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Gender and Social Protection in India: Implications of 'substantive equality'

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The idea of 'substantive equality' is useful in trying to assess the gender sensitivity of social protection. This concept which suggests that the circumstances in which people are placed needs to be taken into account, and further that equality requires looking at impact and the context and reality of disadvantage, takes us towards an interpretation of equality that assesses outcome and result. Substantive equality allows for special measures taken so as to provide a level playing field and address the inequalities and disadvantages of context.¹ This paper explores the ways in which social protection in India has tried to, or could try to, develop this kind of equality.

The first section of the paper briefly reviews the progress of social protection interventions in India and the ways in which these interventions have tried to address gender equality concerns. The focus of the system of social protection as it has evolved has been on workers, and the current effort is to extend coverage to both formal and informal workers. The manner in which gender concerns are addressed is thus through making visible women's roles as workers and provide coverage to maternity. The literature on gender and social protection has shown that risks are gendered, that outcomes vary by gender, and that some types of intervention may have better outcomes from a gender perspective. The second section argues that while risk and vulnerability is a useful way of identifying social protection needs, it is desirable from a gender perspective that this analysis should itself be framed within an analysis of local development approaches, allowing for differentiated responses to seemingly similar risks. The suggestion is that (given the present context and reality of women's lives) there is a need to shift attention away from a purely worker focus (which tends to prioritise protective social security for specified contingencies) to a development focus (which would prioritise promotional social security while also including protective measures), and to allow development to frame the analysis of risk and vulnerability. Further, it is local development that offers the greatest possibilities for promotional social security and gender sensitivity. The third section presents two case studies to illustrate the strong synergies that can be seen between local development and social protection and where 'substantive gender equality' appears to have been addressed. The paper concludes by suggesting that integrating local development with social protection is a way of furthering the agenda of substantive gender equality.

I. Gender and Social Protection in India

¹ The interpretation of substantive equality used here draws on the analysis provided in Goonesekere, Savitri W.E. 2008. The concept of substantive equality and gender justice in South Asia. Paper presented at Sixth South Asia Regional Ministerial Conference Commemorating Beijing, 17-19 January 2008, New Delhi. P.10.

If we examine the progress of social protection in India, it is evident that much of the thinking regarding social protection or social security is linked to economic factors, and specifically to the experience of globalisation. Very broadly it is since the early 1980s that a significant shift has taken place in the framework of economic policy in India and it is also clear as shown in Table 1 that it is subsequent to this period that most of the social security measures have been introduced.

The concept of social protection is originally embedded in the situation of developed countries. It is only in the last 10 years or so that the concept has been expanded and re-interpreted so as to be equally relevant to the situation of developing countries (see Guhan 1994). Despite all the effort to evolve a universally applicable definition, context remains important to interpretation. In the context of developing countries social protection continues to be closely linked to development planning and policy. In the West, the increasing burden of social security and pensions in particular, as the population ages and the demographic pattern shifts towards a higher proportion of older persons, has influenced thinking on appropriate ways of meeting such social obligations, and on whether the appropriate level of social obligation itself ought to be re-defined

In India, social protection is being defined in a very different context: demographically, this is a young country (over 30 % of the Indian population is under the age of 15); and the 'norms' of social protection have to be defined against a context of prevalent poverty. Economically, the organized sector has remained a very small part of the total economy (over 90% of the workforce continues to be in the informal economy). The initial introduction of social security schemes in India was heavily influenced by the Western understanding of the concept at the time. Social security was thus linked to employment in the organized sector; the expectation, at Independence, being that with development the organized sector would grow to provide employment to the majority of workers as is the case in the developed countries. Today, however, as more concerted effort is under way to define appropriate social provision and initiate universal programmes, the contextual differences become increasingly more significant in assessing what is the best way forward.

There is still a large gap between the need for social protection and the actual availability of such support from the state. The role played by NGOs, informal sources of support and the private sector in partially filling this gap remains significant.

The obligations of the state have been spelt out by Article 32 of the Constitution, and support the idea of universal coverage for specified situations:

The State shall, within the limit of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education, and public assistance in case of unemployment, old age, sickness, disablement and other cases of undeserved want.

This could be described as 'stratified universalism, where social policy favoured large social groups' (Utting 2006).

A two-pronged approach was taken in implementing this mandate, through the provision of 'social security' on the one hand and 'social welfare' on the other. Social security was

designed for workers employed on a regular basis in the organised sector. It included an employees' insurance scheme, and a provident fund scheme. The coverage of the schemes has been gradually expanded over the years. Social welfare was seen as a set of interventions to assist the destitute, classified in the first plan as categories of women, children, youth, family, SC, ST, other backward classes, the physically handicapped and others. While originally designed as a welfare approach, this gradually gave way to a development oriented and then an empowerment approach. The Fifth Plan sought to change the concept of social welfare from being primarily redistributive to one that incorporated a more explicit developmental goal: 'an organised function designed to enable families, groups and communities to cope with social problems arising out of changing social conditions, particularly in regard to the structure of the family and its functions. The new approach would aim at a proper integration of welfare and developmental services'. (GOI 1974: 278) The seventh plan (1985) said that 'Programmes of social welfare as envisaged in the Plans are designed essentially to supplement the larger effort at human resource development.' (GOI 1985: 306)

The actual programmes implemented by the government have changed far less than the change in language might suggest.

Both sets of programmes cover a small group of persons – social security being available to workers in the organized sector and social welfare to a percentage of those in extraordinary difficulties and without other means of support.

For workers in the unorganized sector, the main approach has been the setting up of sector specific Welfare Funds (usually tripartite in nature). Welfare funds include contributory and tax based schemes. Tax based schemes have been set up by the Government of India for beedi workers, mine workers, cine workers and construction workers. A cess is levied on the production or export of goods. Through the funds, workers have access to medical care, education of children, and other specified forms of assistance. The Government of Kerala has set up several contributory welfare funds, for different groups of workers. Contributory schemes have been assessed as having lower coverage and it is often difficult to get all the contributions, so from this point of view tax based schemes may be seen as better. Most expenditure from welfare funds have been to cover health, education and housing expenditures and in that sense are not available for the conventional social security benefits such as maternity, invalidity, occupational injury etc. The actual range of benefits varies considerably across the funds. The beedi fund requires that a worker have an identity card that often has to be issued by the employers. Without this card, benefits cannot be claimed. As a result, coverage of the fund is limited and probably only 50-60 % of the workers have cards. Despite problems, the welfare funds have been an important way of reaching out to unorganized workers (Subrahmanya 2000: 67).

'Formal equality' suggests that there should be sameness of treatment among persons placed in similar circumstances. Equal treatment gets amended by protectionist labour laws seeking to address women's 'vulnerability' in the workplace including such actions as excluding women from night work, or certain types of employment considered hazardous for females. A review of social protection measures in India shows that the 'context' of women's lives is reflected in the provisions for maternity leave. For all other measures, women and men are

treated on par, i.e. there is a formal equality in the treatment of men and women among those groups who get covered (organized sector workers and some groups of unorganized workers).

Table 1 summarises the development of social security interventions and this table also shows that many more interventions have been made in the post 1980 period or the period of 'globalisation'. It can be argued that this is reflected in the prioritising of economic aspects of security and in the focus on worker-linked security.

If this catalogue of measures is reviewed to see to what extent it has been gender sensitive, we find that the approach taken to ensure outreach of social security to women as well as men has taken the form of providing quotas for women as in the wage employment programmes. There is evidence of a 'protection' approach in the provisions for maternity leave. The ICDS programme also provides some recognition of the need to support women through pregnancy and while nursing infants. Women's reproductive role is recognised through the provision for maternity benefits and nutrition support to pregnant and nursing mothers. The provision of quotas is some recognition that formal equality will not lead to equal outcomes without special measures.

At best, it can be said that some effort has been made to accommodating and including women in the system of social protection as designed. The design itself is largely based on the identified needs of workers in formal employment and on the international codes.

Table 1: Social protection initiatives in India:

List of Initiatives relevant to Social Protection Objectives			
Subject	Pre 1980	1980-90	Post 1990
Labour laws	Employer's Liability Act Fatal Accident Act (1855) Workmen's Compensation Act 1923 Payment of Wages Act 1936 Industrial Disputes Act 1947 Minimum Wages Act 1948 Employees State Insurance Act 1948 Employees Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 1952 Assam Plantation Employees Welfare Fund Act 1959 Maternity Benefit Act 1961 Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act 1966 Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act 1970 Payment of Gratuity Act 1972 Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1976 Equal Remuneration Act 1976 Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act 1976 Inter State Migrant Workmen		Building and other Construction Workers (RCES) Act 1996 Building and other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act 1996

	(RCES) Act 1979		
Insurance	Public Liability Insurance Act 1971	Comprehensive Crop Insurance Schemes, GIC, 1985 (replaced by National Agricultural Insurance Scheme in 1999)	Jan Arogya 1996 Janashree Bima Yojana, LIC 2000 Krishi Shramik Samajik Suraksha Yojana LIC 2001 (agricultural workers) Khetihar Mazdoor Bima Yojana May 2001 (landless agricultural laboureres) (targeted at low income groups, subsidized by GOI) Varishta Pension Bima LIC 2003 Universal health insurance Scheme 2003
Micro Credit			Rashtriya Mahila Kosh 1993 Kisan Credit Cards 1998-99 (formulated by NABARD for agri inputs and cash for prodn needs)
Combined (old age, maternity, health)			National Social Assistance Programme 1995
Food security	Public distribution of cereals through rationing (1939-45); re-introduced 1950 Integrated Child Development Services 1975		Targeted Public Distribution System 1997 Antyodaya Anna Yojana 2000 Mid day meals 2001
Housing		Indira Awaas Yojana (rural) 1985	Scheme for EWS (urban) 1997
Employment	Wage employment programmes started in the 70's to tackle impact of droughts	Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) 1984 Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (1989) Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana, Swarnajayanti Shahri Rozgar Yojana	Employment Assurance Scheme (1993), Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana 1999 (combining IRDP, TRYSEM, DW CRA and others) Sampoorna Gram Rojgar Yojana (SGRY) 2001-2 Jawahar Gram Samridhhi Yojana (replacing JRY) 2000 NREGA 2005
State Initiatives (selected)	Gujarat Rural Workers Welfare Board Punjab: old age pension, assistance to widows, destitute,	Gujarat Group insurance (fishermen, forest workers, salt workers, shramik suraksha) Kerala welfare funds (head load workers 1981; motor transport	Madhya Pradesh legislation for welfare of unorganized workers; Welfare Boards 2003/5 Tamil Nadu Social Security and Welfare Scheme 2001; manual workers social security 2004; construction workers 1995

	<p>disabled</p> <p>Tamil Nadu old age pension 1962</p> <p>Maharashtra Mathadi Workers Welfare Boards; security guards 1961</p> <p>Kerala Welfare Funds (toddy workers 1970, Labour welfare fund 1977)</p>	<p>1985; advocate clerks 1985; artisans 1986; cashew workers 1988; khadi; 1989; coir 1989; fishermen 1986; handloom 1989; welfare schemes (tree climbers 1980-1; agricultural workers pension 1980; cashew 1983-4);</p>	<p>Andhra Pradesh Labour Welfare 1998</p> <p>Karnataka Social Security Authority – being set up; Labour Welfare 2002</p> <p>State Assisted Scheme of Provident Fund for Unorganised Workers (Govt of West Bengal) 2000 (scheme announced alongwith incentives for industries)</p> <p>Tripura: unorganized workers; beedi 2001</p> <p>Kerala welfare funds akbari (liquor) 1990; construction 1990; agricultural workers 1990; lottery agents 1991; document writers 1991; auto rickshaws 1991; aanganwadi workers 1991; tailors 1995; bamboo 1998; beedi 1996)); new welfare schemes (barbers 2004, laundry workers 2004, automobile workers 2004)</p>
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Notes:

RCES: Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service

Lack of consensus among state governments has prevented passing of a comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers; this has been under consideration since 1975.

Tenth Plan visualized a simplified labour law regime to promote growth of organized employment. Changes in some labour laws are being pursued but a system that fosters substantial expansion in organized employment is yet to take shape

Labour laws have a direct bearing on the conditions of work and the benefits to which workers have access, and there is no particular 'break' evident after 1980.

In contrast, social insurance started post 1980, with most initiatives in the post 1990 period. This is also true of micro credit and the National Social Assistance Programme which seeks to cover maternity, old age and health. While the Public Distribution System is one of the oldest initiatives, the more targeted interventions (mid day meals for all primary school children, and the targeted PDS) are post- 2000. Housing schemes have been started post 1980. Wage employment programmes have a long history, but nothing as ambitious as the NREGA has been attempted earlier. In the case of state initiatives as well, it is possible to see acceleration after 1980 and more so after 1990. It seems clear that the experience of 'globalisation' has had the effect of stimulating such initiatives.

Pre 1980, the focus of effort appears to have been on regulating conditions of work and poverty alleviation. However post 1980 in addition to these types of interventions, a number of interventions designed more from a *risk and vulnerability* analysis have made their appearance, reflecting the understanding that the problem faced by people is not always just one of generalized 'poverty', but of having to deal with specific risks (lack of credit, need for insurance). Similarly an explicit focus on trying to develop programmes for informal workers is seen in the 1990's, especially in State level welfare funds (as in Kerala) and in West Bengal. Although the largest welfare fund (for beedi workers) was set up earlier, the expansion to other workers has mainly been in the 1990s.

II. Substantive equality, gender, and social protection

'Substantive equality' requires taking into account context and the reality of disadvantage, so that focus shifts away from equality of treatment towards equality in outcome and result. With this perspective if we examine the 'context and reality of disadvantage' experienced by women in India and in the context of risks that are sought to be addressed through social protection, certain key features of the situation that emerge include the following.

First, women have greater care responsibilities which includes child care, elderly care, and household provisioning (ensuring adequate water, fuel) which are claims on their time and need to be addressed if we are to start with a 'level playing field'. The usual response to this is the extension of child care and maternity benefits. But it can be argued that we need to extend this to include the better provisioning of water and fuel (taking us to environmental concerns).

Second, women as workers are concentrated in agriculture (85 % of all women workers); informal work and in particular home based work (over 50 % of non agricultural workers). As agricultural workers, women have a strong connection with the land and are heavily influenced by fluctuations in agricultural output. As informal/ home based workers, women are often invisible, dependent on informal arrangements and contracts, and as some research suggests, most dependent on local and domestic markets.² Their lower mobility into new

² As seen for example in studies of women home based workers, ISST – HNSA 2006, ISST-HNI 2007.

areas is dependent on several factors including household and care responsibilities, traditional social norms, information and skills.

An approach to social protection that recognizes these differences in the initial situation of men and women and their lived realities will prioritise investments to regenerate and sustain natural resources (forests, water); land productivity and women's ownership/ control over homestead land; care work; and informal work. It can be argued that in turn, there is considerable synergy between such an approach and one of local development. In a situation where we anticipate and plan for development and enhanced provision, the opportunity to choose a path that *reduces* risk (as distinct from the management of risk) exists and needs to be prioritised.

The literature on gender and social protection has shown that risks are gendered, and that outcomes of social protection interventions vary by gender. The analysis by Luttrell and Moser (2004) suggests that 'The interests of many poor women can.. be served by improving access to social protection in the labour market and extending social insurance to informal workers' and further that there may be need to strengthen informal mechanisms.' Another study suggests the need for 'identifying gender-based factors that prevent individuals from smoothing consumption and designing social protection programs to ease these constraints'. So, for example, 'individual access should be closely tied to roles and not just income—in other words, unpaid work should be valued'. (Ezemenari et al, 2002).

Understanding gendered roles is a key factor in the analysis. In a context where the large majority of women are dependent on agriculture and where household provisioning of water and fuel relies heavily on common property resources, local resources are clearly a major source of well being – or risk. As the case study below shows, in an urban context as well, informal women workers are engaged in household provisioning as well as paid or unpaid economic activity. Linking these roles to the system of social protection is a direct way of easing gendered constraints.

Based on a study of several locale specific interventions it can be argued that while risk based analyses are useful, the attempt to universalize any single set of recommendations can be problematic. If identification of likely risks and sources of vulnerability is carried out within a framework of local resources and local development possibilities, a wider range of possible interventions may emerge as well as more sustainable development trajectories. Such an approach ensures that social protection is both 'protective' and 'promotional'.

Although 'local economic development' (LED) has been variously defined, the essence of this approach to development is an understanding that the economic and social conditions of any given place are the best guide to determining the most viable economic activity for the place; so that LED is essentially bottom up. Four features characterizing LED approaches thus are

- they require participation and social dialogue
- they are based on territory
- they entail the mobilization of local resources and competitive advantages
- and they are locally owned and managed

(Rodriguez-Pose 2001)

The positive expectations from LED include both a social aspect: empowering local societies and generating local dialogue; making local institutions more accountable; and an economic aspect: that the economic activities are based on available local resources and comparative advantage, improvement in the quality of jobs (Rodriguez-Pose 2001).

Local economic development can help to reduce risk. For example, stimulating an ecologically sustainable growth path in an area with a strong dependence on natural resources is essentially a LED approach. The reduction in time spent in fetching water, fodder and consequent increase in leisure time and health related outcomes suggest an improvement in basic needs outcomes. By improving the resource base, the risks to loss of livelihood from environmental degradation are lowered. Where women have a greater role in resource based household provisioning, such risk reduction has a stronger effect on women.

In some situations, a basic minimum of economic and social security is a pre condition to stimulating development effort. For example, without some arrangements for child care, whether private or public, women's work participation will be limited. Proper housing, with adequate water and light, will enhance the productivity of home based workers by improving the conditions of work and reducing the time spent on fetching water. Likewise creating opportunities for work and income earning will increase compliance with contributory social security schemes.

III. Linking Local Economic Development to social protection

To illustrate the synergy between local development, social protection, and 'substantive equality' for women, two cases are briefly reviewed here. One is an example from urban areas – Parivaratan in Ahmedabad. The other is from rural areas in Uttarakhand. Both these examples required community involvement and mobilization of women – through different forms of organising - and identify the approach to LED on the basis of group priorities. Giving a central place to collectivities and communities in this way also makes it possible to see that certain types of investments that contribute to individual security can only be made at a collective level. For example, it is a village eco system that has to be sustainable; it is a slum cluster that has to be upgraded.

National development policies seek to create an enabling framework but their success is premised upon the assumption that adequate capacities already exist at local levels. The case studies above show that this assumption is generally not valid. Considerable *local level* effort is needed to build up human and physical capacities that form the basis for sustainable development. The *Parivartan* programme started as an effort to provide urban infrastructure that would help to integrate slum dwellers economically into the rest of the city. But in order to implement a programme that required a high level of compliance both in terms of adherence to stipulated rules and norms and in terms of making a financial commitment, it was necessary to mobilize residents and provide micro credit. In the Uttarakhand Environment Education Centre (UEEC) example, mobilizing of women and imparting of environmental awareness to children and youth is necessary to create the conditions for sustainable development.

Each of these has been assisted by the state, but the role of the state has been to support a variety of local motivational activities rather than direct the entire process or keep a hands-off

approach. Each of these examples sees other agents than the state making critical contributions – SEWA and its partners in the case of *Parivartan*, the UEEC and its partners in *Uttarakhand*. (see Annex 1 for a summary of the two approaches).

Parivartan

The Slum Networking Programme or SNP (commonly known as the *Parivartan* programme) was launched in 1995 by the Ahmedabad Municipal Council with the objective of upgrading slums in the city by providing basic amenities. The origins of this approach lie in a pilot project undertaken in one slum in Ahmedabad city and supported by a private company (Arvind Mills), the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), SEWA and SAATH (an NGO). The pilot was judged to be a success, and has been upscaled over the years. A similar approach is also being introduced in other cities in Gujarat.

Relevant to the success of the project is the history of the AMC as one of the most efficient and viable local municipalities in the country; the 74th Constitutional Amendment which increased the mandate and role of local authorities; the Agenda 21 agreements which directed international funds into such projects. Sometimes forgotten as relevant factors is the fact that Gujarat combines commercial wealth with a history of philanthropy and commitment to Gandhian ideals, and is fairly unique in the country in so doing. The resulting (relatively) easy relationships between business, social service organizations and a charitable rather than hostile disposition towards the poor in the city is all part of the environment within which this approach has been implemented.

This approach recognizes slums and slum dwellers as an integral part of the city economy, and seeks to strengthen their economic activities and access to social protection through slum upgradation.

Slum dwellers in Ahmedabad mostly earn their livelihood through a range of activities in the informal economy: including particularly vending, home based work and daily wage manual labour. For women in particular, the home is also the centre of livelihood activities. The time spent on fetching water directly affects time available for work; low hygiene affects health and productivity; poor lighting affects eyesight and productivity.

Under *Parivartan*, the Ahmedabad municipality provides the following amenities to selected slums.

- Water supply to individual households.
- Underground sewerage connection to individual households.
- Toilets to individual households.
- Paving of internal roads; lanes and bylanes in the slum localities.
- Storm water drainage.
- Street lighting.
- Solid waste management.
- Land scaping.

(The Ahmedabad Electricity Authority, a private sector company, is now partnering the AMC to provide electricity to the *Parivartan* slum households).

The *Parivartan* programme thus seeks to provide 7 basic items of infrastructure. The cost of provision is shared equally between the municipality, private companies that are partners in the programme, and the beneficiary. Implementing the programme required a high level of compliance from the residents, for example a minimum width of roads had to be ensured and this often meant that people had to demolish a part of their shanties. This compliance was forthcoming, with the selected slums being granted security of tenure for a period of 10 years.

The community development component of the programme included

- Formation of neighbourhood groups, women's groups and youth activities.
- Mobilisation of community savings, by forming savings and credit groups.
- Creation of non-formal educational opportunities for pre-primary age children, school dropouts and illiterate adults.
- Organisation of community health education and other health interventions, with focus on maternal and child health, and commonly prevalent diseases in the slums.
- Day care centers.
- Health centers.
- Corner shops located within the transformed settlements.

SEWA was quick to see the potential of the programme for its many urban members. Its own 30 year history of organizing women in the urban informal economy, and the articulation of a range of strategies for social and economic security to its members, has provided a unique complement to the AMC's efforts.

Many potential beneficiaries did not have enough savings to easily meet their share of the cost. SEWA's role in mobilizing women and SEWA Bank's role in providing loans to enable even the poorest residents to pay their shares has thus been critical to the success of the programme, in those slums where it is an active partner.

SEWA Health and *VimoSEWA* (SEWA's integrated insurance programme) have been active in these areas. SEWA's health visitors conduct regular training and awareness camps. Those who opt for the insurance package are covered for contingencies including accidents, death and maternity.

In the first five years of this programme, 59 slums were successfully upgraded in Ahmedabad, covering around 30,000 people. In an impact study carried out by the *Mahila* Housing Trust in 2002, it was found that over a five year period, there was substantial increase in the number of children in the age group 6-10 going to school (from 66% to 72% in the sample) mainly because less time was needed to collect water; an increase in the number of working hours led to increased earnings and a reduction in the number of persons with very low incomes; there was reduction in the incidence of common ailments like diarrhoea, fever, cold and cough, and an increase in the number of people bathing daily; the average expenditure on health almost halved for the sample (Sewa Academy 2002).

Upgrading the house and providing basic amenities has had an immediate effect on women workers' productivity as well as health and educational outcomes. Thus the programme both meets basic needs as well as stimulating economic processes. The introduction of health awareness and health insurance through *VimoSEWA* has contributed to the programme by

strengthening the ability to cope with health related contingencies.

Uttarakhand Environment Education programme

The approach discussed below was implemented initially on a pilot basis in *Uttarakhand* subsequently upscaled to cover the whole state. *Uttarakhand* is a hill state in the Central Himalayas, with a natural resource base (forest, water) that is potentially a rich reservoir although there has been heavy deforestation over the years. It includes large tracts of uninhabited land, but in the areas where people have settled it is fairly densely populated. The livelihood of people here is heavily dependent on the resource base, while at the same time this dependence has led to erosion of the base. Women in the region have been involved in protests against the cutting of trees (as in the famous '*chipko*' movement) and the mining of soapstone and magnesite.

The approach is based on the understanding that the concept of 'ecosystem health' is central to a sustainable development trajectory, and to tackling the basic problem of 'ecological poverty' which cannot be tackled through an injection of money but only through a regeneration of the resources.

The initial step of the programme is to instill awareness among villagers on the basic cause of experienced difficulties (shortage of food, fodder, fuelwood, water). The most obvious solution is to 'exit' – to migrate, and the region has high (male) outmigration. But with 'transformative education' villagers are able to perceive that a better solution lies in improving the management of resources through changes in their own strategies and practices. These practices require co-operation and a shared understanding of the situation. It is attempted through deepening the knowledge base of the community.

The approach of the UEEC can be briefly summarized as follows. The broad objective is to encourage each village to identify local issues, agree upon forms of collective action, and to build up community based organizations. There is a special effort to reach children in village schools in a course of environmental education that is rooted in practical exercises to bring to life the concept of the village eco system with the expectation that the children would grow up with a sensitivity to appropriate strategies of resource management in the specific context of each village. These principles are also imparted to younger children by encouraging simple activities around the pre primary child care centre or the '*balwadi*' which simultaneously offers child care, nutrition and hygiene education, and also in most places is the nucleus for the formation of women's groups.

While the focus on children will have far reaching implications, women's groups are crucial to the present. The village level groups are federated into the *Uttarakhand Mahila Parishad* (Women's Federation) which currently has over 15,000 women representing 480 women's groups. These groups are able to lead the strategizing for resource management at village level. The quality of life for women here is inextricably linked to the easy availability of fuel, fodder, water and they have been leaders in developing appropriate strategies and ensuring that the community co-operates. These women's groups have been able to leverage funds available to *Panchayats*, and many of these women leaders have been elected to the

village *Panchayat*.

From a social perspective, the building up of inclusive groups and networks has reduced divisions on the basis of caste and gender. From a developmental perspective, the approach has reduced the ecological poverty of the villages to some extent, through improvements in the productivity of the village eco system, and in this way stimulated local development. Improvements have been noted in the following indicators

Ecosystem health (depth of water table, volume and constancy of spring and stream flows, species diversity)

People's awareness: understanding of the need for environmental sustainability and the link between environmental, social and economic issues

Increased capacity of villagers to monitor and assess state of local environment

Greater community unity

Greater participation by women in village affairs

Child care, freeing women for work and enhancing skills of children

Health (almost universal immunization of children; reduction in infant mortality; increased number of women and girls accessing health services; rising concern about nutrition)

Basic needs – water management practices

IV. Is local development the way forward?

Based on these and other examples,³ a strong case can be made that if we want to engender social protection we need to take each local context as our starting point. The identification of gendered disadvantage is only partly common in all situations; there is also a local specificity to disadvantage that needs to be spelt out. The end objective of social protection may be to ensure

‘equal support to all in times of vulnerability and equal ability to manage risk’

In order to level the field, address the special ‘vulnerabilities’ of women, and the sources of risk affecting women more than men, (in addition to risks affecting all citizens) approaches that are rooted in the local economic context, and in communities or collectives, appear to be recommended. The process aspect is very important. The case studies bring out the fact that the complexities of local dynamics will influence the outcomes of any intervention. There will be different interest groups. Traditionally certain groups hold a position of dominance, for reasons to do with caste, gender, income etc. In order to ensure equity and inclusion, a

³ Other cases have been reviewed in Sudarshan 2006.

phase of creating what can be called the 'pre conditions' is necessary. These include building consensus and co-operation to ensure that all groups are included, typically done through mobilizing and organizing and training, including information, education and awareness raising efforts. Special efforts are needed to enable women to expand their roles to include the public domain. It is also necessary to build consensus across generations, so that children, youth and adults share a common perspective towards development. In the context of informal employment and poverty, information and awareness about the informal economy and the particular needs and priorities of different groups of workers needs to be adequately communicated to officials and those in charge of implementing programmes.

The manner in which gender concerns are integrated into social protection through a focus on local development issues emphasizes certain issues, which include

- Engendering social protection in the context of poverty, informality, and dependence on natural resources suggests a need to start from basic needs (and not primarily with contingencies)
- Mobilising women into groups and addressing problems at a common level is central to many successful efforts and suggests that investment in public infrastructure and spaces is necessary.
- Organising people into groups with a view to building co-operation, compliance and a sense of inter dependence emerges as central to these efforts. This also means there is need for a class of volunteers and the quality of the organizing effort has implications for how well the subsequent programme will perform. In practice, good volunteers are a scarce resource and this aspect of the programme is not easily replicable.
- A viable approach to local development needs a framework of ecological sustainability. This viewpoint has many supporters – but also runs into conflict with those who favour market led free trade based growth. Meso level institutions both government and non government play an important role in capacity building needed for local development.

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Annex I

Issue	UKSN/ 'transformative education'	Parivartan/ slum networking
1. Basic unit	Village	Urban slum cluster
2. Scale of operation	State of Uttarakhand	City of Ahmedabad, Gujarat
3. Conceptual framework	Sustainable development requires a healthy eco system and understanding of carrying capacity	Inclusive urban planning based on recognition that slums are integral part of mainstream city economy
4. Key driver	Education	Infrastructure
4. Organising local groups	High priority	High priority
5. Focus on women	Yes	Yes
6. Partners	State and Central Govt., UKSN, NGOs and CBOs, women's groups and schools; private foundations	Municipal Corporation of Ahmedabad, private companies, NGOs, Vimo SEWA, SEWA Health, SEWA Bank, Mahila Housing Trust, CBOs
7. Financing	State and Central Government, private contributions, in-kind and labour contributions from beneficiaries	Government, private sources, SEWA and beneficiaries
8. Financial input	Approx \$ 650 per village per annum (including all expenses, programme costs), excluding in-kind contributions by beneficiaries	Approx \$ 130 per household (one third of this contributed by each of the three -municipality, private company, and beneficiary)
9. Relevant History	Environmental activism (eg chipko)	Gandhian values, philanthropy, strong labour movements
10. Challenges to LED approach (when might a 'best' case become a 'worst' case scenario?)	Lack of consensus; tendency for youth to migrate to cities; achieving balance between 'local needs' and 'global demands'	Opposition from builders lobby, other groups favouring alternative patterns of city development; movement for 'world class cities'; conflicts over resource use by municipality