

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

**The Rhetoric and Reality of Gender Issues in the Domestic Water Sector –  
A Case Study from India**

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**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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I was walking one cold, rainy day in one of the research villages, Chuni feeling exhausted and worn-out. It had been a long and tiring day, my skin was covered with a painful allergy, probably from a wild plant. I missed home and my family enormously and I questioned the purpose of the sacrifice of all involved in this study. The people in Chuni whose resources and lives, I was investing upon and yet there appeared little hope that this study would benefit them. My family and me stood torn apart, in distance and emotion in what suddenly appeared as a big wide world. And then I saw on a small rock, a tiny purple flower, standing alone amongst a foliage of big, strong plants. The wind blew ferociously and it appeared that this force and the swinging of other plants would blow away or push down this tiny flower, which stood poignantly beautiful at the end of a tender, thin stem. I stood for a long time to watch. The flower swung back and forth, but stood firm. In fact, it seemed to defy all the strength and force around it by bending with it but coming back firm each time. It seemed to tell me, 'this too shall pass'.

I dedicate this work, to all I met who are made to feel less equal than others, and to Radha and Nimai.

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**ABSTRACT**

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Great claims of gender success are made in the theory and practice of drinking and/or domestic water projects. The domestic water sector claims that women's increased involvement in water projects contributes to project efficiency and, in the process, women are empowered. This is interpreted as gender success. On the other hand, serious concern is expressed by development practitioners about the practical and deliberate misinterpretation of gender in development policy and practice. It is claimed that the political content and institutional construct of gender inequality is ignored, misinterpreted and depoliticised in the process of incorporating goals of empowerment and equity into development approaches, which predominantly promote economic efficiency. The objective of this research is to identify discrepancies between policy statements, institutional capacities and field experiences in the consideration of gender issues in the management of water projects, on the basis of these contradictions.

This study argues that there is little clarity in domestic water policy and planning on the institutional construct of gender inequality in the domestic water sector. What the water sector interprets as gender and as gender success are discredited when these interpretations are examined according to the theory of gender and evidence of gender inequality observed in the field.

This study analysed official and non-governmental domestic water sector interventions in three states in India, over a period of four years. Using the Social Relations Approach as an analytical tool and using participatory tools of data collection, the emphasis of this study was to qualitatively analyse social relations, and the impact of social relations on people's access to resources across the institutions of households, community, organisations and policy, in relation to domestic water sector interventions.

The findings reveal that there is explicit but incoherent and rhetorical mention of gender in water policies. Gender is misinterpreted as women and gender equity, at best and in rhetoric, is only taken into account in the consideration of women and men's specific water needs. Field analyses reveal that implementation of such policies continue to:

- Restrict women in their domestic roles as water producers
- Homogenise women as a unitary social category
- Separate and isolate women from the context of social relations and
- Ignore the other social variables that influence gender inequity in access to and control of water.

There is little information on gender issues at other institutional levels of the domestic water sector, as water policy and planning ignores the institutional construct of gender inequality in the distribution of resources, responsibilities and power. There is a blue-print approach of addressing gender in water policy and practice, which does not enable analysis of gender inequality structured across different institution levels, more so because policy aims and practice interventions do not relate to the variations of unequal social relations in different social contexts. The so-called gender interventions structured incoherently in policy and compartmentalized at the community level have merely resulted in a tinkering with a history of institutional gender inequity in water management.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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CDS	Centre for Development Studies
CES	Consulting Engineering Services
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
DfID	Department for International Development, UK
DGIS	Directorate General of International Cooperation, The Netherlands
DPMU	District Project Management Unit
DRA	Demand Responsive Approach
DRD	Department of Rural Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAD	Gender and Development
GDI	Gender Disparity Index
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GoI	Government of India
GWA	Gender and Water Alliance
GWP	Global Water Partnership
HDI	Human Development Index
HESA	Hygiene and Environmental Sanitation Awareness
HRD	Human Resource Development
HSC	Himalayan Study Centre
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDA	International Development Assistance
INR	Indian Rupees
INSTRAW	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, United Nations
IRP	Iron Removal Plant
lcpd	Litres Per Capita Per Day
NDWM	National Drinking Water Mission
NFE	Non Formal Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PMU	Programme Management Unit
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institution
RDD	Rural Development Department
RGNDWM	Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission
RNE	Royal Netherlands Embassy
Rs.	Rupees
RWSSG	Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Group
RWSSG-SA	Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Group-South Asia
RWSSO	Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation
SAs	Service Agencies

SCs	Scheduled Castes
STs	Scheduled Tribes
SEMs	Self Employed Mechanics
SL Approach	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
SOs	Support Organisations
SRA	Social Relations Approach
TCS	Tata Consultancy Services
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNCED	United Nations Convention on Environment and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UP	Uttar Pradesh
UPJN	Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam, Jal Nigam
UPAA	Uttar Pradesh Academy of Administration
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VEAP	Village Environmental Action Plan
VWSC	Village Water and Sanitation Committee
WID	Women in Development
WDI	Women Development Initiatives
WED	Women Environment and Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WTP	Willingness To Pay

## GLOSSARY

Agenda 21	Outcome of Rio Earth Summit, 1992
Bada/Baday	Higher (of people/a class term)
Bandobast	Zamindari Abolishment Act, 1968 (see Zamindars)
Block	Administrative unit of approximately 50 villages
Brahmans	First of higher caste groups
Chipko	Womens ecological movement in Central Himalayas
Chota	Lower (of people, a class-term)
Chuan	Unprotected dug well
Dalits	The oppressed / SC's own preferred term for themselves
The Decade	International Water Supply and Sanitation Decade 1981-1990
Dhara	Wooden structure over a 'flowing spring'
Districts	Administrative unit in the state government
Dublin Principles	From Dublin International Conference on Water and Environment 1992
Gad	Seasonal waterfall/ storm water drain
Gadhera	See Gad
Ghada / Ghara	Heavy copper urn, can as well be an earthen pot
Ghat	Water-powered mill
Gram Panchayat	Elected village committee
Guls	Irrigation channels
Harijans	The people of God/Gandhi's term for SCs
Jala Devi	Water Goddess
Kshatriyas	Traditional warriors, second in the social hierarchy of caste groups
Malli	Upper (in place names)
Mandal	See Block
Naula	Harvested water spring
New Delhi Statement	From New Delhi Meeting 1990
9 Million Rs. Project/Scheme	An officially planned and implemented water scheme with a budget of 9 Million rupees
Panchaki	See Ghat
Panchayat	Local self-government
Panyar	Water place
Purdah	Veil
States	29 administrative provinces in India
Sudras	Lower caste groups/untouchables (see also SCs)
SWAJAL Project	'Your own water', symbolises pure water, A project to supply safe drinking water in the state of UP funded by the World Bank
Talli	Lower (in place-names)

Tarmac bias	Consulting only those people whose homes are easily accessible by road
Terai	Plains, foothills of Himalayas
Tharus	Tribal inhabitants along the Indo-Nepal Border
The Mission	Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission
Toks	Hamlets or sub-villages
Uttarakhand	Formerly hills region of Uttar Pradesh now formed into a separate state of Uttarakhand
Vaishyas	Third in the ritual hierarchy of the caste system
Vedic Laws	Hindu religious laws
The Vision	World Water Vision, from The Second World Water, 2000
Zamindars	Local nobles, landowners and landowners

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Research

The current policy context of the water sector emphasises the need for '*empowering* women and men in poor and disadvantaged communities to decide on the level of access to safe water they desire, and enabling them to organise to obtain it' (World Water Council, 2000). At the Second World Water Forum held at The Hague in March 2000, this policy goal was widely endorsed by water sector decision-makers and practitioners across international and national, official and non-governmental water sector agencies.

Comparing the different water sectors, it is claimed that domestic or drinking water supply interventions have a better record than other sectors of promoting women's increased participation at local levels in water projects (Athukorala, 1996; World Water Council 2000). An extensive analysis of policy and practice reveals that the domestic water sector promotes the following forms of women's involvement in water projects at the community level:

- Women's roles in skilled work in project implementation and management;
- Women's awareness of the health and hygiene aspects of water management;
- Women's participation in productive income generation activities made possible through time saved by improved water supply and delivery systems; and
- Women's representation in community decision-making forums.

Cleaver (1997) identified that it is believed that such involvement of women contributes to the potential effectiveness of projects or what is commonly termed as project efficiency, as well as benefiting women, as they learn new skills and gain access to decision-making. These benefits acquired by women are said to contribute to their empowerment, and therefore such forms of women's involvement are claimed as the gender successes of domestic water policy and practice. 'Domestic water projects have a much better success of integrating gender analysis into water sector policies and practices' (Athukorala, 1996). It is claimed that 'planners, managers and decision-makers

within the domestic water sector are already aware of the why aspects of gender, and the main reason that these issues are not sufficiently addressed is because sector professionals lack the tools to practice gender principles' (Associated Programme of the GWP, 2000).

Contrary to these claims of gender success in domestic water projects, there is serious concern expressed by development practitioners about the misinterpretation of gender in development policy and practice (Chant, 2000; Cornwall and White, 2000; Pearson, 2000). Razavi and Miller (1995b) pointed out that although the gender discourse has filtered through to policy-making institutions, in the process development actors have re-interpreted the concept of gender to suit their institutional needs. Baden and Goetz (1998) explain that bureaucratic requirements for information in development policy and practice strip away the complexity and content of gender inequality. In contradiction to the claims that gender issues are understood by policy-makers and practitioners, Wakeman (1995) identifies the urgent need to demystify the term gender at all levels of policy and planning in the water sector.

## **1.2 The Purpose of the Research**

This study aims to research, analyse and demystify the contradiction between the claims of gender success of domestic water projects and the concerns about the misinterpretation of gender in development policy and programming. In other words, it explores the rhetoric and reality of gender issues in domestic water projects. Using the Social Relations Approach as an analytical framework, this thesis explores, discusses and verifies the claims of gender success in the domestic water sector on the basis of the concerns raised in relation to the misinterpretation of gender in development policy and planning. Issues raised in considering these possible contradictions, which form the subject of analytical discussions in the thesis, are broadly summarised here.

### **1.2.1 Gender and Gender Inequality**

Gender is defined as the socially given or learnt attributes of personality, behaviour, roles and responsibilities connected to being a male or female in any given society (Okaley, 1972; March et al., 1999). It has been widely researched and analysed that in most societies, gender relations are skewed in favour of men and therefore there is gender inequality in the allocation of roles, responsibilities and resources. It is therefore identified that addressing gender inequality would involve addressing the context of social relations, which structure and perpetuate inequalities in socially allocated roles, responsibilities and resources between women and men.

As seen above, in water development policy and programming, gender is interpreted as women, and empowerment is measured as women's increased involvement in water projects. The focus of water development interventions is on women and not on social relations. Baden and Goetz (1998) identify that this practice of singling out women from the context of social relations and identifying women as the central problem is commonly observed across development programming. It is believed that women's increased involvement in water projects leads to their empowerment as well as addressing the goal of improving project efficiency. In the language of water policy, both policy goals are identified to be mutually reciprocal. In contradiction, the Social Relations Approach identifies that goals of economic growth are structured at policy-making levels and the contexts of economic growth and empowerment are standardised and measured by tools which do not recognise the complexity and diversity of poverty and social disparity (Chambers, 1997). It is therefore argued that such goals are not mutually complementary but that there is a discrepancy in the policy aim of simultaneously improving economic growth and promoting equity and empowerment.

It has been observed in the more recent past, that attempts to simplify the meaning of the term gender have resulted in the further misinterpretation of gender as 'women and men'. Some development agencies now determine that addressing gender issues means working with men as well as women and addressing the needs of men as well as those of women.

The emphasis is again on the focus of sex identities rather than on the social relations, which structure and perpetuate inequalities between women and men.

### **1.2.2 Empowerment and Equity**

The Social Relations Approach identifies that gender inequality is deeply furrowed by other forms of social inequality such as, caste, class, race, age, religion and so on, and therefore gendered subordination is never present in a pure form (Beneria and Sen, 1982; Mohanty, 1991; Agarwal, 1989; Kabeer, 1994). Complex, diverse and cross-cutting social factors determine and reproduce social relations of inequality, which in turn determine an unequal access to and control of resources, and an unequal allocation of roles and responsibilities.

Empowerment requires that development strategies should be seen and planned from the perspective of the oppressed and disadvantaged and equity demands that development strategies need to be implemented and operationalised from the perspective of the oppressed and disadvantaged (Sen and Grown, 1987; Antrobus, 1987; Harding, 1991; Shetty, 1991; Chambers, 1997).

Water policy statements reveal an abundant use of the terms - poverty, gender, equity and empowerment, however, researchers argue that there is an acute absence of robust empirical data and adequate analytical discourse about the links between poverty, gender and water, which inform the use of these terms (Mehra and Esim, 1997; Mehta, 2000). It is professed that domestic water programming has contributed equally to project efficiency and to women's empowerment. However, there is little substantial information, which reveals that these measures of success reflect the perceptions of the more disadvantaged and oppressed. The abstract generic mention of the terms 'community', 'women', 'poor' in water policies and implementation strategies appears to ignore the complexity and diversity of social relations of inequality in the community, the household and between and amongst women and men.

### **1.2.3 The Institutional Construct of Gender Inequality**

The Social Relations Approach identifies that gender inequalities are not isolated in a vacuum at the household, rather gender inequality in allocation of roles, responsibilities and resources is reproduced and reinforced across the inter-related institutional levels of development policy and practice. Therefore there is a mutually reinforcing institutional construct of gender inequality. North (1990) defines institutions as ‘frameworks for socially constructed roles and norms, which makes certain forms of behaviour predictable and routine, thereby institutionalising them’. Organisations are defined as the formal shapes that certain institutions take (*ibid*).

As outlined above, in water policy and programming, gender issues are isolated in women’s involvement at the local community level. There is little information in domestic water policy and planning on gender issues at institutional levels beyond the household and extended families. This reflects the common presumption made across development sectors that gender issues are isolated in the private domain of households and that public domains beyond the household are inherently gender neutral (Acker, 1990). It is therefore presumed that gender objectives in policy will be simplistically translated to practice through the transparent medium of organisations across different institutional levels.

In contradiction, the Social Relations Approach argues that organisations are inherently gendered as they are products of the same social order in which they operate, and therefore they reinvent and reproduce policies and institutional strategies to suit their specific needs, concerns and interests.

### **1.2.4 Gender Inequality as an Institutional Value**

The Social Relations Approach identifies that because of the institutional construct of gender inequality, ideologies and value-systems promoted by different organisations have an implicit gender bias against women and more broadly against the oppressed and

disadvantaged. It is identified that individuals who staff organisations carry with them their gendered privileges, attitudes and perceptions and reproduce and reinforce these socially determined constructs of inequality in organisational rules, norms and structures. Development policy and planning does not recognise the institutional construct of gender inequality and therefore also assumes the ideologies and outcomes of organisations to be inherently gender-neutral. Because organisations follow written norms and rules, it is assumed that there is no construct of culture operating in these formal structures.

### **1.3 The Research Argument and Focus**

On the basis of these contradictions this study argues that there is an institutional construct of gender inequality in the domestic water sector. Policies and practices of the domestic water sector do not address these inequalities, as there are discrepancies in the consideration of gender and therefore of gendered inequalities in policy statements, organizational capacities and field interventions. What the water sector interprets as gender and as gender success is proven to be wrong when one analyses these interpretations according to the theory of gender and evidences of gender inequality observed in the field.

This research explores and discusses the above argument by analysing gender issues in the policy and practice of domestic water sector interventions. The Social Relations Approach, used here as an analytical tool, enables gender analysis across the institutional levels of policy and practice and across formal and informal institutions. By using participatory tools of information collection, the study projects the viewpoint of the oppressed and disadvantaged, from *below* in order to ensure that this analytical discourse is based on a robust analysis of the links between poverty, gender inequity and water. The research focus builds on and inter-links the following discussions:

- Analysis of the theory of gender and its interpretation and application in the policy and planning of domestic water sector interventions.

- Analysis of the social order of water management in some researched villages in order to identify how socially attributed positions, and socially allocated roles and responsibilities along gender, caste and class divides, impact on the allocation, management and use of water resources and water delivery systems.
- Analysis of the evolving context of the social order of water management across three chronological generations of water development interventions - traditional, official and non-governmental.
- Analysis of how gender issues infiltrate, are interpreted, applied and practised across various organisations at the institutional levels of planning, decision-making and project implementation in official and non-governmental projects.

#### 1.4 Thesis Structure

Chapter 2 analyses the theory of gender in order to clarify the meaning and political content of the term. The findings show that gender is widely mentioned in development policy and planning but holds different meanings for different actors, all of whom have different expectations from the goals of addressing gender issues. The analysis also shows misinterpretation and an evaporation of the complexity and content of the term gender in the process of translation from theory to development policy and planning. The misinterpretation of gender has in some ways been deliberate, in order to rhetorically match policy goals of empowerment and equity, with conflicting but predominant water development goals of improved economic growth and efficiency.

Chapter 3 analyses the interpretation and application of gender in the theory of domestic and/or drinking water policies and planning. The analysis shows that in a background of ambiguity in the consideration of gender and gender inequality, water policy makers and planners take on huge responsibilities for addressing gender inequality through the medium of water projects. The language and content of water policies is incoherent as compatibility is assumed between conflicting goals of empowerment and economic efficiency. Gender is misinterpreted as women, women are identified as a homogeneous category and their roles in relation to water use and management as inherently innate to

their social identities. Consequently, empowerment strategies call for increasing women's involvement in water projects at the community levels and not for challenging the structural gender inequity in roles, responsibilities and resources related to water use and management across the institutional levels of policy and practice.

Chapter 4 spells out the Social Relations Approach and how it is used as the conceptual framework of the thesis. Chapter 4 also details the geographical scope of the research and spells out the broad methodologies of field research techniques used in the study.

Chapter 5 presents an overview of the social geography, as researched in five rural mountain villages in the central Himalayan state of Uttarakhand in India. Research findings show that the village community is a stratified social structure, divided primarily along lines of caste, class and gender. Inequalities in social relations are complex and deep-rooted, impacted by multiple inter-related factors and perpetuated and reproduced in a range of institutions. Findings also show that inequality in social relations results in a corresponding inequality in local people's access to and control of basic resources, as well as inequalities in socially allocated roles and responsibilities.

Chapter 6 examines the impact of unequal social relations in relation to access to and control of water resources and allocation of gendered roles and responsibilities in relation to water use and management. The findings show that the cross-cutting factors of gender, caste and class determine an unequal and inequitable water order amongst different social groups in the community and between women and men. Findings here, as in chapter 5 show that inequality in water roles, responsibilities and resources are rooted in local belief and therefore legitimised as local culture. An inequitable water order persists, as inequality in social relations is mirrored across the local institutional levels of water management.

Chapter 7 analyses official water policies and practices in the rural domestic water sector in India and the research shows that gender inequalities are reproduced and reinforced across the institutional levels of policy and practice. Findings in this chapter also reveal

how a culture of organisational bureaucracy results in an institutional divide and disables the flow of information, between policy and practice levels. Consequently, approaches to water management structured at centralised decision-making levels do not reflect field realities but reflect a rhetorical imposition and/or adoption of global water sector policies. The findings in this chapter show the distinctions between water projects and the overall institutional context of water programming. It is thus evident that the way forward to addressing gender issues is as assumed, neither simple nor completely wholly achievable through the medium of isolated water projects.

Chapter 8 analyses the popular claim that water management approaches based on decentralisation or community management, and on demand management or appropriating pricing and privatisation, deliver more efficient and equitable access to and control of water delivery systems than past official interventions of water management and delivery. Analysis of the World Bank supported SWAJAL water project however, reveals there is little difference in the functioning of organisations promoting different approaches to water management. The findings indicate that blanket prescriptions of demand-management and decentralisation structured at the decision-making hierarchy of the water sector, do not adequately identify and therefore reflect the social inequality rooted in all institutional levels of policy and practice. Findings show the conflict and incoherence between the policy goals of efficiency and empowerment. The project blueprint approach to empowerment structured incoherently in domestic water policies and reduced to and isolated in women's involvement at the community level:

- does not enable and/or permit an analysis of institutionally structured gender inequality and
- therefore does not translate to enabling better sustainability and wiser management of water delivery systems and empowerment of women.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis argument by drawing together the various strands of analysis in showing that there is an institutional construct of gender inequality in the domestic water sector. The claims made of gender success do not reflect the complexity

and diversity of gender inequality. This indicates the rhetoric made of gender and gender issues in the domestic water sector.

## CHAPTER 2:GENDER THEORIES IN DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1 Introduction

At the 1993 Rabat meeting of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, it was identified that there was an urgent need to ‘de-mystify the term gender at all levels’ of development policy and planning (Wakeman, 1995).

As discussed in chapter 1, gender advocates argue that there is a shallow and narrow interpretation of ‘gender’ in development theory and practice, which reduces and therefore depoliticises the complexity of the term (Razavi and Miller, 1995b; Baden and Goetz, 1998; Chant, 2000; Cornwall and White, 2000; Pearson, 2000).

A hypothesis can be drawn, on the basis of these arguments, that gender issues appear obscure and therefore mysterious because of misinterpretation of the content of the term gender in the translation from theory to development policy and planning. This hypothesis is analysed in this chapter by discussing:

- the theory of the term gender and its interpretation in relation to development and
- the interpretation and application of gender in development policy and planning.

Analytical discussions in this chapter indeed reveal that the content of the term gender evaporates and is misinterpreted in the translation from theory to development policy and practice.

### 2.2 What is Gender?

Discussions on gender have a long history of debate and discourse within the context of development, which Jackson and Pearson (1998) define as ‘development of social and human capital’. Oakley (1972) initiated the discussion on the subject in her book, ‘Sex, Gender and Society’. Prior to that, the use and interpretation of the term gender

was limited to its dictionary meaning of the grammatical classification of nouns and related words, roughly corresponding to the two sexes and sexlessness (Macdonald et. al., 1997; March et. al., 1999). Gender and sex were thought to be synonymous terms broadly signifying male and female attributes of sex and sexuality. Oakley's writings point out that the thin line of division between the two terms was related very much to the homogenisation of the concepts of sex and sexuality. The understanding prevalent then was:

1. There are distinct biological differences between women and men.
2. As biological differences are distinct, so are the collective physical, social and sexual personalities of women and men. The biological male exhibits masculine behaviour, classified as aggressive, independent, confident and manipulative. Similarly, women as biological females, exhibit feminine behaviour, classified as sensitive, dependent, domesticated and introverted. Differences in personality are largely an outcome of difference in sex (Terman and Miles, 1936, quoted by Oakley, 1972). Any sign of variation, both in the biology of sex as well as the sexuality of behaviour, is abnormal.
3. Division of labour by sex is also a universal characteristic of the human society (Murdock, 1937, quoted by Oakley, 1972). In traditional rural societies, men are responsible for hunting, fishing, lumbering, while in modern societies, the man works outside the home, earning money. The man is the breadwinner of the family in all societies and his work responsibilities lie in the public domain. Similarly, the private domain of the household is the work-area of women. Women are responsible for cooking, washing, mothering and in general housekeeping. Women's domestic work responsibilities are greatly influenced by her reproductive biology. Pregnancy and maternity are biological roles for women, which necessitate women's presence at home. The division of labour by sex is both natural and egalitarian, as men complement women's reproductive activities with economic subsistence (Engels, 1972).

Appropriate male and female behaviour and the sexual division of labour were seen as inherently linked to the sexual differences in biology and this was seen as the natural

order of human existence and assumed to be universal, like sex, across societies and cultures. Culture here is defined as ‘the set of definitions of reality held in common by people, who share a distinctive way of life’ (Kluckhohn, 1962).

Analysing these assumptions, Oakley then demonstrated, through evidence of biology, sociology and anthropology across different cultures and societies, the distinct difference between sex or biology, and gender or sexuality:

1. Sex is the biological difference between men and women’s bodies. Men produce sperms and women bear and breastfeed children. This difference is innate and universal across all human societies.
2. Male and female behaviour and personalities vary across societies and are therefore not universal. How we are perceived or how we are expected to think and act as women and men is defined by the societies in which we live. Therefore while sex or biology is a fact of nature, sexuality or the characterization of being a male or a female is culturally conditioned. Sexuality has cultural and psychological connotations and although linked to sex, is distinctively separate and different from biological sex. This attribute of human behaviour and personality, distinct from sex is known as gender.
3. In the same way as sexuality varies across societies, the division of labour by sex varies from one society to another. In some cultures, women work in forests and fields until childbirth and soon after that. This is possible because breastfeeding is not a sole responsibility of the biological mother, but is shared by lactating women. Similarly, motherhood or the act of rearing children is not solely women’s responsibility, but shared equally by men and women. The sharing of reproductive burdens is essential in these societies where women’s share of work contributes vitally to the household economy. The perception of the male breadwinner as being a social reality in all cultures is therefore a social myth.

Through these analyses Oakley (1972) argued that, ‘if the correct word for sex is male or female, the corresponding words for gender are masculine and feminine’. She identified that ‘every society uses biological sex as a criterion for the ascription of

gender, but beyond this simple starting point, no two cultures would agree completely on what distinguishes one gender from the other'. Gender is learnt through culture and the learning process begins early. Exemplifying blue and pink blankets for newborn baby boys and girls in maternity hospitals in the West, she identified that a newborn child is assigned both a sex and gender in every culture. The assigning of gender identities to biological males and females is common and obviously different across different cultures. Therefore, the social situation and not biological sex defines gender, or socially appropriate human behaviour. Women and men speak, dress and behave distinctively, perform different activities in different societies, according to the norm of the local social order. Gender is visible as a sum of qualities, literally 'like a mask or costume', over sexual biology, which is unseen and not connected to both social behaviour and social roles and responsibilities (Moser, 1993b).

Following Oakley's historical analysis, sociological studies now define 'gender as all the sociologically given or learnt attributes of personality, behaviour, roles and responsibilities connected to being a male or female in any given society' (March et. al. 1999).

### **2.3 Gender in Development Programming and Planning**

There has been an evolution in the perspectives or approaches to development policy and planning. Moser (1993a) and several others describe the transition from a welfare approach, to equity, then efficiency and to the current policy approach of empowerment. It is also identified that such approaches co-exist and are often mixed and matched in different contexts (Anderson, 1992 quoted by March et. al., 1997).

In the evolving context of development ideologies, Molyneux (2001) identifies a similar transition in the focus and concerns of women's movements, collectively termed as feminism. The meaning of the term feminism is continually contested. Mohanty (1991) defines feminism as a diverse range of women's struggles and political perspectives in the histories of different cultures and societies. Oakley's analysis of the distinction between gender and sex, was very much part of the 1970s social movement in the North against sex privileges. 'If the world we live in requires the oppression of some social groups and the supremacy of others, then greater

sophistication relating to the patterning of prevailing status situations is necessary for the political debate' (Oakley, 1985).

Later women's movements in the South were concerned primarily with the struggles of low-income women over consumption needs, resulting from the social and economic injustice of development ideologies (Braidotti et. al., 1994). The boundaries of feminist protests became wider as gender and sex inequalities were analysed in the context of class, race and religion and other social divides (Mohanty, 1991). More recently feminist protests have analysed gender issues in institutions beyond communities and households, as well as organisations operating at different institutional levels (Whitehead, 1979; Ferguson, 1984; Acker, 1990; Goetz, 1992; Kabeer, 1994).

Within the boundaries of development programmes and policy, 'development' was defined as 'social and economic change over time', however the overriding emphasis was on economic development (Jackson and Pearson, 1998). The debate on gender equality and equity identified the need for greater emphasis on human development and social change and challenged the dominant development agenda, which focused on economic development. Consequently, the gender discourse was historically identified as a political subject beyond the goals of social and economic development. Analysis below shows that despite the more recent incorporation of the gender debate in development policy and programme, the term gender and the notions of gender equitable development remain misinterpreted in the development agenda. As identified in chapter 1, 'the concept of gender has been re-interpreted to suit institutional needs' (Razavi and Miller, 1995b). Primarily, despite Oakley's arguments, which distinguishes the notion and content of gender as being related to social constructs and identities, gender was and continues to be misinterpreted as sexual identities in development policy and planning.

In analysing how, why and when gender became a focus of development, and how and why it was and is still misinterpreted, it is essential to look briefly at the history of development.

## **2.4 The Development Decades**

In the popular sense, the term development and the notion of developmentalism were terms and contexts conceptualised globally after World War II. Development began with the post-war economic reconstruction of ‘First World’ or ‘industrialised’ countries, or more specifically in Europe and Japan. Gradually the focus shifted to *developing* or funding of infrastructure projects in the ‘Second World’ or the ‘non-industrialised’ countries (Griesgraber and Gunter, 1996). Subsistence economies, local traditions and technologies of the Southern nations were identified as ‘underdeveloped’ and classified as ‘backward’ (Roxas, 1996). The focus of the welfare approach of development in the 1950s and 1960s was organising underdeveloped, backward nations and societies in the South through Western systems of knowledge, technology and therefore cultures and social arrangements. A process of economic re-colonisation was initiated after the close of an era of political colonisation (*ibid*). It was assumed that transfer of Western knowledge and technology would promote economic growth, the benefits of which would *trickle down* and therefore reduce the evident poverty gap in Southern populations.

The welfare approach of development completely ignored pre-modern societies and their institutions, their cultures and behaviours. The modernisation model of the household, as a nuclear family consisting of a male breadwinner, dependent female housewife and children, was promoted and used as a planning tool, universally across the developing South. Oakley’s (1972) analysis had shown that the Western model of the household was inequitable in comparison to households in certain traditional societies. Contrary to this argument, development policy justified the imposition of culture by arguing that ‘traditional societies were male-dominated and authoritarian, and modern societies were democratic and egalitarian’ (Jacquette, 1982). The development agenda identified that poor Southern households were *needy* and development welfare would trickle down to poor women positioned as *needy housewives*.

The late 1960s and the 1970s were marked with a series of social protests. Oakley, as a sociologist, had used cross-cultural evidence to initiate the gender inequality

discourse in the West. In the South, there was widespread awareness that the welfare approach promoted by the North had not trickled down across populations and *alternative voices in development* from local people's movements called for people-centred development. The United Nations launched the concept of 'Basic Needs', of extending development resources to ensure basic human needs for the whole human population. This was identified as the equity approach (Moser, 1993a). However, the underlying focus of development still remained economic growth. Distribution policies were coupled with growth policies and the resultant focus was to 'increase the productivity of the poor' (Braidotti et. al., 1994).

In this policy background, Boserup (1970) writing as an economist and development planner critiqued the gender inequity of North-led development interventions in the South. In her book, 'Women's Role in Economic Development' she highlighted women's role in production, challenged the validity of female domesticity and pleaded for the 'integration of women' in the ongoing development of production. Boserup's critique was instrumental in promoting the emergence of women as a constituency in development, in retaliation to the sex-specific terms in which women and men had been drawn into development: men as productive household heads and women as dependent housewives, mothers and reproducers (Jaquette and Staudt, 1988).

Boserup's findings showed the relative social independence of women in the female-farming regions of Sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia in comparison to women's social seclusion in the male-farming societies of South and West Asia. She used the comparison between cultures to argue that firstly, the role of production was not alien to women, and secondly, it contributed significantly to women's status and position in society. Citing the African women's example of 'greater equality' she defined that women's 'own income' was strategic as the equal sharing of household incomes was a social myth. She determined that economic independence for women would narrow the inequality between women and men.

Boserup identified that the modernisation model of development increasingly drew men into new sectors of economic productivity, while women were left behind to manage areas of work at home, where there was to be no economic gain. She argued

that this was detrimental to women's status across different societies and articulated that women needed to be drawn into development, to improve their economic position and thereby their social worth. This process would contribute in a greater way to the primary aim of development, which was increased and efficient economic growth. She argued that development in the broad context depended very much on women's as well as men's economic development. This could be achieved by improving women's access to new production-based skills, as was being practised for men, rather than assume that the benefits of economic growth would trickle down to women, through their male counterparts.

#### **2.4.1 The Women in Development (WID) Approach**

Boserup's text was well received in the fertile period of policy critique and social activism in the 1970s; it revolutionised development thinking from an identification of women as passive recipients of welfare to the recognition of women as a constituency in development. The term, 'Women in Development' was coined in the early 1970s (Braidotti et. al., 1994). Women in Development advocates attempted to change the development focus from passive welfare to revolutionary equity. The period 1975-1985 was declared as the United Nations Decade for Women. The World Plan of Action emerging out of the 1975 International Women's Conference called for 'equality between sexes' (Maguire, 1984).

#### **Women in Development – the Drawbacks**

The *entry* of women into development programme and policy needs to be acknowledged to Boserup, however, there were several drawbacks on *how* women entered development. Some of these are discussed below:

##### **1. The linking of gender equity with economic efficiency**

The Women in Development approach fundamentally reversed the dominant development ideology from 'women needing development as welfare to development needing women for productive efficiency' (Kabeer, 1994). Women in Development advocates, although they represented different interests, followed Boserup's discipline as an economist. They were all pragmatic and spoke a language of reform that did not threaten or challenge the status quo of the economic growth focus of development

ideology, but rather challenged the fact that women had been left out of development and needed to be therefore *integrated into development* (Tinker, 1976).

The appeal to improve women's efficiency to enhance economic productivity found wide acceptance within development programmes and policy, at a time when structural adjustments were emphasising cutbacks on social sector spending (Elson, 1991). Despite the equity argument, the focus on economic growth in relation to development was significantly impacted by the debt crisis in the North in the 1970s. This brought to an abrupt end, the impetus on equity and established the efficiency approach practised in the 1980s and 1990s. The Northern focus on development in the South was directed towards economic gains through classic remedies of budget cuts, inflation and export-oriented economic reforms. Consequently, Southern government priorities shifted from public sector spending and social services to production and export of internationally tradeable goods (Braidotti et. al., 1994). Natural resources in the South were declared as state property and increasingly exploited for debt repayment, and local needs for fuel, water and fodder became increasingly acute (Moser, 1993b).

It is important to mention here that the *alternative voices in development* emerging from the South called for alternative approaches to development. The engagement of Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) in development policy and practice was one key alternative approach to development. NGO movement in development initiated as a result of local people's disillusion and antagonism with both the process of development and the failure of the state to deliver development benefits (Webster, 1995; Fowler, 1996; Sen, 1999). There is little consensus on precisely when the NGO movement in development began (Sen, 1999). Sen also identifies that the historical roots of the NGO community varied widely across regions and cultures.

However, within the popular economic reform context of development, the NGO movement was also seen and put into development practice from an efficiency perspective. 'Benefits identified in involving NGOs were that development policies, programmes and projects stand a better chance of being accepted and implemented in a sustainable manner, in comparison to government action' (Bailey, 1996). The eventual consequence was a popular trend in the hand-over of social services, which

had primarily been the responsibility of the state to externally or domestically financed, private, but 'not-for-profit' NGOs (Jackson and Pearson, 1998).

In this policy environment, termed efficiency by Moser, Boserup's claim of women's potential for economic growth, presented an attractive and hitherto unused source of available and willing labour, which was seen as a valuable resource to be 'harnessed for efficient development' (Braidotti et al., 1994; Davidson, 1990). Kabeer (1994) identified that major Northern development agencies were quick to accept and integrate the Women in Development ideology in development aid policy. A USAID document entitled Women in Development Aid Policy (1982) stated, 'Knowledge of these gender-role patterns will assist project planners to maximise the chance of project success'. The fatal drawback of the Women in Development approach was the serious evaporation of the notion of gender equity, which was the basic goal of WID advocates. The outcome of the reform was therefore essentially the change from *welfare to efficiency and not from welfare to equity* as had been originally planned.

## **2. The isolating of 'women' from the content of social relations**

In the same way as Oakley, the Women in Development theory challenged the assumed universality of the sex-role dichotomy, calling for the need for more systematic disaggregation in development planning and policy. However, in contrast to Oakley's analysis of socially attributed roles and responsibilities, Women in Development advocates were remarkably silent on the complexity of socially conditioned roles and responsibilities for both women and men. Women's share of reproductive tasks, which was equally a socially attributed role and responsibility, was not accorded the same potential economic worth as women's productive labour and therefore dissociated from development (read economic development). It was accepted that the caring, nurturing reproductive role of human behaviour was a natural feminine tendency. The outcomes of this hindsight in the Women in Development approach were several:

- a. In complete opposition to Boserup's plea for 'integration of women in development', Rogers (1980) revealed that the feminising of women's reproductive roles and responsibilities significantly influenced *how women were integrated into*

*development*. The social roles of fetching water, gathering fuel and fodder, which were allocated to women, were feminised and consequently, women were identified as 'naturally privileged environmental knowers and managers' (Leach, 1991; Jackson, 1995; Joekes et al., 1996).

Women were said to have healing hands. 'Forest operations like picking out seedlings from nurseries is best suited to women...The job needs women's patience and nursing instinct' (Aloo, 1985).

Women's potential for increasing economic efficiency was exploited by development agencies, and women were harnessed in environmental resource conservation as 'fixers' of environmental problems in development projects (Agarwal, 1989; Leach, 1991; Jackson, 1993, 1995; Rocheleau et al., 1996). This simply added the 'environment' to women's long list of caring roles. WID projects failed to recognise the opportunity costs on women's already overstretched time.

'In environmental projects in Uganda, women are told that there is drought because trees are being cut. They are also told that if they do not plant trees, they will have no firewood for cooking. The other benefits put forward for women engaging in tree-planting are income, which they can get from selling seedlings, better nutrition for the children from eating fruits and, of course, shade for their homes. For tree-planting women need land and water. Land in Uganda, traditionally belongs to men, so whatever good the trees do, they do not benefit the women directly. Women have to walk miles to fetch water for domestic use and just could not keep the seedlings watered. Some projects introduced a bicycle for fetching water for the seedlings, but this (facility) was not available for the domestic water need. Why I wonder, does it need a concern for 'environmental issues' rather than women's daily burden of water carrying before a bicycle is introduced?

It is true that poor people are more affected by their environment,... this is especially so if they are not the greatest culprits in destroying it. ...I believe women are already struggling with too many immediate problems to be saddled with 'environment'! (Environment and women in Uganda: the way I see it. Adoko, 1993).

However, WID advocates argued that, 'It is up to women to save the environment' (Dankelman and Davidson, 1988). Consequently and in opposition to Boserup's

vision, in the guise of 'special women's development programmes', women were pushed further into the home and harnessed to fulfil the goals of economic development. In this perspective, NGOs were seen as local agents capable of promoting women's participation. Woman-led NGOs were identified to be particularly capable of this task, 'They provide ready role models of women leaders and this will influence local women's involvement' (Simpson-Herbert, 1989).

b. Rogers (1980) also identified that while women were expected to join the labour force of projects, as a form of 'integration of women in development', the rights to resources, such as land and money were as always, held by men. The Women in Development theory simplistically assumed that women's visibility and integration in production would provide women an equal position with men and did not challenge the unequal power status quo. 'One cannot help concluding that the real issue is who controls the resources, not who does the work. Land, labour, livestock, capital, technology, information – are all valued goods that imbue those who own or control them with power and prestige. Why should these resources be shared? Why should...power bases be challenged...or restructured?' (Dixon, 1985). In addition to the special development programmes for women, as identified above, development carried on as usual. Rogers (1980) exposed the marginality of the Women in Development framework in a series of conversations recorded with various representatives of international organisations:

Food and Agriculture Organisation representative: "I've just been filling in a questionnaire from headquarters about women. But you know there's hardly anything to say, because we don't have the sort of projects that would involve them. We have nothing against them, in fact we would like to do more for them. But you see our projects here are concerned with cattle, and it just so happens that women have very few cattle. Of course we also get criticised because cattle are all owned by richer people" (Rogers, 1980).

c. The Women in Development emphasis was on women's ability to implant rational, so far masculine economic behaviour without any equivalent emphasis on men's potential to undertake feminine roles of mothering. While women by taking up the

task of reproduction had always liberated 'men to function as rational producers', there was to be no such complementary support for women. As the approach ignored the complexity of the social roles of reproduction, there was little clarity on how women on their own, would become rational producers. Critiques identified that the isolated emphasis on productivity could actually backfire if it came to be proved that men did have higher productivity than women (Jacquette, 1982). The argument of improvement of women's status was far too simplistic to be realistically logical.

### **3. Women in Development - Which Women?**

Like the earlier patterns of development, the Women in Development approach was initiated from the North and identified to be grossly generalised. 'The historical heterogeneities of the lives of women in the Third World...produced/represented as a composite, singular image of *third world woman* – an image, which appears arbitrarily constructed, but nevertheless carries with it the authorizing signature of Western humanist discourse' (Mohanty, 1991). Kabeer (1994) notes that the network of African women asked, 'What is this nature of development, from which we alone have been excluded and now need to be integrated? Have colonialism in the past and the asymmetrical world economy and political reality been so generous as to put all males in structurally dominant and skilled positions' (AAWORD, 1982). DAWN, another network of Third World women pointed out, 'While gender subordination has universal elements, there cannot be a rigid concept of universality that negates the wide variation in women's experiences. There is and must be diversity, responsive to the different needs and concerns of different women, and *defined by them for themselves*' (Sen and Grown, 1987).

To conclude, the primary reasons for the structural faltering of the Women in Development argument were:

- in not recognising that the problem was with the concept of development itself and not that its benefits had been uniformly distributed amongst men and women and
- generalising women and their specific needs.

The end of the 1980s was marked by the ‘trenchant complaints of third world feminists that the Women in Development philosophies furthered the needs of imperialist states and their allies rather than the aspirations of poor women themselves’ (ibid).

#### **2.4.2 Feminism versus Women in Development**

Some feminist voices in the narrower domain of development planning and policy, emerging both in the North and the South, were instrumental quite by default, in sharpening the agenda of gender equitable development. Feminist protests against the dominant development agenda had two broad characteristics. Firstly, there were some parallels of feminism with Marxism on the grounds that unequal development was a result of the capitalist aims of development. Secondly, most of the feminist protests in development had a central environmental focus. However, as in the WID debate the arguments here too were solely based on sex and not on gender relations.

Pro-Marxist feminists called for a complete disassociation with any offices of development, seeing them as agents of capitalist and patriarchal domination. However, feminism essentially departed from Marxism on the basis that class concerns were placed higher to sex inequalities, promoted by the Marxist understanding that the removal of class would remove all obstacles of inequality (Mies et al., 1988). Marxism did to some degree acknowledge the fact that sex subordination was perpetuated because capitalism had not accounted for domestic labour or the ‘reproductive work’, however Engels’ analysis that, biology was the root cause of social sub-ordination was opposed by feminists.

Ecofeminists, as they were commonly termed, squarely blamed the devaluation of women and nature on the Western concept of development. They argued for a total and militant disengagement with development and identified that women had an instrumental role in leading this struggle. As identified by Leach et al. (1995) there were three angles to the construction of the special relationship of women with nature in eco-feminism. Firstly women were seen to depend closely on natural resources especially in their sustenance roles, which provided for the survival of their families and communities. Shiva (1989) identified that women’s subsistence perspective leads

inevitably to their respecting both the diversity and the limits of nature, which cannot be violated if they want to survive. Women as ‘nature lovers and environment knowers’ were depicted as efficient and authentic environmental managers and their engagement with movements related to natural resources, as demonstrating women’s environmental concern (Jackson, 1993; 1995). This view theorised that because of this special closeness, women develop a thorough knowledge of these resources (DGIS, 1997).

Secondly, eco-feminism identified development as a male construct, as an imposition of patriarchal, western and mechanistic exercises of destruction on indigenous and so far egalitarian societies in Asia and Africa. In opposition to the welfare approach of development, Shiva (1989) identified that pre-colonial societies were not male-dominated and authoritarian but harmonious and gender-egalitarian, where women’s subsistence livelihoods were analogous to nature renewing itself and the work of women and men were complementary. In contrast, she identified that in dominant development terms the environment or nature was an abstract resource to be put to effective productive use, not for sustenance but for economic growth.

Finally, Mies (1988) and Shiva (1989) identified women as major victims of environmental degradation, which systematically depleted women’s resources for ‘staying alive’ as a consequence of women’s closer subsistence relationship with nature.

Ecofeminists found support in articulating the links between environmental degradation and women in the mid 1980s through the media, which increasingly presented images of poor women in the South, burdened by heavy loads of fuel, water and fodder against a backdrop of barren landscapes. These images served to alert the public and development agencies in the North to the problems of environmental degradation in the South and the impact of this on women, in their roles as managers of the environment (Braidotti et. al., 1994). The famous Chipko movement, of tree hugging by women in the Central Himalayas in India, as a form of protest against commercial forestry, was used widely by eco-feminists to project images of women’s roles as inherent environmental protectors (Jain, 1984; Guha, 1989). These arguments

were instrumental in promoting special environmental projects for integrating women in development.

These discussions show the sex specific focus of feminist movements in the domain of development programming and planning.

#### **2.4.3 The Flaws in Feminism and the Transition from Sex to Gender**

The feminism approach exhibited certain flaws, which were both strikingly similar and opposed to the Women in Development theory. The similarity was the generalisation of sex-role dichotomies resulting from the classification of women as an isolated and homogeneous social category.

‘The growing literature was predominantly descriptive, equivocal in its identification and analysis of women’s subordination, and tended to isolate women as a separate and often homogeneous category’ (Pearson et al., 1984).

Arguments for equity were therefore based on the lines of sex rather than on gender differences in both approaches.

The difference was that while the Women in Development approach did not see the dominant approach of economic development as problematic and in fact called for women to be integrated in the development process, eco-feminism called for a militant disengagement with development actors and agencies. Eco-feminists called for an alternative vision of society based on a feminist conception of labour, of a sensual interaction with nature, unmediated by technology (Mies et al., 1988). In the efficiency focus of WID projects, women did not define the course of environmental management as Mies and Shiva (1993) proposed, but women were involved as passive participants contributing to the efficiency of environmental projects.

The larger failing of the eco-feminist approach was the notion of women as good, men as evil and the lack of vision beyond women’s relation with the environment or nature. Mies as well as Shiva had no answers to violence on women by women, as was the case with dowry deaths in India (Kabeer, 1994). Also, there was concern amongst other feminists that although the dominant approach to development was the

main problem, disengagement was not the solution (Molyneux, 2001). ‘The poor all over the world faced a critical shortage of resources to meet their own and their families’ needs, and poor women, in their social role as home-caretakers faced the major brunt of this struggle. Development agencies were powerful agencies involved in meeting these needs, both in the long-term and short-term and therefore could not be ignored’ (Kabeer, 1994).

#### **2.4.4 Gender and Development**

By the late 1980s, there was a new consciousness in development thought. The equity argument was repeated but now it was strengthened by an awareness of the top-down imposition of development ideologies. This was the beginning of the empowerment approach (Moser, 1993a). The stimulus again was the search for ‘human needs oriented development policies’, but this time, the empowerment approach emphasised on the need for a viewpoint from below. ‘People, especially the poor, are capable of promoting their own development, if their efforts and initiatives are supported’ (Antrobus, 1987). Shetty (1991) pointed out that empowerment expressed the interests of the disenfranchised groups of society. ‘The concept of empowerment is deeply rooted in the notion of power and in its reverse, powerlessness, or the absence of power. Dispossessed groups within societies suffer in silences. Empowerment entails building infrastructures to enable breaking these silences’ (Kabeer, 1994).

Development agents adopted this approach, as they had accepted others in the past. The UN Development Programme made a radical statement in identifying economic growth not as an end in itself but only as a means to achieve human development. However, in this context, Rocheleau and others (1996) point out that the North’s interests still led the process of development. Environmental issues became a central focus of development. Yet the picture of the global environment and development crisis that ‘humanity is facing’ was still a simplistic Northern statement instead of the complex inter-related reality of North-South inequities. Poverty and human misery in the South, though included in environmental debates, were not socially analysed and also by themselves rarely figured as substantive reasons to demand policy reform (Braidotti et. al., 1994).

In this policy background, there were attempts from several angles to draw gender logic into the argument about empowerment and to prove that inequality and inequity were social constructs and not a result of biological destiny. Social anthropologists had qualified sex as a commonality and gender as a specificity; however, there was a difficult struggle to configure these two different but inter-related constructs (Jackson and Pearson, 1998).

Kabeer (1994) identified that the translation of biological categories to social ones was not easy. Firstly, there was enormous resistance to social change in human behaviour itself. Connell (1987) identified that the human ability to decide or choose is severely affected by the rigors of social conditioning, what she termed as social hegemony. In most societies, there exist 'hegemonic forms' of masculinity and femininity, which constrain any impetus to change. Secondly, as Molyneux (2001) identifies, women's issues are diverse across cultures, yet there is an element of structural and symbolic commonality and the need existed to pay attention to both perspectives. While gender or the social attributes of what is masculine and feminine remain instrumental to inequality between women and men, it is furrowed deeply by other forms of social inequality:

'A woman's class position structures the concrete meaning of gender for her. The variations that exist between women of different classes are at least as important for the woman's social position as the commonalities inherent in being a woman within a given society. It is an antagonistic social relation that defines, for example, the oppressive social relation between female domestic servants and their mistresses... women of different classes often have opposing interests in social organisations and programmes for social change' (Beneria and Sen, 1982).

Finally, it became apparent that the notion of 'gender was a vicissitude of the English language. In many non-English contexts, there is no literal translation of the term', even though, obviously, concepts of sexuality and sexual differences are exercised and experienced differently by men and women (Braidotti et al., 1994).

Macdonald and others (1997) identified that feminists advocating the gender theory in relation to development stringently followed Oakley's (1972) distinction of sex and gender and added political strength to the argument on the basis of power relations.

The struggle for women's equality with men was named as the struggle for gender equality. Dissociating this struggle from earlier arguments related to sex, it was strongly emphasised that gender inequality was caused by social relationships between women and men and this influenced the allocation and use of power differently by and between women and men. Gender awareness was called for in understanding the difference between sex and gender roles and understanding that the latter, as they are constructed socially, can be changed. The arguments put forward in favour of a gender-aware development are broadly summarised here:

1. Post-modernist discourses on sexed and sexual identities contributed significantly to Oakley's analysis on gender inequality (Braidotti et al., 1994). De Beauvoir (1988) spoke of the common practice in presenting the masculine viewpoint as the general human standpoint, and therefore reducing the feminine to the 'other'. Rich (1997) explained that such symbolic construction of asymmetry between the sexes portrayed women as the 'second sex'. By the 1980s, gender was no longer seen as the cultural and political recoding of a biological reality, but rather the 'expression of a patriarchal ideology that requires binary oppositions between sexes in order to assert male dominance' (Butler, 1987). The arguments were pursued more diligently by gender advocates in identifying the need to include men and masculinities in determining and addressing gender inequality (Connell, 1987).

Drawing from these rich discourses on the content of gender, researchers and analysts argued that treating women and men as categories that can be isolated would be detrimental by rendering men's roles in the subordination of women invisible. As identified above, power was recognised as an important characteristic of empowerment and therefore of unequal gender relations (Whitehead, 1979). Theoretical discourses on power argued that it is not sex that determines human behaviour or the distribution of power, but social interpretations of sexuality, which determine power equations through social relations between individuals. 'Power is co-extensive with the social body. Relations of power are interwoven with other kinds of relations – production, kinship, family and sexuality' (Foucault, 1972).

2. In the late 1980s, there was considerable criticism of the 'whiteness' of gender theories by ethnic black and post-colonial thinkers, who raised issues of race,

ethnicity, class and colour to be recognised as central variables in the definition of gender (Mohanty, 1991). Feminists both from the North and the South agreed that, 'if feminism was about empowerment of *all* women and change in the conditions of *all* women's lives, change was needed in the women's movement itself' (Wong, 1991).

Consequently, the debate on gender equality and equity identified social relationships as a broad range of social differences between the sexes. The diversity of social differences identified as race, ethnicity, class and colour and gender emphasised that gendered subordination was never present in a pure form (Mohanty, 1991; Kabeer, 1994; Molyneux, 2001). These arguments revealed that while gender was central to inequality between women and men, the degrees and levels of gendered subordination varied. In the development context, it accounted for people other than white, adult, professional, Western males, who had so far decided on behalf of mankind (Braidotti et. al., 1994). It was argued that development was not simply the 'entry' of women into positions previously occupied by men, as had been demanded by WID. Development was redefining structures and systems in order to make them less discriminatory not only for women, but ultimately for a group of heterogeneous newcomers who had formerly been denied places and voices in development policy and programming (*ibid*).

These articulations identified the need for a more sophisticated analysis of the 'marginals, the minorities, the people from the periphery who had historically been deprived of the right to self-determination' (Harding, 1991). Harding called for researchers to 'reinvent' themselves and to 'ask research questions, develop theoretical concepts, design research, collect data and interpret findings' from the perspective of the subjugated 'others'. Gender advocates called for a more critical analysis of social structures and the constraints they impose on the gender division of labour and therefore on any potential for change (Connell, 1987). Oakley's argument was applied here, that challenging the gender division of labour, challenging gender hegemony, would require a sophistication of knowledge and insight, of a political agenda to challenge core gender identities.

3. Very early in the debate on gender equity, Whitehead (1979) had pointed out that, 'Gender is never absent'. Gender advocates now analysed 'women's absence' in

organisational hierarchies of production, beyond the family and kinship levels, which had been unexplained earlier. Acker (1990, quoted by Kabeer, 1994) illustrated how gender bias in the division of labour operates in the public domain as well. ‘The organisational logic of public institutions is to create...abstract categories, empty places devoid of occupants, bodies and genders; of a disembodied worker who exists only for the job’. However, as Acker identified, the disembodied worker was socially masculine.

‘The closest the disembodied worker doing the abstract job comes to a real worker is the male worker whose life centres on his full-time, life-long job, while his wife or another woman takes care of his personal needs and his children. The woman worker, assumed to have legitimate obligations other than those required by the job, did not fit with the abstract job’.

Kabeer (1994) identified how the concept of a job, so far labelled as ‘gender-neutral’, carried across the gender biases in division of labour from the ‘reproductive’ world. This, together with the hegemonic attributes of masculinity and femininity, which are associated not only with sexes, but also with education and skills and occupations and positions explained the hierarchical distribution of genders across sectors, in different occupational segments within the sectors, and at different levels of the occupational structure.

‘Universally women tended to be crowded into the service sector and within it, in nursing and teaching jobs in the lower echelons of the occupational ladder. Men are found in larger numbers in traditional heavy industry and in the financial end of the service sector, dominating in senior managerial positions’ (*ibid*).

Goetz (1992) identified that organisations and their framework of rules and norms, commonly assumed to be gender-neutral, mirror the society and the social order. Therefore, while organisations have not been right for all men, on the divides of class and race, they have especially not been right for women, along gender lines.

Research revealed that organisations were gendered in several ways. Goetz (1992) identified that organisations are patriarchal in the same way as society and therefore institutionalised to meet men’s needs better than women’s. Citing the example of developmental organisations’ preoccupation in exploiting women’s labour to meet

efficiency policies, Kandiyotti (1988) identified that the policies formulated or practised by organisations are gendered.

It was also identified that job descriptions in organisations are often gendered. Men dominate the public decision-making areas as managers and women are ‘housed’ in the private, internal areas as assistants, secretaries, librarians, catering and cleaning staff (Macdonald et. al., 1997). Ferguson (1984) identified that formal organisations by virtue of being in the public sphere are dominated by men. The literal male domination leads to a masculine culture of behaviour, arrangements, space and time within organisations. Management styles in organisations have historically been verticalist and efficiency-led, social attributes identified to be masculine and practiced by the male managers. Goetz (1992) identified how conforming to this style was safer and carried more tangible rewards in public places, ‘For many senior women in bureaucratic organisations, success is both a function and expression of their ability to conform to dominant organisational structures and cultures by taking on sociological characteristics of men in their dress, deportment, managerial styles and most importantly in their capacity to minimise the demands of the home.’

4. Moving beyond the gendered structures and systems of organisations, Moore (1992) identified that there are significant assumption made in the value systems of different organisations. For example, organisations operating in the market are identified to be competitive and efficient, state institutions are assumed to be impartial and accountable and organisations operating within the community are assumed to be based on principles of solidarity. However these assumptions are largely unexamined and blindly accepted (Korten, 1987; Buvinic, 1989; Fowler, 1990). The common assumption that Non Governmental Organisations are more receptive than state bureaucracies to the problems of the poor in general and especially to those of poor women has been challenged by research (Rao and Kelleher, 1995; Rao and Stuart, 1997). For that matter, Goetz (1997) claimed that all development organisations, ‘for several related reasons, some historical, some inherent to the organisation of development work, some specific to particular cultural constraints, development administrations...can be expected to have sharply gendered organisational structures and strongly masculinised work place cultures.’

Asymmetrical gender relations were analysed and found to be interconnected across the different institutional domains of individuals, families, the extended kinship, communities, public markets and state bureaucracies. (Young et al., 1980 quoted by Kabeer, 1994). This helped to narrow down the cause of inequitable gender relations, which was reflected in the monotonous similarity of women's oppression in different parts of the world. It also illustrated the 'endlessly variable' spaces to challenge and negotiate these situations as well as the social constraints to transforming unequal gender relations in different social situations (Kabeer, 1994).

5. Finally, the evolving context of social change was taken into account, 'Relations between women and men are social and therefore not immutable and fixed. The form that gender relations take in any historical situation is specific to that situation and has to be constructed inductively; it cannot be read off from other social relations nor from the gender relations of other societies' (Mohanty, 1991). Leach (1991) validated this argument by showing that introduction of cash crops in subsistence farming communities in Sierra Leone altered the pattern of agricultural production and with it the gender divisions of labour and gender relations.

The theory on gender had been grounded; the task that lay ahead was the application of theory in order to transform development policy and programmes (Kabeer, 1994). The objective of the Gender and Development theory was, 'To develop better analytical and conceptual tools for the development of a theory of social relations which would encompass not only the so-called economic relations of society, but also the relations of everyday life' (Young, 1980 quoted by Jackson and Pearson, 1998).

#### **2.4.5 The Gender and Development (GAD) Theory**

Key perspectives of the Gender and Development (GAD, as it came to be known) theory can be summarised as follows:

1. The Gender and Development perspective identifies the care of human life and well being as the central value of development. The production of material resources translates to development only if it complements the development goal of human well being, both in its means and in its end. As an output of this thinking process,

development is to be no longer measured by the volume of marketed goods and services alone but by the extent to which human well-being is assured (Kabeer, 1994, Chambers, 1997).

2. In identifying human wellbeing the GAD theory calls for a reversal of the hierarchy of the knowledge order. It identifies that 'development strategies need to be seen and planned from the perspective of the most oppressed – women who suffer on account of class, race and nationality – so that one can clearly grasp the nature of the links of oppression and explore the kinds of action that can be taken' (Sen and Grown, 1987; Harding, 1991; Rocheleau et al., 1996). However, it is clarified that this did not imply that the 'poor Third World woman' is more knowledgeable than all others. On the contrary, the theory draws from Foucault's (1972) analysis that there is an implicit conjunction between knowledge and power. 'The viewpoint of the dispossessed woman of the Third World matters, not because she knows all, but because she offers the viewpoint from below, from where theory meets practice, and without this view there can be neither development nor equity' (Kabeer, 1994).

3. The Gender and Development approach differs from the Women in Development approach, in that it sees welfare as complementary, rather than in opposition to well-being. GAD theory identifies that welfare that contributes to basic human needs has the inherent outcome of freeing women from their domestic responsibilities. 'Because the primary outcomes of the tensions between class and gender are the differential overwork and ill-health of women, we must support measures such as systems of water provision, electrification, sanitation and medical care and other similar policies. The emphasis must be on *how* such programmes are implemented and *whom* they benefit' (Beneria and Sen, 1982).

GAD theory also differs from the Women in Development approach in that women's reproductive tasks are valued as central to the ability of households, communities and nations to survive (Sen and Grown, 1987). The Gender and Development approach argues that women, sufficiently relieved from a unilateral burden of domestic tasks, could then pursue economic livelihoods, but only if they chose to do so or were compelled to do so because of their circumstances (Kabeer, 1994).

The Gender and Development theory recognises heterogeneity amongst women and therefore identifies that the concept of women's interests is dubious. 'Although it is true that at some level of abstraction women can be said to have some interests in common, there is no consensus over what these interests are or how they are to be formulated' (Molyneux, 2001).

4. Kabeer (1994) identifies that the Gender and Development theory reanalyses the dominant development image of the household as 'an altruistic decision-making unit'. 'The household can neither think nor decide. Rather certain people within the household make decisions. One or two persons with enough power to implement make decisions and other less-empowered members follow them' (Wolf, 1990).

The image of the household in GAD planning is hinged on a less radical and more humanistic description of the household being a site of both co-operation and conflict (Sen, 1982).

5. Moving beyond sex, roles and households, the Gender and Development theory describes the *uneven playing fields* of life for all its human inmates, on the basis of social and socially mediated economic constructs. It identifies the unequal terms in which women and men enter the public domain as a result of the inequalities in the private domain. It recognises the formidable unequal barriers in the public domain, based on the multiple biases of gender, class, caste, race, religion, colour and ethnicity. It thus articulates that gender equity goes beyond providing equal opportunity to biological sexes. The need is recognised for transformation of basic rules, hierarchies and practices of public institutions with an objective of gender equity.

In contrast to the Women in Development approach, GAD calls for not only an increase in the levels of women in public positions of 'production', but for a wider representation of women at all positions in the institutional hierarchies. In order to make this possible, it recognises firstly, the need for a more equal sharing of socially allocated roles, responsibilities and resources across the institutional levels of households, communities, markets and the state (Kabeer, 1994; Goetz, 1992).

6. Finally, the Gender and Development approach calls for not conforming with or disengagement from, but rather for challenging the policy and practice of development ideologies. Gender analysts argue that development means ‘reversing power to the deprived or empowerment, in order to enable all to move towards a society in which all women and men participate equally with justice and dignity. This must entail as an ultimate goal the ability of the disempowered to act collectively in their interests’ (Sen and Grown, 1987). Recognising the multi-dimensional nature of power and the specificity with which power is distributed, the GAD theory calls for an awareness of the trade-offs that the marginalised amongst men and women make in order to cope with the ramifications of the oppressive relationships in their lives (Kabeer, 1994). To an outsider, it may well appear that sub-ordination is so entrenched that the inequalities are said to be divinely ordained rather than socially imposed. This form of domination may suggest that the oppressors and the oppressed are deeply unconscious, that there appears no evidence of conflict or injustice (Shklar, 1990, quoted by Kabeer, 1994). However, drawing especially from Foucault’s (1972) analysis of power, there is recognition that the acceptance of injustice may well be a conscious and calculated judgement.

Central to the Gender and Development approach is the emphasis on adoption of different approaches, complementing a goal of equitable human well-being, which enables both analysis and deconstruction of popular myths associated with development and different development institutions. Recognising the multiplicity of factors of disempowerment, the Gender and Development approach calls for an attitude of learning from below, of planning interventions from the viewpoint of the oppressed, across different inter-related institutional levels, in order to bring about a more equitable redistribution of power, roles, responsibilities and resources between and amongst women and men.

## **2.5 The Application of Gender Theory in Development Policy and Planning**

Discourses on gender and development, although descriptive in character and promoted with an empowerment focus, emerged from theoretical and activist disciplines, both in the North and South. For a long time, there was resistance to understanding and incorporating gender into development programming and policy,

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An economic focus remains central not only to the measurement of development but to the theory and practice of development policies and programmes. This is shown in the case of domestic water sector policies and programmes in the following chapter.

### **2.5.2 Dilution in the Simplification of the Content of Gender**

The complexity in the notion of gender called for a new occupation of translating gender theories into practicable approaches for gender and development. Development policymakers and practitioners demanded ‘gender training’ in order to incorporate, or what is known as *mainstream* a gender perspective in their work. Gender analytical frameworks were formulated, basically as practitioner’s guidelines to addressing gender in development practice. It was assumed that these guidelines would be the ‘magic key’ for applying gender, or *doing gender* in the field (Molyneux, 2001). In the intent to simplify gender, a lot was misinterpreted or lost in translation. Gender became associated with sex and distant from the context of social relations. Gender and Development theorists question the capacity of these tools for questioning, undermining or transforming the structures of subordination or gender relations (Young, 1993).

The Harvard Gender Role Framework defines that practical gender needs are needs related to women’s condition as a result of the traditionally assigned reproductive tasks and strategic gender needs are those related to women’s subordinate position to men in their society. It defines that meeting practical needs will address women’s basic necessities in the domestic environment and meeting strategic needs will challenge women’s subordinate position. The purpose of the sex-related gender need analysis was to enable development policy and practice to address both the practical and strategic needs of women in order to improve women’s condition as well as their position. Kabeer (1994) agrees that the distinction between practical and strategic and between position and condition is important because it helps development agencies to focus on the diversity of gender issues. However, she argues that the divide is essentially theoretical and cannot be addressed as isolable categories of women’s needs. Further, in the process of implementation, ‘needs often tend to be defined by *expert others* or the more vocal others, rather than the subjugated’ (Jonasdottir, 1988). It has been identified that despite the classification of needs, ‘development agencies

are far too anxious to address practical needs, as this serves their own predefined agendas; they are safer to implement as they evoke least political challenging and most importantly are more likely to be quantifiable' (Molyneux, 2001).

Moser (1989) developed the triple-role gender analysis framework, where women's roles and interests in production, reproduction and community management are identified, as she insisted, by women themselves. The purpose was to show that women are burdened in fulfilling all the three roles and yet their inputs in all three roles are neither visible nor valued. In contrast, the use of the framework enables the analysis that men have few reproductive responsibilities and their productive roles are highly acknowledged. The larger goal of this framework was to deconstruct the myth of the male bread-winner and the female housewife and to sound the much-needed alarm for development agents from using women, who are over-burdened and under-acknowledged, as cheap and easily available labour in meeting project goals (*ibid*).

However, Kabeer (1994) argues again that the structure of the triple-role framework does not adequately address its aims. The framework as it stands, simply enables the users to identify what is done and who does it and whose interests lie in what. Evidence from the use of the framework in the field points out that there has been little challenge to the inequality of work assigned by gender.

### **2.5.3 The Misinterpretation of Gender as Women and Men**

There is an academic storm building up concerning the rhetoric about gender in development policy and planning. In the interpretation and application of gender in development, there are two serious and contradictory concerns.

The first relates to an illogical translation of gender as women. In many development agendas, gender is but a second name for women. Guijt (1993) shows the misinterpretation of gender as women in Agenda 21, the documented outcome of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. Despite the advancement in conceptual thinking on gender, the text showed tokenistic references to gender in addition to references to women as *a special disadvantaged category*. The terms gender and women were used in the document in a seemingly random fashion, which did not identify the difference

between the content of the terms. Analysis of water policies in the next chapter will illustrate this fact more evidently. Current development policies and ideologies relate essentially to the Women in Development approach under the new name of Gender and Development. In the reduction of gender to women, there is no relevance attached to the context of social relations and therefore of gendered inequities which result from social relations.

‘Women are separated out as the central problem and isolated from the context and relation of social relations’ (Baden and Goetz, 1998).

Cornwall and White (2000) identify that the misinterpretation of ‘gender as women’ diverts attention away from women’s structural disprivilege, as it masks masculine structural privileges.

The second concern relates to the argument mentioned in 2.4.4, where it is identified that a gender-focus opens the way for formerly feminist agendas to engage in issues related to men and masculinities. This focus has been seriously misinterpreted and misused in development to bring back the focus from women to men.

‘In some instances, gender has been used to sidestep a focus on women and on the radical policy implications of their disprivilege’ (Razavi and Miller, 1995a).

Cornwall and White (2000) report on the recent burgeoning interest in men as the ‘missing half’ of Gender and Development. Gender is now interpreted in development programming and policy as ‘women and men’ rather than ‘social relationships between women and men’ or the ‘the structuring of masculinity and femininity for men and women’. Some development agencies now determine that promoting gender equality means working with women and men as well as their social relationships (SIDA Gender Policy quoted by Farnsveden and Ronquist, 2000). As will be discussed in the next chapter, there are several examples of the misinterpretation of gender, especially in the domestic and/or water sector.

Gender advocates sharpen the argument by asking, ‘Which men and why now and what gender privileges will come from *bringing men in*’ (Pearson, 2000).

Pearson identifies that the origins of feminism were structured to reverse the masculine agenda of the history of development. Thus it was inevitable that men and masculinities were not a passionate priority of feminists who structured the Gender and Development theory, even though gender theory critically identified the heterogeneity between and amongst women and men. Feminists argue that *bringing men in* must go much beyond the literal inclusion of biological males in the scope of Gender and Development.

Chant (2000) discusses the need and the context in which the Gender and Development approach should include men. She identifies that changing economic circumstances have in many cases severely affected the reality of men as breadwinners and heads of households. In such situations of male under-achievement, not only men, but also women, struggle in accepting and understanding changing identities and experiences. There is evidence that this has often resulted in an outbreak of male violence and drug/alcohol abuse with serious consequences for women and children. *Bringing men in* should focus on relationship changes and the resultant impacts on both women and men. The purpose of *bringing men in* is to allow both men and women to reason to deconstruct the hegemony around masculinities and femininity. Men and women do not live as isolated categories, but share physical, social and emotional relations in every society, therefore reaching out to men also has the importance of addressing the male-side of all shared problems.

Gender theorists therefore confront the narrow focus in the development agenda in ‘simply making space for men in Gender and Development’. Instead they sound the need to call for a refocusing of concern on positions of power and powerlessness between gendered sex identities that produce and sustain inequality, seeking practices to transform existing inequalities and inequities (Cornwall and White, 2000).

#### **2.5.4 Mainstreaming Gender – the Implications**

Mainstreaming gender became a popular theme in development policy in the 1990s. Mainstreaming evolved from the earlier practice of ‘integrating women in development’ and signified a push towards systematic procedures and mechanisms within organisations – for explicitly taking account of gender issues at all stages of

policy planning and programme design and implementation (Baden and Goetz, 1998). It also called for a greater organisational diffusion of gender responsibilities within institutions beyond the structure of the earlier isolated Women in Development cells (Razavi and Miller, 1995b).

Aided by gender training one aspect of the bureaucratic response in development to gender mainstreaming was the compilation of gender disaggregated data in order to promote a gender disaggregated approach to development (Elson, 1995). There are now new techniques for measuring gendered inequalities, for example, the Gender Disparity Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), techniques pioneered in the UNDP's 1995 Human Development Index.

Baden and Goetz (1998) challenge the validity of such measures as measures of gender and empowerment. Firstly, the establishment of a universal and modern knowledge to measure empowerment, which is a highly specific culturally loaded concept is questioned. Secondly, empowerment as a notion was formally constituted to enable a grassroots challenge to systems and ideologies of modern knowledge. Harding (1991) stressed the need to develop frameworks and measures of empowerment from the vantage point of the oppressed. However, tools like the GEM are sophisticated and are modern scientific measures of women and men's income, participation in professional and managerial jobs and formal political participation. The GEM does contribute to highlighting women's unequal access to development resources and benefits, but it does not realistically measure empowerment or the lack of empowerment.

Gender analysts fear the dangers of mainstreaming gender as is being practised currently misinterprets and reduces gender to woman/man – stripping away consideration of the relational aspects of gender, of power and ideology and of how patterns of subordination are reproduced. It tends to look to information problems, or to culture as explanatory factors. While valuable insights and empirical evidence are provided, in the process, gender issues are de-linked from the feminist transformatory purpose' (ibid).

Mainstreaming commonly results in the universalisation of gender issues. A striking example is the often-quoted notion of the feminisation of poverty and its blatant use for developing women-specific programmes, very much in the Women in Development fashion. ‘As before, women are identified as one group and labelled, ‘powerless’, ‘exploited’, ‘sexually harassed’, ‘poor’ etc. The focus is not on uncovering the material and ideological specificities that constitute a particular group of women as say, ‘poor’. It is rather on finding cases of ‘poor’ groups of women, in order to prove that women as a group are poor’ (Mohanty, 1991). Such generalised arguments are also skilfully misused to further promote economic growth. Development policies now promote economic liberalisation, ‘so that returns of an efficient economy can be used for investments in women and girls’ (World Bank policy document for Beijing quoted by Baden and Goetz, 1998). Gender and Development theorists challenge the validity and construct of this generalisation, primarily on the basis that it again separates women as the central problem and reduces the relevance of unequal power relations, between women and men and amongst women.

#### **2.5.6 The Depoliticisation of Gender Issues in Development Planning and Practice**

The mainstreaming agenda, discussed above, is limited to devolving more uniformly, gender responsibilities in organisations. The interest only extends to external organisational outputs, not what happens internally within organisations in relation to gender (MacDonald et.al, 1997). This agenda is also missed out by the more recent goals of organisational development, which is similarly limited to bringing about change in organisations in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness of work. ‘Getting institutions right’, has remained restricted to getting institutions right for efficiency (Moore and Vaughan, 1994). Goetz (1997) argues that getting institutions right should involve getting institutions right from a gender perspective.

That organisations are not gender-neutral but inherently gendered has been discussed above. MacDonald et al. (1997) revealed through an analysis of different international development agencies that gender goals were still largely external goals of the organisation and there was significant vagueness on internal gender goals, aims and

objectives. In many organisations, gender was only recognised as a good idea. In others, gender goals and policy were restricted to paper and also only structured in relation to external goals. Amongst those who practised gender, the practice was limited to the external goals. Of the fifteen organisations analysed, only four showed gender-aware policies and practices internally within their own organisations. Kabeer (1994) identifies that 'There is a tendency in development programming and policy to compartmentalise gender issues to the micro-level. All other institutional levels are seen as gender-neutral'.

Despite the consistent feminist concern with organisational structure, there is in reality little space within organisations to challenge authority in demanding democratic principles, debate and participation in the formulation of objectives and organisational practices. Thus, despite the advocacy for gender-sensitivity, genuinely non-hierarchical organisations are the exception, rather than the rule (Molyneux, 2001).

### **2.5.7 The Challenges to Gender in Development**

Finally, the barriers to effective application of gender theories in practice result from the serious challenges to the ideological content of equality and equity in gender theory. Conservatives from many disciplines challenge gender approaches as ways of breaking down families; as means of legitimising immorality and of challenging the natural world order (Baden and Goetz, 1998). Examples of these challenges are legion.

'Are you trying to suggest that families should be broken down' (An Indian minister's confrontation to Agarwal's (1994) plea that women should be granted land rights).

At the Beijing conference (1995) there were vicious attacks condemning the gender perspective as anti-family, anti-religion and basically anti-life and claiming that this was not the perspective of women in many countries (O'Leary, 1995 quoted by Baden and Goetz, 1998).

The result of such challenges has been a significant distancing of women from the South; activists; and development practitioners, from the theory of gender and from Western feminists, who are still seen as the advocates of this theory.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Women were included as a special category in development programme and planning, as development goods and services were seen to have inequitably benefited men. Debates on gender equality identified that:

- women's inequality was a consequence of unequal social relations between women and men and
- women did not exist as a specific category as inequality between women and men was closely associated with other factors of social inequality.

Gender advocates argued that while special programmes for women would address needs specific to women, initiatives to address inequality would need addressing the context of unequal social relations.

Despite the volumes of literature on gender and development, the differences between sex and gender, or socially constructed identities remain poorly understood in development programming. Factors common between sex and gender make the distinction unclear and the fact that inequality between sexes is impacted by other social factors presents a picture of complexity. Consequently, issues of gender and gender inequality are poorly understood and variedly interpreted in development policy and practice. There is little clarity on how gender inequality, impacted by varying social factors across time and place, can be addressed through development projects.

Gender is widely mentioned in development policy and practice but holds different meanings for different actors, all of whom have different expectations from the goals of addressing gender issues. As links between gender and other social factors of inequality remain unclear, the common practice in development programming is to revert to interpreting gender inequality on the basis of sex. Involving women, or at

best women and men in the implementation of projects, is assumed to address gender inequality. Additionally, this approach has the obvious benefits of contributing to the dominant development goal of economically efficient delivery of development goods and services. Adhering to the theoretical meaning of gender would involve greater analysis of complex social relations and challenging of local cultures and traditions as well as global policies and practices, which are instrumental in determining inequity in allocation of resources. In the dominant efficiency approach to development, it is possible only to pay lip service to these concerns about inequality.

To effectively address gender issues, there is foremost the need for clarity in the definition of gender in relation to development policy and programming. Gender goals need to be specified in relation to the wider aspects of development policy and practice. This would provide greater clarity on what aspects of gender inequality can be realistically addressed within the limitations of a development project taking into consideration specific socio-economic contexts. This should resolve the ambiguity in writing down rhetorical jargon of what should be done by way of addressing gender issues.

Chapter 3 analyses drinking and/or domestic water policies and programming in order to determine whether the ambiguity, which has been identified here, in the consideration of gender and gender inequality extends to the domestic water sector as well.

## CHAPTER 3: GLOBAL WATER POLICIES AND GENDER

### 3.1 Introduction

Findings in chapter 2 reveal the varied interpretations of gender in development policy and planning. Chapter 3 analyses the application and interpretation in water policy and planning.

In contrast to the concerns on the misinterpretation of gender in most sectors of development policy and planning, great claims of *gender success* are made in the theory and practice of drinking and/or domestic water projects (Cleaver, 1997). ‘Domestic water supply interventions have the best records of integrating gender concerns’ (Athukorala, 1996). The basis for such claims is that women’s *increased* involvement in drinking water projects has contributed both to project efficiency and women’s empowerment. It is claimed that that gender issues no longer remain ambiguous and therefore mysterious in the drinking water sector. ‘Planners, managers and decision-makers in the domestic water sector are already aware of the *why* aspects of gender. The main reason that these issues are not sufficiently addressed, is that sector professionals and policy makers lack the know-how to embed gender and equity principles’ (An Associated Programme of the Global Water Partnership, Second World Water Forum, 2000).

Concerns guiding water policies have conceptually changed over time, however, Mehta (2000) argues that changes in water policies do not reflect the grounded facts and realities of water situations but draw on vague political, economic and theoretical assumptions. The analysis of evolving water policies in this chapter reveals a poor understanding and interpretation of gender as well as a deliberate attempt to fit the content of gender theory within an incompatible efficiency approach to water management.

### **3.2 Development Approaches to Water Management**

#### **3.2.1 1950s –1960s, Infrastructure and Health**

Water has been one of the earliest and most persistent concerns in development programme history. During the 1950s, the focus was on ‘Health for All’ in the developing nations (World Health Organisation, 1959, quoted by Agarwal et. al., 1981). Drinking water scarcity and unavailability of safe water and sanitation services were identified as problems universally experienced and contributing to poverty and poor health in the South (Shiva, 1989; Braidotti et al., 1994). In the welfare approach to development, there was large-scale external investment, assistance and political pressure to set up and operationalise centralised, highly technical water sector departments throughout the South. It was assumed that the economic investment in water infrastructure development would trickle-down to reduce poverty.

In the planning and management of water delivery systems specific local ecological and socio-economic contexts were ignored. This was primarily because sector interventions were planned and managed by engineering professionals trained in western knowledge systems and cultures (Cleaver and Elson, 1993). The masses of population in the South were considered poor, illiterate, unhygienic and unaware of the safe water and health links. Water taps and metal pipes came to symbolise ‘water supply’, ‘safe water’ and ‘water availability’ (Mahler, 1980 quoted by Agarwal et al., 1981; Shiva 1989). ‘Access to safe water’ was defined as a water stand-post located within 200 metres of the household (Agarwal et al., 1981).

There was large-scale generalisation of women’s roles in water management. ‘Reasonable access to water in the rural context is a situation where the housewife or members of the household do not have to spend a disproportionate part of the day in fetching the family’s water needs’ (World Health Organisation, 1959, quoted by Agarwal et al., 1981). These vague conceptualisations of women’s water roles did not merit any special concern in policy statements. Eco-feminists identify the nature of the early sector

interventions as predominantly patriarchal and masculine, where women were kept external to institutions of planning and decision-making (Shiva, 1989; Rocheleau et al., 1996).

From a gender perspective, the critical oversight in the 1960s water ideology was in the assuming of:

- Water abundance and/or water scarcity as determined by western tools of measure
- Homogeneous unserved populations and homogeneous members of a family as commonly experiencing water abundance and/or scarcity and
- A blueprint technological solution to divergent local problems.

### **3.2.2 The 1970s and 1980s, Women, Water and Economic Efficiency**

The 1970s and 1980s were marked by a series of changes in water management policies:

- The recognition of women as a constituency in development
- The classification of water as a finite environmental resource and therefore as an economic good and
- The identification of the need for women's involvement in water management.

As identified in chapter 2, women emerged as an important constituency in development in the early 1970s. Similarly, at the UN Water Conference at Mar del Plata in 1977, water was recognised as an environmental concern. The water sector was identified beyond drinking or domestic water and interventions were planned to include 'improving the knowledge, use and management of the world's fresh water resources'. However, domestic or drinking water was still prioritised among other water uses, as being critical to human wellbeing from a health perspective. The third United Nations Development decade (1981-1990) was declared as the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade and the Decade aim was, 'clean drinking water and sanitation for all by 1990'.

Eco-feminist movements in the late 1970s were instrumental in linking women with the environment. As discussed in chapter 2, women's roles in natural resource management were identified as inherently feminine and this argument was used to prove that women had a special relationship with and therefore knowledge of the environment. Boserup's (1970) findings as discussed in chapter 2, highlighted the need to 'productively integrate women in development'. The collective impact of these policy arguments translated into the need to involve women in environmental projects. The 'Women Environment and Development' (WED) approach signified the 'indivisible bond between women, environment and development' (Dankleman and Davidson, 1988).

The water sector readily accepted this approach to women's involvement. For the first time in the history of the water sector, the need was identified 'to promote full participation of women at all levels of water supply projects and to take full account the needs and concerns of women' (Water Decade Proceedings, UNICEF and INSTRAW, 1985). However despite the expansion of the water sector beyond drinking water management, women's water roles were only extended to include participation in drinking water projects. This was because of the links drawn between health and safe drinking water and of the thinking prevalent then, that health and wellbeing of the family were women's responsibility and concern.

More specifically, there were two objectives to women's involvement or participation during this period:

1. The first was related to the need to integrate women in water management. However there was a significant evaporation and misinterpretation of the eco-feminist essence of the women/water connection, which was translated as women's involvement in water projects. It was thus proclaimed that 'Water and sanitation was a women's sector and water projects were women's projects' (INSTRAW, 1989).

As stated earlier, Shiva (1989) argued that water projects were patriarchal and the imposed technology ignored indigenous water management practices and the supposed water knowledge of women, whom she identified as the natural water managers.

‘On the World Environment Day in 1979, hundreds of women of the Chipko movement (refer chapter 2) collected in Tehri with empty water pots. They were protesting against the deepening water scarcity but also against the failure of water supply schemes and of a model of science which saw metal pipes and concrete tanks as producers of water, and male engineers and technicians who fitted pipes and designed schemes, as providers of that water. When the district collector came to hear their grievances, they showed him their empty pots and asked him why, if paper plans and metal and concrete could ensure water, their pots were still empty? They said, ‘We have come to tell you that nature is the primary source of water, and we are the providers for our families. Unless the mountains are clothed with forests, the springs will not come alive. Unless the springs come alive, the taps will be dry. If you want to solve our water problems, please plan for water, not for pipes’ (Shiva, 1989).

Shiva’s argument that women needed to be involved in water resource management was translated in the dominant development ideology to women’s involvement in water projects. Water projects claimed to meet Women Environment and Development goals by involving women in:

- Adequate use of the provided water services
- Maintenance of provided water points
- Adequate recovery and use of waste water from the provided water services and
- Ensuring safe health practices in relation to water and sanitation.

Thus, women became hand-pump caretakers and mechanics and health educators, and grew fruits and vegetables in their kitchen gardens from wastewater, contributing to the infrastructure, health and environment goals of the Decade. It was assumed that women would readily and voluntarily participate because in return they were rewarded by improved access to drinking water and better health of the family (Leach and Green, 1995; Leach et al., 1996). The Decade approach to women’s involvement in India shows the purpose and intent of women’s involvement:

‘Women being the biggest users, collectors and handlers of water have a major role to play in rural water management as caretakers, health educators and animators and hand-

pump mechanics. A water committee of women members is given the responsibility of keeping all the hand-pumps in the village in a clean and sanitary condition. This involves cleaning of platforms and drains, planting of kitchen gardens to absorb excess water outflow and reporting of major breakdown in systems provided. The more literate, extrovert and eager women are chosen and trained in domestic health education' (Ghosh, 1989).

2. The second purpose of women's involvement relates to the exploitation of the women/water connection to meet the efficiency goal of water projects. As discussed below, the efficiency approach to development was applied in water policy to identify that water was an economic as well as a social good. Water development agencies readily accepted Boserup's (1970) claim of the economic potential of women's productive roles. Consequently, women's social roles in water management were *harnessed* to increase the efficiency of water projects (Davidson quoted by Braidotti et. al., 1994; Jackson, 1993, 1995, 1997; Leach et. al., 1995 and Baden, 1993). In the Indian context, it was identified that, 'Women play a vital role in India's rural economy. In this culture it is easier to instruct them technically. Women are given an honorarium of Indian Rupees 200 per year (4.4 US\$/per year) for maintaining 10 hand-pumps' (Ghosh, 1989).

In the efficiency perspective it was argued that where women were involved, water projects were highly successful and where they were not, projects failed to reach their objectives (Carloni, 1987; Dankleman and Davidson, 1988).

'It must be realised that unless women are perceived as an integral part of the income generating labour force, much of the potential that can be generated from the time and energy economised in water projects may be wasted for the community' (UNICEF and INSTRAW, 1985). Women's participation in the planning and implementation of water projects was said to contribute both to project efficiency and women's productivity and hence to women's improved status.

Policy statements defined that technological interventions would promote easier access to water and women's time would be saved, which they would then undisputedly invest in other productive income generating activities, which would result in improved social status for women. 'If women manage the water resources and the income subsequently earned, their position will structurally improve' (Dankelman and Davidson, 1988; Moser, 1989). As a result, income generation programmes for women were grafted onto water projects. Women were induced to grow vegetables, sew garments and make candles and chutney in the supposedly spare time they had in not having to trek long distances for water. It was assumed that the new roles for women as water system mechanics and the income generated from tailoring and marketing produce would make women economically efficient and socially independent resulting in an equalling of their status with men.

The emphasis on Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) involvement in water projects was significantly related to the assumed potential of NGOs to involve women. Non Governmental Organisations were assumed to be community-based and people centric (Moore, 1992; Bailey, 1996). As identified earlier women-led NGOs were identified to be particularly favourable for enabling women's involvement in the community in water projects.

The purpose of Non Governmental Organisation involvement in water policy reveals the same efficiency bias, observed in the adoption of 'women's involvement'. Bailey (1996) identifies that development agencies harnessed the comparative benefit of involving Non Governmental Organisations in water projects, in order to implement projects effectively and increase the scope for technical sustainability. 'Non Governmental Organisations were found to work on much smaller and thus more efficient scales than government agencies' (Davies et al., 1993).

In the bid to improve economic efficiency, there was also an increasing emphasis to involve the private sector in water development interventions. Examples drawn on Northern models of privatisation of water management and delivery were promoted as

possible options for water service delivery in the South. However private contractors with access to capital and technical resources, interested in providing and managing drinking water supply could not be located in developing countries (Franceys, 1997). Consequently, in water development programme, decentralised corporations, community organisations, small-scale contractors and NGOs were *loosely* identified as the *private sector* (ibid). The purpose of involvement of all these actors was to increase project efficiency, which translated to ‘projects implemented and maintained at least costs’. Non Governmental Organisations, despite their ideological disagreements in being cast in this role, accepted this role in water projects.

### **3.2.3 Critique of the Women, Environment and Development approach in Water Management**

Gender analysts claim that women’s involvement promoted through the approaches discussed above, did contribute to project efficiency, which meant ‘the implementation, management and maintenance of water delivery infrastructure at least costs’ but rarely resulted in improved productivity and improved social status for women (Kamminga, 1991; Leach, 1991; Jackson, 1993, 1995; Green and Baden, 1994).

#### **1. Improved Productivity for Women?**

##### **a. Improved Water Supply – improved for whom?**

Kamminga (1991) identified that the term *economic benefits* of improved services were confusingly used. ‘It was not clear who the actual receivers of the benefits were; the state, the project, the water-company, rural communities, households, which households, women and which women? Poor women and men often earned money by hauling and carrying water for others. New water supply systems would mean a loss of income for them’.

She identified that ‘time saved by women in collecting water may simply have been replaced in attending meetings, collecting user fees, cleaning water points and operating and maintaining hand-pumps and wells’. New systems of water delivery were often not

locally appropriate and therefore time was not always saved. The call for women's involvement in water projects recognised that 'women needed sources closer at hand' (Dankleman and Davidson, 1988). However the technical focus was on expanding coverage and constructing new water delivery systems and in involving women to make water delivery and management more efficient. This did not necessarily include improving the methods of water delivery infrastructure to address women's problems of carrying and transporting water.

The Decade aim to take account of the needs and concerns of women was ignored. The volumes of research and literature on women and water, which classified hazards faced by women in water transportation, were not used as Harding (1991) had seen the need for, to plan and change water delivery mechanisms from women's perspective.

Curtis (1986) documents from case studies in Kenya that methods of carrying water can result in injury and deformity. 'Backaches are common and 100 per cent Maasai women suffer and many are crippled by the age of 35. At Kenyatta hospital, doctors treat Kikuyu Bursa. She has osteo-arthritis of the soft tissue in the knee, as a result of load carrying. Doctors also had to operate on her thyroid glands as the neck muscles became so enlarged from load carrying. Accidents in carrying water are common, resulting in painful slipped discs, paralysis, injury to carried children, broken backs and even strangulation by the head strap used in carrying heavy water containers. Often in the poorer countries there are no facilities for treatment'.

Despite the claims of *improved* water supply, in many of the rural areas in developing countries, women, especially those who were poor, continued to queue at water stand-posts and carry water for domestic use from the source to home on their backs and heads. Ten years since the Water Decade call to respond to women's specific water needs, Green and Baden's (1994) evaluation of drinking water projects in Senegal documented that women's needs and concerns remain ignored. They found that because of the longer wait to use hand-pump, some women preferred to use the traditional rope and bucket mechanism as this prevented the long queuing time in accessing hand-pump water. Some older women also perceived the hand-pump as being too heavy to handle and therefore

not offering any advantage from the traditional act of drawing water from the well. 'A narrow focus on improving water supplies without due recognition of women's multiple water needs and work loads such as water transportation, has added to rather than reduced women's burdens. Improvements in water supply capacity, quality and means of transport require attention as a package to merit real benefits' (Green and Baden, 1994).

### **b. The Rhetoric and Reality of Economic Gains for Women**

Policy statements on the potential for women's economic gains completely ignored the more practical issues of heterogeneity amongst women, and therefore women's heterogeneous interests, the masculinisation of markets located in the public domain and the locally applied distinctions between improved economic efficiency and social status.

Firstly, it was seen in many instances where time was saved by improved water systems that women preferred to devote saved time to non-remunerative work: cooking, cleaning, washing, care of children, social and leisure activities (Kamminga, 1991; Green and Baden, 1994). Secondly, there was little analysis of why women were economically subordinate in different cultures and whether there was heterogeneity in women's potential to proposed economic gains. Boserup (1970) had herself identified the social reality of heterogeneity in cultures and women's access and control over economic resources. But there was little insight in the Women Environment and Development approach on the heterogeneity of different women's positions and conditions and their differing interests and concerns. There was a vague silence on whether women in patriarchal societies would be simplistically able to control what they would supposedly earn. Finally, it was assumed that universally, there was an open and responsive market for products made by women and that women despite their social reality of exclusion from public domains, would have equitable access to markets and equitably gain a foothold in established forms of local business (Mehta, 1996).

## **2. Improved Social Status for Women?**

The primary assumption in the Women, Environment and Development approach to women's involvement was that economic productivity was the only hurdle to overcoming

social inequality. It was therefore simplistically assumed that women's involvement in water projects would lead to both productive economic gains as well as improved social status.

#### **a. Water Roles are Women's Roles and Water Burdens are Women's Burdens**

Gender analysts argue that this approach cemented water roles and responsibilities as women's roles. The call for women's involvement in water projects did not identify that, 'for women even less than for others, one cannot assume that action reflects choice' (Jackson, 1995). Women's water roles, in the same way as their other prevailing gendered allocations of labour, are determined not by women's choice or instinct but by their social position (Agarwal, 1989; Leach, 1991; Jackson, 1993; Leach and Green, 1995).

The WED approach also perpetuated the unequal burdens of water responsibilities on women. The Decade call that 'Men *also* need to be sensitised to the need to alleviate women's burdens as the main carriers and users of water' which would involve challenging the hegemony of gender roles, was ignored. The emphasis was only on women's involvement. While capacity building was identified as a mechanism to enhance women's participation, there was again silence on how men were to be sensitised. There was no focus on the 'necessity to change traditional attitudes so that water burdens were shared equally by women and men at the family level' (Chibuye, 1996). Agarwal (1989, 1992) identified that gender and class-based (caste, race) relations structure the division of labour and distribution of resource rights. She therefore argues that approaches which conform to rather than challenge the socially established notions of gender and unequal gender roles and responsibilities are not capable of transforming gender inequalities.

#### **b. Depoliticisation of the Political Reality of Water Management**

The overriding technical focus on improving water supplies obscured the reality of social influences in water management. In the Women, Environment and Development

approach to water management, there is no recognition of 'the power differentiation that shapes water management and use in the socially heterogeneous village community' (Mehta, 2000). In field research in Nepal, Hobley (1991) identified that gender and class intersected in decision-making. 'Low-caste women, but particularly low-caste and generally younger women had the least decision-making opportunities and potentials'. In addition Leach (1991) identified that women's involvement was called for in contributing to project success and economic efficiency but little attention was paid to whether women had the resources or the institutional support for effective involvement and productive gains through involvement. The few concerns expressed about the capability of women's potential for management of water interventions, as seen from examples in India, were dismally shallow and apolitical. The only constraints to women's involvement as hand-pump caretakers in India were identified as '*minor* constraints such as the weight of the tool kit and the inconvenience of women's dress, the sari, during hand-pump repairs' (Ghosh, 1989).

Finally, women's involvement in the water sector was restricted to participation at the village level. There was little information on how water organisations operated, nor how they organised women's involvement (Davis et al., 1993; Pootschi, 1986; McCommon et al., 1990; Rodda, 1994).

### **c. The Rhetoric of Women's Participation**

Despite the emphasis on women's participation, Briffa (1999) identified that women-centred water projects were isolated and sparse, during the Decade. The overall impetus on meeting the quantified target of the Decade was essentially driven through official interventions and here the mechanism to involve women or to enable women to participate was identified as 'not established'. Non Governmental Organisations were involved in water projects with a dual objective of increasing women's involvement and improving project efficiency. However, the shift to adopting new practices was not smooth or immediate and therefore NGO involvement in the water sector, and hence women's involvement in water projects, was fragmented and insignificant (*ibid*).

In the light of these arguments, it can be broadly summarised that women's involvement was emphasised much more in the theory, than in the practice of water development interventions in the 1970s and 1980s. Where practised, women's involvement in water projects:

- Secured project efficiency which translated into project success at the cost of women's uncompensated involvement
- Marginalised the interests and concerns of the poor amongst women by overlooking the differences amongst women and
- Enhanced women's subordinate position by cementing the socially allocated and increasingly difficult task of fetching drinking water as women's inherently acquired task.

To summarise, despite the policy emphasis to 'involve women at all levels of water projects', the aim remained largely rhetorical and did not translate into practice. Where women were involved, there was no attempt at analysing which women were involved and what strategic gains were achieved. Women's involvement in this manner may have increased the efficiency of water projects but there was little realistic consideration of the socially imposed water burdens on women and women's specific needs and concerns in relation to water. Finally, the call for 'full participation of women in water projects' only implied women's participation at the community level. The relevance and need for women's participation at other institutional levels of the water sector was neither realised nor emphasised.

### **3.2.4 The 1990s – the Rhetoric of Gender in Water**

The language of water policies became increasingly ambiguous and incoherent in the 1990s. Several new approaches to water management were introduced but as identified by Mehta (2000), all were drawn from vague political and theoretical assumptions. The overall framework for water management was an underlying and over-arching efficiency approach. New policy approaches of decentralisation, demand-management, community participation, gender and empowerment were amalgamated to fit into the basic policy

goals of increasing economic efficiency in water management and delivery. The outcome was dualism in language and incoherence of policy goals and a vague and ambiguous interpretation of gender in water policy and planning.

### **1. The Learning from the Water Decade**

The Water Decade culminated with a meeting in New Delhi in 1990, where Decade experiences were analysed and attempts were made to develop common guiding principles for water management. Some of the observations of the outcomes of the meeting are as follows:

#### **a. The Incoherence of Policy Aims**

The New Delhi Statement was couched in a language of conceptual duality and the stated principles presented an incoherent inclusion of popular development themes. The meeting slogan was based on the need for universal coverage and universal right to water, 'Some for all, rather than more for some'. It was also declared at the meeting, that 'there must be widespread promotion of the fact that water is not a free good. Private enterprise will improve the efficiency of service delivery through cost recovery from the users'. The people-centered approaches written into policy did not show practical resonance with the dominant language of economic reform. However, logic was applied to the duality of approaches by stating that full cost pricing would help in expansion of services *to all*.

This declaration initiated a trend of conceptual dualism and misfit of social and economic issues in water policies.

#### **b. Decentralisation – Community Management of Water projects**

The New Delhi Statement called for decentralisation, or change in the role of the government from that of provider to promoter and/or facilitator of *private sector* involvement. As identified above, community institutions were classed together with the private sector as efficient service providers. At the same time concerns regarding community management were expressed in a language of empowerment and equity (Cleaver and Elson, 1993). 'Community management goes beyond simple participation.

It aims to empower and equip communities to own and control their own systems. Community management is the key to sustaining services for the poor'.

The concept of *community ownership* was promoted as an alternative to earlier centralised approaches to water management. The understanding was that by paying the costs for services, the *community* would own the services and this would serve as an incentive to sustain the infrastructure provided, which would lead to project and therefore economic efficiency. In much the same way as women had been identified to contribute to project success and sustainability, it was identified that user community participation enhanced the efficiency of water projects. 'Increased involvement is to be encouraged to avoid unused, inappropriate technology. Involvement can be through public meetings, workshops, interviews, demonstration etc. Though frustrating for the project design engineer, a link at this stage, with the sociologist can pay later dividends in terms of programme sustainability' (Bailey, 1996).

There was no clarity on who within the community was to be involved and how. While the need for involving the poor was expressed, it was also identified that, 'Initial approaches to community management should be made through traditional and established leadership. In many villages, the poorest people are not in the right stage to be able to contribute to a scheme. To work with the poorest would not necessarily be successful' (Ball and Ball, 1991).

The New Delhi statement reiterated the fact that women had 'influential roles in water management and hygiene education' (UNDP, 1990). The roles for women, as in the Water Decade, were as before limited to community level interventions and the emphasis on women's roles was dominated by the efficiency argument. 'A focus on the role of women can enhance the sustainability of basic improvements in services' (ibid). It was identified that capacity building would make community management effective and enable women to play leading roles.

Jackson (1993) argues that the obscure statements of community result in inequity in the imposition of work burdens. Drawing from Thomas-Slayter's (1992) study of class, gender and resource management, she showed that often when there are community-based, labour-intensive and socially unappealing tasks to be done, the poorer amongst the women, who have little social status, are mobilised to undertake them.

### **c. The Call for Demand Management**

Demand management was another policy approach voiced in the New Delhi forum (Bailey, 1996). The concept of demand management called for a change in the welfare policy of the state in water provision. The approach of a centralised and standardised system of *supplying water* was criticised as being inefficient and not reflective of nor responsive to user wants and needs. It was suggested that the demand-management approach would 'build a better understanding of what improvements in water services people want and are willing to pay for' (World Bank, 1993b).

Demand Management is currently defined as the Demand Responsive Approach (DRA):

#### **Demand Responsive Approach – The World Bank's Explanation**

The DRA takes into account that rich men, rich women, poor men and poor women may want different kinds of service. DRA provides information and allows user choices to guide key investment designs, thereby ensuring that services conform to what people want and are willing to pay for. In exchange for making contributions, in cash or kind for a satisfactory service, the stakeholders have a voice and choice in technology type, service level, service provider and management/financing arrangements (Dayal et al., 2000).

This approach remains pivotal in water management policies currently and therefore needs to be analysed in greater detail here.

World Bank led research articulated that people would pay for water services if services were provided as demanded (Altaf et. al., 1992, Whittington et. al., 1992). A range of models was developed for assessing people's *Willingness To Pay* (WTP), which literally

meant, ‘the maximum amount a user is willing to pay for a service that meets his/her need based essentially on the ability to pay’.

However, there were several complex issues in people’s *Willingness to Pay*, which remained unpacked. Firstly, the Bank Research Team themselves identified that the percentage of income a household is willing to pay for improved services varies widely and is also determined by many other variables (World Bank, 1993b). Despite this observation, it was argued that *people* can and will pay at least five per cent of their income for improved water services systems (Cleaver and Lomas, 1996).

Secondly, it was identified on the basis of a research study in Zimbabwe, that women are willing to pay 40 percent more than men for an improved domestic water supply (Briscoe and deFerranti, 1989). What was not explored was if women’s willingness to pay more translated realistically to ability to pay. Cleaver and Elson (1995) report on the marginality of this argument that women are willing to pay more, in comparison to the prominently gender neutral language of the demand-management approach:

- ‘*Users* must decide on the type of services and improvements to be made’
- ‘*Users* must pay the costs of the chosen services’
- ‘*Users* must take responsibility for maintaining the systems they have chosen’.

There was no reckoning of who the user was and who decides what for whom?

There were many other gaps in the WTP argument. Loza (1997) reports that gender and class inequalities determine access to and control of water, financial resources as well as information.

The demand management approach identified the household as a unitary decision-making institution with common interests and concerns. However, as identified in chapter 2, ‘the household is more realistically identified as a social area of both co-operation and conflict’ (Sen, 1990). It has been shown by widespread research that women have low cash incomes and low control over family incomes within the household. ‘Through

households, women and men do to some extent pool and share money, but in ways that are generally biased against women' (Dwyer and Bruce, 1988).

In most societies water roles are identified as women's social obligations and the subsequent low value attached to women's labour and time in water management impacts on their *Willingness to Pay*. 'Women themselves are conditioned to under-value their water roles. A woman who spent 4 hours every morning fetching water over a distance of 8 kilometres when asked about her contribution in water management said, "Nothing really" (Bhatt, 1995). Reddy (1999) proved that women's water roles held little relation to a *household's* willingness to pay for water. She identified that in water arid western India, despite the extreme scarcity of water, the *Willingness To Pay* was much less than five per cent of the total household expenditure. 'Low opportunity costs of women and children, who are the fetchers of water, coupled with socio-cultural factors such as attitudes towards female labour, may be vital in explaining the low WTP'. Nicol (1998) points out that *Willingness To Pay* arguments do not consider children's roles as water carriers and that their time is undervalued, and that children have little access to making decisions on *Willingness To Pay*.

Finally, the DRA does not question the equity issue, or what is commonly referred to as the Rights/Needs argument of providing more or less water to the rich and the poor on the basis of ability to pay. Studies which detail the indirect costs incurred by the poor in not having access to clean and safe water are often used to show the cost-benefit analysis of charging for water (Mehta, 2000). The poor do pay money for water especially in urban contexts, calculated in some instances at 25 per cent of household incomes (Barlow, 1999). However, as Harrison (1993) reported, payment for water by the poor does not ensure access to safe, reliable and adequate water. As identified above, multiple social variables determine access to safe, reliable and adequate water for the socially vulnerable. The fact that the poor pay for water does not translate simplistically to ability and therefore *Willingness to Pay* but rather to the inequity in addressing the needs of the poorest amongst communities. Mehta (2000) identified that for the very poor, free water is the best source of water. The simplistic arguments put forward for pricing water are

based on vague theoretical arguments rather than on the realities of poverty and social inequity in relation to access to resources (*ibid*). The arguments that pricing is pro-poor misses out on the realisation that instituted mechanisms of paying for water are often not equitable and not always convenient for the poor, especially for women and children. Capital required for payments may be difficult to arrange in the ways in which paying for water is planned, for those with no fixed means of income. Commenting on the inappropriateness of the demand responsive approach, Bajracharya et al., (2001) reported from a field survey in Nepal that 'it was not possible to identify water payment plans with the very poor whose survival is based on day-to-day, fragile and insecure livelihood strategies'. For those with no security of land and/or home, ownership of water delivery systems emphasised in the principles of community management may not be the preferred or appropriate option.

In the British Department for International Development supported Gomti project in the state of Uttar Pradesh in North India, it was identified that the more poor amongst the slum dwellers do not own land. They live on land-spaces or huts, for which rent is paid often to local mafia groups who claim ownership rights to these properties. Tenants here have precarious living and housing rights and face eviction for the slightest disagreements both with the local authority as well as with the proxy landlords. Vulnerability increases proportionately with poverty and social insecurity. For example in many slums, illegal immigrants from Bangladesh are virtually continuously on the move from fear of police harassment and this vulnerability is exploited by their landlords. For the slum dwellers in this case, there may be attraction in paying for improved water but there is little attraction in paying for improvements in water delivery systems. When the land on which they live does not and in all probability will not belong to them, why should they invest in improved services? In many instances however, the poorest families could not afford to pay. For them, free water was the best source of water. The long-term cost and benefits of water and health did not match their precarious survival needs. The same analysis can be applied to women, who generally do not hold rights to land and other property resources (Joshi, 2001a).

## **2. Beyond the New Delhi Conference**

Subsequent to the New Delhi Conference policy arguments increasingly pointed out that water management was impacted upon by factors beyond technical details. A multidisciplinary approach to water management was adopted. ‘Economists, health and hygiene specialists and environmentalists entered the water sector, which had so far been dominated by civil engineers’ (Braidotti et al., 1994). Nevertheless, Cleaver and Elson (1993) identified that within the multidisciplinary context, engineers and economists dominated decision-making in the sector.

There was increasing emphasis to promote participatory approaches in planning and maintaining water delivery systems and services (Leach, 1994; Chambers, 1994). Participation is defined as the self-analysis of social and gender disparities by local people and the enabling and encouraging of the disadvantaged within a community to voice their concerns and plan for their own development (Chambers, 1994). In promoting participation gender analysts caution the need to identify muted voices as ‘social and ideological domination often leaves socially vulnerable groups and individuals inhibited in vocabulary and voice’ (Gujt and Shah, 1998; Jackson, 1995).

However, in water policies and projects the community continued to be identified as a homogeneous group:

- unitary communities able to make decisions that meet everyone’s needs
- competent and resourceful communities that will efficiently manage water, a task in which entire governments had failed and
- equitable communities who will decide who pays what charges and equitably spread service benefits (Cleaver and Elson, 1995).

The promoters of this approach warned that ‘participation could overpoliticize issues’ (Moigne, 1992).

Demand management was identified as complementary to community participation and on these grounds, it was identified that, ‘community based organisations should have the

legal authority to own land, employ people, maintain a bank account and collect user fees (*ibid*). However there was little understanding of the clarity of who within the community would have authority to perform these activities. Cleaver and Elson (1993) argue that the creation of ownership rights confer opportunities for the rich and powerful within the community to appropriate preferential services. Manundu (1997) identifies that women are not usually equal partners when communities create public right over any resource.

Several international and regional water forums were held, post Water Decade. Those significant to the context of global water policy are highlighted below:

### **1. The Dublin Principles – Water is an Economic Good**

At the Dublin International Conference on Water and Environment (1992) global principles for water management were announced and endorsed by participants from about a hundred countries. Since then, the Dublin principles have been central to global water policies. The Dublin meeting was especially affirmative in declaring water as an economic good, ‘the basic human need for water was no longer considered as a criterion for supply’ (Black, 1996, 1998):

#### **The Dublin Principles**

- freshwater is a finite, vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment
- water management should be participatory, involving planners and policy makers at all levels (decisions taken at the lowest appropriate level)
- women play a central part in the provision, managing and safeguarding of water
- water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognised as an economic good (UNCED, 1992).

### **2. The Rio Earth Summit – the Rhetoric of Gender**

Despite the advancement in conceptual thinking on gender, water policies still talked of women’s roles in water management. In Agenda 21, the documented outcome of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, there was only tokenistic mention of the term gender, as policies actually related to women’s roles in water resource management. This initiated the

popular trend in the water sector to literally replace the term gender in place of the term women as had been used earlier. Guijt (1993) identified that Agenda 21 called for women's full participation but the term 'full participation', itself was not clarified.

The language of water policy concerns in Agenda 21 was as incoherent and dualistic as that in the New Delhi statement. One part of the text stated that 'all human beings have the basic right to access clean water at an affordable price'. Another policy statement spelt out that 'water is a finite resource and therefore water users need to be charged appropriately'. Guijt (1993) identifies that the terms, affordable, appropriate were vaguely obscure.

### **3. The World Bank Policy Paper on Water**

The 1992 World Bank Development Report documented the links between water and health, and highlighted that investments in water had high economic returns (World Bank, 1992). Water was chosen as a special topic in the Bank-hosted international conference on 'Environmentally Sustainable Development' in early 1993. Water management experiences of the distinctly different contexts of Pakistan and France were discussed to identify that water management at local levels was economically not viable without greater decentralisation and participation (World Bank, 1993b).

Based on these discussions and on Bank-led research, the World Bank policy paper on water was released in 1993. In this paper, policy approaches to decentralisation, privatisation, participation and demand management were detailed and the benefits in adopting these approaches were predicted for the water sector (World Bank, 1993a).

The paper highlighted the need for pricing water and privatisation of water management systems in order to ensure project and cost efficiency (Bailey, 1996). Decentralisation was promoted, claiming that it would ensure greater ownership and sustainability of water delivery systems. Citing the inadequacy of existing government facilities to meet the water needs of people, the paper called for sector reforms to enable market institutions to deliver water and also to strengthen the capacity of governments in the new enabling role (Panos, 1998).

Decentralisation was linked to community participation and valued for the potential to increase user ownership of projects, project sustainability and cost recovery.

Some donors like DANIDA (1991, 1992) interpreted demand-management as inclusion of all categories of water users in setting priorities and choosing technology, however, the Bank policy paper defined demand-management as, 'the use of price, quantitative restrictions and other devices to limit the demand of water'.

To summarise, several new approaches to water management were introduced in the 1990s. These approaches were drawn largely from ambiguous theoretical assumptions and reflected little of the reality of poverty and social inequity and the impacts of these in water management and use. Water was classified as an economic good and an efficiency approach guided the overall framework of interventions in water delivery and management. Decentralisation and demand-management became cutting edges in the approach to water management. Calls for community participation and women's involvement were co-opted in ways to effectively contribute to decentralisation and demand-management approaches to water management. Gender was still interpreted as women's involvement, in a manner very similar to the 1980s approach to water management. The collective outcome of this process was dualism in language and incoherence of policy goals and a misinterpreted of the theory and content of the term gender in water policy and planning.

### **3.2.5 The Current Water Vision**

The current global water policies are literally, a mixing pot of policy concerns ranging from women's involvement in water management as promoted in the Water Decade, the New Delhi Statements, the Dublin Principles and the Bank policy paper on water management. Additionally, recent popular policy concerns such as, empowerment, poverty alleviation and equity have been added. The basic theme of water policy remains the goal of economic efficiency. The attempt to place gender, equity and poverty goals in

this policy framework, with little analysis of what is complementary or contradictory, results in a mismatch in policy aims and perspectives resulting in incoherence in policy objectives.

The World Water Vision announced at the second World Water Conference at the Hague (2000) summarises the current global water policy (World Water Council, 2000). The Vision aim, claimed to have been developed through participatory consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and professionals reads: 'In 2025, almost every woman and man, girl and boy in the world's cities, towns and villages will enjoy safe and adequate water and sanitation'. There is strong policy emphasis in the Water Vision on an integrated approach to water management. This is identified as co-ordination in policy and practice between the four sub-sectors of water, defined as water for people, for food and rural development, for nature and water in rivers.

The Vision document emphasises empowerment and equity, however as observed in the past, these approaches are couched in the dominant language of efficient economic reform. The approach to water management remains the same:  
'Move to full cost pricing of water services'.

The Dublin principles are not only adhered to in the Water Vision but the document also mentions that 'the challenge lies in developing a comprehensive set of practical principles for implementation of the Dublin aims'.

There is strong emphasis on community management approaches. The objective of the vision is to 'empower women, men and communities to plan, organise and implement their water needs with a view to conserving the quality and quantity of freshwater and water ecosystems'. However as before, the community is recognised as an apolitical, static, relatively homogeneous institution, unitary in its demands and equitable in its actions (Mehta, 2000). In the document there are dual interpretations of the community. On the one hand, it is mentioned that *community*, assumed to be altruistic will be able to regulate effectiveness and equity in the functioning of private organisations in water

delivery and management. On the other hand, it is also mentioned that the *community* itself is as an efficient model of the private sector. There is little clarity on who within the community will be able to and will therefore regulate the potential negative impacts of privatisation. Such examples show the ambiguity and incoherence in policy approaches in the Vision document.

Finally, women and/or gender do merit special mention in policy, but as identified by Guijt (1993) nearly a decade ago, references to gender are seemingly random and rhetorical. Women are still recognised as 'pivotal, as providers and users of water and as guardians of the living environment' and this understanding is misinterpreted as gender-awareness. Gender is interpreted in the current policy document as 'both women and men'. It is identified that 'an exclusive focus on either men or on women has not worked nor led to effective and sustainable services' (Van Wijk and Francis, undated). Visscher (2000), one of the co-ordinators of the gender session at the Hague said, 'Men will no longer have to grow long hair to resemble women in order to derive the benefits of water projects. Water projects would now meet the needs of men as well'. This understanding of meeting the needs of both men and women is the new gender focus of the sector.

The purpose of the Second World Water Forum at the Hague was to debate, discuss, appropriately modify and finally endorse the World Water Vision. The discussion and modification was to be done by water researchers, policy-makers and practitioners and the Vision was to be endorsed by a Ministerial Conference in the political finale to the process. The outcome of the debating process was a mixed response to the policies announced and the process of formulating policy concerns. However, the Ministerial Conference endorsed the Vision Statement and the stated objectives without any significant amendment to the statement presented at the start of the meeting. The endorsement implies that the Vision strategy now informs water policies of most External Support Agencies and national governments.

Some key issues of debate and discussion during and beyond the World Water Forum are summarised below to capture the concerns shared about the incoherence in the stated water policies.

Concern was expressed by Non Governmental Organisations, both from the North and the South to the way in which ‘issues of equity and pro-poor policies were clubbed so loosely together with the pursuit of full cost recovery’ in the Water Vision.

In the Vision document cost recovery through pricing of water is justified by pointing to a formidable picture of a growing global water crisis especially in the developing world. Scarcity is forecast as a potential cause of conflict between nations, people and the multiple-use needs for water and it is argued that pricing water will serve to ensure conservation. Mehta (2000) questions this argument from several angles. She questions the validity in declaring a global water crisis in a homologous manner, which obscures the causes and problems of water scarcity, which are actually divergent and impact upon different individuals and different groups of people very differently. ‘Water scarcity is not felt universally by all. In water scarce arid western India, irrigation pumps work twenty-four hours a day, while poor women find their wells run dry’ (*ibid*).

In the Vision document, market remedies and privatisation are prescribed as solutions to water scarcity and equal, improved access to water. Mehta (2000) questions the equity focus in the links drawn between privatisation of water services and equal access to all. ‘Some form of demand management is *also* required to curb the perverse (swimming pools in desert Arizona and sugarcane fields in arid Western India) over consumption of water by the rich and powerful actors’.

There were radical protests during the Hague meeting against the adoption of privatisation principles. Serageldin (2000), representing the World Water Council, declared that ‘it is expensive to be poor and turning over water management to a private corporation is the best way to provide good services to the poor at a suitable price’. These statements draw little insight from past research, which identified that privatisation of water was not always poor-friendly. ‘Privatisation is centered towards customers who can

and will pay and people not paying for services have just been disconnected' (Barlow, 1999; Petrella, 2000).

There was significant debate and protest on how the Vision Declaration had turned back in history to declare water as a basic human need, in contrast to earlier expositions of water as a basic right. This policy change was challenged on the grounds that adopting such a conservative position would dislocate the urgency and authority to demand water for all. Some international agencies such as UNICEF, the British Department for International Development and the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council did not endorse this particular Vision statement, arguing for the need to view water as a basic human right. However both arguments, for and against the statement are vague theoretical assumptions. These same international agencies endorse policies of decentralisation and demand-management and on the other hand also identify water as a human right. Mehta (2000) points out that if water is a human right, the state should have a key role in meeting this right, but this would seriously conflict with the decentralisation argument. There is thus no clarity on who should and/or would assume responsibility nor how this right would be enforced. This reveals another example in the incoherence in policy (ibid).

Going back to the discussions on gender, the Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) emerged from the Associated Programme of the Global Water Partnership. The Alliance as it stands currently, consists of a heterogeneous group of individuals and organisations led and managed by a Steering Committee. The organisational objective of the Alliance is to *mainstream* gender in integrated water resources management. The Gender and Water Alliance was initially promoted and supported by the Global Water Partnership, which is an association of major international actors involved in water management. Consequently, the objective of the Alliance was not to challenge the duality and rhetoric of dominant water policies, but rather to 'develop tools, modules and manuals on gender for informing planners, managers and decision makers' (ibid). A three-year plan of action for the Gender and Water Alliance has been currently endorsed and the Japanese International Co-operation for Aid, the British Department for International Development

and the Netherlands Government have committed funds to the proposed *gender mainstreaming* initiatives identified by the Gender and Water Alliance. One of the activities of the Gender and Water Alliance is to compile gender disaggregated data and to provide '*simpler tools to do gender*' for water practitioners and '*simpler tools for understanding gender*' for decision-makers (An Associated Programme of the Global Water Partnership, 2000). Mainstreaming here also results in the universalisation of gender issues. The Alliance advocates mention the need for women's integration in order to address the 'feminisation of poverty'. The focus is not as Mohanty (1991) identified on uncovering and challenging why particular groups of women are poor and disempowered. Rather the focus is on finding more cases of 'poor groups of women', in order to try and prove that women are, as a group 'poor'.

To summarise, empowerment and equity are the popular jargon in current water policies. These terms are used liberally in water policies even though the theoretical content of the terms draw little parallel with the dominant approaches to water management, which currently advocate demand-management and water pricing. Gender is interpreted as women or even as women and men and gender mainstreaming as integrating women in development. This misinterpretation of gender issues in water sector policies and practises is alarming especially because the very advocates of gender in water misinterpret these issues.

### **3.3 Water Management Policy Initiatives beyond the World Water Forum**

Two policy approaches to water management, both recently developed, have been widely acclaimed by both theoreticians and practitioners. Both approaches aim to provide better tools to analyse and address equity and poverty concerns in water management policies and practices. The sustainable livelihoods (SL) approach to water management, developed by researchers and academics identifies the need for 'assisting poor communities in generating demand and in enforcing local initiatives of regulation in privatisation approaches' (Nicol, 2000). This approach recognises that at the user level there is an existing integrated system of water management and use at the user level. In

order to sustain varying livelihoods, different households use water for various purposes and from different sources. The approach defines the need for the water sector to move away from a drinking water and health focus and to identify inter-related and multiple water needs for sustaining different livelihoods, if it is to realistically address integrated water management and demand-driven approaches. Nicol (2000) argues that given the wide diversity of water needs, ecological situations' and social, political and economic disparities, a single technical approach to water management will not work. The primary purpose of the sustainable livelihoods approach is to ensure that there is a better identification of the voiceless and choiceless within a community and a mechanism to provide them a greater voice in making water decisions and demands in their favour. Moving beyond the community, the sustainable livelihoods approach identifies the need for an analysis of and linking of water institutions across policy, organisations and practice. The Sustainable Livelihoods approach has a strong equity focus, but mostly from a inter-household poverty perspective. Gender is mentioned as one key social variable in the approach to equal and equitable water management practices, however, it is also recognised that there are other inter-related factors of social discrimination in determining inequality in access to and control of water in the attempt to sustain livelihoods.

The Environmental Entitlements complements the sustainable livelihoods approach to water management. Additionally, it has a more rigorous gender focus. This approach identifies that user communities are not socially, politically and/or economically homogeneous and that there are differing water needs based on differing livelihoods strategies adopted by various households and individuals (Leach et. al., 1997). Thus, systems of water management, use and control are based on the power positions and livelihood priorities of distinct individuals or groups within the community. These systems are also not static, nor sequential in resulting in water degradation or conservation, but are based more realistically on social, political and economic changes at macro and micro levels, which affect and impact upon changes at local levels. An environmental entitlements approach is one that:

- enables an identification of differing water needs as well as the social variability in the given social, political and economical context of the specific area and
- identifies those institutional arrangements, formal or/and informal, which facilitate the development of a legitimate, effective water management strategy.

The environmental entitlements approach is reflective of the specific livelihood needs of all stakeholders in ways and processes that are especially responsive to the water needs of the more voiceless and choiceless (Leach, et. al., 1997). Leach identified that the Environmental Entitlements approach, based strategically on people's livelihood priorities, may be contrary to popular ideals of environmental conservation. This does not imply that reinforcement of socio-economic equity produces ecologically undesirable outcomes instead it leads to a deeper understanding of the people-environment-livelihoods approach, which is 'more likely to lead to processes worthy of the epithet, sustainable development'.

The Sustainable Livelihoods approach and the Environmental Entitlements framework have not yet been effectively translated into water policy or into implementation strategies and are at best used currently, as analytical tools.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The approach to water policies and management has predominantly focused on achieving effective water supply to targeted consumers as economically as possible. All other policy concerns are either co-opted in order to draw parallel with the core argument of project efficiency; ignored or paid lip service in a few lines of rhetoric in policy and project documentation.

The observation that the domestic water sector is relatively gender aware in comparison to other development interventions shows a lack of critique of gender issues in water policies and management. It is evident that water management policies and practice have

not been issues on which the advocates of gender and development have focused their attention and debates.

Chapter 2 showed that the term gender is interpreted in various ways and different aims are expected of gender goals in development policy and planning. The terms gender, equity and poverty are mentioned in water management policies against this background of ambiguity. The common practice has however been to interpret gender as women and to assume that all women in the targeted communities are poor. Involving women in water delivery projects is assumed to address the policy goals of gender equity and poverty alleviation. There is little that is evident in literature or research which clarifies the gender, poverty and equity links in water management and use, or conversely how water delivery and management approaches have addressed these issues in differing socio-economic contexts. This chapter reveals how policy makers and planners have through their rhetoric, taken on huge responsibilities of addressing gender inequity and poverty through the medium of water projects. They claim gender success on the basis of parameters which show little relation to the complexity and institutional construct of inequality as illustrated in chapter 2.

Later chapters will explore gender, poverty and equity linkages in water management and use, in specific local contexts, as well as gender inequality in related water institutions beyond the community. The role of water policies and projects in addressing or misinterpreting gender will then be explored in relation to these findings. The purpose of analysing the rhetoric and reality of gender issues in water policies, management and use is to move towards identifying more practical and realistic gender and equity goals across the different institutional levels of the domestic water sector.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

### **4.1 Introduction**

Findings in chapter 2 reveal that attributes of behaviour, roles and responsibilities termed collectively as gender, are assigned socially to men and women in any given society. The framework of socially constructed roles and norms varies across different cultures, but is predictable and routine or institutionalised within a specific social context. Gender is not isolated to relations between individuals but extends beyond the private domain of the household to public, formal and informal institutions. Thus it follows that organisations or the formal shapes that certain institutions take are also gendered. This happens because individuals determining organisational rules and functions reflect and practise the culturally inherent gender biases of the society of which they form a part. Therefore organisational policies are also gendered. As Whitehead (1979) identified, 'gender is never absent'.

Chapter 3 reveals that the term gender is interpreted in water policy and programming, as women and/or as women and men and the gender objective of water projects is to involve women or men and women. Gender goals in water policies are isolated as community level interventions and gender inequities at other institutional levels remain largely unidentified. This interpretation of gender contradicts the above analysis of the term.

On the basis of these findings from secondary literature, it can be argued broadly that there is a discrepancy in the consideration of gender issues in policy statements, institutional capacities and field experiences of the drinking water sector. The purpose of this research is to analyse and therefore validate this argument through primary research in the field. Chapter 5 analyses gender issues in some rural remote hill villages, which are identified below, broadly identifying social relations between women and men in the hill community. Chapter 6 studies the impact of social relations on the distribution of access to and control and use of domestic water in one of the above village communities, and on the management, roles and responsibilities in relation to these three aspects of domestic

water supplies. Chapters 7 and 8 present a gender analysis of the policies of specific water organisations: how gender issues are conceived, interpreted and practised by different water organisations and the impact of specific water projects on the social order of water management and use in the target communities.

This chapter details and explains the methodologies used in the thesis in researching and analysing:

- gender issues in water management in a specific rural context and
- *if, how and why* gender issues are misinterpreted by drinking water projects in policy, and in organisational and field practices.

#### **4.2 Research Areas**

It was the prerogative of the Department for International Development that the research, which is reported in this thesis should analyse official and non-governmental drinking water projects, involving a range of water organisations across three states<sup>1</sup> in different geophysical locations in India.

Responding to these concerns, the domestic water projects listed below were assessed in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and Uttarakhand<sup>2</sup> (refer to Map 4.1)<sup>3</sup>, during the period extending from June 1998 to February 2000. The research involved the analysis of project policies and objectives, analysis of organisations involved in planning, implementing and managing the projects and the impact of the projects at the community level.

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<sup>1</sup> State refers to an administrative division of the federal governmental structure. The three-tier system of India's federal democratic structure consists of the central, state and local governments. The country is divided into 29 states and 6 Union Territories. States are normally subdivided into 20 to 30 districts, each comprising approximately 50 blocks (mandals) of approximately 50 villages each.

<sup>2</sup> Uttarakhand is a newly formed state in India and was earlier the Uttarakhand region of the state of Uttar Pradesh. The two districts, Nainital and Pithoragarh are located in Uttarakhand.

<sup>3</sup> Note: All maps are attached as separate sheets at the end of the chapter.

#### **4.2.1 Two Official Domestic Water Projects Funded, Planned, Implemented and Maintained by Official Water Organisations:**

1. Rampur village<sup>4</sup> in Banbirpur block in the terai region of Lakhimpur district in the north east of the northern state of Uttar Pradesh (refer to Map 4.2). Research was conducted in the village in September, 1998.
2. Lomagarh village in Tikkabali block in Kondhamal<sup>5</sup> district in the central highland region in the eastern state of Orissa (refer to Map 4.3.1 and 4.3.2). Research was conducted in the village in August and October-December, 1999.

#### **4.2.2 A Multilateral Water Project:**

The Uttar Pradesh Rural Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation project, also known as the SWAJAL<sup>6</sup> Project was planned and supported by the World Bank. The SWAJAL project was managed by the state Department of Rural Development and implemented by local non-governmental organisations and the private sector in four villages in the Central Himalayan state of Uttaranchal (refer to Map 4.4.1). This project is being implemented in 1000 villages in four subsequent batches over a span of six years (1997-2002). It was therefore possible to research different phases of the project in different villages:

1. Hilay village in Belparao block in Nainital district (refer to Map 4.4.2). Research was conducted in this village during the project planning phase in June 1998.
2. Nachuni village in Dewal Thal block in Pithoragarh district (refer to Map 4.4.2) where the project was being implemented in August 1998.
3. Himtal and Mala villages in Gangolihat block in Pithoragarh district (refer to Map 4.4.2). The project had been completed in these two villages, at the times of field research, in July-August 1998, in September 1999 and in September 2000.

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<sup>4</sup> Note: All village and block names are mentioned in proxy as a mark of respect to the researched community and to the organisational staff involved in the project.

<sup>5</sup> Earlier, part of district Phulbani. Phulbani and Kondhamal are two separate districts now, but the maps continue to depict the entire area as Phulbani.

<sup>6</sup> In the local language 'Swa' means pure or self, 'jal' means water; therefore SWAJAL translates as 'pure water' or 'own water'

Research was also conducted in September 2000 in Chuni village in Gangolihat block in district Pithoragarh (refer to map 4.4.2) where the World Bank supported SWAJAL project had not worked, to broadly analyse:

- social relations of inequality in the village and their impact on the distribution of socially allocated roles, responsibilities, resources and power and
- gendered roles and responsibilities in relation to water use and management and socially determined access to, control and distribution of water and water resources, or the social order of water management.

The purpose of this analysis was also to establish a baseline to identify more realistically the impact and outcomes of the World Bank supported water project. The locational proximity and homogeneity of socio-economic characteristics of this village with other villages in Nainital and Pithoragarh made this comparison possible.

#### **4.2.3 Organisations Analysed**

In the above-identified projects, a gender analysis of the following organisations was undertaken:

##### **1. Government of India**

- Planning Commission, Government of India
- Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission

These two organisations were visited intermittently over the period of the research from December 1998 – December 2000.

##### **2. Uttar Pradesh from June 1998 – December 1998; October – December 2000.**

- Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam, Lucknow
- Human Resource Development Cell, Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam, Lucknow
- Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam, Lakhimpur district
- Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam, Banbirpur block

- Project Management Unit, World Bank assisted Uttar Pradesh Rural Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation Project (SWAJAL Project), Lucknow

### **3. Uttaranchal from June – September 1998; August – September 1999 and in September 2000**

- District Project Management Unit, Uttar Pradesh Rural Water Supply and Environmental Sanitation Project (SWAJAL Project) Pithoragarh district
- Uttar Pradesh Academy of Administration
- Centre for Development Studies
- Himalayan Study Circle
- Consulting Engineering Service

### **3. Orissa from July – December 1999**

- Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation, Bhubaneswar
- Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation, Phubani district
- Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation, Tikkabali block
- District Rural Development Authority, Phubani district
- Jagruti
- Samanwita

Names of the persons met in the above villages and in the identified organisations are detailed in Annex 1.

#### **4.3 Selection of Research Methodologies**

The research focus spreads across the institutional levels of policies, organisations and field practices of drinking water projects. This demanded the selection of a methodological framework or frameworks, which would enable an analysis of gender issues across institutional levels. A review of popular gender analytical frameworks compiled by March and others (1998) and of social analysis frameworks outlined in chapter 3 revealed that:

1. As identified in chapter 2, in most popularly used gender analytical frameworks sex rather than gender is the focus of analysis.
2. Most of the gender analytical frameworks are restricted to the analysis of gender issues at the community level.
3. The Sustainable Livelihoods and Environmental Entitlements approaches identify water as a livelihoods or environmental resource and therefore demand the analysis of the inter-relatedness of water management across different water sub-sectors across different institutional levels. While this approach responds to the reality of water management in the field, it is too broad in relation to the specific drinking water focus of this project.
4. Amongst the gender analytical frameworks compiled by March and others (*ibid*) the Social Relations Approach appeared most appealing in the context of this research, as it offers:
  - an emphasis on gender and therefore on social relations rather than sex
  - an emphasis on the complexity of gender inequity across cross-cutting issues of caste, class, race and other such issues and
  - an understanding of gender inequality across inter-related institutional levels of policy, organisations and field practices.

The following section provides an analysis of the Social Relations Approach.

#### **4.4 The Social Relations Approach Framework for Gender Analysis**

Kabeer's (1994) analyses of the theory of gender in development policy and programming forms the fundamental base of the Social Relations Approach, which she identifies is based on a socialist feminist ideology. The specific structure and content of the framework was developed by Kabeer and Subrahmanian (1996) and discussed later by Kabeer (1999).

The Social Relations Approach framework tries to retain rather than simplify the complexity of the politics of gender issues and provides an understanding of gender in the form of a structural framework, which can then be applied to suit specific contexts.

(Kabeer, 1999). Accordingly the framework is built around broad concepts of gender and gender inequality. The conceptual nature of the framework makes its use applicable across different institutions and cultures. However, because of its analytical, conceptual structure, the Social Relations Approach framework is not prescriptive and therefore does not present the ‘tools to do gender’ as other frameworks outlined in chapter 2, do. Simply put, ‘There are no boxes to tick off’ (Subrahmanian, 2000). This is because as Kabeer says ‘there is no single correct way of *doing gender*’.

The Social Relations Approach is explained below by discussing the key arguments of the framework. The issues discussed here were used in guiding the research and in analysing the research findings. As the Social Relations Approach does not identify prescriptive tools for collecting information, data collection methodologies were adopted from other sources and these are detailed later in this chapter.

#### **4.4.1 A Broad Summary of the Social Relations Approach**

1. At the heart of the Social Relations Approach the need is identified to distinguish sexual difference or biology from social difference or gender and to understand that social roles, capacities and attitudes are not rooted inherently in biology. The main objective of the framework is ‘to shift attention away from looking at women and men as isolated categories to looking at social relationships through which they are mutually constituted as unequal social categories’ (Kabeer, 1999).

In analysing gender relations the framework identifies three specific forms of gender discrimination. Firstly, given women’s subordinate social identity, it follows that within any social category by caste, class, race and/or religion, women suffer more or less, all the disadvantages of men but in an intensified form. Secondly, women’s disadvantaged position at any institutional level relates largely to their unequally assigned roles, responsibilities and access to and control over resources. These two gender-specific disadvantages are experienced commonly by all women. There is inequality in access to and control of resources between different social categories within a society. Therefore,

women who belong to more disadvantaged social groups experience gender-specific disadvantages, related especially to unequal access to resources and the resultant burdens of their specific gender roles and responsibilities. This is the third form of gender discrimination. The framework thus points to the cross-cutting realities of gender inequities. Kabeer (1999) points out that ‘in analysing the centrality of gender inequality, it is essential to refrain from identifying women as a homogeneous category. Women carry identities other than that of gender and different women may experience over time a change in their positions from relative powerlessness to positions of relative power. In the same manner, men also carry identities other than their gender’.

2. The Social Relations Approach is based on the empowerment approach to development or more simply the ‘need for development research to draw from the perspective of the subjugated others’ (Harding, 1991). The framework points out that gender inequalities persist because they serve the interests of those endowed with unequal power. Gender inequality is not only justified as inherently natural but is also sanctified as religion, culture, tradition and/or customary values and beliefs. Where biology fails, the ‘sanctity of culture’ is invoked to resist equitable change (Mukhopadhyay, 1995).

The lesson to the researcher is that ‘in identifying and analysing gender relations one must not fall into the trap of sanctifying social relations, especially those of inequality, as culture. Culture influences how we view, evaluate and attempt to organise issues around us’ (Kabeer, 1999). Therefore, the researcher needs to deconstruct his or her own interpretations of culture, before analysing gender relations, roles, responsibilities and gendered access to, use and management of resources, which are essentially based on the premises of unequal gender relations. To illustrate the *trap*, Kabeer (*ibid*) points out that the Indian Constitution guarantees equality to all citizens. However in the application of this legislation, the notion of equality is often misinterpreted in India’s broad culture, where caste and gender inequalities are central to all social relations. As identified in chapter 2, Agarwal (1994) records the official response to the argument for women’s ownership rights to land. “What do women want? To break up the family?”

More specifically, cultural values colour the assumption that women's interests are inimical to family and kinship interests. Kapadia (1992) captured the challenge to this assumption in the voices of rural women in India who argued, '*Sondum sudum*' or *kinship burns*.

It is important to add to the framework content that if research needs to be planned, designed and implemented from the perspective of 'the subjugated others', then caution needs to be exercised in several ways, as an *outsider* in the researched community. Chambers (1997) points out that development workers including researchers, 'rush, make short visits, do not stay the night and come only once or twice' and yet they claim that they see and know what is wrong. In the same manner as outsider interventions should not reinforce power and authority to those already empowered, outsider interventions should not lead to consequences worse than before for the disempowered and disprivileged. 'There is no simple answer on how to proceed with doing things the right way. Basically it requires being sensitive to social diversity and complexity in the various dimensions of social difference' (ibid).

3. The Social Relations Approach identifies that gender relations are reproduced and inter-related across a range of institutions. The framework provides a conceptual background to identifying that inequality in social relations and the resulting inequality in the distribution of resources, responsibilities and power are shaped by and in turn shape institutions. In the Social Relations Approach, institutions are defined as 'the framework of rules for achieving certain social or economic goals' and organisations as 'specific structural forms that certain institutions take' (North, 1990).

The framework identifies four key institutional sites and as discussed in chapter 2, identifies that there is a significant assumption made of specific institutional values.

<b>Institutional Site</b>	<b>Official Ideologies</b>
State - the larger institutional framework	Securing the national interests/equality of all citizens
Markets – the framework for organisations like financial corporations, multinationals	Profit maximisation/ Promoting economic efficiency

Community – supra-family groupings, including neighbourhood networks like non-governmental organisations (NGOs)	Promoting moral economy and social networking
Kinship/Family – households, extended families and lineage groupings	Altruism, sharing and caring

Source: Kabeer (1999)

As identified above, altruism in family and kinship values does not present the perspective of women and is therefore an assumption that is cleverly justified by those whose interests it serves. The Social Relations Approach identifies that the official ideologies at the various institutional levels are equally contaminated by cultural values, which often promote and perpetuate a multi-faceted inequality. Inequality is so deeply entrenched that it is said to be akin to culture and is therefore justified across the institutional levels. Inequalities in households and families, like gender, caste and even class are attributed to biology, culture, tradition, values, religion etc. ‘Inequalities in public bodies are rationalised as the operation of neutral market-forces or merit-based rules of recruitment and promotions’ (Kabeer, 1999). The lesson to the researcher in using the framework is to see beyond what is portrayed by deconstructing the assumptions professed in institutional ideologies.

4. The Social Relations Approach comes closest to being prescriptive in defining a set of tools for analysing institutions and deconstructing official ideologies across institutional levels. However, the generic nature of the framework is still retained as components of analysis are identified but no prescriptive tools for analysis are suggested. The five components of institutional analysis detailed in the framework are:

Rules: How things get done

Activities: What is done

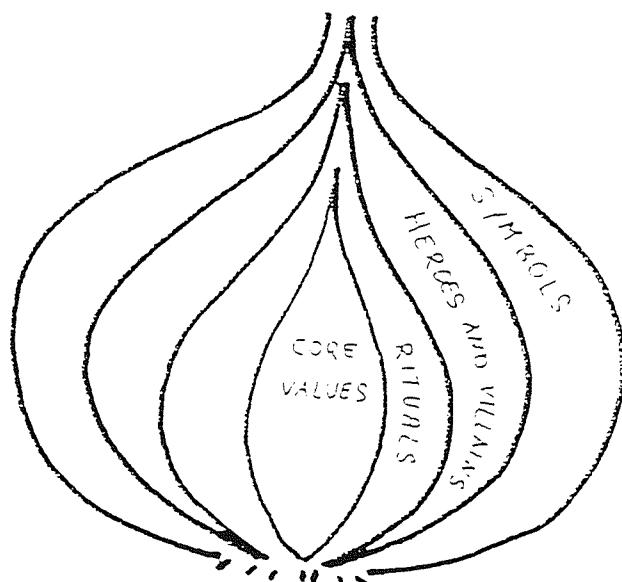
Resources: What is used and what is produced

People: Who is excluded and included in institutional activities and

Power: Who determines how things are done

Kabeer (1999) points out that the broad application of this analytical tool will inform how gender inequalities are mutually reinforced across institutional levels. The above five

components can also be used in a narrower context in analysing how gender inequality is constructed and perpetuated within an organisation. This analytical tool contributes to identifying the official as well as the unofficial or informal rules and norms of organisations. 'There are written rules and unwritten norms and beliefs which come into play in the everyday interactions by which organisational goals are translated into practice' (ibid). This component of the Social Relations approach draws from other analyses of organisations. Hofstede (1991) as seen below, visualised the organisation as an onion:



**Figure 4.1: Hofstede's Onion Image of An Organisation**

(Macdonald et al., 1997).

The formal rules and norms are the outer skin, which is visible to the outsider. What is not seen is the layering of skins inside the outer skin, which signify the informal rules and norms of the organisation. To complete the metaphor, the unseen layers are in fact the basic content of the onion crucial to its identity and purpose.

5. Central to the Social Relations Approach is the analysis of power relations. Power or who determines things and how is key to the analysis of institutions. Gender discrimination experienced by individual women and men has been discussed above.

These issues are equally applicable in the analysis of inequalities in organisations. ‘Men’s social role as breadwinners is often translated to their greater need for a job, especially a better-paid job. Women’s social roles as carers do not however translate as easily into a recognised need for child care facilities in organisations. The politics of needs interpretation identifies that women’s place is at home. This is an example of direct gender discrimination’ and women’s unequal access to the power to make decisions in their favour (Kabeer, 1999).

Gender-specific discrimination is more acute when interposed with class inequality. As observed in this study, women working at the lower rungs of many hierarchical organisations, face the greater brunt of gender marginalisation.

Disparities observed in organisations extend beyond gender inequality. Most organisations have a pyramidal structure and individuals privileged by gender, class and caste occupy the uppermost triangle of the structure. Organisational rules, norms and resources are constructed and controlled by these individuals.

This hierarchy of power inequality is also observed in organisational inter-relations. Across institutions, different organisations are placed in a hierarchical structure. It is commonly observed that those representatives of society, who are privileged by gender, class, caste and other social characteristics, manage organisations that are located at the top-end of the hierarchy. Privileged by individual and organisational political status, these people and these organisations often unilaterally determine rules and norms on behalf of all others. The community at the lower end of the institutional hierarchy has little access to development policy planning and programming. However, it is equally true that power structures are equally hierarchical within the community. Across institutions and organisations there is stiff resistance to challenging this inequality in power.

6. The Social Relations Approach describes an analytical framework for gender analysis of development policies. Policy designs are classified as gender-blind or gender-aware on the basis of the following arguments:

Gender-blind policy does not differentiate between gender needs and interests, or gender inequalities in policy and programming. ‘Policies are written in an apparently gender-neutral language but are seen to privilege male needs, interests and priorities in the distribution of opportunities and resources’ (Kabeer, 1994). As identified in chapter 2, women’s gendered needs and interests are drowned in interpreting the male perspective as the human perspective. Kabeer classifies the following forms of gender-blindness:

#### **Compartmentalisation:**

Compartmentalisation refers to the isolating of women’s issues to the micro or the community level. Such an approach identifies that macro-level planning is gender-neutral and therefore ignores the social reality of an inter-linked institutional construct of unequal gender relations.

#### **Aggregation:**

Poor, labour force, rural population, community, household, children etc., are abstract, generic terms used in gender-blind policies in defining social differentiation and inequality. Such policies do not identify whose interests are reflected and whose are ignored in the distribution of development benefits. Aggregating also refers to treating women and women’s gender needs, interests, roles, responsibilities and access to resources as homogeneous. Similarly, aggregating refers to the homogenisation of men and masculinities.

#### **Eternalising**

Eternalising refers to the justification of gender and other social inequities on the basis of biology, culture, religion, beliefs and/or traditional values.

#### **Depoliticising**

This refers to making women’s gender interests and concerns mute, in order to match the interests of the socially more powerful males. Beyond gender, depoliticising also refers to ignoring or missing out the perspective of the ‘subjugated others’ in policy and planning.

By contrast **gender-aware policy designs** recognise that women and men are constrained in different and often unequal ways and therefore may have differing or even conflicting needs, interests and priorities. The Social Relations Approach framework classifies three types of gender-aware policies:

**Gender neutral** – Policies which recognise gender differences but reinforce the existing status quo in gender relations in policy planning and programming.

**Gender-specific** – Policies that target development interventions on one sex.

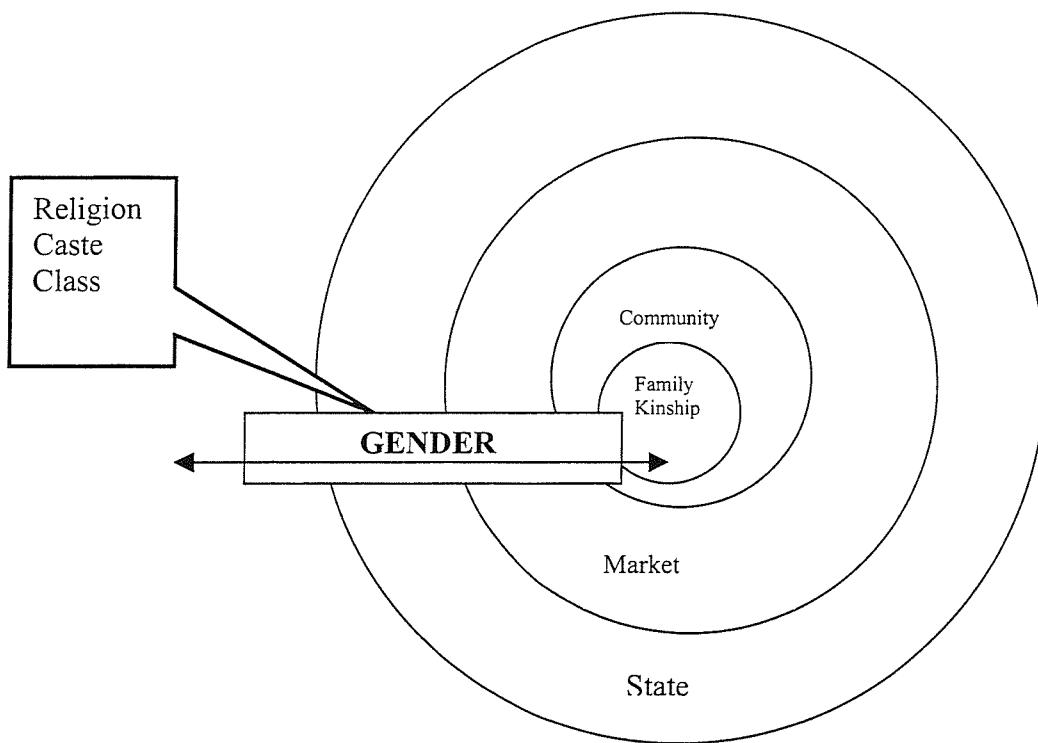
**Gender-redistributive** – Policies that attempt to transform and balance existing gender inequities.

7. In promoting a gender-redistributive approach to development, the Social Relations Approach identifies the need to analyse those development priorities that are central to policy goals. This calls for a need to distinguish between development and economic growth and development and wellbeing. Kabeer (1994) identifies that in the Social Relations Approach, the notion of wellbeing is relative for different people. Policies that promote wellbeing must therefore be informed by the definitions of those whose wellbeing is planned for, rather than by the definitions of those who are doing the planning.

8. Finally, the Social Relations Approach is not only an analytical tool, but can be used to design projects for transforming unequal gender relations, roles and access to resources. This aspect is not discussed further as it goes beyond the focus of this research.

To conclude, the Social Relations Approach is an analytical as well as a planning framework. Used as an analytical tool, it enables gender analysis across institutional levels of policy, organisations and practice. The Social Relations Approach is laudable in attempting to place gender at the centre of all development policy and planning. The framework argues for the need to analyse gender not in isolation but across a spatial nexus of overlapping and cross-cutting social variables like caste, class, religion, culture and such others.

In identifying overlapping institutional boundaries, the Social Relations Approach identifies an institutional construct of gender relations. The framework points out that gender inequalities are inter-related and mirrored across institutions as well as legitimised or justified across institutions.



**Figure 4.2: An Illustration of A Multi-faceted, Mutually Reinforcing Construct of Gender Inequality**

The framework describes analytical tools to deconstruct the ideological claims of equality and equity assumed to be inherent in the goals of different institutions and claims that sharpening the knowledge and content of social inequality across institutions will help in challenging the political reality of gender-blindness. These key concerns of the Social Relations Approach are used to analyse research findings in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

This framework was therefore adopted as the methodological tool to analyse:

- gender issues and the impact of the social order in water management in Chuni village and
- policies, organisational structures and practices as well as the outcomes of the drinking water projects specified in 4.2 across different institutional levels.

#### **4.4.2 Limitations of the Social Relations Approach**

The Social Relations Approach is a comparatively recent gender analytical framework. It has been used more as a framework for planning, than as an analytical research tool. Therefore, there is little insight to draw as a researcher, from earlier uses of this approach.

The complexity in the structure and content of the Social Relations Approach is identified as the key limitation of the framework. March and others (1999) in their review of gender analytical frameworks identified that the key drawback to the Social Relations Approach is its complex structure and content. They also identified that in the framework ‘women get subsumed in many social categories. Where this is the case, gender issues become fragmented with issues of class, religion, ethnicity and so on’. An attempt was made by the reviewers to simplify the framework and explain it in the form of five key concepts. However the issues raised here in relation to the Social Relations Approach go against the very fabric of concerns, which in the words of the authors ‘necessitated the development of this framework’.

Some of the limitations identified by March and others (1999) are discussed here:

1. ‘Gender issues are fragmented within other issues of class, caste, ethnicity, religion, and so on. Therefore, women can get subsumed in many individual categories’.

There is little need to argue this issue. Analysis in chapters 2 and 3 and in 4.4.1 clearly reveals that women are indeed subsumed in many individual categories. Gender issues are not fragmented across different social categories, but rather there is a complex

interlinking of gender inequality with other cross-cutting and inter-linked issues of social inequality. The lesson is not to analyse gender issues from a fragmented perspective but to identify and analyse the centrality of gender inequity in the complexity of unequal social relations.

2. ‘The framework is complicated, detailed and demanding. The theoretical grasp necessary to understand the framework content may limit its use, in a participatory way at the community level’.

Standing back and looking at this argument reveals that this fear may be a misinterpretation of the Social Relations Approach. Firstly, the framework was not developed as a ‘tool to do gender’, and therefore there are no tools prescribed for use at the community or any other institutional level. It appears that the purpose of the framework is to facilitate an understanding of the complexity of gender inequality. Having internalised the key concepts, practitioners can use the framework or its concepts in ways that are appropriate and suitable to specific contexts, as long as the analysis of issues captures the complexity of social inequality.

The language of the framework as it stands now, is considerably steeped in theoretical rigor. To enable field practitioners to understand and put into practice the Social Relations Approach, the need does exist to simplify the content. However the concerns of ‘dilution and evaporation of gender’ as discussed in chapter 2, need to be kept in mind in the process of simplifying gender issues. The analysis in 4.4.1 was an attempt by the researcher in this direction.

The key approach in the framework is to enable the voices, needs and priorities of the disadvantaged and disempowered to be heard. This indicates the essentially participatory nature of this framework. ‘Participatory approaches enable the involvement of people, who had been formerly excluded in development planning and practice, to make decisions over issues relating to their lives would lead to an equitable and sustainable development’ (Gujt and Shah, 1998).

There are already well-established tools for participatory research and use in the community, some of which are discussed below. Therefore, it is futile to develop a method to *participatorily* use the Social Relations Approach in the community. If the Social Relations Approach has been understood and interpreted correctly, its use as a research, planning and/or analytical tool will be participatory. It is essential for Social Relations Approach advocates to point out the difference in using the framework to understand the complexity of field realities vis-à-vis the prediction of complexity in using the framework content and structure.

4. ‘In real life the institutions of state, market, community and household cannot be so neatly defined - there is overlap between them’.

This is again a misapprehension. Discussions in 4.4.1 point out that the Social Relations Approach identifies the inter-linkages and overlaps between the different institutional levels.

5. ‘The framework demands a very detailed knowledge of the context. The framework is difficult to use in situations where there is not very much information available’.

This framework is indeed difficult to use where information is not made available. This problem was commonly encountered in the use of this framework at organisational levels. The depth of information required in the use of this framework did not correspond to the attitude of many organisations to hold back, what they consider sensitive organisational information.

Self-diagnosis by an organisation, which is able to perceive the need for change and is willing to change, is the best form of analysis. However, often gender analysis is seen to happen (at the donor level) as a response to meeting popular development cultural demands and as a result of donor pressure in counterpart organisations (Macdonald et al., 1997). Gender analysis also forms a part of monitoring and evaluation missions in projects, which was roughly the case in this research. The obscure status of this study, albeit the ‘DfID approved need for the research’ contributed to the difficulty in securing information. An independent research conducted by an obscure departmental unit of a

Northern University did not provide a stimulating environment for organisations in the research areas to demand or agree to a diagnosis of their internal structures and functioning parameters. Even after significant reasoning the attitudes of several organisations were understandably fired by significant suspicion. Most organisations were willing to facilitate research in the community, however there was significant resistance to analysis of issues at the organisational level. This revealed that organisational gender analysis is still an alien concept to many organisations. Some of the problems encountered in analysing gender issues at the organisational levels are discussed in the sections below.

6. Chambers (1997) identified more broadly in relation to the 'entry' of development practitioners in project or research communities, that often there is 'a backlash in relations of social inequality as an outcome of rushed outsider interventions'. This was seen to be a potential fear in using the Social Relations Approach to analyse gender inequality at any institutional level. As identified above, the depth of sensitive information collected and analysed can pose some threat to those who voice the realities of inequality. The ethics of drawing out such information in the case of independent research is especially questionable. In this case, there were no immediate legitimate mechanisms to feed back the results of the analysis to help restructure gender-aware policies and practices. The lesson to a researcher attempting to promote gender-redistributive practices through use of the Social Relations Approach is - to sensitively explore and bring to focus the complexity of social inequality, in ways that are equally sensitive to the harsh realities of social inequalities, which may be well beyond the scope of *outsider* researcher interventions.

Chamber's concern about 'the ethics of possible backlash of research interventions leading to consequences worse than before for the disempowered' research, leads to the discussion on tools and strategies adopted for data collection.

## **4.5 Tools and Strategies Used for Collecting Data**

Given the complex, qualitative nature of gender issues it was decided to focus the research on collection of qualitative data and given the ethics of sensitive research, it was decided to use participatory tools of information collection.

### **4.5.1 Qualitative Data**

‘The ideas, values, methods and behaviour accepted and dominant in professions or disciplines... are derived from and fit, things more than people. Complex realities are simplified and ordered in single scales such as poverty lines, and measures of production and employment. In the social sciences and policy, economics dominates, and gives primacy to mathematical analysis; what has been measured and counted becomes the reality’ (Chambers, 1997).

As identified in chapter 2, Jodha (1985) identified that development policy and planning does not measure values it fails to recognise. ‘The first step is to measure what can be measured...the second step is to disregard what can’t be measured...the third step is to presume that what cannot be measured is really not important...the fourth is to say that what can’t be easily measured does not really exist’.

Qualitative analysis focuses on things that cannot be measured easily by mathematical analysis. ‘Qualitative analysis is used for understanding social processes, people’s perceptions, why and how a particular situation came into being and how this situation affects different people, what can be changed in the future and how’ (Canadian International Development Agency, 1996).

#### **1. Qualitative Data at the Community Level**

Quantitative data is data that can be measured easily. In drinking water projects, this would include things like number of taps built; number of households provided water

from these taps; amount of money contributed by households for the service, if at all; number of women participating in planned activities of the project and all such data.

Qualitative data for the same issues would include:

- a. Whose needs and interests are reflected in the design of the taps? Who decided where the taps were to be built and why? Who was excluded or included in the planning for these taps and why?
- b. Who has greater or lesser access to water from these taps and why? Who determines access and how? Is anyone/any household excluded completely and why?
- c. Who has a greater responsibility in maintaining the taps and why? What is the purpose and outcome of women's participation? Which women participate and how?
- d. If at all users are requested to pay for water, who pays how much and why? What is the ethics of water pricing in the specific local context?

## **2. Qualitative Data at the Organisational and Policy Levels**

As discussed in 4.4.1, the Social Relations Approach identifies five components in analysing how gender inequality is constructed and perpetuated within organisations:

- a. Rules: How things get done
- c. Activities: What is done
- d. Resources: What is used and what is produced
- e. People: Who is excluded and included in institutional activities and
- f. Power: Who determines how things are done

All these analytical components necessitate the collection of qualitative data, corresponding to the how, who and what issues. However, there is no further information explicit in the Social Relations Approach, which enables an identification of what specific information is to be collected. In this research, the 'Guidelines For a Gender Assessment of an Organisation' detailed by Macdonald et al. (1997) has been used to specifically assess different aspects of the organisations detailed in 4.2. These guidelines detailed in Annex 2 'outlines the process of assessing an organisation in all its aspects from a gender perspective' (ibid). This process clearly identifies the different areas on

which information is to be collected in the assessment of organisations. The specific tools used in collecting data at the organisational level are described below.

The above five components of the Social Relations Approach have also been used to analyse the process of the structuring of institutional water policies. The policy analytical framework discussed in 4.4, which classifies policies as gender-blind or gender-aware has also been used to analyse official and World Bank water policies.

The document on gender-sensitive indicators developed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) provides a list of some qualitative issues for data collection (refer to Annex 3). This document served as an important guideline; however, the contents of the list were not used prescriptively. Rather, the concept of qualitative data collection guided field research across different projects and across different institutional levels.

#### **4.5.2 Participatory Tools for Information Collection**

As identified in chapter 2, the word participation, like empowerment described the cutting edge of development practice in the 1990s (Gujt and Shah, 1998). The broad aim of participatory development was to increase the involvement of people, who had been formerly excluded in development planning and practice. It was assumed that *participatory approaches* or approaches that enable people to make decisions over issues relating to their lives would lead to an equitable and sustainable development.

The references to participatory approaches are synonymous with references to Robert Chambers, who is acclaimed widely as the main driving force behind the popularisation of the use of this approach. Chambers (1997) identifies that while some of the participatory approach methods are new, many have historical roots, which can be traced back to the 1970s.

Because of the initial use and focus of participatory approaches in participatory rural appraisal (PRA) the framework came to be known as PRA. Chambers identifies that participatory approaches have evolved in many directions and into many domains, one of which is development research.

According to Chambers (1997) participatory approaches are essentially about 'enabling and empowering local people with the skills and confidence to analyse their own situation, reach consensus, make decisions and take action'. Chambers identifies that the essence of a participatory approach is change and reversal of – roles, behaviour, relationships and learning. Accordingly, the salient features of a participatory approach are:

- Outsiders do not dominate and lecture, they facilitate, sit down, listen and learn.
- Outsiders do not transfer knowledge; they share methods, which local people can use for their own appraisal and analysis.
- Outsiders do not impose their reality; they encourage and enable local people to express their own.

- Hand over the stick

- 'They can do it'

- 'Use your own best judgement at all times'

- Sit down, listen, learn and respect

- Unlearn

- Relax

- Embrace error

- Facilitate

- Don't rush

- Ask them

- Have fun

- Be nice to people

February 1991

Added by  
March 1991

Behaviour  
Attitudes

Methods

Sharing

'They'

- Interview
- Map
- Model
- Rank
- Score
- Analyse
- Diagram
- Present
- Plan

- Observe
- List
- Compare
- Count
- Estimate
- Act
- Monitor
- Evaluate

- They share their knowledge and analysis with each other and with us
- All share experiences of living, food, .....
- Organisations trainers share their training camps, experiences with others- NGO's, government, universities, Donors
- Partnership

Figure 4.3: The Three Pillars of PRA (Chambers, 1997)

This diagram makes explicit the essence of a participatory approach. A few issues specific to the context of this research are picked up from this diagram and discussed below:

1. PRA seeks to empower those lower in the social hierarchy – women, minorities, the poor, the weak and the vulnerable. Popular PRA tools, like social mapping or mapping of the community, wealth-ranking, wellbeing-ranking help in identifying the heterogeneity in communities. Within the community, PRA identifies four major axes of difference: of age, gender, ethnic or social group and poverty, and many other axes of differences, like capabilities and disabilities, education, livelihood strategies, types of assets and many more.

‘If we speak to women’s groups we often fail to recognise that these women tend to be the wives of better-off, more influential men in the community. Single mothers, divorcees, widows, poorer wives tend to be excluded from such groups on the basis of economic wellbeing, moral standing, age or social cultures’ (Welbourn, 1991 quoted by Chambers, 1997).

A participatory research approach identifies the heterogeneity in the community and also attempts to bring in and include the perspective of the more deprived and vulnerable.

2. In attempting to realistically draw the viewpoint from below, Chambers identifies the need to be aware of biases in our own behaviour and learning.

- Technically, to plan in greater detail - where to go, whom to meet, how to avoid a ‘tarmac bias<sup>7</sup>’, how to avoid biases of season and time.
- Ideologically, to ‘hand over the stick of authority or the chalk’ (knowledge symbol) to the local people. This involves standing back and learning that local people have the skills to map, model, observe, compare, rank and score much more than outsiders presume.

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<sup>7</sup> Literally, meaning restricting choice of field area to places where the roads are tarred, or to places where modern transportation facilities is possible.

- Practically to facilitate the process of participation by identifying and building on local knowledge and skills, for example through the use of visual and performative tools of interaction and communication (Scoones and Thompson, 1994). In relation to the reversal of knowledge, Chambers identifies the practical necessity to deconstruct inherent professional preoccupations, for example, the obsession with writing and numbers and documented evidence.
3. Chambers (1997) identifies that participatory processes cannot be rushed and participatory research requires as a bare minimum, rapport and some measure of trust between the researcher and the researched. 'Humility, patience, respect, basic transparent honesty, paying attention, listening and not interfering' are identified as the basic attitudes to adopt in facilitating participatory research. In the classical view, good fieldwork is painful, in the PRA context good fieldwork can be fun, creating opportunities for sustained friendships and contacts.
4. Participatory approaches often mean learning from several angles and disciplines, or what is known as triangulating information in order 'to cross-check, compare, gain multiple insights and successively approximate' (ibid).
5. Finally Chambers (1997) identifies that the thrust of the PRA approach is to empower rather than to collect data. Researchers involved in *collecting data* need to be ethically sensitive that the process:
- Is facilitated and not dictated.
  - Does not empower those already empowered and does not burden those already burdened in the struggle to survive. For example making unrealistic demands on poor women and men to leave their work or spare their few rest hours for attending meetings or fulfilling other research needs.
  - Is empowering and sharing, not extractive. For example consciously sharing information and acknowledging inputs and assisting in whatever possible way the participants to use the information to better their own lives.

#### **4.5.3 Specific PRA Tools Used to Collect Information at the Community Level**

As with the use of the Social Relations Approach and the concept of qualitative data collection, the conceptual approach to participatory research guided the process of data collection in this study. The specific tools of PRA actually used in collecting data are as follows:

##### **At the Community Level:**

- Observing directly by living in the community.
- Semi-structured discussions – having a mental or written checklist, but being open-ended and following up on the unexpected.
- Group discussions and activities – casual or random, issue-based or diverse, representative of special social groups or diversely structured.
- Mapping and modeling – people's mapping, drawing and colouring to make social maps, demographic maps, resource maps, water maps.
- Time lines – listing the local history by listing major local events with approximate dates; people's accounts of the past, of their customs and practices.
- Seasonal calendars – recording rain, crop cycles, work of women, men and children in major seasons or month by month; identifying lean and difficult periods in the annual calendar as well as identifying coping strategies.
- Water transect walks – systematically walking with local people to identify water sources, technical and management systems; identifying issues of control and ownership, use and exclusion.
- Personal discussions – discussing issues personally with individual persons and households especially in cases where the individual situations of these persons or households demanded such an approach.

These PRA tools were used to collect information in the seven villages identified in 4.2. It is interesting to share here some of the experiences gained in using PRA tools of information collection:

As identified by Chambers, the process of information collection cannot be rushed, especially if the purpose is to facilitate a participatory analysis of the complexity of gender issues. It requires a bare minimum of ethics to develop a rapport with different women, men and children in the community. Where language is a barrier to communication, rapport building can be a difficult process, as was experienced in the tribal villages in Orissa. Performative tools of interaction were required here to develop a communication cord.

In Lomagarh village, there was a complete communication block between the researcher and the community. A translator did assist in exchanging ideas but the result was a frayed attempt at talking and interests withered. It was the fourth night of the researcher's stay in the village and the volume of women attending the meeting was swiftly decreasing. The initial interest in the 'outsider' had worn out and there was no longer any attraction in keeping the indirect conversation flowing.

The researcher realised the futility of the process and instead decided to concentrate on developing a personal bond. According to history, many of the tribal cultures and rituals, including marriage and courtship, were based around music and dance. Yet, there was little evidence now, in these villages that women and men danced or sang together. Questions on this aspect of their lives revealed that it is now considered 'socially improper to dance or sing'. This was an impact of 'the process of cultural imposition of patriarchal Aryan values of the dominant social groups on the more egalitarian and liberal cultures of indigenous social groups' in this case, tribal communities (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). This process has been described in India as *Sanskritisation*.

The researcher asked the women, if they would teach her to dance. There was a lot of laughter, hesitation, shyness, which was eventually overcome and for the next three days the focus of interaction was the dance around a fire at night with the women. There was enormous joy mutually in the process of dancing. The women expressed how much they had missed the dancing and wished they could carry on this activity, as it brought some sparkle to a life, which had become increasingly difficult. After this, the conversation flowed. The interpreter still translated words, however the bonds of trust and rapport had

been established and there was a mutual understanding of feelings, which was more powerful and communicative than the spoken word.

Similarly in the Uttarakhand hill villages, the staying back of the researcher in the village, the cooking and eating together of meals, the sharing of domestic work, all contributed enormously in developing relationships of trust and oneness.

#### **4.5.4 Information Collection at the Organisational Levels**

In most organisations, information collection began with the review of secondary data, which included past reports of organisational activities, plans and policies. The following PRA tools, as outlined above, were also applied in collecting and analysing data on organisational policies, structures and cultures both internally and in relation to organisational involvement in the specific water projects:

- Semi-structured discussions - with organisational staff at different hierarchical levels within the organisation
- Group discussions and field visits – with field staff
- Mapping and modeling of organisational policies, structures and systems, cultures and values - with staff at different hierarchical levels within the organisation
- Personal discussions – with staff at different hierarchical levels within the organisation.

As identified earlier, the process of collecting information at the organisational level was difficult. The common practice adopted by the researcher was to raise interest at the decision-making level in the organisation, of the need and value for organisational gender analysis. The context and content of the term gender was carefully explained in order to prevent confusion and mystification. The outcome of this practice varied across organisations. In many organisations, the response of the decision-makers was, 'Why should we do it? Where is the time? What is the worth of this process?'

Where the management was not keen to participate, the exercise remained largely external and in extreme cases, informal techniques like structured observation were the only means of gathering data. There was little possibility here for the results of the analysis to identify and lead to equitable organisational restructuring. Where the opportunity prevailed, transparent and participatory processes of information collection were exercised. In both cases, an attempt will be made to deliver the outputs of the analysis at all levels in the organisational hierarchy.

Despite these limitations, there were several positive aspects of this exercise. In the NGO, Samanwita in Orissa, the process resulted in an intense reflection on the state and functioning of the organisation in respect to understanding the gender needs of staff. This was followed by an informal session on exploring gender as an issue both at the organisational and programme levels. A rewarding moment for the researcher was when a female field staff-member said in the midst of the meeting, 'Each time external visitors come to Samanwita, we are paraded like wooden horses and mutely we stand hearing praises of the impact of our work in the field. But nobody had asked us how we feel about our work, what are our difficulties and why? It is only now I understand that what I do not achieve is not because I do not work hard enough, but rather because I work too hard.' Speaking of this exercise of sharing ideas and views, she said, "Even if this process will yield nothing I stand to gain for realising that I am also a normal human being.'

At the end of an exclusive two-day discussion on gender issues, the Director of the organisation, said, "I thought I was setting a good example by coming to the office at seven a.m. in the morning and leaving the office at nine p.m. at night. I realise now that I was setting a bad example. I am a man, who has a housewife at home. I see only today that several of the women field staff are both earning males and housewives together." He also expressed the concern that donor organisations were only interested in getting the projects completed in the field. In all his time at Samanwita, no donor agency staff had even discussed gender issues at the organisational level.

Similarly, amongst the Support Organisation staff of the Centre for Development Studies in Nainital, the discussion of gender issues at the organisational level invoked a young engineer amongst the field staff to claim, “things may not change here in this organisation as a result of what we discuss today. But it provides my colleagues and me, the insight that it is human to demand positive and appropriate working conditions. We must learn to support one another in making this a reality, wherever we may work.”

#### **4.5.5 Information Collection of Institutional Water Policies**

Official water policies as well as water policies formulated and promoted by the World Bank were analysed in the research. This involved a review and analysis of documented policies, as well as research and analysis of the process of formulating policies and disseminating policy guidelines to implementation organisations.

In addition, group and personal discussions were held with staff in policy-making organisations at the central government level and with staff in planning and implementing organisations at state, district and block levels, in order to collect more detailed information.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Qualitative data collected through participatory approaches and analysed through the Social Relations Approach form the content of this research, which identifies and analyses:

- gender issues in water management in a specific rural context and
- *if, how and why* gender issues are misinterpreted by drinking water projects in policy, and in organisational and field practices.

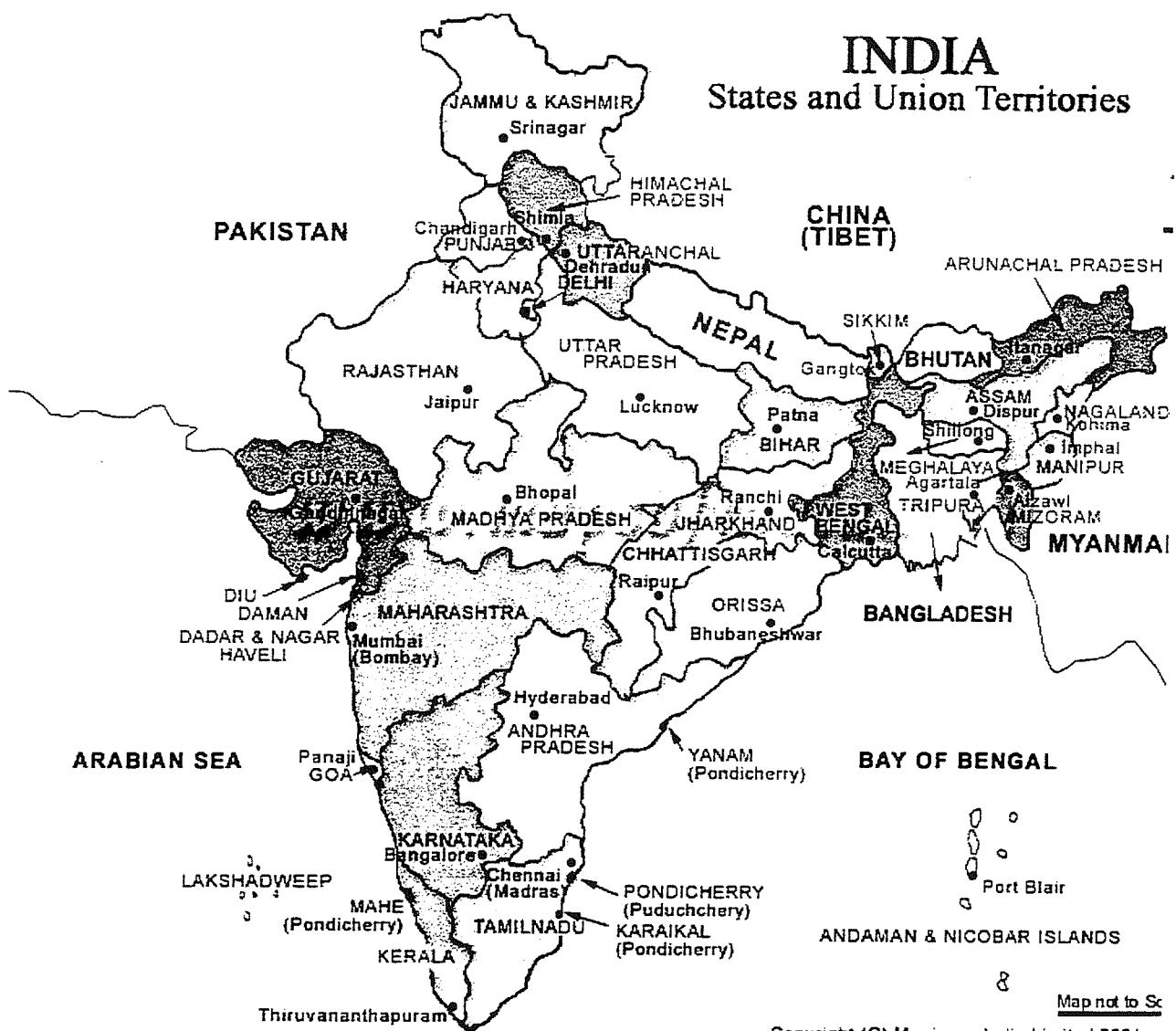
The research was planned so that each methodological framework contributes to and draws from the other in a coherent approach, so that the processes of data collection and analysis blend with each other. This is possible because the core objective of all these

frameworks is - looking and learning from below and attempting to hear the voices and see the images drawn by those who are normally excluded.

The purpose of this approach is to analyse and bring to focus the discrepancies in the consideration of gender issues in the drinking water sector. This process is initiated in chapter 5, in the analysis of social relations between a heterogeneous group of individuals, in remote rural Chuni village in Uttaranchal state.

# INDIA

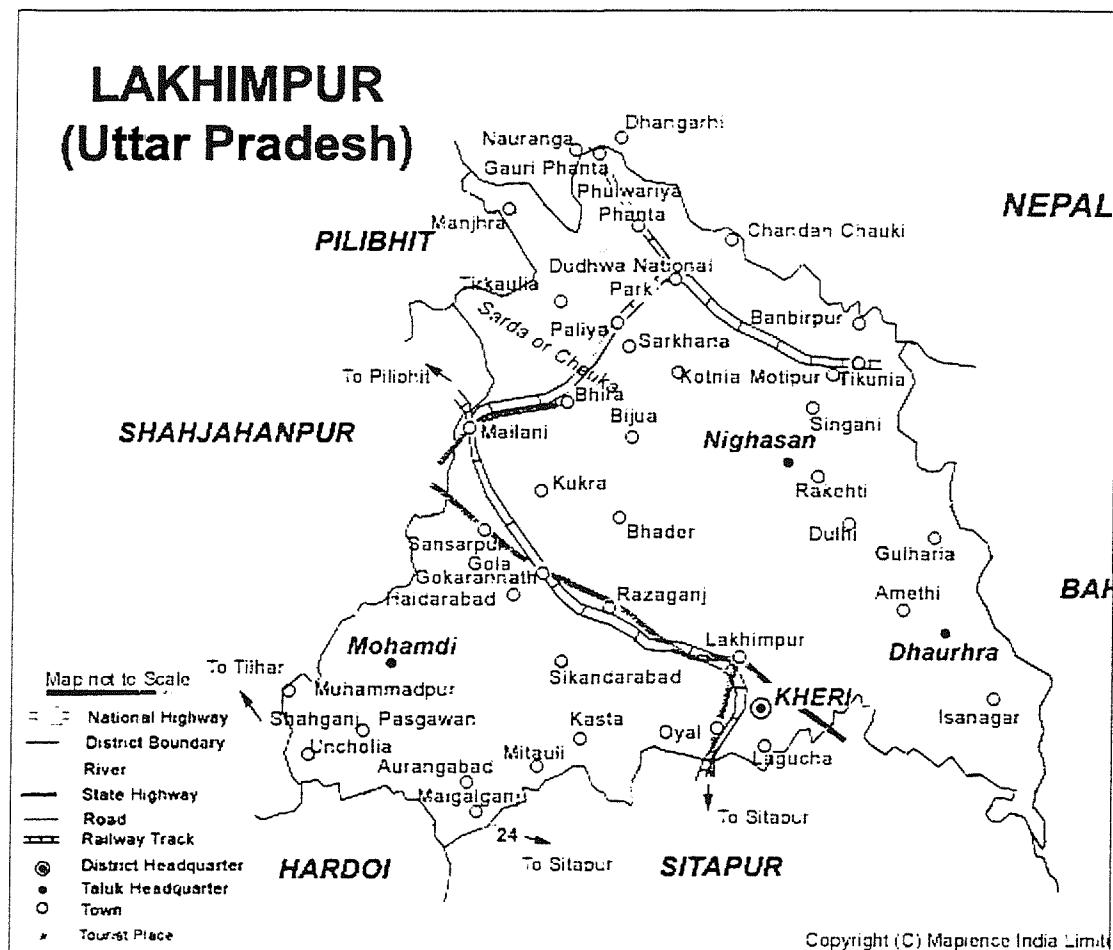
## States and Union Territories



Map not to Scale  
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Map 4.1 India: State and Union Territories

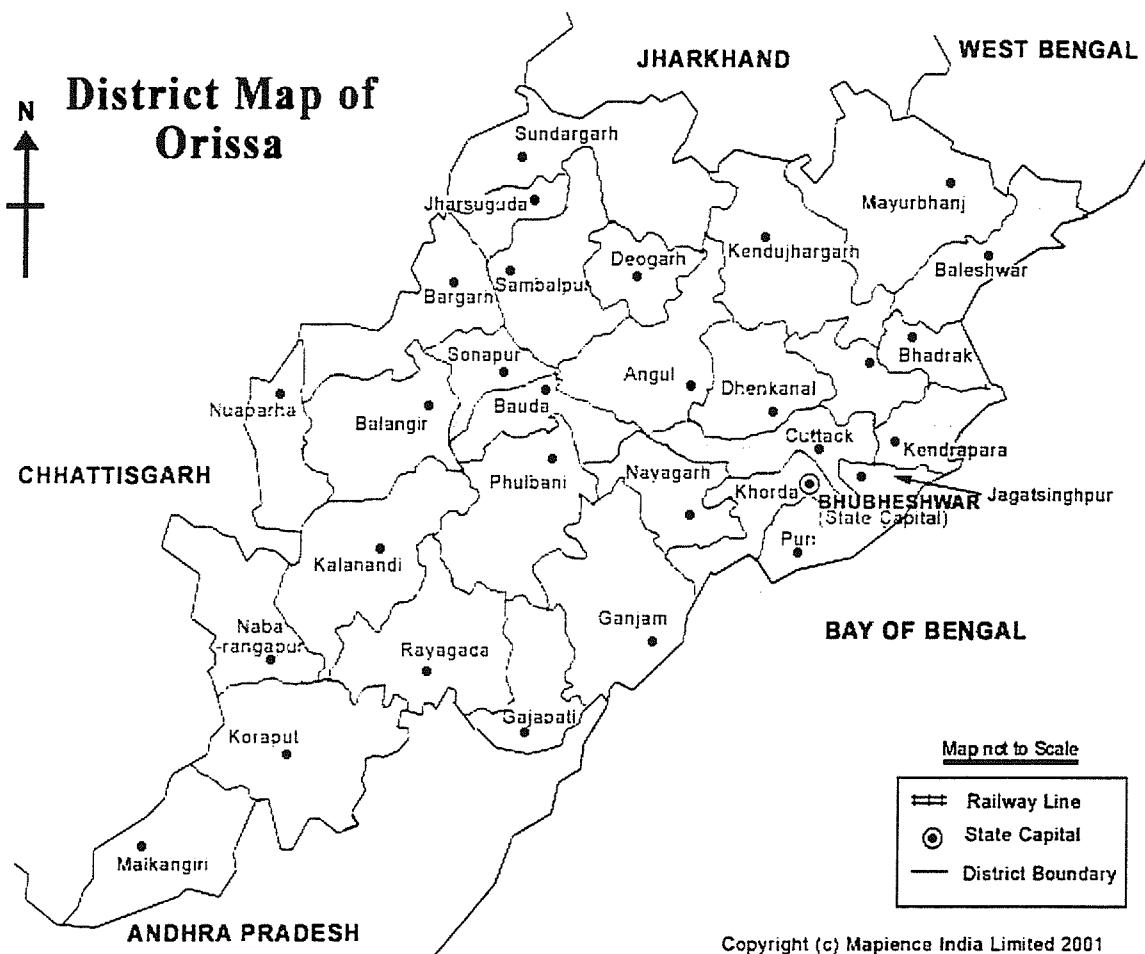
## LAKHIMPUR (Uttar Pradesh)



Map 4.2 Lakhimpur District, Uttar Pradesh



# District Map of Orissa



### Map 4.3.1 District Map of Orissa

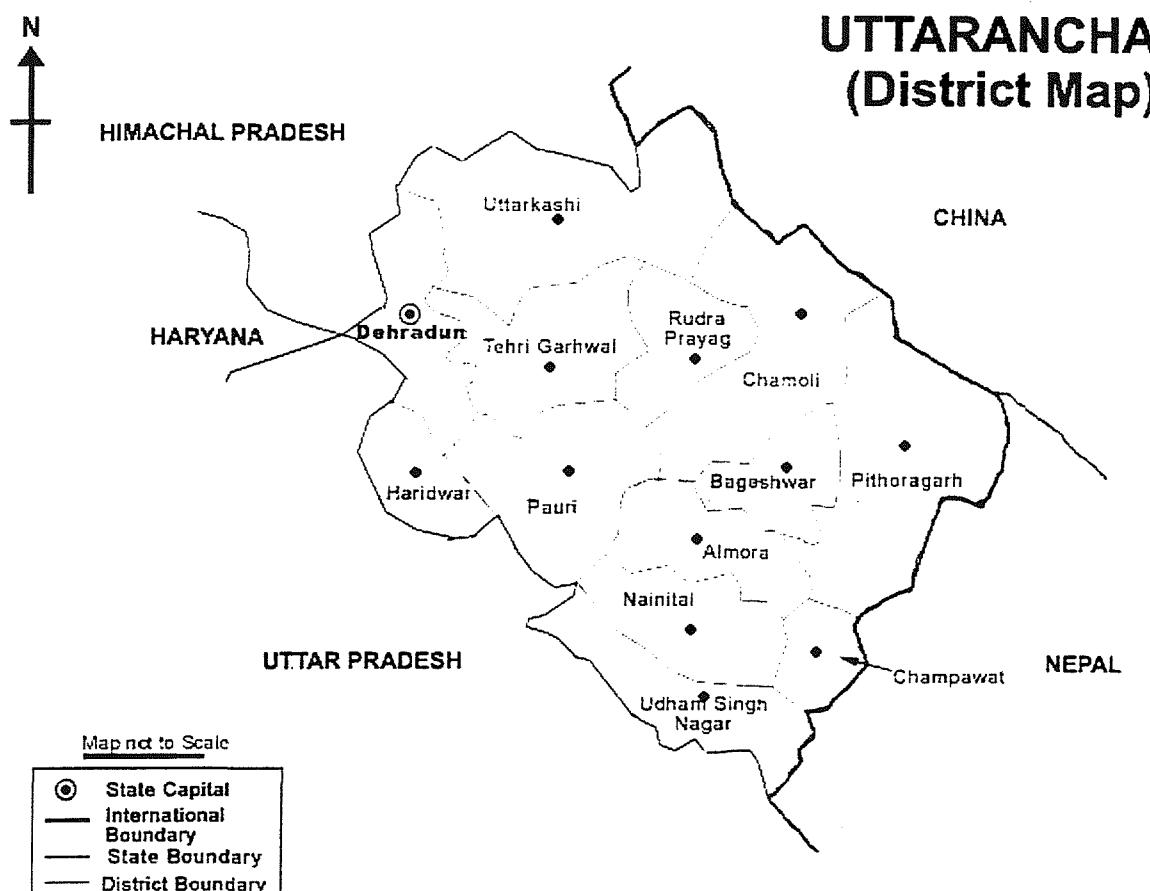
## Phulabani (ORISSA)



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Map 4.3.2 Kondhamal (Phulbani), Orissa

## UTTARANCHAL (District Map)

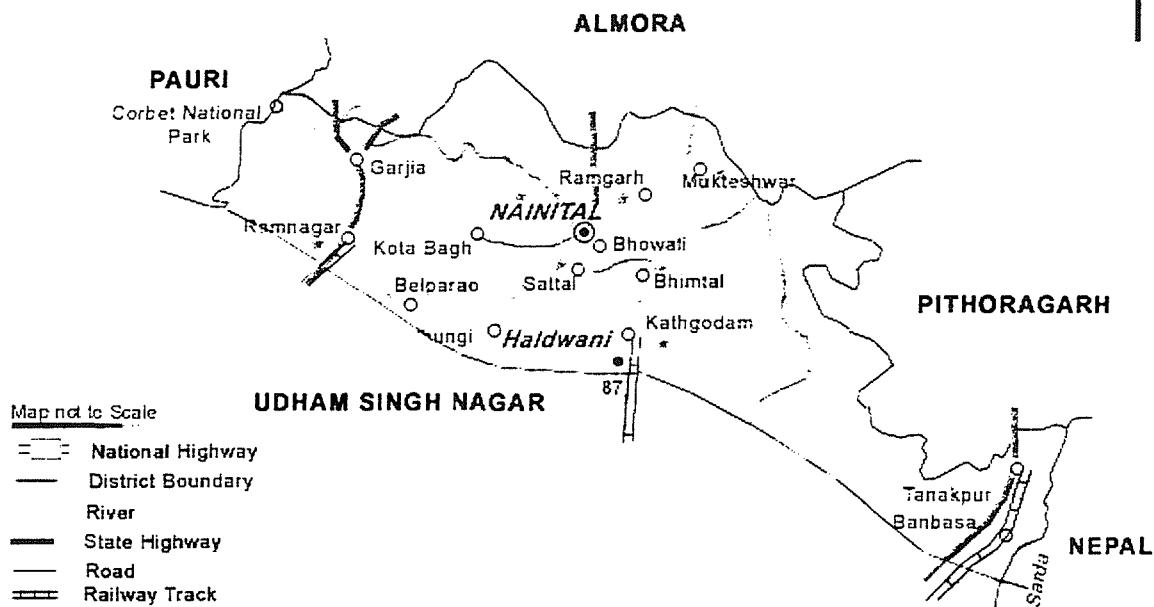


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Map 4.4.1 Uttarakhand Districts

## NAINITAL (Uttaranchal)

N  
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Map not to Scale

- National Highway
- District Boundary
- River
- State Highway
- Road
- Railway Track
- ◎ District Headquarter
- Taluk Headquarter
- Town
- \* Tourist Place

Copyright (c) Mapience India Limited 2001

Map 4.4.2 Nainital District, Uttarakhand

## PITHORAGARH (Uttaranchal)



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Map 4.4.3 Pithoragarh District

## CHAPTER 5: A GENDER OVERVIEW OF THE FIELD RESEARCH AREAS IN UTTARANCHAL

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents an overview of the social geography of the remote, rural mountain villages located in Nainital and Pithoragarh districts in the central Himalayan state of Uttarakhand in India. Field research was conducted intermittently over a period of three years in Hilay, Nachuni, Himtal, Mala and Chuni villages.

The Social Relations Approach defines that there is inequality in the distribution of resources, power and responsibilities. The framework claims that inequality is brought about by unequal social relations between people, which in turn determines people's relations to their resources and activities. It is also claimed that these relations are shaped by and in turn shape institutions. The participatory research methodology adopted here, enables readers to visualise the field area through perceptions, images and voices of the more disadvantaged amongst the local women, men and children.

This chapter identifies the complex nature of inequality exercised and experienced by different groups of people, in the mountain villages, mediated through interplay of different axes of social control. The entire population in all the five researched villages consists of Hindus and the village communities are sharply stratified on the basis of caste. Social anthropologists identify a deep-rooted social inequality in Hindu society on the basis of the social order of castes. 'These idyllic communities, we must not forget that these were contaminated by distinctions of caste' (Thorner, 1966). Traditionally instituted characteristics of the caste system, legitimised by Hindu religion, continue to determine social inequity in the form of local culture. This social anomaly evades all counter-caste legislation demonstrating that legislation does not sufficiently address the deep-rootedness of caste-based social disparity.

The findings in this chapter reveal that gender, caste and class interplay against one

another in determining heterogeneity between and amongst women and men and in a corresponding inequality and inequity in the distribution of responsibilities, resources and power. This results in differing experiences of social vulnerability for different individuals. Inequality and inequity persist and are shaped by and in turn shape the institution of the village community as well as other local institutions, which attempt to mediate social reform and development at the village level.

## **5.2 Caste and the Basis of Social Stratification in the Hindu Society**

It is necessary, first of all, to define what is meant by caste and the caste system and then to identify the underlying social inequalities based on caste.

### **5.2.1 The Concept of Castes and the Caste System**

Hindu society is recognised as being stratified into a rigid, irreversible social hierarchy, consisting of four caste groups. The laddered classification of these four social groups constitutes the caste system. Brahman, Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas in descending social order are the three upper or higher caste groups. Although each caste group is socially distinct, within the caste system, these three groups are collectively referred to as 'clean/pure' in the caste dialect. Constitutionally, these groups are also collectively termed as the 'general castes'. The general castes are distinctly distanced from the Sudras or the 'lower caste' group, referred to traditionally as 'impure' or 'untouchable' and officially as the 'scheduled castes' (SCs). Within these four caste groups are innumerable, locally defined sub categories.

### **5.2.2 Caste and the Basis of Social Stratification**

#### **1. Purity and Pollution as the Basis of the Caste System**

The caste system is determined by notions of purity and pollution, themes, which are identified as central to the Hindu culture (Dumont, 1980 quoted by Murray, 1994). Impurity is symbolised by the peripheral extremities of the human body. 'All

margins...and matter issuing from them are considered polluting... hair, nails...spittle, blood, semen, urine, faeces or even tears' (Das, 1982; Murray, 1994). Human bodies in the act and process of producing bodily secretions or associating with these matters are recognised as polluting. Impurity is also incurred during birth and death; however, while birth signifies 'auspicious impurity' death is considered as 'inauspicious impurity' (Das, 1982).

The core concern of Hindu ritualism is concerned with the manipulation and maintenance of purity and impurity. Purity is increased by associating or coming into contact with things and actors assigned pure status and by reducing association with things and actors of impure status. What is dominantly prevalent in this context is that the mere touch or in some instances the mere proximity of a scheduled caste is considered polluting (Blunt, 1931; Srinivas, 1994). This would result in social and spiritual pollution and would require among other things a purification ceremony to rectify.

In the socially graded system, *Brahmans* are considered to be the purest, as a result of their occupational involvement in ritual and religious activities. These tasks are considered to be the most superior of all social activities. At the other end of the social continuum, the *Sudras* are identified as defiled, as a result of the defiling activities in which they have socially been obliged to engage (Murray, 1994). *Sudras* have historically been assigned the tasks of cremating the human dead, handling dead animals, handling human faeces, cutting hair, nails and washing and cleaning processes associated with bodily excrements. As a result of their occupational association with polluted social events and polluted human matter, they are considered as eternally polluted and polluting (Dube, 1996). Similarly, all women, regardless of their social caste, cyclically incur pollution through the bodily processes of menstruation and childbirth. This means that during menstruation and childbirth, the Sudra women remain doubly polluted, by caste and by gender.

## **2. Caste Hierarchy and Occupational Practice**

The essence of caste hierarchy is the social differentiation between the caste groups,

based historically on occupational practice. In earlier periods of the history of Hinduism, known commonly as the Vedic period, which dates roughly between 2000 and 600 BC, the social division of the Hindu society corresponded to specific activities that individuals chose to perform on the basis of their aptitude for the tasks. Although there was distinction of tasks there was no rigid social division between those who performed different tasks (Kane, 1974). By 500 BC, a change in social beliefs and practices determined that tasks were inherited at birth and were no longer determined by aptitude or preference. The earlier system of occupational division of work became transformed into a rigid social system of castes (ibid).

### **3. Caste-based Restrictions**

There are three basic characteristics of the caste system, which establishes social differentiation (Blunt, 1931).

- 1 Firstly, an individual is born into a caste to which his parents belong. It is not possible to change one's caste.
- 2 Secondly, caste units are separated by endogamy. Every member of a caste must marry a member of the same caste, and may not marry outside it. A physical union between members belonging to different castes results in varying forms of social ostracism, which is severest and irreversible, if the union is between a 'upper caste' and a scheduled caste individual.
- 3 Finally, there are restrictions regarding the acceptance of certain types of food and water between members of different castes. Within the context of caste-based pollution, water and food is accepted only from those castes which are of the same social status or 'higher'. While there are differing forms of commensality and degree of stringency practiced between members of the 'higher castes' there is complete social restriction on acceptance of food and water from the 'scheduled castes' for all the three 'upper caste' groups.

Other prominent ways in which differences in social rank are manifested especially in rural habitats, are in segregation of places of residence, and in the prohibited use of drinking water sources. Both these restrictions on the scheduled castes are enforced in a

bid to minimise social contact and pollution (Mayer, 1960). For similar reasons, the scheduled castes are excluded from equal access to public domains and common resources. Examples of such exclusions are shown below through observations in the research villages.

### **5.2.3 Differing Views of Caste in Contemporary Society**

Some authors argue that traditionally dominant castes are no longer the most powerful, as parameters determining social dominance have changed and continue to change with history (Assayag, 1995; Srinivas, 1998). Others, while agreeing with this view, argue that the institution of caste continues to pose serious problems in the restructuring of Indian society.

Traditional practices of discrimination on account of birth and socially determined occupation persist and impact upon social relations in contemporary India (Dube, 1996; Jaiswal, 1998). Dube (1996), argues that 'A *Brahman* still performs the function of the priest and the *Sudra* is still responsible for ritually polluting occupations. In every region, women and men of the *Sudra* caste are responsible for the essential task of removing pollution of upper and clean castes'. This implies that social positions may have changed for the more and less dominant social groups, but culturally and ritually little has changed for the *Sudras*. They remain ritually polluted and therefore polluting.

### **5.2.4 Efforts to Break Caste Barriers and Counter-Caste Legislation**

Mahatma Gandhi, in an effort to break the caste barriers, termed the scheduled castes as 'Harijans', or literally, the 'people of god.' This terminology is discarded by the scheduled castes who prefer to call themselves 'Dalits' or the 'oppressed'.

The Government of India has constituted several forms of counter-caste legislation. The Harijan Act constituted in 1954 makes vocal, physical and social abuse of the Dalits punishable by law. In order to institutionalise and counter social oppression, legislation

also ensures positive discrimination for the scheduled castes (and Other Backward Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) in education, employment and other political representations.

However, poverty and social backwardness remain widespread amongst the socially disadvantaged, and many of these constitutional privileges remain acutely distant and unapproachable for those unable to cross the threshold to access and gain from these benefits and privileges. In practice, these tools have been politicised to benefit various other backward caste groups, for whom oppression was not a social reality.

### **5.3 Caste and Social Stratification in the Researched Mountain Villages**

The society in Uttarakhand is highly caste bifurcated. Brahmins and Kshatriyas dominate the population, while the Dalits form a political minority. In the two districts, Nainital and Pithoragarh, where fieldwork was carried out, the scheduled castes constituted 15.79 per cent and 20.45 per cent of the total population respectively (GoI, 1991 Census). Colloquially, in the UP hills, the term Harijan is more commonly used than the term, Dalit, pointing perhaps to a reduced level of counter caste resistance, which results from the political minority.

In the researched villages the characteristic restrictions of the caste system, discussed above, are functional and operational.

#### **1. Endogamy**

Caste units in the mountain villages are specifically endogamous and social ostracism is severe if one of the partners in an inter-caste union is a Dalit.

##### **Violation of the Social Norms of Endogamy is Determined Differentially**

Hira Devi Tamta, a Dalit woman from Chuni village married a Brahman man when she visited her sister in Punjab for medical treatment. She and her husband do not find social acceptance in his ancestral village. Hira Devi's husband lives and works in Punjab, and visits his family occasionally. In Hira Devi's village, the dominant Kshatriya caste, also denounce her husband as a social outcast, but blame Hira Devi

for her loose moral virtue in having lured a Brahman man.

In contrast, in nearby Himtal village, a Brahman mother of four young children eloped with a Kshatriya youth. The couple was bought back home and there was a temporary (as it had worn out in the two years of my visit span) order of social ostracism on both the families. Here the Brahmins, who were the dominant caste in the village, argued that the Kshatriya boy had performed black magic to lure the woman away. The local belief is that Brahman women are usually not of loose moral virtue.

The severity and laxity of social ostracism and the culprits identified in the two cases, shows that power structures within the community determine who is to blame and how much. This shows the heterogeneity that results from caste and power differentiation.

## **2. Caste Restrictions on Sharing and Acceptance of Food**

The old Kshatriya women in Chuni village were very conscious of the social order and the practice of commensality. These women often invited the researcher, by caste a Brahman, to their kitchens for meals saying that they considered it a moral virtue to feed Brahmins. Srinivas (1994) states that it is common practice that caste precedes age and class in determining social respectability and status.

### **Violation of Caste-determined Commensality is not Acceptable Socially**

After a few days of stay in the village, the news of the researcher's eating and smoking with the Dalits spread across the village. This news began to disturb the old Kshatriya women and fray their hospitality, however nothing was asked and nothing explained. One day, a Dalit couple, Hima Devi and her husband, Bhim Ram were harvesting the rice fields belonging to a Kshatriya widow, Saraswati Devi. Hima Devi offered the researcher a roti, (flat bread), in Saraswati Devi's presence. Hima's offer of food here, in Saraswati Devi's presence, was essentially to prove to Saraswati Devi that her touch was not defiling to *all* Brahman. The researcher helped Hima Devi gain her small victory, by accepting the bread and eating it in the presence of Saraswati Devi. As a consequence, the researcher's relations with Saraswati Devi remained cordial, but she refrained from

calling the researcher again to her kitchen and also avoided all physical contact.

### **3. Social Segregation of Residence, Water sources, Temples and Rituals**

In all the five research villages, the Dalits live in hamlets well isolated from the main village, where the ‘upper castes’ live. Underground sources of spring water, which are the traditional forms of water systems in the hills, known as Naulas, are separate for the Dalits. All other ‘upper castes’ share a common Naula. A detailed manifestation of notions of purity and impurity and the resultant inequality in relation to water is discussed in chapter 6.

The Dalits in these mountain villages cannot enter the inner confines of temple spaces, nor do they have an equal access to local Hindu rituals. In the mountains, where religion is an inseparable part of people’s lives, this has resulted in the Dalits establishing separate local gods and separate religious rituals. However, the keepers of the dominant religious beliefs, the Brahman, disqualify all such attempts as being incomplete and a mockery of the real practice.

#### **Social Segregation**

Ani Ram Rana of Himtal village belongs to the family of traditional musicians, who in the mountains have historically been Dalits. Ani Ram and his brother still play the drums, known locally as Nagra and Dayna at the village temple and in houses during social functions. According to the local custom, this music is essential to commemorate certain rituals. However, the Dalits are not to enter the inner confines of the temple, nor to participate in the rest of the functions. If a Dalit wants to perform a religious ritual in any temple, he/she has to assign all responsibilities to either the priest or to someone of the higher caste. This age-old restriction is practiced rigorously, even today.

While they play to honour the religious rituals for the ‘upper castes’, their own rituals are not of concern to the ‘upper castes’. The Brahmins perform the religious rituals during weddings, childbirth and death for all other castes except the Dalits. “We have our own Brahman”, says Ani Ram. But the ‘upper caste’ people say, “These are not Brahmins,

they are just the nephews of the family, people with no formal religious training and know-how. This is anyway adequate for these people.”

Even in death, which is a great leveller of differences within the closed confines of a village, there is a difference. As mentioned, a special class of the Dalits are responsible for the task of cremating the dead body. In a village, the common practice is that all the men assist and accompany the funeral processions of those living within the village confines. They also attend the 12<sup>th</sup> day feast after death, which signifies the completion of worldly responsibilities of the deceased and ritual purification of the family. However, while Dalit men participate in funeral processions and purification ceremonies of the ‘higher’ castes, this gesture is not reciprocated.

#### 4. Postures in Physical Interaction

The impact of generations of living in social obscurity is evident not only in the unequal social relations but also in physical postures taken while communicating. Tully (1992) writes of how physical postures taken during physical interaction can determine differentiation of castes. ‘...He mimicked a conversation between a Dalit and a high-caste Hindu. The Dalit folds his hands and wags his bowed head from side to side...’ Such examples are evident in the hill villages:

##### **Images of Social Differentiation**

A group of elderly ‘upper caste’ men and women in Pilkhi village remarked, ‘There was a time when these scheduled castes bowed down low, their foreheads nearly touching the ground. They greeted us by saying, *Sewa layak huzoor* (Sir, we are at your service). Today they barely greet us.’ It is we who are the oppressed today by this whole context of counter caste-based legislation, which has been introduced by the government.

However, social control is still exercised in the village, by portraying examples of good and bad Dalits. A good Dalit is one who bends, who keeps a distance, keeps away from main paths and does not touch water sources. If Dalit men or women speak their mind and try to overcome any construct of practised inequality, they are labelled as having

crossed socially acceptable limits. Physical images of social hierarchy are still visible in the village. An upper caste woman, just married and young, new to the village and therefore of low social stature still exudes a natural physical defiance in front of a Dalit man of the same village. If the man is a guest in her house, she will not wash his used cup or plate. Washing utensils is primarily a woman's task in honour of the visiting guests, especially when they are males. This is however not applicable when the guest is a Dalit man.

## **5. Application of the Counter-Caste Legislation**

The number of cases registered under the Harijan Act does not evidence all the incidences of oppression or social revolt. In far too many incidences the cases do not even reach the courtrooms. They are all settled within the village either through negotiation or threat. This is characteristically true in the hills, where the Dalits live as a minority (Joshi, 1999).

There are instances where caste-based legislation has bridged to some extent the historical gaps in social inequality. A Dalit woman who was asked what changes had come to *her* life by way of counter-caste legislation, pointed to her husband and said, 'Ten years ago, he did not know that he was man. Now he does' (Tully, 1991). This statement also points out an important fact. While constitutional amendments have reduced to some extent caste-based inequities, gender disparities within caste hierarchies remain largely unidentified and therefore unaddressed.

### **5.3.1 Why do the Dalits Continue to Live as they do?**

#### **1. Religion as an institutional construct of inequity**

The political and socio-cultural history of the region of the mountain region is ancient, dating back to the Vedic period, which is traced to 1600 B.C. Vividly aware of this fact, people in the hills proudly refer to their land as Dev Bhoomi or the 'Abode of the Gods'. The religiously conscious hill women and men state, "The 33 billion Hindu Gods and Goddesses lived here, in the age when the Gods lived on this earth." The mountain

people draw on specific cultural practices and beliefs, perceptions of ownership and responsibility and decision-making mechanisms that are closely wedded to local religious and spiritual systems (Mehta, 1993). This system is used to sustain and legitimise local culture across individuals and generations.

The constructs of religion impose a subservient status on the Dalits through different local practices and traditions. The higher castes and the Dalits believe to some extent that the construct of inequality is divinely ordained. Caste-based inequities persist through an effective self-regulatory mechanism. Unequal social status is legitimised by religious doctrines and is practised as local culture. The Dalits are still considered ‘impure’ and the ‘higher castes’ still maintain a social and physical distance from the Dalits. A conforming attitude is expected from the Dalits and the Dalits respond by behaving appropriately. Consequently the Dalits remain excluded from public spaces and public decision-making domains within the village community.

Yet there is now a distinct awareness of social oppression and the social injustice. Counter-caste legislation to a large extent stimulates this awareness of inequality and attempts to provide space for a more equal voicing of decisions. However the legislation, itself, remains inadequate to challenge the injustice.

## **2. Practical Considerations – Making for the ‘Easy Life’**

Hima Devi identified earlier, was *bold* enough to offer the researcher food in front of Saraswati Devi. She did thus fully realizing that Saraswati Devi, a widow living alone was dependent on her. Therefore Hima Devi could prove her point and yet get away with this. There was another incidence, which reveals another view:

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The findings in this section illustrate that the researched mountain village communities are socially stratified by caste. Appropriate social behaviour and social relations are mediated through caste-based norms resulting in inequality between socially ‘upper and lower castes’. Perceptions of village solidarity and community commonality thus need to be revised.

#### **5.4 Gender**

The constructs of Vedic Hindu religion aggravate social vulnerability in women in similar manner to the imposition of social inequality on the Dalits. Religious philosophy, practised as local culture identifies the male as the head of the family, the husband as the ‘God of the wife on the earth’ and the ‘male child as the source of eternal salvation for the parents’ (Liddle and Joshi, 1986). There are deeply entrenched views of what is socially masculine and feminine and these barriers of social hegemony are difficult to cross, let alone to deconstruct. As examples below will show, women bear an unequal share of work burden, yet they critically lack self-autonomy and have little social access to making decisions related to their lives and livelihoods (Mehta, 1993). In these mountain villages, as is common elsewhere too there is a complex interplay of caste, gender and class in mediating inequality in roles, responsibilities and resources.

For example, a gender profile of the state of Uttar Pradesh identifies that Dalit women go through a rigorous exclusion from planned benefits as they experience oppression not only in the form of caste-based social disparities but also because of male-dominance and exploitation both at home and outside (Joshi, 1997).

In the research villages, it was common to see that Dalit women did not even gain the few benefits of counter-caste legislation as did Dalit men. Policies encourage this exclusion by homogenising Dalit women and men, ignoring the obvious gender inequalities.

##### **Gender Disparities in Counter-caste Legislation**

Reservation of scheduled caste representatives in village-level development committees,

for example water committees is mandatory by legislation. These committees are essentially responsible for decision-making and project management. Decision-making committees have historically been the domain of higher caste men, from which the Dalits and women, in general have been excluded.

In Hilay village, Hari Ram, a Dalit man was chosen as a member of the village water and sanitation committee. He views this as a step forward, towards a more complete masculinity that had long been denied to him, even though he identifies the rhetoric of the act. As he says, the prevalent social barriers prevent an effective representation. Like those who wrote the norms for representation, Hari Ram does not consider the need for his wife or other women from his caste to *also* find place in this niche of local leadership. Basking in the rhetorical, new-found glory, he does not even consider his wife's representation, "Why should she be nominated? Her work is in the home and kitchen."

Identifying caste and gender as two aspects of social inequality, livelihood strategies of the people in these mountain villages is now analysed to identify the constructs of inequality and inequity.

## **5.5 Land Ownership and Distribution Patterns**

### **5.5.1 Historical background**

Traditionally, the Indian monarchs and then the British colonial administration assigned all rights pertaining to natural resources to the 'upper caste' local nobles or Zamindars. This feudal system was prevalent especially in North India for over a hundred years (Sengupta, 2000). The landlords were bestowed ownership of entire areas spreading across several kilometres and in turn revenue was demanded for the land. Ram Bahadur Chand, a former landlord, now living in Mala village says, "Though the Government officially annexed and redistributed my land, I am still paying revenue in excess to what I actually own. There have been several legal proceedings but everything moves so slowly."

In order to generate revenue, outsiders were absorbed by the Zamindars either as land tillers or service providers. The land tillers were granted partial farming rights and in return provided agricultural produce, money and any other service demanded by the landlord. The Dalits traditionally provided service as tailors, blacksmiths, musicians, carpenters and stonecutters, animal flayers, barbers and other specific caste-based occupations. In the barter system of subsistence, in return for their services each user family in the village paid them in food grain and other food commodities. In 1968 the Zamindari Abolishment Act (known in the UP hills as 'bandobast') instilled land rights to those who were actually cultivating the land.

### **5.5.2 Land Distribution and Caste – the Dalits' Situation**

In the rural mountain villages, the local livelihood contexts determined that Dalits had and still have the smallest landholdings. As a result of their occupational status, the Dalits did not register as landowners and thus did not benefit, but lost, from government legislation (see above, 5.5.1).

Currently, very few families amongst the 'higher castes' give a regular share of the harvests to the Dalit families, as they are no longer dependent on these artisans. The new benefits of development have brought to villages ready-to-buy utensils, farm tools and clothes. The traditional artisans have lost their markets and clients. As we were travelling across Himtal village, visiting all the houses, my three local guides recalled that we were doing a 'Bhailo'. This was the traditional dance and song performed by the musician group of the Dalits, who would go from house to house during the summer and winter harvest periods, collecting their share of the harvests. This is not the practice today. Ani Ram Rana mentions that the act and remuneration is no longer constant.

The Dalit families own even smaller homesteads, than the ones owned by their ancestors, as land is fragmented with growth and subsequent land redistribution in the family. This determines a precarious existence for Dalit families, especially as evolving socio-

economic contexts makes redundant their traditional livelihood strategies. Most of the scheduled caste families I met were marginally landless and worked as daily-wage labourers or remained pitifully dependent on the benevolence of the landed class.

### **Obligations Resulting from Inequity in Land Distribution Patterns**

Saraswati Devi, mentioned earlier has temporarily given away two small fields to Hima Devi and her husband to cultivate. Hima Devi and her husband ensure that the land remains tilled but do not have to give any crop in return.

However, there are other ways in which they must pay. When Saraswati Devi's sons came home, she took away Hima Devi's cow saying she needed the milk for her grandchildren. Hima Devi and her husband, Bhim Ram consented because according to local norms, a cow belonging to a Dalit is not polluting, but the milk touched by Dalits would be polluted. It has been many months that Saraswati Devi's children have left, but the cow has not been returned.

The Dalit couple also do other jobs for Saraswati Devi, like grinding wheat, carrying ration from the market etc. As Hima Devi says, "We do everything for her except fetch her drinking water and cook her food, which would be polluting for her."

Some Dalits were allotted land under the official Land Ceiling and Land-redistribution Programme. Here the Government acquired land quantified as excess from large landholders, and allotted the ownership to formerly landless rural families. Chambers and others (1989) identify that such land is of the lowest agricultural productivity or value. Bina Devi, whose husband has been allotted such land in Mala village confirms this fact, "The land allotted to my husband is landslide-prone. Every year we lose large terraces of cultivated fields."

The primary livelihood strategies in the hills have historically been agrarian. The Dalits, as historical service providers survived through a system of barter of food for service. In the changing political and economic contexts, the livelihood strategies of the Dalits in the hills today are precarious. Bina Devi's statement of land allotted to her husband opens the

argument on the patriarchal and patrilineal systems of inheritance and social organization prevalent in the hills today and this leads into the next issue of discussion, on land distribution and gender.

### 5.5.3 Land Distribution and Gender

In the Uttarakhand as in much of India, women do not own land (Agarwal, 1994). Land ownership rights pass from father to son. Women experience a series of vulnerabilities for this gender-biased allocation of the primary resource base.

#### **The Impact of Patriarchal Land-Ownership Patterns on Women's Lives**

In Himtal village, Radha Devi, a young woman around 30 years of age, was tortured for the fifteen years of her married life by her in-laws. Finally she was forced out of the house and came to seek refuge in her father's home. Here she lives with her youngest son in a small hut, which was earlier the family kitchen. Her widowed mother has given her some land to till and a cow for sustenance, but she has not been given formal ownership rights over these possessions. According to her mother and brothers, this is a temporary arrangement and she has to go back to her husband's house, when her son is able to claim his right to his father's land. Her father's land belongs to her two brothers, both of whom have migrated outside. Radha Devi lives here as a stranger, clearly constrained by the obligations made by her family to her. The researcher lived in this house but was not introduced to her by the family, so low was her worth in her family's view. Her mother does not approve of Radha Devi's stay in the house and says, "My elder daughter went through worse miseries, but she never came home. She upheld our name and the name of her (husband's) family. That is a woman's true religion." It is poignant that a daughter cannot share with her mother the vividly held memories of her tortured life in her husband's home. Radha Devi does not want to go back ever, but increasingly realises the desperation of her situation.

In all the research villages, only in two instances, had land been given to daughters, however none of these women had the authority or control over the land.

#### **Women Do Not Own Land**

In Chunni village the Khanka landlord patriarch gave away some of his land to his daughter's family when his sons' wives did not bear any male children. However, land given to the daughter was registered in the name of her husband. The Khankas however regretted this decision when their daughters-in-law bore sons and this Khanka household traces their present day poverty to the hasty act of giving land to the daughter's family.

In Himtal village, Kamla Devi lives on the land that was actually allotted in her name by her father. She was the only child of her parents and when they were old they called her to come and live with them and take possession of what belonged to them. However she was no better off by owning land. Her husband accompanied her and so did his father. Her father-in-law was a dominating person, who forcibly gambled away most of land. As a daughter-in-law, she could not argue with her father-in-law, no matter how unjust the situation. When her husband died, his brothers denied her sons ownership to their father's patriarchal property, saying that they had left their homes. Her sons blame her for their landless condition and in turn abuse her for this.

Socially, a woman's status is projected as a dependent, and according to her marital status, she either depends on the benevolence of her parents or her husband and his family. As findings above show women have only temporary rights of stay and residence in their parental homes and their social worth lies in anchoring base in their husband's homes, no matter how difficult the living situation there. The reasons may be different, but the stress of coping with social obligations is more or less equal for women across caste and class boundaries. Dalit women have little to turn back to, in form of parental economic support in cases, of violence and torture in the husband's home. For completely different reasons, the stress of coping for 'upper caste women' like Radha Devi, results from the demands to uphold the family name at high personal costs.

Analysis below will further reveal that the right to own land is fundamental to social equity in the hills, especially as agriculture is the mainstay of sustenance. As seen above, women remain divorced from this basic right by means of social culture and socially mediated political interventions, yet as findings below reveal that women form the

backbone of the agrarian economy. The unequal division of agricultural labour coupled with women's lack of rights to land ownership imposes on the hill women a burden that has remained constraining and limiting.

## **5.6 Agriculture**

### **5.6.1 Land and Cultivation**

More than 80 per cent of the population in the Kumaun is rural and agriculture is the main source of livelihood sustenance. However, only 13.15 per cent of the total area is cultivable (GoI, 1991). The topography of the region is rugged and mountainous and much of the region faces extreme cold-climate and snowfall during the winter months. Being the catchment areas of several river systems, the ecosystem is both critical and fragile (Agarwal and Narain, 1997).

Data collected during fieldwork revealed that on an average, only 30 per cent of the households in the project area are able to meet their annual food need from their fields. For most households, on an average, returns from agriculture can sustain food needs for about 5 months in a year. Thus a seasonal cycle exhibits lean periods of food insecurity. Despite poor returns from the agricultural fields, the labour inputs to farming are high and much of the burden of cultivating the fields falls on women.

### **5.6.2 Differentiation of Tasks by Gender**

A seasonal analysis of the agricultural tasks shows a distinct differentiation of tasks in the field and at home, for women and men. Men's work is seasonal and they are responsible for ploughing the fields, planting seeds and irrigating the fields. Their work hours in the field thus vary in accordance to agricultural seasons. Women work in the field throughout different seasons, as they remain responsible for hoeing the fields, weeding the fields, cutting crops, harvesting the crops and finally storing the agricultural produce. Women assist men in planting seeds and irrigating the fields and men assist women in crop

harvesting. The time and labour inputs of women's work in the field is collectively higher than that of men. However, the division of labour by gender does not hold true in most mountain villages. In many instances, women remain entirely responsible for most work in the field as migration is a common livelihood strategy and the mountain villages are characterised by an eerie absence of young and able men.

### **5.6.3 Migration as a Livelihood Strategy**

Factors contributing to male out-migration are believed to be the low agricultural productivity, intensified in the hills with widespread deforestation, and local people's loss of forest-based livelihoods as a result of the deforestation. Faced with increasing food insecurity, most young and able men migrate.

#### **1. Patterns of Migration**

Of a study conducted in 75 villages across 14 divisional blocks Jaffri (1990) found that 35.8 per cent of the households reported out-migration and 95.3 per cent of the migrants were males, in the age group of 16-60, and of this 73.3 per cent were in the age group of 16-35. The option of out-migration is not available for the local women. Public spaces within the village, but more so beyond the village boundaries, are domains that are forbidden to them (Mehta, 1996).

The incidence of male-alone migration peaks in the case of families at the middle and middle-lower economic levels, which identifies the type of women most affected by out-migration. Amongst the higher income groups there are wider incidences of migration of entire nuclear families.

The rate of migration decreases with remoteness of the village and also with the very low levels of economic wellbeing, skills know-how and education. This indicates that social escape nets of migration are limited for the poorest and most vulnerable amongst the men, who are neither able to save money for the journey away from home nor to invest in learning formal skills of popular trade demands. The hill economy is known as a postal

remittance economy. The scant documentation that exists reveals that the percentage and amounts of remittances to those who remain in the villages, is dismally inadequate and unreliable (Jaffri, 1990).

## **2. The Impact of Male Out-Migration on Women**

The gender impact of male out-migration is strikingly evident on the hill women, who struggle to manage fields and homes and also experience psychological and physical solitariness. In families where the men have migrated, women take up all of the male divisions of work in the field, except the act of ploughing, on which there is a rigid social restriction for women. This belief holds rigidly true for all Hindus across communities. This socially held belief is not violated, no matter how severe the need. The local NGOs talked of empowerment of women and anecdotal events of women having started to plough the fields, however there were no such examples seen or heard of in any of the villages visited.

### **Gendered Roles which Cannot be Violated**

Lila Devi, a Dalit woman of Suni village works in Himtal as an agricultural labourer. She is a widow and has four adult daughters. They have some small fields of their own, but they cannot plough the field, nor can they afford to pay other men to plough it for them. Most of the family land has therefore been given away for sharecropping, from which the family gains little produce. Lila Devi and her daughters work as agricultural labourers doing 'femininely' appropriate agricultural work.

Rao (2001) recently mentioned of an incidence in the northern state of Bihar, where a widow, belonging to a lower caste decided to plough her land. Challenging of this social norm caused great disturbance. The 'keepers of the social norms', powerful men in the village decided that by violating this norm, she had become an animal. For several days she was tied with a rope together with cattle and forcibly fed cattle feed.

Even though women put in all other labour in cultivating the land, they do not own the land and are rarely able to make decisions related to farming. This results from the obvious gender disparities in social relations. Mehta (1996) reports that a young woman

of one of the mountain villages, with a migrant husband and elderly and frail in-laws, was the main agricultural worker in the family. However, her father-in-law, who had little input in the field, still made all the agricultural decisions. The young woman could not voice her decision to grow crops that would require less labour and have higher returns. On her father-in-law's insistence she continued to plant and grow crops that required intensive labour and were of little productive use to the family. The lack of decision-making authority also results from the fact that women do not have formal ownership rights to land and their social position disables them from making their views known.

In the mountain villages, despite women's major contribution to sustaining the local economy, men have *de jure* control of productive resources and are socialised to interact with the 'outside world'. This actually reinforces women's dependence on men (Jetley, 1987). Women carry the major burden of sustaining the family's needs through available land resources, yet women in these mountain villages do not exercise an equal control of the available resources. Bound by their social inhibitions, they are unable even to make the major agricultural decisions.

To an outsider's observation the hill women appear socially mobile and liberated. However, as these examples reveal, women share an unequal burden of the work-intensive agricultural labour and yet have an unequal access to the resource base. Women's intensified physical labour in sustaining the agricultural economy is especially demanding as women struggle to manage fields and homes in constraining environments. As examples below will show, in the remote mountain villages, access to basic services is poor and women remain primarily responsible for managing domestic services at home.

## **5.7 Class and Caste Effects on Degree of Social Vulnerability**

The examples above bring to light the complex linkages between diminishing resources, environmental degradation and economic impoverishment on the one hand and pronounced gender and caste-based inequities on the other. A third dimension to social inequity is the interplay of class divides.

Class divisions closely determine the degree of caste and gender specific vulnerabilities. There are various manifestations of class differences in the mountain communities. The first of these is directly related to caste, a higher caste determines a higher social status or in other words a higher class. Often this factor overrides a simplistic notion of economic disparity and differing social classification. A high caste Brahman family may be poor but may still exercise a certain social authority in the local community. However, this example is not so simplistic as divisions of sub-classes amongst castes also determine degrees of social hierarchy. Thus a low class Brahman may actually be subservient to a high class or noble Kshatriya and this is especially applicable if caste ‘nobility’ is related to traditional land ownership patterns. As a second case, traditional land-ownership patterns determine social class and this classification holds good even if present situations do not correspond to traditional social positions. Finally, in relation to changing economic contexts, the ability of a family to earn money through engagement in varying new occupations influences to a varying degree class differentiation. However, improved economic status only readily translates to improved social position, in instances where class superiority was existent traditionally. In other words, a newly rich Dalit man or his family may experience a change in their personal living conditions, but they rarely experience a change in their relative status within the larger community. In all these cases, there is a distinct differentiation of class hierarchies experienced by men and women, as a result of the dominant gender impacts on social status.

Saraswati Devi, an ‘upper caste’ widow belonging to the ‘landed class’ does not own land herself, but by making decisions on land belonging to her migrant sons, she is able to secure obligations of both ‘landless’ Dalit women and men like Hima Devi and her husband Bhim Ram. Saraswati Devi privileged by class and caste can look forward to

being obliged. In contrast Hima Devi, disprivileged by caste and class must always find relations to oblige, in order to survive. Gender disparity determines that Hima Devi bears the greater burden of poverty and caste disempowerment in comparison to her husband, Bhim Ram. When Saraswati Devi gave them food in the field, Hima Devi waited for Bhim Ram to eat first, before she ate what he left for her.

The complex interplay of caste, class and gender need to be internalised in analysing issues of gender disparity identified below.

## **5.8 Access to Basic Services in the Mountain Villages**

### **5.8.1 Gendered Experiences of the Struggle for Survival**

Official statistics show that access to basic services is higher in the hills in comparison to the rest of the State. However this does not reflect on the fact that higher access to services actually derives from a lower population density. In reality, basic services are poor and scarcely distributed across a difficult terrain (Joshi, 1997). Both women and men struggle to meet basic livelihood needs in the face of ecologically depleting natural resources and poor basic services. However, as in managing the fields, there is a distinct gender division of labour at home and women remain responsible primarily for domestic work.

In their socially determined roles as home managers and with the option of migration denied to their gender, women face the greater brunt of the survival struggle in the face of poor basic services. In the struggle for living and sustaining the family in a hostile ecological environment, women have forgotten their individual self and worth. It is common to hear women say, 'Here we are not individuals, we are only living things'.

Increasing environmental degradation of forests results in physical threat to women's lives as they take longer walks on steep terrain to fetch fuel-wood and fodder. Nothing stops this activity; rain, swollen rivers and springs, leeches in the monsoon, the blazing

summer sun, the winter cold or the daily threat of predatory tigers. Women access water for domestic use across difficult and rugged terrain. As identified in chapter 2, water delivery systems, both traditional and official has not translated to water availability within the household premises. As long as water availability is guaranteed the community at large and women themselves have been conditioned to think fetching and carrying water across long and difficult terrain is not a problem. Research has shown that women fetch water from as far as ten kilometers (km) away from home to the water source. The average distance travelled by women to fetch water is between 3 to 8 kms every day (Pande, undated; Upreti, 1998). Incidences of women falling down from the mountain heights while fetching water, fuelwood and fodder were common and apart from anecdotal mention, these find little reaction amongst women and men. Here women's life in general is cheap. If a wife dies, a man will find several others. However for a woman, it is religiously and culturally binding to *belong* to one man, and thus women do not and cannot remarry. A glimpse into the life of one such woman of the hills reveals the burden and melancholy of existence.

#### **One day in Gopuli Devi's Life**

Gopuli Devi is a upper-caste woman living in Hilay village. Married at the age of fourteen, Gopuli has four children, two sons and two daughters. Her eldest son is now in his early teens and her youngest child is just three years old. She lives in a one-roomed house that the family use as a kitchen and bedroom, which is also shared with the cattle. Gopuli's family is amongst the poorest in the village. Gopuli feels that her life is of no significance to anyone not even herself. Her self-esteem is very low. For a long time she refused to speak as she felt there was nothing in her life that was of any significance. Gopuli gets up every day when it is still dark and the moon and stars can be seen. Her first task is to make tea for the family. Then she goes to the forest to fetch fodder for the cattle, which takes at the least about two and half hours. After she is back, she feeds the cattle, one buffalo, two cows and one bull, and prepares the children for school. Then she cleans the house and fetches water. She is lucky that the water is available at a distance of a few furlongs in her neighbour's house, as her neighbour has tapped water from the nearest overhead source through pipes. She then prepares lunch, and serves it after the children return from school. After lunch and housework it is time to go to the forest to get

fodder and wood. Double trips to the forest are made whenever there is less work in the fields. By late afternoon it is time to fetch water again and carry manure into their fields. On some days she carries rations down the steep hill from the main road, which her husband brings from Nainital the district town. They do not have horses, which are owned by the better-off families. By evening it is time to feed the cattle again and collect manure, and take the cattle into the house. After this she prepares dinner and serves it to the family, then eats herself and cleans the utensils and the kitchen. Then bedding is rolled down and it is late night when Gopuli can finally go to sleep.

She never goes anywhere except for the occasional trips to her father's house in Bethalghat. Her husband once took her to Kotabagh, some seventeen km away to watch a local religious play, the Ramlila. They walked to Kotabagh and walked back the very same night, as she had to feed the cattle in the morning. Her life, as she says is tied to the cattle, the field and the family. Gopuli does not have a mirror in her house and would like to see herself but is also ashamed that she probably looks ugly and old. Her husband buys all her clothes and she has never gone shopping, and has also never been to Nainital.

Yet, Gopuli has some dreams, she would love to travel. She would like to have a nice house with a temple and to find time to worship and pray. Gopuli has never prayed, she has no time and there is no temple in the house. Gopuli does not attend any meetings in the village related to projects. She has no time. Yet, Gopuli feels she has been lucky, and counts herself amongst the more privileged women. Her husband is kind to her and does not hit her after drinking alcohol as do the other men. He gives her a little money sometimes to buy things like glass bangles, when peddlers come to the village. Her husband being an orphan, she had no mother-in-law to dominate her. She cites the case of her neighbour, Bhawani Devi who is dumb and whose husband is very poor. They have three daughters and one son. None of the daughters attend school. Bhawani Devi is not allowed by her husband to interact with any of the women. Bhawani Devi also has to fetch water from the drain some two km away, as her husband is not on talking terms with Gopuli's neighbour who has the private water source.

Women in general do not own the primary resources of homes and land, yet women bear an unequal share of work in the fields and at home. However, not all women are constrained equally by the burden of intensive labour. As examples below reveal, caste and class differences amongst women and men determine the degree of social vulnerability.

## **5.9 Gendered Allocation of Work and the Constructs of Social Hegemony**

### **5.9.1 Socialisation of Gender Roles and Responsibilities**

As identified earlier women's work hours show little variation. Across the year, most women work for 15-16 hours a day, collecting fodder and small firewood, cultivating the fields, depositing animal dung everyday in the fields, fetching water, cooking, washing, cleaning the house, looking after the cattle, the children and the old and sick at home. The notion of appropriate masculine and feminine roles and responsibilities is strongly established. Housework is women's responsibility and according to the local belief, good women are those who perform all the designated tasks at home, willing and diligently.

#### **1. Phases of Women's Lives**

Religion and social culture determine that women are married and pushed into the role of home caretakers at an early stage, an average of between fourteen and sixteen years (Pande, undated; Joshi, 1997). As young teenagers, girls begin to take over the tasks at home in order to be able to perform these roles efficiently when married. It is at this age that girls begin to drop out of school, while boys are forced to continue studying so that they can get into some form of employment. Girls experience an increasing restriction on their freedom and an increasing demand on their time and resources as issues of social rights and wrongs for women are inculcated at this age.

The young girls in the study villages identify words, which are commonly used to restrain their physical movement and voices. *Uchaluwa* means one who jumps around,

*charcharuwa* -one who talks too much and loudly, *phiruwa* - one who roams around, also a term used for alien Muslim traders who roam from village to village. They identify that these words are not used for their brothers. It is at this age that women are made to realise that they cannot go out and roam as their brothers. It is at this age that they are told to lower their heads, talk softly, housekeep well and to avoid looking at, talking to or laughing with men.

However even this constraining period is identified by most women as more attractive than marriage and womanhood. For women like Laxmi Devi of Chuni village, whose husband was not employed, was dominating and difficult and well known for ‘drinking away’ the meagre family resources, the state of being a wife and mother were clearly painful experiences. She says, “Oh there is nothing better than ‘*Jawani*’ (youth). To throw a *chunni* (scarf) around the neck and skip around along crooked paths. The biggest advantage of youth is the sheer physical strength of the body. Yes, there is work, but it is not binding. My daughter Janaki may cut some grass today but she surely does not have to bother as to how to feed the family day and night.” Thus class determines that brunt of womanhood and the unequal burdens of the gender division of roles are more severely felt by some women.

Laxmi Devi’s argument also reveals that marriage and childbirth in the presence of hard work and poor nutrition are both physically and mentally exhausting for women. Motima Devi of Mala village, who is now ninety years old, recalls that when she was young, they did not allow daughters-in-law to rest at all. “There was so much work that we ran continuously to ensure that we were able to complete everything expected of us. My daughters-in-law are much luckier today.”

In addition to caste and class, women’s fate to a large extent depends on the individual lottery they inherit as husbands and in-laws, on marriage.

In Chuni village Maya Devi is one of the more fortunate women. Her husband is a retired army man and has now found employment in a private company. She does not live with her mother-in-law and thus is the mistress of her house. She has three grown up daughters

and two sons, all of whom are obedient and helping.

In sharp contrast, in the same village Sunita Devi's husband has been mentally ill for the past seven to eight years. She has five small children of whom the smallest is three years old. She could only manage to get a contraceptive operation done by literally begging her poor parents to invest this much for her. She lives with her old father-in-law and a young brother-in-law, and this family is among the poorest in the village, both in terms of land-holdings and paid employment opportunities. Her husband throws away all the food, clothes and other household goods whenever he has fits, which happens often. He does not allow the children to go to school and drags them away from the school, threatening the teacher. He has often dragged Sunita Devi by her hair, when she tried to attend village meetings. The villagers no longer try to save her, as some years ago he cut a man's leg who was trying to prevent her from being hit. There is no money to invest for his treatment. It is difficult to look into her eyes, burdened as they were with pain and despair. Why is she still living as she does? But there is no place to go, she says, my parents are too poor and they will not take me back with these five children.

Sunita Devi does not accept her husband as her mortal God in accordance to the Hindu culture and religion, but she has no other options. She asks, "Where can I go, where will I leave these children? It is just my fate." One can question no further, knowing that the researcher can do little to bring any change to her life. The local NGO, which had been in the village for around eight years had not yet identified her vulnerability and continued to portray the example of the involvement of women like Maya Devi in projects in the name of women's empowerment.

The defeating gender roles for women continue till their bodies are bent with age and physical exertion. Mohini Devi of Chuni village identifies, "My mother-in-law is very old and bent with age, yet I still expect her to help me with some work. It is as if we women have ourselves defined that women must work to live. If I had an elderly father-in-law I would not have made such demands on him."

## 2. The Social Hegemony of Gendered Roles and Responsibilities

The unequal distribution of work is so deeply socialised that it is considered inherently natural. On stimulating deeper discussion, men expressed the view that their work burden is equal with that of women, while women argued that they worked more than men. However the concept of gender inequality in allocation of work responsibilities is distinctly an external construct, as locally, both women and men do not equate gendered division of work with notions of equality and inequality.

The socially approved tasks for men at home includes grazing cattle and collecting bigger logs of wood for construction purposes as well as for use as fuelwood. Some men do assist their wives and mothers at home with domestic labour but this practice is individualistic and rare. The social hegemony constructed around gendered divisions of labour is rigid and difficult, if not impossible to negotiate.

In Mala village, women had been well initiated into the process of social mobilisation and organisation by a local NGO for the past five years. These women are confident to travel outside the village and to argue with the Block and District Administration officials for provision of basic services. The NGO identifies this process as being socially empowering. However, these 'socially empowered' women do not challenge the unequal gendered roles, responsibilities and resource access and control at home. When the women of Mala village, sat through a gender role-play exercise and heard about gender role reversal possibilities, their reactions ranged from anger to fear, "we don't like this. Men can help a bit but why should they cook food and wash utensils and clothes? If they do this *menial* work we will lose our respect for them. We will not allow this." These comments were made especially by women who were economically more advantaged than the rest and did not bear the burden of having to physically and financially manage the household.

When adult men assist their wives at home, the local constructs of male hegemony are violated and the man, but more so his wife become subjects of ridicule.

Most women in Chuni village identify that Him Singh and Kishore Singh as men who

had gone beyond doing what was appropriate for them. This related especially to their cutting grass, milking the cattle, collecting animal dung and depositing it in the fields, tasks which are defined as being exclusively feminine. The women blame Kalyan Singh's wife, "She is lazy and fat and says I can't work fast enough. So she sits and watches her husband work. What a shame! She has taught the same to her daughters and their homes too will be *destroyed* like hers".

### **3. Gendered Perceptions of Men's Work**

It is men's task to 'go out and earn money' and the fact that women do not have equal access to public domains, contributes to this divide of roles (Mehta, 1996). The task of finding 'paid employment' is equally daunting for men in the face of large-scale unemployment. The most common employment for the poorly educated hill man is to join the Armed Forces as a sepoy. While this rings bells of joy at home, the young recruits go through a harrowing process of proving to be an army man. Far away from the hills that they love, the harsh discipline they experience at the lowest level of the hierarchy in the armed forces does not make life easy. On discussing the issue of meaningful and preferred employment, new army recruits in the villages said they somehow survive in their jobs because they know that they must 'earn money for the family'. Given a real choice, not many would opt to join the Army.

There is a loneliness and helplessness that men hide behind their proud faces as 'employed' soldiers. However in the face of severe unemployment the aspiration to be a 'male' soldier continues to haunt the young male school dropouts. In the absence of employment men know that their prospects of finding respect at home and a 'worthwhile' bride will remain unfulfilled and if unemployed they will survive an entire life at the mercy of their employed brothers.

Hari Singh is amongst the poorest of men in Mala village. His family having always been poor, Hari Singh is also illiterate, thus most doors of employment were closed for him. He lives with his father and works as a daily wage labourer when work is available. For Hari Singh there is no gendering of tasks. His elder brother is mentally unstable and often when he becomes very violent, Hari Singh and his father keep a separate kitchen. He is

already near thirty-five years of age and still unmarried. People say he will not find a wife.

Observation reveals that the few men who assisted their wives with work at home were usually those in paid employment. The reason could be that these men had fulfilled the masculine notion of being the breadwinners and could thus brave gender role reversals.

Pukar Singh of Mala village is unemployed, as many other men, but felt particularly disturbed by having been rejected as an army recruit three times. He was amongst the least co-operative to his wife Anandi and when drunk with alcohol expressed, “Am I so less a man that I should now help my wife with the housework?”

The only males who are expected to help at home are small boys and very young men, who reveal that they have specific responsibilities at home, which varies inversely with the number of adult, able women in the family. Anand Agari is about 16 years. His mother lost her sight in both her eyes about 4 years ago. From the time his two sisters got married Anand has been doing all the work at home. He cooks food, washes clothes, takes care of the cattle, sweeps the house. He does not resent doing this, for he loves his mother. However his mother is deeply pained at being forced to put Anand to such burden.

Boys and young men, who are still unemployed help to fetch water, assist in the preparation of the evening meal and wash clothes of fathers and elderly men in the family. Locally, marriage and procurement of paid employment opportunities are important landmarks that define the start of masculinity and masculine roles and responsibilities.

#### **4. Men Decide What Women Can and Cannot Do**

Men identify that no matter how great the poverty or how certain the opportunity of their wives gaining employment, they will not allow their wives to do work beyond socially defined parameters. Men also commonly say that they will not take over the tasks of washing women's and children's clothes, cutting grass and collecting animal dung to

enable their wives to work in paid employment. Adult males assist in housework, only when they can individually ignore or overcome what is defined as a socially acceptable masculine image. As seen above, men also assist only when there are no other options, as in the case with physically disabled women in the family.

Commonly, it is not women's work to go out and earn money. In all the five villages there were less than ten women who held some form of a waged employment. All these women work in the same village or in nearby villages as teachers, creche caretakers and health workers. Locally, there are distinct views on the type of work that women should do. Teachers, creche caretakers and health workers are jobs that are socially acceptable and respectable, as they did not require the women to leave the village confines or interact with alien men. Such work also does not hinder the tasks of housekeeping.

Women also identify that they will take up paid employment, only if it also enables them to keep house. They cannot perceive of assigning the housework to their men.

### **5.9.2 The Causes and Consequences of Gender Role Reversals**

In the local context, gender role reversals does not signify gender equality but in fact reveals a situation of socio-economic impoverishment and hopelessness. It is mostly the poor amongst men who are seen to undertake some of the essentially feminine tasks, outside the confines of their homes. However, in contrast to women, most men are paid for such work. Even then it is considered demeaning for a man to undertake such tasks. Poverty here is seen as a harsh leveler of gendered inequities as the self worth and esteem are low amongst the very poor women and men who have reversed traditional gender roles.

Him Singh in Chuni and Bishan Singh in Mala village are both unemployed men with little agricultural land. In order to survive they who do any work on demand from cutting grass, to carrying animal dung to the fields, to carrying goods and people (sick and old) back and forth from the villages. In return they are assured of goodwill and sustenance during difficult periods. Him and Bishan Singh are however, also lesser men than the

other males in the village.

A woman who works as a daily wage road labourer on the road head said, “What difference is there between a dog’s life and mine? I work here, abused and ridiculed by the male contractor and his managers and then when I go home I have to do everything myself.”

Contrary to popular notions of gender equality through gender role reversals, for the local women, working outside the home is not considered a social privilege. Some women do work as daily wage labourers in road repair and construction works in nearby towns beyond the boundaries of the village. This indicates locally a dismal level of poverty and desperation and an act, which is personally experienced as demeaning.

If men are socially ridiculed for working at home, women working outside the home are abused in many ways. Firstly, women’s work is assumed to be only complementary. As daily wage labourers in farm and non-farm activities they are paid less than men for the same number of work hours for equal or more strenuous work. Secondly, not all women working as labourers have access to the money they earn. The different constraints, which force women to take up waged labour as well as the abuse of women when they work outside the home is illustrated by the example below:

In Nachuni village both men and women are deeply constrained by poverty and the lack of means to sustain livelihoods. The geographic landscape of Nachuni presents a particularly devastating landscape, marked by deep and wide landslides, a result of the frequent blasting in constructing the Pithoragarh-Dharchula highway. The soil in Nachuni is dry and rocky due to extensive deforestation, which fails to show even the customary greenness of the hills. Nachuni is known in the region as a village where no father will knowingly marry his daughter. Both women and men here present an air of self-defeat.

Most men in the village can be seen in shops along the road, playing cards and drinking alcohol from the morning. They say, “Yes, we drink alcohol but what else is there to do? After taking food in the morning we leave home to come and see if there are work

opportunities on the road-head and nearby villages and towns, but if there is nothing, what point in going back? No we do not help with the work at home, men have never done so. Why do you ask this to us? Are we men, so poor here in Nachuni that we should now start cooking food and fetching water? If there is work then too, we like to relieve our work burdens at the end of the day with some alcohol. We survive the struggle of our lives on the strength of these crutches. No we do not tell our wives what we earn, what is the need to tell everything, after all it is we who run the house and bear all costs. Sometimes our wives also work as labourers on the road, when there is opportunity. We often collect their wages on their behalf, we may give them a little amount, but certainly not the whole amount.”

### **5.9.3 Assumptions of Women’s *Better* Social Status linked to Increased Mobility in the Hills**

There is a common story told time and again that the social status of women in the hills is comparatively higher than that of women in the plains. This is proved by demonstrating that the hill women are not constrained by restrictions on physical mobility, or purdah, which is prevalent in the plains. However, as seen above, for the women in the hills, this mobility is restricted to the walk between the home, the forests and the fields, the need for which is strongly enhanced by the physical absence of their male partners. Such mobility has also not necessarily been empowering to the hill women. ‘Often women are compelled to contravene local (pahari) norms by going into areas where mutually-recognized social norms no longer apply, where for brief moments they have no social ties (Berreman, 1993; Mehta, 1993). In many such instances, the presence of non-local men, alien values and a play of much required liquid cash is seen to exacerbate a long-established pattern of sexual exploitation of mountain women. Trafficking of mountain women to brothels in the big cities all over India is of common occurrence and said to reflect general conditions of poverty and failing mountain economies (ibid). More specifically, there was a hushed talk in the nearby villages that the desperation in Nachuni forces the women there to engage in prostitution, in order to earn money and meet their livelihood needs.

The findings in this section reveal the rigidity and inequality in gender specific roles and responsibilities in the local culture. Women's socially identified position as home caretakers and their lack of access to public domains keeps them bound to the home and hearth, providing them little opportunity to explore and gain benefit from the outside world. The changing economic context and the increased social mobility of men in comparison to women, make it men's responsibility to earn money. Women and men exchange their gender specified roles only in situations of extreme constraints. Men's adoption of household work results in decrease of their masculine status, whereas women's adoption of paid labour outside the household domain has much wider damaging implications. Despite the gloom seen in conditions of role reversals, this fact also proves an important point that gender roles are not set in stone and therefore can be changed, if for worse, then also for the better. Having identified the unequal gender roles, responsibilities and access to resources, it is logical to identify why this inequality persists and proliferates.

## **5.10 Factors Confirming Inequality in the Social Order**

This section will reiterate and bring to some convergence the various factors that determine social inequality locally. Caste-based inequality has been discussed earlier and the focus here is on gender. The questions explored here concern why most women bear an unequal share of work burdens, why they lack self-autonomy and why they remain silent in the face of social inequity.

### **5.10.1 Cultural Images of Women's Roles**

Religion, manifested as local culture, primarily defines appropriate feminine and masculine behaviour and confirms social inequality (Liddle and Joshi, 1986; Mukhopadhyaya, 1995). The Uttarakhand hills present a classic picture of a rhetorical sanctification of women, where women are glorified as the mortal images of female goddesses in their roles as benevolent mothers, graceful and honourable wives and

daughters. Women are thus expected to maintain the dignity of the local community and society and there is considerable social pressure on women to maintain this image in much the same way as the determination of good and bad Dalits is used as a tool to enforce social control. Any contradiction to this image is not tolerated well. Yet, we see that in the unequal gender roles and responsibilities, in the unequal distribution of resources the mortal images of women as female goddesses are rhetorical. Similarly, when pushed to extremes of poverty, the sanctification of women as virtuous wives and daughters is conveniently ignored.

Women do not have the right to landed property and sharing of material resources depends largely on the attitudes of the male patriarchs. Widows are social outcasts and are required to live lives of severe social austerity. Often this is a hopeless situation, where they find little respect both within their husband's house and in their parental homes. In Himtal village, the house where the researcher lived presented a classic case of the demands of social integrity of women to their husband, a relation, which demands no mutual reciprocation.

Ama, or mother as she was commonly known, was married at the age of twelve but her husband ran away from home after just two years of marriage. Someone traced him and found him after several years and brought him home, but he went away after a few weeks and no one knows where he is today. She still has to adorn herself with all the ornaments which signify her married status, but her tale is poignant, “I had lost my father before my marriage and my mother died of my grief a long time ago. What is my life, it is only an image, not a reality. I lived because I did not die, not because I wanted to live.” Could she not have gone back to her mother and remarried? “No, we women must not even think of this. When he came back a second time, I was too shy, but today I think I would have asked him why he did this to me? If he had to go, why did he leave me here or even agree to marrying me? But all that is long past and will make no difference to my life.”

### **5.10.2 Diminishing Resources, Difficult Living Conditions**

Women’s lives in the UP hills present a strange paradox. Religion and social culture sanctify their position as inferior to men. Ecological and social hardships on the other hand have made the tasks that were traditionally theirs, demanding and constraining as well as pushing them further into the traditionally male domains of labour and responsibilities. Yet they share little of the social privileges accorded to men. ‘Market-driven policies and processes coupled with the reality of a diminishing forest resources and a declining agricultural base draws the hill communities into wider state and market economies. These pose a host of new challenges especially to the mountain women, whose lives remain on the other hand embedded in the specific local cultures, practice and beliefs’ (Mehta, 1993).

### **5.10.3 Impotence in Effecting Change**

#### **1. Perceived Social Advantage of the Status Quo**

While discussing gender role reversals, women in Chuni village identified that for them, their roles in relation to water, no matter how difficult were tasks that granted them some

degree of social value in what they identified as their demeaned existence. Reversing roles as water mechanics would not grant them any social advantage. In their perception, when the larger universe remained the same, how would such solitary change of roles impact on their position apart from the obvious impacts of an added physical burden.

## **2. Social Constructs Defy Challenge**

Social constructs of patriarchy, masculinity and femininity are used to create discourses of dominance for women at the different institutional levels of household, family, lineage, community and society. These tools of social control are seen to cut across variables of class, caste, age and poverty, thus different women experience these tools of control differently.

Despite their subordination by religion and culture, women in the hills, like the Dalits, suffer in silent subordination not because they are unable to analyse their own situation and problem but because they are unable to challenge the belief systems that legitimize gendered domination and subordination. It is more to do with, ‘What choices do these women have in their specific local contexts?’

### **5.10.4 Education and the Socially Vulnerable**

One of the primary factors in this situation of women is the unequal literacy between women and men, and the corresponding inequality for alternative opportunities. The same applied historically, between Dalits and the ‘higher castes’, and persists, despite change in legislation to affirmative action.

The hills record higher rates of literacy in comparison to National figures, at 75.51 per cent for men and 42.87 per cent for women. However, there is a wide divide in the levels of literacy between urban and rural areas, between Dalits and the general castes and between women and men. It would be correct to say without assessment that most of the illiterate are certainly the economically poor.

In personal communication, some local analysts identified poverty and impoverished livelihoods, along with the ‘isolated mountains context’, which historically stifled any productive gain from education, as the principal reasons for differential access to education. They also pointed out the ‘social context’ as stifling any meaningful gain from education for women (Pathak, 1998). The rigid gendering domestic roles and responsibilities is one example of this stifling context.

#### **5.10.5 Manipulation of Political Representation by the Power Elite**

##### **1. Restrictions of Caste, Gender and Poverty**

Official policies have aimed to provide opportunities for a more equal participation in decision-making processes and forums. Analysis reveals the superficiality of such interventions in bringing about equitable change. However, because of the complexity in social inequality and sanctification of unequal gendered roles and responsibilities, women as a social category and both women and men amongst the Dalits have not been able to take advantage of state-led interventions in promoting positive discrimination. While gender and caste are recognised as specific constraining factors, there is no recognition of the fact that poverty excludes access to decision-making capacities.

In the face of enormous social constraints, it is now more apparent why Dalit women and men, the poor both women and men and more generally women remain excluded from informal decision-making forums at the village level.

##### **2. Manipulation of Allocated Electoral Seats**

The first local self-government (panchayat) elections were conducted in 1996 in Uttaranchal (then Uttarakhand region of Uttar Pradesh) in 9 districts. This was the first time that the State had declared that 1/3 of the electoral seats would be reserved for women and similarly 2/3 for the Dalits at all levels of local self-government elections. A report on the process complied by a local NGO on issues of reserved representation for women and Dalits presented interesting insights (Sahyog, 1997). It is important to note

here that the reporting context of the NGO, itself, did not differentiate between Dalit women and men.

The report reveals a deep knowledge gap amongst the local people, especially amongst women, the poor and the Dalits on issues of electoral processes, people's rights to information as well as on the roles and responsibilities of the elected representatives. Consequently, there was widespread violation of electoral norms by both the local administration and the more powerful in the communities.

- In one block in Chamoli district, the local leaders amongst the men, asked the illiterate women to sign a note to the district administration, which asked for cancellation of the reserved seats for women on the grounds that women were uneducated, unaware and not able to take up this responsibility.
- The more powerful in the community also defined that women could only be elected on the 1/3 of reserved seats and the rest of the general seats were reserved for men. There were several incidences of spreading of incorrect and misleading information.
- Most of the women who were elected were wives or family members of former male upper caste leaders and were proxy leaders on behalf of these powerful men.

In Mala village, the elected leader was the youngest daughter-in-law of the most powerful erstwhile Zamindar family. Her father-in-law had been the elected village head for many years and this time when the seat was reserved for a woman, she was fielded. She lives in Pithoragarh town, a significant distance from the village, to educate her children, and her father-in-law is the de facto elected village head.

There was an unequal power divide in the struggle for leadership between such women and women who were contesting independently, and poor women (Sahyog, 1997). Dalit women did not even make it to the competing ranks, nor was this reported.

#### **5.10.6 Reasons for the Failure of Development Initiatives to Transform Women's Lives**

Social inequality and inequity as a result of caste, gender, class and other correlated

social factors continue to exist and proliferate despite years of development interventions in these mountain villages. Why have development interventions not been successful in reducing the incidences of poverty and social inequity? How do development actors in the region interpret development issues and how different is this interpretation from the local people's needs? The chapter concludes with a brief analysis of the interpretation of field realities by development agencies, both official and non-governmental.

### **1. The Urban-Rural Development Divide**

The first observation is that development has been urban focussed. This has been the primary reason for increased out-migration. Every able male in the villages in the hills attempts, atleast once, to come down to the towns and plains to try and improve his economic status. If things work out the system of remittance economy persists and if not then the man returns home, losing skill and interest in the unproductive agricultural practices (Agarwal et al., 1997). For women, spaces and opportunities outside the village are forbidden to be explored on their own.

### **2. A Misinterpretation of Local Social Movements**

The Uttarakhand region is much acclaimed in development history as one of the regions where there was a natural process of women's movements for social transformation and environmental protection. Local environmental protection movements like the Chipko or literally, 'tree-hugging by the local women in retaliation to commercial forestry' were not essentially women's movements but Gandhian movements born out of a process of socio-political revolt (Jain, 1984; Guha, 1989). This is proved by the fact that little changed for the women who struggled. In the hill region mass movements have essentially conformed with the patriarchal male-dominant cultures and value systems, thus women's involvement in these movements has rarely changed the lives of the hill women (Joshi, 1997).

### **3. Agencies' Interpretations of Development - Women as Caretakers and Nurturers**

An ecofeminist interpretation of development is classically exhibited here in the Uttaranchal hills. Women are seen as environmental caretakers and nurturers and

therefore the institutionalisation of 'fixer roles for women' in environmental conservation (Jackson, 1994). As the environment is central to all other social problems women are also seen as 'appropriate vehicles' for mending all other social wrongs (Joekes et al., 1996). Thus women in the Uttarakhand hills have been harnessed to fight against deforestation, non-functioning of development interventions in villages, mal-functioning adult and primary education systems, and the list continues at length. The trend of women-centric development has tended to imply that the problem and hence the solution is confined to women. Therefore even issues of alcoholism and increasing male violence are movements taken by unilaterally by women. This trend has also homogenised women and women's problems.

Local women ask, 'Why women alone, why is all the burden of development rights and wrongs forced on women? Observations reveal that years of development do not show an unburdening off women's responsibilities. Development here was equated by agencies earlier with provision of basic services and now with enhanced productive efficiency for women. 'Women in the hills have been used as tools and instruments to lure development funds by both NGOs and the government. Projects focussing on women have rarely changed the lives of the women. The bending of women over project funded sewing machines and the vacant looks of women knitting blankets and dhurries tell a story of despair. The answer lies in liberating women within their homes and enabling the socially bound shackles to break and liberate their conscience' (Upreti and Pant, 1991).

In the process of enabling access to services, rarely have women and men been facilitated to identify gender inequality, empowerment and self-sustenance. In two villages where a local NGO had been working for over seven or eight years, it was common to see that only the more privileged amongst the women had significantly gained, thus the existing power structures and social imbalances had not been challenged. Women who were amongst the most vulnerable, poor, widowed, unable to save money for the self-help groups had been excluded. This observation was acknowledged by the NGO staff. 'We had to do this to gain foothold in these areas' (Pandey, 1998a). One could however ask, whose foothold, for whom and why?

#### **4. The Social Composition of Local NGOs**

Apart from government interventions to counter caste-based hierarchy there has been little alternative action in reducing these inequalities. The primary reason for this could be that most prominent NGOs in the hills are led by members of the ‘upper castes’. Understandably, it is more convenient for the local NGOs to focus on issues of women’s development and restoration of the fragile mountain ecology.

#### **5. Sanctification of Existing Inequalities by Local Development Partners**

As will be seen in the following chapters, local development partners sanctify gender and caste inequalities as culture and tradition. Challenging such inequities within a community with such strongly socially determined norms raises formidable constraints and this would not, as seen below, fit the narrow institutional priorities of NGOs.

##### **5.10.7 Local Interpretations of Development**

How do the local people in general interpret development? Most women identify that development means an unconditional provision of basic needs like water, fuel, food and health. The men also identify these needs and also identify the need for sustained income opportunities. ‘There should be factories here for us to work in, but we wonder if we have the natural resources?’ The local people do not share parallel concerns of environmental degradation or natural resource exploitation, as do the local NGOs. Years of poverty and exclusion from income-earning opportunities do not enable the local people to look beyond immediate survival needs. All that is demanded is assured livelihoods.

One old man in Himtal village said, “Providing basic services does not really classify as development, this is our right. Having basic needs fulfilled however can lead to development. For the women, development means relieving them of their taxing work burdens, enabling them to exchange their poorly paying productive activities like cattle rearing with something that gives them assured income and more time for rest. The practised forms of income generation through sewing classes for women is not going to

change their lives. To be able to even think of changing lives, our women must be liberated first from the burdens of their physical labour. This will initiate them into deciding what they want as development. For us men, development should be something that provides us to be here at home and still be able to sustain our needs. It is an increasingly monetised world. The cooking gas prices, electricity prices, all that has increased. We cannot survive on the strength of our fields, although we cannot abandon them. We need assured income-generating opportunities or relevant agricultural assistance to increase our yields and good marketing possibilities and high assured returns for the excess we will hopefully produce then.” It was obvious that the agents of development had not heard the wise words of the people.

### **5.11 Conclusion**

The village community in the researched areas is divided primarily along the lines of caste, gender and class. The intricacies of these divides which are neatly interwoven into the local fabric of religion and culture and into lives and the livelihoods of the people, are difficult to isolate and categorise.

Findings in this chapter support many perspectives of the received wisdom of gender inequality specified in chapter 2. Foremost, the rigors of social conditioning are deeply embedded in the local culture and thus are resistant to change. These mountain villages are remote, rural and isolated and this perhaps influences the way in which caste and gender inequalities, justified by religion and culture are more accepted than challenged here. The stories of Dalit oppression in these villages are different from the stories of Dalit revolution and opposition to caste-based inequities elsewhere in India.

It is difficult to disassociate inequality between women and men from inequality by caste and economic class. Women throughout these villages are consigned to the ‘restrictive’ household domain. Their socially assigned positions and roles and responsibilities are inferior to those of men and they have lesser access to and control over resources than men. However, inequality of caste and economic class determine that different women

experience the constraints of inequality differently. It is indeed an antagonistic, socially oppressive relationship that exists between the landed, socially higher caste Saraswati Devi, and her land tiller, the poor Dalit woman, Hima Devi. Findings in this chapter indicate that in such circumstances it would be inequitable to restrict the gender debate to issues of inequality between women and men.

The observations made here are specific to these mountain villages. In this case, the increased out-migration of young and able-bodied men implies changes in socially allocated roles and responsibilities for women, which are seen to be mostly negative - increased work burdens with little corresponding authority to make decisions. This points out that factors of inequality vary across time and regions and there cannot be a standard blueprint approach applicable to gender equitable development.

This chapter illustrates the complexity and deep-rootedness of inequality, impacted by many factors, perpetuated across time and reproduced in a range of institutions. It is obvious from this analysis that concerted and inter-related action is required at different levels of policy and development practice to reverse and correct this entrenched inequality in social relations. It begins to appear inevitable that a reversal in such social relations cannot be brought about by a water development project working within the narrow confines of one or few villages and organisations.

Chapter 6 analyses if and how unequal social relations identified here, impact upon water use and management practices. The purpose of this research is to analyse the social order of water management and to use the analysis in moving towards identifying realistic and practical gender goals for water projects.

## CHAPTER 6: INEQUITIES IN WATER ALLOCATION, MANAGEMENT AND USE IN CHUNI VILLAGE

### **6.1 Introduction**

Findings from chapter 5 reveal the complexity of inequality in social relations and identify how inequality stems from and perpetuates socially allocated roles and responsibilities, and access to and control of basic livelihood resources.

This chapter analyses how social relations of caste, class and gender, impact upon local people's rights to water. Rights to water analysed here include 'local formal and informal rights to use/access water; construct, operate and maintain schemes and systems; decide on system affairs; represent the system/source to third parties; formulate and change regulations on use and management; enforce rules and the right to occupy a position of water authority' (Benda-Beckmann et al., 1997).

Water is a spiritual construct in the Hindu way of life (Baartmans, 1990). This connotation of water interrelates with the stratified caste and gender hierarchy of the structure of the Hindu community. Water is not only polluted by the touch of the Dalits for the 'higher castes', but water is also used to purify individuals who have been socially polluted by close contact with the Dalits (Baab, 1975, quoted by Murray, 1994; Baartmans, 1990; Khera, 1997). The Hindu ritualism of pollution associated with water, ascribed to Dalits is also applied to women, cyclically in relation to women's biology, related to reproduction (Das, 1982). Across some Hindu communities, on the first four days of menstruation, during late pregnancy and 21 days after childbirth, women are considered bodily impure. These connotations of the Hindu way of living are studied here to analyse their impacts upon water management and use.

Past research confirms that women, given their universal responsibility for providing and managing water at the domestic level, are primarily impacted by the lack of adequate, appropriate and reliable water (Curtis, 1978; Van Wijk, 1998). While this is true, the

focus of analysis has been restricted to women, rather than gendered use of resources: women are identified both as victims of and solutions to the problem of inadequate, inappropriate and unreliable water (Leach, 1991). Women's unequal gender roles and responsibilities in relation to water are analysed here, in relation to the unequal social relations between women and men. Mehra and Esim (1997) point out that there is an acute absence of empirical data and of adequate analytical discourse about the links between poverty, gender and water. The findings in this chapter analyse how gendered inequity to water is impacted by other cross-cutting issues of social inequality.

The findings in this chapter are drawn from a walk taken through the hamlets of Chuni village. Data was collected using the PRA tool of Transect, which was used to map the history of water institutions, sources and systems in Chuni village, as interpreted by the local people. In walking across Chuni, one encounters different systems of water technology in use as well as different management systems. It is essential to have a fair understanding of these systems.

## **6.2 Drinking Water Delivery Systems in Chuni Village**

Water delivery systems encountered in Chuni village are common across other hill villages in Uttarakhand. In Chuni village there are both the traditional systems and official systems built through government assistance.

### **6.2.1 Traditional Drinking Water Systems**

The terms 'traditional' and/or 'indigenous' imply that the design, management and control of water delivery systems are established without any influence external to the local community (Agarwal and Narain, 1997). In Chuni, as in other mountain villages, local people identify these systems as more appropriate, effective and reliable than recently provided official systems. In the hills, the preferred traditional system for drinking water is the *naula* or the harvested natural spring. According to the local people, water from the naula is usually available throughout the year, is clear, and therefore is

perceived to be clean and is also sweet to taste. When naula water is not available, water is obtained from seasonal waterfalls known locally as gadheras or gads. Water from the gad is assured only during the monsoon and even then it is muddy, as the flow of water collects mud and debris. Often, when both sources are available gad water is used to feed animals or used for bathing and washing purposes and naula water is used for drinking.

Naulas are identified in existing literature as examples of excellence in water delivery systems and the reason for this is traced to the concept of spirituality associated with these harvested springs. ‘The naula is built by constructing a wall across a groundwater spring. Naulas are traditionally held in deep reverence and rituals are made while constructing a naula. Big shady trees in the vicinity provide privacy to water users, as well as reducing evaporation. People worship these naulas and the trees, which serve the dual task of keeping systems clean and conserving water. Leaves of medicinal plants are added periodically to the naula to clean and purify the water (ibid).

The available documentation does not identify that if religion plays a key role in the upkeep of the naulas, whether it also imposes a construct of inequality by caste and gender on the management and use of water. This issue is researched in this chapter.

As identified in chapter 5, in the Zamindari system prevalent in North India, the landlords had ownership rights to all natural resources. There is no recording of rights, if any, of tenants to natural resource *commons* (Sengupta, 2000). Despite the distinct feudalism operational then, it is simplistically assumed that the institutions and systems of water management were fair and egalitarian. ‘...to what extent they were internally unequal or oppressive is difficult to say, but Indian villages functioned like little republics which managed their own resources...local communities managed and maintained their own water harvesting systems, including the establishment of rules for sharing water, penalising offenders and making payments to those who managed water distribution’ (Agarwal and Narain, 1997).

In eulogising the equity of water management in traditional systems, Agarwal and Narain (1977) go as far as stating that most hill villages were traditionally unicaste. Findings from chapter 5 contradict this statement. The authors also identified that 'traditional Indian villages were self-contained and self-sufficient'. In traditional India, where occupations were defined by caste, villages – in order to be self-sufficient – had to consist of multi-occupational caste groups. Berreman (1993) identified that the closed societies of Himalayan Hindu villages are rigidly stratified into different caste groups. Given the reality of social, economic and political inequality in caste relations and skewed land-ownership patterns, it is contradictory to assume that traditionally there was equitable access to and control of water resources.

It is documented that traditionally water rights were based on the principle of prior water-use and were also linked to land rights (Agarwal and Narain, 1997). The Zamindari Abolition Act, which resulted in the redistribution of land, transferred water ownership rights with land ownership rights. The Kumaon and Garhwal<sup>1</sup> Zamindari Abolition Act of 1950 states, 'The owner of the land shall have the right to use the water source for any purpose'. In the same Act, water sites situated on common property were annexed to the State. 'Tanks, ponds, ferries, water channels belonging to the State shall be managed by the Gram Sabhas (village elected leadership) or any other local authority established' (ibid). There is little information available in literature on whether these new laws were effectively interpreted and implemented by village communities. Given the geographical and political isolation of the hill villages, there was a fair chance that state legislation was not enforced in strict detail at the village level. This chapter analyses rights to water in the context of feudalism and unequal allocation of power between the landed and the landless and how changes in legislation impacted upon these rights.

### **6.2.2 Official Systems of Water Delivery and Management**

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<sup>1</sup> These two regions were formerly the Uttarakhand hill region of the state of Uttar Pradesh. Now these two regions constitute the newly formed state of Uttarakhand.

Systems of water technology, introduced through British colonialism, are recognised as the official systems. As a colonial legacy, this system also formed the seed of official water planning after Independence. Shiva (1989) and Sengupta (2000) identify that in comparison to traditional systems, official water delivery systems consisting of ‘cement tanks and metal pipes’ were an alien and imported technology. They perceived these systems as involving an exaggerated emphasis on western civil engineering techniques, which they argued as inappropriate to local conditions. The arguments underline the prevalent confusion between the use of the terms, technology and the system of delivering and managing technology. Fieldwork investigations presented in this chapter reveal the basis and logic of such prevailing perceptions.

Conforming to the approach of centralisation of basic services, discussed in chapter 3, the Uttar Pradesh government passed the Kumaon and Garhwal Water (Collection, Conservation and Distribution) Act in 1975. This Act terminated the customary rights of individuals and village communities and established state ownership of water resources, a process well known in the development context as ‘nationalization of natural resources’. Under this Act, the state government took over the power to frame rules for collection, conservation and distribution of water and control of water sources. It is mentioned in the Act that the state could set up, rehabilitate and develop water-management systems on land belonging to any individual. Additionally, no individual was allowed to create an irrigation system without prior permission of the sub-divisional magistrate, who is the highest level of authority in the district bureaucracy. It is also mentioned in this Act, that all former water legislation was nullified (Agarwal and Narain, 1997). Iyer (2001) mentions that constitutionally the legislation does not clarify ownership and control rights of ground water and the received wisdom is that in the face of ambiguous legislation, powerful individuals continued to exercise power and authority in determining the use and allocation of water. This chapter analyses the implementation of such legislation to water allocation, management and use in the research village.

### **6.3 Choice of Chuni as the Research Village**

Chuni is a breathtakingly beautiful village, located at about one and a half kilometres (km), an equally breathtaking steep ascent (!) from the beds of the Ram Ganga river that flows through the valley of Ram Ganga.

### **6.3.1 Appropriateness for Researching Water Issues**

The primary reasons for choosing Chuni as the research village are:

- In Chuni village water development and management systems are still largely traditional. The reason why official intervention here has been minimal is because the village presents a deceptive picture on water availability. As Hari Singh of Talli Chuni says, “Most government officials walk to the lower hamlets of Chuni and, seeing the abundant flow of water there, they never walk up.” And as discovered, Chuni is also one of the many villages where different social groups of the community experience water abundance or water scarcity.
- Chuni is a mixed-caste village and therefore provides scope for assessing social hierarchies and inequalities between the castes.
- There is a dominant single-lineage caste group in Chuni, which traces its ancestry to the man who purchased the entire village. Other households in the village are those settled by the landlord for purposes of providing agricultural labour, therefore the possibility that constructs of power inequities along class lines could exist.
- Chuni is known as the ‘village favoured by the Jal Devi, or Water Goddess’. Right at the entrance to the main hamlet of Chuni is an ancient temple dedicated to the Jal Devi, thus providing ample scope for identifying the mythological constructs of water in relation to social inequality.
- Chuni is located close to other villages where a World Bank funded water project was implemented and analysed in the context of this research. Therefore, research in Chuni can be used as a baseline for determining project impacts in common social and geographical settings.

### **6.3.2 Residents of Chuni and their Social History**

Chuni is a revenue village, which is the lowest form of local government in the rural political structure. The village consists of ten hamlets or sub-villages, known locally as *toks*. The history of Chuni village, collected using different PRA tools is described in Annex 4. This description will enable the reader to assess the local politics of caste and class, which historically determined the social composition of the village. The description is summarised here in the form of a table, which identifies the caste composition of families and the social hierarchy between the resident families on the basis of caste and class.

**Table 6.1: Caste, Class and Social Hierarchy in Chuni Village**

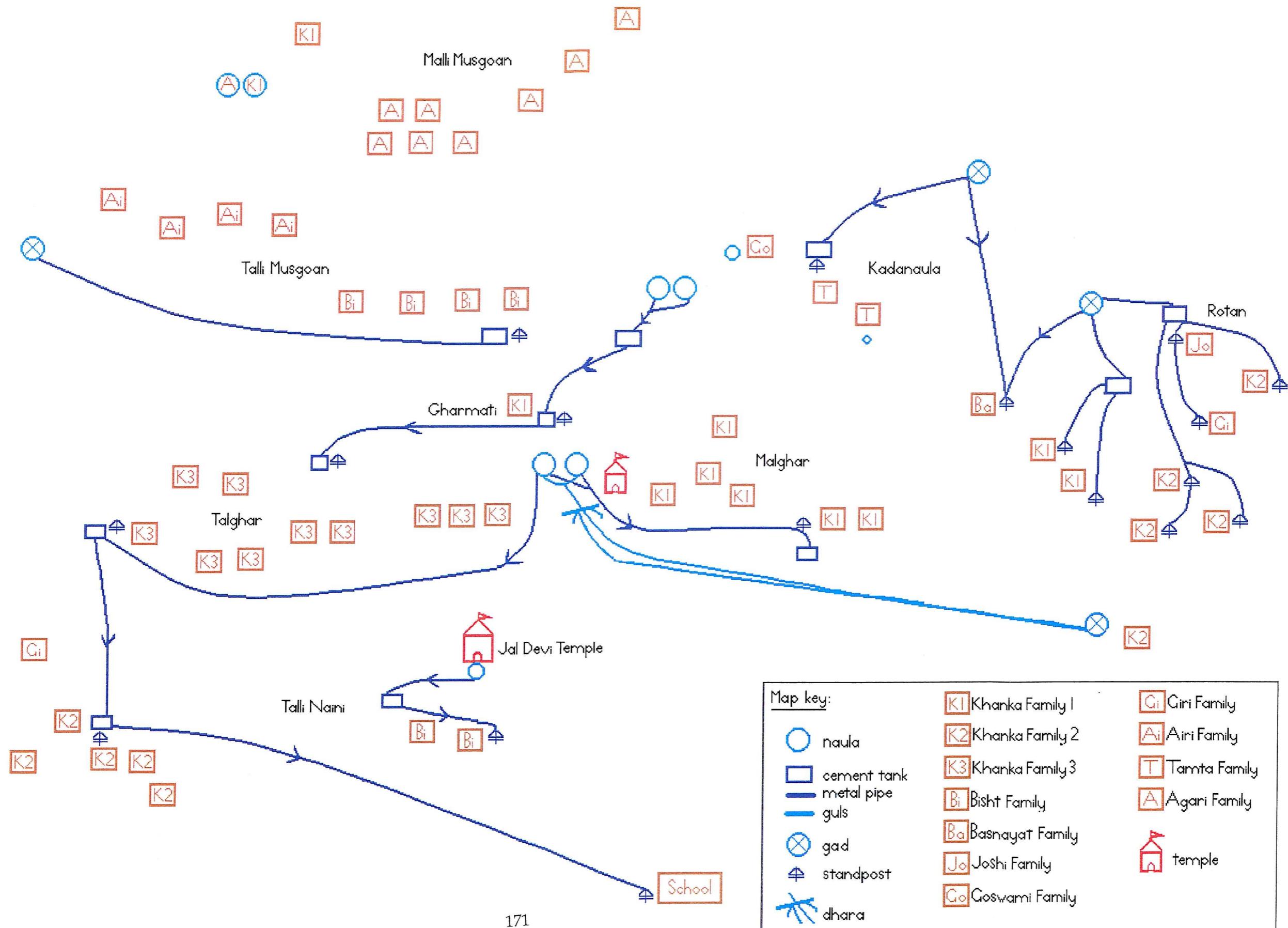
<b>Sub caste / Caste</b>	<b>Occupation/Class</b>	<b>Order in the Social Hierarchy/Class</b>
Khanka / Kshatriya	Traditionally landlords, still agriculturally landed	The Khanka families trace their ancestry to 3 family trees. Khanka family 1 is the family of the patriarch landlord, Dhan Singh from his first marriage. Khanka family 2 is the patriarch's family from his second marriage. Khanka family 3 is the family of the patriarch's brother. Family 1 is socially the most dominant family in Chuni, and families 2 and 3, follow the order in a decreasing social hierarchy.
Bishts / Kshatriya	Given land and settled through matrimonial relations with Khanka family 1	Bisht families are less dominant than Khanka family 1, but through their connection with this family, they are socially more resourceful than the other 2 Khanka families and other Kshatriya families.
Basnayats / Kshatriya	Given land and settled through matrimonial relations with Khanka family 3	Socially inferior than both families of Khankas and Bishts.
Joshis / Brahman	Land tillers settled by Khanka family 1	Low class despite higher caste, this lone Brahman family strives to maintain good relations with the Kshatriya families.
Goswamis / Mixed caste group	Land tillers settled by Khanka family 1	Lower caste, low class, socially unable to exercise power.
Giris / Mixed caste group	Land tillers settled by Khanka family 1	Less dominant than the Goswamis, given their landless condition.
Airis/ Mixed caste group	Settled through illicit marital relations with family 2	Lower caste, low class, socially less powerful than the Goswamis and Giris.
Tamtas, Agaris /	Traditionally blacksmiths and	Lowest caste and class, socially most disadvantaged, this position changes little even for Dalit men holding new professions outside

Sudras or Dalits	agricultural labourers, settled by Khanka family 1	the village confines and their relative economic advancement.
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### 6.3.3 The Social Map of Chuni village

The social map of Chuni drawn by the local residents identifies the geographical position of the hamlets and locates where the various families live. The map shows distinctly the social segregation of households by caste. Dalit households are located away from the central village proximity. This geographical segregation of the Dalit households is observed in all multi-caste mountain villages. This has also been recorded in Chapter 5, to be true beyond the mountain context. The proximity of some ‘higher caste’ families to Dalit families denotes their relatively lower social position.

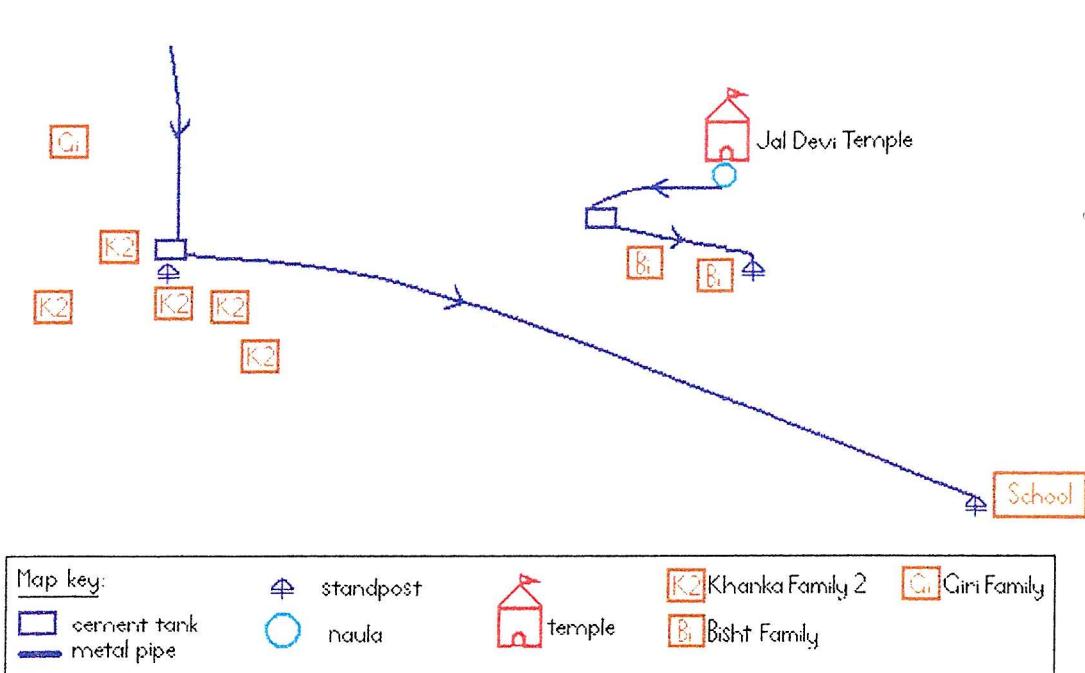
**Map 6.1 (see next page)**



## 6.4 Water Availability, Allocation and Management in the different hamlets in Chuni

Starting at the tail end of the village, this section guides the reader across the different hamlets of Chuni and identifies the families that live in each hamlet and shows their relative access to and control of the available water sources and water delivery systems. The findings show how social relations mediated by caste and class, determine differential access to and control of the available water. Specific constraints experienced in each hamlet in relation to gender inequities are also mentioned here. However, unequal gender roles and responsibilities, in relation to water and the impacts of caste and class constraints on gendered inequalities in relation to water use and management are discussed in greater detail in the next section of this chapter.

#### 6.4.1 Talli Chunī or Lower Chunī



## **1. Social Status**

The five Khanka households in Talli Chuni trace their maternal ancestry to Dhan Singh Khanka's second wife and the 2 Bisht households are related to Dhan Singh's family from his first wife. Also living here are Bir Nath Giri and his family. Bir Nath does not own any land and is also unemployed (refer to Table 6.1 and Annex 4).

## **2. Water Source**

The primary water source in Talli Chuni is a naula, which is located in the famous Jal Devi or Water Goddess temple.

## **3. History of Access to Water – the Effects of Class**

When the Bishts were given land here (refer to chapter 5), they wisely negotiated to participate in the temple upkeep, knowing that sharing this responsibility with the resident Khanka family would increase their rights to the water source. According to the legislation related both to prior use and land ownership, the water source located in the Jal Devi temple belonged exclusively to the Khankas (Khanka family 2, refer Table 6.1). On the basis of commonality of the caste order, the '*right to use water for domestic use*' from the Jal Devi temple was extended equally to the Bisht, Khanka and the Giri families of Talli Chuni.

Class hierarchies between the families, however, enabled the Bishts to claim ownership rights to this water source in 1970. They were able to do this because of their family links with Himal Singh Khanka of Khanka family 1, who was then, also the elected village head. Himal Singh Khanka wielding social authority and political power used official funds from the local development office to divert the water from the temple to a cement tank, built on land belonging to the Bishts.

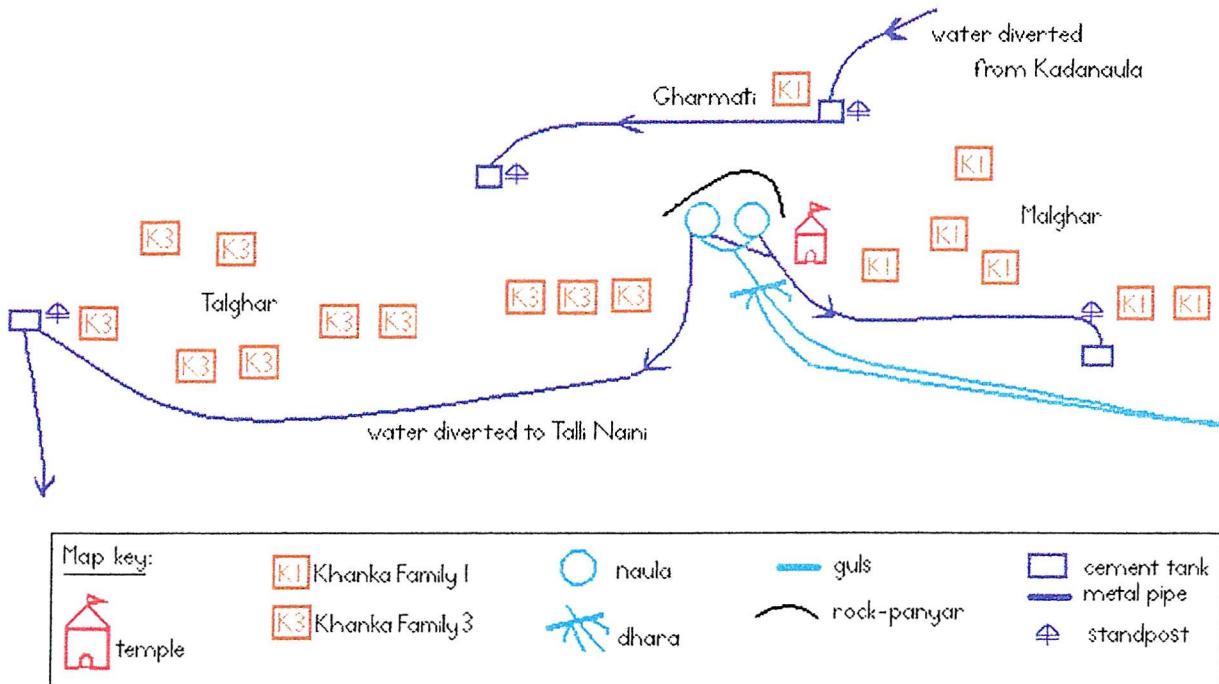
Uday Singh Khanka and his brothers, of Khanka family 2, living in Talli Chuni objected to this arrangement even though the water had also come closer to their homes and a tap had been left in the tank, which provided equal access for all the Talli Chunni households. The resentment was not related to access but to ownership and managerial

rights to the water. However, Himal Singh could ignore the law and restructure water ownership rights. Later the Bisht family invested personal resources to pipe the water from the tank to a stand-post in the house. The Khankas did not argue about this, as by then, they had found an opportunity to tap another water source and claim personal ownership to it.

During his tenure as the village head, Uday Singh Khanka managed to get official permission to detach some of the pipes from an official scheme (known popularly in the village as the ‘9 million rupees scheme’) that had failed and been aborted and to divert water from one of the naulas in upstream Chuni and course it down to his courtyard. Using the authority of his political status and a clever strategy, which is described below, Uday Singh succeeded in obtaining rights to water to which he had neither prior use nor ownership rights. Even though this was not part of the official project, Uday Singh started to pay taxes for the water (Indian Rupees 7/month) to the state agency in order to further legitimise his action. The Khanka families in Talli Chuni continue to pay this tax today.

Bir Giri, deprived of land and of low economic and social status, remained excluded from all discussions and decisions related to the management of the water sources in this hamlet. He was neither consulted nor could he voice any protest. For him, it was okay as long as he continued to get access to use water. Even now the family do not have their ‘own’ water source.

### 6.4.2 Malli Chuni or Upper Chuni



#### 1. Social Status

Malli Chuni consists of three smaller toks or hamlets, Talghar, Malghar and Gharmati. The residents of Malli Chuni all belong to a common caste. As seen in Talli Chuni, a distinct hierarchy is visible in the social positions of the Khanka families living in Malli Chuni, which determines differential ownership and management rights to the available water.

#### 2. Water Sources

As illustrated in the map, the primary sources of water in Malli Chuni are the two perennial naukas located at the foot of a large rock. This area is known locally as the panyar, or 'the water place'. From here, water flows into a wooden structure known as a dhara, which locally means a source of flowing water. Water for domestic use is collected from the dhara. There are also narrow irrigation channels, known locally as guls, which carry the water flowing out from the dhara to agricultural fields. Water in the dhara

decreases slightly during the summer, however, during the monsoon and for several months after monsoon, water flows out from the dhara into the guls, which irrigate the rice fields. Malli Chuni is the best location in the village, in terms of water availability.

### **3. Access to Water – Effects of Religion**

No Dalits live in this water abundant part of Chuni village. Located close to the dhara is a small Jal Devi temple. The Dalits cannot access the area around the temple and the area where the two naukas are situated. This space is considered as the most sanctified locations in the village, after the Jal Devi temple. The Dalits can drink water from the dhara on their way through Malli Chuni, without touching the structure of the dhara itself. This is allowed, as according to the local belief, flowing water is not polluted. However, this is a recent development. In earlier times the Dalits were not allowed to walk across this hamlet. Across the village, there were separate paths for the Dalits in order to prevent their movement across ‘upper caste’ hamlets and village sacred spots. Even now, it is considered socially appropriate for the Dalits to keep away from this area and it is said good Dalits are those who keep away from such sacred spaces and water sources used by the upper castes. This area is also forbidden to the women of Malli Chuni, in their cyclically impure condition.

#### **a. Talghar or the Lower House**

##### **i. Social Status**

The ten households in Talghar trace their ancestry to Dhan Singh’s brother and his wife (refer to Table 6.1 and Annex 4). The Talghar Khankas have less agricultural land and also a lower political status than the Malghar Khankas, who trace their ancestry to the patriarch, Dhan Singh through his first marriage. The Talghar Khankas are known locally as the *Chota* (smaller, lower) Khankas in contrast with the *Bada* (bigger, higher) Khankas of Malghar. Here in Talghar live the poorest families amongst the Khankas, who cultivate land for others. The brothers, Him Singh and Bir Singh work as daily wage labourers. They have a low social status not only amongst the Khankas but also amongst other men, in terms of an unequal masculinity, as explained in chapter 5. Here lives Khim Singh and his family who have struggled through two generations of poverty and unemployment.

Women like Khim's Singh's wife, Laxmi Devi (refer to chapter 5) are amongst those most burdened by an unequal gender allocation of work, in the face of extreme poverty. Laxmi Devi's daughter, Haruli, is the only girl in the village of her generation who did not attend school.

### **ii. History of Access to Water – Effects of Social Status**

There is a conflict between the Talghar and Malghar families on rights to water from the panyar. Bhima Devi of Malghar, Dhan Singh's daughter-in-law by his first marriage and the oldest woman in Chuni says, "The panyar and the dhara belong to us, as they are located on land that belongs to us. You can still see the stone that was set as the boundary between the two hamlets." However, the Talghar Khankas claim equal rights to the water of the dhara as they say that of the two naulas in the panyar, one was theirs and the other belonged to Malghar families. "When Uday Singh Khanka of Talli Chuni diverted water, he did it from our naula. To legitimise his action, he provided a connection to the last household in our hamlet, Talghar, belonging to Hem Singh Khanka. Hem Singh has now migrated and his family was not living here even then. We had conflicts with Uday Singh over this. This was a clever strategy by him to claim legitimacy for his action, but it also proves that this naula belongs to us."

Ganga Singh Khanka of Talghar was elected as the village head but he did not see the need to improve the water situation in Talghar as there is abundant water in the dhara, which not only meets the domestic water needs of the Talghar and Malghar households, but is also used for irrigation. The socially disadvantaged Talghar Khankas have equal access to the abundantly available water, but their ownership and control of the source is not defined.

## **b. Malghar**

### **i. History and Social Status**

The descendants of Dhan Singh and his first wife live here. There are 6 households presently living in Malghar. All the Malghar households ancestrally had the largest most fertile, irrigated and productive landholdings in Chuni. In the process of land reform they

thus lost large tracts of land. Loss of land coupled with fragmentation and division of land has resulted in significant impoverishment of some of these erstwhile rich Khanka families.

Despite changes in land ownership and relative economic status, the dominant social authority of the Malghar or *Badya* Khankas is reflected in their relations with others in the village. No common decision is made in Chuni village, even now, without the direct or indirect approval of the Malghar Khankas and there is little resistance to decisions made by these families of the Malghar Khankas. The present elected village head of Chuni, Hem Datt Joshi is a retired army man and by caste, economic and now political status superior to the Khankas. However, he exudes reverence to the Malghar Khankas, which is visible in his attitude, speech and physical posture. After all, it was not very long ago, when his grandfather was asked to settle here and serve the patriarch, Dhan Singh.

## **ii. History of Access to Water – Effects of Social Status and Political Power**

The Malghar Khankas say that water sources in Malli Chuni can be accessed by all the families living in Malli Chuni, but ownership rights to the water belong to them. Claiming stake to such ownership, Himal Singh Khanka during the tenure of his first elected position as the village head, used his political and social clout to tap and pipe water from one of the naulas in the panyar to his courtyard. This was done using official funds and showing the entire population of Malghar as beneficiaries on paper. There was considerable conflict amongst the Malghar families when this happened. They knew that Himal Singh had built the system for his personal benefit, using official funds and their names as beneficiaries. However, the resentment did not lead to any resistance. As Neema Devi, Himal Singh's wife recalls, "No man could challenge my husband then." An open tap-stand was built and water was also carried to a stone tank, below which were built two bathing units with taps. An animal trough was built, which is also used by the family for washing utensils. Built in 1968 under personal supervision the system stands sound even today. Women and other members of Himal Singh Khanka's family have not been to the dhara to fetch water since then. Last year there was a significant water shortage in the naula, which feeds the water to this system. Bishan Singh, Himal Singh's

son, managed to get a connection from the other naula as well, which is said to belong to the Talghar Khankas. There was verbal conflict and resentment, but no one could prevent the withdrawal of water by this family.

### **c. Gharmati**

#### **i. Social Status**

There is a single Khanka family tracing their origin to Dhan Singh's first wife in Gharmati tok. Saraswati Devi is the only member of this family, now living in Chuni. She is a widow and her four sons have migrated. Saraswati Devi manages the agricultural fields owned by her migrant sons and has given some fields to poorer Khanka men – like Him Singh and Bir Singh – and to some Dalit families to cultivate. From some of her cultivators she takes a share of grain and from others she demands other obligations (refer to chapter 5).

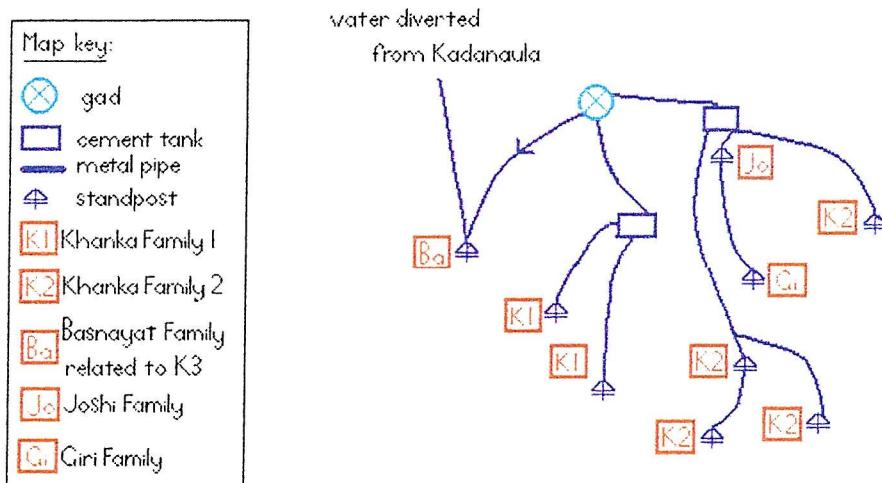
#### **ii. History of Access to Water – Effects of Social Status and Political Power**

Throughout her youth, Saraswati Devi as the only daughter-in-law carried water from the dhara in Malghar, uphill across the rocky panyar to her home. She had seven children and parents-in-law and her life, as she recalls, was certainly not easy. Saraswati Devi's husband was in the army and came home only occasionally. According to her, he had little time to devise a solution for her water needs, which was also obviously not important to him.

When the '9 million rupees official scheme' was implemented, pipes and stand-posts were provided in her courtyard, but the scheme failed to deliver water. In 1984 Uday Singh Khanka of Talli Chuni, in his position as the elected village head helped Saraswati Devi to get water piped to her courtyard. Water was drawn from two naulas located at Kada Naula, a hamlet just above Gharmati tok. The official water supply department in Pithoragarh approved and funded this plan, forwarded by the elected village head, on the grounds of Saraswati Devi's plea that she was an *old widow without water*. The officials in Pithoragarh did not bother to come and check how this plan would affect those living in Kada Naula hamlet. This is discussed in the next section.

This strategy planned and implemented by Uday Singh provided piped extensions from a tank built in Kada Naula to Gharmati as well as to Malghar and Talghar toks and to the village primary school. Uday Singh then strategically negotiated and implemented his plan to draw water from the Talghar Naula at the Panyar and pipe it down to his own courtyard.

#### 6.4.3 Rotan



#### 1. Social Patterns and History

Rotan hamlet is considerably distant from the rest of Chuni and consists of small, scattered settlements: Banjhkhali, Bichapani, Dhar and Rotan. A Basnayat family from Nepal, related to the Talghar Khankas were given land to cultivate here. Hem Datt Joshi, the elected village head and his family live here in Rotan. The most recent settler in Chuni, Hari Giri also lives here with his family.

Rotan shows a distinct variation to the common patterns of social hierarchy seen in the hamlets so far visited. As an area, Rotan held less value for Dhan Singh Khanka, because it was not included in the land bought from the Pants (refer to Annex 4). For a long time, no one lived in Rotan, and there were only agricultural fields here. More recently, with growth and division in the families, members of all three Khanka groups have settled here.

## **2. Water Sources**

In terms of water availability, Rotan is also different, in that there are no typically traditional systems of water delivery in use here. Rotan had abundant water sources earlier – enough to operate a water-powered mill, known locally as Panchaki and/or Ghat. However, these water sources dried up and Rotan became prominently water-scarce.

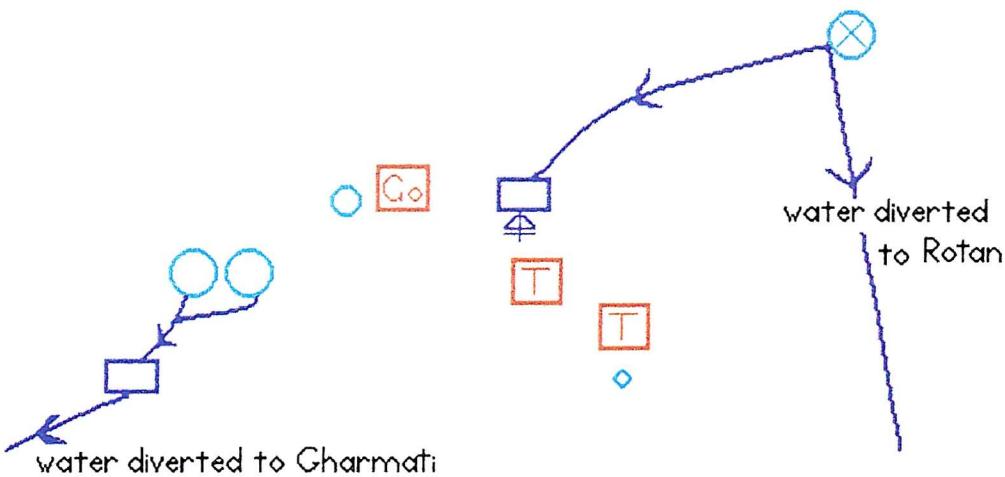
## **3. History of Distribution of Water – Success of the Official System**

In 1974-75, Ganga Singh Khanka of Talghar in his political capacity as the village head, allotted block development funds to divert water from a gad located in the hamlet Kada Naula to Banjhkhali, for the benefit of the Basnayats who were his maternal relations. Later in 1982-84, these hamlets were identified officially as the priority areas for the official ‘9 million rupees scheme’ to be implemented in Chuni village.

The official system was designed and implemented by the official agency for water delivery. However, just four days after the scheme started operating, a monsoon landslide washed away most of the pipes and tanks that constituted the water delivery system. Some men in Rotan identified a water source on their own, disconnected and realigned the pipes to divert water to tap-stands built through the official scheme. The distribution of water here in Rotan is also distinctly different, in that there is an equal distribution of the available water. This is because the official ‘9 million rupees scheme’ provided stand-posts to all households. Thus all the residents of Rotan, even the Giri family, who live in the house of a migrant Khanka family, have equal and abundant water, available right in their courtyards. Madhu Devi of Rotan showed me with great pleasure how the water jets

out from the tap in her courtyard and said, “No matter what other problems we have here, ‘We are all water *lords*’ (sic).”

#### 6.4.4 Kada Naula



Map key:			
○ X	gad	—	metal pipe
○○	2 large naulas	□	cement tank
○	small naula belonging to Goswamis	⊕	standpost
		○ Go	Goswami Family
		○ T	Tamta Family

#### 1. Social Patterns and History

There are three families living here, two Dalit Tamta households and one Goswami family, all settled in Chuni by Dhan Singh. Deepa Devi Tamta, widowed and now the matriarch of the Tamta family, lives in one house with her younger son's wife, her daughter, Hira Devi and Hira's two small sons. As mentioned in Chapter 5, Hira Devi is

the Dalit woman who dared to marry a Brahman man and thus cannot live with her husband in his ancestral village. Deepa Devi's elder son lives separately with his wife and two sons.

The land in Kada Naula belonged initially to Uday Singh Khanka and his brothers of Talli Chuni. Implementation of the Zamindari Abolition Act resulted in the transfer of land ownership rights to Jay Nath Goswami's father, who had worked as a land tiller for the Khankas. Jay Nath was the only male protégé in the family and thus most of the land in Kada Naula belongs to him. During the reorganisation of land ownership, known locally as 'Bandobast' or 'arrangement'; only a small landholding was allotted to the Tamta family, who were traditionally blacksmiths by profession. This small landholding has been further divided between the two Tamta brothers.

Jay Nath Goswami is a rich man, if one goes by the volume of land he owns today. However, his fields are not irrigated and are of little productive value. Nevertheless, Jay Nath and his family work hard to cultivate their fields as best as they can. His only son is employed in the army and much of the work burden falls on his wife, his young daughter-in-law and his daughter. Jay Nath's daughter, Bimla, is one of the few girls who did not continue with her primary education and she deeply resents the fact that her father did not allow her to continue in school. Despite the changes in legal status, Jay Nath's social status has not changed in the village. He has no social access to the Khanka forums in the village and his companions in the village are the Airis and the landless Giris. However, within his hamlet, he is clearly the patriarch. He has sub-let large portions of his land to the elder Tamta brother's family. He demands a share of the produce as well as other obligations from his Dalit tenant farmers.

## **2. History of Access to Water – Effects of Caste, Class and Gender**

In striking contrast to Rotan, Kada Naula residents were used to abundance of water for domestic use earlier, and now, especially the Tamta families face an acute water scarcity. Earlier, there were two large and perennial naulas here, which provided adequate water for household use, though not for irrigation purposes. The Dalit family used one naula

and the Goswami family the other, since, caste-based restrictions determine that the Dalits cannot touch or use the Goswamis' water sources. Both families also accessed water for bathing and feeding cattle from a storm-water drain further uphill, known as Kalchin gad.

In 1974-75, water from the gad was diverted by the village head to Banjkhali in Rotan. Ganga Singh Khanka of Talghar asked Uday Singh Khanka of Talli Chuni to coerce the Kada Naula residents to agree to this plan, in order to provide water for his Basnayat relatives in Banjkhali (See above and Table 6.1 and Annex 4). Despite the transfer of land ownership, Uday Singh Khanka, the original landlord, exercises considerable authority over the land in Kada Naula and its residents. The two families in Kada Naula could not disagree to sharing the gad water. Further, gad water is not a preferred water source and at that time, this was the second alternative water source available to Kada Naula residents. However, they asked for an outlet to be left for them for feeding and bathing their cattle. Ganga Singh then implemented the scheme through official block development funds.

Deepa Devi recalls the conflict in the process of *sharing* water. "This *gad* is fed by rain water and also courses through a loose hill. During rainfall, mud and stones choked the outlet. The Banjkhali Basnayats thought we did this and they would abuse us. When they came to repair their pipes, they would block our outlet." By agreeing to share the water source, Kada Naula residents found that they had lost their ownership rights to the water and given their inferior positions in the village social order they could not challenge the Basnayats.

It was surprising to hear that the Kada Naula families again *agreed* to let go of the other water source – the two large naulas – in 1984-85, when the water was diverted to Gharmati tok. Jay Nath says, "For this plan, I was not asked. I was told I must agree. After all they have been the landlords and we are living on land that actually belonged to them. They said I have a smaller naula in my field, while Saraswati Devi had no source, and she is an old widow. If I had disagreed, how would I have survived in the village? I

could only ask them to leave an outlet so that we could also use the water. But the outlet was made in such a way that the water only drips out. It was a decision that I was forced to make by compulsion.”

Deepa Devi Tamta, the Dalit widow, says, “I was not asked. I was told that Jay Nath has agreed, so I must. I thought if that is so, what can be done? But I was so distraught. They also told me that there is a naula in my fields, just as the one in Jay Nath’s fields. But I could not argue that our naula is so small and there is hardly any water, unlike Jay Nath’s which is more reliable, if not adequate.”

Legislation guaranteeing water rights to the landowner was violated here. In addition, the currently applicable legislation of state ownership and management rights of water, was cleverly used to legitimise the plan by obtaining official permission. Uday Singh Khanka knew that the officials would not come to assess the situation in Chuni and that Jay Nath and the Tamta family would not dare to challenge the plan.

As Saraswati Devi says, “We watched helplessly the water from our naulas diverted elsewhere. The tap provided in the tank did not provide water. Anyway, as Dalits, we had been told not to touch the tap or we would be socially ostracised. However, when someone broke the cover-head of the tank we were blamed. Since the water was taken away, we had to walk up to the gad, several times a day, in the summer heat, rain and cold to fetch water. We had to drink the muddy, dirty water from the gad, which we earlier used only to feed and bathe animals.” The Kada Naula residents were told that the Banjhkhali Basnayats would soon start to receive water provided through the ‘9 million rupees project’ and then the diversion from the gad would be removed.

When the official ‘9 million rupees project’ was being implemented, Udai Singh asked Saraswati Devi to go to Pithoragarh and ask the officers there to approve a scheme to bring water from the gad to their hamlet. “I had to stay in Pithoragarh for three days to ask for what was really mine. I was *taught* to tell the officers that I was a *poor Dalit widow without water*.”

Official approval for the proposed scheme for Kada Naula was granted in 1983, but it was only in 1986, when the new water source had replenished Rotan hamlet, that this scheme, approved in Saraswati Devi's name was implemented. The gad water was drawn through pipes and brought to a built tank near the three households. Jay Nath wanted the tank to be built in his courtyard, but Saraswati Devi disagreed. Having lost her water sources completely and having carried water across the hills and listened to false accusations, Saraswati Devi was now firm. She also knew that Jay Nath carried little social clout in the village. "I told Jay Nath, that this scheme was approved because of me, my widowhood and my Dalit status. I have no objections, still, to the tank being built in your courtyard, but it will constrain you. I will wash clothes, take a bath, gargle water in my throat and spit it out. Will you like this *polluted* water to spill on your courtyard?"

Jay Nath's strategy to gain sole ownership failed and a common water tank and tap were built between the Tamta and Goswami households. For Jay Nath it was socially demeaning to share a water source with Dalits. Consequently, he improved the other smaller naula in his fields, which the family now uses for getting water for drinking and cooking purposes. He only just managed to save his social standing through this action. Saraswati Devi says, "If it were possible, I would like to have my own connection here. I still have to hear ten hundred things from Jay Nath and his family every day. We do not care, as I know this was built for me, but who wants to argue all the time? It is always better for us Dalits not to share a water source."

The water from the gad, which feeds the tank, is neither reliable nor appropriate. Jay Nath's family complain less as they do not depend on this water source as much as the Tamtas. They use this water only for washing clothes and feeding animals. The Tamtas are however, wholly dependent on this source. In the summer months, the water in the gad decreases considerably and the water stops trickling down. The Tamtas then make several trips to the gad to fetch water. In the monsoon, the gad is flooded with rainwater and the water delivery system is often choked with mud and stones. Water delivered to the tank is muddy and the pipes and tank have to be emptied and cleaned regularly. All

this work is done by the Tamtas, as this is their only water source. The Khankas say, "These Dalits are dirty and lazy. If Jay Nath could develop his naula, why can they not?" Saraswati Devi says, "The naula in our fields is too small, it is also not perennial. We have tried and we know it is not adequate."

While Jay Nath is unable to argue with the Khankas on his legitimate ownership claim to the water in Kada Naula, he is able to assert exclusive ownership of the naula that he now uses. The Dalits cannot access this water source. One hot summer day Narayani Devi's very young nephew 'stole' water from Jay Nath's naula. His family used to drink the hot, muddy water from the gad asked him repeatedly where he had got the cool, sweet water from. The Goswamis overheard this questioning and threatened to discontinue to employ the Dalit family, if the act was repeated. They then emptied all the *polluted* water from the naula into the field and performed a religious ceremony to 'purify' the naula. The little boy was beaten severely by his parents for putting them to such abuse. The Kada Naula residents were forced to exchange a safe, reliable and appropriate water delivery system for an unsafe, unreliable and inappropriate system and there was little that they could do to challenge the inequality and illegality of the whole process. In both the Goswami and Dalit families, the greater burden of carrying water falls on the young daughters-in-law. However, there is a difference between them in both social relations and burden of the water roles. The Goswami daughter-in-law is the mistress, while the Dalit daughter-in-law is the servant. The former has access to a nearby naula, while the latter must travel everyday to the far away gad. The difference in the hardships faced by the Goswami and Tamta women in Kada Naula is revealed in the diagrams below:

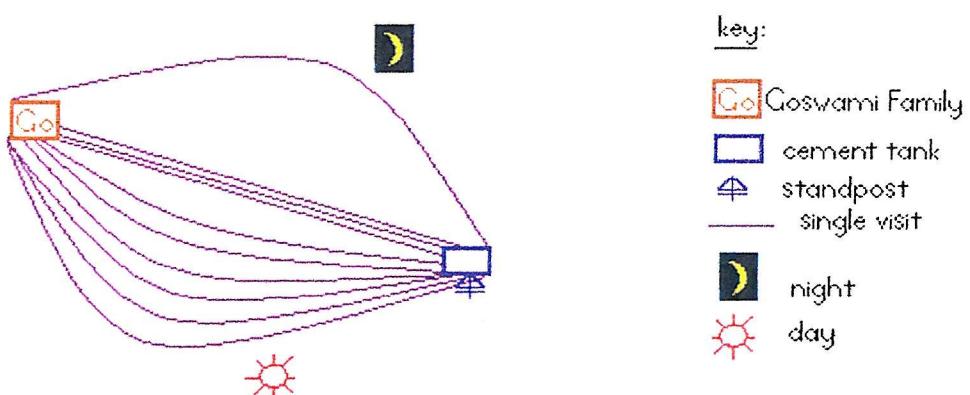


Figure 6.1: The Goswami Women's Daily Walk to Fetch Water

The Goswami women drew the above depicted lines leading from their home to the tank, in order to show their daily tasks in relation to water. The diagram does not illustrate the family naula and how water is used from here. The Goswamis, both women and men are, understandably, anxious not to reveal publicly their only reliable water source. Within the family, the young daughter-in-law, Kaushalya Devi, is assigned the greatest responsibility for meeting the household water needs.

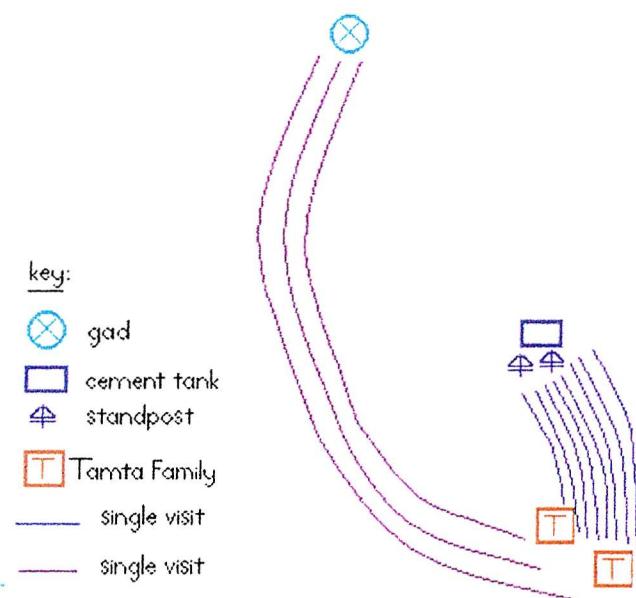


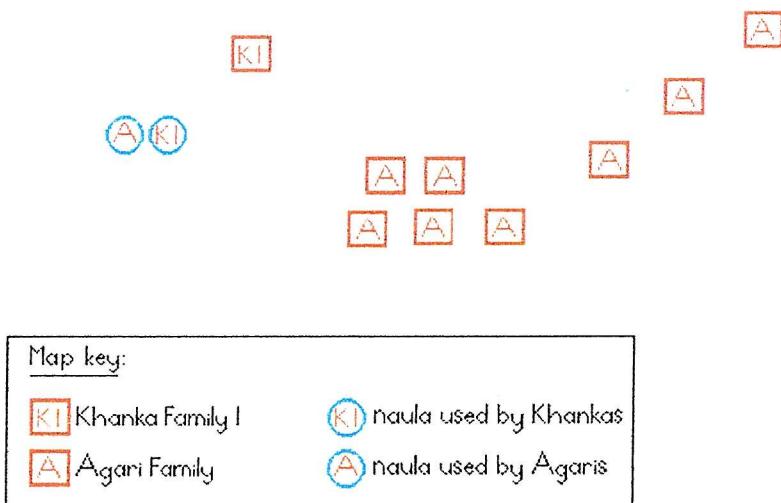
Figure 6.2: The Tamta Women's Daily Walk to Fetch Water

By comparison, the diagram of the Tamta women shows that they need to travel daily to the gad due to the unreliability in water availability from the tank water. Each journey to the gad takes half an hour, one way. The Tamta daughters-in-law are primarily responsible for fetching water. The Dalits cannot access water from the naula used by the Goswami family. Their dependency on Jay Nath Goswami prevents them from challenging the unequal access to the available and preferred system of drinking water.

## Musgoan

Musgoan is the last hamlet in Chuni village located at an altitude, considerably higher than that of Talli Chuni. There are two settlements in Musgoan, Malli or upper Musgoan and Talli or lower Musgoan. Both settlements are water deficient and were therefore not an important agricultural area for the Khanka landlords.

### 6.4.5 Malli Musgoan or Upper Musgoan



#### a. Social Status and Water Sources

In Malli Musgoan live eight Agari Dalit families and one Khanka family. There are two naulas here, one used by the Khanka family and the other by the Dalit Agari families.

#### b. Effects of Caste on Access to Water

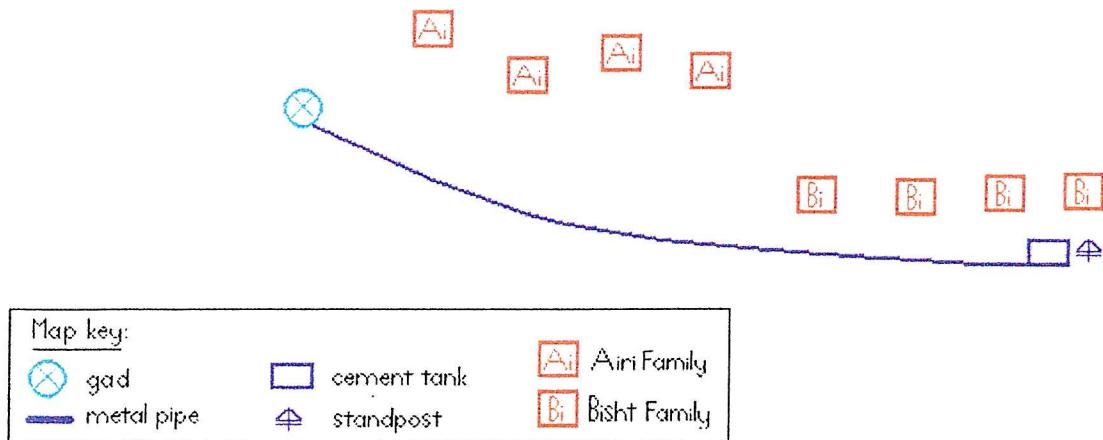
In Malli Musgoan the impact of caste-based inequality and inequity on water access is strikingly evident. One Khanka family consisting of two adults use one naula while eight Dalit households consisting of about thirty individuals use the other naula. In summer,

with the decrease in the water table, water in both the naulas decreases considerably. For the eight Dalit families water from one naula becomes grossly inadequate yet, on their own, they cannot access the water in the naula used by the Khankas, which has adequate water, as it is only used by two individuals.

The Dalits resort to asking the Khankas for water. The Khanka couple are both school teachers and their busy daily routines constrain them from being able to spare time to 'take out water and give it to the Dalit families'. There is a lot of conflict in this process of giving water. The Khankas think that they are not only giving water from *their* source, but also providing their time and effort in drawing water for the Dalits. Thus they look forward to being obliged in return.

It is the young Dalit children and amongst them girls who are sent most frequently to ask the Khankas for water in the mornings. The young girls say that they hate this task as in return, they are asked by the Khankas to water plants (this is obviously not polluting), sweep the courtyard, husk rice, fetch firewood, etc. The girls are rarely able to say no and if they refuse or do not do the work well, they know this will lead to getting less water, waiting for longer periods of time and getting abused both here and at home. The Dalit women also go to ask for water in the morning, though less frequently than the girls due to demands of work at home. The women are not readily asked to work but then there are latent demands made on their time and effort later. Men and the older male children usually fetch water from the naulas at night. In the dark, they collect the water that trickles drop by drop into their naula and also *steal* water from the naula belonging to the Khankas. Older male children rarely go to ask the Khankas for water, but if they do, they are asked to chop wood, fetch larger logs from the forests and sometimes clean the courtyards. It is the adult men who are least subject to demands, as they rarely go to ask for water. However, when they do, there is a variation in the demands placed on them. Ishwar Ram, a retired army-man and now employed in the army ecological brigade, has never been asked to do anything by the Khanka family. The same leniency is not applied to his unemployed and poor brother, Bhim Ram.

#### 6.4.6 Talli Musgoan



##### a. Social Status and its Effects on Access to Water

In Talli or lower Musgoan live four Bisht and four Ari families. The Bishts trace their relation to Khanka family 1 and are therefore more powerful and resourceful than the Ariis, who anyway have a low social status (Refer Annex 2 and Table 1). This is reflected in their preferential access to the available water source here.

In Talli Musgoan the only water source is a gad, which was used by all the households, including the Agari Dalits of Malli Musgoan. In 1971-72, water from the nearby gad was tapped, piped and carried down to a tank just below the houses of the Bishts through Block development funds. This was again done under the authority of Himal Singh Khanka, during his tenure as village head. An outlet was left for the Ariis and other users at the site. The Bishts thus have water at home, which meets all domestic needs throughout the year. In addition, they are also able to irrigate vegetable gardens after the monsoon.

The Ariis are greatly constrained for water, especially in the summer. Their houses lie further away from the gad than the Bishts'. The water from the gad could not be brought up to their sub-hamlet, which is higher up than the gad. The technology of gravity flow,

applied traditionally in the hills to design water delivery systems, cannot carry water uphill. So they do not grudge the fact that the Bishts have a tank at home. Having never been consulted or occupied a position of water authority, neither do the Airis realise that a tank built at the source itself would have been more equitable. The walk down to the Bishts' house is longer than the walk to the gad, and while there are no social barriers to prevent access to the tank, there are unspoken, informal tones of disapproval if 'too much' water is used, as the tank 'belongs' to the Bishts. For the Airis too, in the summer, the gad water reduces to a trickle. There is conflict between the Airis, as filling even one small bucket takes about half an hour. Here amongst the Airis as among the Musgoan Dalits, both men and women fetch water. When we were asking women about their water constraints, Bishen Singh Airi, insisted that we talk on this issue with men as well. "We too fetch water, both in summer and winter. It is not so much the task, but the waiting for a small vessel to fill, which takes anything between half an hour to an hour," he said. Both the Airi women and men mention that, like the Dalits in Malli Musgoan, in the summer they have to make several trips to the gad during both day and at night. "It is as if we have no other work. If anything goes wrong during anyone's turn, there is so much conflict amongst us. Could anything be done for us? Who will speak for us four households? We are not a priority even for the political leaders."

The walk across the different hamlets illustrates that within the socially stratified village community, water is not a village commons. Socially constructed factors of caste and class create unequal social relationships and this inequality then determines unequal access to and control of water resources. The findings also begin to point out the complex interplay of caste and class on gendered roles and responsibilities in relation to water use and management.

The key findings from this section are pulled out and summarised in the analysis below and then analysed in relation to gender disparities in water roles, responsibilities and resources.

## **6.5 Unequal Social Relations and an Unequal Access to Water Distribution and Management**

Social practices that are regularly and continuously repeated are sanctioned and maintained by social norms and have a major significance in the social structure. This process is termed institutionalisation (Levy, 1998). It is seen that inequality and inequity in water allocation, management and use in Chuni has been institutionalised. The complex linkages between the various factors of social control, as evidenced in the reading, make it difficult, if not impossible, to structurally classify inequality and inequity in water access, use and management. An attempt is made here, drawing on common and specific findings in the different hamlets to understand inequality in water roles, responsibilities, access and control as determined by unequal social relations.

### **6.5.1 Effects of Caste Differentiation**

#### **1. Caste Determines Water Abundance or Water Scarcity**

Chuni village was identified as experiencing both water abundance and scarcity. Research findings show that some hamlets of the village are distinctly water abundant, while some are water scarce. Malli Chuni, Talghar, Malghar and Rotan are water abundant areas located towards the lower end of Chuni village, which is a valley. Water scarcity is experienced in Musgoan and Kada Naula, located on the higher slopes of the valley. The socially dominant and powerful Kshatriya families live exclusively in Malli Chuni, Talghar, Malghar and Rotan and more vulnerable and less powerful Dalit families live in Musgoan and Kada Naula. The upper caste people in Chuni say, “What can anyone do, after all water cannot be made to flow uphill.” It is another matter that inequality in socio-economic conditions determined that the socially underprivileged were restricted to areas where water could not reach.

Scarcity is not only a consequence of a deliberate imposition of unfavourable geographic locations on certain vulnerable social groups. Scarcity of water is closely affected by inequitable social control of water sources. The lone Khanka family living in Musgoan experiences water abundance while the Dalit families living here face acute water

scarcity and similarly, the Dalit and Giri families in Kada Naula had little control over their water sources.

Positions of control and decision-making in relation to water distribution, management and use, have historically been controlled and occupied by powerful individuals in the village community, privileged by caste, class and by gender. Such forums have not been socially accessible for the Dalits, other lower caste groups and to women in general. Disempowered by lower social status, the Dalits are not only unable to access decision-making positions but are also unable to challenge the inequitable decisions made by the socially dominant in the village. This is demonstrated by the findings that certain powerful individuals in the village could bypass official legislation and divert water away from Kada Naula twice, to other hamlets. Administrative and financial support for these activities was derived from official sources indicating that inequality in control of basic resources is reinforced across different institutional levels. Consequently, Kada Naula, which was earlier water abundant, has now become water scarce.

## **2. Caste Determines an Unequal Access to Available Water**

Caste determined notions of *purity* and *pollution* determine an unequal access to available water resources. This belief is effectively made use of in ensuring social control on access to water sources. Dalits are classified socially as perpetually impure and this prevents their access to water sources used by the upper castes. Dalit women and men therefore face complete exclusion from water resources used by the upper caste households. Such sources are often the preferred source of drinking water in the hill villages. Defiance of this rigidly established social norm is not well tolerated.

In a village near Chuni, a Dalit schoolteacher was socially ostracised and asked to leave the village as he used the naula meant for the upper castes. His ‘defiance’ was that he too preferred to fetch his drinking water from the naula, rather than from the officially provided stand-post, which piped water from a gad. The upper caste villagers said to him, “When there is a water source near where you live, why did you use *our* source? You are determined to challenge our age-old beliefs.” Obviously, the question of appropriate choice could not be extended to him. There was a religious ceremony conducted for

purifying this naula. The teacher got his job transferred and left the village. He did not initiate any legal proceedings, even though, officially, the treatment meted to him was punishable by law. Even he, who was educated and aware, decided that it was in his better interests not to challenge the injustice.

Legitimised by religion and practised as local culture, it is difficult to challenge this inequity in access to water resources and water delivery systems. Dalits in the hills are especially unable to make use of the existing legislation designed to prevent social inequality, because of their minority status.

However, *cyclically impure women* much more than the *perpetually impure Dalits*, are blamed for polluting water sources, which is said to result in depletion of water in the traditional water sources. Using the accusation of 'caste untouchability' would in some way give acknowledgement to the fact that Dalits, even if on the sly, can and therefore do access water sources barred to them. It is socially and politically more advantageous to blame women even though some Dalits do *steal* water from sources forbidden to them.

#### **6.5.2 Caste in Conjunction with Class Determines an Unequal Control of Water Sources and Water Delivery Systems**

Research findings reveal that where caste is a commonality, access to available water is guaranteed but 'the rights to construct, operate and maintain schemes and systems' are influenced by social class, determined in Chuni by ancestral lineage and land ownership patterns. The right to make decisions on water use, management and distribution is guaranteed by social and political status and is therefore concentrated in the hands of the socially dominant, by caste and class.

Social hierarchy is seen to exist across institutional levels, impacting upon the structuring, interpretation and implementation of formal and customary rules relating to water ownership, management and use. Formal rules entrust decision-making authority to the more powerful in the community, thereby severely reinforcing the existing social

inequities in resource management. These factors collectively determine who is included in or excluded from formal and informal water decision-making positions within the village social system.

Individuals disprivileged by caste and class are not only excluded from positions of water authority but are also unable to challenge the inequitable and often illegal decisions made by the socially powerful.

### **6.5.3 Unequal Gender Relations and Gendered Roles and Responsibilities in Relation to Water**

The findings above discussed the impacts of class and caste upon water allocation and management within the village community. Gender issues in relation to water management and use, identified and analysed during the walk taken across Chuni village are discussed here.

#### **1. Water Roles and Responsibilities at Home, Women's Responsibility**

Women in the hills, as in much of the world, are responsible for fetching and managing water for domestic use. In the mountain villages, this water role for women is socially legitimised and sanctified as local culture.

##### **The Cultural Gendering of Water Responsibilities**

One of the very first rituals performed by a bride when she enters her husband's home is to visit the local naula to perform ritualistic worship here. She then carries water from the naula home and offers it to all the elders. This signifies that, from this day, the young bride has access to the naula and is also responsible for meeting the water needs of those in her husband's house. Culture demands that the groom accompanies the bride, but in the majority of cases, the groom's paper crown, used during marriage, is tied to the bride's head, as his visit is only symbolic. Therefore amongst women, daughters-in-law are primarily responsible for meeting household domestic water needs. This fact is verified in countless local stories and songs, which portray this role for women and also illustrate how this responsibility is socially binding for married women.

Women across the different hamlets of Chuni village identify that their work has been and is still now fetching drinking water; fetching water for other domestic uses; washing utensils; bathing small children; fetching water for the cattle to drink and water for bathing the buffaloes in the summer. The task of fetching and carrying water from far away sources across difficult hilly terrain is burdensome and demands significant labour, time and energy. An old woman who had had a particularly difficult life started crying when she recalled the difficult days of her youth, a major part of which involved carrying water up and down the hills. She recalled that the task of carrying the heavy copper urn, 'ghada', on the head made women lose their hair. This was especially because hands were used for carrying clothes, another ghada or small children.

These roles and responsibilities for women have not changed. Women in Rotan, who now have water gushing out of the pipes in their courtyard, say, "Water has come closer to our homes, so we no longer face the problems of walking up and down. However, the tasks related to water use remain the same. We still remain responsible for all the water work at home. In fact, now that there is water at home, men do not even wash clothes as they bathe here at the tap and leave the clothes for us to wash. Also since the water is so close, children, rather than men, now fetch water from the taps when we are unable to do so." The women laugh and say, "Water pipes and cement tanks have improved this much for women here. We hear that now in cities pushing one button gets many things done, like cooking food and washing clothes. But women will still have to push the buttons for getting the household work done. That will never change, will it? You tell us!"

## **2. The Gender Hegemony Associated with Domestic Water Responsibilities**

The task of carrying water home and using water for domestic purposes is identified as distinctly feminine. A few adult men assist their wives in fetching drinking water, but this assistance is in most cases occasional. Commonly in the mountain villages, men fetch water for domestic use if their wives and daughters are menstruating and therefore 'impure' and capable of 'polluting' water sources. Men may also assist women in fetching water in situations of acute water scarcity as seen above in Talli Musgoan.

However, if the water situation improves, as seen in Rotan, men discontinue the few responsibilities related to their water roles and this results in an increase of women's responsibilities.

Curtis (1986) reported that normally, across cultures, the social stigma for adult men to carry water for use at home is enormous. This is starkly evident in the field. It is only the *lesser* men, like Bir Singh and Him Singh who carry water for other households in order to gain some benefits. Even these socio-economically-challenged men do not do carry water to their own homes.

The socialisation of carrying water for domestic use initiates early in a girl child's life and assumes greater responsibility with age and remains obligatory even in old age. A discussion with the women revealed that, "A small girl often walks to the spring to fetch water from the time she can hold a vessel. Young boys also help but girls are increasingly made aware of their task of fetching water as they grow up. For the boys it is the opposite. When boys grow up they can decide not to help any more in fetching water, but for women this becomes a responsibility, not a choice. Often older boys and men bring drinking water from the naulas, just before meals, as they themselves prefer to drink naula water, which is cool in the summer and warm in the winter." The men confirmed that they often fetched drinking water from the naulas just before food was served. "If they were really helping us, would they not help us meet the other household water needs as well? They are not responsible like us for using the water at home. For a woman it is different. Once a girl is married, fetching water becomes her duty. Washing, cleaning is our task", said the women. Women have little option but to accept this responsibility, which is legitimised as local culture.

The gender role of fetching water does not diminish with age. Older women are never completely relieved of this task. Like the small girl, an old woman will also go the source to fetch a little water, as long as she can walk and hold a vessel. When men grow old, their socially allocated responsibilities are often withdrawn even though they continue to occupy a position of authority in the household. However, for women, the obligation to

work continues into old age, till she can physically no more perform what is demanded of her. An analysis of the daily activities of young boys and girls and men and women across the village verified these findings.

### **3. Religious Constraints on Women's Access to Water**

In the hill villages, it is believed that water sources are sacred. Hari Singh of Talli Chunni says, "The Jal Devi temple is ancient and revered by all the people in this area. It is the Goddess who keeps the water flowing here."

While women in their social roles as home-caretakers are primarily responsible for meeting the household water needs, religious beliefs prevent their access to the available water for women during their bodily 'impure' condition. In the first four days of menstruation and in more rigid cases of social restrictions, women in the late stages of pregnancy and the early weeks of motherhood are considered 'impure'. During these periods, women do not enter temples or touch still water sources. Flowing water sources like rivers and gads are accessible to them during these periods. Paruli Devi of Mala village said, "River water flows and thus never gets polluted." Women also do not touch others in the house, cook food, touch cooked food or water meant for drinking and cooking, when bodily 'impure'. This notion of impurity is applied equally on all women. Drawing some parallel with caste impurity, upper caste women, when menstruating refer to themselves as Domnis or as Dalit women. Therefore Dalit women, when menstruating are 'doubly impure'.

Locally it is believed that if menstruating women touch the naula, the water will be polluted. According to local belief, the first sign of pollution is the appearance of big white snakes in the naula, which indicates the Water Goddess's wrath. This is followed by the complete drying-up of the water.

In 1979, the water in the naula located in the Jal Devi temple decreased significantly and it was believed that menstruating women had polluted the naula and thus angered the goddess. A Brahman priest was called to perform the ritual appeasement. People believe

that following this there was an earthquake and there was an increase in the water flow from the Jal Devi temple.

Women rigidly adhere to this belief, primarily for fears of water depletion. However, they find it strange that such restriction is applied to them. “Both menstruation and childbirth are exhausting periods and during these times, our needs for water are greater. Yet we have to walk to the river or the gad, especially if there is no one in the house or amongst the neighbours who can fetch water for us.”

#### **4. Women’s Exclusion from Water Decision-Making Authority and Water Delivery and Management Systems**

Like the Dalits, women, regardless of their caste and class, have historically remained excluded from decision-making authority and water planning and delivery management domains. These domains, which function in the public space are socially identified as masculine. The socially determined constructs of femininity define that women’s place is at home. Therefore women’s access to decision-making and public performance is discouraged and suppressed.

Throughout Chuni, women identify that it is not appropriate for them to be involved in engaging in discussions related to water management and technology. “That has never been our work, how can we go and talk about water with our elder males? We have never been involved in constructing or designing water systems here in the village. That is men’s work. We did not know what pipes were and that water could be carried through pipes. Decision-making in public is men’s task. We do not know about rights to water. Land belongs to men and we think water belongs to all those who use it or have been using it. We do not own land, and we do not know if we can say that a water source belongs to us. The only thing that we women actually own here, are the grazing lands which provide fodder (also reported by Chambers et al., 1989). We have rights over these, which we negotiate between ourselves. Each woman has her own marked area and no one can intrude or cut grass here without her prior permission. When a family migrates, the woman often hands over the rights temporarily to others.”

Except for the two instances, when Saraswati Devi of Gharmati tok and Saraswati Tamta were asked to approach the officials in the nearby town to present their case of lack of access to water, women did not figure in any illustrations of water use and management decisions, taken in Chuni.

Uday Singh Khanka added that decision-making, and the design and implementation of water systems was not *women's domain*. He recalls that, during the implementation of the '9 million rupees scheme', official rules required women to be employed along with men, as waged labourers. As the village head then, he supervised the work and put women's names on the registers while their husbands worked and got paid. The engineers knew about this as well and said it was just a formality of rules.

Bereft of women's presence, the much-eulogised technology of traditional systems, designed and implemented by men, is largely ignorant of women roles and responsibilities in relation to domestic water use. By contrast, the task of irrigating fields is identified as that of men, and as water planners and water technicians, men improvised technology to carry water to the fields. Excluded socially from the public domains of decision-making women are unable to voice their water needs, in relation to their socially determined roles as water carriers and household water managers. Their specific water needs thus continue to be ignored. Instead, in wider contexts, the relation between women and water has been romanticized through art and media. In the hills and beyond, prose, poetry and song depict 'rosy and romantic' pictures of women carrying water on their heads and hips.

## **5. Age, Class and Caste Impact on Women's Water Responsibilities**

In the mountain villages, the act of marriage imposes water responsibilities on the young daughter-in-law. As seen in the illustrations of Kada Naula, daughters-in-law are primarily responsible for fetching water home for drinking and other domestic uses. It is popularly reported that young men in water scarce villages do not easily find brides.

Different women experience their water roles and responsibilities differently, on the basis of their caste and class. On being asked if the burdens of carrying water was common to all women in the past, women clarified, “No, the women amongst the royalty did not carry water, except for their religious rituals. The Chand women in Mala did not even walk across the village. If they had to go anywhere their servants carried them in ‘dolis’ (hand-held carriages). In these households, women did not have to brave the sun and rain like us to fetch water. They employed servants to do most of the housework. However, nowadays, even these women work in the fields and carry water from the naula. They may have money to pay others, but there is often no one to hire. Most of the able-bodied men have migrated and their wives are busy managing their homes and fields and, unlike earlier times, no one is obliged to work for the Zamindars.”

Some women in Chuni village had access to the benefits of water technology, which brought water home. This reduced their water responsibilities considerably. Neema Devi of Malghar and the Bisht women of Talli Chuni and Talli Musgoan stopped carrying water home several years ago. Neema’s husband, the powerful Himal Singh Khanka was able to alleviate this responsibility for his wife and other women belonging to his immediate family. In contrast, Bir Giri’s wife, Paruli Devi of Talli Chuni, who died 5 years ago, knew that she would never get water home in her courtyard. She knew she had to be satisfied with having access to the available water, owned and controlled by the Bisht and Khanka families in her hamlet.

The difference in class and social authority determined that, for a major part of her life, Saraswati Devi of Gharmati continued to fetch water from the dhara, several times a day, across a steep ridge, about a quarter of kilometre from her home. It was only in her social position as an elderly widow that Saraswati Devi found relief from her tasks of carrying water. Here too, Saraswati Devi’s social status as a wealthy widow of the socially dominant Khanka family enabled her get access to water.

In contrast, the Dalit Tamta women in Kada Naula lost their reliable and preferred source of water and now carry water from the gad, twice a day, across a distance of half a mile.

Similarly, the Airi women and men in Talli Musgoan carry water across longer distances than they used to, earlier.

For the Dalit women of Kada Naula and Malli Musgoan water is available, but not accessible. Unequal access to the available water is legitimised by religion and they are unable on their own to challenge this deep-rooted social inequality. Nandi Devi Agari of Malli Musgoan says, “What can we do? Will you come with me to the Khankas’ naula and I will take out water in the open (in daylight, in everybody’s knowledge)?” After much thought and discussion, she drops the idea. She says, “My neighbours are important to me, no matter what they do. I need their support for my family’s daily existence. You sympathise with me, but you are here today and gone tomorrow.” Conflict and defiance even in the face of social injustice are not the preferred solutions for her. It is greatly constraining to question her but be unable to support her.

In terms of an unequal allocation of water and an unequal allocation of water responsibilities, it is the Dalit women in Malli Musgoan who face the greatest burden in all of Chuni. While most women and men in Chuni are relatively satisfied with water availability, the Dalit women in Musgoan left their work in the fields and at home and came down to Malghar, when they heard that someone was inquiring about water. They say, “Ask us what water scarcity is - it is to not bathe in the summer heat, after toiling in the fields. It is to reuse water used for washing vegetables and rice to wash utensils, to use this water again to wash clothes and then to feed the buffaloes this soapy water. (They laugh despite this to tell me how weak their buffaloes have become drinking soapy, dirty water). Water scarcity is to sit up the whole night filling glass by glass as water trickles into our naula. It is to sit and wait for someone from the Khanka household to come and give us some water. It is to walk up and down their path, calling a little, waiting a little, hearing them say they are busy and also knowing that our own tasks at home are left unattended. It is to steal water stealthily, taking care not to wet the ground, for fear of being suspected. It is to feel the guilt of stealing, of thinking perhaps we should not have done and again to think, ‘Why is it like this?’”

The water they manage to procure from their own naula and with what is given by the Khanka couple is not enough, so they must walk half a kilometre down the steep hills to Talli Musgoan, to fetch drinking water from the gad. They also go here to bathe, to wash clothes and to fetch water for the buffaloes. “We often don’t clean the utensils and just wipe them with a cloth. We feel so dirty and unclean in the summer. These people say that we Dalits are dirty, that we smell. But how can we be clean without water? We do not wash our clothes for weeks, just rinsing them with a little water. In Talli Musgoan too, water in the summer decreases and there are many households sharing that water. Being outsiders there, we can only ask for what is leftover.

While upper caste women face an occasional and cyclic exclusion to the preferred water sources, Dalit women face complete exclusion to preferred water sources used by the upper castes. An example from Chuni village reveals the impact of caste and class on gender in relation to women’s water roles and responsibilities.

Bina Devi, a Dalit woman of Mala village lives alone at the top of the hill with her two young children. Her source of water is a cement tank that is fed water diverted from a gad. This source is *shared* with a Brahman family, who live in a nearby hamlet. In the monsoon season, the water flows out from the tank through an open tap, located at the middle of the tank height. As long as Bina Devi does not touch the tank and the tap, she can use this water.

In the summer the water from the gad decreases to a trickle and the tank does not fill up to the level of the tap. Water needs to be scooped out of the tank. Then Bina Devi needs to wait for the Brahman woman to use the water first and then give some to her. When the Brahman woman is cyclically impure, the men in her family fill water and then give the remaining to Bina Devi. It does not matter whether Bina Devi is menstruating or not, she is eternally impure and therefore cannot touch the tank and the tap. Neither she nor her young children can access this water on their own. During the summer there is often not enough water for two families. As Bina Devi always gets what is left over, she needs to walk down almost every day to the river located a kilometre away from her house, across a steep hill. This is an enormous demand on her work, energy and time.

Could Bina Devi not do anything? “But who do I ask? Mine is the lone scheduled caste family in this village? Who will listen to me? We have no money to do anything ourselves. My husband works in Bombay in a private factory and his salary is so low that he can barely manage to send some money home or even come home. My brother-in-law also works in Bombay and his family live there with him. He is in Government service and earns well. He and his family come here every summer. What can I tell him or them? In the few days that they are here, they also experience what I experience always. If they cannot see and feel my pain and suffering, what point is there for me to say anything?”

The findings above show the complex interplay of social factors of caste, class and gender, in determining an unequal water order. The gendering of water roles and responsibilities shows the centrality of gender inequality in water allocation, management and use. Women’s responsibility for providing and managing water at the domestic level is socially imposed and legitimised by religion and culture and therefore difficult if not impossible to deconstruct. Yet, gender issues in water management cannot be observed and analysed in isolation. The social reality of the complex interplay of inter-related factors of caste, class and gender in relation to water allocation, management and use indicate that women in certain disadvantaged social groups are impacted upon more severely than others by the lack of adequate, appropriate and reliable water.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

A walk across Chuni village reveals that the socially stratified village community does not view or treat their water resource as a common good. Those disadvantaged by caste and class have historically been deprived of water and isolated from decisions related to water management. Their voices are stifled, even when what takes place in the form of local water development interventions impacts negatively upon their water needs and rights.

Women are primarily responsible for meeting household water needs and yet local culture determines that women do not have a say in the planning, management and allocation of water delivery systems. These forums are accessible only to men privileged by caste and social class. As a result, women's specific needs for appropriate, reliable and adequate domestic water are poorly understood by planners and managers and are therefore poorly addressed by the water delivery systems on which they rely.

While all women hold binding responsibilities for meeting household water needs, the intensity of water related burdens experienced by different women varies. Crosscutting issues of caste and class and the social identities of women within a household define inequity in relation to water use and water roles. Findings in this chapter show that contrary to popular belief, the technology of 'cement tanks and pipes' did bring water closer to some homes and lessened the water burdens of the socially privileged women. These findings indicate the fallacy of blindly eulogising traditional and condemning modern 'technology'. At the same time, there are contextual limitations of using improved technology to deliver water in these remote rural villages. Firstly, there has never been an adequate allocation of resources to sustain improved water delivery to all households. Secondly, the focus of modern water delivery systems has been to tap water from a source and deliver it to a destined point. This has often been done without considering whether the new systems can be sustained through locally available resources. More importantly, these developments have not taken into account the need for sustainable management of locally available water sources in relation to the multiple and competing water needs of the user households.

Benefits of 'services provided' are often exploited by the socially elite and powerful amongst the user community. Sustained equitable allocation and distribution of available water is therefore not possible if poverty, equity and gender links are not identified and addressed. These findings illustrate the challenge to and equally the potential of water management interventions to address the unequal social order of water management.

If policy goals of empowerment and equity are to be addressed realistically, water management and delivery interventions must provide space and opportunity for the socially disadvantaged, both women and men, to question and reverse the prevailing practices of inequitable water allocation and management. Women's participation in water projects holds the promise of being meaningful, if it leads to the planning and delivery of systems that equitably reduces the water burdens of the most disadvantaged amongst the women. However, the achievement of these goals would depend on many factors; including local social context, the priority and resources allocated to achievement of these goals in the project design, and finally the understanding of these issues by the project management. 'Involving women and/or the community' in projects which are planned, designed and structured top-down will not bring about sustained transformation in the inequitable allocation of water and inequality in socially allocated water roles and responsibilities.

In the light of these observations, Chapter 7 analyses official water policies, the policies, structures and strategies of the water organisations which plan and implement water projects, and the impact of official water interventions on the water needs and concerns of local women and men.

## CHAPTER 7: OFFICIAL RURAL DRINKING WATER PROGRAMMES

### 7.1 Introduction

Analysis in chapter 6 reveals that access to, authority and management of water delivery systems is unequal and inequitable in Chuni village and determined by inter-related factors of caste, class and gender. It was also observed that official projects implemented through local leadership in Chuni village benefited a privileged few and significantly reduced the water burdens of women belonging to the socially privileged families. On the other hand, the only officially managed water project in Chunni village was planned and implemented without any local people's participation, was inappropriately designed and built and thus failed to deliver water.

This chapter researches official water institutions in India, in a wider context beyond the examples seen in Chuni village. The SRA framework claims that gender inequality does not exist and operate in a social vacuum at the community level, but is organised and reconstituted across the different institutional levels identified in chapter 4. The relationship between 'organisations being products of the unequal social order and the impact of organisations on the unequal social order' is said to be mutually reinforcing.

A hypothesis can be drawn from this argument that inequalities in roles, responsibilities and resource management and distribution in relation to water persist and are mutually reinforced across the various institutional levels of the official rural drinking water sector. The hypothesis is analysed in this chapter by outlining the process through which rural drinking water sector policies are structured, interpreted at various organisational levels, implemented by various organisational actors and finally experienced as water delivery systems in the communities. This involves analysis of:

- Rules – governing the institutions or water policies
- Power / People – who determines priorities and makes the rules, how and why
- Activities – what is done; interventions by way of official water programmes and projects

- Means and ends – what is used and what is produced.

It is essential first to provide a brief history of the official rural drinking water supply sector in India.

## **7.2 The History of Rural Drinking Water Policy and Practice**

A review of water development interventions in India brings to light the significant and persistent impact of global water policies on national policies and programmes. Development planning in India after Independence has been achieved through consequent five-year plans. The focus and nature of water development interventions sector in India is analysed chronologically through the medium of these five-year plans:

### **7.2.1 1950s – 1960s**

As discussed in chapter 3, the global approach to water development interventions in the 1950s and 60s had an infrastructure and health perspective. In India as elsewhere the focus of domestic water programming was on establishing a network of centralised technical institutions, which planned and provided capital-intensive water delivery services, to an assumed mass of ‘unserved’ population.

#### **1. Change in Water Delivery Systems from Traditional to Official**

As discussed in chapter 6, the skewed land and water ownership patterns established during colonial rule, through the Zamindari system were abolished officially in 1950, after India’s independence. Sengupta (2000) identifies that official water management systems structured after Independence, inherited and internalised colonial attitudes and approaches. Constitutionally, water was declared as a state government resource and in the federal democratic structure of the Indian political system, water management rights were vested in the state governments (Iyer, 2001).

#### **2. Central Government Leadership in Water Management**

While water was declared as a state government resource and domestic water delivery and management as the responsibility of the state government, central government leadership in water management persisted administratively and financially. The centre/state institutional relationship was based on an understanding that the centre would be responsible for macro-policy formulation and financial assistance while state organisations would plan, implement and manage drinking water projects (Iyer, 1994).

In the 1950s, during the first and second five-year plans, state-level water organisations termed as Public Health Engineering Departments, were established and funded through central government assistance and regulation. State governments were gradually urged to increase their financial contribution to the implementation of water programmes as well as to contribute to policy planning processes (Ghosh et al., 1995).

### **3. Urban Focus on Improving Water Delivery**

Rural drinking water supply was a low priority in the initial five-year plans. In the first five-year plan (1951-1956) only 0.15 per cent of the total budget was allocated for rural drinking water supply (World Bank, 1998). In comparison, the urban drinking water supply budget was almost double the allocation for rural programmes. Administrative responsibilities for urban and rural water supply were vested in the Department of Urban Development, both at the central and state government levels. At the end of the 1960s, despite statistical increases in coverage figures, water management problems in much of rural India remained unsolved. This fact was highlighted by the severe water scarcity experienced in rural villages during drought in India in 1979-80 (Ghosh et al., 1995).

### **4. Globally Determined Technical Water Guidelines Standardised in India**

As discussed in chapter 3, engineering professionals trained in western concepts of water management determined notions of water availability and scarcity (Cleaver and Elson, 1993). Following global trends, water needs and delivery systems were generalised in India irrespective of the varying livelihoods of people in different social and ecological conditions. Towards the end of this period, in the early 1970s, a common set of technical guidelines was established and applied across different state governments for the rural

drinking water sector. The tools of measurements incorporated to determine ‘access to safe water’, ‘adequate’, ‘unserved populations’, ‘reasonable access’, ‘family needs’ did not recognise the distinct social heterogeneity within targeted communities. The technical guidelines specified:

- Complete coverage to all no-source, problem villages and partially covered villages.
- Water supply to be provided within the stipulated norms of 40 litres per capita per day (lpcd) within a maximum distance of 1.6 kms or at an elevation of 100 metres in the hilly regions. At least one source for every 250 persons with capacity of 40 lpcd (with an additional 30 lpcd for cattle in desert and problem areas).
- Priority of safe water provision where the existing supply sources exhibit health-harming characteristics (Ghosh et.al., 1995).

Findings below will show that despite changes in policy these technical guidelines continue to guide work implementation in current official rural drinking water programmes.

## **5. The Dominance of Men and Masculinities in Water Management Programmes**

Rocheleau and others (1996) identified that globally the culture of water institutions was predominantly masculine. In India men privileged by caste and economic class found easier access to systems and cultures of Western knowledge and dominated water supply institutions. As will be discussed below, the dominance of men in the official water organisations led to a culture of masculinity in these organisations.

To summarise, rural drinking water supply was of low priority in India’s domestic water policies in the 1950s and 1960s. Written in an apparently gender-neutral language, policies aggregated the socially heterogeneous urban and rural populations. Women’s water needs and interests did not find mention in the wording of policies and implementation strategies. Also, opportunities in water institutions were accessible to those socially privileged by caste, class and gender. According to the discussions in chapter 4, India’s domestic water policies in the 1950s and 1960s were gender-blind.

### 7.2.2 1970s and 1980s

As discussed in chapter 3, water was established as an environmental concern and the Women, Environment and Development approach identified women as natural water managers during this period. However, women's water roles did not extend to the management of water resources, but only to their involvement or participation in domestic and/or drinking water projects.

India's sixth five-year plan (1980-85) coincided with the International Drinking Water and Sanitation Water Decade and, in keeping with the trend of policy assimilation, India pledged full support to extend water services to the so-far unserved rural villages and to involve women in water projects. The Decade approach to women's involvement in India was interpreted as:

‘Women being the biggest users, collectors and handlers of water have a major role to play in rural water management as caretakers, health educators and animators and hand-pump mechanics. A water committee of women members is given the responsibility of keeping all the hand-pumps in the village in a clean and sanitary condition. This involves cleaning of platforms and drains, planting of kitchen gardens to absorb excess water outflow and reporting of major breakdown in systems provided. The more literate, extrovert and eager women are chosen and trained in domestic health education. Women play a vital role in India’s rural economy. In this culture it is easier to instruct them technically. Women are given an honorarium of Indian Rupees 200 per year (4.4 US\$/per year) for maintaining 10 hand-pumps’ (Ghosh, 1989).

The seventh five-year plan (1985-90) coincided with the end of the Water Decade. The approaches to water management identified at the New Delhi Water Conference were incorporated as ‘social clauses’ in India’s official water policy guidelines in the late 1980s. These were as follows:

- Women to be involved in all decisions related to location of standpoint/ hand-pump, women also to be involved in the maintenance of water points.

- Priority coverage to Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe inhabitants and SC/ST inhabited villages and to landless agricultural labourers.
- Voluntary organisations (NGOs) to be involved in the implementation of programmes in order to enable community participation (Ghosh et al., 1995).

An analysis of the implementation of these ‘social’ reforms shows a marked trend of policy evaporation, indicating a divide between global and national policies as well as between official policy and practice. Firstly, the Decade approach of ‘promoting women’s full participation at all levels of water projects’ was translated in India’s policy context to ‘involving women in decisions related to location of standpoints/hand-pumps, and in the maintenance of water points’. Even this diluted version of ‘involvement of women’ failed to get translated into practice. As seen in chapter 6, there was no involvement of women in the official water project implemented in Chuni village in the 1980s. Briffa (1999) identified that despite the emphasis, women’s involvement in water projects during the Decade was isolated and sparse. How and why this happened in India’s context is discussed later.

The clause of priority coverage to Scheduled Caste groups had been formulated in official water policy to overcome the caste-based discrimination in the allocation and distribution of drinking water. It had been correctly identified that, ‘one of the most obnoxious disabilities suffered by the rural Harijans (Dalits) is lack of access to drinking water. Loopholes in the law are exploited by ‘upper caste’ villagers, with the connivance of local officials of identical castes, to classify village wells as private property. Harijans either have to travel far to get their water or must turn to polluted sources that the ‘upper castes’ do not use’ (The Commissioner for Scheduled Castes, 1980 quoted by Agarwal et al., 1981). Amongst all other clauses, this clause was most closely adopted by the implementing agencies because of the political policing of this issue. Data collected and collated by the planning and implementing agencies now identified coverage of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe habitations. However, as revealed in chapter 6, scheduled caste groups gained little by way of water projects funded officially, as

commonly loopholes in the law were still exploited by ‘upper caste’ villagers and officials.

Finally, there was little NGO involvement in official water projects. India is identified as a region where alternative voices originated in relation to local people’s disillusion with natural resource management approaches in development programming (Braidotti et.al., 1994). However, NGOs operating in the water sector in India, as elsewhere, were loosely classified with the ‘private sector’ and seen as cheap alternative service providers (Sen, 1999). Despite the recognition of NGOs as efficient service providers, NGO involvement in water management remained insignificant. Up until late as 1999, Briffa analysed that ‘in much of India, the Government is still largely seen as a provider of basic services, including water’. This could have been because of the devaluing of the NGO movement or because the effective adoption of alternative approaches were hindered by rigid and dominant structures of water bureaucracies. Whatever the reasons, NGOs had little legitimate voice in decision-making processes in water management, either locally or nationally. This position holds good even today.

To summarise, there was a change in the language of official water policies in the 1970s and 1980s in India. However social clauses written into water policy were considerably diluted versions of similar reforms structured in global policy. There was a further dilution or evaporation in the translation of policy to practice. The primary cause was the lack of practical guidelines on how such policies were to be operationalised at the implementation level. The historical dependency of implementation organisations on central government for policy direction, as discussed in 7.2.1, meant that official water projects continued to be implemented as they had been prior to these policy declarations.

### 7.2.3 The 1990s

Chapter 3 identifies the ambiguity and incoherence in the language of global water policies formulated in the 1990s. The analysis also identifies the significant impact of

economic reforms in water policies. Both these issues are likewise identified in the India's rural water policies during the 1990s.

Up until the eighth five-year plan (1992-97), there was little innovation in drinking water sector policies, beyond the rhetorical incorporation of the social clauses as mentioned above (World Bank, 1998). A target-oriented, welfare approach continued to guide sector investments and activities. The only obvious change was the incremental increase in financial allocation for rural drinking water supply in national and state budgets.

Quantitatively, the increase in national spending was complemented by official figures of improved coverage of water supply to rural populations. According to the 1991 National Census, 87 per cent of the rural population was provided safe drinking water (GoI, 1991). For several decades, quantitative official documentation of coverage figures remained the only tool for evaluating official water programmes. A more independent and qualitative evaluation of sector performance in the 1990s showed that there were impediments at technological, institutional and policy levels in the water sector and the coverage figures did not indicate reliable, appropriate and safe access to drinking water (GoI, 1994).

In the eighth five-year plan, there was a radical change in national water policy guidelines. Water was identified as an economic good. The following new approaches to water management were structured in policy:

- Management of water as an economic good
- Demand-led approaches in water provision
- Decentralisation, user-participation and private sector involvement in water management and
- Local level management and adoption of low cost technologies of operation and maintenance (Ghosh et al., 1995).

These approaches were identified as crucial to resolving the impediments to water management, identified above and the reforms were supported by international agencies popularising these approaches. 'India has invested much effort in bringing supplies of

safe and clean water to the countryside. Too many investments fail to take adequate account of the needs of water users, while maintenance is threatened by a shortage of finance and the concentration of responsibility in the hands of remote bureaucracies' (World Bank, 1998).

However, in the eighth plan, new policy perspectives suggesting the 'economising of drinking water delivery practices' were placed side by side with the national goal emphasising 'state responsibility for extending safe drinking water to all rural habitations'. This indicates the incoherence in policy perspectives. As discussed earlier, policy reforms were rarely based on learning from field experiences. The dualism of policy perspectives in official water programming in India suggest a simplistic incorporation of the similarly dualistic global sector reforms corresponding to this period.

To sum up, there has been a distinct and persistent influence of global policies on rural drinking water supply policies in India. Findings also reveal a divide between policy and practice levels, which has historically been deep and plagued by a culture of dependency. This is seen to result in evaporation and dilution in the translation of policies to implementation strategies. The dualism and incoherence in water policies in the eighth five-year plan adequately summarises the history of rural drinking water supply interventions in India. The next section discusses the first of the four dimensions of institutional analysis of the official water programme, i.e. the rules governing current official rural drinking water programmes.

### **7.3 Current Rural Drinking Water Policies**

#### **7.3.1 Dualism and Incoherence in Policy Perspectives**

The language and approach of the current ninth five-year plan (1997-2002) is as dualistic and incoherent as that in the eighth plan. On the one hand, the ninth five-year plan spells out the national goal of 'providing all rural habitations with a minimum basic requirement of safe drinking water'. The policy guidelines specify:

- 40 litres per capita per person per day
- one water source for every 250 persons and
- water source within 1.6 km of the habitation in the plains or within 100 metres elevation in the hills (GoI, 1996; 1999).

The ninth plan also spells out a demand-driven and decentralised approach to rural drinking water supply and management. For 58 pilot districts the policy guidelines specify:

- A demand-driven, integrated approach to water supply and sanitation
- Partial (20 per cent) capital cost recovery and 100 per cent operation and maintenance financing by users
- Community participation in project planning, implementation and maintenance
- Stronger links to watershed development programmes and
- Control measures on over-extraction of groundwater (GoI, 1999; Tripathi, 2000).

The pilot programme is being funded entirely by the central government. 20 per cent of the annual national budget for rural drinking water supply programmes has been reserved for the implementation of these policy reforms in the identified pilot districts (*ibid*). In comparison to past plans, there is a significant improvement in the outlining of an implementation strategy in order to pilot the new policy guidelines. At the time of research, work in the 58 pilot districts had not started, therefore only a theoretical analysis of the current policy guidelines can be made here, which reveals the following issues:

1. The guidelines identify a priority selection of districts facing problems of water availability and quality for piloting the new strategy. Guidelines also mention that the districts selected are to have been progressive in meeting water coverage through the efficient functioning of committed water institutions (GoI, 1999). It is contrary that progressive districts would also be problem districts. Practitioners at the state level, responsible for selecting the districts, said, “The new policy guidelines demand significant inputs from local water organisations. Therefore only those districts having

committed water organisations were chosen as the pilot districts" (Mishra, 2000). This contradicts the policy guidelines aimed at 'targeting coverage on a priority basis to those habitations and villages least provided with safe water supply'. There may also be other important implications. What is possible by way of piloting the revised guidelines in progressive districts may be difficult or even impossible to replicate in less progressive districts.

2. The new policy guidelines speak of a demand-response approach but there is a narrow interpretation of the term 'demand' in purely economic terms, as discussed in chapter 3. Demand management is linked to the need to ensure that target communities in these pilot districts will contribute ten per cent of the capital cost and the complete operation and maintenance costs of the specific drinking water projects.

To facilitate implementation of the new strategy, reform guidelines define the following activities:

- Constitution of state and district level management committees
- Identification of NGOs, local elected bodies (Panchayat Raj Institutions or PRI) and/or private sector as new project implementation actors by the district committees
- Constitution of village level water and sanitation and user committees
- Planning, collection of user contributions, supervision of implementation, and operation and maintenance of delivered systems by the village water and sanitation committees and user committees (GoI, 1999).

There is no clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities for the various institutional actors identified above and in this aspect, the multiple-actor environment has created a somewhat confused tangle of appropriate institutional roles and responsibilities (Water and Sanitation Programme, 1999). Past experience reveals that existing local management systems are weak, disorganised and inequitable from gender and poverty perspectives. It has been cautioned earlier that 'the implications of the rapid transfer of

policy and practice from a centralised system to a three-tier management with a federal background remain unclear and need serious reckoning' (Iyer, 1994).

3. The new water policy reform guidelines are yet to be piloted and their applicability and relevance tested locally, yet there is significant pressure on state governments to adopt these policies. The state of Maharashtra, considered one of the more progressive states, has already adopted this approach as the state drinking water supply policy (GoI, 2000). This move is widely acclaimed at decision-making levels. 'The purpose of these pilots is to translate the principles of sector reforms into state policy. It would be good if other states follow Maharashtra's initiative of upscaling the reform process' (ibid).

4. Finally, demand-driven policy reforms will be implemented in nominated pilot districts side by side with the regular supply-driven approach in all other districts in India (except in Maharashtra). This means that within one state, rural communities in one district will be delivered drinking water, implemented, managed and operated free of cost by responsible local authorities and in the pilot districts, village communities will pay the capital costs as well as operation and maintenance costs for water delivery systems. The political implication of this duality in strategy has not been analysed, nor given the importance it demands.

### **7.3.2 The Rhetoric of Gender**

Current policy reforms recognise the need for women's involvement in water projects, but the approaches to involving women are as in the past, seen to reinforce existing gender inequalities in women's water roles and responsibilities. Policy guidelines define that 'women will constitute 1/3 of the strength of the Village Water and Sanitation Committees' (VWSCs) and user groups at the community level will comprise exclusively women. User groups will be given responsibilities for awareness raising, collecting funds, ensuring and undertaking maintenance of water systems and certifying the completion of the project' (GoI, 1999).

Women's issues continue to be compartmentalised at the community level. Women are also aggregated as a unitary social category. Agarwal (1997) identifies that there are 'significant differences across states, social classes and communities (tribal/non-tribal, Hindu/Muslim, "upper caste"/lower caste Hindus and hill dwellers/plains dwellers), factors, which differently influence different women's abilities to participate in public processes'. The analysis in chapters 5 and 6 identify some of the caste-based differences amongst hill women. The current water policy design does not take into account these differences.

There is a distinct efficiency bias, as discussed in chapter 3, in promoting women's involvement. The official document states, 'It is a well-known fact that collection of drinking water in a village is primarily done by women. Thus they are the predominant user group. To strengthen women's participation in the project activities, especially in the area of sustainability of the system, formation of user groups comprising of women in each village may be taken up' (GoI, 1999).

The current policy reforms use the age-old practice of 'harnessing women's labour to ensure project efficiency'. The guidelines state that women's involvement will contribute to their empowerment. However, the guidelines do not explain the term 'empowerment' or detail the links between women's (voluntary) involvement, project efficiency and empowerment. Locke, (1999) analysing official forest management initiatives in India identified that the context of 'women's involvement' has explicit efficiency goals and this approach is promoted under the pretext that women's involvement will empower women. It remains to be seen how the implementation of policy reforms in water management will empower women.

There is no recognition in the current policy of already researched evidence, which enumerates the numerous barriers women face in the process of involvement. Agarwal (1997) notes, 'A range of factors constrains gender-balanced participation. This includes the rules governing the new bodies; social barriers stemming from cultural constructions of gender roles; gendered responsibilities and expected behaviour; logistical barriers for

women relating to the timings and lengths of organisational meetings and finally male biases in the attitudes of those responsible for promoting these initiatives'.

A theoretical analysis of current rural drinking water policies shows dualism and incoherence of policy perspectives. Policy guidelines fluctuate between a reassuring of state role in provision of drinking water supply to least covered rural habitations, and enforcing a demand responsive approach in providing drinking water to progressive districts, where administrative and technical competence exists to enforce privatisation and appropriate pricing. There is evidence that the government is investing effort and resources in trying to bring about sectoral reforms. However, the efforts to pilot new approaches are rushed and the approaches are themselves incoherent. The implementation of the current policy reforms banks heavily on the voluntary contribution of both women and the larger community. While women's contribution to promote project efficiency is explicit, there is a conceptual misinterpretation that women's voluntary involvement in water projects is synonymous with their empowerment and that opportunities exist equally for all women to participate and become empowered.

This discussion on the reality and rhetoric of official water policies leads to the second issue of analysis - of power structures determining e policy priorities and the process of formulating official policies.

#### **7.4 Who Determines Rural Drinking Water Policies in India, How and Why?**

Development planning is officially identified as a consultative process engaging all key stakeholders. Analysis from field research however reveals the following issues:

- A distinct divide and lack of co-ordination between policy-formulation and implementation institutions, in other words, between the domains of policy and practice
- Institutional fragmentation and lack of co-ordination between decision-making organisations and between water sub-sectors.
- Imposition of global policy on national rural drinking water policies.

Before these issues are discussed in greater detail, it is useful to broadly identify the central government organisations involved in the formulation of official rural drinking water policies:

**Table 7.1 Organisations involved in Formulation of Official Rural Drinking Water Policies**

Organisation/s	Institutional Roles and Responsibilities in Policy Formulation
International Agencies	Introduce and implement different approaches to water management at national and state levels. Influence policy and institutional structures. Key players in India are: the World Bank Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Group (RWSG-India), UNICEF, the Royal Netherlands Embassy, Danish International Development Agency and others.
Planning Commission	Government of India's apex policy planning and budget allocation organisation.
Ministry of Rural Affairs Ministry of Environment and Forests Ministry of Water Resources	All these ministries have some overlapping roles in policy formulation of rural drinking water policies and programmes. However, the Ministry of Rural Affairs has key roles in policy formulation in rural drinking water supply.
Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission, (Rajiv Gandhi Mission) Ministry of Rural Affairs	The Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission is responsible for management and evaluation of all drinking water programmes, funded by the Central government. The Mission is also responsible for ensuring co-ordination amongst policy and implementation organisations across national and state levels.

#### **7.4.1 Institutional Divide and Lack of Co-ordination between Policy and Practice**

The Planning Commission is responsible for facilitating and enabling consultative planning across central, state and local governments, between relevant ministries, organisations, experts and at general public levels. The five-year plans discussed earlier, are identified to be an outcome of this consultative planning process and guide development interventions in India.

The Rajiv Gandhi Mission is responsible for forging downward linkages with state government organisations implementing water projects in order to identify rural drinking water priorities from practice levels. The Mission then forwards sector concerns to the Planning Commission, where consultative planning informs the writing of sector policy guidelines, which are finally approved by the Government of India as rural drinking water supply policies. The World Bank (1998) report on the rural domestic water sub-sector in India reveals some of the organisational constraints faced by the Mission, which do not permit the establishment of effective communication links with implementing organisations at state levels. These issues also surfaced during discussion with the Mission staff in the course of the field research:

1. Directors and Additional Directors who constitute the decision-making cadre in the Mission are continually moved between various institutions. This impacts upon the stability in the building of relationships with water organisations at the state and other administrative levels.
2. The Mission is responsible for financial and administrative management and evaluation of rural drinking water projects funded by the state governments. The Mission also provides technical assistance to state government water organisations. Given the size of the country the organisational functions of the Mission are complex. Therefore since its institution, the Mission functions have been restricted to financial management of the official water programmes. The tasks of maintaining innovative upward and backward linkages have been difficult to establish and continue. There are diverse water management issues confronting each state and one professional in the Mission is administratively responsible for several states. By way of discussing policy guidelines, the Mission co-ordinates annual or biannual meetings of state level water organisations in order to debate national and international water policy concerns and also to achieve some consensus on policy structuring for the sub-sector. However, these sporadic national level meetings do not provide the appropriate opportunity to discuss policy concerns. The Mission staff members are at best able to interact with individuals heading state level water organisations. Administratively there are norms, which specify that discussions on

policy guidelines, initiated by the Mission are to be replicated at state level, involving all concerned political and administrative units. However, there is hardly any replication of these discussions at local levels.

3. Given the distinctly separate political authorities of the national and state governments, the Mission has limited influence in ensuring consistent implementation of national policy in state implementing organisations.

These constraints inhibit decision-makers at the Mission from comprehending ground realities and therefore effectively representing field realities in formulating policy concerns. The divides between policy and practice persist for several other reasons, a few of which are as discussed below:

As discussed above policy goals have historically been target oriented and quantitative and there are no tools in practice to assess the impact of services and to restructure policy on the basis of past learning. The culture of dependency of implementing organisations on policy formulation and financing organisations severely inhibits a bottom-up flow of information. Finally, lack of communication and inter-organisational co-ordination is influenced by the fact that the organisational structures in implementing organisations are vertical and hierarchical. Power hierarchies insulate each higher organisational level from the lower levels and communication channels are formal and impersonal. A classic example is the interpretation of the new policy reforms by engineers across the different hierarchical levels of implementing organisations.

In Orissa the new revised policy guidelines for rural water supply have been delivered by the Mission to decision-making authorities in the implementing organisation, the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation (RWSSO), through workshops held at national and regional levels.

Research in the field revealed that officials in the main office in the State capital, Bhubaneshwar are aware of the new policy guidelines, some more vaguely than others. The knowledge of the policy reform guidelines was seen to wane across district and block

level organisations. The Executive Engineer heading the Kondhamal District Office was aware that new policy guidelines had been issued but was not aware of the content of the guidelines. The Junior Engineer in the Tikkabali Block office of the organisation was completely unaware of the policy reforms and of the national and regional level workshops.

The divide between policy and practice is not identified institutionally. Based on research in other sectors, Ramachandran (1998) identifies that, in India, 'Bureaucracies do not see an organic link between planning and implementation. This separation is so generic to government programmes and schemes that it is not even acknowledged as a factor that could influence outcome'.

Despite these problems in the formulation of policies at decision-making levels, officially, implementing organisations are blamed for everything having gone wrong, demonstrating a peripheral understanding of this divide. 'State Government implementing organisations are overstaffed, have high cost overheads and are plagued by corruption, politicisation and practice an inflexible technology' (Saxena, 1998). Yet research reveals that beyond the increase in financial allocation to state government water organisations, over the years there is little evidence of effort in building the capacities of these organisations. This is reflected in the near complete lack of analysis and evaluation of implementing organisations at the state and local levels (TCS, 1999). The new sector reform policies in the ninth five-year plan have only just identified this need, however this is still a very narrow way of looking at the problem, as it does not identify constraints across the institutional structure.

#### **7.4.2 Institutional Fragmentation and Lack of Co-ordination in Decision-Making Organisations**

Co-ordination is not only limited between policy and practice domains but also between and amongst organisations at the policy-making level. The Planning Commission consists of several units, amongst which the Housing and Urban Development and Water Supply,

and Rural Development are two divisions. These administrative divisions are sparsely staffed and there is little inter-divisional co-ordination. ‘At the Planning Commission, where co-ordination is vitally called for, the level of interaction in most cases is limited to inter-sectoral circulation of paperwork’ (Shourie, 1999). This is especially relevant, as urban and rural water management in India have been compared to a legendary heroine, Draupadi, who had five husbands. ‘Water in India is like Draupadi in Mahabharata. There are five ministries that deal with it’ (Thakur, 2000).

In the Planning Commission, responsibility for steering water supply policies, both rural and urban, are carried by the Housing and Urban Development and Water Supply division. The Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission functions administratively under the Rural Development Division but functionally reports to the Housing, Urban Development and Water Supply Division. This results in further administrative complications.

The lack of inter-institutional co-ordination is strikingly evident in the wording of the National Water Policy, which says little about drinking and/or domestic water. Iyer (1994), the key actor involved in the drafting of this policy, identifies the rhetoric of the process, as ‘much remains to be done to restructure and make operational the National Water Policy’.

Despite the rhetoric of policy planning being a consultative process, the Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission remains unilaterally responsible for formulating rural drinking water policies. During a meeting at the Planning Commission, the Principal Advisor of the Housing, Urban Development and Water Supply Division indicated that it was best to consult officials at the Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission on sectoral priorities of the rural drinking water sector. Other officials in the division identified, “We only facilitate the official approval of water policies forwarded to us by the Rajiv Gandhi Mission” (Katailiha, 1999).

### 7.4.3 Imposition of Global Policy on National Rural Drinking Water Policies

The divide between policy and practice domains and the fragmentation and lack of co-ordination between water institutions, influences the imposition of global water policies as national policies. Rural drinking water policies continue to be borrowed from or imposed by global water platforms despite the fact that 'external assistance in the water sector amounts to less than five per cent of India's total spending on water' (World Bank, 1998). There is a distinct exploitation of this vulnerability by influential global partners at decision-making levels. The Regional Water and Sanitation Group for South Asia (RWSG-SA), the regional coalition of the UNDP-World Bank Water and Sanitation Sector is currently the key agency, which has forged a strategic alliance with the Rajiv Gandhi Mission. This explains why Bank sectoral reforms of 'privatisation and appropriate pricing' most strategically influence national water policies and strategies.

In June 1998, the RWSG-SA entered into a strategic three-year alliance with the RGNDWM with a view to introducing reforms in the rural water supply and sanitation sector. The reforms would focus on:

- New institutional arrangements for institutional actors
- Cost-sharing with beneficiaries
- Greater community control and involvement through innovative financing mechanisms.

Under the new agreement, the Mission was to share vital information on policy directions and national thinking trends with the RWSG-SA. In turn the RWSG-SA would assist the Mission in accelerating ongoing policy reforms of a demand-responsive approach and increased user cost recovery in the delivery of services (Jalvaani, 1998).

The World Bank plays a critical and assertive role in accelerating national policy reforms towards demand-responsiveness and cost recovery. Both formal and informal links are very well established. Discussions during the field analysis revealed that the new policy guidelines discussed in 7.3, were in fact literally drafted by World Bank staff on behalf of Rajiv Gandhi Mission staff. The politics of these informal links are deeply entrenched.

Despite this blatant imposition of policy, it is argued at decision-making levels that new policy reforms for the domestic water sector are incorporated from global policy on the basis of their relevance and applicability to field reality. The applicability and limitations of policy would be best identified and analysed by organisations implementing policies at field level. But it has already been identified that there is a poor understanding and interpretation of policy by practitioners and an equally poor understanding of field constraints and realities at decision-making levels.

#### **7.4.4 Women's Involvement in Water Policies**

There were few pointers in the above analysis, which showed why rural domestic water policies have changed little in attempting to 'involve women' in water delivery programmes. This is discussed here.

The most visible observation is the under representation of women in water decision-making levels at the central government. In the context of Indian decision-making bureaucracies, it is identified that, 'for centuries now, men have control over public spaces, mainstream organisations and institutions. Women's access to such forums has been limited' (Ramachandran, 1998). However, this observation does not mean that the presence of a few women at decision-making levels would readily translate to gender-aware water policies. In fact it is identified in chapter 2 that women working in a minority often inculcate masculine behaviours and attitudes and are unable to, resistant or even confrontational to making strategic changes for gender equality. This often stems from the pressure to conform to the dominant culture. Refusal to do so or creating a new culture is not accepted easily (Goetz 1997).

At the time of research, there were only two women who held decision-making positions, one each in the Planning Commission and the Rajiv Gandhi Mission. The Principal Advisor to the Housing, Urban Development and Water Supply Division, when asked about gender issues in the water sector, said, "What works for women in the West does not work for our rural women. 'Gender' is just another popular term now. It is best that

you observe in the field what is working and what is not.” The lone woman Additional Director at the Rajiv Gandhi Mission was amused in being asked if she experienced any constraints in the dominantly male organisation. “Why should I experience any constraint? Being a woman does not affect my performance in any way differently from that of others (men). If we as women have chosen to work (in offices), we cannot expect different organisational norms for us.” The distinct caste and class advantage that enables a few amongst Indian women to reach such positions means that they rarely experience the feminine constraints that plague their less fortunate sisters.

Although policy mentions women’s empowerment, there was little understanding of what this specifically meant amongst decision-makers, both male and female. The dominant view was that ‘women need to be involved, but essentially water management is a technical issue’. This view has been reported elsewhere, ‘...engineers as technical professionals address a technical problem, which has little to do social inequalities, leave alone with gender relations’ (Ramachandran, 1998).

It is, therefore, not surprising that the proposed organisational restructuring strategy for the rural domestic water sector is not gender-aware. In a bid to bring about women’s involvement policy mentions, ‘that implementing organisations functioning at state level should have a participatory development unit, staffed by a senior social scientist and a gender specialist. The gender specialist should be well conversant with women’s development concepts and issues’ (GoI, 1999). The ‘women’s development unit’ is proposed despite past evidence that such units in other departments and sectors did not address the context of gender inequality and women’s empowerment. In the analysis of official organisations in India, Ramachandran (1998) reports, that ‘special spaces cannot easily correct centuries of unequal access. Gender sensitisation involves change in attitudes, work culture, organisational priorities, resource allocation and monitoring systems’ (*ibid*).

To summarise, there is no participatory process of policy development with an equal involvement of all institutional actors. Policies are structured at the national level, while

implementation is undertaken at state level and there is a distinct divide between the two domains. There are few mechanisms and strategies in place to ensure that policies are debated across the various institutional levels and lessons from the field are fed back to decision-making levels.

There is evident gender inequality at the institutional level of policy formulation illustrated by the unequal access to resources, responsibilities and power between women and men. For the few women privileged by class and caste, who have access to such positions of authority, the institutional compulsion is to adopt masculine attitudes and culture. The wording of gender issues in water management policy and within organisations reveals the peripheral significance attached to concerns of gender equality. The lack of gender sensitivity and focus in decision-making forums is perhaps the reason why current gender policy reinforces gender inequity by interpreting the voluntary involvement of women at the community level to increase project efficiency as gender empowerment. This is significant evidence that water organisations are products of the unequal social order and in turn reinforce an unequal social order.

## **7.5 Activities – What is Done and How in Programme Implementation**

This section focuses on the analysis of implementation processes and strategies at the state government level, or on what is done and how by way of official water interventions. The systems and cultures of official organisations implementing official rural drinking water programmes are discussed here. The analysis in this section identifies that like the organisations at decision-making levels, organisations at the implementation level are equally products of the unequal social order.

### **7.5.1 The Administrative Structure of State Water Organisations**

As in 7.4, it is useful to map out the key organisations implementing rural drinking water projects at the state level.

**Table 7.2 Organisations Implementing Official Rural Drinking Water Programmes**

<b>Organisation/s</b>	<b>Institutional Roles and Responsibilities</b>
Department of Rural Development	Administratively responsible for policy formulation, funding and evaluating rural drinking water programmes at the State level. The Department has offices at district and block levels. The management of rural drinking water programmes by this Department is only administrative.
Public Health Engineering Organisations	Known by various names in different states, these organisations are responsible for the planning, implementing and managing rural drinking water programmes. These organisations have well-established offices at state, district and block levels. State level offices are responsible for overall planning and management. Field offices in the different blocks undertake and manage implementation locally, while the district offices have a supervisory and middle management functions.
Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs)	NGOs have occasionally in the recent past been involved in the implementation of drinking water programmes, especially in donor funded programmes. In India's official water programmes, NGOs have primarily been responsible for undertaking community management activities, while the Public Health Engineering organisations undertake all technical activities.
Village Panchayats (Locally-elected governments)	Despite the rhetoric of decentralisation, the elected village government does not have any relevant role in official projects managed and implemented by the Public Health Engineering Organisations. The Village Panchayats do undertake small water improvement interventions through funds provided through the District Rural Development funds, as described in chapter 6. These are separate activities from the programmes undertaken by the Public Health Engineering departments.

Public Health Engineering Departments function administratively under the Rural Development Department for managing rural drinking water supply programmes. The structure and functions of these organisations has changed little since their inception in the 1950s, despite recent changes in names and organisational status, which are seen to vary in different states.

In Uttar Pradesh, the Public Health Engineering Department is a semi-autonomous corporation, known as the Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam or Jal Nigam. “Decentralisation of the UPJN was one of the early, disjointed efforts of the World Bank to initiate decentralisation in water management in the state in 1975” (Singh, 1998a). Under the regulations of this decentralisation process, the Jal Nigam was to function and sustain itself as a semi-autonomous organisation. However, there was no organisational

restructuring and the Jal Nigam continued to function as before, the only difference being the change in name and status (TCS, 1999). Despite the change in status, the Jal Nigam continues to occupy a central role in the planning, design, implementation, operation and maintenance of rural drinking water schemes.

In Orissa decentralisation did not take place and the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation functions as an official organisation under the Rural Development Department and is responsible for managing and implementing rural water supply programmes.

Both Jal Nigam and the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation have well-established field offices at the district and block levels. In both organisations, work is implemented departmentally through staff located at district and block level offices and/or by tendering work execution to private contractors.

Recent policies advocating the need for involvement of alternative actors in water management programmes has resulted in the fairly incoherent and sporadic involvement of different local people's groups and NGOs in various rural water management programmes in both Uttar Pradesh and Orissa. The outcome has however not been very constructive. 'It is fair to state that the rural development scene at the local level is chaotic with both state and non-state institutions and organisations operating in an uneven and unstructured fashion' (Webster, 1995).

### **7.5.2 Decision-Making and Communication/Information Systems**

The key decision-making authorities for both the Jal Nigam and the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation are located outside to the organisation in the State Rural Development Department. Within the organisations themselves, the structure of leadership varies. A chairperson nominated by the state government and belonging to the Central Administrative Services heads the Jal Nigam and is vested with all decision-making powers. Change in leadership is frequent and the organisational head, being

external to the organisation, is unable to conceive and internalise organisational strengths and weaknesses. In the words of a Jal Nigam employee, 'there is no future vision or perspective, the organisation moves from one annual plan to another' (Singh, 1998a). In Orissa, a Chief Engineer belonging to the organisation heads the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation.

Regardless of the differences in leadership patterns, organisational systems are similar - vertical and hierarchical. Organisational analysis reveals that communication channels are formal, top-down and communication between different offices or within different hierarchical levels in any office is restricted to exchange of paperwork. Bottom-up communication processes are rare and therefore field offices at district and block levels rarely contribute to decision-making processes. This is one reason why, as identified earlier, there was differential interpretation of policy guidelines by staff across the hierarchies of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation.

Both Jal Nigam and the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation follow the same technical policy guidelines discussed in 7.3 and this procedure does not encourage a flow of information from the field level up towards decision-making levels as:

1. Technical guidelines promote standard, physical and tangible targets and do not permit flexibility for field staff to innovate technology, despite wide variations in local geographies. Planning requirements in the officially implemented projects do not require an investigation of different systems in use or user preferences. Project monitoring and evaluation processes are target oriented and quantitative. There are no tools to assess the impact of services or to restructure past experiences as lessons.
2. Despite years of inclusion of social development clauses in the policy guidelines, there are no mechanisms or processes structured for the implementation and evaluation of these clauses. In the common mode of project implementation, work is contracted to private contractors and the contract agreement details both technical and social clauses. The departmental Junior Engineer located at the block level technically supervises the

contractor's work, however, there are no structures or mechanisms in place to ensure that social clauses in the contract document are implemented and evaluated.

The implementing organisations are relatively candid in stating they do not undertake community participation activities. 'Community participation is an essential component in the Dutch Support Programme being implemented by the Jal Nigam. The Jal Nigam does not essentially have a community participation agenda in other official rural drinking water projects, implemented across the state' (Joshi, 1998).

Community participation activities have been difficult to implement and sustain in these organisations. In the Dutch-funded water programmes in Uttar Pradesh, there were significant efforts to establish a social development unit in the Jal Nigam. This did not materialise and NGOs were involved as external consultants for undertaking community participation activities. This form of NGO involvement in water projects, where official technical agencies do the technical work and NGOs take up the process of organising communities for decision-making, local maintenance and management is common in donor-supported projects in India (Fernando et al., 1997, quoted by Van Wijk, 1998).

Community participation as defined in the Dutch bilateral programme involved:

- Setting up village water and sanitation committees, with specified levels of women's representation
- Identification of hand-pump sites by women
- Operation and repair of hand-pumps, mostly voluntarily, by women
- Running of income generation programmes for women in project areas.

Goals of community participation as defined, were achieved in the project however the efforts backfired by isolating social development perspectives from the main implementing agency. Communication between NGO staff and engineering field staff was constrained by organisational differences. A condescending attitude of the NGO resulted in Jal Nigam staff disowning issues related to social development. There were efforts to sensitise key project engineers to social development issues by facilitating their attendance at social development orientation and training sessions. However, as the root

causes of institutional problems were ignored, training of a few individuals had little or no effect on organisational change. The few engineers in Jal Nigam provided social development found that “the organisational system does not allow the practise of what was learnt as improved ways of working in the field” (Saraswat, 1999). Observations made elsewhere held true, ‘Training programmes conducted by outsiders can at best change the attitudes of a few individuals. A lasting impact can only be achieved if planning, organisation and management issues are addressed simultaneously’ (Ramachandran, 1998).

In response to the policy reforms structured in the eighth plan, the Rajiv Gandhi Mission evolved the National Human Resource Development (HRD) Programme in 1994 to change institutional practices and initiate community participation in the operation and maintenance of rural water supply and sanitation services. HRD cells were established in state water organisations to:

- enhance the capacities of local rural communities in taking over the operation and management of water delivery systems and
- strengthen the institutional network to facilitate this process by sensitising policy and decision-makers at state and local levels (Singh, 1998b; Pandey, 1998b).

However, this approach was seriously flawed and the programme has been acknowledged as ‘not successful’ in most states. Of the several factors that contributed to the programme’s failure, the primary was the staffing of HRD cells with engineers who were not provided formal training or capacity building in social development disciplines. Most found the task of ensuring ‘community participation’ burdensome and looked at this move as a ‘punishment posting’ (Singh, 1998b; Mishra, 1999).

There was little explicit in policy as to how community participation was to be planned and implemented. The need for ‘community management’ was identified in relation to operating and maintaining water delivery systems and there was no vision to involve the ‘community’ in the overall planning and implementation of water delivery systems.

NGOs were assigned this task by HRD cell staff, who had little prior experience of working with NGOs and the interaction was largely ineffective (Singh, 1999).

Moving away from the description of the few unsuccessful attempts at restructuring organisational responsibilities, the analysis below looks more closely at the culture of the implementing organisations.

### 7.5.3 Organisational Culture

Engineering and administrative organisations in India have been identified as predominantly masculine. The lack of gender parity, focus and expertise, seen in decision-making organisations, is also evident in implementation organisations.

The under-representation of women as engineers in these organisations is reinforced by several factors. Firstly, social inequities at community and household levels influence the fact that women do not have equal access to education, especially higher professional education (Joshi, unpublished). Secondly, as discussed in chapter 2, the civil engineering discipline is considered masculine and socially inappropriate for women. This explains the gender disparity in civil engineering. Finally, the dominance of male technical and administrative staff in both Jal Nigam and the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation does not encourage equal employment opportunities and inhibits the 'entry' of the few qualified women civil engineers.

Jal Nigam employs 4,742 permanent engineers, amongst whom there was only a single woman engineer during the time of research (UPJN, 1997). Discussions with her in 1998 revealed that she was able to continue work and reach this position through significant personal sacrifice. "I have only one child. I could not have afforded to have a larger family and keep working. Many times during my career, I had to work harder than most male colleagues to prove my worth as an engineer, as I was a woman. I could survive because of the enormous support given to me by my family." However, the perception of her male colleagues was symptomatic of the male attitude, "that she got away from the

difficult field postings because she was a woman and life was easier for her within the organisation.”

In 1997, the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation adopted the national government policy of 33 per cent reservation of employment opportunities for women. Consequently, in the past two years, seven women have been recruited to the organisation, making a total of eight women engineers among the organisational total of 591. However, as stated above, the masculine organisational culture and image make it constraining for women to work here.

In the central office of the RWSSO in Bhubaneswar, there are only two women engineers. The physical structure of the office is not designed to meet gender-specific needs. The biggest practical constraint identified by these two women is the lack of a separate toilet for them. As water supply within the office is intermittent and poor, the two women face considerable problems, especially during their menstrual periods. Culturally, the office exudes a masculine image and it is with considerable personal strength that these women have chosen to work here. The younger of the two, who is unmarried, commented that people think she is very ‘wayward’ when she mentions her place of work. It is by attempting to mask their feminine image that these women manage to make themselves less conspicuous.

More practically, the men have over time created a culture of coming late for work and leaving late in the evenings. This timing does not suit the women, in their social roles, either as a housewife or as a young woman living alone. Attempts to leave the office at the stipulated time of 5 p.m. are interpreted by their male colleagues as lacking the ability to function effectively. The male engineers even sympathise and say that ‘after all a woman’s place is at home’. Generally, women in the organisation are not given field postings, under the pretext that they are not ‘suitable’ for the demands of field duties. A request to be posted in the field by the young female junior engineer was viewed with informal disdain and she was identified as being too bold. This is the dominant ideological construct of the organisation. The internal architecture of the organisation

does not provide the space or opportunity for women to even articulate these concerns, leave alone finding solutions to the problems.

In such environments, women's mere representation rarely translates to gender equality and equity.

The dominantly masculine structure and culture of the water organisations is instrumental in severely constraining women's involvement in the community. Despite the policy goal to involve women, organisational constraints continue to disable the implementation of such aims. Often, the entire team of managers and implementers are male technicians, external to the community and in some cases culturally and linguistically alien. This further prohibits women in the local community from 'participating' in water projects implemented officially.

The hypothesis that organisations are products of the unequal social order and in turn perpetuate social inequality holds true in the analysis of organisations responsible for implementing rural drinking water programmes. This leads to the last point of analysis in this chapter, which reveals how institutional practices of implementing organisations, impact upon the needs of water users - both women and men in the user community.

## **7.6 Means and Ends – What is Used and What is Produced**

The goal of official water programmes has historically been to 'provide all rural habitations with a minimum basic requirement of safe drinking water'. Rural populations have historically been aggregated as a homogeneous, unserved group and the trend continues. This policy aim ignores social differentiation and inequality evident in rural communities as indicated in chapters 5 and 6. Social development clauses in policy guidelines do prioritise:

- provision of drinking water to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe groups and
- involvement of women in drinking water projects.

However, apart from an indication of quantitative increase in prioritised provision of drinking water supply to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe habitations, no mechanisms have been developed for the effective implementation and monitoring and evaluation of these social clauses. As discussed earlier, technical guidelines do not permit investigation of user preferences and there are no tools to assess the impact of services or to restructure past experiences in future planning.

Policy claims are made of having achieved 100 per cent coverage of safe drinking water to all rural habitations (Saxena, 2001). These claims are complemented by records of increased financial investment in rural drinking water supply programmes, from 0.15 per cent in the first plan to 2.47 per cent in the ninth, of the total planned national budget (World Bank, 1998). This is projected as the increased national commitment to meeting drinking water needs. Statistically having achieved 100 per cent coverage, the government has now legitimately moved to introducing economic reforms. Reform measures in the ninth plan promote demand-driven, decentralisation and privatisation approaches to rural drinking water management. Officially, it is claimed that these approaches will improve access to sustainable rural drinking water as well as empower the community and especially women (*ibid*). Despite the earlier references to social heterogeneity and inequality in village communities, current policy approaches are based on the assumption that the community is a unitary, altruistic social group.

An analysis of the outcomes of official drinking water programmes at the community level, reveals that policies and implementation strategies do not distinguish the distinct contexts of ownership and control and the complex interplay of social, economic, political and ecological factors that influence resource availability, management and use and thereby reinforce existing inequalities. The findings from the field are summarised below:

### 7.6.1 Inaccuracy of Statistical Claims

Results from the field are contradictory to the statistical claims of complete coverage of drinking water supplies to all rural populations. ‘Independent studies reveal that 40 per cent of villages face water shortage during the summer months’ (Saxena, 2001).

Contradictions in statistical findings were pointed out early in the 1980s, when independent evaluations of the water programmes were initiated. In a sample survey in Uttar Pradesh in 1987-88, findings showed that improved services did not imply improved access to water (Ghosh et al, 1995). Survey details showed that almost 66 per cent of women in ‘covered’ rural areas had to carry water from a source outside the home complex. Within this aggregate, 63 per cent of women fetched water from a distance of less than a kilometre (km), 22 per cent from a distance of one to six km and 5 per cent travelled more than six km to access water. (Statistical data relating to the unaccounted 10 per cent is not mentioned in the survey report).

Similarly, official statistics claimed that in 1997, 88 per cent of the rural areas in Orissa were provided with safe drinking water. An independent multi-disciplinary team survey in Orissa in 1997 revealed that only 69 per cent of the households reported collecting water from safe sources (hand-pump – 61 per cent, protected dug well – 5 per cent, piped water supply standposts – 3 per cent). Others got their water from unprotected dug wells, also known locally as chuans (22 per cent) or from ponds and streams (8 per cent). The rejection of safe water sources provided was found to be mostly due to excess salinity or iron in the water and also poor operation and maintenance of services.

Cases of poor operation and maintenance affecting use were seen during field research in Orissa. In one hamlet in Lomagarh village in Tikkabali block, of the 7 hand-pumps provided officially, 5 were not functioning at the time of research and the other 2 were not being used because of the high iron content in the water. Of the two iron removal plants installed, one was not functioning.

These observations reveal that statistical claims of improved coverage do not necessarily translate to improved use and/or improved access. Several factors contribute to the fact that systems provided do not ensure better access and use. A few of these are discussed below.

### 7.6.2 The Hindsight of Policy Goals

As discussed earlier, the focus of official water systems is on extending coverage and meeting quantitative targets rather than on sustainably meeting water needs.

Official records in 1997 claimed that 88 per cent of the rural habitations in Orissa were provided with safe drinking water. Policy also demands priority-provision of drinking water supply to tribal populations. In much of the western highlands of the state inhabited by the tribal populations, there are periods of near drought in the summer every year. In these 'water-scarce' belts, government norms have been revised from provision of one hand-pump for every 250 individuals to one hand-pump for every 150 individuals. The problem here is not lack of water delivery systems but of water availability. Extensive deforestation has greatly lowered the natural capacity for ground water retention and a change in cropping patterns has increased water demand. In the peak summer periods, most of the water sources including hand-pumps run dry. However the official response is to construct more hand-pumps (Sethi, 1999).

### 7.6.3 The Rhetoric of Community Participation

Despite the rhetoric of increased community participation, official systems are planned, managed and controlled by technicians, external to the village community. Users have little control over the process of implementation of official systems.

In many parts of Orissa, as well as in Uttar Pradesh, the contractors and the labourers implementing the official schemes were from neighbouring states and spoke an alien language. Communication links between service users and providers were poor. It was common to see delays of 2-3 months and in one incidence in Lomagarh village, up to 4 years in the provision of a platform around the hand-pump.

In both Uttar Pradesh and Orissa the contractors are accountable only to the official organisation and the community at large and there is no mechanism to ensure that women are able to identify the appropriate site for the water point. In identifying specific locations for siting hand-pumps, the best examples of community involvement are when departmental staff consult powerful men in the village, like the elected village head (Sahoo, 1999). At worst, which is the case commonly, the contractors sign a backdated contract document with the implementing agency. This is because contractors drill boreholes for the handpumps on the site most convenient to carry boring equipment. Thus the actual site of the hand-pump is mentioned on the contract document only after work has been executed in the field. Planning for water delivery services is often not in accordance to user needs and preferences.

#### **7.6.4 Institutionalisation of Inequity in Access to and Use of Water**

The official system provides little space and potential to the socially disadvantaged to challenge the unequal distribution and availability of water resources.

Rampur village is located in the terai belt, which borders India and Nepal. Tribal Tharus have lived in this region historically and practised shifting agriculture, until official land registration practices inhibited this practice. The more recent settlers in Rampur are the Punjabi farmers who migrated from Pakistan, following the India-Pakistan partition. The new migrants were provided large landholdings by the government from land that was originally farmed by the tribal Tharus. Officially this area has been declared as 'grey' or water-scarce and there is a legal restriction on drilling boreholes for water for use in agriculture. Despite the legislation, the large landholder farmers use ground water indiscriminately, all the year round, which is obtained by the use of motor powered deep bore-wells. These pumps provide water for cultivating the large sugarcane fields and also provide water for domestic use for the rich migrant families. In the Tharu hamlets, there are officially provided Mark II hand-pumps, which are however used sparingly, as it was identified that they were unreliable, poorly maintained and not located for convenient use. During the monsoon, the better-off Tharu families use water from individually

installed shallow water pumps. The water from this source is convenient to access but as the users identify, smells and tastes bad. There are significant chances that this water is contaminated with fertilizers used for sugarcane cultivation. Tharu families who are unable to invest in these pumps depended on the unreliable Mark II hand-pumps or on the benevolence of their neighbours. In the summer months, water in both individually and officially installed hand pumps dries up and the Tharu women must make long trips to the nearby river for meeting their domestic water needs. Scarcity in the summer also affects agricultural productivity and livestock wellbeing, the latter being an essential livelihood means of the Tharu households.

Jal Nigam officials claim that due to institutional fragmentation, they are unable to control the exploitation of ground water sources. This is the responsibility of other official departments and there is hardly any inter-institutional co-ordination. In this environment, the Jal Nigam was holding workshops in Lakhimpur district to identify the appropriate costs that water users (sic!) like the Tharus should pay for 'safe water supply' in accordance to the new policy reforms. Water users like the large farmers are excluded from water charges as they are not served by the official system. Here it is not water that one pays for, but rather the official systems that supposedly deliver water.

#### **7.6.5 Women's Exclusion from Planning and Decision-Making Processes**

As identified in the examples above, women are hardly consulted and little involved in official processes of water delivery. Policy statements of involving women are rarely translated into practice, as mechanisms and structures to enable such involvement are lacking. Traditionally, village committees have consisted of men, and particularly the more powerful amongst the men. As revealed in chapter 6, women and commonly the socially disadvantaged have historically been excluded from such platforms located within the public domain. The current approach in the rural drinking water policy guidelines does not identify any of the structural barriers to women's effective representation.

Agarwal argues that policy approaches calling for community participation stand a danger of severely negating women's participation. 'Given women's historic exclusion from public domains and the gender specific constraints to effective representation in formally instituted bodies, replacing traditional systems of prior use rights of common resources with formal membership systems and rights' may backlash on women's access to and control over water delivery systems and water resources.

#### **7.6.6 The Practical Impacts of Women's Exclusion from Planning and Decision-Making Processes**

As observed in chapter 6, traditional drinking water delivery systems did not realistically relieve the burden of women's gendered roles of accessing water for domestic water needs. The survey of official drinking water systems in Uttar Pradesh showed that women continued to travel distances up to six kilometres to access water sources in areas classified as 'covered by drinking water provision'. Women's exclusion from planning and designing processes at all institutional levels of the drinking water sector continues to constrain their ability to influence systems to meet their socially determined water roles.

Where access is not a problem, the design of the systems provided is not user friendly as identified in chapter 3:

A common complaint by women in Orissa and Uttar Pradesh was that the officially provided 'hand-pumps' are difficult to use, especially for old women, very small children and pregnant women. Hand-pumps are also difficult to operate to take baths, to wash utensils and clothes. Further, the design of these water delivery structures does not provide the privacy determined socially appropriate for women.

The explicit health focus of the sectoral approaches ignores the multiple and varying needs for water for other uses. Hand-pumps are identified as the appropriate technology to deliver safe water for drinking purposes. However, there are no other technologies identified for meeting other domestic water needs, for which women continue to remain responsible. The overworked amongst the village women often prefer to make one visit

to a water source, which could meet all water needs, even if such sources did not provide ‘safe’ water.

#### **7.6.7 The Social Impacts of the Transition from Traditional to Official Systems**

Despite the inequities, ‘the design of traditional systems of water delivery were built with locally available resources and were appropriate to local situations’ (Sengupta, 2000). The declaration of state responsibility for provision of water resulted in the loss of traditional skills in water management and technology (Agarwal and Narain, 1997). Men’s task of providing and managing water delivery systems was taken away by official agencies, who now paid men to work on official water delivery projects. Consequently, men’s capacities and voluntary interests in building water delivery systems have been systematically eroded. Increasingly, traditional water delivery systems are much less available and much less in use in rural villages now. This loss of capacity and ownership of local assets is deeply damaging to women whose socially allocated roles for meeting multiple, household water needs is not sufficiently addressed by officially-provided water delivery systems.

In Derinaju Sahi hamlet in Lomagarh village in Orissa, there are 2 officially provided hand-pumps for a population of 10 households. Of these, one was recently installed, still without a platform. However, the water from this source had high iron content and therefore would not be used. Water from the other hand-pump is palatable but dries up during the summer season. An old well in the hamlet provides both drinking water and water for other domestic uses, throughout the year. The open wells permits oxidation of the iron and this water is preferred for drinking and domestic use. However, dense vegetation growth has nearly covered the well, making access difficult. Unlike during earlier times the well is not cleaned or maintained by local men.

In another hamlet in the same village, people complained about inadequate water. Women said that in summer the hand-pumps do not deliver water and they have to travel 3-4 kilometres, several times each day, to a nearby river to fetch water for domestic use. The well in this hamlet is not used, even though water is perennially found here. Dung

and wastes from an animal shed flow into this well. The men in the hamlet are no longer interested in cleaning it, as their forefathers had done traditionally.

#### 7.6.8 The Homogenising of Women in Official Water Programmes

The use of the term ‘women’ in the policy documents is highly aggregated and masks the diversities that exist amongst women. Observing official forest management projects, Locke (1999) identified a clash of interests amongst different classes of women in the move to environmentally protect forests. Women privileged by economic class barred the collection of any form of forest produce. This severely impacted upon the needs of poorer women, whose livelihoods were linked to forest produce. New water policy guidelines could similarly lead to conflicts of interests between women who can and women who cannot afford to pay for water.

Locke’s observation of forest policies that, ‘at best, gender policy has been established as a local and depoliticised issue about an undifferentiated category called women and despite the conservative position, this understanding has been poorly operationalized’, holds true for the rural drinking water sector.

In Orissa, UNICEF funds for the Self-Employed Mechanics (SEMs) programme allows for the provision of a bicycle to women, as an incentive to attract women mechanics. However, the selection criteria specify that SEM applicants need to be literate and have prior technical skills. Both criteria actually discriminate against local women. Women in general have little knowledge of traditional and ‘modern’ technical skills. Extreme poverty in the face of unequal social relations determines that women disadvantaged by caste and class, are mostly illiterate. Only the more advantaged amongst the local women could benefit from this incentive. It was however ironical that the lone woman SEM in Tikkabali had yet to receive her ‘promised bicycle’ two years since she started working as a SEM (Tikkabali block SEMs, 1999).

In Rampur village in Lakhimpur district, in the Dutch bilateral programme, the Jal Nigam had trained and employed Tharu tribal women as hand-pump caretakers and mechanics. However, analysis in the field revealed that these tasks designated to women were located at the lowest level of the local hierarchy, were labour-intensive and poorly paid and therefore showed little potential of empowering these women to influence any strategic decisions.

To summarise the above discussions, impacts of the official drinking water projects in the field contradict the professed aim of 'improved access to safe drinking water for rural populations'. Increased provision of service has not resulted in increased or improved access. The emphasis on providing 'safe drinking water' means that the design and technology of officially provided systems do not respond to the multiple, domestic water needs. This is seen to be especially constraining for women, whose socially allocated roles of accessing water for domestic use, become increasingly difficult as traditional knowledge and systems in water delivery and management are systematically eroded. It is also seen that the declaration of water as a state resource does not inhibit those who are locally powerful and rich from controlling an unequal distribution and management of water resources. Official water policies and practices ignore and therefore perpetuate inequities in the distribution and access to water resources.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

The official rural drinking water sector consists of a large and complex network of institutions and actors. Various inter-related issues, which have been discussed in this chapter, affect how 'water is delivered'. The range of agencies and issues explain the numerous impediments to achieving India's policy aim – 'to provide all rural habitations with a minimum basic requirement of safe drinking water'.

The question leading from these findings is – 'how can issues related to gender equality be incorporated into water planning and management, taking into account the complicated interface between policies, organisations and the user community?' Equally,

‘why should issues related to gender inequality merit special consideration?’ There are no simple answers to the first question, but it is evident from past analyses that inequality in access to, use and management of water sources is determined by co-related factors of caste, class and gender. Gender is amongst the several factors that determine inequality in water allocation and use. It is evident from the findings that gender issues cannot be isolated from other factors contributing to inequality or disassociated from issues of importance in water planning and management. The greatest losers in water management interventions, which do not take into account the water needs and concerns of the user community, are the marginalized and vulnerable within the community, whose needs are not heard and addressed.

The striking anomaly in the official water sector is the lack of an effective communication strategy between the levels of policies, organisations and the user community. Rural drinking water policy guidelines specify that water delivery mechanisms must identify and address water needs of women and those vulnerable by caste and class divisions. Yet analysis in this chapter reveals that there is little guidance, incentive or institutional priority for project managers and implementers to put this policy aim into practice. Multiple competing uses of water, control of water use by the socially powerful in the village community and impacts of these on availability of drinking water to all are little understood and/or taken into account in planning and managing official water delivery. Therefore services provided have been largely inappropriate, unreliable and inadequate.

This chapter reveals that men who are privileged by caste and class, fill the organisational levels of policy and practice in the official drinking water sector. It is inevitable that socially conditioned attitudes are carried into organisations, perpetuating the barriers to taking into account issues of inequality in water delivery. The patronising attitude of project managers towards the less privileged is further encouraged by ambiguous policies and lack of clear operational strategies. This explains why issues of equal and equitable access to water remain peripheral in water planning and management. Likewise, this is the reason why the social guidelines in water policy, such as:

- the interpretation of gender issues in drinking water as ‘voluntary involvement of women at the user community level’
- inaccuracy in the statistical claims of improved coverage of water supply to Scheduled Caste habitations and
- the clause concerning priority coverage to the landless rural poor being completely ignored

are rhetorical rather than real.

How water is delivered, who benefits and who loses in the process, depends to a large extent on who decides what, how and why at the level of policy-making and in the organisations implementing those policies. This issue has not been realised in rural water sector programming, as in most other development programmes.

The way forward to address issues of inequality in water use and management is neither simple nor can it be brought about instantaneously. Concerted planning, adequate resources and above all political will for change are essential prerequisites to initiate and sustain the change process. The voices and concerns of the socially vulnerable must inform the writing of policies and the planning, implementation and evaluation of programme strategies. This requires changes in attitude and perspective in order to make space for the historically marginalised and excluded to influence water management decisions and strategies. Many of such changes would need to be supported by interventions beyond the water sector. For example, a more equal representation of women’s presence and voice within policy-making and practice organisations would require:

- increased awareness, will and the social and economic environment within and beyond families to educate equally the girl child
- changes in policy and practice towards positive discrimination for women in primary and higher technical education, keeping in mind other factors of inequality and
- changes in the work environments in water organisations, to accommodate women and their views and concerns.

These findings show the distinctions between water projects and the overall institutional context of water programming. Yet the impetus in supposedly gender-sensitive development has been restricted to making rhetorical changes to water policies and in involving assumed homogeneous categories of women and the community in water projects. As a starting point, the official water sector must acknowledge that the deep-rooted, multi-faceted inequality across the institutional levels of policies, organisations and users cannot be corrected by merely changing the wording of policies and by involving the user-community and women in projects.

Claims of success in addressing issues of gender equality which have been made for some alternative water management approaches are analysed in chapter 8.

## CHAPTER 8: THE SWAJAL PROJECT - A MULTILATERAL WATER PROJECT

### **8.1 Introduction**

Findings in chapter 7 reveal the numerous social and technical impediments in the official rural water sector's aim to deliver water for all. Recently, new approaches to water management have been incorporated in India's rural domestic water policy and these are being piloted in select districts. It is predicted that the new policy reforms of demand management, decentralisation, privatisation and appropriate pricing will deliver more effective, efficient and sustainable services than previous official interventions.

Such predictions are made on the basis of success claimed of water projects implementing such approaches. The SWAJAL<sup>1</sup> project, planned and supported by the World Bank and managed by the Department of Rural Development, piloted these new approaches to water management in the states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and the success of the project is widely acclaimed. 'In the SWAJAL Project, village communities control investments in water supply and sanitation infrastructure and the project has proved to be a frontrunner in the concept of community contracting' (Jalvaani, 1999). It is thus justified, that, 'sector reforms in India have been based on the highly successful SWAJAL project in Uttar Pradesh supported by the World Bank' (Tripathi, 2000).

This chapter analyses the claims of success of the SWAJAL Project. The necessity to validate these claims is based on past researched evidence, which shows that implementation of similar policy approaches in the forestry sector in India did not result in success. Rangan (1997) identifies that, 'blanket prescriptions for privatisation or transference of ownership to communities did not ensure better long-term sustainability or wise(r) management, and in many instances reinforced the marginalisation of poorer households'. Continuing research by gender analysts on the equity and poverty

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<sup>1</sup> In Sanskrit as well as in the local language 'Swa' means pure or self, 'jal' means water; therefore SWAJAL translates as 'pure water' or 'own water'.

effectiveness of privatisation and community management approaches in India in the forestry sector reveal similar findings (Agarwal, 1989, 1997; Locke, 1999; Sarin, 1999).

As discussed in chapters 2 and 4, assumptions are made of the functional outcomes of different institutions. There is an assumption of altruism in the functioning and outcomes of community level institutions, which according to the Social Relations Approach include both community organisations and local NGOs (Kabeer and Subrahmanian, 1996). It is believed that these institutions, both formal and informal, exercise and promote values of co-operative service and moral economy. Findings from chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate that community is not an altruistic, unitary institution, as it is assumed to be. Similarly, the assumption that NGOs are more receptive than state bureaucracies to the problems of the poor in general and especially to those of poor women has been challenged by research.

All development administrations are identified to have sharply gendered organisational structures and cultures, which is derived from, and in turn reinforce gender inequality in the communities, where they operate (Korten, 1987; Buvinic, 1989; Fowler, 1990; Goetz, 1992, 1997; Rao and Kelleher, 1995). Based on this understanding the Social Relations Approach argues that that in any given socio-political context, organisations are all products of the same social order. Therefore the functioning of markets and communities is similar to that of official institutions. Exchanging one institutional type for another will not provide appropriate solutions, if complexity or rootedness of inequality and inequity, in gender relations as well as in resource distribution are not identified and addressed.

Based on these discussions, this chapter analyses the SWAJAL project across the institutional levels of:

Rules – governing the institutional framework of the project

Power / People – who determine priorities and make the rules, how and why

Activities – what is done; interventions by way of the SWAJAL project

Means and ends – what is used and what is produced.

As mentioned in chapter 4 the outcomes of the SWAJAL Project in the community are researched in the same villages studied in chapters 5 and 6. The purpose of maintaining research continuity is to identify whether SWAJAL policies and implementation strategies address the unequal social relations and unequal distribution of water resources revealed in chapters 5 and 6. Similarly, analysis of SWAJAL project interventions will reveal whether the new approaches to water management enable better long-term sustainability, wise(r) management as well as empowerment of the community in comparison to traditional and official drinking water programmes observed in chapters 6 and 7.

Following the pattern in chapter 7, the World Bank's (or the Bank's) policy perspectives on rural drinking water management and gender are discussed first, in order better to understand SWAJAL project objectives. This analysis refers back to the discussion of global water policy interventions outlined in chapter 3.

## **8.2 The World Bank's Policy Perspectives in Water Management**

The World Bank is the largest multilateral development organisation, which lends money to developing nations from two main sources, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (Chamberlain, 1996).

The Bank's financial assistance for the SWAJAL Project is an IBRD loan made to the Government of India. IBRD loans are provided specifically to implement a set of development objectives, in this case, in water management. The IBRD's decision to lend is based on economic considerations. Loans must be repaid within 15-20 years and interest is payable. The need to stimulate economic growth in borrowing countries is a precondition and loans are therefore extended to countries where there is an internal environment of reform. The Bank's assistance programme with India for the Financial Years 1996-98, at the time when the SWAJAL project was approved, was focused on

sectoral and state-level reforms in order to establish a framework for efficient private investment in infrastructure and the restructuring of social programmes (*ibid*).

### **8.2.1 Water Resources Management – The World Bank Operational Policies**

Ideologically, the Bank identifies the establishment and development of efficient financing mechanisms as central to all development processes (World Bank, 1994a). Water supply and sanitation is a key lending sector in the Bank. As discussed in chapter 3, the Bank propagated the approach of ‘economising’ of water resources and water delivery systems. From the early 1990s the Bank’s water policy strategy was to assist borrower countries to:

- develop frameworks for designing water resources investments, policies and institutions
- facilitate adoption of pricing and incentive policies that achieve cost recovery, water conservation and better allocation of resources
- enhance decentralisation of water service delivery, to enable user involvement in planning and managing water projects, so as to encourage division of responsibilities between public and private entities and wider stakeholder involvement in policy formulation
- ensure priority provision of adequate water and sanitation for the poor and prevent overexploitation of aquatic ecosystems and ground water resources and
- establish strong legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure that social concerns are met, environmental resources protected and monopoly pricing prevented (World Bank, 1993b).

As discussed in chapter 3, these arguments significantly influenced the Dublin principle, ‘Water is and should be recognised and managed as an economic good’ (UNCED, 1992). This principle has been persistently advocated in global water policies.

The concept of demand management promoted by the Bank was intended to create a better understanding of people’s ability and willingness to pay for improvements in water

services. Prior to this, demand had been conventionally interpreted in water management from an engineering perspective of water need calculations. Cultural settings and social norms were identified in Bank studies as shaping behaviour, performance of sectoral approaches and therefore demand, however demand-management was narrowly defined as, 'the use of price and quantitative restrictions to determine and limit the demand for water' (Gijjt, 1993).

The World Bank (1993a) policy paper on water detailed the benefits for the drinking water sector in adopting the approaches of decentralisation, demand-management, privatisation and participation. The paper called for institutional reforms to transfer water delivery functions to the private sector and other institutional actors and identified a facilitatory role for government in water management (Panos, 1998).

Cleaver (1995) reports on the Bank's strategy of combining privatisation and demand-oriented approaches with community participation. People's involvement in site selection, service level selection and cost-sharing arrangements were identified as important in determining economic demand, thereby valuing participation in terms of its contribution to project efficiency.

Recent Bank documents record internal changes, 'In the past, sponsors and designers may not have always listened to all the people or consulted poor and disadvantaged members of society, but this is changing' (Chamberlain, 1996). The Bank identifies access to project information as one aspect of increased participation, acknowledging that, in most cases, affected communities are not consulted until after the Bank and borrowing governments have decided on key aspects of a project's specific design. However, the Bank identifies that participation depends on:

- public access to basic information on loan projects
  - willingness and ability of borrowing nations and the Bank to enable participation
  - the ability of affected communities to take advantage of participatory opportunities
  - the attitude and working culture of Bank staff involved specifically in projects
- and argues that not all these factors remain under its domain of control (*ibid*).

Although new policies for increasing participation continue to be formulated, lending strategies for water development have changed little. Recent Bank water management strategies are not vastly different from earlier policy perspectives:

- Demand-based approach to service delivery, where the eligibility criteria for investments include need and demand (willingness to pay) for services;
- Participatory process in service delivery, where beneficiaries play the lead role in decision-making (service levels, technology choice, planning, design, implementation, operation and maintenance), through facilitation by NGOs;
- Shift in government's role from direct service delivery to planning, policy formulation, evaluation and monitoring and partial financial support;
- Introduction of capital cost sharing;
- 100 per cent operation and maintenance financing by beneficiaries (World Bank, 1998a).

In the South Asian context, the Bank identified that water, especially for drinking, is perceived as a free good and this is a fundamental cause of misuse and mismanagement of water resources (World Bank, 1998b). Existing sector institutions were identified as centralised, bureaucratic and highly inefficient and blamed as the primary cause of poor operation and maintenance of water delivery systems and over-utilisation of depleting water resources. Demand-led approaches and decentralisation of services were offered as appropriate solutions to these problems (*ibid*). The Regional Water and Sanitation Group-South Asia (RWSG-SA), a regional office of the World Bank-UNDP located in India, aims to:

- Innovate institutional arrangements and financing mechanisms and
- Link participation to overall sector themes (World Bank, 1994b; Jalvaani, 1998).

### **The Demand Responsive Approach – The Bank’s Explanation**

The DRA takes into account that rich men, rich women, poor men and poor women may want different kinds of service. DRA provides information and allows user choices to guide key investment designs, thereby ensuring that services conform to what people want and are willing to pay for. In exchange for making contributions, in cash or kind for a satisfactory service, the stakeholders have a voice and choice in technology type, service level, service provider and management/financing arrangements (Dayal et.al., 2000).

The SWAJAL Project was an attempt to pilot and demonstrate the success of these policy approaches. Since the project’s inception in 1998, the India team of the RWSG-SA has strengthened collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Affairs and Employment through the Rajiv Gandhi Mission, with the objective of influencing policy. A successful outcome of this collaboration has been the signing of a three-year alliance with the Rajiv Gandhi Mission (Jalvaani, 1998). The new sector reforms in the ninth-five year plan are an outcome of this strategic alliance.

The Bank has historically advocated approaches for increasing the economic efficiency of investments in water infrastructure and successfully incorporated these in global and national policies. Participatory initiatives have been skilfully co-opted to complement privatisation and demand-management approaches to water management. The Bank’s conditional lending strategy to mainstream these approaches in borrower countries’ water policies has borne fruit in India’s rural drinking water sector policy reforms.

#### **8.2.2 Gender and World Bank Water Policies**

The Bank acknowledges its underachievement in meeting gender commitments. ‘Less than 25 per cent of overall Bank lending is spent on projects which include measures to strengthen the role of women’ (Wolfensohn, quoted by Chamberlain, 1996). A 1996

NGO report indicated that, of the 5,000 Bank projects in 1994, only 615 included gender components (Chamberlain, 1996).

As discussed in chapter 3, Bank water policies over recent decades have readily incorporated issues of women's involvement and/or participation. However, the approach to promoting women's participation is essentially tied to increasing project efficiency. 'Women *should* be encouraged to play influential roles in water management and hygiene education. A focus on the role of *women, amongst the poor and unserved* can enhance the sustainability of basic improvements in services' (UNDP, 1990). Bank-led studies highlight women's interests in paying for water, 'in Zimbabwe women are willing to pay 40 per cent more than men for an improved domestic water supply' (Briscoe and deFerranti, 1989). These arguments are used to emphasise the need to price water delivery services. There is no analysis on whether the complexity of gender inequalities and inequities determine a ready transition of willingness to pay into ability to pay. It is recognised that women's involvement and participation contradict the dominant efficiency approaches promoted by the Bank, 'gender issues sometimes conflict with the economic formulas and strategies of Bank policies' (Chamberlain, 1996). This conflation of interests result in the incoherence in policy perspectives, which as identified in chapter 3, continues to date.

Currently, in principle, the Bank subscribes to the Gender and Development approach, discussed in chapter 3. A gender approach in Bank terminology is interpreted as, 'ways in which relations between women and men are/can be influenced to advance efforts to boost growth and reduce poverty for all' (ibid). In implementing a gender and development approach, the Bank adheres in principle, to the four principles promoted in the Beijing Gender forum:

- Increasing participation of grassroots women in economic policy-making (for example in designing Country Assistance Strategies, Poverty Assessments etc.)
- Institutionalising a gender perspective in the Bank's policies and programmes

- Increasing Bank investments in women's health services, education, agriculture, land-ownership, employment and financial services and ensuring greater access to and control over these key resources by the poor, especially women and
- Increasing the number and racial diversity of women in senior management positions within the World Bank (Chamberlain, 1996).

In a significant shift from the past ignoring of gender issues, Bank policy statements on gender now emphasise the need for participatory processes that encourage women's involvement at all stages of the project cycle. However, analysis of SWAJAL project policies, reveal that gender in Bank water sector policies is fragmented to issues of women's involvement in the community and depoliticised to fit into the framework of efficiency goals. In a bid to demonstrate the linkages between gender, participation and demand, the Regional Water and Sanitation Group (South Asia) of the World Bank-UNDP conducted an evaluation of 16 water and sanitation projects in 14 countries. The study identified that 'the more demand-responsive the project (was), the better (was) the access to and use of the service' (Dayal et. al., 2000).

The Bank has taken some forward-looking steps in meeting gender commitments in its various projects. However, progress has largely been a result of external pressure and the focus is, at best, gender-specific. At its core the Bank is a financial organisation and its key interests are to promote sectoral reform to enhance and ensure successful banking procedures. In this policy context women's involvement has been designed to complement the dominant goal of economic productivity and this approach is identified as a gender and development approach. It is assumed that women's involvement will lead to project efficiency and women's empowerment. What is not explored, as analysis below will show, is the complexity of contradictions between these two policy aims.

With this conceptual understanding of Bank policies on water and gender, an analysis of the policies of the SWAJAL project follows.

## **8.3 Rules Governing the Institutional Framework of the Project**

### **8.3.1 Project History**

In 1988-89, the Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam submitted a proposal to the World Bank for funding support for a water project. Negotiations initiated in 1991, but further communication was stalled following major disagreements on the project design. The Bank determined that, as a precondition to funding, NGOs would implement the project. The Jal Nigam was opposed to this precondition (Jal Nigam staff, 1998).

In 1994, negotiations with the Bank for this project were re-initiated by the Department for Rural Development in the government of Uttar Pradesh. Following a Bank pre-appraisal mission in 1996, changes were made in the project design to incorporate the Bank's preconditions for a demand driven and decentralised approach. Project policies now emphasised community management of the project, facilitated by the involvement of NGOs and the private sector, under the overall management of the Rural Development department. The Bank approved a US \$59.6 million IBRD loan for extending rural water supply and sanitation to 1,000 villages spread across 19 administrative districts in the Uttarakhand hill region (now a separate state, Uttaranchal) and the Bundelkhand region. The loan became effective on August 28, 1996, for a project period extending from 1996 to 2002 (World Bank, 1996b).

### **8.3.2 SWAJAL Policy Goals**

The Bank's priorities in promoting economic goals of water policies have been discussed above and in chapter 3. Chapters 5 and 6 reveal the basic survival and security priorities of the poor, particularly women, who stand at the crossroads of various forms of inequality: by gender, class and caste. Discussions in chapters 2 and 4 reveal a 'conflation between equitable development and economic growth' (Kabeer, 1994). This is also confirmed by the Bank - 'goals of participation often contradict the broader goals of economic growth' (Chamberlain, 1996). Based on this understanding, SWAJAL project

policies, which link efficiency and empowerment goals, are analysed here in order to identify the assumptions made in the drawing of these links. A summary of project goals and the priorities determining these goals is detailed below in Table 8.1.

**Table 8.1: SWAJAL Project Goals and Priorities (World Bank, 1996a).**

<b>Project Objectives</b>	<b>Priorities determining goals</b>
1. To raise living standards in rural areas	‘A safe and reliable source of domestic water supply linked to improved environmental sanitation, a necessary precondition for improving health standards and economic productivity of poor women and men in Indian villages’.
2. To empower women	‘The project focuses on providing the means for...women to take the lead in decision-making...and in collective sharing of benefits’.
3. To sustain rural water supply and sanitation services through the implementation of a demand-responsive approach	Cost recovery and community participation. Financial sustainability to be achieved by cost recovery. Technical sustainability period of the project-implemented services specified at twenty years.
4. To strengthen the institution of panchayats (elected local-self government) through decentralisation approaches	‘Communities, especially women, take the lead role in decision making, they choose the appropriate technology for water and sanitation’.
5. To test an alternative to the current supply driven service mechanism	Communities and project villages to be selected on the basis of community willingness and ability to pay for improved services. Communities pay for, manage, implement and operate the services.

It is professed that policy approaches of decentralisation and demand-management will promote efficiency and empowerment, especially of women (World Bank, 1996b). Analysis below reveals the numerous assumptions made in the putting together of these strategies.

### **1. The Project Approach of Decentralisation**

Project policies indicate that:

- communities will take the lead role in decision-making and
- communities will choose the appropriate technology for water and sanitation.

The project assumes that households and individuals across the community have an equal voice and choice in making demands. It is also perceived that there is a similarity of water needs and interests across households and therefore the 'village community' will choose 'one' appropriate technology for delivering water. These assumptions contradict findings in chapters 5 and 6, which reveal social, political and economic heterogeneity amongst households and individuals in rural hill communities. In the rural hill communities analysed in chapters 5 and 6, different households and individuals in the community do not have an equal voice and choice.

NGOs are given responsible for facilitating community participation. This decision is made on the basis of the assumption that NGOs are receptive to the problems of the community and women in particular (World Bank, 1996a). Little heed is taken of past observations that NGOs, like all other development organisations have gendered structures and cultures, which is derived from and reinforces gender inequality amongst the communities where they operate (Korten, 1987; Buvinic, 1989; Fowler, 1990; Goetz, 1992, 1997; Rao and Kelleher, 1995).

## **2. The Project Approach of Demand Management**

In sharp contrast to the homogeneous image of the community constructed in relation to the decentralisation approach, economic heterogeneity is acknowledged amongst households in relation to the demand-responsive approach. The jumble of assumptions in the project guidelines reveals incompatibility between project goals of efficiency and empowerment.

The demand-responsive approach reveals a bias against equity. Project guidelines specify that the project will deliver services only those villages willing and able to pay for improved services. Project guidelines also specify that the delivery of services will be determined by user households ability to pay more or less user fees (World Bank, 2001). Smaller concessions are made within 'selected villages' for addressing the needs of the poor. In the delivery of sanitation services, project guidelines provide a graded subsidy for construction of household latrines by different households.

Project policies assume that by making contributions in cash or kind, ‘user households’ will have a voice and choice in decision-making and in making management/financing arrangements. It is not specified who amongst user households or within households will be empowered.

In relation to women’s involvement, project guidelines identify women in the community as a homogeneous category. It is assumed that women (presumably all women) will be involved in making decisions and will equitably gain from other project benefits.

SWAJAL policy goals do not appear to contribute realistically to the empowerment of the socio-economically disadvantaged. Firstly, the project aims to empower only those communities – and therefore women from those communities – willing and able to pay for improved services. Secondly, communities, households and women are aggregated as homogeneous in the policy guidelines. The project does not recognise researched evidences of heterogeneity of decision-making abilities between and within households. The project goal of empowerment is compartmentalised for a supposedly homogeneous mass of women in the community and not pursued further across other institutional levels.

The above findings show that the goals of empowerment have been structured to match the goals of project efficiency. It is clearly evident that the basic survival and security priorities of the poor did not determine project policies and guidelines. This leads to the next issue of discussion.

#### **8.4 Who Determines Project Priorities, How and Why?**

Analysis below shows the top-down imposition of Bank policies and priorities across the institutional levels of the SWAJAL Project. Despite the rhetoric of participation and empowerment, there is little space and scope for effective involvement and participation of key stakeholders in project planning and decision-making. Although empowerment is

emphasised in policy goals, there is decentralisation of roles and responsibilities, not of decision-making authority to project stakeholders.

Research findings reveal that project policies and implementation strategies reinforce power divides between decision-making and implementation organisations. On these grounds, there appears to be little difference in organisational inter-relations between the official water projects, analysed in chapter 7, and those observed in the SWAJAL project.

#### **8.4.1 The Imposition of Project Priorities**

The history of the SWAJAL project discussed in 8.3.1 reveals the Bank's priority in promoting decentralisation and demand-management approaches to water management. Senior managerial staff at Jal Nigam identify the SWAJAL project as the second deliberate attempt by the Bank to impose decentralisation and privatisation policies on the state government of Uttar Pradesh. As discussed in chapter 7, Bank guidelines had effected the change in the status of the Jal Nigam from a government department to a semi-autonomous corporation in 1970. As there had been no complementary efforts to enable the organisation to function autonomously, this change had been of little positive value to the organisation. The Jal Nigam's resistance to involving NGOs is as explained in chapter 7 a result of conflicting relations with the NGO involved in the Dutch bilateral programme. Towards the end of the programme, the Dutch donors discovered misappropriation of project funds by the NGO, who were undertaking community development activities. The task was subsequently handed over to the Jal Nigam. Therefore Jal Nigam staff believed that they could undertake community development activities, if adequately supported. Yet there was little opportunity to communicate these experiences to the Bank.

It was not possible to document the level of discussions between the Bank and the UPJN. The common understanding internally in Jal Nigam was that "What actually happened was that a few officials in the Rural Development Department went ahead to comply with all Bank policy impositions. In fact, the key official negotiator of the project now works

in the World Bank. Within our organisational structure, there is no mechanism to discuss and debate policy processes and impositions of policies like these. Our decision-making hierarchy is not drawn from within our own organisation. There was a play of power politics, which we as line managers could neither access nor influence" (Jal Nigam staff, 1998). Consequently in the SWAJAL project, the Jal Nigam was traded for alternative actors. The change was justified on the grounds that the Jal Nigam was 'overstaffed, had high overhead costs, was plagued by corruption, politicisation and practised an inflexible technology' and that communities, NGOs and the private sector would ensure better, wiser and more efficient management of water delivery projects (Saxena, 1998). This illustrates the unilateral imposition of policy guidelines and the subsequent exchanging of one institutional type and structure for another.

#### **8.4.2 A New Institutional Structure**

New policies resulted in the establishment of a new institutional structure for project management and implementation. A Project Management Unit (PMU) was established within the Rural Development Department, which functioned as the key co-ordinating, facilitating and monitoring body at the state government level. District Project Management Units (DPMUs) were established in each administrative district where the project was being implemented, as field extensions of the PMU. NGOs were contracted by the PMU as Support Organisations (SOs) to facilitate community participation through the Village Water and Sanitation Committees (VWSCs). Similarly, private consultants were contracted by the PMU as Service Agencies (SAs) to supervise and guide the technical work undertaken by the community through NGO facilitation. The PMU also contracted technical and community development training consultants (World Bank, 2001).

This structure ignored not only Jal Nigam, but also other existing institutional structures of the Rural Development Department at district and block administrative levels. The establishment and strengthening of the new institutional structure was a resource-intensive exercise; however, it was justified under the claimed need to, 'pilot demand-

driven investments in the State with a view to inform appropriate future strategies' (World Bank 1996a). The ignoring of existing implementing agencies greatly minimised opportunities for information sharing and capacity building and also limited the objective of appropriately and realistically informing future sector strategies. It appears unclear how compartmentalising the project within an isolated, temporary institutional structure would contribute to predicting and promoting long-term sector sustainability.

#### 8.4.3 Rigidly Planned and Top-down Structured Project Strategy

Key project stakeholders were contracted as service-deliverers and had little choice in determining project implementation strategies, which had been structured top-down. Table 8.2 illustrates the rigidity in the structure and content of planning and implementation strategies in the project cycle. The table also reveals that tools or means of evaluation were not participatory.

**Table 8.2: The SWAJAL Project Cycle (World Bank, 1996a).**

Project Cycle	Activities	Means of Evaluation and Project Targets
Preplanning Phase 7 months	<p>Selection of Support Organisations (SO) and Service Agencies (SA) by the PMU</p> <p>Selection of villages on the basis of technical feasibility and ability and willingness to pay by SO staff and approval by DPMU and PMU staff</p>	<p>Reports submitted by SOs, Monitoring by independent technical consultants</p>
Planning Phase 9-12 months	<p>Community development training for SO staff by training consultants</p> <p>Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC) formation facilitated by the SO</p> <p>Capacity building of VWSC by SO staff</p> <p>Non formal education and hygiene and sanitation awareness programmes for women by SO staff</p> <p>Upfront cash for capital investment in the project collected from the village community and deposited in Bank (VWSC and SO staff are joint</p>	<p>Monitoring visits, proposals and progress reports submitted by SOs</p> <p>30 % women's representation, 20 % SC/ST representation in VWSCs</p> <p>80 % VWSC cash contribution deposits in Bank</p>

	account holders)	
	9 Community Action Plans prepared by the VWSC, facilitated by SO staff. Plans approved by PMU	
Implementation Phase 12 months	Water, sanitation plans implemented by VWSC through SO facilitation, assessed by SA and PMU  Women development initiatives plans implemented by VWSC through SO facilitation, assessed by PMU	1,000 Scheme completion reports SO progress reports and PMU post-implementation visits
Post Implementation	Hand over of the village water supply scheme to the VWSC	

Project documents specify that each project phase is time-bound. Completion of activities in each phase is binding for release of project funds for the next phase. This strategy is applied universally for all project villages ignoring the fact that different socio-economic constraints in different villages may result in different opportunities for community participation. This blueprint strategy also ignores the fact that different NGOs (Support Organisations) may have varying capacities to facilitate community organisation activities.

#### **8.4.4 An Imposition of Agency Roles and Responsibilities**

##### **1. Support Organisations and Service Agencies**

Work responsibilities and salary structures for all field staff of Support Organisations and Service Agencies were rigidly specified in the project strategy for the different phases of the project cycle (World Bank, 1996a). Several NGOs found this imposition constraining. In small local NGOs, there is a culture of sharing work by staff. Dividing staff rigidly between projects was an alien concept and resulted in isolation and polarisation between projects and staff. Salaries specified in the SWAJAL project did not draw parallel with local salary structures and agency resources. This caused tensions between staff working in different projects and raised expectations, which in many cases, could not be fulfilled or sustained.

Work demands on the implementation agencies were intensified by a bureaucratic demand for copious volumes of written records. Some Support Organisation staff, especially those experienced in community organisation and mobilisation processes, said:

“We identified a shift in our priorities as an outcome of this imposed bureaucracy. We were no longer accountable to the community, but to the agencies, who demanded information and released funds. Often information had to be fabricated, as activities planned did not take into account the geographical isolation of villages, difficult hill terrain and the intensive work demands experienced seasonally by women and men in the communities. When we tried to raise these constraints, the response from the

management was ‘do as told or bear the consequences’. We realised that we were not working as community development agencies, but as contractors. There are many NGOs who are willing to oblige, therefore raising problems encountered was looked upon as a form of unreasonable challenge and not tolerated well” (Support Organisation staff, 1998).

Findings also reveal a distinct gender bias in the project design strategies. Despite the enormous detail in the drafting of Terms of References for Support Organisation and Service Agency staff, project guidelines did not consider gender-awareness as a necessary skill for project implementation staff. Project guidelines specified a formal degree or diploma in civil engineering as a prerequisite for recruitment of senior or junior engineers. However, no formal degree or work experience in social development was demanded in the selection of community development staff. The assumption made here was that anyone, especially women, can *do gender* and community development. These findings reveal a perpetuation of the assumption that NGOs, and especially women staff in NGOs have an inherent understanding of gender issues. Gender was a low priority in the training curriculum of the SWAJAL project. Gender training was planned as a one-day, one-off activity for project staff. Higher salaries specified for engineers in comparison to community development staff reinforced the low value and importance attached to community development activities. Finally, the domains of engineering or technical work and social development activities were isolated. Terms of Reference for project engineers did not mention the need for gender-focus in the planning, implementation and monitoring of technical interventions. Similarly, tasks determined for the social development staff did not require inputs to engineering design and planning.

## **2. Community Involvement**

Project policies define that the Village Water and Sanitation Committee, at the bottom end of the institutional structure, takes the lead role in decision-making (World Bank, 1996a and b; World Bank, 2001). However, rigours of bureaucracy do not enable decentralisation of decision-making authority. The norms and strategies for identifying

potential VWSC members and nominating them formally, as well as the roles and responsibilities for VWSC members are structured top-down in the project guidelines. The research and analysis of project outcomes in the community, discussed in section 8.6 of this chapter, reveals more explicitly the outcomes of the imposition of 'participation' strategies.

The terms empowerment and participation are liberally mentioned in project policies. However, SWAJAL project policies and project strategies illustrate, as discussed in chapters 2 and 4, a misinterpretation of these terms. Participation, which ideally means enabling of sharing of power, is interpreted as involvement in externally conceived projects, via contributions and benefits (Wallace, 2000). Empowerment expresses the interests of those long distanced from power and authority to challenge and define the agenda for development on the basis of their own priorities and interests (Kabeer, 1994). Empowerment here means no more than a substitute word for integration in processes whose main parameters have already been set by a minority at the top (*ibid*).

### **8.5 Activities: What is Done and How at the Project Implementation Level**

Project policies assume that the new institutional actors will deliver more effective, efficient and sustainable services than official organisations. It is this assumption that is researched here.

Findings in this section reiterate earlier observations of an unequal power balance between management and implementation organisations. The analysis of the different organisations involved in the SWAJAL project shows that organisational structures and cultures are sharply gendered at different institutional levels, and therefore exchanging one institutional type for another does not simplistically lead to wiser management of the water delivery systems and empowerment of the community.

Organisations involved in the SWAJAL project can be broadly classified into two groups, Project Management and Project Implementation. Table 8.2 in section 8.4.2 illustrates the

different functions of the SWAJAL organisations during the project cycle. In this section, the functioning of these organisations is assessed, both internally and in relation to the specific project goals.

### **8.5.1 Project Management**

#### **1. Project Management Unit and District Project Management Units (PMU / DPMU)**

As outlined in 8.4.2, the Project Management Unit (PMU) and the District Project Management Units (DPMUs) are essentially responsible for overall project management, co-ordination and monitoring.

The PMU and DPMUs are staffed with officials deputed from various other official organisations (not all responsible for water and sanitation services) as well as staff appointed on a contractual basis. As discussed in 8.4.2, this is a new institutional structure. This structure is also temporary. The government of Uttar Pradesh is not under any obligation to continue to maintain the PMU/DPMU offices after the completion of the SWAJAL project.

The PMU and DPMUs have similar staffing structures and patterns. The Project Manager (PMU) and the Deputy Project Managers (DPMUs) head engineering and community development staff and are supported by administrative teams. The staffing pattern demonstrates the traditional gender divide of roles and responsibilities and a devaluation of community development knowledge and skills. Structures and cultures in these organisations are as sharply gendered as those in official organisations. In both the Project Management and Deputy Project Management offices there are status – and, therefore, privilege – hierarchies between officially deputed staff and temporarily contracted staff. The status and privilege divide was especially detrimental for women who constituted the majority of the contracted community development staff, as project policies did not recognise the need to address gender issues in these organisations.

The Women Development specialist at the PMU said, “For some of us women working here as contracted staff, there are problems. Often work continues late into the night, well beyond office hours. It is not safe to travel alone at night, especially in certain areas of the city. Our status as contracted staff does not entitle us formal access to office vehicles. Personally, I do not have problems because I can use my husband’s vehicle, but not all women have access to such luxuries. The Health and Hygiene specialist has a small child at home, but she is often working late and is always dependent on someone to drop her home. I have tried to raise this issue and other issues like these at meetings, but the response of male colleagues, especially those in more powerful positions is, ‘How can women claim to be equal to men if they still demand special benefits?’ I wonder if there is any legitimacy in my or their arguments.” On being told that this was a legitimate gender issue often encountered at the organisational levels and not unique to this office, she was surprised that gender training had never raised such awareness. She was equally perplexed when told that different women in NGOs that she monitors face similar and perhaps even more constraining problems. She remarked that the monthly monitoring format for NGOs does not include an assessment of what happens within organisations. All that is asked is how a (presumably homogeneous) group of women in the community are involved in project activities.

Working conditions in the DPMUs are similar. A Women Development specialist who had worked in one of these offices said, “There are no formal or even informal mechanisms to address staff needs and rights. The work culture and conditions depend very much on the sensitivity of the Deputy Project Manager. In my case, the conditions were as bureaucratic as in government offices. Contracted staff, like me had little authority and therefore little bargaining power. The Deputy Project Manager would ring a bell to summon me, even though we were working in a small office, where voices could be heard and there were telephone interconnections. He took all the decisions both within and beyond the office.” In the entire SWAJAL Project, there have been no women Project or Deputy Project Managers.

The lack of gender-focus and sensitivity within the management organisations is reflected in the outcomes of their functions. All engineers in both the Project and District Project Management organisations are men, and community development staff are predominantly women. Here also, it is assumed that women inherently possess social development and gender skills. One example illustrates the dangerous outcomes of this assumption:

The Women and Development Specialist of a DPMU is a young woman who has recently completed her doctorate on theoretical aspects of nutrition, from a local university. She had neither theoretical nor practical experience in gender issues or even community development processes. It was assumed that a one-day training on gender will equip staff like her with the skills to enable and assess NGO community development activities, especially those related to the empowerment of women. The myth of this assumption was revealed in her perception of participation and empowerment.

In one SWAJAL village, talking of women's development interventions, the DPMU Women Development Specialist said that some women are not as enthusiastic to participate, as others. This was pointed out in relation to women in the last cluster of houses in the village, furthest away from the road-head. She said, "It is no use going there, those women did not participate in any project activities. I told the NGO to persuade them, but they just do not come. But other women here have participated and gained." The training centres operated by the NGOs were all located at the road-head. Walking down to these houses revealed that these were Dalit households and their outlying situation was an outcome of social ostracism. The women here said the road-head was too far away for them to access the training and also these Dalit women knew that it was not socially acceptable for them to sit closely with 'upper caste' women in the small rooms used for training purposes.

The ineffectiveness of the one-day gender training for project management staff was reflected in misinterpretations of gender, participation and empowerment. A Deputy Project Manager, a male engineer, on being asked what gender goals the project had achieved, said, 'Very early on in the project, when we went to the villages, the women would stare at us through holes in the doors or through windows. Women in the villages

were usually dirty and smelt of cow-dung and were too embarrassed to talk face to face. Now when we go to these same villages, the women come for meetings dressed in clean clothes. They undertake most of the project activities and show more interest and enthusiasm than the men. Their enthusiasm extends to their showing the greatest hospitality to project staff, feeding us curd and milk. This is how I feel that women have been empowered in this project.”

It was obvious that women in the community had identified the real decision-makers of the project who controlled everything from approving project villages to releasing payments, to gracing special occasions in the project cycle, with their presence. The women, in their bid to get water, were anxious to please these powerful agents.

The findings show that cultures of bureaucracy, unequal power structures and masculinity observed in official organisations are equally evident in SWAJAL project management organisations. Findings also show how socially conditioned attitudes affect the functioning of staff and therefore impact the delivery of project goals. However, a planned strategy for changing work cultures and individual attitudes was neither identified nor addressed.

### **8.5.2 Project Implementation**

Several organisations are involved in the implementation of the SWAJAL Project (refer to Table 8.2). The Community Development Consultants train implementation organisations in community development activities. Support Organisations function as community development facilitators and Service Agencies are involved in the technical supervision of the work planned and implemented in the community. Finally, the VWSC representing the user community implement the project.

#### **1. Community Development Consultants**

The SWAJAL PMU contracted the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) as the Community Development consultants. The CDS is an autonomous, self-financing

organisation in the official Uttar Pradesh Academy of Administration. This is the apex training institute of the state government primarily providing service training to state executive civil servants.

The Community Mobilisation, Gender and Local Self-Government Unit was established as a training cell within the CDS specifically to plan, manage and provide community development training to organisations involved in the SWAJAL project. Administratively, the unit, which is one amongst several other similar cells, is managed by the CDS governing body, which is headed by the official leadership of the Academy. Academy staff are officially appointed and protected by official organisational and staff rules, which are common to all state organisations. There are no corresponding benefits to staff temporarily appointed on a contractual basis by the CDS to work in its different cells. Specification of the terms of employment and allocations of leave are the only formally documented terms and conditions of their employment.

At the time of research, a project co-ordinator, two project managers and two training assistants comprised the Community Mobilisation, Gender and Local Self-Government Unit. Staff were identified as specialists in accordance with SWAJAL project demands, irrespective of the fact that their skills and experiences did not realistically match those required for the SWAJAL project.

Sensitivity to gender issues was not a concern, either within the organisation or in relation to work interventions. The only woman in the organisation, a computer programmer by profession, was assigned clerical functions. Unskilled and inexperienced, with low status as a member of support staff, she was excluded from all decisions related to the design and implementation of training programmes. The rigid and bureaucratic administration of the CDS inhibited participatory planning processes, and decisions made by key members of the Centre could not be challenged.

The researcher sat through a meeting of the staff with the Vice-Chairman of the Centre, who is also the Additional Director of the Academy. The purpose of the meeting was to finalise the Terms of Reference for a new contract for a Capacity Building Consultancy

with the SWAJAL PMU. The project coordinator, who had prepared the ToR was leaving the organisation and had chosen not to attend the meeting. The two training assistants were not involved in the meeting. The Vice-Chairman dominated the session and dictated his views on the ToR to the two project managers who sat in subdued silence and were unable to question any decision. Amongst other dictates, the move to incorporate a more specific and sustained gender training module in the ToR was turned down by the Vice Chairman, who decided that it was not required.

There are no formal regulations specifying working hours for staff. For the Community Mobilisation, Gender and Local Self-Government Unit, work demands are high especially as staff strength and skills are inadequate. The three programme staff had conducted and managed forty-four training programmes for the SWAJAL project in just four months. Consequently, project staff work on most holidays. On most working days, and especially during workshop sessions, work goes on till very late in the evening. There is no remuneration for overtime work and no practice of providing safe transport for staff working late. The lone female staff member is involved in helping in training programmes, even though it is categorically said that she is not *involved* in training programmes. She mentioned how going back home late was socially unacceptable, especially as she was unmarried, and how this caused enormous social problems. Yet there was no mechanism to express concerns. Constrained in many ways, it was only the social prestige of being attached to the elite Academy and the local realities of unemployment that pushed the staff to continue working here.

The fact that gender issues were ignored within the organisation was reflected in the outcome that poor priority was attached to gender issues in the training programmes. Staff mentioned that a one-day session had been set aside for gender-awareness in the 10-day ‘Community Action Plan’ training session conducted for PMU, DPMU and Support Organisation staff at the beginning of each project cycle. This included a brief introduction to gender and the construction of a ‘Problem Tree’ in relation to women and water and sanitation. The project co-ordinator identified this as one reason why gender meant different things to different people in the project. He had plans to extend the

gender training and employ skilled external consultants. But, as seen above, the Vice-Chairman of the Centre did not think this essential and his decision could not be challenged.

Some of the more experienced Support Organisations, as well as contracted community development staff in the PMU and DPMUs, informally pointed out the inadequacies of the training consultants. But formally they did not have the authority to comment on this, given the strategic and powerful alliance of the PMU and the CDS managerial staff.

The findings reveal that changing names and organisational status, as in the case of the CDS, matters little if inequalities in power hierarchies remain unaddressed. The training consultants themselves exhibit little understanding and application of participation and empowerment internally within their own organisation, yet altruistic project assumption is made that the CDS would teach participation and empowerment to other SWAJAL organisations.

## **2. Support Organisations/NGOs**

Project policies claim that NGOs will enable community participation and empowerment, especially of women. Findings below reveal wide differences in inherent interests, structures and capacities of NGOs. Despite a common goal of community development, different NGOs unconsciously perpetuate an unequal social order, both internally and in their outputs as a result of their conception from and their operation within an unequal social order.

### **a. The Centre for Development Studies - Support Organisation**

The CDS also established a Support Organisation in October 1997 with the purpose of participating in the SWAJAL Project. Staff were drawn from existing training units and also recruited externally and housed in a new structure, identified as the CDS SO. The SWAJAL PMU approved this structure, despite the fact that it did not meet the project determined criteria that SOs need to have past experience and expertise in rural water supply and sanitation or community development activities. Having no former identity or

organisational ideology, the CDS SO, in turn, rigidly adhered to the specified project guidelines.

The SO team, like the training unit, was accountable to the Vice-Chairperson of the Centre, who assigned work responsibilities and evaluated staff performance and work outputs in the community. The Vice-Chairperson held complete authority and control over the new team of young and inexperienced recruits. Staff members could be appointed or dismissed at his discretion and the divide in power was evident in the structure and culture of operations and in the relations of the staff with the Vice-Chairperson. To quote one example, the SO staff work in distantly located villages, yet are not assured appropriate transport facilities. All requests for transport arrangements have to be approved centrally and there is no guarantee that the *favour* will be granted.

Despite the assurance that a vehicle would be provided the researcher and the CDS SO team, were stranded at a remote road head for 8 hours, waiting for the official transport, which did not arrive. It was later learnt that the Vice-Chairperson had decided not to send the vehicle, as he was agitated on a completely different account.

The CDS SO community development staff members are young women and men with no prior experience and skills in community development activities. Like all SO staff, they had been trained by the CDS Community Mobilisation, Gender and Local Self-Government Unit and understood gender as involving women in issues identified in the project guidelines.

Staff members identified that there was success in meeting project gender targets in some terai villages, located close to urban towns. Under the Women's Development Initiative programme, women had participated in sewing training classes and some had even opened shops as a result of the skills gained. The SO staff who rigidly followed these guidelines, failed to understand why women in the hills were so reluctant to follow suit. They felt that women in the hill villages were simply not interested and, despite pleading and even coercion, there was blatant non-cooperation. Their own training had not revealed to them the varying realities of women's lives in different socio-political and economic contexts. They failed to see that, in the remote mountain villages, sewing

machines were rare and markets far and few. More practically, social roles forced mountain women, especially the less affluent, to procure water, wood and fodder in difficult terrain. In contrast, in the terai regions, women mostly stayed at home, given the social constraints on women's mobility and therefore there was time and opportunity to learn and sew.

The CDS SO staff are unable to change the environment in which they work. Like many others, including the project designers, they are unaware that equitable and fair working conditions are essential components of the development process. Despite the constraints in work conditions, the young and friendly staff members, who were locals, established good ties with the community and religiously attempted to involve the community in project planning and implementation. It was another matter that they were not equipped to analyse the differences within a village community. Consequently, the forms of involvement they encouraged perpetuated the social divisions within the community.

The SWAJAL project had created a market for NGOs in the hills. During the researcher's stay in the CDS, there were many young people, mostly men, who came to ask CDS staff on how to form an NGO and secure involvement in the SWAJAL project. The aims and objectives for involvement by these young unemployed youth were to secure livelihood opportunities. Many such newly formed NGOs were involved in the later phases of the project. Staff from a local NGO, with experience in community development processes, said, "Such NGOs are actually promoted. They do not question any imposition of policy and attitudes. They do as they are told and will meet all targets on paper."

#### **b. Himalayan Study Circle – another SO**

In significant contrast to the CDS SO, the Himalayan Study Circle (HSC) is an organisation born out of a social activist movement. In the late 1970s, some young people, all distantly related, came together to protest publicly against wrongs they identified as committed against the hill community. Their targets were the improper functioning of government services, bureaucracy and corruption in local government practices, as well as alcoholism amongst the hill men and related issues of women's

oppression and struggles. Failing to sustain freelance activism, they developed an organisation, the HSC, in October 1986. Currently the formerly young protestors constitute the functional members of the Executive Body.

The HSC now works with several international NGOs on education and women's development programmes. Widely known in the area, it was the first NGO identified by the PMU for participation in the SWAJAL project. For the last phase of the project, the HSC has also been given additional responsibilities for undertaking community development training. In the words of the Director, a positive transition has been made in HSC's agenda from activism to service provision. Some founder members, however, see the change as detrimental, "Earlier we were accountable to the people, now increasingly we are accountable to the donors."

The organisation understands that women form the backbone of the hill economy and are responsible for the entire workload of managing homes and fields. They argue that development interventions should be centred on women and aim to meet both their practical and strategic needs. Government interventions are identified as not being centred on people and, especially incapable of meeting women's needs. However, while the organisation works primarily with women, the battle is restricted to women's struggle with the official bureaucracy and against alcoholism amongst men. More sensitive issues of social inequality and inequity at community level are rarely challenged. Like many NGOs, the HSC believes in what Mukhopadhyay (1995) identifies as the 'sanctity of culture' and looks upon the more sensitive issues of gender equality as a 'brand of western feminism, which will not work here' (Pandey, 1998a). Examples of this value system are identified in the analysis of project interventions in the community, presented in section 8.6.

The organisation's commitment to community empowerment is widely respected, but its vision is narrow and masked by inherent organisational values. The founder members, who are the senior management staff are all upper caste Hindus, the highest placed in the social order of castes. Amongst over 100 employed staff, there are only two Dalits, who

work as field staff and whose position is low in the organisational hierarchy. The organisational commitment to community empowerment is, therefore, not reflective of a commitment to overcome caste-based inequities within the socially stratified and hierarchical hill communities.

Although the organisation has a long history of working with women, the gender co-ordinator admitted, “There has been no gender training at the organisational level, neither is there any specific training budget within the organisation. I, myself feel the need to be trained in what gender actually means and how we can address it in our work. We have worked with women for so long in the community and yet I see so little has actually changed in their lives. In many ways they have changed, women who were so docile and silent can now question authorities in the local administration. Yet this does not reflect a change in their own lives.”

The need for this change is not reflected in the organisation as a whole. In fact there is a definite patriarchal resistance to promoting gender equity internally. The response of a male founder member to issues of increased women’s involvement in senior management positions was, “We would like to gender balance our team, but we will not do this just to please donor demands of gender balance. Staff working in the organisation at senior levels are those who have gone through the process of struggle and intense community interaction. This understanding cannot be achieved merely through professional degree or sex. There are now many more women staff at the field level, and perhaps the next generation of staff will be more gender balanced.”

HSC is the regional representative of the National Commission for Women. The external image of the organisation is one of promoting action on women’s problems. However, there is no gender-specific policy within the organisation. Like many other NGOs, HSC attempts only to identify and address problems faced by women in the communities in which they work. The organisation idealises the ‘voluntarism’ of community development and the brunt of this is borne by the field and administrative staff who work relentlessly for very basic salaries. Working conditions are difficult and turnover is high

especially amongst women staff. Most of the women staff are unmarried and some have chosen to remain single. The young human resource development assistant said, “I have worked here for nearly 3 years now, and literally every day. I will certainly not be able to continue with this when I marry.” As field staff work hard to meet project and programme demands and glorify the name of the organisation, their vulnerabilities remain unidentified and unaddressed. There are no personnel rules, formal or informal, to guarantee fair employment terms. There is little consideration of gender-sensitive employee needs. These locally powerful advocates of equity and empowerment are seen to ignore these issues in their own backyard.

Hira lives in the same mountain villages where she works. Her disillusion with the organisation, which she adopted as her second home, is painfully stark. “I worked twenty long years for this NGO, travelling all day on foot across difficult mountain terrains. More than that I defied the abuse heaped on my morality, when I left home to work outside. But what do I have to show for it now? It has been a few months since I became completely ignored and forced to stop working because I did not concede to the director’s wife’s demands. I had imagined that I could be strong and resistant, which was what I encouraged women in the village to be. I did not realise there was a difference between what we can say and what we can do. I am poorly educated, unable to speak and write English, and have realised in these past few months that my years of experience are of no value in the market. I am the only employed member of my family but am now back to where I started, except that the rebuke is so much more painful to bear as all doors appear to be closed to me”.

There is a distinction made between attempts to improve participation in relation to project and programme implementation and participation in the internal culture of the organisation. There have been distinct and positive efforts in providing space for field workers to innovate and influence the process of planning and implementation. Teamwork is evident and this participatory method is identified as one of the reasons why there is a close link between policy and practice in the organisation. “In the SWAJAL project, we are able to critically appraise the project process in relation to field reality and therefore suggest changes in working norms. We identified that non-formal education and

women's income generation programmes are not to be planned as isolated end-products of the project but as approaches to a more holistic community development" (Director, HSC). However, while staff members can be vocal about project policies and their drawbacks, they lack a forum to evaluate the organisation and its internal working practices.

### **3. Service Agencies – SA, Consulting Engineering Services, CES**

The Terms of Reference for the SAs specify that they are accountable only to the PMU and DPMUs and this is determined solely on how effectively they are able to:

- Supervise and expedite the completion of technical work in the time determined
- Ensure that the quality and content of the work closely matches the specifications in the project guidelines.

The SAs approve technical plans prepared and implemented by the community. As identified above, technical verification is prerequisite to release of project funds by the PMU. The Consulting Engineering Service team, like all other SA teams, comprises a Project Manager and senior and junior engineers. The senior engineer functions as the team leader and is responsible for supervising the work of junior engineers as well as reporting to PMU and DPMU staff. Each junior engineer is responsible for technical supervision and evaluation of the work in four to seven project villages. Project guidelines demand that field teams report once a week to the DPMUs in a format specified in the guidelines.

The SA teams attend technical training conducted by the technical training consultants, the Roorkee Technical University. They are not expected to attend community development training sessions. Their perception of gender was, "Gender is a very relevant component of this project. Women are involved in this project; in fact most of the women have contributed voluntarily to technical aspects of the project. However, we are not directly concerned with gender aspects. Our work is technical supervision and quality control."

When told that SO staff felt that SA engineers are not willing to understand the problems of the community, especially in relation to the technical design of the project, they answered, “We are in a very difficult position. We are accountable to the PMU and DPMU. Our responsibility is to determine that the work is completed in time and meets the quality standards demanded in the guidelines. We have been given specific guidelines for each technical component of the project. The SOs do not like us monitoring their work. In fact so many times they have set the VWSC against us and this makes it difficult for us to work in the villages.”

The SOs are, however, equally clear about the situation, “If the project says we are single window assistants to the community and the project has facilitated engineers to work in our team, why is there policing of technical issues across several layers? Technically, what do these other engineers know, which engineers in our teams do not? The SA engineers do not understand community problems. So often, they have asked us to dismantle what was constructed and rebuild again, as they said technical specifications were not adhered to. How are we to explain to the community that there is nothing in the project guidelines about compensating for the cost and labour of their contributions in these cases?”

There appears to be little difference in the internal functioning of different organisations, despite their varied external images. Project guidelines mention the need to monitor NGO interventions in relation to proposed community development activities. There is no similar requirement to analyse what goes on within organisations internally and how this impacts upon project goals. This is because projects aim to bring about empowerment and participation in target communities only and assume that organisations like the private sector and NGOs are governed by formal stated procedures and operate in an equitable, sterile and gender-neutral manner. It is thus surprising that organisations like the Jal Nigam are singled out as bureaucratic and corrupted. There appears to be little logic in assuming that exchanging one organisational type for another will result in more sustainable and better management of water interventions, without unpacking the assumptions held about these organisations.

## 8.6 Means and Ends: What is Used and What is Produced

This section analyses the outcomes of project interventions at the community level. The monitoring and impact indicators used by project managers to measure project success are detailed in Table 8.3 in the next page.

The evaluation tools do not measure project outcomes in a participatory manner. Also, as the table reveals, the concept and content of empowerment is diluted in the transition of policy to practice. Empowerment is an important project goal; however, the term does not figure in the list of project monitoring indicators. Project outcomes as perceived and experienced locally by women and men in the project villages are researched and analysed here, in comparison to the indicators listed below in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3: Project Monitoring Indicators (World Bank, 1996a).

Objectives	Inputs	Indicators and Project Targets	Means of evaluation
sustainable health benefits	Community organisation  Hygiene and environmental sanitation awareness	80 % functioning VWSCs  20 % SC/ST VWSC members  1/3 women VWSC members  Healthy home surveys undertaken by community in 90 % of schemes  Reduction in incidence of diseases	Monitoring visits, project proposals, SO progress reports and special studies  Same as above

Construction of water supply schemes	1,000 schemes in 1,000 villages	Scheme completion reports
	80-90 % of schemes operational 3 years after construction	Post project visits
	VWSC account with full balance	Monitoring visits, project proposals, SO progress reports
Construction of latrine	Village maintenance worker trained 50 % of households with latrines	

In order to capture the impact of the project on the community, it is helpful to analyse the different phases of the project cycle sequentially.

### 8.6.2 Pre-planning Phase

#### 1. The Selection of Project Villages

Project criteria for selection of villages specify:

- A felt need for improved services within the community, assessed by willingness and ability to pay 10 per cent of the proposed project costs and 100 per cent of all operation and maintenance costs.
- Presence of an undisputed perennial source(s) in the village with water flow not less than 7 litres per minute. This would provide a minimum yield of forty litres per capita per day for the entire village population, with figures planned to take into account population projections for the next 20 years.
- Villages where half the population drink water from polluted sources.

SO staff members identify that villages with no or poor water sources and where poverty is prevalent could not be selected on the basis of these guidelines. SO engineering staff

community development staff to assess willingness to pay. At this early stage, project designs were not known and potential costs of the projects could not be predicted. Yet community members were asked if they would pay certain percentages of capital and operation and maintenance costs. After initial survey of selected villages by NGO field staff, independent technical consultants reassessed technical feasibility. There were no similar mechanisms to reassess felt need or ability to pay. An NGO field staff member involved in the process said, “This project is not about providing water to the most needy villages and the rural poor. It is about *proving right* the demand-responsive approach.”

## **2. The Arbitrary Selection of Project Villages**

The project guidelines determined that problem villages facing acute water scarcity were ignored. There was no initiative to co-ordinate selection of project villages with official implementing organisations. The hostility of official organisations to SWAJAL project interventions is captured in the statement of an official organisation staff member, “The purpose of this project was to deliver services to least covered villages, as identified in the original proposal structured by the Jal Nigam. However, NGOs went ahead selecting villages in a random manner and there was no information to us on which villages were selected. Where there were official systems running and in good shape, we were suddenly and rudely informed that these were now SWAJAL villages. Some villagers dug up pipelines and standposts and deposited them in our offices. I do not know if this is what decentralisation or capacity building actually means, but it was certainly not the best use of scarce resources. Paradoxically, many of these villages have now realised that they cannot operate and maintain the SWAJAL schemes on their own, and have come back to our offices to plead with us to take over operation and maintenance responsibilities” (Ram Babu, 1998).

### **8.6.3 Planning Phase: Community Development Activities - the Rhetoric of Empowerment**

#### **1. Hygiene and Environmental Sanitation Awareness**

A week-long Hygiene and Sanitation Awareness training for women is one of the first project interventions in the community. Trained by the CDS consultants, the SO staff communicate a set of fourteen messages on personal, domestic and environmental sanitation to women. The messages were developed by consultants in New Delhi and standardised across the project villages. There are several failings of this strategy, structured to contribute to both improved health and empowerment of women.

Firstly, the messages do not relate to field reality. In Hilay village, the researcher sat through a session where the staff conducted hygiene education training for women and children. It was the period just after the harvesting of the wheat crop and the stubble in the field attracted thousands of flies. There were flies all over the field, over people and especially over babies, whose faces were wet and sticky with food and milk. Against this background, the community development specialist was using project-designed flash cards and explaining to women that flies carry germs and cause diseases. The women said that they go through such fly cycles annually and asked what could be done, because this was a reality of their lives. Another card showed two street-vendors selling sweets, one having covered his wares and the other having exposed his sweets to flies. Children were told not to buy sweets that were not covered. But in these remote mountain villages there were no streets and no street vendors, as shown in the cards! The SO staff identified a whole lot of cards which did not relate to the local realities in the hills but said they had been told to speak on these issues and understood that they would be monitored for this work.

Secondly, the fact that women are targeted reinforces the broader message that women are, and therefore must remain responsible for the health of children and family. This perpetuates inequality in gender roles and responsibilities. In many villages in order to meet the project target of healthy home surveys, inspections are planned and women whose houses are clean, are acknowledged publicly. This is a defeating experience for many poor women, whose homes are shared by cattle and usually in tatters. They have no resources to clean their houses in the way identified in the survey formats. Home cleanliness is a gendered virtue associated with good women. This exercise resulted in

these poor women feeling socially and morally accused because of constraints beyond their control.

Finally, as identified above, not all women attend the training programme. It is stated in project notes that training will be conducted in different hamlets of the village. However, in most villages, SO staff struggle to meet work demands and often a single training session is conducted in one hamlet of the village, which is supplemented by delivery of messages in other informal sessions. DPMU staff evaluating the programme are often not aware of possible ‘tarmac’ and social biases.

## **2. Village Water and Sanitation Committee**

In keeping with the rigidity of the project design, criteria for selection of the VWSC are specified in the project guidelines:

- Geographic representation of members from different areas of the village
- 30 per cent representation of women and 20 per cent representation of Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe groups
- Committee headed by a President
- Committee treasurer to be literate and, as far as possible, a woman.

Similarly, roles and responsibilities for VWSC members are specified as:

- Collection and management of community cash and labour contributions
- Approval of proposed technical design
- Resolution of community conflicts in relation to the project
- Procurement, management and use of construction materials (World Bank, 1996a).

### **a. The Rhetoric of Democratic Selection of the VWSC**

Project guidelines specify that the selection of Committee members is a democratic process. SO community development staff members are to spend three to four months interacting with people in different geographic clusters of the village, enabling them to democratically identify cluster representatives for the Committee. The cluster

representatives are then formally nominated to the VWSC on a special day. The Social Development consultants had documented the formal selection ceremonies of the Committees in different project villages on video. One such video was the selection of the Committee in Hilay village, where the CDS SO worked. Hilay village, spreading over twenty-two square kilometres, was one of the largest project villages. Despite their best efforts, community development staff had not been able to effectively communicate about the VWSC in the stipulated project time. Field research revealed that interaction had been mainly limited to the central hamlets of the village. But project deadlines for selection had to be met:

The day chosen for the formal selection of the VWSC was a local festival when visiting friends and family was a ritualistic norm for the villagers and not everyone was present. As the community nominated their representatives, DPMU members present at the meeting pointed out that the strength of the VWSC did not meet the recommended 30 per cent reservation for women. Randomly, women's names were suggested by SO staff and seconded by local men. No local woman spoke a word during this process.

As the meeting proceeded, in obvious ignorance of project aims, an old man got up and said, "Sir, please give us a road, this is what we need most." This village has no road connection to the main road head, which lies about seven kilometres from the extreme end of the village. He was told by the senior project managers, "This is not a road project." SO staff clarified project aims and objectives at the meeting. On hearing of education activities for women, the old man got up again and said, "What about education for men?" The CDS Vice-Chairperson, who was present at the meeting said, "Education is for women and children, not for men."

#### **b. The Rhetoric of a Geographically and Socially Representative Committee**

As will be illustrated in Map 8.1, at the end of this section, the selection of Committee members in Mala village violated the project norms of geographically and socially representative selection. However PMU staff did not evaluate these facts.

The lone Dalit household, headed by a single woman was excluded from the Committee, despite the obvious norms for her mandatory inclusion. There are interesting and varied opinions on why this family was excluded. Some women members of Mala VWSC said, “The house is not within the village boundary”. The president of the Committee, a man, disputed this and said, “It is in the village, but she is a single woman and she does not want to/cannot attend meetings”. SO staff at the senior managerial level said they were unaware of this fact. Field staff admitted more candidly, “To insist on the Dalit woman’s representation would have antagonised the dominant higher caste community in the village. This would hamper completing the project in time, which was our major responsibility. And we did manage to achieve this task. This was the first SWAJAL village where the project was completed and the World Bank Vice-President came to inaugurate the scheme.” The reality from the perspective of the Dalit woman was:

As discussed in chapter 6, Bina Devi’s household is the only Dalit family in Mala village. Bina Devi did not attend any project meetings, she said she was not called and therefore was unaware of what was happening and when. The upper caste women in the main hamlet say, “We called her but she did not come.” In the local reality, Bina Devi’s touch and mere presence is considered polluting. The upper caste villagers, who abide by the social norms of purity and pollution, will not invite her for closely packed sessions. It is another matter that this village, heralded as the success story of the project, **excluded** Bina Devi’s household from the improved water supply scheme and the subsidised sanitation specially determined for Dalits. Various theories of connivance are quoted locally to explain why the family could not be **included**.

Where Dalit members are nominated to the Committee, participation is seen to be, at best rhetorical.

In Hilay village, Hari Ram, a Dalit man nominated to the Committee said, “I was selected because Dalit representation was demanded. But my selection does not mean that I can challenge or influence anything done by the larger Community. I only add Dalit colour to the Committee. Today, as you see, was a VWSC meeting. It was planned in conjunction with a ceremony in the house of the village teacher, who is ‘upper caste’. I cannot attend

the meeting in his house, as this is not socially acceptable. When we Dalits cannot sit and smoke the hookah together with the higher caste men, how can we plan together?"

There are no project indicators to measure the effectiveness of Dalit representation in the VWSCs, leave only to assess gender in Dalit representation.

### **c. The rhetoric of women's empowerment through representation in the Committee**

Not all women who are nominated participate effectively. Agarwal (1997) identifies that, membership apart, to participate in decision-making, women need to attend and be heard in public meetings. However, few women are able to attend meetings and those who do are rarely able to speak out.

Eight months after her nomination as a member, Bheema Devi of Hilay village was clueless about Committee roles and responsibilities. Her social position as a young daughter-in-law, and her pregnancy during the time of her nomination did not permit her to attend meetings – let alone express her decisions.

Sheela Devi of the same village was an appropriate choice as the Committee treasurer as she was literate. However, being literate did not change her social situation. Her husband has migrated to the city and she struggles to manage her fields, animals and five children. She is unable to collect community contributions, deposit the money in the nearby town bank, keep records, make purchases for construction work and pay the labourers every week. Project guidelines define the work of the treasurer as voluntary. The nominated village community worker, who is remunerated for this position, does this work under the direction of the Committee President, both males. On paper, Sheela Devi is still the treasurer.

The all-women's committee in Himtal village is heralded as a gender success story. However, a closer look reveals other sides to the story. Firstly, the participation does not entail a heterogeneous representation of the women. Dalit women in the village are explicitly excluded from the Committee. Secondly, the representation has not been empowering to members. "We participated because the men refused to do all this voluntary work for no gains. It has been an enormous struggle to complete the project and

to meet our various work demands at home and in the field. We are unable to change anything in the project design. We do not get any monetary compensation, not even to meet travel costs to the Bank, NGO and PMU offices. We think this is the price we poor women must pay for getting water.” The zeal shown by the women on the committee did not bring about any change in the dominant local patriarchal social order.

Durga Devi, the woman President of the Committee, belonged to the Kshatriya caste, while the village was dominantly Brahman. Even as she diligently managed the water project, her family was socially ostracized for several months when her son eloped with a married Brahman woman of the same village. No one came to her assistance, not even the NGO staff who had promoted her to this position. Her women colleagues in the Committee expressed sympathy but could not reverse the decision called by the elected village head, a powerful Brahman male. The village leadership also entangled her family in many legal complications and she was subject to all forms of social and political harassment ranging from police raids on her house to being called to the local courts. Many of these allegations have now subsided, but she still cries when she talks about her experiences. She says, “This project has broken me and my family.”

Women who are able to participate effectively do not always reflect the voices of the more disadvantaged women.

In Mala village, Maya Devi was said to have been an active and functioning treasurer. Maya Devi’s husband is a pensioner from the Army, working again in a private firm. She also works as the non-formal teacher in the crèche run by the NGO and is paid for this work. Her four children are big and help in both house and field. She is enthusiastic, strong and few men in the village can challenge her. However, despite the fact that she honestly and diligently worked to make this the first village to complete the project, she was also one of the most vocal in declaring that Bina Devi, the lone scheduled caste woman, should not have access to any project benefits.

The formation of the VWSC was not designed to explore the unequal power relations of gender, caste and class operational in the community.

### **3. The rhetoric of decentralisation**

In order to formalise the VWSC, and link it to the existing local units of administration, a Government Order was passed under the state Panchayat Raj Act (World Bank, 1996a). It was declared that the Committee would function as a subcommittee of the existing elected village leadership, or the Gram Panchayat. The project aim of institutional strengthening of local government did not happen in most instances. In several instances, there was extreme polarization between the VWSC and the elected village leadership.

SO staff had identified Mala as a project village. However, correctly, Mala is one small hamlet of the official village, known as Nandi Gram Sabha or Nandi Panchayat. During project planning and implementation, the elected village body had not been consulted. This move was supported by NGO and DPMU staff. In time, relations between the two bodies became strained and there was complete and severe mutual opposition. This was especially because the project budget that the Mala VWSC was handling was much higher than the annual budget of the Nandi Gram Panchayat. Now, with the project over, Mala residents complain that the Gram Panchayat excludes them from all benefits. Residents are told, “You are the all powerful SWAJAL Committee. Why do you need anything from this small budget? Go back to your NGOs and PMU and DPMU and ask them to meet your needs.”

### **4. Preparation of Community Action Plans**

#### **a. The divide between technical and community development domains**

In the planning phase, SO staff are responsible for facilitating the formulation of nine community action plans for implementation in the next phase. The technical and community development domains are prepared separately and there is little link between these plans. Male engineers interact with the men and are assisted especially by a village community worker, in preparing technical plans for water delivery. The community worker was seen to be a man in all the project villages, even in the all-women's VWSC in Himtal village. This person then goes on to become the Community Technician, and as always technology remains within the masculine domain.

Similarly, community development plans are prepared by SO community development staff. No male member of the community is involved in the development of these plans.

### **b. Technical plans – the rhetoric of demand-management**

Project guidelines specify that the community decides an appropriate technology. SO staff reveal that technology is determined top-down and there is little realistic opportunity to choose an appropriate option.

“Essentially there is no choice for the community. Project technical guidelines are specified to minute details and there is strict monitoring on the implementation of regulations. In the mountain villages, the community is asked to choose between a gravity flow system and, where possible, an electrically motored system that would draw water from a river, located mostly at the foothills of the village. Since the latter is more expensive, everyone opts for the former. There is no choice then on how the gravity flow system is to be designed and built or what materials are to be used for construction. From tapping the source to the design of the tap-stand, everything is specified in project documents. Similarly, for sanitation, it is specified that the latrines are to be twin pits, with a brick and concrete superstructure, and the toilet door is to be 6 feet. In the hill villages, the community objected to this specification as this increased costs, which were to be borne by them. We argued with the technical consultants and the DPMU staff that in this region, where doors of households do not measure more than 4 feet, what is the logic for the height of the bathroom door to be 6 feet? However, in the first round of projects, payments were withheld and we were told not to innovate but follow what was specified. It was only with constant arguing that in the later phases we were allowed to follow what was more appropriate to the community needs” (SO field staff, 1998).

### **5. Cost-recovery for water and sanitation services, not equitable**

According to the project guidelines, all households in the community, regardless of socio-economic differences, are to contribute equally to the ten per cent capital cost of the project. In the hills, this cost is spread as 1 per cent cash and 9 per cent labour contribution. Project guidelines then specify that households can opt for a private

connection by paying increased costs over and above the basic contribution. Inequities in this approach are diverse. Firstly, both rich and poor households pay the same amount to access improved water services. Secondly, richer households have access to more water and better services by paying more cash. This results in the richer families having better access to water as there are no restrictions on water use. Some households with individual tap-stands in their courtyards are able to use the water to irrigate their kitchen gardens perennially. This facility is denied to the poorer households, who share water from a common tap-stand.

Both rich and poor households are required to provide equal days of labour contribution in the implementation of the project. The equity of this logic is also questionable. In many instances, richer households hire others to work for them, as often status defines what is appropriate activity for 'upper class' families. In contrast, there are many poor households who cannot afford to volunteer labour for the stipulated number of days. In some villages, there is an understanding of this inability and the very poor are exempted from contributing voluntary labour. This concession is not, however, oblivious of the social obligations accounted to these families for having been exempted from what was demanded. These families will pay for the benevolence in other ways.

There is a better poverty focus in the delivery of sanitation services. However, project guidelines do not exhibit the flexibility to accommodate poor households who do not fit into project-determined categories of the poor. There is a graded subsidy scheme for delivery of sanitation services and Dalits and the economically weaker households pay less than the economically better off households for investing in private latrines. However, this gradation still effectively subsidizes the richer households, who are often the first to complete the construction of latrines. In contrast, the very poor households with constrained livelihood opportunities are not able to invest time and money in building latrines, despite the higher subsidy available to them. Poorer households with physically disabled adults are also not able to invest time or hire services for building a latrine. Project designs, structured top-down, did not allow the analysis of variations in vulnerability in the community.

Finally, SO staff identify that it is not the community but the SO which actually prepares the plans. “It is not possible to expect a community to be mobilized and organized to prepare nine different action plans in twelve months. This is especially so, because people in these rural communities, especially women, have intensive work burdens in the field and at home. The project cycle does not recognize agricultural seasons and work demands. We work in several villages and there is the constant pressure to deliver monthly reports, to accommodate visitors to the project and to meet technical specifications. At best, we inform those who were able and willing to listen and ask the Committee members to sign the documents on behalf of the community.”

#### **8.6.4 Implementation Phase**

##### **1. Construction of Technical Systems – a Masculine Responsibility**

In the implementation phase, men are primarily involved in the construction and technical supervision of the water delivery system. In Himtal village, with the all-women’s Committee, the community technician responsible for technical supervision was a man. Women commented that they were responsible for buying tools and assisting men in non-skilled labour, but they rarely held technical responsibilities.

##### **2. Long-term Sustainability**

Some examples begin to point to the fallacy of the assumed long-term technical sustainability of the project. The cost of delivering water is high and the design is not appropriate to the fragile ecosystem of the mountain villages. During the implementation period, many heavy tanks made of metal and cement were washed away by heavy rains and landslides. During project implementation and one year after that, the systems are insured against damage. After the project is handed over to the village community there is no project responsibility. Many village communities identify that they will not be able to meet the costs of major repairs and reconstruction. The thought of possible damage and the costs involved is frightening to the villagers, who regret agreeing to meet all

operation and maintenance costs. In the event of major problems, they admit that they will go back to using official systems of water delivery.

### **3. Women's Development Interventions**

In this phase of intense technical activity, income generation activities are planned for women according to the project design. However, contrary to project assumptions not all women participate and not all women gain from the process.

#### **'We sewed and saw our differences, but we can do little to change this'**

An analysis of the sewing training in Mala village as an income generation programme revealed that the programme had been of productive use only to the richer women in the community who also had sewing machines to practise the new skills. Six months later, most women, obviously the poorer, without sewing machines, who had attended the training, had forgotten what they had learnt. The bitterness that these women felt in realising their inequalities with other women was clearly evident. They said that the Dalit woman, Bina Devi was better off in not being able to attend the training.

In the remote rural mountains, there are no thriving markets and no demand for products made by women through these programmes. Also, given the social reality of their exclusion from public domains, women cannot gain an equal foothold in established forms of local and wider businesses (Mehta, 1998). They remain pitifully dependent on NGO benevolence, which is seen to vary. Any income generated does not lead to economic productivity and therefore empowerment.

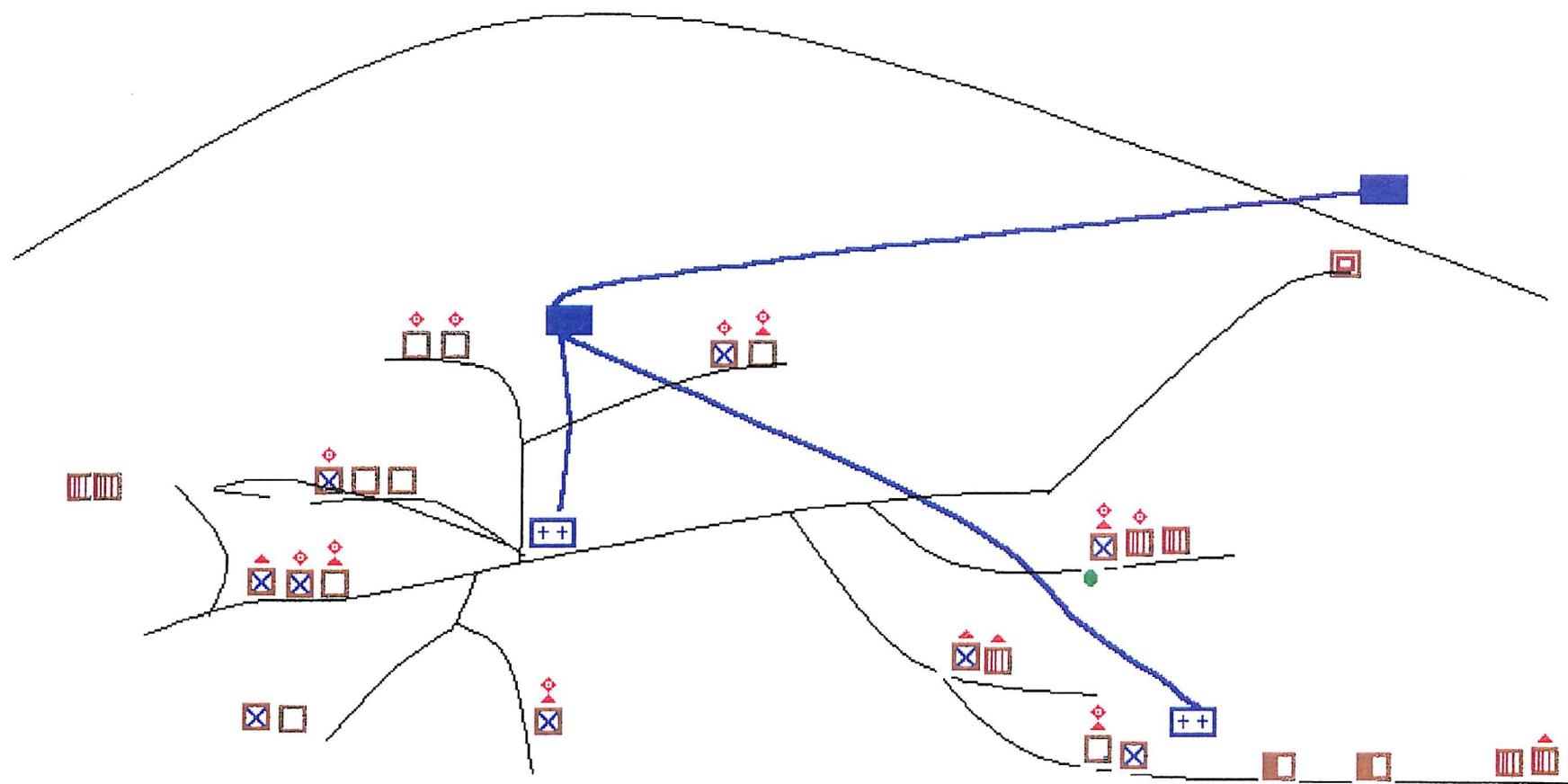
#### **What labour, what income**

In another SWAJAL village, women have been trained to weave woollen dhurries through NGO mediation. These women are provided raw wool, which they make into threads and then weave. For each dhurri they make, which takes them about a month, they are given Rs 15 (US\$0.3) by the NGO. The NGO then sends these dhurries to a neighbouring city for fine finishing and sells them in another city. The women are unaware of either the production cost or margin of profit.

VWSC and specifically women's participation are planned to address the dual project goals of decentralisation and demand management. However, from the stating of project objectives to the measuring of project impacts, women's empowerment is literally rubbed out of project notes. Empowerment here is very much a substitute word for involvement.

Increased involvement of some people at the community level does not translate to empowerment. The quick-fix methods of involving the community perpetuate existing inequalities, as there is little time to provide the socially disadvantaged space and support necessary to change decisions to their benefit. Women are identified as a homogeneous category and forms of women's involvement are separated and isolated from the broader context of the unequal social relations, in which women live and relate to one another and to the men. Involvement under these conditions does not empower women.

These facts are illustrated in Map 8.1 in the next page.



- X VWSC members
- Comm. technician
- ▲ non-formal education
- ◊ Income-generation programme
- unemployed/low agricultural returns
- Scheduled Caste/Dalit

**Map 8.1 The Impacts of Social Inequality and Disparity in the Spread of SWAJAL Project Benefits in Mala village.**

## **8.7 Conclusion**

The SWAJAL project is an ambitious attempt to implement currently popular approaches to water management, viz.:

1. User communities and households can and will pay for improved water services, if they are provided the opportunity to choose services they desire.
2. Involvement of the local community in project planning, implementation and management leads to sustainable services and therefore sustained health and economic productivity.
3. Involvement of NGOs and the private sector results in more effective and efficient service delivery.
4. Involvement of the local community, especially women, in choosing appropriate services and in project management leads to social empowerment.

Findings from the field show that most goals were not realised, especially not in the way assumed.

There are numerous limitations of the demand-management approach. Given the constraints of resources, it is not technically feasible to incorporate varying demands of water users in the design of a water delivery system. In this context, a water project cannot claim to realistically address demand. Ability to pay determines which villages receive water and which do not, however, this does not adequately capture the need and therefore demand for improved water services. Poorer households require or *desire* the same level of improved services as richer families.

Bina Devi of Mala village lives socially and geographically isolated from the main village hamlet, as a single parent with two young children. She has small terraces of rain-dependent agricultural land around the house and would have benefited enormously from a reliable and adequate water supply. This was especially so, because as a Dalit she lacks access to water sources used by her dominant upper-caste neighbours. The nearest standpost in the main village is about 3 miles down a steep slope from Bina Devi's house

and as a Dalit, she would not have had social access to that water source. She demanded a standpost near her house and was initially told she must pay more for an individual household connection, although her isolation from the rest of the village community was not by choice, but by social compulsion. She agreed to pay charges for a private household connection but was denied access on several flimsy grounds and rules, which were not applied to any other household. Clearly, this indicates that ability to pay does not guarantee access if social and political barriers to equitable water access and control remain ignored. The study also points out that, while users will pay for water, issues of inequity are perpetuated if the economic differences between households are not taken into account in the planning of demand-responsive approaches. In the current form, demand management approaches favour the socially and economically elite of the village community.

Involvement of the user community in the SWAJAL project did deliver drinking water better than systems implemented officially. However, it cannot be argued that community participation as defined by SWAJAL, guarantees sustainability of provided services. The SWAJAL project did not enable local people to determine their situation and take actions that might be appropriate to their abilities and resources, it only encouraged involvement of the local community in project activities that had been structured and pre-determined by others in the project management hierarchy. The technical structure of a water delivery system is sustained through appropriate technical expertise and adequate resources. Local people had gained new technical skills, but local realities had not been taken into account in the technical design of the project. The construction costs of the water delivery systems were high and it was evident that meagre operation and maintenance fees paid by user communities would not be adequate for correcting major faults in the system.

The findings also show that sustainability, as mentioned in the project documents, applies to water delivery systems and not to water availability. The project did not identify the multiple and competing uses of water by different households in the villages and how this would affect overall availability of water at the tapped sources. There was no restriction

on water use from connections provided by the project and little analysis of who benefited most, how and why. . Health and economic productivity gains from the project were seen to benefit most families privileged by caste and class.

Findings show that despite the common rhetoric of 'community empowerment' the aims of different NGOs vary and evolve with time. Local NGOs, often constrained in their access to resources, readily adopt and tailor the objectives of funding organisations in their own policy goals and implementation strategies. Further, inequality by gender, class and caste, pervades the functioning of organisations, both internally and in relation to their organisational goals. Biased by socially conditioned attitudes and perspectives, NGO staff only address those issues that are culturally acceptable to them. Issues of structural inequity in the local communities, along gender and caste lines as identified in chapters 5 and 6, were rarely brought to the surface and addressed by local NGOs involved in the SWAJAL project. Project guidelines failed to provide the incentive for field staff to draw these issues from the field. .

These analyses show that an organisation's ability to bring about social change depends on the space and opportunity provided to analyse, understand and interpret inequality within and beyond the organisational structure and culture. Local NGOs and other organisations involved in the SWAJAL project were not provided such opportunities. When processes of introspective review do not function naturally within an organisation, it is preferable to assume that social inequality exists and will proliferate in organisations rather than others. This would provide a better opportunity to analyse and address these issues, which impact upon the broader goals of equitable development of targeted communities.

SWAJAL policy talks of empowering Dalits and women. Yet, field research reveals that there is little effective involvement of the socio-economically marginalised amongst the user community. The analyses indicate an underestimation and misinterpretation of the complexity of unequal social relations. The SWAJAL project also illustrates a deliberate

co-option of the goals of social empowerment. Effectively involving the Dalits and the marginalised amongst women would have hindered the completion of the project at the least cost, as it would have meant overcoming the numerous restraints to social inequity and inequality. The findings show that parallels cannot be simplistically drawn between goals of empowerment and efficiency.

The new approaches of demand management and decentralisation do not, as predicted, promote better long-term sustainability, wiser management and empowerment of the community. This case study presents a classic example of a rhetorical jumble of project policies which underestimate the complexity of field realities. There are numerous contradictory objectives attached to the SWAJAL project, which operates within the dictates of limited time and resources. Consequently, the claimed success of the project outputs does not reflect the perceptions of the user community, especially of the more marginalised within the community.

To conclude, the rural drinking water sector has turned one complete circle from the traditionally managed water delivery systems to top-down emphasis on involving local communities in water projects. For several decades the water sector has tried different strategies for delivering water. These strategies are conceived by *expert others* and rarely reflect the varying and complex constraints experienced at the different institutional levels of the water sector. It is not surprising therefore that there has been little progress in delivering adequate, appropriate and reliable water to all.

## CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

The key concerns which guide water policies have conceptually changed over time. Eco-feminist movements in the late 1970s were instrumental in linking women with water use and management. So significant was this emphasis that domestic water supply was considered as a women's sector and water projects as women's projects. It was assumed that women would readily and voluntarily participate in the upkeep and maintenance of water projects because in return they would be rewarded by improved access to drinking water and better health of the family. Women's involvement in this manner related well to the efficiency approach to water policies and management, which has predominantly focused on achieving effective water supply to targeted consumers as economically as possible.

Expanding on the women-water connection, policy makers and planners in the domestic water sector went on to predict that women's participation in water projects would also contribute to improving women's economic productivity and social status. Consequently, water projects took on huge responsibilities to address gender, poverty and equity goals.

Analysis of evolving water policies and practices reveals a poor understanding of gender as well as a deliberate attempt to fit the principle of gender equality within an incompatible efficiency approach to water management. Gender is widely mentioned in water policy and documents about practice, but holds different meanings for different actors, all of whom have different expectations from the goals of addressing gender issues. Gender goals of water policy and practice are designed to contribute to an underlying and over-arching efficiency approach to water management. The outcome is dualism in language and incoherence of policy goals and a vague and ambiguous interpretation of gender in water policy and planning.

Findings in this study show that despite the emphasis in policy on women's involvement, few women are actually involved in water projects. Policy is poorly translated into practice as current approaches to addressing gender issues do not adequately take into account the specific constraints that are experienced by different

implementing agencies in ‘involving women’ in water projects. Subsequently specific needs and concerns of women rarely inform the planning and management of water delivery mechanisms. Similarly, despite the numerous predicted outcomes of women’s empowerment, this study reveals that in practice, the application of ‘gender issues’ translates into women’s voluntary participation in water projects. Women’s involvement promoted through these approaches does contribute to projects being implemented, managed and maintained at lower costs, but rarely results in the transformation of social relations of inequality.

There is little clarity about the reality of gender inequity in the context of water management and use as links between gender, equity and poverty across differing socio-economic and socio-political contexts are poorly understood. Policy statements on the potential for women’s gains through their involvement in water projects completely ignore the more practical issues of heterogeneity amongst women, and therefore women’s heterogeneous water needs and interests. Similarly, there is little understanding of how inequality, impacted by varying social factors across time and place, can be addressed through the medium of water projects. Strategies for addressing gender issues are conceived by ‘expert others’ and are standardised across projects implemented in different regions. This study explored some of these gaps in the consideration of gender issues in domestic water supply programming.

Field research in the state of Uttarakhand in India shows village communities divided along lines of caste, gender and class. Woven into the local fabric of religion and culture and into the livelihoods of people, issues of social inequality are difficult to isolate and categorise. The socially stratified village communities do not view or treat their water resource as a common good. Those disadvantaged by caste and economic class are deprived of water and isolated from decisions related to water management.

Women are primarily responsible for meeting household water needs and yet local culture determines that women do not have a say in the planning, management and allocation of water delivery systems. These forums, located in the public domain, are accessible only to men, and especially those who are privileged by caste and class. As a result, women’s specific needs for appropriate, reliable and adequate domestic water

are poorly understood and addressed by water delivery mechanisms. However, crosscutting issues of caste, class and the social identities of women within a household define the intensity of water related burdens experienced by different women. Officially funded water development interventions, planned and implemented locally, have significantly lessened the water burdens of the socially privileged amongst women. These findings contradict the prevalent perspective of blindly eulogising traditional approaches and condemning the use of modern technology. At the same time, the findings show several limitations of official systems of water delivery in these remote mountain villages which are defined by the local context.

Analysis of the official rural drinking water sector in India shows a lack of any effective strategy for communication between the levels of policies, organisations and the user community. Despite the rhetoric of addressing gender, there is little guidance, incentive or institutional priority for project managers and implementers to put this policy aim into practice. The focus of official systems has been to deliver water with little consideration of the multiple competing uses of water, of the control of water use by the socially powerful in the village community or of the impacts of these issues on the availability of drinking water. Services provided officially are often inappropriate to user needs, unreliable and inadequate. The greatest losers in the mismanagement of water delivery systems are the marginalized and vulnerable within the community.

Findings also reveal that men privileged by caste and class fill the organisational levels of policy and practice. Socially conditioned attitudes are carried into organisations, perpetuating the barriers to taking into account issues of inequality in water delivery. The patronising attitude of project managers towards the less privileged is further encouraged by ambiguous policies and lack of clear operational strategies. This explains why issues concerning equal and equitable access to water remain peripheral in planning and management of water systems in official organisations.

Alternative approaches to water management, studied through analysis of the World Bank-funded SWAJAL drinking water project, show that, as predicted, demand

management and decentralisation approaches to water management do not effectively promote better long-term sustainability, wiser management and empowerment of the community. The study presents a classic example of a rhetorical jumble of contradictory objectives attached to the SWAJAL project, which operated within the dictates of limited time and resources.

In accordance with the demand-management approach, ability to pay determines which villages receive water and which do not. This does not adequately capture the varying domestic water needs of different households and therefore actual demand for improved water services. Further, ability to pay does not guarantee access to water and water delivery systems, as social and political barriers to equitable water access and control remain ignored. The study points out that, while users will pay for water, issues of inequity are perpetuated if economic differences between households are not taken into account in the planning of demand-responsive approaches. In the current form, demand management approaches favour the socially and economically elite of the village community.

The SWAJAL project facilitates involvement of the ‘user community’; however, as predicted, this does not guarantee sustainability of provided services and/or an equitable spread of project benefits. Health and economic productivity gains from the project benefit most those families who are privileged by caste and class. ‘Sustainability’ as mentioned in the project documents applies to sustainability of systems that deliver water and not to sustainability of water available. The project does not identify the multiple and competing uses of water by different households in the villages and how this affects overall availability of water at the tapped sources.

Project guidelines identify the involvement of local NGOs as strategic to ensuring community involvement and empowerment. Findings from the field however show that inequality by gender, class and caste pervade the functioning of such organisations, both internally and in relation to project organisational goals. Biased by socially conditioned attitudes and perspectives and dictated by priority goals of project efficiency, NGO staff are rarely able to bring to the surface and/or to address issues of structural inequity in the local communities. Additionally, project guidelines

provide no opportunities or incentives for local NGOs to put into perspective the voices of the disadvantaged.

These findings show that the way forward for addressing issues of inequality in water use and management is neither simple nor can it be brought about instantaneously. The complexity and deep-rootedness of inequality, impacted by many factors, are perpetuated across time and reproduced in a range of institutions. It is obvious from the analysis that action is required at different levels of policy and development practice in order to reverse and correct entrenched inequality in social relations. Concerted planning, adequate resources and above all political will for change are essential prerequisites to initiate and sustain the change process. This requires changes in attitude and perspective in order to make space for the historically marginalised and excluded to influence water management decisions and strategies. Many of such changes are beyond the immediate scope of water projects and in fact require interventions beyond the water sector. This study points out the distinctions between water projects and the overall institutional context of water planning and programming and how this distinction is so poorly understood. The impetus in supposedly gender-sensitive water development interventions has been restricted to making rhetorical changes in water policies and in involving both women and the 'community', who are assumed to be homogeneous categories, in water projects. Yet findings in this research show the rhetorical nature of such changes in policy and the obvious limitations of trying to bring about gender equality through water delivery projects, within the narrow confines of one or a few villages and organisations.

In order to address issues of gender inequality in water management and use, there is foremost the need to clarify the purpose of addressing gender issues. As explained above, gender is widely mentioned in policy but different actors have different expectations of gender goals. In practice, addressing gender issues is commonly interpreted as involving women in water projects in ways which enhance project efficiency. There is often significant resistance to addressing sensitive issues of gender inequality in water projects. This is often justified by water practitioners as respecting local culture or by pointing out that the basic goal of water projects is to deliver water and not to transform unequal social relations.

On a hypothetical basis it can be argued that provision of adequate, appropriate and reliable water supply to all households to meet domestic water needs does not require an understanding of unequal gender relations. However, findings from this research prove the hypothesis wrong. The challenge to water development interventions lies in providing equal and appropriate access to water in the face of limited capital and human resources and conflicting interests in water availability amongst users. This research shows that social relations of inequality between and amongst men and women affect access to and use of water. Water management interventions, which do not analyse and take into account these interrelations, will not lead to equal access and appropriate delivery of water. The impact of unequal social relations in relation to water planning and management is thus irrefutable.

Gender relations of inequality are diverse and specific to the different socio-economic contexts in which they are found, and they are also evolving with changing socio-cultural, -political and -economic contexts. It also follows that organisations are structured and operate differently in specific socio-economic and political contexts. Subsequently, capacities and limitations of different organisations in analysing and addressing issues of gender-based inequality in the planning and implementation of water delivery mechanisms vary. Similarly, water needs and uses differ across regions and amongst households. Seasonal and spatial variations in the availability of adequate and reliable water impact differently upon different women and men, given their different socially-defined water roles and responsibilities and their unequal social positions and conditions. These analyses indicate that gender-based issues of inequality in water management and use cannot be predicted but need to be uncovered and analysed in consideration of these points.

In spelling out the linkages between poverty, inequity and gender, water policies need to set up realistic and practical strategies to explore and address these issues across different regions and different institutional levels of the water sector, rather than writing down rhetorical jargon in the form of gender goals. The achievement of equitable access to water for vulnerable groups within the user community, and of appropriate access to water for women, as primary domestic water users, will then rely on staff who are responsible for the implementation of policy having a clear

understanding of these issues. This requires capacity building for staff to understand the overlap of social relations of inequality and the impact of these on water access and use. Tools that explore and uncover social relations of inequality and their linkages with water would be more useful than prescriptive tools on addressing gender issues. Enabling organisational environments are then required for project staff to be able to address inequality in water management and use.

The phrase, 'enabling organisational environment' does not relate only to appropriate opportunities for staff to address issues of inequality as project goals. On the contrary, organisational staff can realistically understand issues of equality, only when such concerns are reflected in the structure, culture and policy of the organisations in which they work and operate. This means that organisational efforts have to be directed in creating space and opportunity for increased and effective representation of those formerly excluded from policy and planning domains. The need for women's increased representation in water organisations stems from the concern for provision of equal opportunity for women to participate effectively and strategically in planning and implementing water policies and strategies. However, issues of gender equality in organisational structures, cultures and policies should not obscure the reality of social discrimination along the lines of caste, class and ethnicity. A major limitation of the Social Relations Approach used to guide this study, is that the conceptual tools identified for analysing organisations and policies tend to revert to interpreting issues of gender equality as inequality between women and men. The tools do not enable analysis of the complexity of the multi-faceted social inequality in organisations and policies.

The delivery of adequate, reliable and appropriate water in ways that take into account the needs and concerns of the marginalised and vulnerable can only be achieved realistically by identifying inter-related, realistic and practical gender goals which cross the institutional levels of policies, organisations and user communities. As stated throughout the thesis, these goals are specific to particular situations and locations and cannot be predicted here and now. However, definition of such goals should help to resolve the present ambiguity in addressing gender issues in relation to the provision of domestic water supplies.

## **ANNEX 1: A LIST OF PEOPLE CONSULTED DURING THE COURSE OF RESEARCH**

### **Uttar Pradesh**

The people of Rampur village in Banbirpur block, Lakhimpur district  
Mr S L Shukla, Jal Nigam, Banbirpur  
Mr C K Tripathi, Jal Nigam, Banbirpur  
Mr R K Singh, Jal Nigam, Banbirpur  
Mr Shivkaran, Jal Nigam, Banbirpur  
Mr U Yadav, Block Development Office, Banbirpur  
Mr D P Singh, Jal Nigam, Lakhimpur  
Mr R P Pandey, Jal Nigam, Lakhimpur  
Mr J Prasad, Jal Nigam, Lakhimpur  
Mr A Singh, Lab-in-charge, District Water Testing Laboratory, Jal Nigam, Lakhimpur  
Mr M Singh Katiyal, District Rural Development Office, Lakhimpur  
Mr B D Pandey, District Rural Development Office, Lakhimpur  
Mr S Singh Chandel, Dhanjuwa village, Sarwankheda block in Kanpur Dehat district  
Mr R Chandra, Dhanjuwa village, Sarwankheda block in Kanpur Dehat district  
Mr R K Singh, Dhanjuwa village, Sarwankheda block in Kanpur Dehat district  
Mr U Singh, Dhanjuwa village, Sarwankheda block in Kanpur Dehat district  
Mr B B Singh, Dhanjuwa village, Sarwankheda block in Kanpur Dehat district  
Mr J Singh, Nirman Sewa Sansthan, Kanpur Dehat district  
Mr S Sanyal, Jal Nigam, Lucknow  
Mr R K Khanna, Jal Nigam, Lucknow  
Mr J A Joshi, Jal Nigam, Lucknow  
Mrs H Sharma, Jal Nigam, Lucknow  
Mr A Singh, Jal Nigam, Lucknow  
Mr Saraswat, Jal Nigam, Lucknow  
Mr K K Mishra, Jal Nigam, on deputation to the Rural Development Department, Rural Water Supply, Lucknow  
Mr S R Singh, Human Resource Development Cell, Jal Nigam, Lucknow  
Mr G Singh, Human Resource Development Cell, Jal Nigam, Lucknow  
Mr V Pandey, Human Resource Development Cell, Jal Nigam, Lucknow  
Mr S R Mendiratta, UNICEF, Lucknow  
Mr S Chandola, UNICEF, Lucknow  
Mr K M Srivastav, Shivas, Lucknow  
Mr S R Raju, SWAJAL Project, Lucknow  
Mr J P Shukla, SWAJAL Project, Lucknow  
Mr V K Agarawal, SWAJAL Project, Lucknow  
Ms P Joshi, SWAJAL Project, Lucknow  
Ms U Prakash, SWAJAL Project, Lucknow  
Ms S Bahuguna, SWAJAL Project, Lucknow  
Ms A Sinha, SWAJAL Project, Lucknow

Mr C Mohini, Panchayat Raj Department, Department for Rural Development, Lucknow  
Mr Tiwari, Panchayat Raj Department, Department for Rural Development, Lucknow  
Ms N Gupta, Panchayat Raj Department, Department for Rural Development, Lucknow

### **Uttaranchal**

The people of Hilay village in Belparao block, Nainital district  
Dr R S Tolia, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr R Sharma, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Ms R Pandey, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr V Vikramaditya, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr N Kumar, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr P Farthayal, Centre for Development Studies  
Mr S Sah, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr D R Bhatt, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr M Saxena, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Ms G Kandpal, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr G Routela, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr G Joshi, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr D Mahtolia, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr R G Arya, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr R. Chand, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr. K Joshi, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr M Pathak, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr G Lal, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Ms M Arya, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Ms S Arya, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr L Adhikari, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Mr B Joshi, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Ms B Pandey, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital  
Ms M Chamiyal, Centre for Development Studies, Nainital

Ms B Pathak, Mahila Samakhya (Education for Women's Equality), Nainital  
Mr U Sinha, Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam, Nainital  
Mr R Babu, Jal Sansthan, Nainital  
The people of Nachuni village in Dewal Thal block, Pithoragarh district  
The people of Chuni, Himtal and Mala villages in Gangolihat block, Pithoragarh district  
Mr D Joshi, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Mr S Joshi, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Ms U Pandey, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Ms H Joshi, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Mr A Upadhyay, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Mr D Upreti, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Mr P Singh, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Mr U Karki, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Ms P Joshi, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Ms G Joshi, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Ms R Khanka, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Mr P Pathak, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Mr M Pandey, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Mr D S Bora, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Mr R C Pant, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Mr R Pant, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Ms S Pathak, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Mr P Pant, Himalayan Study Circle, Pithoragarh  
Students of Intermediate Final, Science Group, Government Girls Inter College, Pithoragarh  
Students of Intermediate Final, Science Group, Government Inter College for Boys, Pithoragarh  
Mr D S Dhapola, DPMU, Pithoragarh  
Mr B Bhatt, DPMU, Pithoragarh  
Mr M Badauni, DPMU, Pithoragarh  
Ms U Pant, DPMU, Pithoragarh  
Mr U Singh, DPMU, Pithoragarh  
Mr D Singh, DPMU, Pithoragarh  
Ms P Bisht, Freelance Consultant, Haldwani  
Mr P Rana, ERA, Champawat district  
Mr G Joshi, ERA, Champawat district  
Ms A Khati, ERA, Champawat district  
Mr P Joshi, Almora

## Orissa

The people of Lomagarh village in Tikkabali block, Phulbani district, Orissa  
Mr G P Roy, Samanwita, Tikkabali  
Mr S C Satpathy, Samanwita, Tikkabali  
Ms S Nayak, Samanwita, Tikkabali  
Mr P Pati, Samanwita, Tikkabali

Mr M Sahoo, Samanwita, Tikkabali  
Mr B Pradhan, Samanwita, Tikkabali  
Ms S Pradhan, Samanwita, Tikkabali  
Ms P Nayak, Samanwita, Tikkabali  
P. Maji, Samanwita, Tikkabali  
K. Pradhan, Samanwita, Tikkabali  
Mr S Panda, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation, Tikkabali  
Mr S C Sahoo, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation, Tikkabali  
Self Employed Mechanics, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation, Tikkabali  
Mr B C Mishra, Tehsildar, Tikkabali  
Mr J N Das, Block Development Office, Tikkabali  
Mr B C Malik, Block Development Office, Tikkabali  
Mr C S Nayak, Block Development Office, Tikkabali  
U Sahoo, Kiramaha Village, Tikkabali  
Ms S Nayak, Kiramaha Village, Tikkabali  
Mr T K Naik, Voluntary Action India, Kalinga, Tikkabali  
The people of village Samonbadi, Tillory block, Daringbadi district  
Mr K Pradhan, Self Employed Mechanic, Samonbadi, Tillory  
Mr R N Nayak, Hostel in charge and Primary School teacher, Samonbadi, Tillory  
Mr A Pradhan, Block Development Office, Tillory  
Mr B Pradhan, Block Development Office, Tillory  
K Pradhan, Block Development Office, Tillory  
Mr R B Sahu, Block Development Office, Tillory  
B C Pradhan Block Development Office, Tillory  
Mr K Dandapat, Jagruti, Daringbadi  
Mr U N Nayak, Jagruti, Daringbadi  
Mr A P Patnaik, Jagruti, Daringbadi  
Mr J Adhikari, Jagruti, Daringbadi  
Ms B B Singh, Jagruti, Daringbadi  
Mr R K Baliya, Jagruti, Daringbadi  
Mr B Digal, Jagruti, Daringbadi  
Mr D Das, Jagruti, Daringbadi  
Mr A Meena, District Rural Development Office, Phulbani  
Mr G Panda, District Rural Development Office, Phulbani  
Mr S Sahoo, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Office, Phulbani  
Mr G R Panigraha, Assistant Engineer, RWSSO, Phulbani  
Ms S Nayak, Project Implementation Officer, UNICEF, Phulbani  
Ms B Laxmi Sarangi, Project Implementation Officer, UNICEF, Phulbani  
Mr R C Das, NIPIDT, Phulbani  
Mr G S Misra, Save the Children, Kalahandi  
Mr C Pradhan, Save the Children, Kalahandi  
Mr T Pradhan Save the Children, Kalahandi  
Mr A Kanungo, Save the Children, Kalahandi  
Mr R Sakhtivel, Save the Children, Kalahandi  
Mr S Mohapatra, Save the Children, Kalahandi  
Mr G Rao, Save the Children, Kalahandi

Ms B Das, Save the Children, Kalahandi  
Ms V Laxmi, Save the Children, Kalahandi  
Mr R Ratan, Save the Children, Kalahandi  
Mr Raout, Save the Children, Kalahandi  
Mr J Joy Sethi, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Office, Kalahandi  
Mr B Mohanta, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Office, Lanjhigar bock, Kalahandi  
Mr M K Mohanty, Block Development Office, Lanjhigar block, Kalahandi  
Mr N Jali, Rural Development Department, Bhubaneswar  
Mr S P Mishra, Rural Development Department, Bhubaneswar  
Mr T Nayak, Rural Development Department, Bhubaneswar  
Mr M A Kalam, UNICEF, Bhubaneswar  
Mr P Patjoshi, UNICEF, Bhubaneswar  
Dr N Rath, Freelance Consultant, Bhubaneswar  
Ms K Misra, Freelance Consultant, Bhubaneswar  
Mr S Mohanty, DANIDA, Bhubaneswar  
Mr Sahoo, Centre for Youth and Social Development, Bhubaneswar  
Mr Jagadananda, Centre for Youth and Social Development, Bhubaneswar  
Ms G Jena, Centre for Youth and Social Development, Bhubaneswar  
Mr G Kurien, Centre for Youth and Social Development, Bhubanewsar  
Mr S K Ghosal, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation, Bhubaneswar  
Mr S N Mishra, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation, Bhubaneswar  
Mr S K Dash, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation, Bhubaneswar  
Mr Mohapatra, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation, Bhubaneswar  
Ms Pathak, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation, Bhubaneswar  
Ms Kalpana, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Organisation, Bhubaneswar

### **New Delhi**

Mr. N C Saxena, Planning Commission, Government of India  
Mrs. K Singh, Housing, Urban Development and Water Supply Division, Planning Commission, Government of India  
Mr. K P Katailiha, Housing, Urban Development and Water Supply Division, Planning Commission, Government of India  
Dr A Joshi, Environment and Forests Division, Planning Commission, Government of India  
Mr. S K Tripathi, Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission, Government of India  
Mr. B Lal, Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission, Government of India  
Mrs. P V Valsala G Kutty, Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission, Government of India  
Mr Harish Kumar, Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission, Government of India  
Mr K M Mazumdar, Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission, Government of India  
Mr N Kittu, Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission, Government of India  
Ms S Sinha, UNDP/World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme  
Mr S Singh, UNDP/World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme  
Ms B Evans, UNDP/World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme  
Ms S Goswami, UNDP/World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme

Ms R Dayal, UNDP/World Bank Water and Sanitation Programme  
Mr A Zutshi, Netherlands Embassy  
Mr U Pradhan, Ford Foundation  
Ms C Joshi, UNIFEM  
Mr B Baxendale, Water and Environmental Sanitation Group, DfID  
Mr D Bhattacharya, Water and Environmental Sanitation Group, DfID  
Ms N Joshi, Water and Environmental Sanitation Group, DfID  
Mr A Chowla, Water and Environmental Sanitation Group, DfID  
Mr N Kirby, Water and Environmental Sanitation Group, DfID  
Mr F Watkins, Water and Environmental Sanitation Group, DfID  
Ms A Barrett, Urban Poverty Office, DfID, New Delhi  
Ms B Agarwal, Institute of Economic Growth  
Mr R R Iyer, Centre for Policy Research  
Mr R Rangachari, Former Member, Central Water Commission and Additional Secretary, Ministry of Water Resources, GoI

### **Individuals And Resource Institutions Outside India**

L Mehta, Research Fellow, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex  
R Subrahmanian, Research Fellow, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex  
Gender and Water Alliance Steering Committee Members. First Steering Committee Meeting, UNESCO, Paris  
IRC staff, The International Resource Centre, Delft, The Netherlands  
Mr I Curtis, DfID, London  
Mr P Evans, DfID, London  
Mr J Ockleford, DfID, London  
Ms J Crowder, DfID, London  
T Wallace, Freelance Consultant, Research Management Team, UK  
N May, Freelance Consultant, Research Management Team, UK  
S Trace, WATERAID, London, Research Management, UK  
H Slavin, Freelance Consultant, Research Management, UK

## ANNEX 2: GUIDELINES FOR A GENDER ASSESSMENT OF AN ORGANISATION

The aim of these guidelines is to assist with the process of assessing an organization in all its aspects from a gender perspective. First, some definitions.

- A focus on gender rather than women implies not looking at 'women' and women's issues in isolation but recognizing the different needs and interests of women and men in the context of power relations between them.
- A gender analysis of an organization examines the processes and interventions in and by the organization in terms of their effects on women, men and the relationships between women and men. It explicitly recognizes the unequal gender relations between men and women in society.
- Gender equality means equality between women and men at various levels: equal material *welfare*, equal *access* to resources and opportunities, a *value* system based on the belief in equality, equal *participation* in decision-making, and equal *control* over resources and benefits.<sup>1</sup>

### How to use the questionnaire

An organization's commitment to gender equality must be analysed in terms of the organization's mission/goal and objective, policy, strategy, activities, internal structure and systems, organizational culture, and external context. These broad headings are used in the questionnaire which follows. A number of sample questions are given under each heading. However, this list should be considered as a guideline only, not as an all-embracing, exhaustive checklist in which questions can be answered by a simple 'yes' or 'no'. A number of other questions could easily be used as alternatives or additionally. Clearly, not all the questions will apply equally to all organizations. The selection of questions will have to reflect the size, complexity and history of the

organization concerned. Given that organizations are constantly changing, certain questions might be more relevant than others at particular moments.

The questionnaire is intended to stimulate a deeper examination involving discussion and analysis of organizations and gender. This is the reason for questions such as: Why are things the way they are? Have they always been like that? The aim to indicate the areas and issues to which attention ought to be given when assessing how far an organization has progressed on the road to becoming a more gender-aware and gender-equal organization.

There is no ready-made recipe for this process, as each organization is unique and has its own characteristics in terms of identity, size, age, organizational phase of development, context and cultural setting. Organizations in different regions of the world will carry out the journey towards gender sensitivity in very different ways and at very different paces; NGOs and grassroots groups will also differ in their experience and interpretation of the process.

The questions do not necessarily deal with gender issues alone. Information regarding overall organizational functioning and context is a critical part of a gender analysis of an organization.

### Core business of the organization

Mission, goal, objective (the purpose of, and rationale behind, the organization's existence)

- Does the organization have a clearly defined mission which enables it to assess its achievements in comparison to what it has defined as the rationale for its existence?
- Does the gender vision/perspective of the organization acknowledge the existence of power inequalities between men and women? To which aspects of gender inequality does it refer: welfare, access, values, participation, control?
- Are the mission statement and vision based on a thorough analysis of the context, including a perspective on gender inequality?
- Is the organization also aware of what is *not* its mission?
- Does the organization have a convincing rationale making clear why it is the best (perhaps unique) organization to carry out its mission (as opposed to any other organization)? In other words, is the organization aware of what would be qualitatively missing if it were not there?
- Is the mission written down and/or known by the organization's members, staff at different levels, and board? Is there evidence of their commitment to it?
- Is there evidence of support and commitment to the organization's mission and existence by beneficiaries, providing legitimacy and relevance?

**Intervention strategy (strategy of the organization, defining how it intends to achieve its mission/goal)**

- Has the organization translated its mission into clear, defined goals and ways and means of achieving these goals, specifying long- and short-term objectives and a plan of activities?
- Does the organization have specific objectives regarding gender in relation to its overall mission?
- Does the gender policy inform the overall policies of the organization? The policies of specific sectors?
- Does the gender policy inform intervention strategies in general?
- Does the gender policy include intervention strategies with regard to the beneficiaries of activities, the organization itself, and the external context of the organization?
- Are the different elements of the gender policy consistent with each other?
- Does the gender policy of the organization recognize the diversity of needs and interests among women (socioeconomic, ethnicity, cultural identity, sexuality, age, religion) among women?
- Do the intervention strategies of the organization emphasize women-specific, men-specific and/or mixed activities? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different strategies pursued in terms of addressing gender inequalities?
- Has the organization developed the capacity to recognize and handle resistance to addressing gender issues?

**Products (the activities, services, programmes, output of the organization)**

- Why and how have the products been selected by the organization? Have women among the beneficiaries influenced the particular choices made?
- Was an inventory made of the interests and needs of women prior to the design of the organization's products, taking into account women's workload, available time, education and skills?
- Do the women among the beneficiaries value the products and see them as a priority?

- Do the products contribute to increased gender equality in terms of welfare, access, participation, ideology and control? In other words, what is the impact of the organization's products for men and for women in terms of:
  - material well-being, workload, division of tasks and responsibilities;
  - access to resources, information and education/training;
  - participation in decision-making regarding their productive, reproductive and community/political tasks;
  - images and values concerning femininity and masculinity, self-respect, legal status;
  - control over resources, information and benefits?
- Do the products of the organization contribute towards a change in macro-policies and/or legislation with regard to gender inequalities?

**Structure, systems and resources (also known as processes, procedures)**

The structure of an organization refers to the relative positions of the parts of the organization, the division of tasks, responsibility and authority. Systems refer to the way in which various processes, decision-making and flows take place within the organization. Systems include both formal and informal elements.

**Structure**

- Are there adequate and effective mechanisms for coordination and consultation among the various parts of the organization?
- Do these mechanisms include coordination and consultation with regard to the implementation of the gender policy?
- Are the various stakeholders, including women, represented in the membership and board of the organization?
- Are women from the beneficiary group represented in the structure of the organization?
- Do women from the target group have a clear influence on policy-making and implementation processes?
- Does the organization have staff with specific gender expertise and responsibilities? Where is this staff located within the organizational structure (e.g. at key/strategic points in the organization or not, with/without authority, in an advisory capacity, in a centralized unit/desk, at decentralized levels within the organization)?

- Does the organization allow space for staff who wish to organize on the basis of one aspect of their identity (e.g. sex, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, age), to inform and enrich the organization about its diversity?
- Does the organizational structure accommodate institutional learning on gender issues?

#### **Systems**

The term 'systems' refers to processes of a diverse nature: operational/implementation, decision-making, planning, monitoring and evaluation, learning, policy-making, communication and information, sensing the environment, administration.

#### **Operations/implementation**

- Are there procedures and mechanisms to facilitate discussions between the beneficiaries (both women and men) and the staff of the organization on gender issues?
- Are there mechanisms which enable the organization to reflect on and learn from its achievements? How do gender issues feature here (e.g. internal reflection, learning reflected in proposals and documentation, revision of original proposals)?
- Does the organization have a system for operationalizing its strategies, including targets, performance indicators, a time path and review? How is gender integrated into this system? For instance, are targets and timetables set regarding the allocation of resources towards activities aimed at women specifically, or at gender-integrated activities?
- Does the organization have a mechanism for sensing the environment in which it is working (i.e. being aware of changes in the gender force-field of actors and issues)? Is this reflected in programme proposals and activities?
- Are there mechanisms for signalling problems and conflict, for example in relation to sexual (and other forms of) harassment, and for dealing with conflict?

#### **Decision-making**

- To what extent do beneficiaries and staff participate in decision-making in relation to management, policy-making, programme activities and external relations? Is there a difference between men and women in this respect?
- Is there a balance between control and flexibility to enable male and female staff to carry out their work? In other words, is there a balance at management level between capacity to delegate and to take decisions? How does this operate with regard to decisions concerning gender issues within the organization?

- Does the organization have a system, and does its staff have the skills, for identifying problems, analysing options and then taking the relevant decisions concerning gender issues?

#### *Planning, monitoring, and evaluation*

- Do methodologies for planning, monitoring, and evaluation accommodate the active participation of women beneficiaries and staff?
- Is a gender analysis, allowing for the collection of gender-disaggregated data, central to the planning (including strategic planning), monitoring and evaluation of the organization?
- Do methodologies for monitoring and evaluation accommodate listening and learning from male and female beneficiaries? And is this linked back into the planning process?
- Do the terms of references for assessment and evaluation include gender issues that address the impact on women and men, both at the level of beneficiaries and at the organizational level?
- Do planning, monitoring, evaluation, and advisory teams consist of members who are gender-sensitive and include at least one person with specific expertise and skills on gender issues?

#### *Communication/information*

- Does the organization's administration include records of its work in the field of gender, and are these easily accessible?
- Are staff members and the board of the opinion that the gender data of the organization and the available information on gender issues are adequate to enable them to carry out their work with gender awareness?
- Does the organization document its own learning in relation to gender practice, and does it make this information available to others?
- How is communication in the organization (e.g. between different parts of the organization) organized? Does this promote exchange, dialogue, and openness regarding gender issues?
- How is the external communication organized (e.g. with beneficiaries, with outside expertise)? Does this promote exchange, dialogue and interaction regarding gender issues?

**Personnel**

- What is the overall gender composition of staff and the board, and within the different hierarchical levels of the organization?
- Is there management commitment to the promotion of female representation at all levels of the organization (i.e. affirmative action)?
- Is this commitment set out in a policy and plan with targets and a timetable?
- Do recruitment and selection strategies facilitate the recruitment of women?
- How does the organization deal with the possible side-effects of affirmative action (e.g. disempowerment as a result of high visibility or majority group cohesion)?
- Do men and women receive equal wages for equal work?
- Does the organization promote male and female labour in non-traditional fields?
- Do the working arrangements of the organization take into account women's and men's caring responsibilities outside the workplace (e.g. part-time work, job-sharing, maternity/paternity/care leave)?
- Does the organization recognize the differences in life-time and career-time structure between women and men (also called the difference between female and male chronologies; for example, differences in terms of mobility and possibilities for working away from home for long periods)?
- Do staff (women and men) receive training on gender issues? Is this training perceived as part of an ongoing learning process of organizational change? Is it needs-based and tailor-made, addressing both attitudinal change and concrete skills?
- Does the organization appreciate both the strengths and weaknesses of its human resource base in relation to its gender policy objectives? Is this reflected in a gender-sensitive human resource plan and investment in human resources development?
- Is there clarity in the organization about people's self-interest in diversity (e.g. on the basis of sex, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, age)?

**Resources (human, financial and physical)**

- Are there adequate numbers of staff to carry out the gender programmes planned? Do staff members have the right knowledge, skills and attitude to carry out their work with gender awareness?

- Are financial resources allocated for the operationalization of the gender policy at all levels? Are these adequate?
- Are financial resources for implementation of the gender policy an integral part of the core budget?
- Are specific financial targets set for promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women among the beneficiaries?
- Are gender expertise and gender capacity building systematically budgeted for?
- Does the organization have an adequate infrastructure to enable female staff to carry out their work (e.g. in relation to a safe working environment, location of the office, transport arrangements)?

**Organizational culture**

Organizational culture is what one could describe as the personality of the organization, the shared set of symbols, rituals, language, opinions and values of the organization's staff/members. This bears a direct relationship with the specific contextual and cultural setting of the organization.

- Does the organization reward or value gender-sensitive behaviour? In other words, does the organization provide incentives to enable gender-sensitive values to be implemented across the organization?
- Is there commitment throughout the organization to the implementation of the gender policy?
- Does the organization demonstrate gender-sensitive behaviour in terms of the language used, jokes and comments made, images and materials displayed, style of meetings, procedures on sexual harassment?
- Does the organization respect the diversity of styles between men and women, as a source of strength for the organization?
- Are appropriate facilities, such as lavatories, childcare, and transport, provided in the working environment?

- Do the working arrangements enable the combination of work with reproductive/caring responsibilities outside the workplace, e.g. via part-time employment, flexible working hours and leave allocations?

#### **External context**

- Is the organization well informed about its external context, including knowledge about important actors and issues – in both positive and negative senses – with regard to gender issues?
- Is the organization building and maintaining strategic alliances with key actors in the field of gender, such as women's organizations or other organizations with gender expertise?
- Has the organization defined specific gender objectives and targets in terms of the external environment (e.g. lobbying for legislative change, influencing macro-policies, influencing public opinion, promotion of networking and cooperation between different organizations), and is it able to deal with any potential conflicts and tensions that might emerge?

#### **Note**

1. This is an adapted version of Sarah Hlupekile Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework, further developed by Hivos (1996) in its 'Policy Document Gender, Women and Development.' The levels should be imagined as a continuum forming a circle, with no hierarchical order or value attached.

## ANNEX 3: THE WHY AND HOW OF GENDER SENSITIVE INDICATORS

### THE WHY AND HOW OF GENDER- SENSITIVE INDICATORS: A PROJECT LEVEL HANDBOOK

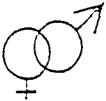
Working definitions of these types are:

DEFINITIONS OF INDICATORS	
Input indicators:	concern the resources devoted to the project.
Process indicators:	measure delivery activities of the resources devoted to a project. They are measures to monitor achievement during implementation, and serve primarily to track progress towards the intended results.
Output indicators:	measure intermediate results, for example at a point when donor involvement in the project is close to complete.
Outcome indicators:	relate directly to the longer-term results of the project, and after donor involvement is complete.
Quantitative indicators:	are numerical measurements of change, such as the number of women visiting a pre-natal counselling centre.
Qualitative indicators:	are people's perceptions, such as opinions regarding alterations in social relations, authority or status. They can be quantified. For example, the number of women in a project area who consider that their status has improved can be added up to provide a numerical measure of a qualitative indicator.

Methods for choosing indicators to fit your project are described in more detail in chapter 3.

- The main focus in use of indicators through the project cycle should be on outcome indicators, because they best measure results. As a rule of thumb in projects with an end-user focus, outputs can be determined near to completion of the project. Ideally, outcomes can be determined between project completion and 3-5 years after donor involvement with the project is complete. Allowing this length of time after the end of donor involvement will also provide a guide to the *sustainability* of the project, although it may not always be practical to review a project 3-5 years after donor involvement ends.
- Another rule of thumb is that quantitative and qualitative indicators should be used together to cross-validate each other, in a process called triangulation. Qualitative indicators are important because using them will promote participation through the project cycle, and tell you what end-users think about the project.

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There are various other ways in which indicators can be classified, for example using terms employed in the Logical Framework Analysis, such as input, output, outcome and impact. The terms themselves are less important than the way in which they are defined, that is they should be defined in a way that covers all stages of the project cycle. Proposed indicators must also meet the key tests of validity and reliability to be useful. The reader should turn to chapter 3 of the Guide for more details on these key tests and a discussion of how to select and use quantitative and qualitative indicators.

#### POINT 4 – USING QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Quantitative and qualitative indicators are pointers; in themselves they can achieve only a certain level of analysis. When working with indicators there is usually a need for further qualitative analysis as to why a certain situation exists.

- Qualitative analysis is used for an understanding of social processes, why and how a particular situation that indicators measure came into being, and how this situation can be changed in the future. It should be used at all stages of the project cycle.
- Quantitative and qualitative indicators will tell you how far your project has succeeded or failed. Qualitative analysis will tell you why this result took place, and whether the result was a good one or not.

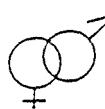
An example will clarify the indicators-analysis continuum:

#### EXAMPLE

##### *Indicators of change in rural India*

*An innovative study on the incidence of poverty in two Indian villages was carried out over twenty years by Jodha (1989), between 1964 and 1984. Jodha gathered quantitative indicators on household income and used these indicators to chart the fortunes of the different households; the findings from these quantitative indicators were that 38% of sample households had become poorer during this twenty year period.*

*Unusually, Jodha also collected qualitative indicators from farmers who were deemed to have become poorer. Poor farmers' qualitative indicators or perceptions of change over the twenty year period were phrased not in terms of declining income but in terms of: reduced reliance on patrons, reduced dependence on low-paid jobs, improved mobility and improved assets. Even though these farmers had become poorer in monetary terms, they considered their quality of life had improved.*



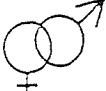
## THE WHY AND HOW OF GENDER- SENSITIVE INDICATORS: A PROJECT LEVEL HANDBOOK

*Jodha then uses qualitative analysis to examine why, because of social changes in their villages, poor people felt that they were better off, the main reasons being because they had greater independence, more mobility and were no longer at the mercy of the village elite. Jodha's is one of the best studies to show how quantitative and qualitative indicators can cross-validate each other, and why there might be differences between the two kinds of indicators.*

- 
- Qualitative analysis is usually required to isolate the reasons why results have been achieved whether the project includes Type 1 or Type 2 objectives.
  - Ideally, quantitative and qualitative indicators and quantitative analysis should be used together in project monitoring and evaluation.

There are two useful Guides to qualitative analysis, Coady International Institute (1991), and CCIC et al (1991). These are widely available and the reader should turn to them for further information on this important subject.

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### 3. THE RIGHT SIGN IN THE RIGHT PLACE: CHOOSING INDICATORS

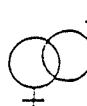
This chapter expands on point 3 in the workplan and explains how indicators can be chosen. Following the guide-lines in the box below, this chapter looks at how indicators can be chosen in an education project. Chapter 4 looks at choosing indicators in projects related to empowerment and participation, and the Appendix gives an example of such a project.

These generic examples cover two important areas that CIDA works in - basic human needs, and participation and empowerment. The education project is an example of a gender integrated project, and the empowerment project is an example of a WID-specific initiative. In practice, gender-sensitive indicators can be used in all types of CIDA projects.

Only a few indicators may need to be chosen at each stage of the project cycle. As a rule of thumb, up to six indicators can be chosen, although balance will need to be maintained between the cost and time involved in gathering and analysing indicators and the need for comprehensive evaluation of results.

#### Guide-lines for choosing indicators

- indicators should be developed in a participatory fashion, involving all stakeholders wherever possible
- indicators must fit with objectives
- indicators of risk/enabling factors should be included
- each stage of the project cycle needs an indicator
- both quantitative and qualitative indicators are needed
- all indicators should be sex-disaggregated



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### EXAMPLE : an education project

#### Background

Consider a region in which agriculture is the principal source of livelihood, supplemented by home-based activities such as weaving and sewing, carried out mainly by women. Women's main production activities include growing vegetables, hoeing, weeding, harvesting, threshing, and small-animal husbandry (e.g. poultry, milking). Because of poverty, inequality and lack of gender-equity in the region, there is a bias in the local educational system towards the education of boys from wealthier households.

All primary and secondary education is provided in village-based public schools, and teachers are mainly educated local people, with 75% of the teachers being men. The number of teachers is insufficient for the potential number of students. Although the law requires compulsory primary schooling from age 6 to 13 years, there is only sporadic enforcement of this.

Enrolment rates show substantial differences across different socio-economic groupings and between women and men. Gender bias is found in the enrolment rate at the primary level (grades 1-6): 50% for girls compared to 80% for boys. Bias towards wealthier socio-economic groups is also found in the enrolment rate at primary level. When socio-economic groups are classified from 1 to 5 dependent on total income, group 1 (wealthiest) displays 90% enrolment rate and group 5, 15%.

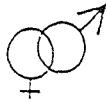
#### Project objective

Objective	Type of Objective
To ensure socio-economic and gender equality in access to primary education, - without reducing enrolment rates - within five years.	Type 1

#### Project components

1. A system of incentives aimed at parents and teachers. Parents from poorer socio-economic groupings will be given monthly in-kind or cash payments if their children satisfy pre-determined enrolment and attendance rates. Parents from all socio-economic groupings will be given monthly in-kind or cash payments if their daughters satisfy pre-determined enrolment and attendance rates. The second part of this component attempts to ensure "buy-in" from households from all socio-economic groups.

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2. To maximize community involvement village-based advisory school councils (ASCs) with equal representation of male and female parents and teachers, and equal representation from across socio-economic groups, will be formed. The size of the payments to parents will be determined in consultation with the ASC, which is also responsible and accountable for their distribution. This component attempts to facilitate community participation and ensure on-going community involvement and therefore sustainability.
3. Improvements in quality of school equipment: mid-day meals, and classroom equipment, such as desks, blackboards, and textbooks.
4. Improvements in the gender content of the curriculum.

Base-line data should be collected on the number of students admitted by socio-economic grouping, sex, grade, age; public expenditure per student, e.g. teachers' salaries, meals, instructional material, equipment, etc.; number of teachers and school administrators, by sex; state of school equipment, e.g. textbook-student ratio; nature of the curriculum, e.g. time devoted to different subjects.

After collection of base-line data, the following are quantitative and qualitative indicators that can be used to measure the results of this project, using the risk and input-to-outcome typology. For further discussion of education, health, employment and water supply indicators, see Annexes 5 to 9 in the Guide.

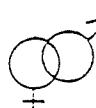
#### EXAMPLE

##### *Risk/enabling indicators*

- Government support gauged by analysis of official attitudes.
- Popular community support gauged by attendance and analysis of comments at meetings.
- Elite support, gauged by focus group meetings and comments at meetings and interviews.

##### *Input indicators*

- Amount of project funding.
- Community perceptions of the feasibility of the project.
- Degree of community input to project planning, by socio-economic grouping and sex.



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### *Process indicators*

- Receipt of cash or in-kind payments by socio-economic grouping of household.
- Regular monthly meetings of ASCs.
- Equal participation across socio-economic groups and by women and men in ASCs.
- Parental views of benefits of schooling.
- Net and gross enrolment rates by socio-economic grouping and sex.
- Drop-out rates by socio-economic grouping and sex.

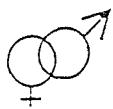
### *Output indicators*

- More equitable employment of women and men teachers.
- Equitable school enrolment rates by socio-economic grouping and sex at end of donor involvement.
- Equitable school completion rates by socio-economic grouping and sex at end of donor involvement.
- Equitable literacy rates by sex and across socio-economic grouping at end of primary level.
- Improved perceived gender content in the curriculum (e.g. improved representation of women).

### *Outcome indicators*

- Equitable school enrolment rates by socio-economic grouping and sex three years after end of donor involvement.
- Equitable school completion rates by socio-economic grouping and sex three years after end of donor involvement.
- Improvements in status of boys and girls from poorer groups, in terms of health and employment.
- Changes in community and parental perceptions of the desirability of having children from poor households and girls educated.

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*Qualitative analysis*

*This would involve identifying and isolating the factors that caused specific indicators to be in place and why the project succeeded or failed. For example, it would involve analysing how, why and when members of the community participated, any constraints placed on the project by wealthier socio-economic groups and how these were overcome, and showing the links between increased education and higher status.*

#### ANNEX 4: CHUNI'S LOCALLY INTERPRETED HISTORY

The entire village of Chuni was brought by Dhan Singh Khanka of the Kshatriya caste, of Baj Falyati village in Baitarni district of Nepal from a Brahmin Pant family for a pair of gold earrings. Dhan Singh did strike a good deal. One of the Pant women had been eaten by a tiger and considering this as an inauspicious sign the Pants were eager to get rid of the land. There was an agreement though that the Khankas would continue to get all the worship done in the temples through the Pants. This practice stems from the fact that in the hills, people have their own 'lineage Gods' (known as Kul Devtas), whose temples are located in places of ancestral residence. The ritual of worshipping these Gods where they stand is handed down along generations. Dhan Singh then bought his brother's family here. The progeny of Dhan Singh's 2 marriages and his brother's family constitute the dominant Khanka population of Chuni. Dhan Singh's family occupied the best place in the village, known as Malli Chuni, determined so primarily by the presence of two large perennial naulas. The naulas were located at the base of a huge rock boulder, known as the Panyar. Water from the two naulas flowed into spring, known as the dhara. The dhara is made of wooden pipes and water continuously and perennially flowing out of these pipes is used for drinking, cooking, bathing, washing clothes and utensils. The dhara was constructed by the Pants. Water also flows from the dhara along narrow and shallow irrigation canals called guls, which were built by the Khankas to irrigate their agricultural fields.

Dhan Singh also brought in some Dalit families, one Goswami (a religious sect) family, and a Joshi, Brahman family to Chuni. The Goswamis are considered a low caste, but socially clean. The Kshatriyas will not eat food cooked in water, known locally as *kuccha* by the Goswamis but will drink water from them and eat food cooked without water, known locally as *pucca*, by these people. There is also no bar on Goswamis from touching water sources and water used for drinking and cooking by the Kshatriyas. The Goswamis and Joshis primarily cultivated land for the Khankas, while the Dalits were the traditional service-providers and also provided labour for agricultural tasks whenever deDhanded by the Khankas, Joshis and Goswamis. As was local practice, an entourage of

men from Khanka, Joshi and Goswami families also accompanied Dhan Singh on his social visits to other hamlets and villages. It was the special task of the Brahman to carry the ‘eating-habit’ or *Dhoti* of Dhan Singh on his social visits. The Joshi family of Brahmins, even though of higher caste were socially lower placed than the landlord Khankas as here the Joshis were the peasant class working for the landowner Khankas. This was also because land-tilling Brahmins are considered to be of relatively low social status amongst the caste of Brahmins. The highest amongst the Brahmins are the land-owning class, distinct from the land-tillers and those who perform religious rituals for others. The Goswamis, to a lesser extent and the Dalits particularly were settled at the upper extremities of the village boundary and were responsible for identifying and developing their own water sources, as were the Joshis. The Khankas extended and improved the system of irrigation guls only along and below Malli Chuni.

Some time after the settlement of the Khankas, a young Khanka girl eloped with an Airi boy of a nearby village, who belonged to the occupational caste of goatherds. When his family refused to accept the couple, they were given land and settled in Chuni by the girl’s family. Airi’s are an endogamous social group of low social status. This stems from the fact that they are considered as the illegal progeny of the maidservants, whose duty was to accompany young brides of the land-owning *noble* Chand (Kshatriya) castes from the bride’s homes. Airis are also referred to as Kamars, which means slaves. Airi is a self-constructed name and grazing a self-determined occupation by the group to enhance their social status.

The employer-employee or landlord-cultivator relationship was not mutually dependent. Hari Singh Bisht said, ‘A Dalit man, living in Musgaon hamlet for several years failed one day to report to work on time. The reason for the delay was that his wife was menstruating and thus ‘unclean’ to fetch water and cook food and her husband had to perform these tasks himself. (This issue related to women’s menstruation is explained in chapter 6). Dhan Singh ruled with an iron fist and true to his nature, he did not give this Dalit man any chance to explain but asked him to leave the village at once. The degree of oppression by the dominant landlord class was even more evident in villages owned and

ruled by the ‘local kings’, known as Rajwars. The nearby Nandi Gram Sabha was one village amongst the twenty-two villages owned by the Chand Rajwar family, who had also migrated from Nepal. The settled people of one such hamlet, Mala in Nandi Gram Sabha recall, ‘We had to be at their beck and call at all times. The land was not ours formally and we paid in cash, grains, cattle and labour. We could be asked to leave at any time. It was a difficult existence then, we had to bend down at all times in all contexts.’ For the Dalits life was even more difficult, ‘We had to bow down even lower both to the landlords as well as to the other settled ‘socially upper castes.’

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