasi programme. The Corporation has in total a staff of fifteen. All except three Corporations staff are new. Even the Managing Director who looks after corporation has been assigned this as an additional responsibility.

CONSTRAINTS

The constraints faced by the Corporation are lack of staff, lack of finance, lack of dynamic leaders. The major reasons for unsuccessful implementation are the lack of follow-up; lack of dedicated and motivated staff; lack of co-ordination among the departments, and the Corporation's failure to seek co-operation from the departments.

LACUNAE IDENTIFIED IN PROGRAMMES

1. Training given in any trade does not provide certificates as in the case of vocational centres.
2. A training centre does not become a production centre, mostly due to marketing problems, or the lack of technical knowledge.
3. Jobs are not ensured for beneficiaries on completion of training.
4. Under the stitching of uniform scheme, jobs are provided to women only for three months. The concept of sustainable income is missing.
5. The Corporation fails to provide technical consultancy services since it does not have its own technical cell.

(iii) *Tamil Nadu Development Corporation for Women*

Tamil Nadu Development Corporation for Women Limited was established as a company in 1983 under the Companies Act. It has identified its objectives which can be carried out within the state set-up. The primary objectives are to provide or create employment opportunities for women, to identify projects, guide/assist and provide escort services to women entrepreneurs in promoting their production unit; to conduct training programmes for development of women; to undertake projects in the field of village and cottage industries, handlooms, animal husbandry, agricultural and allied activities enabling women to earn a livelihood. It has a staff of twenty-two out of which eighteen are corporation's staff and four are on deputation including the Managing Director. At field level, it has field officers who co-ordinate the IFAD projects. Most of the programmes are implemented through NGOs.

CONSTRAINTS

Lack of resources and lack of dedicated staff are constraints faced by the Corporation, because of which it has not been able to do proper follow up.

LACUNAE IN THE PROGRAMME

1. It provides training under the vocational training scheme but does not provide facilities for the trainees to undertake the exams which would enable them to have certificates from the recognised institutes.
2. Under the skill development training scheme, beneficiaries are not provided jobs on completion of training.
3. Many of the NGOs who undertake the training-cum-production centre scheme, fail to convert the training centre into a production centre due to lack of technical expertise.
4. The Corporation fails to provide technical assistance to the individual entrepreneurs as well as to NGOs. It does not have any technical advisory board of its own which can guide the beneficiaries/or the women on the technical aspect of the project.

SECRET OF SUCCESS

However, this Corporation has been successful in implementing the IFAD project. It helps in increasing the income earning potential of women by integrating them into the regular delivery system for credit and technical support services. It enhances social advancement through raising awareness and fostering the confidence to strive for social change. This project has been successful for the following reasons:

- Under this project training has been given due emphasis.
- The objective of creating assets fulfilled, perhaps because the beneficiaries are nominated by the groups themselves.
- High credit utilisation ratio and repayment rates are ensured through social peer group pressure by the co-group members, and the process is facilitated by NGO workers.
- The project is being reviewed by the District Controller in DPCC meetings which are regularly being conducted once in two months. These are attended by project co-ordinators of NGOs, Regional Manager of India Bank, Project officers of the project implementation unit, and district heads of line departments.

It may be concluded that in this project the corporation has been able to seek co-operation from all line departments, NGOs, banks and above all from the women of the villages. This provides a clear example of how the WDC can play a catalytic role rather than becoming merely an implementing agency.

(iv) The Uttar Pradesh Mahila Kalyan Nigam Ltd.

The Uttar Pradesh Mahila Kalyan Nigam Ltd., was established in 1988 under the Companies Act. It has incurred a cumulative loss since its inception. It has a Board of Directors consisting of only three members which seems to be quite weak. The Corporation has eighteen staff members. The objectives of the corporation have been economic development of women through training for income generating activities and to promote setting up of cottage industries by providing financial support.

CONSTRAINTS

Lack of staff, lack of resources and lack of dynamic leadership are some of the reason for unsuccessful programme implementation. The Corporation staff fail to do any follow up of the programmes.

LACUNAE IN THE PROGRAMMES

Training-cum-production centres fail to convert the centres into production units. On completion of training, beneficiaries are not given jobs.

Under the marketing assistance scheme in the hill areas of UP, the corporation achieved only 20 per cent of the targets. This is mainly due to inadequate staff.

The Corporation's staff are least bothered to recover the loans given to the beneficiaries.

The margin money loan scheme has become less popular because of its criterion of providing loan to women who have infrastructure, raw material and marketing facilities. This is done with a view to recover loan in a easy way. However, this has shifted the original objective of helping poor women by providing employment.

Out of the ten working women's hostels, only four are partially constructed, though payment has been made for most of the construction. None of the officials are much concerned about it. This kind of irresponsible attitude is due to frequent transfer of officials.

Although it is difficult to draw a uni-dimensional comparison of the working of the four WDCs in review, it may be said that in terms of awareness creation, mobilisation as well as sustainable income generation through effective co-ordination of concerned agencies, performance of the Tamil Nadu Corporation seems to have superseded the others. The secret

of its success seems to have been couched in the ingenuity with which the corporation has been able to co-ordinate existing infrastructural facilities and services to come to the aid of women's groups. Successful utilisation of such facilities in its turn has been ensured by generating awareness at the grassroots level, and cohesion among the potential beneficiaries by involving peer-group solidarity of the kind that the Grameen Bank experiment in Bangladesh has been utilising for implementing its programmes

There are a number of common problems faced by all the four Corporations. Inadequacy of funds, commitment and continuity of the services of the WDC personnel, and absence of inter-departmental co-ordination are some of the major problems identified. Despite inter-state diversities, certain common solutions to these problems emerge clearly. These are listed in the following section in the form of recommendations.

Section IV

Recommendations

Based on the review and analysis presented in the previous section, the following recommendations may be made, which, if implemented, are likely to lead to successful achievement of the corporations. These recommendations may be classified into three categories: (a) improvements in the administrative structure and related aspects (b) resource generation (c) programme designing and implementation mechanisms.

Recommendations on improvements in the administrative structure and related aspects

- i. Most of the organisations have between fifteen and twenty members. We feel that given the nature of work, staff strength should be increased to between twenty-five and thirty.
- ii. All the four Women's Development Corporations have Boards of Directors consisting of officials from different ministries, eminent social workers, etc. Mostly they meet once in a year. They should meet more often to review the work.
- iii. Recruitment of staff should be done by the Corporation according to its own needs. At present staff come on deputation from various government departments. Usually these staff members are least interested in the kind of work WDCs undertake. For successful functioning, the WDCs need motivated and interested candidates who are gender-sensitised and committed to the cause of women. Autonomy in the recruitment policy will enable the Corporations to recruit more efficient staff.

- iv. All the Corporations have Managing Directors who work on a full-time basis. However in Karnataka, Secretary, Child Welfare, has been assigned an additional responsibility of the acting as Managing Director of the Corporation. Such situations should be avoided.
- v. Tenure is another important factor. Staff members, including the Managing Director need to serve the Corporation for atleast three years. Frequent transfers hamper the work as well as continuity. The Uttar Pradesh Mahila Nigam's achievement has suffered a lot due to such transfers. In case of direct recruitments, job contracts should be for not less than three years, to ensure continuity and commitment.
- vi. Training: Every member of the staff needs to be provided orientation and training on the needs projects to be implemented. There should also be training in gender sensitisation for all staff members. Lack of gender sensitivity has been found to be one of the major reasons for poor designing and implementation of programmes.

Resource Generation

All four corporations are facing financial problems, especially from the time the Central Government has withdrawn its support. These organisations should be allowed to generate their own resources including accepting grants from donor agencies. This will give them the requisite autonomy to design and implement innovative projects.

Programme Designing and Implementation Mechanism

All the Corporations have development programmes and schemes for rural poor women. One of these programmes is skill development training. Under this training scheme wom

en are mostly given training on traditional activities like tailoring, stitching, embroidery, leather work, etc. The Tamil Nadu WDC also provides training in nursing, physiotherapy, etc. But these programmes do not assist the beneficiaries to appear in examinations conducted by authorised boards. Without certificates of clearance from such boards, such training is not of much practical use.

We recommend that

- i. WDCs should either provide training in collaboration with authorised institutes, or follow the syllabus recognised by such institutes so that the trainees are eligible for appearing in the requisite tests. This would also serve as a check on candidates who join such courses only for the sake of the stipend. Unless such a tie-up programme is designed it is a sheer wastage of money to simply provide training for three to six months in any trade.
- ii. Trainees should be exposed to market trends as a regular component of the training programmes so that they are better equipped to start enterprises on their own account, after the conclusion of such programmes.
- iii. Three of the four organisations are partially, and one totally, dependent on the staff of the other departments. Only the Gujarat and the Tamil Nadu Corporations have field level staffs of their own and recently Karnataka has recruited a small number of field staff to co-ordinate the Devadasi Rehabilitation Programme. Unless the Corporations have their own staff to implement the programmes, there is no direct control.
- iv. Most of the training-cum-production centres find marketing to be a problem. WDCs should try to create

- linkages with other agencies so that there is regular demand for their products.
- v. WDCs should provide technical services to the beneficiaries even after the training is complete. The Corporations should have their own technical experts to advise women entrepreneurs.
 - vi. Access to credit being a major problem for poor women, the WDCs can play an important role in providing escort services and establishing linkages with banks, as well as in providing margin money subsidy to such women.
 - vii. WDCs should encourage NGOs to assist beneficiaries who have been trained in such trades as stitching/garments/tailoring/embroidery, etc. in forming co-operatives.
 - viii. WDCs should try to implement programmes through local NGOs who have better access to local poor women. Before launching any programme, WDC staff should have thorough knowledge of the area. Also they should carry out feasibility studies on any scheme that they may want to plan in an area.
 - ix. The role of WDCs should not be limited to giving financial support towards economic empowerment of women, but should be extended to organising groups to raise awareness, in areas where local NGOs do not exist. It may be mentioned in this context that in Gujarat, the WDC has failed to implement any scheme in the tribal areas because of the absence of suitable NGOs.
 - x. WDCs may also act as a catalyst by facilitating interactions among NGOs.
 - xi. There is a need for regular follow-up of the programmes implemented by the WDCs. Usually on completion of

- training WDCs do not involve themselves at all in the affairs of the beneficiaries. In order to make the programme achieve its goal of providing sustainable income to women by developing their skills, WDCs should follow it up till they start earning an income.
- xii. There should be clear guidelines on identification of beneficiaries of these programmes, in terms of location (rural/urban) and income/asset groups.
 - xiii. WDCs should act as nodal agencies at the state level and all the central schemes may be implemented through the WDCs.
 - xiv. WDCs should have strong links with women's studies centres and women activists in their respective states. This would help them to understand the situation of women more clearly. Also it would give them ideas on new projects that are more holistic in nature.
 - xv. WDCs should aim at playing a catalytic role in implementing the programme through NGOs, panchayats, mahila mandals, etc.
 - xvi. WDCs should also take on a promotional role on the economic role of women through media campaigns.
 - xvii. WDCs will be more successful if they allow the village women to choose the pace at which they want to learn and act. Experience from the Rajasthan WDP and the Mahila Samakhya clearly suggests that gender-sensitive delivery systems are much more successful.

Section V

References

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