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PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER: ARTICULATING CONCEPTS AND CASES

by

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RÉSUMÉ

En premier lieu ce document souligne la nécessité d'appréhender différemment la contribution des hommes et des femmes au développement participatif. Ensuite il passe en revue certains des obstacles susceptibles de freiner ce processus, telles que les croyances et pratiques socio-culturelles et l'organisation sociale du travail. Comment surmonter ces obstacles ? En mettant en relief les rôles respectifs des hommes et des femmes au plan des initiatives locales ; en obtenant le soutien des responsables pour les projets de développement participatif ; en prévoyant des modes de financement souple pour les projets de développement local ; et en démontrant l'efficacité de cette participation. L'accent est mis sur les limites de ce type d'approche au développement, le manque d'homogénéité d'intérêts dans les communautés locales et le rôle de groupements de femmes dans le développement participatif. Enfin, à partir de nombreux exemples issues d'ouvrages et d'entretiens, on s'est attaché à préciser les implications du rôle distinct homme/femme dans ce processus.

SUMMARY

This paper begins with an explanation of the need for a gender perspective in the participatory development field. Subsequently it examines some of the obstacles to achieving the goals, such as cultural beliefs and practices, including the social organisation of production. Ways of surmounting these obstacles include: a gender focus of efforts, advocacy, flexible funding and evidence that participation works. Various positions in the debate in regard to: the project paradigm, social actors versus communities as entities and women's organisations and participatory development issues are also presented. An effort is made to spell out the implications of gender differentiation with numerous examples from the literature and interviews.

PREFACE

The Development Centre's work on the "Human Factor in Development" includes a short term study on "Promoting Participatory Development Through Local Institutions". This research is being undertaken in response to renewed or new efforts on the part of aid agencies, governments and NGOs to promote more satisfactory development patterns than those evolved in the past. The research aims to clarify conceptual issues and to show how, on the basis of such a clarification, the practice of participatory development can be improved.

This paper focuses on the importance of, and the need for, gender differentiation in the effort to strengthen participatory development. Identification of the social actors is a critical element in the analysis of institutional mechanisms and social processes appropriate to sustain programmes founded on local initiatives. It follows that a correct appreciation of gender-related questions is essential if genuine participatory development is to take place. In this regard, a closer linkage between hitherto largely separate strands of enquiry and activity under Women in Development programmes and participatory development initiatives would provide scope for cross-fertilisation and mutual enrichment.

Numerous examples derived from the literature and interviews with selected agencies, experts and practitioners illustrate how practical progress can be made towards building and strengthening local institutions and actors, and point to ways in which the goals of participatory development — efficiency, empowerment and sustainability — can be achieved. The paper also indicates how a gender perspective can contribute to the success of the various approaches.

At a time when the donor community is placing increasing emphasis on participatory development and good governance, it is important to bring the issues presented in this paper to the discussion table.

Jean Bonvin
President
OECD Development Centre
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
COMO	Centre de Orientacion de la Mujer Obrera (Mexico)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FEHMUC	Federación Hondureña de Mujeres Campesinas (Honduras)
FUNDE	Fundación Nicaraguense de Desarrollo
GSO	Grassroots Support Organisation
IAF	Inter-American Foundation
IDS	Institute of Development Studies (Sussex)
MUDE	Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicana (Women's organisation in the Dominican Republic)
MSO	Membership Support Organisation
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
Pdev	Participatory Development
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PROWWESS	Promotion of the Role of Women in Water and Environmental Sanitation Services
SARTHI	Social Action for Rural and Tribal Inhabitants of India
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
WAND	Women and Development Unit Extra-Mural Department University of the West Indies Barbados
WID	Women in Development
WWF	Working Women's Forum (Madras India)

INTRODUCTION

Undertaken in the context of the Development Centre's work on the Human Factor in Development, this paper is an integral component of the study on Promoting Participatory Development Through Local Institutions. The purpose of the paper is twofold:

- to stimulate an awareness of the need for a gender perspective in this field; and
- to contribute to an integration of gender into the promotion of participatory development (Pdev).

A review of both Pdev and Women in Development (WID) literature has been carried out and personal communications solicited to identify the main issues and concerns of practitioners, researchers and policy makers.

Section I spells out why explicit attention to gender is needed, given the main objectives of Pdev, namely: efficiency, empowerment and sustainability. Mechanisms to achieve these objectives include institutional reform and a change in the language of Pdev.

Section II describes what have proven to be obstacles to Pdev, such as culture and the social organisation of work. The role of outsiders in overcoming some of these obstacles is discussed as well. Also illustrated in this section are ways of overcoming obstacles, such as, focusing efforts, adapting the incentive structure and enhancing gender sensitivity. In addition, the need for advocacy, funding issues and evidence that participation works are pointed out.

Section III deals with themes and issues frequently mentioned in the literature and expressed in various forums, such as: the project paradigm, other concepts of participatory development, and the current debate over social actors versus communities as entities. Issues related to women's organisations and ideas for linking the local, national and international donor levels end this section.

Section IV presents the conclusions and a summary of the general points brought out by this review as well as suggestions for future research.

I. THE RATIONALE FOR A FOCUS ON PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER

Why Gender and Participatory Development?

There are many reasons why a special focus is needed on gender issues within participatory development. The main rationale is the dearth of gender differentiation in the Pdev literature. A number of authors and practitioners recognise the "genderblindness" in this field¹. Robert Chambers (IDS Sussex) points out that, "the gender dimensions of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) are crying out for more work and its dissemination"². Personal communication with both gender specialists and Pdev practitioners indicates that the lack of gender representation in the literature may have serious consequences for the way poverty issues are addressed. It is increasingly recognised that women's contributions to family livelihoods are most crucial in the poorest rural and urban households.

Another valid reason for this special focus is that both Pdev and the women's movement developed in the same historical period, the early 1970s to the present. For example, the PIDER programme of rural development in Mexico started in 1970 and was "completed" in 1990³. Before the 1970s, studies which compared and contrasted men's and women's experiences were considered irrelevant⁴. Both movements have sought a redefinition of development objectives, where, "...each person will have the opportunity to develop her or his own full potential and creativity,... and solidarity will characterise human relationships"⁵. The parallels and overlapping in the concepts of development are apparent and will be illustrated throughout this paper. Both include a wide range of initiatives, some with a project paradigm and others with more autonomous non-project efforts.

What are the obstacles then for poor men and women, how do they differ in the implications for the way to reach both with Pdev? The WID literature includes gender differentiation when designing incentives in projects because of the gender division of labour and tasks in most societies, but the Pdev movement lacks this emphasis.

In arguing for a gender perspective in the International Co-operative Movement, Apelqvist⁶, points out that an analysis of values and practices in relation to women's and men's different realities and conditions is needed. Without this analysis there will be no penetration of the discrepancy between the basic co-operative values of

¹. Norman Uphoff, *Local Institutional Development: An Analytical SourceBook with Cases*, Kumarian Press, 1986, pp. 152-153.

². Personal Communication, December 1992.

³. See Michael Cernea, ed., *Putting People First*, Second Edition, World Bank, 1991, for an account of the PIDER Experience.

⁴. Edited by Ann Leonard, Introduction by Adrienne Germain, *SEEDS: Supporting Women's Work in the Third World*, The Feminist Press, New York, 1989.

⁵. See: G. Sen and C. Grown, *Development, Crises, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1987 in A. Germain, *IBID*.

⁶. Katarina Apelqvist "Gender Perspectives", in *Review of International Co-operation*, Vol. 85, No. 4, 1992, pp. 105-108.

equality and democracy and the lack of equality between men and women in co-operatives. Such an analysis is necessary for the credibility and life force of co-operatives as well as in Pdev in general. Analysis can indicate what practical actions can be taken to narrow the gap and heighten the visibility of women as compared to men in Pdev efforts.

Afshar⁷ maintains that if women's interests are not specifically addressed by policy makers they will not benefit from prosperity. The development process is not inherently liberating for women but with "...greater relative prosperity,...(there) may be room for negotiation for better terms." At the heart of Pdev efforts is the notion of persistent negotiation to motivate others and to disarm the opposition⁸. However, there are known obstacles in specific settings. For example, prior to 1976, the supposed benefits for women of collectivisation were always enumerated. The worst abuses of women in China had already been dealt with in the 1950s and therefore did not have to be addressed in the 1980s. However, there has been a backlash against the somewhat rhetorical commitment of the Cultural Revolution to break down discrimination against women. It is now more difficult to argue for equal employment rights for women, for example⁹.

There were no women members of the Indian Agricultural Labour Association until SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) insisted. When they were actually registered, it was found that women outnumbered men. Furthermore, there are often more women labourers than men in the village because men migrate to urban areas in search of employment. In addition, explicit recognition means being able to plan from a gender perspective, which includes providing training, for example, in informal dairy production. SEWA trained illiterate women so that they could form producers' co-operatives¹⁰. It also means envisaging ways of dealing with gender resistance and male domination. An interesting example is given of a male co-operative operating at a loss. When women took it over, and were eventually empowered, the men tried to regain control. Leadership goals can be developed for local women, with training in skills which complement women's basic knowledge.

The main objectives of participatory development are: efficiency, empowerment and sustainability. Given the emphasis on empowerment in the Pdev literature, and a specific focus on gender, it becomes evident that women's economic roles have to be stressed, especially women as farmers and entrepreneurs. Therefore, the donors can develop partnerships with grassroots women's organisations and recognise the need to increase opportunities and resources for poor women¹¹.

At a World Bank Seminar on participatory development¹², participants felt that

⁷. Afshar, ed. *Women, Development and Survival in the Third World*, Longman, London and New York, 1991, p. 1 Introductory notes.

⁸. See: B. Lecomte, *Project Aid: Limitations and Alternatives*, OECD Development Centre, Paris 1986.

⁹. See: Delia Davin, "Chinese Models of Development and Their Implications for Women", in Afshar, *op. cit.* pp. 30-52.

¹⁰. Kalima Rose, *Where Women Are Leaders: The SEWA Movement in India*, Zed Books Ltd., London and New Jersey, 1992, p. 109.

¹¹. Sally Yudelman, personal communication, February 1993.

¹². Smita Lahiri, "Capacity Building and Consultation" in Bhuvan Bhatnagar and Aubrey C. Williams, *Participatory Development and the World Bank: Potential*

measures to ensure the participation of women, indigenous people and the poorest should be made an explicit focus during the design phase of projects. Furthermore it was felt that it should be made a condition for borrowing governments. It was also pointed out that poverty reduction requires the efforts of both men and women. In fact, the same factors that exclude women from Bank-financed projects keep those projects from being participatory in a wider sense. Also women constitute more than half of most populations. "Participation cannot by nature "trickle down"¹³. Therefore, human capacity building has to be the result of direct involvement of women in decisions which affect them. "Men are not proxies for women"¹⁴." Skills must be included in any initiative to empower women, whether it be scaling up grassroots movements or strengthening local government. Participation should be acknowledged as a political process, therefore the World Bank needs to create mechanisms to accommodate popular feedback into project designs. Significant attention to gender-sensitive participation in any project can have positive impact on the solution of problems faced by disadvantaged groups and their environment. This more holistic systemic approach can avoid negative synergies which are the result of exclusion and not spelling out a gender perspective.

A neglect of women's roles means that there is not enough information provided for analysis and indicates, especially in certain regions such as West Africa, "...socially incompatible assumptions about the roles and activities of women"¹⁵." For example, production and marketing units will not function effectively, in a cultural tradition that expects women to produce and sell, if they are excluded from these units. Furthermore, neglect of women's roles is "...simply a corollary of the generalised lack of a socially informed design and implementation strategy"¹⁶." Another example of the above is mentioned for Ghana, where no women were in the "contact groups" which were to transmit technical advice to farmers, although women do a large share of farm work¹⁷.

The so-called community sector which is mainly dominated by unpaid women or low-paid women, needs to be studied from women's perceptions of effectiveness and efficiency in this context. It is no longer good enough to consider women as "hidden resources"¹⁸.

SEWA

SEWA's integrated set of services has helped to provide an enabling environment¹⁹. The aim of these services was to make the loans provided to SEWA members more productive and their lives more viable. Supportive services included helping women in the same occupations to buy in bulk and to find market outlets for

Directions for Change, World Bank Discussion Papers, 183, 1992.

¹³ . IBID, pp. 158-159.

¹⁴ . IBID.

¹⁵ . Conrad Phillip Kottak, "When People Don't Come First: Some Sociological Lessons from Completed Projects", in Michael Cernea, *Putting People First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development*, Second Edition, 1991, pp. 431-464.

¹⁶ . IBID, pp. 458-459.

¹⁷ . Norman Uphoff, "Fitting Projects to People", in Cernea, *op. cit.*, pp. 467-511.

¹⁸ . K. Apelqvist, "No Future Without A Gender Perspective", in *Review of International Co-operation*, Vol. 86, no. 1 1993, p. 82.

¹⁹ . Kalima Rose, *Where Women Are Leaders: The SEWA Movement in India*, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

their produce. Links to government were made so that the women could purchase their own tools of trade with the help of subsidies. SEWA's work in literacy also has generational effects which are related to sustainability, i.e. literacy for the daughters of SEWA members. By making the mothers' work more remunerative, the daughters of SEWA members are encouraged to stay in school. Today younger women from self-employed trades are entering positions where literacy skills are needed. However, this is more of an urban trend than a rural one. Ela Bhatt the founder and leader of SEWA is still concerned that too many girls are withdrawn from or excluded from school.

SARTHI

An example of the need for forethought to link participatory development objectives to gender, is the SARTHI experience in wasteland development²⁰. Women are unlikely to benefit from land rehabilitation efforts in any lasting way, unless these development projects empower women to gain greater control over the use and management of local resources. SARTHI (Social Action for Rural and Tribal Inhabitants of India) in helping women to meet their needs for biomass in a more efficient and ecologically sound way, has had the effect of empowering these women to start assessing themselves how they can deal with a broader range of problems.

²⁰. Madhu Sarin, *Wasteland Development and the Empowerment of Women: The Sarthi Experience*, SEEDS, No. 16, 1993.

FEHMUC

One Honduran woman who worked with an important women's organisation (FEHMUC) joined the mostly male National Campesino Union (the UNC) and later the National Congress of Rural Workers (CNTC) so that she could participate in the struggle for land. She knew that the male campesino organisations were trying to regain land for the poor. She perceived the lack of land as the biggest obstacle to being self-reliant. FEHMUC had worked for years setting up co-operatives to try to increase women's incomes, but the peasants did not have enough land to grow their food.

Objectives and Mechanisms

How can the Pdev objectives of empowerment, efficiency and sustainability, mentioned above, be achieved? Mechanisms have to be envisaged to give impetus to Pdev instead of accepting empty rhetoric. The objective of much of the work taken on by intermediary NGOs is to increase the productivity of the poor; the mechanisms include training, capital, and job creation²¹.

A number of authors in the Pdev literature have denounced the rhetoric without mechanisms and suggest ways of building in such mechanisms by developing an experimental approach and improving the social analysis in small-scale interventions²². A similar plea for more social analysis reveals that, "...persons with the needed skills were locally available, but that communities were not organised and empowered to raise the needed funds to provide effective supervision for self-help efforts"²³. Community capabilities needed to be strengthened by making government funds available and by providing technical training.

The WID literature indicates that one important mechanism to get access to resources is group formation. Receiving mechanisms among disadvantaged groups are needed²⁴. Until recently, women's development in India had followed a social welfare approach in programmes for women and children. However, in the 1980s, Indian authorities wanted to involve women in the development process, but there were no "...receiving mechanisms among the disadvantaged groups. Group-formation ...is an essential prerequisite for the reception and effective utilisation of sectoral programs for women"²⁵. In Rajasthan, the Women's Development Programme which started off in 1984 with work in six districts now covers nine districts.

In the African context, a mechanism is needed which would help policy makers recognise the important role of women in agriculture. In Zimbabwe, the draft

²¹. Thomas F. Carroll, *Intermediary NGOs: The Supporting Link in Grassroots Development*, Kumarian Press, 1992.

²². Neville Dyson-Hudson, "Pastoral Production Systems and Livestock Development Projects: An East African Perspective", in Cernea, *op. cit.* pp. 219-255.

²³. Cynthia C. Cook, "Social Analysis in Rural Roads Projects", in Cernea, *op. cit.*, pp. 397-424 and Norman Uphoff, "Fitting Projects to People", in Cernea, pp. 467-511, in relation to Ghana.

²⁴. See: Maitreyi DAS, "Group Formation for Women's Development", World Bank, Policy Research Working Papers, Population and Human Resources Department, May 1992.

²⁵. IBID, p. 5.

proposals for the Communal Lands Development Plan do not reflect the demands of Zimbabwean women who want some control over land, their labour and its products. The power to allocate land in communal areas is in the hands of local councils, who still allocate land to men on "...behalf of their families...", men therefore control women and farms²⁶.

SEWA presents a stunning example of the power of group formation as a mechanism for access to resources. It has its own mobile bank which is an innovative solution for bridging the modern and traditional worlds. Rural alternatives have been sought and found in building up a strong multiple occupation base to earn income throughout the year. The joint action of the SEWA unions and co-operatives has created a shift in consciousness: from piece-rate workers to worker-owners. Their unity makes it possible for them to press for policies and their enforcement. When the objective has been to halt land degradation, land co-operatives were created and have reversed this process. However, there are pre-conditions or a pre-co-operative stage with training which is necessary to attain access to assets, land, loans, equipment and animals²⁷.

SARTHI's (Social Action for Rural and Tribal Inhabitants of India) work provides another example of a mechanism used to strengthen women's political voice within local institutions and to get women's groups tenurial rights to common land. Short-term wage employment had to be generated so that the wastelands could be developed as a long term asset. Furthermore, SARTHI's work with group formation gave the women a power base to challenge the gender division of labour at home and in society. Husbands started taking on some household chores to free the women for work on the wastelands. These women's groups were models of democratic participation and fairness. Realistic expectations were formulated and field staff trained. This facilitated the creation of a "women's space" within the community²⁸. The lessons learned from the SARTHI experience show that given the fact that they are the primary gatherers and users of biomass, "...women are in the best position to implement wasteland development activities"²⁹. They have both the knowledge and the incentives to make a success of such programmes, but they needed help in order to start working together, to take action and to have influence within their community. Organising women around the development of these wastelands indicates the potential that women have to manage natural resources and thus be empowered.

In still another part of the world, MUDE (Women's organisation in the Dominican Republic) has created more public awareness of the economic roles and contributions of women. However, extension services and government credit are still not available to women farmers. MUDE remains the only women's development organisation which provides credit and technical assistance to peasant women for productive projects.

Institutional Reform Needed

A current theme running through the personal communications and the

²⁶. Anne V. Akeroyd, "Gender, Food Production and Property Rights: Constraints on Women Farmers in Southern Africa" in Afshar, ed. *Women, Development and Survival in the Third World*, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-171, p. 157.

²⁷. Kalima Rose, *Where Women Are Leaders*, *op. cit.* Zed Books Ltd, 1992.

²⁸. Madhu Sarin, SARTHI, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 8, 17, 18.

²⁹. IBID, p. 18.

literature is the need for institutional reform and/or development. The specific question is whether institutions should be developed separately for men and women. Uphoff argues that separate organisations for women are desirable to build and enhance solidarity, the energy generated in these groups can be rallied and can give women a voice in their communities and at other levels. Where such separate organisations would not be viable, the only alternative may be integration. However, this means that women's participation is under the control of men. "Even the highly idealistic leadership of the Deedar co-operative in Bangladesh was not able to have a strong women's role in that remarkable organisation at the start (...). It took twenty years to get women into full voting and office-bearing roles though this has been accomplished within a very favourable environment"³⁰. And "The optimum LID (Local Institutional Development) strategy appears to be some combination of women's, men's and mixed groups to tap the ideas and efforts of different sets of persons working on varied development tasks (...). Unless special circumstances require it, women's organisations should not operate in isolation from all contact with men. The case studies of the Senegalese gardening groups (Annex five) and the Comas Women's Academy in Peru (Annex Seven) show advantages of co-operation with and even co-optation of men"³¹.

Furthermore, Uphoff expresses doubts as to whether there will be sufficient government resources to be devoted to separate women's and men's LA (local administration) extension units. Therefore, it does not seem advisable to insist on such units as part of local institutional development. A better course would be increasing the number and proportion of women LA staff.

Role of Donors

Many practitioners agree that the present institutional structure of donor institutions is not conducive to participatory approaches. For example, according to Partridge, while the existence of the World Bank Core Learning Group on Participatory Development is "counter cultural", it exists because the NGO Advisory Committee and some Bank staff are working in this way but Pdev is not the way the World Bank operates³². Given the lack of administrative framework, procedures and trained personnel, more effort is needed to analyse institutions as they are, in order to identify obstacles to Pdev.

Governments too have to be influenced; SEWA succeeded in achieving policy changes³³ as a result of work on "A Fair deal for the Self-employed" presented to the Vice Chairman of the Indian Planning Commission. Cernea³⁴ argues for "institutional and social scaffoldings" built in at the same pace as financial resources. What is needed is the formulation of "an efficient social construction strategy for absorbing...financial resources."

³⁰. Norman Uphoff, *Local Institutional Development: An Analytical Sourcebook with Cases*, Kumarian Press, 1986, pp. 153-154.

³¹. IBID.

³². William Partridge, World Bank, Member of Core Learning Group on Pdev, *op. cit.*.

³³. Kalima Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

³⁴. Cernea, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

II. CONTEXT AND OBSTACLES

Cultural Context

Culture and Participatory Development

Culture may be an obstacle to Pdev. In Rajasthan³⁵ there were problems in setting up women's groups, the men in their families felt uncomfortable with women's joining group action. Donor policies can try to overcome such obstacles. For example, the World Bank has a set of rules to follow, even if the traditional culture excludes women, financial flows will not start until some provision is made for them³⁶.

With decollectivisation in China there has been the persistence and a resurgence in the strength of traditional values, i.e. while peasant households remained patriarchal even with collectivisation, afterwards men became more adamant in their attitudes. Also the practical implementation of collectivisation had meant that women had regular contact with peasants from other families in women's work teams or mixed ones. In the new household responsibility system (under decollectivisation) women work only with members of their own families. Thus there is a lack of opportunity to establish relationships outside of the family and there is a minimum of personal identity and autonomy. In the post-collectivisation era, women's access to resources is now dependent on a man, compared to membership in a collective which conferred rights to use the means of production³⁷. The household head always controlled earnings and still does but, previously, women's contribution to family income, with the work point system, did at least measure women's work outside the home and give it a clear value. However, there is hope that the population policy which limits births to one child per family, may have an indirect benefit for women. Those families who have only one daughter will invest a great deal in her, so women in the next generation may see a change in these cultural attitudes.

Culture may also be helpful for Pdev initiatives. In many West African societies, the socialisation of women is towards autonomy and independence. In Yoruba society, for example, women are expected to provide materially for themselves and their children, supplemented by contributions from their husbands. In order to fulfil these expectations women need independent and regular sources of income (in contrast to the "pin money" notion present in Latin America and elsewhere). A daughter is taught to earn her own income, it is therefore helpful to "conceptualise" the stages of a Yoruba women's personal and working life, as the construction of a "career". This example indicates that there is a link between the availability of material resources and the "ideological definitions" of women's responsibilities³⁸.

³⁵. Maitreyi Das, *The Women's Development Program in Rajasthan: Case Study in Group Formation for Women's Development*, *op.cit.*

³⁶. William Partridge, Senior Anthropologist, Member of the World Bank's Core Learning Group on Participatory Development, personal communication.

³⁷. Delia Davin, "Chinese Models of Development and their Implications for Women", in Afshar, *op.cit.*, pp. 30-52.

³⁸. Carolyn Dennis, "Constructing a 'Career' Under Conditions of Economic Crisis and Structural Adjustment: The Survival Strategies of Nigerian Women", in Afshar, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-106.

In Southern Africa, however, women are said to be in a "cultural straight jacket". A Malawian official stated bluntly:

"Our custom is that women should be subordinate to men. This is how it always has been and it won't change easily. We have always been a male dominated society. Men were hunters, but made most of the important decisions. Then they became migrant workers and brought home money. Ask any woman about decisions. They will talk but in the end they will say: you must ask the man. So this is a cultural thing. In this country men are always above women. The women who are struggling to get on top of men are fighting against their own consciousness. They know and are brought up to know that men are above them.

Men's superiority here is customary — also it's Christian — it's in the Bible. We expect our wives to respect us and despite talk of equality, we must lead — we can compromise a bit, but we must lead³⁹."

In India the state through official surveys like the family budget survey has made an ideological construction of the nuclear family in contrast to traditional culture and reality of the joint family. This construction not only contradicts customary law but denies women's roles in production as workers, while "glorifying" their roles as mothers and wives. Westwood argues that these constructed ideologies with patriarchal assumptions which represent women as home-based wives and mothers encourage the exploitation of women⁴⁰.

Cultural Conditioning

The cultural conditioning in India which dictates that women defer to men, hampers women's confidence and ability to speak out in a mixed forum. Therefore SEWA groups are all-female forums for fear that if men are admitted they will take over. In addition SEWA argues that since poverty takes the hardest toll on women "...let their relief from it be managed by them." Increases in women's income benefit the entire family because women plough most of their earnings back into the household. Therefore SEWA channels resources through women's hands. The fact that SEWA has an all-female membership provides strong female role models⁴¹.

However, women who protest make themselves targets for social disapproval which can have many serious consequences for themselves and their families, ranging from physical violence to loss of employment. Therefore, while their unity makes it possible for them to press for policies and their enforcement, "...they have also found it is difficult to unify until there actually is a policy backing them up which they can then rally around⁴²."

In the Indian setting, caste dynamics and the fact that caste affiliation is related

³⁹. Anne V. Akeroyd, "Gender, Food Production and Property Rights: Constraints on Women Farmers in Southern Africa", in Afshar, *op.cit.*, pp. 139-171.

⁴⁰. Sallie Westwood, "Gender and the Politics of Production in India", in Afshar, *op.cit.*, pp. 292-293.

⁴¹. Kalima Rose, *op.cit.*, p. 18.

⁴². IBID, p. 120.

to specific occupation, limit a woman's ability to demand change. A demand for higher wages, for example, is often interpreted as a caste issue and is perceived as a threat to the caste hierarchy.

SEWA is an indigenous movement, it therefore recognises that Indian traditions are "deeply embedded" in women. This knowledge means that SEWA "starts from where the women are: from their strengths, their needs, and their weaknesses. Indian traditions are built as much on economic systems as on social and cultural ones⁴³."

Opposition of Men

One big cultural obstacle is dealing with men's suspicions when only women are organised. Husbands of some members in SARTHI's work complained that housework was suffering. As March and Taqqu⁴⁴ found there is a relation between self-assertiveness and self-protection within women's informal strategies. In the SARTHI experience, "at the family level, each woman had to use a combination of assertiveness and diplomacy. For example, some of them started getting up earlier to finish their housework on the land or to attend meetings. The fact that SARTHI staff called a meeting of the whole village to explain why they were working only with women, assuaged some of the men's misgivings, but others continued to spread rumours against the activity and to stealthily listen in on the women's group discussions. Careful, steady work by SARTHI staff eventually increased the women's self-confidence and countered the men's resistance by ensuring their participation in other SARTHI projects⁴⁵."

⁴³. IBID, p. 271.

⁴⁴. Kathryn S. March and Rachelle L. Taqqu, *Women's Informal Associations in Developing Countries: Catalysts for Change?*, Westview Press, Boulder and London, 1986, p. 70.

⁴⁵. Madhu Sarin, *op. cit.* p. 12.

In Honduras, similar opposition from men was encountered. Even men who were active in the land-claiming association wanted their wives to stay at home instead of attending the meetings of the women's groups. This is in spite of household provisioning patterns which mean that women have to have their own resources to provide clothing for themselves and their children. The man buys his own clothing but not theirs. It is very difficult to organise women given male opposition, which is due to men's fear of losing control over women. In this culture like so many others, men think that they should tell the women what to do. However, organised women have learned to speak out in community meetings, while those who are not organised remain silent, "afraid to speak out in front of men"⁴⁶.

Elsewhere, the experience of MUDE in the Dominican Republic is that given the general economic situation, husbands and companions of MUDE members increasingly support women's participation in projects that bring income⁴⁷.

Different Cultural Perceptions

In another geographical context, Carroll points out that there are different cultural perceptions between Westerners and Nepalese. While Western values stress the notions of independence and self-reliance in community development of individuality and equality, "the Nepalese villagers ...perceive their world as opening through personal relations and hierarchical linkages". Linda Stone, an anthropologist working in Nepal, points out that:

"Rather than encourage an attitude of 'independence' on the part of village communities, a development strategy based on the idea of interdependence between villagers and their government, development agencies and institutions or between villagers and 'outsiders' generally would be more realistic and appropriate"⁴⁸.

A word of caution is voiced by experienced practitioners about the possibility of transforming traditional systems considered as obstacles to change. It is often assumed that traditional systems such as pastoralism can be "updated as a holistic design". Such systems embody technologies and comprise the social organisation of production, change therefore would mean adaptation of highly complex indigenous systems which use both sexes and all ages⁴⁹.

Gender and the Social Organisation of Work

⁴⁶. Medea Benjamin, Translator and Editor, *Don't Be Afraid Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart, The Story of Elvia Alvarado*, A Food First Book, San Francisco, 1987, p. 88.

⁴⁷. Sally Yudelman, "Mujeres En Desarrollo Dominicana: MUDE", Interim Report, DR-199, Prepared for the Inter-American Foundation, Mimeo, May 1989.

⁴⁸. Linda Stone, "Cultural Crossroads of Community Participation in Development: A Case from Nepal." in *Human Organization* 48(3), 1989, pp. 206-213, in Thomas F. Carroll, *Intermediate NGOs, op. cit.*, 1992, p. 212.

⁴⁹. Neville Dyson-Hudson, "Pastoral Production Systems and Livestock Development Projects: An East African Perspective", in Cernea, *op. cit.* pp. 219-255, pp. 220-221.

This topic can be considered a continuation of the cultural obstacles to Pdev briefly illustrated above, since the social organisation of work is culturally defined. While cultural patterns usually persist, traditional ways of doing things can change. For example, one of the results of a textile revival programme in Bolivia, which includes innovative work with women, has been the reorganisation of jobs within the household. Men are doing the women's jobs to leave women free to devote more time to the textile revival programme. Powerful economic incentives are overriding the traditional social organisation of work⁵⁰.

The historical process which has transformed traditional artisan production, in Iran, is not in itself necessarily gender-specific, but, modernisation with an emphasis on capital accumulation, has had the effect of depriving many poorer women of their access to reliable revenues from subsistence production. The traditional subordination of women has been reinforced by male-oriented development projects and employment opportunities⁵¹.

In China, there has been a reversal of favourable attitudes to women's employment in the urban workforce. The new political climate makes it easier for male employers to express their reluctance to employ women openly. In spite of the years of counter-propaganda, traditional attitudes were not destroyed. There is now a battle over whether women should have the right to work at all. However, when asked most men state that they want their wives to work outside of the home⁵².

Farmer organisations in Southern Africa, often tend to exclude women and smallholders for various reasons. Since it is the official view that farmer's organisations are an appropriate vehicle to deliver extension services, women's full participation in agricultural development is hindered. Thus, existing patterns of gender inequality in agricultural production are reinforced. A gender-based division between the production of domestic crops (women's crops) and cash crops (men's crops) is maintained. However, if home gardens prove successful economically, experience from elsewhere indicates that men may usurp control⁵³.

In building an enabling environment for participatory development the issue of solidarity between men and women is important. However, remedies are usually aimed at helping women assume "the double day" rather than relieving them of part of their responsibilities. Rohini argues that the choice underlying union demands for protective legislation as well as a living wage for women is: "either total economic dependence on men, or a degree of independence but at the cost of an increased workload:..."⁵⁴ It is the general "climate" of work and the "double day" for women which makes for the lack of solidarity between men and women. Moreover, participatory development methods, such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), are unlikely to be effective in resolving local conflicts equitably if the general social and political context works against solidarity between men and women.

⁵⁰ Kevin Healy, IAF, Personal Communication, February 1993.

⁵¹ Afshar, ed. *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁵² Delia Davin, in Afshar, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-44.

⁵³ Anne V. Akeroyd, in Afshar, *op.cit.* pp. 155-156.

⁵⁴ Rohini P. H., "Women Workers in Manufacturing Industry in India: Problems and Possibilities", in Afshar, *op. cit.*, p. 261 and p. 285.

Westwood⁵⁵ argues that a "multi-layered account" is needed to understand the issues of gender relations and complexities in both the formal and informal sectors. In one example given⁵⁶, women's skills become part of the economic strategies of men. The idea presented is that women are not workers and that their place is in the home. This is a "convenient fiction" to ensure "invisible hands" at work on sewing machines in the export garment firms owned and managed by men⁵⁷.

In male-dominated societies, poor women's ownership of assets is more likely if the ownership is collective rather than individual. Each small co-operative can grow at its own pace and previously economically deprived women can be effective in the mainstream economy. This has been the experience of SEWA⁵⁸. The conceptual blocks encountered by SEWA represent policy constraints. For example, laws regulating labour unions in India, recognised unions only where specific employer-employee relationships existed. SEWA's concept for the self-employed maintained that unions of workers (not against employers) were equally valid. Negotiations with the government which lasted four months were finally successful and SEWA's broader interpretation was accepted in April 1972. The new law made it possible for SEWA to respond to the needs of poor self-employed women by providing access to resources, including credit and raw materials, and control over their own income⁵⁹.

For example, there were no women in dairy co-operatives, although women were responsible for the care of cattle and milking cows. None of the income generated in these activities reached them and they were not included in the training courses of the government⁶⁰. Coping with the reality of rural women means respecting their need to have several occupations and to reinforce the interlinkages between occupations. When developing an agenda for change, it is important to know that "the same people who own the land...also own the shops, lend the money, exercise political control, and give employment⁶¹." In such situations demands for higher wages may not only jeopardise employment but have other far reaching consequences.

However, SEWA members (leaders in their villages) have acquired literacy and administrative skills. They have developed fodder and water resources over which the women now have some degree of control through the managing committees of their organisations⁶². The SEWA co-operatives have reduced dependence on employers and landowners. They are a tool for leverage in work relations because they provide better opportunities for self-employment. They improve women's skills through training, the women are therefore in a stronger position to negotiate on issues related to agricultural wages and credit. "With the increased options co-operatives provide for year-round employment, women become less desperate to accept exploitative work arrangements⁶³."

⁵⁵. Sallie Westwood, "Gender and the Politics of Production in India", in Afshar, *op.cit.* p. 289.

⁵⁶. IBID, p. 304.

⁵⁷. IBID, p. 304.

⁵⁸. Kalima Rose, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24.

⁵⁹. IBID, pp. 44-45.

⁶⁰. IBID, p. 67.

⁶¹. IBID, p. 148.

⁶². IBID, p. 206.

⁶³. IBID, pp. 207-208.

Highlighting and increasing the visibility of gender relations in resolving conflicts is essential to achieve Pdev. March and Taqqu suggest starting with a "detailed grasp" of the types of economic resources women may control and a sense of the obligations they are expected to meet with these resources⁶⁴. With this knowledge, groups of women can go on to appropriate a legitimate space for themselves. This was done in the SARTHI experience in managing village common land resources in accordance with their needs and priorities. They now have the right to manage these resources collectively⁶⁵.

Having multiple activities does not mean the same thing in each geographical context. In contrast to SEWA's experience MUDE's study of the women with multiple activities suggested that its members were not among the poorest. However, the important point is that women cannot claim legal rights in the family or community until they earn income⁶⁶. MUDE therefore assists women in becoming economically independent. The issue is that "pin money" is not enough which means women have to be helped in getting away from traditional income-generating projects which are not viable economically.

The Role of Outsiders

Outsiders are often needed to facilitate the development of a women's space within the community. This is one of the lessons from the SARTHI experience; trained SARTHI field staff helped to develop a public and social space for women to assert their rights. This lack was an obstacle to the development of the wastelands⁶⁷.

The provision of resources, by outsiders, can help to strengthen the recipients' future autonomy when "mutual legitimacy is part of the exchange⁶⁸." Furthermore, outside support has helped indigenous and other disadvantaged groups to gain confidence, as a result they have started to make claims on the official system. The notion of "free space" in which people can gain self-confidence and learn to be more assertive is important. This "free space" is not permanently open, however, and one researcher has found that an outside facilitator who is not part of the usual setting and therefore not limited by his relationships can open up this space again when it has become constricted⁶⁹. Outsiders can also influence the introduction of innovations which are acceptable because that have been approved by economic and technical experts from the World Bank and other donor agencies⁷⁰.

⁶⁴. March and Taqqu, *op. cit.* p. 54.

⁶⁵. SARTHI, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁶⁶. Sally Yudelman, MUDE, *op. cit.*.

⁶⁷. SARTHI, *op. cit.*.

⁶⁸. Thomas F. Carroll, *op. cit.* p. 87.

⁶⁹. Anne Hornsby, "Building 'Healthy' Organizations: Some Thoughts on Organizational Consulting for Economic Development", Paper prepared for the Inter-American Foundation Mid-term Conference of Doctoral Fellows, Quito Ecuador, 1989, in Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

⁷⁰. Norman Uphoff, "Fitting Projects to People" in Cernea, *op. cit.*, pp. 467-511.

Carroll has found it useful to think of three modes of support offered by the Grassroots Support Organisations (GSOs) he studied: proactive, collaborative and responsive⁷¹. He also found a difference between GSOs and Membership Support Organisations (MSOs): many of the latter are often exclusive and internally unequal, GSOs can play helpful mediating and stabilising roles when this is the case. Their intervention can reinforce democratic leadership⁷². Therefore, donors such as the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) should legitimise the role of such organisations and help to strengthen them⁷³.

Some development NGOs have assumed three useful functions: educational work, for example in maternal and child health; economic and financial assistance, with the idea that the group has to first rely on its own resources and not always depend on outside resources; and institution building with a political dimension. Although NGOs in this category plan to withdraw when the groups have acquired sufficient autonomy, very few of them actually do so. They remain NGOs which are concerned with other people's development⁷⁴.

Guggenheim and Spears⁷⁵ have found that many forestry projects fail due to ignorance of the basic social organisation of production. There is no grasp of the resource management patterns on which behavioural change depends. The internal functional structure of the domestic group and the whole constellation of rights, opportunities etc. varies as families mature. For example, "rotational inheritance" in southern Colombia is not conducive to any long-term investment, although there may be co-operative management among brothers. Another question to ask in each setting is what are the external linkages, the "ground level" connections between communities and outside groups?

Overcoming Obstacles

One strategy employed by many women's organisations to overcome exclusion has been to single out women and to identify their needs. Advocacy, including Information, Education and Communications (IEC) about participatory development and the gender and generational implications is another device. Funding issues in regard to Pdev often include sensitivity to gender.

⁷¹. Carroll, *op. cit.* p. 111.

⁷². IBID, p. 157.

⁷³. IBID, p. 158.

⁷⁴. Lecomte, personal communication, 1993.

⁷⁵. Guggenheim & Spears, *op. cit.* in Cernea, *op. cit.*, p. 327-328.

Local Focus of Efforts on Women's Needs

Much discussion and analysis of the Pdev movement focuses on the activities of member organisations and other local institutions in their communities, while in WID materials the level is more often regional or national. Women's organisations help their individual members to generate income for themselves and as group members they subsequently undertake collective action. These activities usually have a positive impact on the living conditions in urban neighbourhoods and rural communities.

Most WID endeavours were undertaken because women were excluded from facilities due to misconceptions about their roles and functions. In one case, omission of women was due to the idea that what was being proposed would be good for everyone in the community. However, just as "trickle down" does not work in poverty alleviation, "trickle across" (from men to women) does not always work either. The homogeneous composition of women's groups, rather than the assumed homogeneity of communities, may be a key to their success. The BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) example⁷⁶ shows how they made a needed shift in approach from community development rhetoric to their present recognition of a diversity of interests at the local level.

Experiences seem to indicate that separate funds and projects for women are a necessary first step⁷⁷. Yudelman's study of five women's organisations shows that they combine the "...equity — and poverty-oriented variants of the women-centred approach in that they seek the integration of women into political and economic life....(they) focus on the economic emancipation of women⁷⁸." These organisations recognised that economic autonomy can lead to autonomy in other aspects of women's lives.

The rhetoric is similar for both the Women's and Pdev movements. For example, the Mexican women's organisation COMO (Centro de Orientacion de la Mujer Obrera)⁷⁹ included counselling of its members about evolving gender and work roles. Their objectives were to help women resolve their problems, to promote solidarity, participation, social responsibility and openness to change. These attitudes were then channelled into the solution of community problems. Many of the volunteer *obreras* stayed on to become paid staff members, and as COMO grew, the idea of eventual control by the workers themselves took root.

⁷⁶. See: Fazle H. Abed, "Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee: Promoting Popular Participation", in World Bank Discussion Paper 183, *op. cit.* and Marty Chen, "Developing Non-Craft Employment for Women in Bangladesh" in *SEEDS*, *op. cit.* pp. 73-97.

⁷⁷. See: Sally Yudelman, *Hopeful Openings: A Study of Five Women's Development Organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean*, Kumarian Press, 1987.

⁷⁸. *IBID*, pp. 10-11.

⁷⁹. *IBID*, p. 17.

Advocacy

NGOs will need help in strengthening their advocacy skills if they are going to effectively change policy. In the last four years the Holdeen Fund for India has helped a number of Indian NGOs in their advocacy efforts and this has been very successful. Now OXFAM in the United Kingdom and ActionAid also want to spend most of their funds on advocacy work⁸⁰.

Public protest by SEWA-member vendors in Ahmedabad, against police harassment, was used to bring attention to their plight. The women received no consideration of their demands or applications for licenses so they decided to demonstrate. On Independence day in 1978, 2 000 women marched to protest against police harassment. The women's demonstration to be licensed and to have legal selling positions, actually improved the public's perception of the need to support poor women⁸¹. SEWA also acts as an advocate for women's issues in international fora of trade union networks. It not only represents women in these forums but would have these structures change in order to respond to the reality of so many women members. There are now new SEWAs in Bihar, New Delhi, and Madhya Pradesh in addition to the groups in Ahmedabad. This improves information collection and the possibility of lobbying collectively.

Reorienting negative values, policy change and advocacy cannot exist in a vacuum. That is why SEWA, simultaneously supports women through "a consistent value network rooted in the community. There are hundreds of examples of how SEWA support has redirected the manifestation of negative values against women,...⁸²." Each SEWA is organised around different issues. Initially, the major issue was income generation for extremely poor women and their families. Subsequently and for others the major goal was getting skilled women out of exploitative arrangements with middlemen by helping them to have their own production units. Still others have actively fought unjust social practices against women, such as dowry and child marriage⁸³.

Ela Bhatt, the founder and Director of SEWA, has been an outspoken advocate of women's ownership of assets in national and international forums. The importance of this issue is based on the fact that women's incomes are mostly used for food, clothing and housing, therefore the quality of life improves when women are in control of income. Moreover, there is an increasing number of women-headed households and in crisis periods, assets help these units to survive.

⁸⁰. Kathy Sreedhar, Holdeen Fund for India, Personal Communication, February 1993.

⁸¹. Kalima Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁸². IBID, pp. 109-110.

⁸³. IBID, p. 96.

However, providing access to assets has met with resistance. SEWA Bank, therefore petitioned the Union Minister for Banking and Economic Affairs to separate 'development banks' from commercial banks when establishing viability norms. SEWA lobbied for recognition of the need for special supportive services for the poor. The increase in the functions of women's banks, compared to commercial banks with a different kind of clientèle was the rationale behind this plea for separation. "In the midst of SEWA lobbying, the bank actually met the norms for the first time in its decade and a half of existence, emphasizing the process of economic integration⁸⁴."

Smita Lahiri⁸⁵ argues that the World Bank should recognise that "the promotion of a participatory ideal can lead to internal strife and conflict between member governments and citizens. A commitment...to play an advocacy role for the people placed at risk in these conflicts" should be included and considered on the agenda of international human rights discussions. Crawford points out that advocacy and funding are part of creating an enabling environment, and here the World Bank's role is very important within countries. "It was recommended that the Bank use all its nonfinancial tools (for example, fiscal policy analysis and macroeconomic and sectoral options) to try to create such environments⁸⁶."

Carroll⁸⁷ in his study of both GSOs and MSOs found that the former have an advocacy role which they assume by taking "an activist, representational posture...for collective beneficiary interests⁸⁸." An important part of the advocacy role is protection of the groups concerned from hostility, and mediation on their behalf.

Funding Issues and Participation

Most donor institutions are not geared to reach indigenous people, therefore the question arises of who is going to pay for the necessary contacts with these groups? Parallel to approaches we have to look at mechanisms to decentralise resources. The international donor community could set up arrangements to have matching grants, to provide for items not included in the regular budget⁸⁹. Efforts are under way at the World Bank to create a financial mechanism which can make resources available for project preparation by local communities. These funds would be used so that the people could define their own goals and preserve a variety of cultural objectives⁹⁰.

⁸⁴ . IBID, p. 199.

⁸⁵ . Smita Lahiri, "Capacity Building and Consultation", in World Bank Discussion Paper 183, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

⁸⁶ . Brett Crawford, "Funding Instruments", in World Bank Discussion Paper 183, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁸⁷ . Thomas F. Carroll, *Intermediary NGOs*, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁸⁸ . IBID.

⁸⁹ . William Partridge, Personal Communication, February 1993.

⁹⁰ . IBID.

An alternative to funding projects is to fund programmes or organisations which meet certain criteria for support. This is the approach adopted by the Holdeen Fund for India⁹¹. They support untouchables, tribals and Muslims, and primarily women in these groups. Frequent observation of the activities of these groups has indicated whether they are indeed participatory or rather very top-down. Errors in funding can be rectified in this manner.

A long-term concern for institution building has guided the funding decisions of the Inter-American Foundation (IAF). Therefore, support and strengthening of grassroots organisations formed by the people themselves is considered the best way to help the poor. The IAF is willing to take risks by supporting new organisations which are "experimenting with untested approaches to solving problems"⁹². Furthermore, funds are provided to organisations which have broad-based democratic participation in their programme design because it is considered so important for sustainable development⁹³. The flexible funding of the IAF encourages the grantees to be concerned "with the social process of development" rather than a rapid financial return. Social development and participation are not sacrificed to efficiency criteria.

Evidence that Participation Works

Bhatnagar maintains that participatory development has to be linked to effectiveness with systematic evidence which shows that participation makes a positive difference. Efforts to document the success of participatory work are under way at the World Bank, these include a review of 110 Rural Water Projects⁹⁴. Similarly, one thousand irrigation systems were evaluated, taking into account participation practices, in the Philippines⁹⁵.

Lessons learned from the SARTHI experience indicate that among the criteria for successful intervention is the recognition that local people and especially women need help in overcoming traditional obstacles which have impeded solidarity, working together, taking collective action and being able to influence their own communities. Other important lessons are the following:

- "Women's collective needs cannot be met unless the gender division of labour at home and in the wider society is challenged. Women's participation in the wastelands groups has allowed them to challenge the hierarchy of the family as evidenced by some husbands taking on household chores to enable their wives to attend group meetings or to participate in training camps⁹⁶."

⁹¹. Kathy Sreedhar, Executive Director, Holdeen Fund for India, Personal Communication, February 1993.

⁹². Jeffrey M. Avina, with Alan R. Lessik, Arelis Gomez, John Butler and Denise Humphreys, "Evaluating the Impact of Grassroots Development Funding: An Experimental Methodology Applied to Eight IAF Projects", Mimeo, 1990, pp. 3-4.

⁹³. IBID.

⁹⁴. Deepak Narayan, forthcoming. See also Agit Banerjee, forthcoming study on forestry, comparing non-participation and participation.

⁹⁵. Bhatnagar, Personal Communication, February 1993.

⁹⁶. SARTHI, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

- Participation does work, as it was found that, "among the strengths of the women's wasteland groups are the standards of democratic participation and fairness with which they operate. Decisions about hours, output and quality of work are all made democratically and all participants share equitably in both the labour and resulting product⁹⁷."
- The collective power of women is enhanced where they move out of their communities to attend meetings. A positive synergy is set in motion in this process which increases women's self-confidence and ability to speak out in larger public meetings and to take leadership roles⁹⁸.
- Field staff need to be sensitised to explore "locally appropriate strategies for empowering women" which are more successful than simply implementing a predetermined programme.
- The public strategy of the women's wasteland groups has helped them to sustain their achievements by "insisting that their respective panchayats uphold their land rights when challenged both from within and outside their communities⁹⁹." Furthermore, the women now have the right to vote in panchayat and state elections which they can use in the future to safeguard and promote their interests.

Bhatnagar and Williams¹⁰⁰ have documented the fact that participation can be successful. In a 1990 study of 52 USAID projects in various sectors, the correlation between participation and success is clear. Other evidence cited by the same authors indicates that the water sector, including irrigation, is the most stunning example of the success of participation. And, "while scores on participation correlate highly with improved quality of project design and project implementation, the association is even stronger for women's involvement¹⁰¹." In water and sanitation, primary health, forestry and natural resource management, land reform and rural development, education and small scale enterprise, many references indicate that participation in these fields has led to commitment and sustainability¹⁰².

The net benefits for governments of participatory approaches include: the collection of more accurate information from local communities about their needs, capabilities, etc.; the possibility of adapting programmes to local conditions; the mobilisation of local resources which may complement or substitute for governmental services; and the improvement in the utilisation and maintenance of public facilities¹⁰³. Participation does, however entail risks such as, raising expectations prematurely, having a long start up time and the possibility that local elites will capture development resources.

⁹⁷ . IBID.

⁹⁸ . IBID, p. 19.

⁹⁹ . IBID.

¹⁰⁰ . Bhuvan Bhatnagar and Aubrey C. Williams, *Participatory Development and the World Bank: Potential Directions for Change*, World Bank Discussion Papers, 183, p. 3, 1992.

¹⁰¹ . IBID.

¹⁰² . IBID, p. 4.

¹⁰³ . IBID.

One of the most striking things about a number of successful rural women's projects is how much the productive activities of these various women's enterprises branched out and changed over time¹⁰⁴.

Another lesson from successful interventions, is that economic and humanistic organisational objectives are compatible if properly implemented. They have also been found to be mutually reinforcing. Carroll found in his study, "that strong performance moves sequentially: accomplishing one objective serves as a building block for reaching another, although this is not to say that climbing up block by block is easy¹⁰⁵."

¹⁰⁴. Shimwaayi Muntemba, ed. *Rural Development and Women: Lessons from the Field*, two volumes. Geneva. World Employment Programme, International Labour Organisation, in Norman Uphoff, *LID:Source Book*, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

¹⁰⁵. Thomas F. Carroll, *Intermediary NGOs*, *op. cit.* p. 36.

All of the thirty GSOs and MSOs reviewed and evaluated by Carroll showed a very good track record for getting things done on time and with "reasonable" efficiency. This indicates that associated with success is the ability to influence others, such as banks, suppliers and participants, as well as proper internal management¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁶. IBID, p. 43.

III. GENDER RELATIONS IN MAJOR PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT DEBATES

The Project Paradigm and Participatory Development

Much of the participatory development literature sees conventional project approaches as an obstacle to genuine participation. Lecomte maintains that agencies carry out their projects and leave the people with their problems. The project often masks the real problems by focusing all attention on itself, or holds back solutions to local problems by using up all available resources. In this view, another problem with the project approach is its deterministic nature which does not allow for the financing of activities which are not foreseeable in all detail¹⁰⁷. Moreover, Lecomte and others such as Uphoff consider that the most rational method for support of self-help efforts is not to plan everything in advance. Rather than undertaking comprehensive and costly survey work, these authors argue for an approach which includes study of local conditions, followed by experimentation and correction as the action develops.

According to Lecomte, one of the major errors of the project strategy, is to consider the poor as a target group, for whom it is necessary to do something, instead of interesting the poor in the conception, design and implementation of activities of their own. Furthermore, donor agencies are under pressure to disburse funds and each project tends to invest too much without taking into account either the resources, or the organisations of the local populations in question, and therefore they may act too soon instead of letting people themselves take the initiative. Help should be given, after local people have organised themselves and can undertake changes. It is only then that they can think of ways to use funds to solve the problems as they perceive them. It is necessary to observe first how grass roots organisations are born, get strengthened, associate and create common functions. Aid can then be adapted to this autonomous process which is not usually predictable.

While Lecomte advocates an "anti-project" approach to Pdev, Uphoff suggests "assisted self-reliance". This position accommodates both a project paradigm (trying to amend conventional project approaches) and a paradigm of more autonomous/endogenous Pdev. In addition to assisted self-reliance, the salient concepts in Uphoff's work are: capacity building, learning process, and empowerment. He advocates promoting popular participation but especially participatory methods of monitoring and evaluation, which he considers more important than monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of participation *per se*. He also advocates taking a pluralistic and pragmatic approach to M&E of participation.

¹⁰⁷. Bernard Lecomte, *op. cit.*.

Uphoff would agree with Lecomte that there must be an acceptance of the idea of experimentation. However, for experimentation to work, there should be a network of supportive, committed personnel in a variety of key positions, bridging across departmental and sectoral lines, who will give the programme a boost (or protection) when and if the need arises. In Uphoff's view, there must be a continuity of personnel involved in the programme, both from the government side and from the donor agency. Continuity is also needed in the involvement of NGOs and local communities. There cannot be a very effective "learning process" without institutional memory to interpret observations and reflections. The concept of "project implementation" should be revised to emphasize capacity building more than achieving targets. Capacity is a moving target. The project cycle should be participatory from the start. This will establish precedents and expectations that should enlist support and responsibility from communities. Participatory monitoring and evaluation would then be a natural consequence of such an approach.

In addition the project design and implementation process will have to become more of a learning process for all concerned, getting away from "blueprint" approaches. Flexibility in budgets and schedules should be accepted as the norm with periodic revisions so that knowledge about design and implementation can be cumulative. However, the learning process does not mean that design and implementation must be *ad hoc*. The World Bank (and other agencies) should be prepared to invest in participatory capabilities.

There is no dichotomy between WID and Pdev practitioners in regard to the project paradigm; one knowledgeable gender specialist, Adrienne Germain¹⁰⁸ suggests that having no projects would mean a drastic change to move away from present practices, but the danger is that everything gets too diffuse and cannot be measured. In contrast Sreedhar¹⁰⁹ maintains that the Holdeen Fund for India has done away with the project concept and funds only organisations with proven track records of participatory methods.

In a previous study the author reviewed 60 development projects of three different types; wide response to a first draft of this study, made it possible to include the project experience of many WID practitioners in the final draft¹¹⁰. The project paradigm, was considered a useful structure if used with flexibility. This approach, which included the language of the project cycle, offered the following advantages:

- the project cycle starts with the identification of particular areas for intervention;
- the identification stage offers the opportunity to establish at the outset of a project whether particular enabling components, or pre-conditions, for women's successful integration should be included; and whether they should be in the form of separate women's projects or can merely be included as affirmative efforts within a general design;

¹⁰⁸. Vice-President International Women's Health Coalition, and Former Ford Foundation Representative in Bangladesh, Personal Communication, February 1993.

¹⁰⁹. Director of the Holdeen Fund for India.

¹¹⁰. Winifred Weekes-Vagliani, *The Integration of Women in Development Projects*, OECD Development Centre Papers, Paris 1985, see tables in annex.

- a reformulation of the identification procedure can bring out the fact that problems sometimes are seen differently by men and women;
- advocacy and legitimisation of the idea of integrating women in development interventions can play a role, and direct the attention to this problem;
- the visibility of women is heightened by examining how the project's objectives converge with gender roles; and
- bi-lateral and international donors can play a crucial role in the necessary interplay between respect for indigenous cultural values and the change to be brought about by action programmes envisaged.

One outspoken advocate for organising women in Honduras¹¹¹ mentions that all of the *campesino* organisations say they are organising women to attract foreign funds. "The foreigners love to fund women's projects¹¹²." However, because the women's groups disintegrate when foreign funds are no longer available, a better strategy is to organise women for the sake of strengthening their identity, and these organisations will develop projects suited to their own needs.

In a report of another group in the Caribbean, Yudelman¹¹³ recommends that the evaluation of MUDE focus on the economics of groups and projects. The income level of the beneficiaries, the type of projects which are most successful and why. But the organisation "has neither the data nor the instruments to measure project impact¹¹⁴."

Cernea suggests that social scientists should try to think of how they can influence projects¹¹⁵. He maintains that effective alternatives have not been identified, therefore projects are the most likely vehicle for transforming policies into action, but putting people first can change the conventional way projects evolve.

¹¹¹ . See: Medea Benjamin, *op. cit.*

¹¹² . IBID, p. 87.

¹¹³ . Sally Yudelman, Report of MUDE, 1989, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁴ . IBID, p. E and pp. 17-18.

¹¹⁵ . Cernea, *op. cit.* pp. 6-7.

Participatory Development Beyond the Project Paradigm

Some of the concepts of participatory development are embodied in the positions taken against the project paradigm. Two main points of view emerged: that Pdev be holistic instead of sector-driven; and that groups be empowered to put pressure on their own governments rather than substituting for government services.

In a similar vein, Ela Bhatt's conception of Pdev is the following: "We not only want a piece of the pie, we also want to choose the flavour, and know how to make it ourselves¹¹⁶." The main thrust of Bhatt's organisation is a demand for justice not charity, self-help and self-reliance. SEWA acknowledges the need for women to have work throughout the seasons, they therefore provide support to strengthen women's ability to assume multiple occupations. The all-women's co-operatives in rural and urban areas, include production, service and banking co-operatives. The importance of women's ownership of assets is recognised and the fact that women can become owners more readily collectively than as individuals. The idea is to affect change at the local, national and international levels. In her view, women are pivotal in India's struggle against poverty. But in order to effectively deal with poverty, women must have access to resources, be part of decision-making, planning and empowered to carry out their own programmes.

The basis of SEWA's philosophy is that women from all levels of society join together to work *with* rather than *for* poor women. Solidarity with mutual respect and a shift in control are among their goals. Self-respect is generated in the various SEWA groups, so that the women can resist exploitation and demand change collectively. SEWA organisers strive for a constant balance between members' need for support and autonomy. Ela Bhatt also feels that the organisation should be ready to follow through if the women themselves cannot do so. "We must also prepare leaders. But until they are ready to assume power, we must assume final responsibility for action. If we don't, we fail. If the poor had that capacity already, they would not have been exploited for so long¹¹⁷." There is also the fundamental belief that people can grow if their self-confidence is properly nurtured by a support system.

Usha Jumani, joined SEWA a year before their split with the main textile union. She maintains that: "All actions — raising women's consciousness, sensitising the government and the public, and striving for economic viability — have to be simultaneous, not sequential¹¹⁸." Local grassroots models cannot persist without national support, therefore SEWA began lobbying for a national commission which would study and document the problems of self-employed women workers.

Other experience points in the same direction. Organising women around their specific economic problems can be the beginning of empowering them to assess for themselves and deal with a broader range of problems¹¹⁹. In Honduras, women who got together started asking difficult questions which it seems went beyond the charitable intentions of those who provided help. "They (the Church) wanted us to give food out to malnourished mothers and children, but they didn't want us to question why we were malnourished to begin with. They wanted us to grow vegetables on the tiny plots around our houses, but they didn't want us to question why we didn't have enough land to feed ourselves¹²⁰."

¹¹⁶ . Ela Bhatt as quoted by Kalima Rose, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁷ . As reported in Kalima Rose, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

¹¹⁸ . In Kalima Rose, *IBID*, p. 90.

¹¹⁹ . See: SARTHI, *op. cit.*

¹²⁰ . Medea Benjamin, *Don't Be Afraid Gringo*, *op. cit.*

Most of the organisations reviewed and evaluated by Carroll¹²¹ supported beneficiary groups, rather than individuals or families, and had a commitment to "collective empowerment as an independent value¹²²." They were also committed "to some notion of a self-sustained development process, in productive and organisational terms¹²³."

Motivation for Pdev varies. For example, eventual empowerment of local populations may not be the donor's main motivation for participation. Indeed if the objective is rather improved project implementation, then there probably will not be too much learning carryover from these experiences¹²⁴. But if projects involve beneficiaries early in the planning phase, it seems learning how to tackle tasks unrelated to the original activity is enhanced.

Lecomte's experience has enabled him to distinguish different types of organisations; each approaches participation from a different angle. The motivation of members of user associations is based on having access to the services as a consumer. The members do not usually join because they want to reflect with others about common problems. Therefore, feelings of solidarity, respect for verbal commitments made and being part of a social group will not be very strong. These associations have assumed responsibilities that the state and donor agencies have transferred. To expect them to be creative rather than passive is unrealistic.

¹²¹ . Thomas F. Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

¹²² . IBID, p. 26.

¹²³ . IBID.

¹²⁴ . Thomas F. Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

Communities vs Social Actors

The question of the lack of homogeneity in local communities is at the heart of the debate in regard to a social actor approach versus the community as an entity. Michael Cernea¹²⁵ maintains that communities cannot act collectively. There is no sociological basis to assure a community woodlot, therefore we have to focus on social actors. Communities are not a unit of social action. According to William Partridge¹²⁶ institutional analysis and social actors are neglected. There is a need for a more sophisticated recognition of divergent interests in communities, such as political affiliation, educated or not, access to resources etc.. This calls for social analysis to set up social strategy — if poverty alleviation is the objective, then set up ways of reaching the poor. This needs planning at the local level.

Efforts to promote Pdev need to be based on an informed understanding of its potentials and limits in dealing with local problems. Identification of certain underlying assumptions of a variety of practitioners has provided insights regarding the debate over the social actors approach versus the community as an entity. Some examples from the WID literature, and focusing on the gender variable in Pdev will serve a broader function, i.e. it will investigate the possibility of Pdev initiatives to deal with the economic plight of the poor of both sexes. Moreover, the implications of the gender blindness of Pdev may become apparent in an analysis of these examples. W.F. Whyte¹²⁷ discusses the difference between accidental and systemic errors, the latter are caused by the conceptual scheme practitioners and researchers bring to bear on a problem. Identification of the assumptions of Pdev practitioners can be used to probe for further information. In other words, the assumptions are based on their experience, questioning then, can provide new insights.

For example, Lecomte emphasizes the importance of autonomous self-help initiatives which should be allowed to develop at their own pace. The centre of attention in the initial phases of this process is the innovator, but following this, the grassroots group which is being created is the focal point. In this later phase, people should be allowed to search for themselves, this may take longer, but it makes it possible to take into account traditional ways, and permits a natural process of discussion, revision of methods, and forms utilised. The assumption here is that there are no generational differences in outlook within the community. In addition, there may be cultural prescriptions related to gender and status which prohibit women, and/or poorer members of the community from taking part in the "natural process of discussion". The location of the informal discussions is an important consideration for participatory development. An illustration of this point comes from Nepal where traditionally women are not active in public or political affairs, and participation varies a great deal according to ethnic affiliation. Usually women do not attend *panchayat* or village meetings nor are they free to spend much time in tea shops where men typically hold their informal discussions¹²⁸.

¹²⁵ . Sociologist and Member of the Core Learning Group at the World Bank, Personal Communication, February 1993.

¹²⁶ . Anthropologist, World Bank, *op. cit.*

¹²⁷ . William Foote Whyte, *Social Theory For Action: How Individuals and Organizations Learn to Change*, Sage Publications, 1991, p. 20.

¹²⁸ . Augusta Molnar, "Forest Conservation in Nepal: Encouraging Women's Participation", in *SEEDS, op. cit.*

Another assumption is that interference with freedom comes only from outside of the community. The process of self-organisation is described as one in which people are left to conceive and carry out simple actions, without coercion, or suggestions on how to proceed, and without a fixed time in advance. It is in this space of freedom that the group will find itself, with trial and error, evaluate, and think of itself differently. In fact, some people in the community may need "outsiders" to facilitate their participation. For example, all of the five women's organisations studied by Yudelman¹²⁹ were started by "outsiders" such as socially progressive and concerned Catholic clergy and laity or middle and upper class professionals. In the initial stages they all depended on foreign sources of funds, as opposed to substantial local support. This pattern of support suggests "assisted self-reliance" rather than autonomy.

The ideal of community participation is described as a willing gender and generational division of labour, without questioning whether or not these tasks have been assigned by the elders in the community. That is, there is no recognition of possible conflict in incentives and rewards for various interest groups. However, the experience of Women's Working Forum (WWF) Madras at the local level, indicates the power of organising women along occupational lines rather than just on the basis of community ties. This has increased their negotiating power at the national level¹³⁰.

The debate in regard to social actors versus communities, includes a whole range of factors and phenomena. For example, an interesting continuum of decision-making was presented at the World Bank Seminar mentioned earlier¹³¹. Abed points out that analytically precise reasoning is needed, i.e. there is a difference between contributing to decisions made by others and participating in actual decision making. In the latter type, the participants have a voice, authority to make decisions and control over resources to make decisions effective (empowerment). In the former type, information may be solicited from the intended beneficiaries, preferences expressed by them and the consultation may present lobbying or advocacy opportunities for intended beneficiaries.

According to Spitz¹³² consulting people on their needs and aspirations is a minimal participatory approach. It ensures the cultural and political context and facilitates a better assessment of the differences in perceptions, values and attitudes of the various actors involved in project design and implementation. A participatory approach means that differences of opinion should be made explicit and debated, with all parties fully aware of the issues at stake. Conflict between classes, gender and age, status symbols and in relation to ecological factors should be anticipated. For example, rural development projects have too often ignored women. IFAD is trying to remedy this situation but so far they have designed projects *for* women rather than have women contribute to project design.

¹²⁹ . Yudelman, *op. cit.*

¹³⁰ . Marty Chen, "The Working Women's Forum: Organizing for Credit and Change in Madras", India, in *SEEDS, op. cit.* pp. 51-72.

¹³¹ . See: F.H. ABED (founder of BRAC), in World Bank Discussion Paper 183, *op. cit.*

¹³² . Pierre Spitz, "International Fund for Agricultural Development: Experience with People's Participation" in World Bank Discussion Paper 183, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-45.

Uphoff's notion of the "social map" is useful when considering building participatory capacity¹³³. It is more important to know who is involved in participation and who is not, rather than how much participation is going on. Practitioners of Pdev point out that it promotes responsibility, and autonomy; it helps the community to mobilise its resources. There is a risk, however, of reinforcing inequalities if autonomy is without increased access to and control of resources for different sub-groups in the community.

How does the different gender division of labour in agriculture, health or other sectors, influence Pdev approaches? Does experience show a dichotomy between, directly productive and indirectly productive endeavours? As Uphoff points out¹³⁴ "Social research has arrived at a stage at which it is possible in fact, imperative to be more precise about "participation". While practitioners and researchers may disagree about what is to be considered "participation", it should be possible to assess the results of different approaches, assumptions and mechanisms.

One major problem is that many people write and talk about women's groups and NGOs, without acknowledging that women's groups *are* NGOs. Too often, women's organisations are not viewed as actors on the scene. It is almost as if women do not operate within the same political, social and economic context that men do¹³⁵.

Part of the social actors versus community debate is the notion of targeting which has a negative connotation in much of the Pdev literature because it is contrary to the spirit of Pdev which is driven from within. Targeting is considered too close to military strategy¹³⁶. However, the following example shows that targeting can be very positive and indicates that there has been communication between the "planners" and local men and women to identify their needs. In Nepal, the extension staff learned that women and men treat the issues related to the use of forest products differently. Their estimates of the particular mix of fuel, fodder, and timber-producing trees, and the amount of wood that should be cut over a single season to meet household needs might not be the same. They began to realise that if the plan did not provide for adequate fuel and fodder, the women would inevitably break the rules.

Targeting in this case, could also mean involving women directly as project staff, village workers and decision makers. On the other hand, the Nepal example can illustrate why Lecomte rejects the project paradigm, since in a later evaluation it was found that it used up the resources and detracted attention from the real problem, i.e. getting the women involved. It was found that, "orientation of forest department staff and creation of the monitoring and evaluation units, and so forth, have all been time-consuming and problematic...."¹³⁷

¹³³ . See: Norman Uphoff, "Monitoring and Evaluating Popular Participation in World Bank-Assisted Projects" in World Bank Discussion Paper 183, *op. cit.*.

¹³⁴ . Uphoff, in Cernea, *op. cit.*.

¹³⁵ . Sally Yudelman, Senior Fellow, ICRW, personal communication.

¹³⁶ . David Marsden at Informal Development Centre Seminar, Paris 1993.

¹³⁷ . A. Molnar, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

Ways around these difficulties were found in Nepal. In two instances, innovative women formed village forest committees. Sub-units, which were more homogeneous than the *panchayat* were allowed to take control of forest management. One women's committee formed on this sub-unit level, was organised by a bright assertive woman training to be a teacher. In her opinion, village forestry was very relevant to village needs and a female forest committee could be a way of getting needed social action under way.

Another such committee charged a minimal fee for permits to use existing sections of the forests, thus providing revenue for future planting efforts and other community improvements. These women's committees have since received encouragement from district staff. And they are highly regarded by the men who are happy to abide by their decisions regarding village forest resources. Involving women in the management decisions means that long-term community forestry can realistically be envisaged.

And finally, "Women's roles in the collection of forest products must be seen in the context of their household responsibilities.... Looking at both wage earnings and household subsistence production, women contributed 50 percent of total household income with boys and girls contributing 6 percent and adult males 44 percent¹³⁸."

Changing Perceptions of Actors

The account of BRAC's¹³⁹ (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) work shows that there can be a shift in thinking and approach. In early 1973 BRAC launched an integrated rural development programme very much like earlier top-down community development initiatives. This approach was based on the erroneous assumption that the village was a community, instead of understanding the innate conflicts between the rich and poor within the village. The basic assumption about rural poverty and development was completely reassessed after this initial experience.

BRAC's operating assumptions are now quite different, in that they believe that programmes designed for the whole community, "...deliver most of their benefits to the rich and tend to by-pass the very poor." The rural power structure must be challenged in programmes designed for the poor. Today, BRAC's major thrust is to organise the poor and powerless (both men and women) into co-operative groups who then take charge of their own activities. This is an example of "assisted self-reliance", it takes a lot of top-down to get bottoms-up initiatives. BRAC provides training, extension, credit and logistics assistance as needed.

BRAC's women's programme started as conventionally as their overall programme, laced with erroneous assumptions and myths that women played no active economic role and that dressmaking was women's work etc. However, their adult education work was better suited to the real problems of both men and women villagers. The functional education given revolved around village problems and a problem-solving dialogue.

They learned in the course of these functional education classes that the degree to which women's contributions are needed for the household to survive is indicative of the extent of poverty. BRAC therefore, decided to work only with women from the poorest households whose main problem is daily survival.

BRAC's underlying philosophy emphasises that women are part of the larger struggle to organise the poor, both men and women, rather than seeking women's economic development or social independence as the major goals. They believe that all economic and social action should be taken collectively.

The membership organisations thus formed, as elsewhere, start by saving which is a sign of their intention to work together. Each group can make its own financial and productive plans. BRAC field staff is on hand to help them assess their plans in terms of cost-effectiveness and feasibility.

¹³⁸ . Acharya and Bennet 1985, in IBID.

¹³⁹ . Marty Chen, "Developing Non-Craft Employment for Women in Bangladesh", in *SEEDS, op. cit.*

The production enhancement schemes indicate that it takes outsiders to get equal treatment for women. BRAC makes every effort to "...increase output and efficiency by providing the same package of extension services offered to men, namely credit, commodities, technology and training. Other improvements in production conditions are also being made so that women can gain control over their own labour, be able to demand higher wages, greater employment opportunities and access to land.

The impact on women, i.e., the synergistic effects of earning income, combined with the strength derived from belonging to a group, is very positive. Women have begun to negotiate new roles and opportunities for themselves. Their economic contributions have won them more affection and respect in their own families. They are also able to reduce their dependence on the rich and powerful in the village for advice, loans and work opportunities.

Democratic values of good governance are reflected in the fact that they now exercise their right to vote and to withhold votes in their own interests. A demand for public goods and services are now made on a collective basis and therefore, carries more weight. In a conflictual situation with the men in their village, they now feel able to confront the issues: "We are ninety members and we have strength." The *separate* men's and women's village groups meet on a regular basis with other primary groups within their own villages to increase solidarity before being federated beyond village and gender limits.

The Markala, Mali co-operative¹⁴⁰ is also a local membership organisation which has been helped by capital grants from several NGOs. Like the other experiences noted above, the initiative was prompted by an outsider. A local official of the Ministry of Agriculture who was residing in the town in 1975, suggested that local women join together to discuss their problems and possible solutions. They decided to form a co-operative.

The women's priority was economic: income-generation rather than activities such as literacy training or health education which they felt were irrelevant considering their financial needs. By the end of 1975, about one-tenth of the women who initially expressed interest in this endeavour, remained. "...twenty determined women began working in borrowed rooms in the back of a local school and the Markala Co-operative was in business". These poor women in rural Mali were seeking paid employment, they needed to earn a regular salary and to learn marketable skills. These goals had been achieved by 1981.

Women's financial independence is highly valued in Malian society and Malian women have always played an important role in providing for their families. However, there is a clear division of responsibilities for men and women. But unlike the men, women have not benefitted from the training programmes and employment opportunities opened up by an irrigation project in Markala.

¹⁴⁰. Susan Caugham and Mariam N'diaye Thiam, "The Markala, Mali Co-operative: A New Approach to Traditional Economic Roles", in *SEEDS, op. cit.*, passim.

This group was innovative, in the sense of having joint ownership of resources, collective work groups are common in Mali. Traditional activities were not offering viable business undertakings, so these women decided to learn new trades. However, the activities they chose (cloth dying and soap making) were acceptable occupations for women in this society. "The financial advantages of the group extend beyond the monthly salary. Co-operative members have formed a rotating savings club to which each contributes from her salary. Each month in turn, two members receive approximately \$50."

An example from Kenya¹⁴¹ shows a slightly different pattern from the others, but illustrates step one in Lecomte's stages mentioned above. "The women in Mraru got angry one year. The nearest market centre for this cluster of eight small villages in the Taita Hills of Kenya was the town of Voi, about 12 kilometres away. You can't carry heavy goods to market or a sick child to the clinic on foot over that distance. There are not many buses to Voi, and almost all are fully loaded by the time they reach Mraru. If there is any space, it goes to the men, not women. Men first: that is the tradition in the countryside of Kenya, and for women the tradition is to resign themselves to it. But in 1971, the Mraru women decided to do something else. They decided to buy their own bus."

In this "assisted self-reliance" initiative, a widespread popular tradition was used to raise the initial capital. In addition, a government social services worker in Mombasa helped by convincing the firm that sold them the bus, that the group was credit-worthy. The social worker made a personal contribution by guaranteeing a loan for the final 7 000 shillings needed for the down payment. And as a registered women's group, the Mraru group is eligible for continuing assistance from the government as to further investments. The more traditional pursuits of women are substantially underwritten by government funds. These available support services were accepted without creating dependency. The group decided what advice to accept or reject and thus maintained its autonomy.

Clarification of what is intended is linked to envisaging measures and policies which will create and develop an enabling environment for local initiatives. Focus on the many differences which exist at the local level, requires sensitive analytical tools which can penetrate, perceive and envisage the possibilities for development interventions. Enhancing the capabilities of local people, that is, helping them to help themselves, means knowing who they are in all of their converging dimensions (gender, age, economic circumstances, ethnicity etc.). The roles outsiders can play are also tied to insights about the implications of local diversity. They may become convenors, catalysts and facilitators, rather than initiators, who can act in a flexible manner to achieve the major objectives of participatory development: efficiency, equity, empowerment and sustainability¹⁴².

Proper differentiation of groups and interests and recognition of the lack of homogeneity in local settings, can empower the poorer people in a number of ways, such as, building collective awareness, having the confidence to confront others, and being able to reconcile their differences through negotiation¹⁴³. The identification, expression and resolution of conflicts of interest remains a frontier for participatory methods¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴¹. Jill Kneerim, "Village Women Organize: The Mraru, Kenya Bus Service" in IBID, pp. 15-30.

¹⁴². Norman Uphoff, in Cernea, p. 504.

¹⁴³. See: Robert Chambers, "Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory", Discussion Paper 311, IDS Sussex, October 1992. and Bernard Lecomte,

Another more positive attitude to target groups is expressed by Cernea¹⁴⁵. The repeated failure of many development programmes was a key factor in a change in their conception. It is argued that much of this failure was due to sociologically ill-informed and ill-conceived development policies. Therefore, in the mid-seventies there was a moving away from "trickle down" theories of poverty alleviation which changed the nature of development interventions. It was at this time that the concept of target group was brought to bear on project strategies. Similar positive attitudes to target groups can be found in the environmental education field in regard to communications which can penetrate the "target audience's" world view¹⁴⁶.

So far the illustrations provided in the debate over the social actor approach as compared to the community one, seem to lean toward the former rather than the latter. However, it is not an either/or choice. One experienced practitioner of Pdev suggests that while women very definitely have specific problems which they would like to see resolved (equipment to alleviate their workload, procedures to bring water closer to the home, etc.) they also have problems which they share with men, such as agriculture and livestock. Their knowledge in these domains is as well-grounded and lucid as the men's. They complain, however, that they are never included in the training offered to men. They have therefore, formally asked the government personnel to be included in their training programmes and to be trained *with* men, and not separately. In fact, women maintain that if they want to apply something new which was not included in their husbands' training, they will be forbidden to do so¹⁴⁷.

From the example above it is evident that a restrictive interpretation of gender, i.e. equating gender with women only, is not commensurate with the complexity of meanings it may have at the local level. Examination of a body of materials from both Pdev and WID fields is needed to indicate why the patterns of local formation are what they are and/or what should change in order to "mainstream" both women's issues and participatory development rhetoric into action.

One major assumption in part of the literature, is that people are altruistic. But, we cannot always assume that people want to help others. Furthermore, who delivers the message is often as important as the substance.

Project Aid: Limitations and Alternatives, OECD Development Centre, Paris, 1986.

¹⁴⁴. Robert Chambers, *op. cit.*, p.57.

¹⁴⁵. Michael Cernea, Editor, *Putting People First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development*, Second Edition, World Bank, 1991, Introduction.

¹⁴⁶. Winifred Weekes-Vagliani, *Lessons From the Planning Experience for Community-Based Environmental Education*, OECD Development Centre Technical Paper No. 62, Paris, April 1992.

¹⁴⁷. Maria-Theresa Cobelli, from an experience in Burundi, Personal Communication, 1992.

A "community sector" exists in all countries, "which the state has either never bothered about or is quickly leaving to its fate....(It) is dominated by unpaid women or low-paid women, hierarchically led by male political leaders and managers. This sector provides an enormous "market" for Co-operative Democratic Economy¹⁴⁸." Community-based approaches for the provision of services usually includes the notion of participation at the local level. The work of PROWWESS (Promotion of the Role of Women in Water and Environmental Sanitation Services)¹⁴⁹ has the same goals as the Water and Sanitation Programme, it aims to improve the services for the poor by "building on development partnerships at the local, national, regional and global levels". Low-cost technologies and community-based approaches will help to accelerate and improve services. Involving women in the provision and management of water and sanitation is part of Prowwess' mandate. But the implementation of this mandate, which includes tools and training methods developed by PROWWESS, and the underlying development philosophy go beyond the sector. It recommends that "special attention be given to gender issues, cross-cultural communication and methods for identifying resource flows in communities¹⁵⁰."

The experience of SEWA and the difficulties revealed in their work in rural areas, would also point to the social actor approach. They found that caste, feudal, and gender hierarchies were stronger in the villages than in most urban communities¹⁵¹.

Because wage demands of rural women has met with considerable resistance, SEWA has had to look for other channels around which to organise rural women initially. Some "non-threatening" focal points have been community health, rural savings groups and the implementation of government maternity programmes. SEWA had already set a precedent for organising women across community lines and they have tried to do the same in regard to caste. But here also the role of outsiders has been important in acquiring access to resources which help to build up women's self-confidence, reduce their vulnerability, and increase their visibility. When the social actor approach is taken measures can be envisaged to take a more holistic approach to meeting women's needs. This has been the SARTHI experience¹⁵². The latter also provides a good example of the lack of solidarity between men and women within the same village. A group of men in one village destroyed the work of the Muvasa women's group, by throwing a lighted cigarette on the grass the women had been nurturing for a year. However, because the women's group showed firmness and commanded the respect and sympathy of the rest of the village, the men had to pay a fine.

Group Capacity Building

¹⁴⁸. Katarina Apelqvist, "Gender Perspectives", in *Review of International Co-operation*, Vol. 85, No. 4, 1992.

¹⁴⁹. UNDP, Report of an Independent Team, "A Forward Looking Assessment of PROWWESS", October 1991.

¹⁵⁰. IBID, p. xiii.

¹⁵¹. Kalima Rose, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

¹⁵². Madhu Sarin, "Wasteland Development and the Empowerment of Women: the SARTHI Experience", *SEEDS*, No. 16, 1993.

But what about "getting ahead collectively"?¹⁵³ Little analytical work or systematic documentation exists in regard to the development of local institution building¹⁵⁴. Some GSOs (Grassroots Support Organisations) and MSOs (Membership Support Organisations) are more comfortable with building individual capacity rather than group empowerment¹⁵⁵. "But grassroots development means joint or group action conceptually and practically, and the essence of the IAF's (Inter-American Foundation) aims is also accomplished through groups of common or ordinary people¹⁵⁶." Another study of IAF funded organisations points out that, "the foundation holds that no one is positioned to perceive and address local needs better than local actors and that there are natural leaders and problem-solvers in every community¹⁵⁷."

The Foundation believes that building local capacity is basic to developing institutional structure without which project benefits cannot be transformed into sustainable, locally driven organisational endeavours. Therefore, the Foundation concentrates on the process of developing local organisational capacity rather than conventional approaches to development. "It willingly subsidises institutional learning and believes that the learning which results from muddling through day-to-day problems of program management is the essence of organisational maturation and will serve long after IAF funding ceases¹⁵⁸."

Most examples given above, contradict the underlying assumptions of those who focus on the community as an entity, especially in regard to homogeneity and the role of outsiders. Furthermore, the aspirations and needs of most women for remunerated employment are not reflected in the "community" approach. Rather than serve as "volunteer" participants in community endeavours planned by others, women's groups seem to prefer being empowered economically and politically so that *they* can design and plan activities which are beneficial to the whole community.

¹⁵³ . A. Hirschman, 1984 in T.F. Carroll, p. 95.

¹⁵⁴ . Carroll, IBID.

¹⁵⁵ . IBID, p. 95.

¹⁵⁶ . IBID p. 159.

¹⁵⁷ . Jeffrey M. Avina *et al.*, "Evaluating the Impact of Grassroots Development Funding": An Experimental Methodology Applied to Eight IAF Projects, Mimeo, 1990, p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ . IBID.

Women's Organisations and Pdev - Issues

Many women's organisations have changed and enhanced the perception of women's roles. The contributions of women to family incomes are well documented, i.e. they are producers of goods, not just consumers of services. Nevertheless, two issues in regard to women's organisations have emerged: the leadership of these organisations is sometimes autocratic rather than participatory; and the poorest women may be excluded. The leadership of some of the women's organisations studied by Yudelman was not participatory.

Lecomte suggests that groups "learn from failures" and that what may be operating is Albert Hirschman's Principle of the Conservation and Mutation of Social Energy¹⁵⁹. Yudelman suggests that COMO exemplifies the latter principle, at the time of her study. Many of the graduates of COMO courses and the staff became leaders in their own communities. "The social energies aroused in the building of this unique working women's movement ...did not disappear with the crisis and subsequent diaspora. The commitment of the core group of 'Obreras' (factory workers), both to Como's objectives and to each other, was simply too strong¹⁶⁰." It is hypothesised that "...the energies remained, as it were, in storage for a while, but were available to fuel later, and perhaps very different, movements".

Carroll's formulation of the concept of social energy is not gender specific and would apply to many local organisations:

"...once set in motion, the learning process about collective experience transcends particular local organisations, which are generally not fixed or stable anyway, and can energise a whole network of fluid and overlapping informal groups of people, from which specific forms of aggregation appear, disappear and reappear¹⁶¹."

Reports of women's organisations in Asia indicate participatory patterns of leadership. Surveys of members of women's organisations in India, show that access to institutional credit provided by SEWA, for example, has increased the awareness, confidence and assertiveness of these women. However, it is not clear whether these attitudinal changes are the result of the conditions of access provided for SEWA members or whether they are the consequence of the loans themselves. However, Everett and Savara¹⁶² maintain that, "the real issue is not women's organisations making the loan programme work but, instead, the loan programme facilitating organisational development among women petty commodity producers." Furthermore, the organisation-building mechanism, devoted to providing loans to poor women, provides a potential base for the political mobilisation of these women to address issues of economic, political and gender equality.

¹⁵⁹ . Albert O. Hirschman, *Getting Ahead Collectively: Grass Roots in Latin America*, Pergamon Press, Elmsford, New York, 1984. pp.55-56 in S. Yudelman, *op. cit.*.

¹⁶⁰ . IBID, p. 28

¹⁶¹ . Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

¹⁶² . Jane Everett and Mira Savara, "Institutional Credit as a Strategy Towards Self-Reliance For Petty Commodity Producers in India: A Critical Evaluation", in Afshar, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-255.

Women in India have for the most part been excluded from employment in the formal sector and from the union structure, they have therefore created their own organisations. SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) and WWF (Working Women's Forum) are good examples of the most successful. SEWA has argued that the rights of self-employed workers, "should be akin to trade-union rights based on collective organisation¹⁶³." SEWA's insistence on the term "self-employed" rather than informal workers, was done to give a positive status to people too often portrayed with negative images. And both traditional and modern occupations are included in SEWA's definition of self-employed, which ranges from the informal bartering of goods to capitalistic piece-rate work.

SEWA provides a meeting place for women to discuss not only their work problems but other issues they face as a group. Discussion of social issues is possible as well as training in legal procedures, or running a creche, or literacy in English etc.. This "space" is available to SEWA members in periods of crisis and from their experience it is a place where they can work at solving their own problems. Furthermore, because they represent substantial numbers of organised women, they have a voice and the power to change things in their favour. From a survey of SEWA members it is clear that the poorest are not excluded: 97 per cent are slum dwellers, 93 per cent illiterate and on an average each woman had four living children.

Strong female role models are also set by SEWA's all female membership. The criticism of autocratic leadership was not made in the case of SEWA, it seems to be a rare example of collaboration between women of different educational, class, religious and occupational backgrounds.

Members of women's organisations who have benefitted from credit and investment opportunities provided by the co-operative structure have given women a voice in the community. The community projects undertaken by the women in FUNDE (Nicaragua) help them in the domestic sphere of their lives: day care, health, and potable water for the school. The market women's strong economic base insures that their priority needs will be met. "It is questionable whether men's co-operatives would have done the same things¹⁶⁴."

Women's Organisations and Other Issues

Some issues pertaining to women's organisations have implications for changes in donor agencies. Creating an enabling environment for participatory development will involve accurate perceptions of the key issues at stake. According to Ellen Murphy¹⁶⁵ all social policy is local. Therefore, new approaches in donor agencies will need to be linked to interactions at the local level. While donors seem to ask when will NGOs scale-up, GSOs may ask when will donors scale-down. Negotiating this means a change in ideologies on both sides. What is needed are joint ventures in social problem solving.

¹⁶³. Sallie Westwood, "Gender and the Politics of Production in India", in Afshar, *op. cit.*, pp. 297-298.

¹⁶⁴. See: Judith Bruce, "Market Women's Co-operatives: Giving Women Credit in Nicaragua, pp. 123-138 in *SEEDS, op. cit.*

¹⁶⁵. IAF, personal communication, February 1993.

Carroll posed a similar question in presenting three sets of evaluation criteria in his study of intermediary NGOs¹⁶⁶. In assessing the wider impact of intermediary NGOs, he asked, how can the recognised microeffect of these organisations be expanded or "scaled up", and even linked to the macrolevel? But the idea that intermediary NGOs should have a broader impact is relatively recent. It is apparent that women's organisations have long posed this question. The strength of WAND (Women's network in the Caribbean) resided in its skills of mobilisation and conscientisation of women and the promotion of awareness, communications, linkages and networks at all levels of society in order to better women's status and economic condition¹⁶⁷.

The vertical linkages which women's organisations have developed have not damaged but enhanced their ability to bring about changes in the microenvironment based on policies they have fought for in the macroarena. As Carroll so eloquently puts it:

"The lesson is not that small is beautiful but that through the microreality, one can tackle macroissues and conversely, that the correctness, costs, and benefits of policy reform show up best in the microsetting¹⁶⁸."

¹⁶⁶. Carroll, *op. cit.*, p. 27 and p. 32.

¹⁶⁷. Sally Yudelman, "Looking Backward, Looking Forward: Reflections on a Visit to WAND, Barbados, Spring 1989, Report prepared for the Inter-American Foundation, June 1989.

¹⁶⁸. Carroll, *op. cit.* p. 157.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Conclusions: Summary of Major Points and Suggestions for Future Research

The purpose of the examples and illustrations presented of Pdev concepts is to heighten the visibility of the gender variable in this field. It was necessary to spell out the implications for local communities and various donors so that funding envisaged for action research take into account the phenomena described.

Mechanisms to achieve the objectives of Pdev, include institutional reforms, a change in the language and refining the concepts of Pdev. Perceptions of local reality must be based on penetrating social analysis which includes the experience and aspirations of local men and women. Several reasons were given for making gender an explicit concern of work on Pdev. They include the following:

- Women represent more than half of most populations, therefore, participatory development and good governance practices mean they must be explicitly included;
- Gender sensitivity in Pdev endeavours has implications for the way we address poverty alleviation measures;
- The concepts and practices of the Pdev and WID movements, much like the WID and environment movements, should cross-fertilize each other, rather than working parallel or in isolation;
- The redefinition of development objectives sought in both movements should set in motion positive synergies. Gender solidarity which is sorely lacking at the local level is basic to achieving Pdev goals;
- For Pdev initiatives to work the incentive structure will have to take into account the stark contrasts in the contributions and benefits of women and men, and therefore their separate incentives to respond to policies. In some developing areas, especially Africa, the household is not a corporately producing and consuming unit. But even where there is close integration of women's and men's contributions to livelihoods, such as in many parts of Asia, it would be a mistake to see women and men within the household or community as a homogeneous human resource, perfectly substitutable and experiencing the same economic opportunity costs and gains in economic change;
- Gender differentiated knowledge is necessary to deal with the opposition or resistance to Pdev initiatives, so that planning of initiatives will include training, for example. This knowledge will stress women's economic roles;
- Exclusion of women or rendering them invisible, means that these initiatives are less participatory in the wider sense and indicate a general lack of socially informed design and implementation strategies;

- A lack of gender analysis is wasteful of scarce resources. This is especially true of the "community sector" which will need special attention to guard against marginalising women in unremunerated or low-paid work;
- Group formation is a pre-condition for women to get access to resources which are not accessible to individuals. In other words, groups are badly needed as receiving mechanisms for credit and technology. In addition, groups can also have political leverage;
- Language, thought processes and underlying assumptions have implications for reaching poor men and women. Therefore, identification and analysis of these factors is necessary.

Developing an agenda for change must be based on socio-cultural analysis. A detailed grasp is needed of the resource management patterns on which behavioural change depends.

The funding issues should be addressed by donors. In view of the importance of socio-cultural variables for the success of local initiatives, flexible funding arrangements are needed. Donors can play a crucial role by showing their willingness to address socio-cultural issues in the initial negotiations with governments. At the project identification stage, possible conflict between local cultural values and the change to be brought about by the programmes envisaged can be pointed out.

The discussion and debate around social actors versus communities as homogeneous units indicates that a focus on social actors provides the needed fine tuning. However, a gender perspective does not exclude a flexible project paradigm with the notion of target groups. It is interesting that practitioners who are anti-project, frequently do not indicate whether they are sufficiently aware of diversity at the local level. In much of the Pdev literature, the idea of the spontaneous evolution of community organisations blunts the analysis of social reality; local gender and class hierarchies do not emerge clearly.

For experimentation and flexibility to work, with participation at the initial phases of projects, there must be a supportive network of committed personnel in key positions at various levels to provide continuity and institutional memory. This "corps" of practitioners can reduce the danger of reinforcing existing inequalities through "autonomous" Pdev. In this sense, targeting can reflect the need to differentiate local social actors, and deal with conflicting interests. It can mean identification of and mechanisms to reach the most needy with appropriate messages, interaction, involvement and dialogue. Targeting can mean grasping the many differences at the local level and perceiving possibilities for self-help development initiatives. This means finding out who the people are in all their converging dimensions. Outsiders can become convenors, catalysts and facilitators, rather than initiators.

While many acknowledge the genderblindness of the Pdev field, and the need to integrate gender throughout, the evidence reviewed in this paper indicates that much more work is needed. Empirical evidence should be collected which demonstrates how gender and generational conflicts have been resolved at the local level. One dimension of sustainability implies having lasting effects on future generations. Special attention must be given to women's economic roles, so that generational effects for younger women can be identified. For example, does mothers' improved economic status indeed ensure that girls will remain in school, in a variety of settings? The two examples (SARTHI in India and Bolivia) of economic factors overriding cultural patterns and the traditional social organisation of work are encouraging. Are there more? What have been the implications of other initiatives for the objectives of Pdev, namely: effectiveness, empowerment and sustainability? A typology of endeavours could be developed which would indicate the kinds of initiatives undertaken: directly or indirectly productive? Community sector endeavours, carried out by whom?

Group formation has been shown to be essential, both for men and women, but what has been the nature of these groups, separate or mixed and for what kind of local initiative? Is it possible to "scale-up" solidarity between men and women? In other words, can we make it happen more often in a variety of "social map" situations? There is some evidence that participatory rural appraisal and other similar methods are not likely to be effective without solidarity between men and women. What can be done by local people and "outsiders" to enhance solidarity rather than conflict at the local level? The identification, expression and resolution of conflicts of interest remains a frontier for participatory methods. A major problem in tackling this research is the lack of information in the WID accounts of gender relations at the household and village or community levels. There is evidence that changing gender relations at the local level can exacerbate conflict between men and women. "Raising consciousness" can also increase conflicts. This possibility cannot be dismissed. What has worked best, confrontation or negotiation, at the household, village or community levels? This is related to a major concern in the women's movement about domestic violence stemming from conflict over women's use of their time on women's groups initiatives rather than on the husbands' land, for example. Have male attitudes to women's autonomous participation in the activities they identify and decide on changed with their own adoption of the Pdev ethos?

ANNEX

FUNDE

The Nicaraguan Foundation for Development (Fundación Nicaraguense de Desarrollo or FUNDE) is one of the two programmes sponsored by the Nicaraguan Institute of Development.

The Holdeen India Fund

The Fund was established in 1984, through bequests from Jonathan Holdeen, a lawyer and businessman from New York. Holdeen's bequests to the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) of Congregations was made to fund: maternity, child welfare, education and migration expenses of natives of India and their descendants. The Fund is incorporated in the United States as a non-sectarian, religious philanthropic trust and maintains a small office in Washington, DC.

Inter-American Foundation

The Inter-American Foundation (IAF) is an independent agency of the U.S. Government created in 1969 as an experimental alternative to established U.S. foreign assistance programmes benefiting Latin America and the Caribbean. The IAF works to promote equitable, responsive, and participatory approaches to self-help development through awarding grants directly to local organisations throughout the region.

PROWESS

PROWESS (Promotion of the Role of Women in Water and Environmental Sanitation Services) is an interregional project of the United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP). Its overall objective has been to support and expand affirmative measures to include women more actively in all activities related to the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade.