

Report on the workshop on 'Engendering Public Policy'

Venue: Casuarina, India Habitat Centre, Lodi Road, New Delhi

March 25-26, 2010.

The conference on Engendering Public Policy was hosted by the Institute of Social Studies Trust in partnership with SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) Bharat and the International Development Research Council (IDRC) as part of a larger project whose objective was to describe the feminist economist intervention in the Eleventh Five Year Plan of India as a new voice in public opinion on macro-economic policy and argue that it is the unfolding of sharply accurate facts and analysis by this new actor, woman, as the growth agent that might provide the ideas and voice for restoring coherence in the economic policy arguments.

It also aims to contribute to feminist understanding of concepts like mainstreaming gender; poverty eradication with special reference to women's poverty; and developing new measures to understand progress and gender equality. This conference was held as an initiative to strengthen the network of feminist economists whose opinion and work engage with public policy. Names of participants and their current location are included towards the end of this report.

Session I: Engendering Macroeconomic Policy

The first session of the workshop provided an overview of the need for a discussion on engendering public policy. Referring to the experience of the working group of feminist economists that was set up in 2008 by the Planning Commission to provide sector specific inputs drawn from their work, Devaki Jain said that such forums could be expanded to include a diverse range of stakeholders for presenting a collective voice and perspective in the public policy domains. The documentation of this experience had revealed that many inputs had been included in the final version of the Eleventh Plan. The session highlighted the diversity of perspectives and also touched upon some of the issues which need to be addressed through policy for gender equity. Renana Jhabvala from SEWA representing an activist's perspective shared some of organizations' experiences of influencing policy for women workers in particular sectors such as home based workers and street vendors and the challenges in the process. Mridul Eapen talked about the exercise of gender budgeting in the context of Kerala State Plan. She covered some of the allocations for women-centric policies which were included such as emphasis on water and toilets as opposed to just ports etc in the category of 'infrastructure'. She also emphasized the value of gender budgeting exercise for raising consciousness within the government and in society at large that women's need have to be integrated into mainstream policies and schemes.

Chair: Mrs. Devaki Jain

Speakers: Ms. Renana Jhabvala, Dr Mridul Eapen

The Chairperson, **Ms Devaki Jain** welcomed participants and introduced the session by talking about the Working Group of Feminist Economists, which was set up as an effort to engender the 11th Plan. She said at the first conference of the Indian Association of Women's Studies a separate sub-group

composed just of economists formed a group with the name 'Economists Interest in Women's Issues Group' – EIWIG. The decision not to use the word 'feminist' was meant to encourage men to be a part of the group. EIWIG had convened several sector specific conferences, each being convened in a different development institute and a volume of the essays papers written for those conferences edited by Nirmala Banerjee and Devaki Jain had been published.

More recently a working group was set up by the Planning Commission to scrutinize the Draft Chapters of the 11th Plan, through a gender lens. Each member reviewed one or more chapters according to their knowledge base and gave in some written comments over a period of three months. The group contributed their views on a range of sectors including agriculture, non-agriculture, infrastructure, was made to the full Planning Commission. After the 11th Plan was printed and published, it could be seen that the group had made some indents. There have always been Steering Committees, women's networks from grassroots being invited by the Planning Commission and regional consultations as part of the planning process but for the first time, the Working Group of Feminist Economists was set up. This experience motivated the idea of having the present conference to discuss ways in which efforts can be made to engender public policy and how a collective voice in intervening and transforming the perceptions of women's ability, capability, and entitlement, could emerge.

The first speaker, **Ms Renana Jhabvala** opened by saying that the members of the Group of Feminist Economists represented different perspectives and she represented SEWA and an activist perspective. There are many ways of engendering macro policy, and SEWA's way is from the grassroots. Policy determines what is happening through the government, through society, through the economy and hence it is important to influence policy for successful grassroots work and it is important to reflect the interests of the poorest women.

She briefly described the beginnings of SEWA which was started in 1972, with Ela Bhatt as the founder, and is a trade union of women in the unorganised sector. The members are street vendors, home-based workers, women selling their labor and services and small producers, such as small farmers and milk producers. SEWA at present is working in nine states of India with over 1,200,000 members. It is both a trade union and a development organization having promoted over 100 cooperatives which are owned and managed by women; it provides micro finance services, has its own bank, and conducts training.

While working with the women in the unorganized sector, many of the issues that SEWA confronts are related to policy, although this may not be immediately obvious. It is therefore important to bring them to the attention of the policy makers and to advocate for changing the policy or making more empowering policies. Also, even when there are appropriate policies and laws, getting them implemented is a challenging exercise. She illustrates the point by using the example of home-based workers. These are mainly women, who work within their homes and manufacture goods or provide services. Women who work within their homes are often seen as home makers. Even a woman who works eight or ten hours, making bidis or stitching is not recognized as a worker. And the perception is that 'she is only a house wife doing something in her leisure time'. The issues that SEWA identified for action in this sector included first, making them visible as workers; second, the difficulty in organizing

them because they are confined to their own homes; and third, many are linked to the ultimate employer through a long chain of contractors, particularly in case of those producing for global markets.

Over a period of 15 years or so, the issue of invisibility has been addressed through collection of statistics on home-based workers. A lot of academics have found that independently collected statistics has a limited impact compared to official statistics, so SEWA's effort is always to eventually influence official data collection systems. In 1999-2000 NSS did collect statistics on home-based workers; which found that there are about 30 million home-based workers in India. Efforts have been made to get a separate Labor Law for home-based workers. Labor Departments in different states have been approached to include home based workers in the Minimum Wages Act; and at the international level, efforts have been made for an ILO convention and recognition by trade unions. In the SAARC region, one of the successful advocacy attempts was to get the Prime Minister of India to attend a SAARC level conference on home-based workers.

She pointed out that these efforts have been able to influence policy. Home-based workers have been included under the Minimum Wages Act in many states; home-based workers were recognized as a category and included in the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana and in the Social Security Act; they have been included in many marketing schemes; and Home Net, which is the network of home-based workers, has been recognized by SAARC. Multinational chains have recognized that home-based workers are part of their chain. The more difficult part is actually translating policy into local action.

She then talked about SEWA's work with women street vendors. The street vendors struggle has been a long one, and one primary issue is to obtain for them the Legal Right to Vend. SEWA has developed the idea of Natural Markets, where consumers will 'naturally' come - near a bus stop, near their homes. The National Alliance of Street Vendors has been formed and SEWA is a part of it and a conference was organized asking for a National Policy on Street Vendors. However, women street vendors were initially not recognized even within the alliance of street vendors. There is now a National Policy on street vendors, but it is not being implemented in most cities, with some exceptions such as Bhubaneswar.

Social Security is one of the main focus areas now, as a large share of poor people's earnings is spent on healthcare which is the major source of debt now. The three major problems faced, over and above that of earning enough, are health risks, old age risks and risks from disasters. One of the achievements has been the Rashtriya Swasta Bima Yojana, which was actually modeled on SEWA's insurance scheme. One final example she detailed was that of infrastructure for the urban poor. SEWA has been advocating that every person living in the urban area should have access to water and sanitation, regardless of the legality of the land on which they live. Infrastructure for women does not mean ports or airports or roads; it means water and a toilet. And so engendering infrastructure policy means talking about toilets and not ports.

Finally, she said one major challenge is that most policies are now implemented directly by government or by corporate sector. The Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana is government subsidized and implemented by insurance companies. First, the question of mobilization, and bringing people together is not

addressed either by the insurance companies which make money or the government which gives the money. Second, in many of the policies, women are targeted but not empowered. Third, money is being poured in schemes but she argued that it's like pouring down something through already clogged pipes of government apparatus. The question is how can one either clean or by-pass those pipes so as to actually reach people?

Ms Mridul Eapen, the next speaker observed that her interest in engendering public policy started with an interest in gender budgeting. Gender budgeting is not just a technical exercise, but also a political one but altering allocations often gets obscured in number crunching. The Ninth Plan in Kerala was the first attempt at introducing gender-aware and decentralized planning in the state. The government recognized women's double role, attempted to provide for women's special needs, with an understanding that there are unequal gender relations, at least at the level of rhetoric. But at the time of implementation, not many transformatory projects could be formulated. The 11th Plan exercise was energized further through own thinking in the Planning Board (reflected in the Approach Paper to Kerala's 11th Plan) and the efforts of the Committee on Feminist Economists and many issues raised by that group, e.g. infrastructure, were included. This year, Kerala has focused on infrastructure for women.

She pointed out that the gender budgeting exercise is normally done for what are called 'gender-related sectors', i.e. education, health, family welfare, agriculture, rural development, social welfare, including SC/ST, small-scale and traditional industries. However over 70% of the total budget is allocated to 'gender-unrelated sectors', such as the PWD, power, ports, transport and communication, irrigation. Gender budgeting in the absence of gender disaggregated data is difficult and yet a worthwhile exercise not only because it sensitizes government and society to the fact that budgets impact men and women differentially, but because it creates a consciousness that women's needs have to be built into the formulation of projects.

She argued that it is essential to go beyond numbers and formulate schemes which address specific and critical issues of women within a gender perspective. In this context a workshop was held in Trivandrum organized by the Kerala Planning Board and the Gender Advisory Board on 'Workshop on Gender Budgeting- making it feasible through plan write-ups'. It was then agreed that gender budgeting exercise for 2010-11 needs to be undertaken at different levels. At one level is the need to make the financial data more reliable and proximate the actual flow of resources to women, which is an ongoing exercise. The second level is to plan (a) women-specific projects in women-unrelated sectors and (b) to plan new initiatives in gender-related sectors in the 2011 Annual Plan, depending on women's priorities as perceived in the specific context of the state. With respect to women-specific projects in women-unrelated sectors, it was decided this year to give a major focus on women-friendly infrastructure as envisaged by the Departments. A survey of public and government offices at the district level showed that there were 100-odd offices which had no separate toilets for women and about 40-odd offices in 14 districts which had common toilets. Toilets may appear to be addressing practical needs of women by ensuring mobility; but by ensuring mobility, security and safety, they also address strategic needs.

So PWD suggested toilets for women in new public buildings, toilets for women in existing public buildings on a priority basis, gender sensitive trainings for engineers, working women's hostels. Transport Department formulated a project for waiting rooms for women with toilets and drinking water in 69 depots and sub-depots of the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation; under the EMS Housing Scheme, for the BPL Households, along with the house, a smokeless chulah would also be provided; two buses for women provided at ports; victim support cells in police stations for the police stations in taluk headquarters entire state; orientation workshops for media persons; ICT training for women and skill enhancement for women in ten women's colleges.

A new scheme proposed by the Planning Board and implemented by the Housing Department is the Innovative Rental Flats Housing under which one-third is reserved for women-headed households. Science and Technology Department has a women scientist cell which will look at issues such as women and health under climate change or women and technology. Health both physical and psychological of women victims of violence is sought to be addressed through the Medical Care for Women Victims of Violence and Abuse in all the 14 district hospitals. The Regional Cancer Center has invested in the latest technology in cancer cure for women.

In agriculture, with large numbers of women working, there are specific programmes for women in crop production, in poultry, and milk production. The Income Support Program is for self-employed people, such as those in handloom, cashew, coir, bidi, khadi, basket-making. They have employment, but either their product is not being sold at the right time or there is no demand, so the intention is to give an income support guarantee through either government purchasing that product, part of it goes as working capital to the unit and part of it goes as wage to the workers. There is a new scheme for financial support to caregiver of completely immobilized family members. There is an on-going gender awareness scheme seeking to create a consciousness which promotes gender sensitivity in the environment. As a result of these efforts, the share of the budget going to women under the 100 percent women's schemes has gone up from 5.6% of the plan outlay in 2009-10, to 8.5% in 2010-11. She added that while resources are important, it is also important to ensure they are used in the right way.

Ms Devaki Jain: concluded the session by saying that she hoped for the creation of a forum which is driven by the desire to ensure that the poorest and amongst women are represented, and have some stake in the transformations that are taking place, and can bring a knowledgeable voice to work on policy. Currently there are dispersed voices from women. Media projection of women's voice is usually of a corporate woman. The kind of voices heard today at the forum speak for the less privileged and the kind of roles they are playing in the economy and the effort is to see how to speak in very specific ways to policy.

In the discussion that followed, several points were raised.

- The difficulty in getting a minimum wage for piece rate workers.[The response from the panel was that over the years time rate is increasingly being replaced by piece rate and the struggle has to be to see that piece rates are made effective and commensurate]

- It was pointed out by a participant that media is all about perception; and the nomenclature of 'feminist economist' leads to a perception of exclusion of somebody who is not a woman. Being sensitive to women's issues and gender issues is different from being a feminist economist.
- To what extent can gender budgeting as a tool that can be truly transformative – the achievements in Kerala are like a minimum essential; how accessible will the planned outlays be for women in very vulnerable situations? [In response, it was said that while not immediately transformative, it can make a big difference over a period of time]
- A comment was made that the income support scheme for the self-employed group in Kerala may have useful lessons for future design of NREGA and could perhaps be used for places like Himachal, where women did not want to do manual work but would be willing to participate in other activities.

Session 2: Gender in Economics and Economics in Women's Studies

The speakers in this session articulated the absence of gender analysis in Economics curriculum at the University level in India. Ritu Dewan shared her experience of attempting to introduce gender in the Economics curriculum in Mumbai University and the resistance she faced on various fronts. Sumangala Damodaran talked about why the discipline of Economics is particularly difficult to engender because of an exclusive emphasis on technique imparting devoid of political, historical context. The other two speakers talked about the experience of inter-disciplinary Women's Studies Centres in Jamia Milia Islamia and Delhi University. Sree Rekha from Jamia also highlighted the challenges of teaching gender in a classroom where students not only come from different disciplines but also diverse social backgrounds. However the nature of the classroom discussion is also lively as students engage with issues through their lived experiences. Manjeet Bhatia discussed some of the experiments attempted at Delhi University.

Chair: Dr. Mary John

Speakers: Prof Ritu Dewan, Prof Sumangala Damodaran, Dr Shri Rekha, Dr Manjeet Bhatia

Dr. Mary John welcomed participants and introduced the panel. She said that so far, the discussion has been on the relationship between policies, state, grassroots and research, but not in the context of pedagogy, teaching, syllabus making, and the classroom. The latter occupies a very integral part of the history of women's studies and the women's movement. Patriarchal prejudice has been mentioned earlier; and the pros and cons of talking about the category called 'women'. Today, there are over 70 women's studies centres in Indian universities across the country, and there are also attempts to engender different disciplines.

Economics is a peculiar discipline, claiming for itself a special identity, and certainly amongst many male economists, a very prominent and dominant identity, as a more scientific discipline, than History or Sociology or Political Science. Despite all the work that has been done on gender from an economic or developmental perspective, there is some hostility to gender questions in economics department. On

the other hand, women's studies centres have tried to bring development questions within their broader interdisciplinary or trans-disciplinary agendas.

The first speaker, **Prof Ritu Dewan** talked about her struggle and attempts to introduce gender in economics curriculum at Mumbai university. She said the Department of Economics, in Mumbai University is one of the oldest departments and tends to be very Brahminical and patriarchal in its attitude to change – thus, a wide range of issues could be included in 'development studies' but was not permissible under 'development economics.' Her struggle started in 1987-88, at two levels: one for mainstreaming, by including getting gender into the main economics course, both compulsory courses and later the optional courses; and second, getting a women's studies center within the Department of Economics which would not duplicate the work of the Center for Women's Studies at SNDT, but rather try to mainstream gender into the discipline of Economics. Mainstreaming the regular was easier in the optional papers than the compulsory papers. The gender based division of labor in the Department was such that most of the women were teaching the optional courses, and most of the men were teaching the compulsories [for which all 140 students are present]. Finally, few changes were accepted in the four compulsory papers- in Macro Economics and Public Economics, no changes were permitted; in Micro Economics gender was reduced to a non-standard economic problem and was acceptable only through particular issues such as fertility analysis. In the fourth paper Development, gender was included through models of fertility; bargaining theories of household; and work participation rates. Issues such as property rights, dowry, and violence against women were not accepted. It was argued that dowry etc belonged to Sociology and violence against women in the domain of Psychology and hence they had no place in Economics. In the credit based papers there are ten compulsory papers that are divided into four semesters; and gender is just one word, along with tribes and minorities, in a compulsory paper on Indian Economy.

Among optional papers, she says, in 'Agriculture' gender is fully integrated - because she was in charge of it; and because a woman was teaching the course on Industry, it was possible to include male/female wage differentials. In the paper 'Transport/ Social Infrastructure', nothing was changed in the transport section and in Social Infrastructure education, health and sex ratios were included. In 'Urban and Regional Development' - a new paper, gender was subsumed under Informal Market Segmentation. If not, gender is reduced to reproductive issues and fertility. In some papers like International Economics, Financial Economics, Monetary Economics, Mathematics and Econometrics there is no component of gendered analysis. In mathematics and Econometrics etc it is perhaps possible to do so through the examples and problems that are used for analysis. Gender is mentioned in only 5 of the 34 optional papers and that is because I was in charge of designing those courses. I teach four of the papers, and I offer a full paper on Gender Economics. The paper on Gender Economics has four modules, Patriarchy; Approaches to development theories (the term economic theories were not accepted); National Income; Women in the Developmental Process. However, she says, including gender issues in the curriculum is only one step, ensuring it is taught in the right way requires a teacher who is gender sensitive.

The next speaker **Sumangala Damodaran** pointed out that the story in Delhi University or in JNU and in Delhi, in general, is far worse than what has just been described by the previous speaker on the status of engendering Economics in Mumbai University. She focused on how the disciplinary context affects the way in which some of these issues are dealt with at the level of the curriculum. There has been very strident resistance to teaching courses on gender. All disciplines have faced resistance from a dominant patriarchal ideology initially but the resistance in Economics, she argues, is more fundamental than that.

Delhi University had an extensive syllabus revision exercise a few years ago. At the end of it Economics, the way in which it is taught in Delhi University now is quite devoid of any conscious engagement with either a historical context or a socio-political context, with an almost exclusive emphasis on technique imparting. This does not allow for any kind of historical analysis, it does not allow for any engagement with ideas of discrimination, whether it is in the form of race, caste or gender. She says, that the real constraint within the classroom is that even when students are interested and understand how important a gender lens or a larger historical understanding is in placing themselves in how they look at society, they are unable to actually grasp what you are trying to say to them. She argues that Economics was gender insensitive even before; but with this kind of exclusive emphasis on pure technique imparting, even the brightest of students are not in a position to understand, methodologically, what is being conveyed to them. As far as students are concerned, it is actually a serious capability problem.

She says, there are small windows within the Development Economics course, although it is exclusively focused on the individual, it allows, to some extent, for students to think of contexts where the world of Neo-classical rationality breaks down. But it is in terms of the 'other', in a context where rationality breaks down, where the so-called Science of Economics has to be compromised because there are these creatures known as developing countries. In developing countries, you have people like peasants, you have people like women, who behave peculiarly in the credit market. In an ideal world, everyone would be behaving like homo-economicus, Robinson Crusoe and so on. But the larger methodology does not allow the students to think beyond this paradigm of very limited optimization Economics. In some courses, it may be possible to introduce gender in limited ways such as work participation rates or fertility rates.

In Ambedkar University which she has joined recently, she says, there is by mandate, an interdisciplinary Masters program in Development Studies, so there is far more space to introduce courses on gender. There are optional courses on gender, and a general compulsory course is planned on discrimination, bringing in race, caste, gender.

Sree Rekha teaches at the Centre for Women's Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia. She says, other than the struggle with the UGC and the way Women's Studies as an academic discipline is structured, teaching a subject like Women's Studies in a place like Jamia also brings a lot of other issues related to what you are teaching, how you are teaching, what is the politics of what you are teaching, and so on.

The Women Studies Center is called the Sarojini Naidu Center for Women's Studies. It started in 2000, and in the first five years or so, it had only research projects and organized workshops and the teaching

began in 2005. The BA-I paper is called An Introduction to Gender Studies. There are two papers in BA-II called Women and Development, and Women in Indian Society. The next step is introducing BA pass course on Women's Studies which will have five papers on Women's Studies- two more added to the already existing ones. A Post Graduate Diploma and a Masters are also in the process. Also teachers do Gender Studies refresher courses at Jamia.

The teaching started in 2005 with some guest faculty and in 2006, she and another colleague joined as full timers. She says, in those days, the number of students was around 25-to-30 in the first year. This year's batch is around 46-48 students. The students come from different disciplines including Economics, Political Science, Sociology, History, Psychology, English Literature, and Islamic Studies to Arabic studies, and they also come from very diverse backgrounds of caste, class and gender. There are several male students who opt for Gender Studies. These include Muslim clergy, clergy students, Purdah wearing students, to those who wear short skirts and study English Literature. The nature of the classroom discussion is therefore extremely lively, but certain issues have to be dealt with sensitively. There are always students who are very religious, and sometimes there are people who opt for these courses just to know exactly what is being taught.

However, she points out that on the positive side, Jamia students actually engage with what they learn with a lot of honesty and sincerity and link it to their lived experiences, and the questions are very genuine. For her, as a feminist, as an atheist, she says, it has not been easy to talk about many political issues in the syllabus and to take strong positions on them and engage with a huge majority who are very religious. And also, considering the Muslim majority in a university where what is happening to Muslims as a community in the world today is at the forefront.

According to her the syllabus that has been approved is very problematic. There are five topics in my first-year paper called Introduction to Gender Studies which asks, "What is Women's Studies?". The second part is Basic Concepts in Women's Studies, which is sex, gender, patriarchy, social construction of gender. The third unit is called Women and Society, in which caste, class, race and ethnicity, with gender. Then there is Unit Four, which is called Family, Marriage and Education Institutions, and there is another Unit Five, on Women and Education. But one of the biggest challenges is finding readings for students who are more comfortable with Hindi.

Student feedback from first-year students has consistently shown that the most important issues that they felt were useful for them were caste, marriage, and education. She points out that every year, the number of students from the Department of Economics who join the courses, has come down. The few students from Economics, who opt for the course, find it challenging and difficult to relate what they learn in their main courses with what is taught at the Centre.

Engagement of the Centre with other Departments is not always welcome and there is resistance against collaboration. At the same time, the faculty at the Centre are supposed to be experts on everything concerning women. She says in the previous year the Centre organized a seminar on Special Economic Zones and Women Workers. The response and support from the students of the Economics

Department was very good, but at the same time, the departments and the teachers felt this was encroaching on the terrain of another discipline.

According to her the question which has to be discussed is whether the way forward for the Women's Studies Center is to encourage every other department to have more and more papers in Women's Studies or create a separate identity for the women's studies center?

Manjeet Bhatia reiterates that there is still no feminist theory or feminist economics component in the Economics Department in Delhi University despite the fact that the Women's Study Center is one of the first four centers started by UGC in 1987. In most of the other Social Sciences in Delhi University, except Economics, at-least component on gender has been added. A few departments are offering even optional courses in gender studies at UG and at PG levels. Many people are doing PHD thesis and M. Phil dissertations on gender issues. Delhi University has achieved sprinkle effect though intense courses on gender are lacking. The administration has been creating hurdles. The UGC has been saying since the 10th Plan, that Women's Studies Centers should become Departments of Women's Studies. The Centre designed syllabus for MA program, M. Phil program but it did not materialize because , as issue of administrative control over it could not be resolved. Delhi University is still to give clearance to the centre's request to teach long term courses. Some short courses have been started, at the Undergraduate, Post Graduate and Advanced levels. The Undergraduate course was designed in association with teachers of different colleges and departments, and this course is taught with the help of a college coordinator and guest faculty and is reviewed every year. Joint certificates are given by Women's Studies and the college. This is a 100-hours course, equivalent to a one-year BA course. There is an option to teach 50% through lectures and the balance through workshops, theatre, or exposure visits. The PG level course is a four-month course formulated by Women Studies and taught at the Centre. The advanced course in Gender studies again taught at the centre focuses on giving training on interdisciplinary research methods on gender issues. She also points out that most social sciences do not touch law at all which is a part of the advanced gender course.

26 March, 2010

Session 3

Engendering Employment Strategies

The session outlined the need to integrate gender in the employment policies based on where women are currently located in the workforce and the trends in employment across rural and urban areas and taking into account regional diversity. Nirmala Banerjee talked about how the changing patterns of livelihoods and the growth of the unorganised sector has created additional burden for women in particular. She also highlighted the fact that the focus should not be just on increasing the number of women in the workforce but ensuring an increase in their productivity, on skill development and improving the quality of employment. Preet Rustagi presented some quantitative and a few qualitative

trends in women's employment using NSSO data from the 55th round to the 61st round which is 1999-2000 to 2004-05. She pointed at continuing segregation and segmentation in the labour market, based on gender stereotypes and also emphasized the need for addressing skill deficit.

Chair: Reiko Tsushima

Speakers: Nirmala Banerjee, Preet Rustagi

The Chairperson Reiko Tsushima, provided the background to the formulation of the National employment Policy which has taken about two years. It was a consultative process that involved various ministries and the Planning Commission and National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector and more. It was finalized in 2009 and it did go to the cabinet, but unfortunately at that time it did not pass. Now, the Labour Minister has briefed all the officers concerned and the Minister is set to take it forward again in the cabinet soon. She says the significance of the policy is that it contains a section specifically on women workers which recognizes the severe constraint women face in terms of lack of recognition of their contribution in many economic activities that are not adequately measured and also recognizes that they are discriminated against; that there are wide gaps in opportunities and lack of support structures to facilitate their employment. So, it provides a policy direction for gender sensitive employment and macro policies. It recognises the need to identify sectors where women are participating in large numbers and to introduce technology for reducing work burden thereby to increase productivity; but also to make sure that those technologies do not end up displacing women; and also to stipulate that facilities and structures are needed to meet basic conditions of work, sanitation, drinking water, and childcare facilities. It emphasizes organization and empowerment. It talks about the need to come up with an employment impact assessment in which the gender should be indicator.

She says, in an attempt to operationalize the policy, the ILO initiated an exercise, spearheaded by Mrs Devaki Jain. Data was needed to substantiate the fact that women are in areas of work that are holding up the economy and if the GDP growth is to continue, the policy must look at working conditions of women and productivity of women workers. Hence, ILO commissioned some studies and a seminar was organised in July 2009. The papers tried to locate women in the economy in many ways: state wise, income wise, age wise, and sector wise. The data was represented through maps. An estimate was made of the contribution of women's work to GDP using existing official data. Preet Rustagi prepared a paper on employment trends, Saraswati Raju on regional and state wise differences in women's employment and trends, Aruna Kanchi on agriculture. Mr. Ravindran did a paper on evaluating women's work in terms of GDP. And Ms. Anandi Venkateshwara who is an officer at the Ministry of Commerce writing on her own initiative, not the Ministry's, wrote a paper on trade liberalization and its impact on women.

The first speaker **Nirmala Banerjee** adds further details about the above process. The papers were a joint effort and finalised after several meetings and discussions over the period November 2008 to July 2009. The framework agreed upon was different from the usual employment analysis in several ways.

First, women workers were placed in their context: region, class, household, and patriarchal tradition – to see them in and from their own space. She argues that employment policy should not aim only at giving women more jobs but improve their existing situation. The exercise was based mainly on the official data system. For unpaid work in households, data was also used from a randomized study in West Bengal for households and women's role in the household economy.

The first issue was to specify where women are located in the economy. In the last 20 years or so many traditional occupations and livelihoods have become marginalized which means that many more families, including almost all the families in the unorganized sector, are now in a crisis because their traditional livelihoods, whether it was agriculture, whether it was artisan industry, whether it was small industry of any kind are now in decline. Households are trying to cope with the crisis by adding supplementary income. Such work does not yield a living income and the additional work effort comes from unpaid labour of family members as an addition to whatever else was being done. This becomes additional burden mainly on women. Women take on whatever additional paid work is available while continuing with their household labour. In addition they try and substitute some of the household purchases by their own labour like collecting fuel or processing fuel.

Data shows that increasingly women are going into self-employment, including unpaid family work. In 2004-05, over 64% of rural working women were self-employed and of them nearly three quarters were unpaid family help. In urban areas, 47% of working women work in self employment and half of them were in unpaid family help. In some areas such as U.P., Bihar, Eastern and Northern India, women's work load has increased much more. She says the problem of Indian working women has not been finding work, but finding work with higher productivity and better remuneration.

The bulk of the female labour in India is in the age group 30+ and of those 60% of rural and 37% of the urban female workers are illiterate in the year 2004-05. In this year's budget, there is a scheme for adult illiteracy to be tackled by self-employed groups – but Ms Banerjee posed the question how are self-employed groups going to learn techniques of adult literacy or find the time for such activities. The new entrants into the workforce after 2000, 39% of the rural and 18% of the urban workers had no education or education below primary level. So we carry a big burden of illiteracy and those with education do not have technical education or professional skills.

The state wise rates of growth of rural employment vary widely from 13% in Haryana to 0.8% in Tamil Nadu between 2000 and 2004-5. The states with growing women's employment are not necessarily the states where the state GDP was growing. A second problem, she highlighted is the measurement of women's work. Almost all women workers are not in a regular 8-hour employment. Hence it is difficult to say how much time they spend on each job. She cites her own study in West Bengal study where the average came to nearly five hours a day on all productive jobs taken together and another 2 hours a day on housework. Dr Ravindran has computed from CSO data that women constituted 32% of the recorded national workforce but contributed not more than 20% of the national product.

Women are increasingly in agriculture as self-employed workers or cultivators. The term cultivator is deceptive. What we see is that women are moving out of casual wage labour and are now becoming

family labour. Men are moving out of agriculture. The owners of tiny and marginal holdings now constitute nearly 80% of the cultivators and between them they own about 40% of the cultivable land. But these are non-viable units. So most of the men from these farms particularly in states like UP and Bihar and also now in West Bengal are moving out of agriculture migrating somewhere else leaving the cultivation to women. Cultivation has become women's responsibility even though she does not have the title to the land, nor is she going to claim the returns from that land. In Murshidabad, men are moving out, but the farms are not abandoned, they are left to women to manage. Women are expected to take over the cultivation while still carrying on with sericulture, bidi rolling or whatever other activities they were engaged in. In discussing employment, we need to address land rights. The Reserve Bank of India has given a directive last year that bank should pay prompt agriculture loans to women cultivators regardless of whether or not they have a title, and other departments need to issue similar directives to tackle the ownership question. One of the problems faced by women in agriculture is of the middleman. For instance, small farmers cultivating watermelon which was very much in demand in Calcutta tried to sell it directly to consumers in Calcutta, but the middlemen killed that effort by pressurizing the wholesalers lobby not to unload the lorry. So the fruit just rotted.

She also argues that a debate is necessary on the entry of organised retail which is expected to affect petty traders adversely but it is possible that direct purchase from the villages will help the producers. Debate is needed also on Export Processing Zones (EPZs) which has emerged as a venue of employment for women. EPZs have increased women's employment but wage discrimination remains and land is taken away from farmers. One recommendation was the creation of 'women's empowerment zone' with clusters of small and medium enterprises in handicrafts and modern products that employ women in large numbers and are given the same concessions as SEZ, provided that 50% of their workers are women and the unit is encouraged to improve the technologies, import machinery, and take up work for the domestic as well as the foreign market so that women get better skills and better employment.

The next speaker **Preet Rustagi** presented some quantitative and a few qualitative trends in women's employment. Analysis shows that over the last 10 years women's participation both in the labour force as well as in the workforce including both employment and unemployment, is increasing. This is clear from NSSO data from the 55th round to the 61st round which is 1999-2000 to 2004-05. The magnitude of increase is higher in urban areas although the larger number of women is in rural areas. Educated women are gaining in terms of regular jobs with better returns. Human capital attributes are clearly resulting in better returns although low end self-employment too is increasing. The challenge remains human capital endowment, skill enhancement, and changing the perception regarding women's work.

Over the last three periods i.e. from 1993-94, 1999-2000, and 2004-05, rural women's labour force participation is higher amongst the older age group, the 35-59 age group. In the urban women's context, women start working at younger ages. In rural areas 10% of working women are 'never married' while urban India reports relatively higher percentages of unmarried women workers (or 'yet to be married').

There is a shift to more self-employed jobs from casual labour. The industrial distribution shows that rural manufacturing is absorbing more male workers along with some women. Urban manufacturing is also employing men and increasingly more women over this last period. Rural construction workers

have increased. Trade, hotels and restaurants have reported increase in women workers, both in rural and urban areas. Community, social, and personnel services have risen for rural women. And finance, insurance, and real estate business have also shown a slight increase in urban areas. Between 1993-94 to 2004-05 there is a decline in the casual workforce, in rural areas from 39% to 33% in casual employment and in urban areas from 26% to 17%. There is an increase in self-employment from 59 to 64 in rural India and 45 to 48 in the urban context. In the urban context there has been a substantial increase in regular workforce from 29% to 36%. The occupational distribution shows some increase in the professional and technical related work and also in the administrative, executive, and managerial work. Sales worker has increased more in the urban context. Service workers increased much more in the urban context, with a doubling over this 10-year period in terms of actual numbers and magnitude of workers. Production-related workers continue to increase in the rural areas but is on the decline in urban areas.

She pointed out that due to task segregation and segmentation in the labour market, women get certain kinds of jobs much more easily than others because of the kinds of biases that are there and stereotypes that exist. Looking at the share of women workers within occupational categories, clerical and related work is where they are increasing. There is a change in the composition with relative increase of women in farming and all primary sector jobs; also in the professional, technical, and related workers. In rural areas, the highest growth rate is registered by 'village elected officials', which includes Panchayati Raj and all other elected representatives.

Looking at all the occupations at the two-digit level women continue to be concentrated, as they were 15 years ago, in housekeeping services; tobacco (bidi); farmers other than cultivators; agricultural laborers; housekeeping, maid, and stewards; nursing; teachers, more primary teachers; production related workers, launderers, dry cleaners, pressers, plantation laborers; social scientists and related workers; Building care takers, sweepers, cleaners, spinners, weavers, and so on and garment industry related work or forestry workers, tailors, dress makers, sewers, and cultivators. These categories have more than 30% women.

High growth occupations in the rural sector include the elected legislative officials with the highest rate of 34% in terms of the growth rate primarily in the reserved local body seats. Others include protective service workers. In the urban areas, over this 10-year period the highest growth rate was computing machine operator. Then, scientific, medical, and technical persons, engineering technicians, these reflect some stereotypes being broken to some extent.

In the occupations in which women are increasing most are young, educated beyond secondary schooling, even up to graduation, and unmarried. There is still gender discrimination in terms of wages.

The actual magnitude of employment generated reveals 77 million workers. Of the 77 million workers, 53 million are males and 24 million are women. In rural areas, the net addition has been to the magnitude of 17 million while in the urban areas it's 7 million. Nearly 4 million additional jobs are in tertiary sector jobs in urban areas with the similar number in villages as well. Majority of them are urban regular salaried females involved in unorganized sector jobs especially among the poorer section and more than

one-half of the poor urban women regular workers are employed with private households – primarily domestic work.

According to her, the supply side constraints that need to be addressed, education and skill upgradation are prominent. The National Skill Development Mission has highlighted the high level of skill deficit. In conclusion she said, newer avenues are coming up; there is also, an acceptance of atypical and uncommon job profiles, for instance night work in IT, BPO, call centers, changing perceptions and aspirations of parents and guardians – fashion, entertainment and media. This is all occurring in urban India, metropolitan cities and or bigger towns; in rural areas, NREGA is an avenue that has great potential.

The Chair person summarized the session. She said the speakers have drawn attention to the role of skill development leading to productivity increase as a policy priority. The mapping of gender and geography in terms of economic participation shows that men and women have equally strong participation. Among self-employed again men and women are similar in terms of regional dispersal of intense participation. But in non-agricultural work there is a vast difference between male and female participation. These measured spaces show important variations suggesting the need for regionally responsive employment policy.

The following issues were raised during the discussion:

- How was unpaid work computed? [Response - domestic activities and the household activities; so from those two, you can look at the additional work participation]
- How should women’s productivity be calculated? What are the constraints on their working, what do we mean by low productivity?
- Should domestic work be seen as regular employment?
- There is a concern that a lot of employment that is being generated is exploitative and an assumption that paid labor is less exploitative. What difference does it make to have well functioning health centers, well functioning educational programs, and a political context where men and women, together, are able to resist being exploited? Should we look not just at employment trends but also ask the question of what is happening in these rural or urban contexts in terms of the politics of making institutions better? On NREGA for instance, under what conditions are these large investments in employment actually meaningful?
- Does the use of official data sets constrain the actual analysis of the trends and factors leading to mobility? And in the occupational and industrial analysis, is there any observable caste specific distribution?
- There is a range of occupations at the bottom, like waste pickers, and little is known about what factors affect their wages and their occupation. It seems that waste picking has lost its rewards because of the meltdown and loss of markets in China. Moreover these livelihoods are affected by new technology.

Responses from the panel:

- Regional and local specific policy is absolutely essential. The extent of diversity we see across the country, even at the state level, is nothing compared what we see as we get into district analysis and further down to blocks. These variations and local specificities must be the basis of employment planning and policy.
- The proportion of the female-headed households is just 11%, and there is a 1% increase over this ten-year period. Work participation rate among the female-headed households is higher and close to 50% or more. It's 42% in urban areas and 61% in rural areas. There is a large chunk of single, unmarried women who are not female-headed households, who are in the workforce, and at the much higher rate as compared to the married women in the workforce. So single women in the labor force have a much higher share than those in the married context, especially in the urban areas. What might be the implications of families being dependent on the earnings of their daughters, in terms of the intra-household position of women, in terms of empowerment, in terms of what they actually get, in terms of what kinds of investments are being made and so on?
- For skill enhancement, education alone is not enough; aptitude and inclination need to be taken account of.
- Regular workers are defined as all those with monthly salary income. SCs and STs are still being concentrated in casual employment.

Session 4: Engendering Poverty Alleviation Programs

The session addressed some of the lacunae in existing poverty alleviation programs from a gender lens. Dipa Sinha examines some of the government schemes which aim at improving food security such as ICDS and Public Distribution System and the proposed National Food Security Bill and pointed out their inadequacy. The issue of women's labour subsidizing government schemes was also highlighted particularly in the context of anganwadi workers who are underpaid and categorized as voluntary/honorary workers. She also argued that there are two aspects to food availability, one relates to production and agriculture, and the other to food access and absorption and support services. Thus, it is crucial that agriculture policy is examined through a gender lens and needs of women as farmers are addressed. Subhalakshmi based on a study by Nirantar talked about the impact of micro-credit on women's well-being as it is one of the prominent strategies that have gained widespread currency for poverty alleviation amongst women. She argued that Self Help Groups are largely attempting to achieve financial efficiency and are not addressing women's real needs including social issues. She also suggested that the group examine and discuss the Micro-finance Bill drafted by the government in 2007. Aasha Kapur Mehta pointed out the critical need for gender disaggregated data on poverty for policy formulation as women's poverty is often subsumed within household poverty. She also argued that entitlements such as NREGA should be individual based and targeting in schemes such as PDS has been counter-productive.

Chair: Yamini Mishra

Speakers: Dipa Sinha, Subhalakshmi Nandi, Aasha Kapur Mehta

The Chair Yamini Mishra, said the session will focus on the nature of policies and schemes that are on the anvil and in place currently; and what are some of the issues that we, as feminists, should be bothered about. Some of the policies of concern include the proposed National Food Security Act, the Integrated Child Development Scheme which consumes 97% of the resources of the Ministry of Women and Child Development and within which there are deeply gendered issues that need to be addressed such as the issue of Anganwadi workers not being paid minimum wages, the issue of really low and unrealistic unit costs, for instance the supplementary nutrition program unit cost stands at Rs 2.30 per-women, per-day, in a situation where anemia in women is rising and food inflation is hitting 17%-18%. The session will debate some of these really important schemes from a gender lens and deliberate on what should be some of the key demands of the group.

Dipa Sinha who works with the Right to Food Campaign and also, at the Supreme Court Commissioner's Office on Right to Food examined some of the government schemes working towards ensuring food security through a gender lens. She said 46% of children in our country are underweight. It used to be 47% in 1998-99, it came down to just 46% in 2005-06. Even among adults, about 33% of women have a body mass index of less than 18.5%, which is below normal. And then there is gender gap here, there are 28% men who have a BMI less than 18.5%, which is still a significant number, but among women it is more. 56% women are anemic overall, and 70% of pregnant women are anemic. 24% men are anemic. Studies have estimated that about 50% of under-five mortality can be directly or indirectly linked to causes related to malnutrition. A life cycle approach to malnutrition shows that the problem begins with low birth weight, where 30% of the births in India are low birth weight; the highest anywhere in the world, even compared to sub-Saharan Africa. This is linked to the mother's health and her access to nutrition and anemia. Many studies show that malnutrition is linked to women's status, not just through these physiological conditions of pregnant mother being anemic and underweight resulting in a low birth weight child, but also in terms of female education, working women, what their status in society is, because a lot of child care and feeding activity is also seen as a woman's activity, and therefore, how it is done and what kind of resources are given to it is closely linked to what women's status is in the society. Gender inequalities in food and nutrition security are therefore at the root of the whole cycle of hunger and malnutrition. She says that in looking at food security, there are the two aspects to food availability that have to be considered, one relates to production and agriculture, and the other to food access and absorption, which is more in terms of distribution and the other kind of support services that you need to be able to absorb the food to result in nutrition, mainly health facilities, safe drinking water, sanitation etcetera.

Most of women workers in India are in agriculture and this is rising with increasing male out-migration. Agriculture policy needs to be looked at from a gender lens, and the Steering Committee and Working

Group of the Planning Commission on Gender and Agriculture made some recommendations including the need for better access to credit for women, extension services being directed at women. One study showed that only 5% of agriculture extension services actually reached women. Women should be provided greater access to agricultural education, made a part of the service providers providing agricultural extension services and also access to property rights, especially land is crucial.

On the access and absorption front, the framework used by the Supreme Court in the Right to Food case, looks at the public distribution system, direct feeding programs like the ICDS and the mid-day meal schemes, and the cash programs like pensions for the old, widows, disabled, and maternity benefits. One big issue with the PDS is that of targeting and how it is done. The campaign strongly believes that it is best to have a universal system. The definition of the household for the PDS is 'sharing a common kitchen', which does not give any specific entitlement to a single woman who is living in a larger family, and who may be discriminated against within the family. An entitlement to 35kgs of grain a month, could help increase her status in the family as well. There is a court order which recognizes single women as one of the vulnerable groups. But this cannot be monitored in the absence of data. She made a suggestion that priority should be given to women to run ration shops. The issue of replacing PDS with cash transfers also needs to be debated as it can be more harmful than helpful because cash then goes into other expenditures, whereas women tend to have more control over food grains.

Other issues include timing of the ICDS Center which is usually different from the timing of the women's work. There is no component of social mobilization in the whole ICDS program. There will soon be 1,400,000 Anganwadi Centers in the country, which means 1,400,000 Anganwadi workers, and 1,400,000 Anganwadi helpers. Most Child Rights organizations are demanding a second Anganwadi worker, which would mean another 1,400,000 workers or a total of 4,200,000. In addition there are 800,000 Asha workers in villages. So there are about 5,000,000 women workers who are themselves from quite poor and discriminated backgrounds, who need training not just to provide for immunization and supplementary nutrition, but have an understanding of women and their role as care providers. These 5,000,000 workers need to be empowered if the program is to succeed. They are underpaid, they are under-trained. She argues that the reason they are not given any support is because they are women and providing services mainly to women. Dipa also points out that the current draft of the National Food Security Act is inadequate and very minimalistic. Only one of the demands of the campaign has been accepted, i.e. ration cards should be in the name of the woman of the household.

Yamini Mishra added that in this year's Union Budget there was an announcement that the Indira Gandhi Matrutva Suraksha Yojna (maternity benefit scheme) will be implemented soon and the unit cost being computed there is Rs.4000-per-women, whereas in Tamil Nadu, Rs 6000 is already being paid. The total cost of ICDS taking note of some of the demands comes to Rs 58000 crores, whereas the current allocation is Rs 8000 crores from the Union Budget.

The next speaker **Subhalakshmi Nandi** said that the organization she works with represents the two worlds of feminism and women's education. NIRANTAR, for the past ten years, has been looking at micro credit very critically. They are now working towards strengthening existing self help groups and

women who are already in self-help groups. The study done by NIRANTAR was published in 2007. It is based on discussions with feminist economists, and civil society groups across the country.

Two studies were conducted, one a qualitative one in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, covering government programs such as SGSY Velugu, which is now Indira Kranthi Patham, Dwarka Swa Shakti, as well as two NGO programs. The second was a survey in 16 states with partner NGOs which also covered SGSY and other groups between 2004-and-2007. One objective was to look at the impact on women's lives, the second was to look at the group as an institutional space and how it can be used to empower women and to address poverty issues, and the third to look at access to resources, women's learning opportunities, educational opportunities in those groups. Some of the findings were SHGs providing access for women into a public domain, smoothening consumption needs and increase in mobility. The concerns were some of the ground realities. Within the key findings, the poorest and most marginalized were excluded in these groups; including SC/ST minority women. In terms of literacy and power, the national average for rural women is 47% but in the SHGs we surveyed, the literacy rate was only 39%. There was a direct relationship of literacy with leadership opportunities, with future learning opportunities, with access to big loans. Training content was limited; only 6% of groups had inputs on gender, and only 19% on livelihoods. Most inputs were on bookkeeping, record keeping, financial management. Only three groups were providing literacy inputs out of the forty five that were surveyed. In terms of poverty alleviation, 90% of the groups were saving in banks, but they did not have access to their own money. In times of need, they were not able to access it. And 60% were still borrowing from moneylenders at very exorbitant rates of interest. Livelihood interventions were very gender stereotypical, were unviable, and did not consider many aspects related to natural resources, service provisioning or women's own skills or building their technical skills. With Panchayati Raj institutions also, there was hardly any engagement. As regards empowerment, there was a very clear tension between financial and social issues. Social issues and only of a certain kind only, were addressed in only 64% of the groups. Violence was raised in 11% of the groups, even though the sponsoring agency did not support this, it was brought up by the women.

The construction of the 'good woman' through the micro credit phenomenon, she pointed is of particular concern. Women said: "we are contributing and we feel good about it. We are getting respect and husbands don't have to work that much anymore. We feel ashamed and low when we cannot repay. We have started wearing sarees straight instead of the dhoti because we have become civilized." The burden of savings and repayment is on women; in addition to the domestic and the agricultural responsibilities the micro credit framework leads to over burdening of women. Women's contribution in the domestic and care economy is being invisibilized.

The self-help groups started historically as a space for women to come together, to pool together their resources, to work on their issues but are becoming very financial-efficiency-driven forums; and are no longer addressing social issues or some of the real concerns of women. In women's enterprise, the question is what is the remuneration, what is the kind of role being played by women, are they really playing a role in the decision making or are they just acting as managers- for instance the task of managing mid-day meals in schools is give to women replicating the gender roles within the household, in the public domain and legitimized through it. Further, rates of interest are high, there is coercion to

repay. These concerns are of great significance since micro credit seems to be the only strategy focusing on women in the area of poverty alleviation and empowerment.

She points out that even though 11th Five Year Plan has articulated these problems, the proposed high level committee, to look into the framework for poverty alleviation and employment programs and what SHGs are doing, issues such as capacity building, what investment is required, what are the indicators etc has not been set up yet. This dialogue and debate needs to be conducted in the states and districts, to discuss what needs to be done to strengthen some of these groups and to really invest in women. The other policy area is the micro finance bill which made an appearance in 2007, and might be back. According to Ms Nandi there are existing regulations; there is the RBI, and there is an existing legal framework for regulation and if others have a right to deposit savings in banks where there is certain amount of security then why should the same standards not apply for poor women. Their savings should also not be collected by just any player in an open market. Nirantar is trying to influence on-going programmes, but she suggests that this group can examine the policy.

Aasha Kapur Mehta, the next speaker raises the issue that women are constantly being buried within the household, in the domain of work; but also on account of poverty, which is anchored in household consumption. Women are often the last to eat and therefore the worst-off in regard to food intake; but there is no data to prove this. There is no data to show how many poor women are there. She says the HDRs of the UN said 70% of those who are poor are women; but says there is no data underlying that estimate.

The lack of evidence or lack of gender disaggregated data is a huge limitation in talking about poverty, because women's poverty gets subsumed within household poverty and therefore, it is not separately estimated, even though it is well known that women are among the poorest and within poor households, the percentage of women who are poorer is greater than that of men.

Poverty is multi-dimensional and is reflected in low levels of health, high morbidity, low levels of education, schooling, literacy, poor voice participation, or extremely low levels of participation in the political space, lack of decent work, low wages; and that there are huge gender disparities in each of these. It is possible to argue for correctives in the context of literacy or representation in parliament because there is data to show the gender gap whereas the gender gap in the context of poverty. Hence, the criticality of data for all policies, programs and schemes that are meant to alleviate poverty through a gender lens.

She points out that when the draft of the NREGA was being discussed, despite the fact that concern was raised about subsuming women's Right to Work within the household, it was not discussed and not even minuted. She argues that these entitlements need to be individual based. Persistence of poverty is a huge issue. The 'Drivers, Maintainers and Interrupters' framework of poverty analysis shows that among the important factors that drive people into poverty is ill health. Women are worse-affected by this because they have poorer access to healthcare, again there is not adequate data to stake this claim. Also for instance conflict is a driver of poverty but has a greater impact on women than it has on men, but there is no data to show differential impact. Another example is that of alcohol addiction that can lead

to people getting stuck in poverty and women are worse-affected when there is alcohol consumption within the house, but there is no evidence on the subject.

She also argues for universal coverage of schemes like PDS as poverty levels are way higher than what the official estimates declare them to be. With targeting, people who are actually deserving of that particular benefit are excluded. The ICDS, according to her is a critical scheme, well intentioned and well designed in many ways, yet, it is unable to deliver outcomes because Anganwadi workers and Anganwadi helpers are paid poorly. Gender budgeting is a way of sensitizing different arms of government to identify ways of making their services accessible to the poor, and trying to make them look at their policies, programs and schemes in terms of gender sensitivity and in terms of accessibility to women and therefore is a useful tool.

The following issues were raised during discussion:

- Self Help Groups are said to be for women's empowerment but actually, they are being used for poverty alleviation. One attempt to look at a sample of poor households and then find out how many women belonged to those households and how many men belonged to those, and then look at them as a percentage of the male and female population in total. It did show that a much higher percentage of women were in the poorer households than men.
-
- DFID is looking at supporting micro finance, rural livelihoods, political empowerment, support to women through Mahila Samakhya and other such avenues. Is there any evidence to show which the right track is, and what works in terms of leading to empowerment? Each of these government programs is trying to target either political empowerment or economic empowerment or social empowerment. Since there was a lack of agreement on getting additional aanganwadi workers, it was suggested that an alternative would be community-based mobilization for accountability. Are there some examples of that, where it has worked, how it has worked that funding agencies can draw on?
- With a Food Security Act in place, how is it being matched by the financial commitment?
- Kerala's SHG programme – Kudumbashree - states that it is for Poverty Alleviation, so there is no cheating in that sense. But it is also difficult to measure the actual output of these small Kudumbashree enterprises.
- Is there a difference regionally between north and south, in the functioning of SHGs? Why do you think that Dalits are excluded from SHGs? Is it because they are unable to contribute sufficient money regularly?

Responses:

Anganwadi workers lost the case in the Supreme Court, because they are seen as Honorary Volunteers; they are not employees. Women are subsidizing government program for food security, for instance Mid-Day Meals get SHG women to cook. Until recently, Andhra Pradesh said that because it was local women cooking mid day meals, there was no allocation for compensation. There was money for food grain and fuel and oil and whatever else goes into it, but nothing for the woman who is doing the cooking. From this year, there will be some Rs 1000 for a cook. If women were given preference to

manage PDS shops, it would be different and move away from gender stereotyped work of being a cook, of being a child care worker.

Session 5: The Way Forward

Renana Jhabvala

Ratna Sudarshan

Renana Jhabvala thanked ISST for organizing an excellent workshop. She said, the aim of this workshop was to share the work of the feminist economist working group which has been interacting with the Planning Commission and getting a larger discussion going on feminist economics and public policy or the women's point of view and public policy. The hope was to broaden the network. In this last session she invited people's suggestions on what they think such a group can do and if they would like to participate and if so how.

Ratna Sudarshan thanked everyone on behalf of ISST which has been the organizing partner in this workshop. She said the discussion over the last two days has been around policy and there may be some people in the room who are in a position directly to influence policy, but the policy space needs to be seen as something much broader, to include public awareness and discussion, our own understanding of different issues, and in this way contributing indirectly to the making of policy.

There are important issues around research method that came up during the workshop. One approach is to use established theory and apply economic or gender theory to our situation. The other is to start from reality and build upwards from that and maybe let new concepts emerge. There is hopefully a creative tension, between these alternative approaches. She said forums such as this one can bring together people from different locations around shared concerns – but being linked through an issue is perhaps easier than being linked in a very broad sense of all relevant policies. Hence she suggested that one possibility is to discuss what issues should the group prioritize.

Participants offered suggestions including:

- Program for gender sensitization. There is very little public debate on these issues and in fact there is a prevalent fundamentalist approach to the role of women in the household and in the economy. We need to think about the platform through which this is best done, whether media or teacher training etc. Media campaigns and sensitization is important and this group can think about creating a platform, keep ready names of people who can be contacted on different issues by the media, which makes it easier to get the stories out. ILO has an on-going campaign on domestic workers. UNIFEM has appointed an ambassador for gender-based violence. We could consider these ways of furthering gender sensitization through a campaign.
- Recent participation in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Joint Review Mission showed that many of the states have been given money for gender sensitization and on caste issues and they are really floundering without an idea of how to go about this. Engendering the plans at the state level and integrating them into schemes, linking up with the state women's commission, and trying to strengthen them on various kinds of issues will be a way to translate the theoretical articulation into ground reality.

- The entire issue of the concept of women and work is changing and is so dynamic. Thus, a need for deliberation on definitions, for instance should domestic workers be shown as regular employees? We need to again examine the data and the data biases with reference to the present context.
- One issue that has not been addressed, and that is going to be very important in the years to come is women's migration within the country.
- Self help groups and micro-credit is the biggest policy the government has for women and there is need to look at that issue and take a position on that.
- The retail sector as an avenue for women's employment needs to be discussed.
- The issue of access to services with trade liberalization - the loss in tariff revenue might affect social sectors. Access to medicines and healthcare and increasing privatization of healthcare.
- One issue is around creating evidence as well as putting it in a public domain in terms of what works for women. Whether it is political empowerment, or economic empowerment, sufficient information is not available in the public domain to understand the issue. A sort of resource directory of people and materials will be useful to have.
- Any such forum which gets together people who want to analyze a particular discourse from a feminist lens is useful. The important issue right now is how we come together as a group. It will have to be open in terms of membership and in terms of the kind of issues we want to focus on.
- How do we really bring in the women's role in the within the household into our thinking?

Ms Devaki Jain added the aim should be to include knowledge both from ground experience, knowledge from women's study centres and research, both targeted at policy. Specific suggestions that have emerged for now are about NREGA - advocacy to broaden the occupations and the projects that are included. Another is that in future while looking at employment policies, caste and class differentials within gender would be very valuable. Third, there is now a Mission on Women's Empowerment which will need evaluation on what actually reaches women. And considering whether cash transfers is a viable option.

The workshop was concluded by Ms Ratna Sudarshan with a vote of thanks and with no specific 'action plan' but a confirmation that people found the discussions useful and energising and therefore that there is support for the idea of a broader forum.

Introduction of Participants (March 25)

Ajay Mehta: is with the National Foundation for India which is a small Indian donor organization. There are many issues that would be common to men and women – water, toilets, poverty and yet time and again none of these agendas actually fructify for the poor. What is it about our politics that prevents many issues that are common to men and women, from being on the agenda of policy?

Aliya: is at ISST, and working on a study on the Bachpan Project at the ISST community center with an objective to study gender and care.

Bhumika: is with Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability and within gender budget analysis team now want to go beyond budgeting statements to look at different programmes and schemes and see how these are impacting women and girls.

Biswajit Dhar: is at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries, which has a focus on international economic issues more from a perspective of developing countries and inclusive development and have started some work on gender and trade specifically impact of trade agreements on women.

Claire Noronha: is with CORD, currently doing a project on the outcomes of education which has involved looking at a lot of gender issues, the pathways by which education impact, health, and fertility for the poor and skills training and labor market outcomes. The project is being done in four countries – Ghana, Kenya, Pakistan, and India.

Dipa Sinha working at the Supreme Court Commissioner's Office on Right to Food said she is also part of the Right to Food campaign working group on children under six and both these roles have been part of monitoring the ICDS, the maternity benefit scheme and the mid-day meal scheme; she is mainly working on child care and children under six and is associated with gender and women's rights.

Divya Mishra: is at Lady Sri Ram College, and curious about how the gender element can be incorporated in planning.

Divya Sharma: is with the Institute of Social Studies Trust and has been working mainly on women's work in the informal sector, and also on women's groups in rural Uttarakhand.

Elizabeth Hill: is a political economist at the University of Sydney, having taught there the first dedicated course on women's economics in Australian Universities in the 1970s; is associated with the Work and Family Policy Round Table which looks at current policies around women's work and care; in India, she has a longstanding research interest in the informal economy having done her PhD research at SEWA at the end of the 1990s; and currently looking at the way in which work is changing in the Indian economy and its implications for care as families become more nuclear; also works with CORD on education.

Geeta Gouri: is with the Competition Commission of India. This is a commission which is trying to look at issues around the creation of a level playing field for various players, and whether or not there are entry barriers. An issue of interest to the CCI is that of street vendors.

Manjeet Bhatia: is with Women's Studies Centre, Delhi University, which has started many short term courses in which development, budgeting, and feminist issues are definitely a part; refresher courses for teachers are continuously updated.

Mary John: is at the Centre for Women's Development Studies, and interested to seeing the links between state level policy making, research and classroom dynamics.

Meera Samson: is with Collaborative Research and Dissemination, which has looked at issues around education in government schools, health and labour, and how policies affect the poor and the disadvantaged.

Mrinalini Sapre: is with the Indian Revenue Service and currently posted as Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax and prior to this has worked at NCAER on projects related to the informal sector and macroeconomic policy.

Mythili Bhusnurmath: is with the Economic Times and somewhat ambivalent about the entire idea of 'feminist economics'; while being very concerned about the status of women in this country, the term may also be a little bit exclusive and putting off. Is it better to pose these concerns as a larger issue where women are first human beings and then women?

Navneeta: is with the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability and their team on gender budgeting which has worked on the union budget so far but is now doing a project with the Department of Women and Child in Rajasthan.

Neelam Dev: has retired from the Indian Foreign Service and currently working with the human rights organization called "Breakthrough" which is sensitive to women's rights and is presently carrying out a campaign relating to domestic violence against women addressing men and boys since mostly they are the perpetrators. Also, trying to set up a foreign policy think tank in Mumbai.

Neelam Malhotra: is at Lady Sri Ram College and has a special interest in the disability sector, and the question of how physically and mentally disabled people can work together and earn a livelihood; would be interested in co-ordinating with SEWA on this issue.

Nirmala Banerjee: has been a part of the Committee of Feminist Economists and is part of the exercise of gender budgeting that started some time ago.

Priya Nanda: is with the International Center for Research in Women which conducts research on programmes and policies that specifically address gender inequities; she is a health economist by training.

Reiko Tsushima: is with the International Labour Organization which is one of the United Nation specialized agencies on labour, in the South Asia office, and covering gender equality in the world of work. At present focusing on domestic workers, for whom there is an international labour standard setting agenda in 2010 at the International Labour Conference which may lead to an international labor convention for domestic workers.

Rina Bhattacharya: is with the Institute of Social Studies Trust and currently involved with a study on the NREGA programme.

Ritu Dewan: is with the Center of Women's Studies at Department of Economics in the University of Mumbai and researching and teaching on gender issues, with special interest in SEZs and land and displacement issues in Maharashtra.

Rupinder Kaur: is at National Council of Applied Economic Research and has been inspired by Devaki Jain's time use study having done a similar study for her PhD research on women's work participation in the Punjab. She is currently working on many issues including health and education.

Shreerexha: teaches at the Center for Women's Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia.

Sumangala Damodaran: has been at Lady Shri Ram College for many years and has recently moved to Ambedkar University, Delhi.

Swati: is with ISST and presently doing a study on the Bachpan Project at the ISST community center with an objective to study gender and care.

AGENDA

Venue: Casuarina, India Habitat Centre, Lodi Road, New Delhi

March 25-6, 2010.

March 25	Title	Chair	Speakers
2 – 3 p.m.	Engendering macroeconomic policy	Devaki Jain	Devaki Jain: Engendering public policy in India: Feminist Economists and the 11 th Five year plan Mridul Eapen: Engendering State Plans: the Kerala Experience Renana Jhabvala: Engendering macro policy from the grassroots
3 – 3:45.	Introductions		
3.45. – 4.	TEA BREAK		
4.-5.30	Gender in Economics and Economics in Women’s Studies	Mary John	Ritu Dewan, University of Mumbai Sumangala Damodaran, Ambedkar University Sreerekha, Jamia Millia Manjeet Bhatia, Delhi University
March 26			
9.30-10.45	Engendering Employment Strategies	Reiko Tsushima	Nirmala Banerji, Preet Rustagi
10.45 – 11.00	TEA BREAK		
11.30 – 12.30	Engendering poverty alleviation programmes	Yamini Mishra	Subhalakshmi Nandi: Micro credit and self help groups, Nirantar Dipa Sinha: Food security, Supreme Court Commissioners Office Aasha Kapur Mehta , IIPA
12.30-1.00	Way forward	Ratna Sudarshan and Renana Jhabvala	

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Meeting to discuss Monograph by Devaki Jain: March 25, 10 a.m. – 1 0.m.; venue: ISST

A meeting was held for the Working Group of Feminist Economists (WGFE) on the morning of 25 March from 10-12 pm (list of participants below). The draft of the monograph on the impact of the WGFE on the Eleventh Five Year Plan prepared by Devaki Jain was presented to those presents for their comments. After the presentation, there was a discussion on the structure, format, authorship and content of the paper, which were duly noted for preparing the final draft of the paper due to be submitted to IDRC and to the planning commission on 30 April 2010.

Participants:

Devaki Jain
Renana Jhabvala
Mridul Eapen
Mary John
Yamini Mishra
Aasha Kapur Mehta
Ritu Dewan
Nirmala Banerji
Ratna M. Sudarshan
Navsharan Singh, IDRC
Rupa Dutta, Planning Commission
Rithambhara Mehta, Planning Commission