



GENDER AND PARTICIPATION

Overview Report

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1. Introduction¹

Concepts of 'participation' and 'gender' have been a part of emancipatory discourse and practices for the last decade. Advocates of these concepts have claimed that they allow the representation of the most marginalised groups – women and the poor. However both approaches have also been accused of being co-opted and providing lip service to the interests of the most marginalised sections that they claim to represent.

A common mistake of some applications of gender and participation approaches is the failure to be aware of conflicting interests between groups. Both approaches have had to encounter a similar set of questions from critics, such as: To what extent can gender take account not only of the differences between men and women, but also of differences between women, and between men, along the axes of class, age, ethnicity, race, caste, sexuality etc.? And to what extent have participatory methods allowed expression of divergent voices along the lines of gender, as well as other differences? The similarity of questions posed in both cases has now led people using both approaches to take a critical note of and learn from each other.

This report looks at convergences between approaches to gender and to participation, how these have been played out, and how they have been or could be constructively integrated into projects, programmes, policies, and institutions. In the following section, background is given on the concepts of gender and participation, why there has not been more interaction in the past, and attempts for learning across these two approaches. Part three looks at efforts to combine participatory methodologies and gender in projects. Part four describes ways in which the two have been used to influence policy and to what extent measures have been institutionalised. Part five concludes the paper, draws out recommendations for policy, projects and programmes, and identifies gaps in research on this area.

This report forms part of the Cutting Edge Gender Knowledge Pack on Gender and Participation which also includes a summary of this report, a copy of the BRIDGE bulletin *in brief* on the same theme and a collection of supporting resources.

¹ BRIDGE thanks Andrea Cornwall for her advice and editing of this report.

2. Concepts, Approaches and Methodologies

2.1 What counts as participation?

Participation can mean many different things. In this paper we use participation to refer to both the use of participatory methodologies in development projects, and taking part in governmental and other political processes.

Participatory methodologies

Participatory methodologies are now commonly used in development projects. One of the better known methodologies is Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) which is used widely for development planning. PRA draws on Freire's legacy of critical reflection and other, earlier participatory research methods to develop a set of practices, tools and methodologies which facilitate critical reflection, analysis and action by marginalised groups. The aim is for local people to be able to represent and analyse information about their livelihoods or other issues, and make their own plans. This learning process is enhanced by the use of visual graphics and can motivate those involved – researchers, development practitioners, local people and policy makers, to behave differently and to undertake different kinds of action (Guijt and Cornwall, 1995: 3).

Genuine or hypocrisy?

The word participation has been used in development projects with a range of meanings. While it can refer to genuine intent to hand over the power to interpret, analyse and come up with solutions, in some cases, imposition of donor agendas has been justified by cursory consultation processes which are then referred to as participatory.

2.2 From 'Women in Development' to 'Gender and Development'

Since the seventies, gender has become increasingly visible as an issue in development. Development workers became aware that women had been excluded from much of the benefits of development activity. In response, a 'Women in Development' (WID) agenda was advocated, which aimed to increase local women's involvement in the market economy and project activities. However, problems with this approach soon became apparent. Women were *already* working hard, particularly poor women, and women's labour was already a part of the economy, although not necessarily recognised as such, or remunerated. Increasing their 'involvement' in project and market at times meant primarily increasing their labour burden. Furthermore, the WID approach focussed on women without looking at their context. Trying to change the situation of a group of women without looking at how the men in their lives might be affected made for an ineffective strategy. In the 1990s 'Gender and Development' (GAD) was touted as the new approach which was to overcome the shortcomings of WID. GAD aims to look at the social relations and interactions between women and men, and the contexts and constructions of masculinities and femininities. To some degree the GAD approach has brought about real change, however in practice some 'GAD' interventions may continue WID's distorted focus on women in isolation from their context.

Several gender analysis frameworks have been developed as the tools of GAD, with the aim of enabling development planners to systematically understand gender issues in their local contexts and find ways of addressing them at every stage of the project cycle (Mayoux, 1995). However, translating these gender analysis frameworks into practical tools to enable gender redistributive responses and strategies is easier said than done. The search for tools and frameworks to integrate gender sensitive data and practices to projects and policies implies a faith that technique can override forms of prejudice embedded in organisational systems and work cultures. Framing gender as a technical issue underestimates the role of discriminatory gendered patterns in incentive systems, accountability structures and the bureaucratic procedures and institutional practices of development organisations (Goetz, 1997). As a result, changes to more equal gender relations remain an elusive goal in spite of the incorporation of gender analysis frameworks into many projects and programmes.

2.3 Why has Gender and Development not been more participatory?

The inadequacy of these frameworks in understanding and addressing gender realities indicates the need for participatory approaches to bring the voices and strategies of different groups of stakeholders into the process. One reason may be that Gender and Development involves the application of external models and concepts as the basis for designing or assessing the differential impact of interventions for women and men. In contrast, participatory approaches deriving from the PRA school of practice try to enable local people to articulate and analyse *their own* situations for themselves on their own terms. This leaves little room for facilitators to challenge aspects of the status quo, which may be objectionable to feminists (Cornwall, 2001). This 'top down' conceptualisation of gender in development circles has limited openness to divergent experiences which may come to light in participatory activities. Fixed ideas of gender are not compatible with the complex, varied and changing realities that may be reflected in participatory reflections on gender.

The following trends have thus inhibited gender and development work from being more participatory:

- Operational frameworks tend to treat men and women as if they comprised instantly identifiable groups by virtue of their sex alone, and as if women have different interests and competing claims with men. This isolates women and men from the web of social relations that are important for their well-being.
- A focus on women may mask other forms of exclusion and differences within the category 'woman'. Women are also active in relations of dominance and disprivilege and are not necessarily more open to sharing power and control than men.
- Gender relations generally refer to that dimension of male/female relations that involve actual or potential heterosexual relations. Other kind of male-female relations and also gender dimensions of same sex relations are ignored (Cornwall, 2001).

2.4 Why have participatory approaches not been more gender aware?

Just as gender work has ignored participation, participation has also lacked an awareness of gender and gender differences.

Gender was hidden [in participatory research] in seemingly inclusive terms: 'the people', 'the oppressed', 'the campesinos', or simply 'the community'. It was only when comparing ... projects that it became clear that 'the community' was all too often the male community (Maguire, 1996 cited in Guijt and Shah, 1998: 1).

PRA methods for example, are in themselves largely gender neutral. PRA facilitators who lack a concern with process, power and difference can easily reinforce forms of development practice that do little to address inequalities. Numerous so-called 'transformative' projects pay little attention to gender, and support a highly inequitable status quo. This is in part due to PRA's tendency to look for consensus and agreement within the target group, based on the often mistaken idea that a certain level of cohesiveness and common interests will be found within a community. In her article 'Rescuing gender from the poverty trap', Cecile Jackson argues that in participatory approaches, and in PRA in particular, it should not be assumed that women can or will express their priorities to facilitators. This is largely because they are generally excluded from dominant worldviews and male vocabularies (Jackson, 1996).

Irene Guijt and Meera Kaul Shah have also identified obstacles to participatory approaches addressing gender:

- Development has been driven largely by a poverty-alleviation agenda that has resulted in the analysis of social difference being limited to those below and those above the 'poverty line' rather than addressing differences such as gender and age.
- Development professionals were initially mainly men, making communication with women culturally difficult in many areas. Moreover they were not generally exposed to gender analyses.
- Negotiating structural change with men and women takes time and courage, making it an unappealing task for donors and many NGOs. The association with a western imposed feminist agenda - an association heightened by pressure from donors - has exacerbated the unpopularity of tackling structural change in gender relations (Guijt and Shah, 1998).

2.5 Gender and participation: Learning from each other

To some extent, both participation and gender practitioners have responded to criticisms of their mutual ignorance, and strategies have been found which bring the two together.

The transformative or the empowerment approach to gender issues originated in feminist and third world organisations such as DAWN (Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era), and emphasised the collective dimensions of empowerment. DAWN stressed the need for a new vision of development based on the perspective of women in developing countries, which promoted change towards a society free of poverty and inequality. The core methods were political mobilisation, legal changes, consciousness raising and popular education. This had implications for organisational structures and procedures such as democratic processes, dialogue, participation in

policy and decision making and techniques for conflict resolution (Sen and Grown cited in Oxaal *et al.*, 1997).

The empowerment approach to gender issues connected participation and development in a transformative sense, in so far as change was to be driven by self mobilisation of women's collectivity leading to a wider process of social transformation and a potential challenge to existing power structures. It also meant allowing conflicting interpretations of the social reality to surface within the communities - namely from women and men from different social groups/classes. The idea was that sensitive facilitation would lead to a realignment of social practices. This, in turn meant gender sensitive development practices would have to ask questions such as those posed by Robert Chambers in 1997:

- Whose knowledge counts?
- Whose values?
- Whose criteria and preferences?
- Whose appraisal, analysis and planning?
- Whose action?
- Whose monitoring and evaluation?
- Whose learning?
- Whose empowerment?
- Whose reality counts? (Chambers, 1997: 101)

In other words, initiating gender sensitive changes would need skills, tools, and methodologies, which would allow differing and even conflictual articulations of social reality within the communities, and would promote local engagement on these different understandings to bring about gender redistributive change. Several projects have today turned to the use of participatory methodologies in order to enable local ownership over such processes of social change. Insights from gender analysis, for example the need for gender disaggregated data, and separate meetings for women and men, have also enriched participatory methodologies.

Some participatory methodologies are based on the assumption that communities are fairly homogenous, and able to come to a consensus on a range of problems and solutions. Some gender approaches assume that women share a set of interests which differ from a set of interests shared among men. There are now however examples of these approaches combining in the realisation that they had underestimated the diversity and conflict within communities, and within groups of women and men, and that the lines of division may be multiple: ethnicity, caste, race, class, culture, sexuality, education, physical ability as well as gender, economic difference and many other factors. The following section presents some case studies of projects which failed to take account of this multiplicity of interests, and then moves on to examples of those which succeeded in doing so.

3. Gender and Participation in Projects and Programmes

3.1 Where participatory projects ignored gender

Case I: The Kribhco Indo British Rainfed Farming Project

This poverty and gender focused project in India has the objectives of building local capacity to manage natural resources and improve the ability of the poorest people to access government programmes. In July 1992, after extensive training in PRA methods, community organisers began their entry into the villages and conducted PRAs.

Organised as social and public events, the PRAs had implications for the kind of information that was generated. For example, being initial PRAs they rarely involved all sections of the village community; gender, age, kinship and education all influenced the nature of participation. In particular women's participation was found to be limited and discontinuous as women faced a number of practical constraints to participation, such as timing of the PRA which clashed with women's weeding work.

Women also faced social constraints such as their cultural exclusion from public spaces and activities such as those outlined above. Public expressions of women's interests generally revolved around issues such as health care, child care, nutrition, domestic work and home-based income generation activities, and therefore offered a socially acceptable profile of women's activities. Women are also excluded from the mapping of natural resources, and the methods used in the PRAs failed to incorporate several of the women's concerns, such as overwork and violence from husbands, as these could not be expressed spatially through maps and charts. Further, as public events, PRAs emphasised the general over the particular which led to a unitary view of interests, underplaying difference and conflict. The very structure of PRAs which involved group activities leading to plenary presentations, assumed and encouraged the expression of consensus (Mosse, 1995).

Case II: Joint Forest Management (JFM) Project, India

Joint Forest Management (JFM) had initial success due to the initiative of local foresters in West Bengal and is seen by certain sections of development professionals as an alternative to the traditional practices of centralised forest management in India. PRA tools are used to develop a village forest management plan. Typically, PRA sessions are held in the village where discussions are arranged between different groups (mostly men but also 'some' women) on the history, use of the forests, and problems faced. A problem analysis in PRAs highlighted how excessive and unrestricted use of the forests had led to their degradation. It therefore contained solutions fencing of certain areas for regeneration and planting new saplings, to restrict people's access to forests in their own interests. Access and use of certain parts of forests has consequently been restricted in a number of places where JFM has been initiated.

Fencing has led to several negative impacts on poor women and groups whose livelihoods were dependent upon forests for fuel, fodder and other survival needs. It was found that fencing had led to an increase in women's work, particularly poor

women who were dependent upon the forests for fuel. They now had to walk a much longer distance due to the fencing of the nearer forests. In addition, the livelihoods of men and women dependent upon forests were often also severely affected. In the Himachal Pradesh Forestry Project, it was found that people had to sell off their sheep and goats as grazing was banned. Households which earned their incomes from rearing the sheep were also severely affected and several now had to find work as agricultural labourers. This in turn led to a decrease in the agricultural yield as sheep droppings, which are an excellent field manure for maize, were not available (Blunt *et al.*, 1999).

Both experiences show that contrary to its aims, PRA can also perpetuate the exclusion of women and the poor. Marked differences of interest between men and women as well as between the poor and the better off, meant potential conflict. Since both cases emphasised consensus, only dominant voices were heard. Therefore, participatory methodologies by themselves do not necessarily address issues of power and powerless within communities. The transformative or empowering potential of the participatory processes set by PRA cannot be assumed and PRA can be used for token or nominal participation of marginalised groups and can therefore perpetuate their domination.

The case studies suggest that the main constraints to poor women and men being able to articulate and negotiate their interests were:

- Participatory methodologies tended to focus on the 'communities'. However communities are not homogenous entities with monolithic interests. A community focus obscured the differences between the interests of the social groups and their articulation.
- Facilitating organisations and individuals themselves had biased perceptions of the realities of the poor and of women. By not giving adequate attention to the social exclusion process within the communities, they contributed to the exclusion of many voices from participatory processes.

3.2 Combining participation and awareness of gender and other differences

It is crucial to emphasise that such applications of PRA are not the only participatory approaches. Other methods have been developed to better respond to community differences and also to negotiate citizens' rights to improved local services and access to local decision-making institutions. Some organisations have attempted to deal with biases in systematic ways. These include Redd Barna Uganda, Eastern India Rainfed Farming Project, the Stepping Stones approach in Sub-Saharan Africa and REFLECT in Bangladesh. Their experiences show that facilitating organisations and their personnel's own orientation play an important role in any social change process².

Case I: Redd Barna, Uganda³

Redd Barna is an NGO providing support to the government and other NGOs in planning efforts that will benefit children. In their engagement with the use of PRA,

² For more best practice case studies see the Supporting Resources Collection.

³ The BRIDGE bulletin In Brief no.9 has more details on this case study.

Redd Barna found a surprising lack of information about two fundamental aspects: firstly how differences within communities can be addressed systematically and secondly how communities can be involved in planning and not just in appraisal.

Redd Barna started its work in the community of Kyakatebe (Masaka District) in 1994. Within a few months of working through PRAs, a community action plan was finalised and implementation began. However, about 18 months later, despite initial positive beginnings, the community planning and action process seemed to fizzle out. A community meeting in 1995 in Kyakatebe identified several reasons for this failure, the chief ones being that creating greater understanding of and respect for differing needs through PRA processes was essential.

Contrary to Kyakatebe, a new experiment was initiated in Bulende-Bugosere in Iganga district, where changes were planned and carried out with smaller groups. Here, special efforts were made to involve women in planning processes and they were deliberately sought out and invited to participate. More attention was given to younger women to increase their confidence and encourage the community to take them seriously. Factors such as the timing of meetings were considered, as women were often busy with household chores. Appraisal methods were adapted for working with children to keep them interested and make their input meaningful (Guijt, Kisadha, and Shah, 1998).

Over a period of time, RBU has now developed a planning approach that builds group action plans and community action plans. A five stage approach takes into account and facilitates the negotiation of different interests within the communities among smaller interest groups such as young men, young women, children, older men and older women. Each group discusses and analyses its situation while facilitators record issues raised on a matrix. The 'Issues Matrix' is a table outlining the issues of concern of the different interest groups. Only after the group has come out with its list of issues is there a cross discussion, and joint community actions taken. Otherwise, each group pursues its own group plans and monitors their implementation. The Issues Matrix is the basis for further monitoring; as the Matrix is updated it captures newer issues and selects those most relevant to different individuals and contexts. In this way, the communities gain a better understanding of their own patterns of development (Muukasa and Mugisha, 1999).

Case II: Stepping Stones approach

Stepping Stones is a training package which has been used to explore ways of addressing the problem of HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. It has now been adapted for use globally. Taking its cue from the fact that information provision does not necessarily lead to behavioural change, the Stepping Stones approach highlights the importance of beginning with and building on people's own perceptions and experiences rather than imposing our own.

A series of sessions are planned, most of which separate individuals into peer groups according to age and gender. A facilitator of similar age and gender guides each peer group, enabling individuals to explore their intimate sexual concerns and other sensitive issues. The sessions also focus on assertiveness training and encourage each peer group to consider and apply ways in which they can change their behaviour and prepare for the future.

In the peer groups, participants have the time and the space to work together and to decide for themselves the best solutions to the challenges they face. This helps to develop peer group identity and the ground rules for co-operation. Peer group meetings are interspersed with mixed sessions, when each peer group presents their ideas, and discussions about similarities, differences and solutions are encouraged. This structure heightens awareness of the needs and concerns of other members in the community. Thus the whole workshop enables individuals, peer groups and communities to explore their own social, sexual and psychological needs. Participants are able to analyse the communication blocks they face and to practice different ways of addressing their relationships. The facilitators encourage each peer group to keep meeting regularly even after the last session.

The long term development of such self-help groups has been the key to sustained behavioural change. Discussions in Buweda village of Uganda, suggest that the approach has lead to:

- behavioural changes such as less quarrelling between couples and sharing of household costs.
- greater mutual respect between young men and women.
- greater ability to discuss sexual matters with children.
- sustained increase in condom use (Welbourn, 1998).

Case III: Eastern India Rainfed Farming Project

The Eastern India Rainfed Farming Project works in mainly tribal parts of the Eastern Plateau of India. The project's overall goal is to improve the livelihood of women and men through participatory planning and farming systems development, institution building and income generation. The project's poverty strategy has been to identify the poorest households, or 'BLAD' (people living between life and death) and deficit households (households that do not get enough food through the year). Over the years, the project had developed a more nuanced and detailed understanding of poverty and livelihood issues and constraints through participatory poverty ranking.

In participatory poverty ranking, villagers identify about five categories of well-being within the village. The lowest and fifth category is that of destitute persons. This includes those who are old, mentally ill or physically challenged, those without family support, the homeless, those with acute drinking problems, widows with young children and without family support, persons living through long periods of illness and those who beg in the village. The general strategy of the project has been to undertake developmental interventions firstly through participatory appraisal and planning (PRA), and secondly through the implementation of income generation and farming systems options using self help groups for poor families.

However the project was initially unable to involve the 'BLAD' in the PRA, participatory processes and self-help groups. BLAD persons were unable to come to planning meetings, due to constraints such as old age and illness, or other disabilities and vulnerabilities. However, the project now does 'individual' needs assessments of such vulnerable persons by involving existing self-help groups (SHGs) in the villages. These SHGs are involved in finding out options for bringing BLAD out of social isolation. This has resulted in innovative micro-options such as a system whereby a project grant

given to the BLAD member is invested by the SHG as credit to its members. Monthly interest then goes to the BLAD as an income source. The self help groups are therefore encouraged to monitor the well being of such persons and explore a strategy of care for them (Akerkar, 2000a).

Lessons to be learnt

What is very clear from these three experiences with participatory methodologies is that participation is not an open and spontaneous process whereby all participate equally leading to a 'free consensus' on the issues under discussion. Rather it is 'a complex political process in which inequalities in resources and power between participants and potential participants strongly influence the aims of participation and the forms which this takes' (Mayoux, 1995: 245). Deciding which of the many and conflicting needs are addressed is extremely complex and cannot be divorced from wider political concerns.

The best practices emerging from the experiences of SUS, RBU, Stepping stones and EIRFP approaches are:

1) Awareness that both 'participation' and 'gender' are political issues, and that making participation gender sensitive is a political process

- The case studies take their starting point from the fact that communities are heterogeneous; that there are different and even conflictual understandings and experiences on the same issue amongst different social groups. These approaches problematise certain notions, in particular gender commonalities and community common interests, understandings and solutions. They allow differences in perceptions and experiences between men and women, women and women, and between persons from different age groups, marital status, and social compositions.
- The facilitators work with the belief that defining priorities, negotiating change processes and acting upon them leads to changing the relationships between different social groups and their capacities to influence each other. In particular, such a process empowers marginalised groups by enabling them to participate in processes of reflection, analysis, bargaining and contestation. This defines the change process, increasing the influence of marginalised persons. It is through this process that gender redistributive changes can take place.

2) Recognition that strategies are needed to enable different voices to emerge

- Participatory techniques are used in separate peer group discussions for men and women, and for other groups according to age, marital status, and social composition if necessary.
- Close attention is given to participatory structures: for example, the location and timing of meetings, and the criteria for membership, which enables participation of different social groups.
- The inclusion of sessions for both men and women identifies the crucial role of all members of the community in increasing levels of participation and relieves the pressure on women to be the sole agents of change.

- Different members of the community are included and a range of strategic responses and locations are employed. Empowerment must be multi-faceted rather than focussing on just one aspect of women's lives.

3) Management of change, power and conflict

- Facilitators remain aware that participation and working with difference are time consuming processes and cannot be achieved through short and speedy meetings.
- Facilitators give attention to the processes of participation, inclusion and exclusion when deciding on which issues to address. They recognise the power differentials inherent in any social relationship and remain alert to their influences on the processes of change.
- Facilitators ensure a platform for the different social groups to share their experiences, articulate their concerns, define their priorities and make choices from the possible options. The issues articulated encompass a wide range of societal relationships of the persons/groups with regard to family, community, market, and the state.
- Facilitators consciously arbitrate conflicts and differences and enable the groups to develop their plan of action. While broad based consensus across all the social groups on some issues is achieved, they recognise that this may not always be possible.
- Facilitators enable the participants to fulfil their own plans of action. Participants monitor their progress against their action plan and direct the change process accordingly.

Limitations

The experiences and case studies such as RBU and Stepping Stones have developed methodologies that encourage different articulations across varying axes of differences such as gender, age, clan/caste. However, issues like class and particularly disability are still being grappled with by organisations such as RBU. One of those engaged with the RBU work has pointed out that despite their efforts, it is proving exceedingly difficult to reach the poorest, who are often also the disabled, the aged and the ill. How to resolve this is still not clear (Guijt, Kisadha and Mukasa, 1998).

The EIRFP case study shows an important way forward in these terms. The strategy of bringing the poorest people out of social exclusion and isolation by building conscious relationships between poor families and rest of the community has been the building block on which further livelihood options for the BLAD have been explored. The EIRFP targets vulnerable members of the community separately, as well as integrating them into the wider community processes. This has been crucial to changing the self-image and the status of the BLAD persons within the community. However more research is still needed on ways to adequately articulate the different voices that emerge along the multiple axes of differences such as caste, class, ethnicity, age, marital status, gender and sexuality.

3.3 Mainstreaming gender and participation into projects and programmes

A genuine integration of gender and participation into projects and programmes needs to be done at each stage of the project cycle. The entire cycle from participatory

planning, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation filters information at different levels to reach new insights for action. Central to any mainstreaming of gender and participatory processes is the question of who controls the process of information gathering and analysis, and the search for solutions. As well as being gender disaggregated, data needs to be processed in a way which exposes and explains interconnections between issues, and reaches conscious conclusions to be fed back into the project strategy. Larger questions also need to be raised around who collects, analyses and evaluates the data. If there is no critical analysis of gender dynamics, then there is a danger that men and women will be represented as isolated from the web of social relationships that affect their well-being.

Reflective processes, analysis and social action by different sections of communities need to be the core of the general participation strategy. This has led many to recognise a strategy for institutional change as a necessary component of any change process. However, the institutionalisation of these elements in terms of concrete practice is not easy, given the presence of so many stakeholders and their differing and even conflicting gendered interests. While institutional constraints and opportunities limit the mainstreaming of gender and participation into all aspects of the project, there are some encouraging examples. Characteristics of more successful mainstreaming efforts include:

1) *Conscious integration of knowledge and social action with a rights-based emphasis*

A rights-based approach takes as its starting point the idea that in order to increase women's participation in decision making, women have to be aware of, and exercise their human rights. Such an approach recognises that:

- Rights and entitlements are legitimate demands by women, as outlined in international conventions recognised by governments.
- Equality between men and women is the base from which to argue for change.
- Practical and strategic gender needs are often blurred. A demand for a practical need can lead to a strategic shift of power. For example, arguing for better health care or clean water can enhance women's status.
- Education about rights can lead to demands for legal reforms, better implementation of existing laws and changes in policies.
- Economic, social, civil and political rights have equal status. This may be important. For example, distribution of income within the household which is necessary to raise the income of the entire family, encompasses all of these rights (adapted from Long and Phillips, 2000).

Rights-based approaches generally work from the top down, through legislative change and making people aware of their rights. A conscientisation approach works from the bottom up, enabling people to become aware of their potential to change their situations. Too often, these approaches are not connected, with rights-based activists working at one level and empowerment/conscientisation activists at another. However they are starting to come together. By focusing on literacy and social action, the REFLECT approach, developed by Actionaid, provides a framework for combining both approaches.

The REFLECT approach to literacy and social change

The REFLECT (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) approach is an example of a rights-based approach where knowledge and social action are interlinked. REFLECT is based on the philosophy of Paulo Freire, and uses techniques such as PRA that stimulate sharing of participants' knowledge, analysing topics of local concern, and taking individual or collective action where appropriate. The role of the literacy teacher or 'facilitator' in a REFLECT class (called a circle) is to facilitate this discussion. This involves probing deeper into the relationships between power structures, social stratification, and the specific topic of concern to the group, as well as introducing numeracy and literacy skills through such discussions.

In this way REFLECT attempts to break the link between illiteracy, poverty, marginalisation and discrimination. Discussions often start from local analysis but this is linked to wider national and global issues. The case of REFLECT shows that tools such as participant observation are invaluable in the understanding of culturally specific opportunities to bring about change. This in turn helps the facilitators to develop a set of questions that are in tune with the local issues and situations.

REFLECT Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, the NGO Grupo Venancia have developed their own REFLECT methodology to ensure the women participants of the literacy circles explore how unequal gender relations impact on their lives and how they can address inequality. Work on literacy skills is combined with an exploration of women's knowledge and experience, the identification of common needs and appropriate social action⁴.

2) The continual innovation of participatory methods to create a better understanding of aspects of social relationships, especially those of gender

In a group in Sierre Leone, when asked to draw the improvements they would like, some women replied "We can't draw changes on this map, because the kind of changes we need can't be drawn". They were referring to issues such as overwork, breakdown in co-wife support and beatings from their husbands, which could not be drawn through visual PRA techniques (Welbourn, 1991). The lessons on methodology from RBU, EIRFP and Stepping stones are important in this respect. It has generally been recognised that not all women's and men's concerns can be represented by spatial techniques (for example, maps and matrices) and that tools need to be constantly adapted to suit the context in which they are being used.

3) Recognition of the difficulties of language and translation

Language can be a barrier to good analysis, monitoring and evaluation if the difficulty of translation of concepts is not recognised. Many donor funded projects use terminology reflecting indicators of social change in the English language. However, not all English concepts have equivalent meanings in the local languages. In such situations, participant monitoring and evaluation needs a careful sequencing of questions that use local concepts and expressions to understand people's perceptions of change. Change within a specific locale needs careful attention, it cannot simply be assumed to be due to a particular project.

⁴ For more case studies see the Supporting Resources Collection.

Eastern India Rainfed Farming Project (EIRFP)

EIRFP is an example of where local concepts were used in participatory evaluations and in dealing with issues of attribution. One component of the EIRFP impact work is to understand women's feelings of empowerment, and the extent to which the project has had any effect on these. In this case there was no local equivalent for the concept of empowerment and certain equivalent phrases had to be used in questions. These were field tested with women of different communities/social groups to see if they were understood in the same manner by anyone. The testing of different phrases and expressions has now led to the use of a carefully sequenced set of four open ended questions which allow women to talk about the different ways in which they feel disempowered or empowered. For example, "in what situations do you feel helpless, vulnerable, or powerless?". (The Hindi equivalent for all these three English words is "lachaar". This single phrase was able to capture a range of dimensions pertaining to women's lives).

Secondly the issue of attribution of changes in women's situations is carefully addressed by posing impact-related questions in carefully sequenced ways. For example, women are invited firstly to talk about the changes in their situations in which they felt disempowered without any reference to the project. Only after these discussions is it possible to ask women the questions of whether project has been responsible for any of the changes they have experienced (Akerkar, 2000b; Ladbury, 2000).

4) Mainstreaming gender as part of adapting institutions

A commitment to working to achieve gender equality cannot stop with an examination of the relationship between agency staff and beneficiaries. Facilitators and promoters need to examine their own lives from a gender perspective. This would also involve an analysis of the way agencies work and also the personal and professional relationships of and between staff. Furthermore, a continuous process of support for staff is needed to ensure that they keep up-to-date on new ideas and innovations generated elsewhere, and so that they can share their experiences and problems⁵.

⁵ The Supporting Resources Collection features a case study of an extension project in Siavonga, Zambia. It traces the institutionalisation of a gender focus into the programme and draws lessons for similar projects.

4. Gender and Participation in the Policy context

For the last twenty years, the concept of participation has been widely used in development, referring primarily to participation in projects or in the community. Now the processes of inclusion and critical reflection encouraged by participatory methods have been brought into the debate on good governance (Cornwall, 2001; Goetz and Gaventa, 2001). 'Participation is now being related to rights of citizenship and to democratic governance' (IDS web site www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/research/localgov.html). This is reflected on the one hand in the decentralisation of the political processes across countries, and on the other in efforts to provide a platform for policy level dialogue. Such a dialogue between civil society and the state is considered necessary to articulate people-centred policies. The intergovernmental forums led by the UN such as the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, have also stressed such dialogue. Achieving gender sensitive policy frameworks, requires the development of participatory processes with the segments of civil society which represent gender concerns.

This subsection explores to what extent policy processes have been used to integrate participation and gender in policy. Firstly it will look at the recent Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP)⁶ led by the World Bank as examples of efforts to upstream participation into processes of policy making. Secondly it will look at how some countries have attempted to mainstream gender into policy processes through creation of 'national machineries' such as women's units and advocacy machineries. Thirdly it will show how gender analysis of budgets has worked towards redistributive change at the national level. Have such measures combined mainstreaming gender in national policy making with participatory approaches, or have they remained distinct? What can be learnt in order to formulate best practices to integrate gender and participatory processes into policy making? Finally the subsection will give some examples of ways in which governments have attempted to institutionalise gender equality and participation in more general policy processes and political bodies, such as through affirmative action and decentralisation.

4.1 Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs)

Participatory approaches have broadened our understanding of what poverty is, and if successful shows how gender relations affect men and women's vulnerability to poverty and how they can move out of it. PPAs and PRSPs represent attempts to feed this understanding into policy as well as to encourage civil society's participation in policymaking. In the 1990s the World Bank conducted Poverty Assessments (PAs) in more than 50 countries. In addition to quantitative analysis, some PAs used participatory poverty assessment (PPA) methodologies. This combined qualitative methods such as focus groups, semi-structured interviews, conversational interviewing, with participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques such as venn diagrams and wealth ranking. The main PA report in such cases was thus an outcome of the use of participatory methods in combination with other conventional methods of data collection.

⁶ See the BRIDGE bulletin In Brief no. 9 for an article on PRSPs and PPAs.

However, a process analysis of a few countries by Whitehead and Lockwood shows that although many PPAs produced interesting accounts on gender issues, the main PA text does not integrate these findings into the policy recommendations.

- PAs were guided by sex disaggregated data, without adequate gender analysis, or were the result of selective readings of the PPA findings. This led to simplistic recommendations for change (see for example, the Zambian PPA and its main PA report and the Ghana II PPA and PA report).
- The World Bank's Poverty Reduction Handbook and the policies defined by the 1990 World Development Report (WDR) have largely determined the PA findings. For example, gender implications in three emerging areas of PA match the WDR approach, namely market led growth, export-led agricultural growth and the role of education and vulnerability.
- Little attention has been paid to the empirical details of poverty measurement and analysis emerging out of the PPAs indicating the influence of the 1990 WDR model on the PA text.

These examples illustrate a 'filtering out' of gender issues from PPA to PA, and from primary data collection and data analysis to policy formulation. By the time the policy chapter in many PAs is reached, poor women and their specific characteristics have often disappeared. Even where the main body of the PPA has addressed gender issues, there is a substantial gap between these discussions and the way gender is addressed in the final policy sections of the report (Whitehead and Lockwood, 1999).

PPAs in South Africa and Jamaica

The South African and Jamaican PPAs went further than previous ones in illuminating women's experience within heterosexual relationships. The team included feminist researchers and NGO workers who ensured that women's interests stayed on the agenda throughout synthesis, policy analysis and writing, and invited the engagement of actors who were able to make this happen (Cornwall, 2000). Nevertheless, as they failed to include the gendered experiences of men, they resembled a women-focused rather than a balanced gender perspective.

4.2 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)

Following criticism of its structural adjustment policies and their impact on the poor, the World Bank has, in the last five years, started a new initiative for heavily indebted poor countries. The governments of these countries are required to develop a poverty reduction strategy paper through widespread consultations with civil society, which outline ways to reduce poverty. This country paper is called Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and enables the countries to apply for a debt reduction from the bank. The PRSP gender guidelines advise on gender-sensitive participatory approaches at the poverty diagnostic stage and on developing responsive, gender-based policy interventions (see World Bank web site <http://www.worldbank.org>). They also provide guidelines for participatory monitoring of indicators and for tracking gender-differentiated impacts of PRSP actions. Yet no accountability mechanism currently exists within the World Bank, or within most national governments, to ensure that these guidelines or other gender-related criteria are adhered to.

Case I: Tanzania

In Tanzania, a gender analysis of the government's PRSP document was undertaken by the working group on gender which included representatives from the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs. They concluded that the PRSP document lacked an analysis of gender and was based on data that was not disaggregated by gender:

- The PRSP had not taken into consideration that women and men experience poverty differently.
- Poverty reduction strategies had not analysed the contexts which created inequalities, and did not seek to create appropriate strategies to redress these, such as policies, laws and allocation of resources.
- Women's contribution to the productive economy remained invisible in the analysis. Their unpaid household work, caring responsibilities, fetching water and firewood and subsistence agriculture, were not recognised as a contribution to the economy. Taking account of women's contribution would allow government to invest in sectors where women's labour is concentrated.

The Working group suggested developing a systematic collection and analysis of gender disaggregated and qualitative data at different levels on priority basis, in order to develop gender sensitive poverty reduction strategies.

Case II: Kenya

The Collaborative Center for Gender and Development, a non-profit voluntary organisation in Kenya has worked to ensure sustainable development by mainstreaming gender equity in national economic policies and budgets. The Centre has used the PRSP combined with participatory approaches to achieve its objectives; these include demystifying and democratising the government economic planning and budgeting processes to allow the involvement of women, and creating awareness for individual women and women's organisations around engaging with these processes at all levels (Shiverenge, 2000)⁷.

It is clear that unless consciously monitored by a separate group, the larger policy perspectives are likely to remain uninformed by the gender dimensions. There is therefore also a need for groups/mechanisms which would constantly watch the policy making from a gender perspective in different sectors by ensuring that participation and consultation processes include dialogues with particular groups. However, heavily indebted countries need swift access to debt relief - the carrot that the World Bank holds out for the successful completion of the PRSPs. Therefore the time needed for gender analysis, collation of disaggregated data and meaningful public participation, let alone effective civil society involvement is not is often not made available.

⁷ See the Supporting Resources Collection for a summary of this case study.

4.3 National women's machineries and their influence on planning processes

Countries such as Chile, Mali, Vietnam, Jamaica and Uganda have set up national women's machineries to influence gender agendas in their countries. These machineries take the form of advocacy units that have a mandate to influence the planning processes across all development sectors on women/gender issues. These national units are housed in the office of the Prime Minister or other ministries. They have a mandate to promote attention to women/gender issues and to give advice to various government units. Most of these units have devised a range of policy instruments such as gender monitoring checklists, guidelines emphasising gender disaggregated data analysis, inter-ministerial committees and gender awareness training. Some, such as Chile and Uganda, have WID focal point officers in other ministries for liaising and gender mainstreaming. While the presence of national machineries has given a better profile to the gender issues in policy issues, there remain several obstacles to influencing policy:

- There is still a lack of conceptual clarity on the use of the term gender. The tendency is to assume that it refers to women alone.
- Participation of civil society, women's groups and NGOs in policymaking is not yet formalised. One of the few countries which has made some efforts in this direction is Uganda and its department of WID (Goetz, 1998).
- Participation is made more difficult by the hierarchical structure of bureaucracies in which women's national machineries are housed, and the logistical problems such as a lack of technical capacity and budgets.

WID and policy making in Uganda

In Uganda, WID has engaged in consultations with civil society in the framing of the Constitution. Seminars were held on different aspects of the constitution such as marriage, divorce and employment regulations. The range of participants included illiterate farmers, lower level civil servants such as nurses and teachers and members of women's groups and local NGOs. The women's views on the constitution were reported and informed the constitutional framework. Another outcome of this process was a greater politicisation of women on constitutional issues, with 30 women contesting seats in the constituent assembly elections of 1994.

4.4 Gender budget analysis

A more recent initiative in various countries looks at gender related impacts by analysing budgetary process as well as social policies. Gender budget analyses work on the principle that budget policies are key to the formulation of programmes and that budget analysis can tell us whether the impact of the programmes are in line with the stated gender policy of the country. Gender disaggregated data is used to understand the impact of budgetary allocations, and the analysis can enable the re-allocation of programme budgets and act as a gender equalising measure. Pioneering work has been done in South Africa, and gender budget analysis is now done in many other countries such as Jamaica, Uganda, Mozambique, Tanzania and Bolivia.

The South African Initiative on Gender Budget Analysis

The Gender Budget initiative in South Africa is based on the 1993 Women's Charter and translates its stipulations into concrete and prioritised order of budgets from three different sectors. Based on this analysis, the initiative lobbies and advocates for change in budgetary policies to ensure that budgetary allocations will lead to gender redistributive impacts. The South African gender budget is based on the unique strategic alliance and collaboration between groups with common interests. These groups include parliamentarians, civil servants, NGOs and academics. Civil servants provide the data, NGOs carry out operational advocacy and focussed research, and parliamentarians lobby for budgetary changes. Researchers focus on the facts rather than abstract theoretical arguments. They are supported by parliamentarians, government officials and other NGO members who are too busy to do research themselves, but who provide information and insights on how to combine the sectoral, gender and budget analysis. The successful lobbying of this network has seen the initiation of 'Inside Government Gender Budget' in South Africa, which has in turn led to the changes in budgetary policies and gender redistributive impacts (Budlendar, 2000; Hamadeh-Banerjee, 2000).

4.5 Lessons learnt from these measures

1. Sex Disaggregated Data

The availability of, and capacity to interpret sex disaggregated data stand out as important elements to be improved through participatory methods. The majority of the initiatives around national women's machineries show a lack of conceptual clarity on gender issues and are sometimes focused on women alone. In addition, the PRSP process often lacks available sex disaggregated data, while the World Bank PPA initiative did only a selective analysis of the data generated in line with its pre-stated documents and texts. By contrast the South-African initiative gives close attention to the emerging 'sex disaggregated facts' rather than abstract theoretical argumentation.

2. Who participates and at what level?

The perspectives of various actors and stakeholders influence the policy processes and outcomes. In particular who participates in the various levels of the exercise is a key factor. Developing policy insights through local analysis or a micro-macro analysis is essentially a political process. The higher up the information moves, the more likely it is that it will be filtered and presented in different ways to suit different analyses. Many factors influence the outcome of such processes such as:

- who sets the agenda
- who decides who will attend meetings
- who records the proceedings and checks conclusions
- who writes, reports and edits the plan
- to whom are decision-makers accountable
- who monitors whether decision-makers have addressed the varying viewpoints.

3. Transparency and accountability in the consultation processes

The Ugandan and the South African initiatives illustrate the importance of transparency in consultations at various levels of policy dialogue and operations. Such open and accountable processes allow for multiple perspectives to come into the debate in the public arena. They also provide mechanisms to deal with the power relations inherent in any interactive process which leads to the choosing of one policy option over others. Transparency and accountability enables the development of networks and links between people from local communities, national experts, researchers, policymakers and local bureaucrats. This gives greater scope for voicing individual concerns which would normally remain embedded in their own social setting and provides new directions for policy change in both these contexts.

In the World Bank PPA initiative, while the primary level data collection through participatory methods did lead to collection of gender disaggregated information to some extent, the aggregation and higher level information selection, analysis, synthesis and policy recommendations were done through peer group review within the World Bank. This resulted in the dominance of the World Bank textual view over the factual data and shows a token recognition of gender issues in the policy recommendation text. Weak participatory norms such as the lack of open, transparent and accountable dialogue with civil society groups, and a lack of clarity on gender issues and gender disaggregated data has prevented the World Bank's PPA or PRSP processes and national machineries from encouraging the development of gender sensitive policies. The South African initiative on budget analysis, by contrast, shows how influence on policies from a gender perspective is achieved through strong participatory and consultative processes with a range of stakeholders. This is reinforced by conceptual clarity on gender which in turn reflected the choice of methodological tools in terms of gender disaggregated budget analysis. This shows the need to integrate gender and participatory practices.

4.6 Decentralisation and affirmative action: increasing participation of women in policy making bodies and processes

Hierarchical governmental organisations often inhibit opportunities for participation, and in many cases interactions between civil society members and governments are limited. There is therefore the need for much better channels for civil society engagement, decentralisation and affirmative action. The idea is that affirmative action, decentralisation and rights based education lead to deepening of democratic politics. The assumption is sometimes made that this will ensure women's participation in the political processes, and promote the formation of women's civil society groups. Some national governments have attempted to institutionalise gender equality and participation through affirmative action and decentralisation. NGOs have responded by initiating training of government officials, and training people in their rights.

Affirmative action in the Philippines

In 1991 a local government code was enacted in the Philippines which transferred some of the fundamental responsibilities and accountability to local government units (LGU). Active participation by the private sector, NGOs, and public organisations is

encouraged by these LGUs beyond the formal structures of government. The Democratic Socialist Women of the Philippines (DSWP) for example, engages in critical collaboration with local governments by training women in community leadership.

The experience in the Philippines has also shown that the engagement of women's organisations in mobilising women to participate in the LGUs has resulted in some welfare achievements. However there are still some problems in advancing substantive empowerment of women through LGUs :

- Few women occupy top positions in local government, and most positions occupied by women are those traditionally considered as women's work (e.g. social welfare, library work, record keeping and health care). This leads to continued gender stereotyping in the labour market.
- Women's empowerment is equated with economic well-being and welfare services such as health and day care facilities, issues such as domestic violence therefore often go unreported and unchecked (Atienza, 2000).

Participatory Gender training in Lira district of Uganda

A gender and decentralisation programme was implemented in the Lira district of Uganda in 1997. The programme focussed on community discussions on gender and the need to support women's participation in local leadership. Participants included leaders from local councils, clans, religious groups, women's groups, youth and other groups. This programme aimed to:

- promote discussions of gender roles at household and community levels
- solicit community support for women in leadership
- train candidates for local councils in campaign strategies and delegate work
- develop awareness that electorates consist of different groups of people, each with their own specific interests and problems

This was done by holding small group discussions on the above issues, identifying constraints into women's political participation and possible solutions. Gender roles were discussed and women's role in productive as well domestic spheres was highlighted. Discussions identified constraints such as:

- workload and lack of transport to attend meetings
- the suspicion of male family members of interaction with other men at meetings
- the lack of respect for women as leaders by both women and men
- bias against married, divorced and widowed women as leaders

Solutions were found to some of the above issues. Constraints such as heavy workload for example, were addressed by sharing in the collection of water and fuel, and an increase in men's involvement in domestic tasks. This training programme increased the number of women candidates and surpassed the criteria of one-third of women representatives in local councils. In some districts they reached 42 percent. Women candidates showed confidence and assertiveness increased solidarity, and were backed by the clan leaders (Tempelman, 2000).

Affirmative action in India

Following 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments in India, one third of the seats in the Gram Panchayats and municipalities were reserved for women. Close to one million women have now entered the local political institutions. However, empirical studies have indicated that women belonging to the elite class are more likely to enter local politics, and that they do not necessarily represent poor women's interests. In addition, it has been observed at least initially, that the husbands of the elected women members have significant influence in their running of the panchayats (Nair, 1997; Nanivadekar, 1998; Pai, 1998). More recent experiences across different states show that female panchayat members, when supported by women's organisations and NGOs, are gaining confidence to raise issues of liquor sale, use of development funds for schools, fuel and water sanitation issues (Akerkar, 1998). Several studies also suggest that training women in the functions of the panchayats, their rights and obligations as elected members and education in political skills is helping them to participate in this new political space (Mahi, 1988).

However, as violence, caste and class politics still rule the workings of most of panchayats, participation by women is not fundamentally changing the power relations within the communities. In this sense, gender equity is still marginal to the women's participation in the local political system. Budgets also remain a constraint on the undertaking of creative activities and several grampanchayats are underfinanced. The notable exception being the state of Kerala where 40% of the State development budget has been allocated to panchayat development planning. Here, 10% of the panchayat budget is allocated as 'women's budget' and is used for women centred welfare activities⁸.

Although these case studies demonstrate efforts to problematise representative politics, questions still need to be asked about who is being represented and in what way. Poor women's demands are not necessarily represented when women from more privileged classes gain entry into local elections. Local politics can thus be considered another site of struggle, offering both opportunities and constraints for change in gender relations. Affirmative actions have not, by themselves led to changes in social structures and relationships. Issues such as property rights for women, effective laws against violence and changing the sexual division of labour need to be addressed.

Affirmative action and decentralisation will only have a positive impact on gender relations if they go hand in hand with a process of critical reflection on the quality of political participation and rights training for citizens, staff of development institutions and government employees⁹. Participatory approaches to development have a role to play in such critical reflection as well as ensuring that training is relevant and accessible. This, together with gender sensitisation training and capacity building programmes, would have lasting and sustained impact¹⁰.

⁸ See In Brief for more information about how PRIA uses participatory approaches to influence the political process in India.

⁹ See section 3.3 for information on a rights-based approach and the Supporting Resources Collection for practical examples.

¹⁰ For more case studies of civil society government engagement see the Supporting Resources Collection.

5. Conclusions

1. *The combination of a 'social relational perspective' with the use of gender as a category of analysis enables us to think through ways of changing unequal social relations marked through gender, class, caste and age.*

It is crucial to develop strategies that focus on both men and women, and to work with differences and complexities inherent in any social setting. Andrea Cornwall argues that power and powerlessness should not be understood in terms of differences between the fixed identity categories of men and women. Participatory approaches and methodologies should explicitly explore, analyse and work with differences between women and women and between men and women of different social groups. This is not to deny that in some cases such as violence, property or reproductive rights, there could be common interests between women, and a strategic use of the category women could be politically important in organising women around these issues (Cornwall, 2001).

2. *Participatory methods can potentially help the poor and the marginalised to voice their understandings of their social reality and to influence practice and policy agendas.*

However the case studies analysed here show that participatory approaches and methodologies such as PRA techniques, by themselves do not *necessarily* allow the articulation of the voices of the poor and of women. Using participatory methodologies by themselves may not be enough to produce equity impacts and may even have disempowering impacts on women and other marginalised groups. Participatory methodologies must therefore engage with the political task of unpacking the idea of a homogenous community. Facilitating organisations and individuals must recognise and creatively engage with the power dimensions inherent in such processes.

3. *It is crucial to institutionalise gender equity as well as participatory approaches in project practice, development programmes and policy formulation.*

The first step is the recognition of different stakeholders as actors in the project cycle/policy formulation. These can be primary stakeholders or local communities of men and women divided by class, caste, ethnicity and age, representatives of donor organisations, national governments, non-governmental organisations and other implementing organisations and policy makers. The meanings, understandings and operationalisation of 'gender equity' in project practice and policy formulation are therefore in a constant process of redefinition and reformulation as different stakeholders engage and negotiate with each other, according to their different understandings of gender equity. The wider institutional context and power relations that influence the participation of different stakeholders needs to be addressed and understood.

5.1 Recommendations of good practices to institutionalise participatory processes and gender issues at different levels

For programmes and projects:

The facilitation of a culture of learning that embraces failures and responds to emerging situations involves facilitating decentralised rather than centralised approaches which encourage grass-roots perspectives and multiple understandings of reality. More specific recommendations include:

- Developing methods of working with differences such as age, social composition, class and marital status to enable individuals to give accounts of their own social realities. In practical terms this means organising project practices and planning processes in such a way as to take into account poor women's time constraints and their work burden.
- Encouraging men, women and other social groups within the community to develop their own action plans for implementation, and to use these plans for monitoring and further evaluations.
- The development of staff performance measurement systems that highlight qualitative indicators such as promoting empowerment processes over quantitative targets.
- Training and capacity building of facilitators in participatory and gender-sensitive methodologies, and rights and advocacy-based approaches.
- The use of a rights-based approach and a conscientization approach, integrating knowledge and social action. This ensures a firm base for action. It also enables the wider dimensions of poverty encapsulated in the concept of social exclusion to be addressed.

For influencing policy formulation processes:

- Development of gender units within national governments to encourage participation of civil society in policy making processes.
- Using and developing participatory process methodologies and tools including PRA methodologies that facilitate gender disaggregated information and gender perspectives at different levels of policy formulations processes.
- In the case of policy formulations, the facilitating organisation (government, non-government or other institutions such as the UN or the World Bank) needs to hold consultations and to engage with different actors in civil society, particularly women's groups and other marginalised groups. This could bring about transparency in negotiations between different stakeholders. Knowledge generated and perspectives shared are thus not manipulated and the voices of the marginalised groups such as poor women are not lost in data analysis or selective interpretation.
- Affirmative actions and decentralisation of policy making that make it possible for local women and men to participate in local policies and programmes affecting them, need to be placed alongside policies which enable women to assert their human rights in areas such as property, labour and violence. This would help transform social relationships through women's participation in policy and programmes.

- Developing capacity building and training programmes to bring about a better quality of women's participation, particularly the poor, in local decision making processes. It is important not to assume that an increase in the numbers of women participating, together with decentralisation of policy making, automatically results in gender issues making it onto the policy agenda. It may also be useful to use some of the participatory methodologies that encourage participation of different social groups in formulating local programmes to ensure that priorities and interests of the different constituents are met.
- Ensuring adequate budgetary allocation to different programmes, informed by gender redistributive objectives.

5.2 The review of gender and participation issues, shows three critical knowledge gaps

1. While some of the case studies have developed methodologies that encourage different articulations across axes of difference such as gender, age and clan/caste, there are not many experiences which have grappled simultaneously with all these axes of differences in their participatory processes and methodologies. While recent publications such as *The Myth of Community* (Guijt and Shah, 1998) have made important contributions to this debate, there is a clearly a need for further research and documentation on this issue.
2. There is a lack of information, research and documentation on institutionalising change. Most readily available are one-off reports on training programmes and their impact. However, social changes, and particularly those in relation to gender relations, happen over a fairly long period time in the project cycle. There is a need to capture the complexities involved in institutionalising change given the presence of a number of stakeholders. Changing gender relations involves challenging deeply held personal biases, attitudes and practices and structures.
3. Transparent, open and accountable processes with consultations involving wide sections of civil society and different social groups have a higher possibility of retaining grassroots gendered perspectives in the context of policy-making. There is as yet very little understanding about how to institutionalise transparency and accountability in processes of policy formulation such as selection and analysis of data. This is important in ensuring that priorities articulated by marginalised groups and women through gender sensitive participatory methodologies are not lost.

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